DEMOCRATS, AUTHORITARIANS AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS: UNIVERSITIES IN GERMANY, RUSSIA, ENGLAND AND WALES

DEMOCRATS, AUTHORITARIANS AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS: UNIVERSITIES IN GERMANY, RUSSIA, ENGLAND AND WALES

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

To Alexander S. Revushkin, who first aroused my curiosity
about the Bologna Process

Contents

Acknowledgements *ix*

Preface by Peter Scott *xiii*

Map of Council of Europe and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) members *xvii*

Chapter 1 Introduction *1*

Chapter 2 Learning, Innovation, Society and the Bologna Process *13*
- Learning Processes *13*
- Cooperation and Learning *21*
- Learning and Innovation *24*
- The Learning Process and Society *28*

Chapter 3 The Bologna Process: A Quiet Revolution *35*
- The Bologna Declaration *35*
- How Did the Bologna Process Come About? *36*
- Why Did Countries Think They Needed the Bologna Process? *41*
- Developments since 1999 *43*
- The Management of the Bologna Process *51*
- The Bologna Process in Its Wider Context *59*
- The Bologna Process and Its Implementation *61*

Chapter 4 Germany: Aesop's Tortoise *67*
- German Higher Education until 1945 *67*
- West Germany after 1945 *72*
- East Germany after 1945 *75*
- Reunification *77*
- Enter the Bologna Process *80*
- The Transition to Bachelor's and Master's Degrees *82*
- Assuring What Quality? *90*

Mobility: Lifelong Learning *95*
Concluding Thoughts *97*

Chapter 5 Russia: Potemkin Lives? *99*
Background – History and Institutions *99*
Some Siberian Universities: Omsk *109*
Some Siberian Universities: Tomsk *116*
Concluding Thoughts *125*

Chapter 6 United Kingdom: England (and Wales up to 1999) – Aesop's Hare *127*
A Brief History before the 1963 Robbins Report *128*
From Robbins to the Bologna Declaration *132*
Impact and Management of the Bologna Process *139*
The Descent towards Barbarism *141*
Developments in England (only) since 1999 *145*
Conclusion – Whither England and the Bologna Process? *158*

Chapter 7 Wales: The Red Dragon Awakens *163*

Chapter 8 Discussion and Conclusions *177*

Appendix: The Bologna Declaration of 19 June 1999 *183*

Bibliography *187*

Index *199*

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[1] Mattei (2014).

Process, who gave me an immense amount of highly relevant material, and who showed continuing interest in my work as it progressed.

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interest in the progress of the work, reading and commenting on successive drafts of most chapters, and even printing out much of the book when my own printer and computer refused to communicate with each other.

But the views expressed here are entirely my own.

Preface

In this book Judith Marquand has rescued the Bologna Process from the condescension that has often been its fate, certainly in the United Kingdom, one of four signatories of the original Sorbonne Declaration in 1998 that foreshadowed this Europe-wide movement of reform in higher education and also two of case-study countries on which she has based her penetrating analysis (she has treated England Wales separately – rightly so, in my view).

It is a remarkable achievement. Too often the Bologna Process has been dismissed in the United Kingdom (or, more accurately, England because both Wales and in particular Scotland have shown greater enthusiasm) as a dry-as-dust matter of interest mainly to university administrators or a pretext for Euro-groups to junket by engaging in a ceaseless round of self-justificatory meetings or, worst of all, utterly irrelevant because the United Kingdom had been doing almost everything required by it already. In fact, as Marquand shows, it is the other way round. England is not super-compliant with Bologna but rather, because of its desire to engineer a free-market revolution in higher education (despite the broad opposition of the universities, bar a thin top leadership class), Bologna has become irrelevant.

In this book, Marquand has succeeded in bringing Bologna alive. She has made it a subject of compelling interest, not simply in the particular terms of the reform in higher education but also more broadly of how networks are emerging to tackle global problems (what is, perhaps rather grandly, referred to as the 'New World Order' – 'disorder' might be a more accurate label in an age of Trump and Brexit).

Outside the ranks of Bologna-philes, the English response has always been a contradictory mixture of 'we are doing it all already' and 'it's all irrelevant anyway'. In contrast, in the rest of Europe – even Putin's neo-authoritarian Russia – it has been used to launch a movement not only of reform but also of renewal of the European university. England, if not the whole United Kingdom (despite its pivotal historical role in that European tradition), is now rather awkwardly semi-detached – a stance that appears to have become generic and endemic in our relations with our European neighbours, as the catastrophic result of the referendum its continuing membership of the European Union with its razor-

thin majority to 'leave' has demonstrated. Maybe our indifference to, occasionally even irritation with, Bologna prefigured Brexit.

In central and eastern Europe, in particular, the Bologna Process has been a key instrument in reconnecting these countries to the European mainstream after more than four decades of totalitarian rule. Outside Europe too Bologna has been admired. I remember a meeting of higher education ministries and funding agencies on the far side of the world in New Zealand where the State Commissioner for Wisconsin asked, only half in jest, how he could 'join' the Bologna Process.

Few of those present when the Bologna Declaration was signed in the summer of 1999 can have imagined the impact of the process that was being initiated that day. A decade-and-a-half later, far from diminishing, that impact is greater than ever. Judged against the stuttering efforts to make progress on other, much higher-profile, global agendas such as climate change that also depend on building international consensus through networks of persuasion, Bologna has been a remarkable success – an exemplar perhaps for all such efforts (although not literally global in its reach, it stretches more than half-way round the globe from Greenland to Vladivostok). For that reason alone, Bologna deserves serious study far beyond the higher education community.

The motives of the original, and subsequent, signatories were inevitably mixed. The Germans were concerned about the length of time students took to receive the *Diplom*, so the attractions of a two-cycle bachelors-masters pattern were immediately appealing. France, despite its supposedly Napoleonic and statist traditions, possessed a fragmented higher education system, divided between universities and *grandes écoles*, and Bologna held out the promise of greater integration. The Italians, and others, saw an external instrument, such as Bologna, as a lever for reform of their universities. For the central and eastern Europeans, as has already been said, Bologna was a powerful symbol of reintegration, even hope for the future. The British… well, we tagged along.

But underlying these particular motives there were two generic concerns. The first was how to cope with the growth of student demand and the expansion of higher education. Here Bologna could provide only part of the answer, by promoting more sensible patterns of study, raising standards and focusing attention on student achievement. The other part concerned the, still sharply contested and unresolved, question of how these greatly expanded systems of higher education should be funded – a dilemma made more acute by the, mistaken but ubiquitous, austerity policies pursued since the banking crisis of 2008. The

second was a desire to make European universities more competitive, grounded in a concern that they were no match for their American peers today (and tomorrow might not be a match for their Chinese or Korean ones).

Here Bologna has provided a fuller answer. It is not difficult to imagine that, with the benefit of historical hindsight, the early years of the twenty-first century will be recognised as a period of renewal for European universities, perhaps a golden age. For that the Bologna Process deserves the major credit. But, as Marquand points out, Europe has had to walk a narrow line between, on the one hand, modernisation, the drive towards improved efficiency and more effective management of universities (which inevitably perhaps raises the question of the role of the 'market') and, on the other, the preservation of what is often coyly labelled the 'social dimension', the contribution that universities can and do make to social justice, civic solidarity and the wider public good. Compellingly she contrasts the 'liberal democratic' origins of the Bologna process with its 'social democratic tinge'.

This book transcends the narrow boundaries of higher education studies in two ways. The first has already been mentioned, the model Bologna offers of doing business on an international level (in this case the reform of higher education on a continental scale). It may be argued that this has been easier in a European context. Although an inter-state process not 'owned' by the European Commission, and indeed stretching far beyond the frontiers of the EU, Bologna clearly benefitted from habits of compromise and cooperation that have grown up since the Treaty of Rome. But this model of the 'New World Order' provided by Bologna is crucial because it relates to the making of public policy; other models of globalisation relate almost exclusively to markets (and, perhaps, resistance to markets).

The second way in which this book transcends narrow disciplinary boundaries is that it offers a clear theoretical framework in which to locate, and understand, the reform of European higher education since the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. Marquand usefully reminds us that the ubiquitous 'New Public Management' is a complex, indeed fractured, phenomenon. She skilfully analyses the inter-relationships between different strands within public management more generally – 'fatalist' (characterised by the collapse of trust and advance of cynicism), 'hierarchist' (where rules are there to be obeyed – without too many questions), egalitarian (when the rules are always 'in play' within a lively democratic culture) and individualistic (when markets 'rule OK' and all forms of collectivism are suspect). She does so at

multiple levels, the European Higher Education Area, nation states, higher education systems and individual institutions.

It is tempting to typecast her four case studies in these terms – Russia as enduringly 'hierarchist', Germany as a combination of the 'hierarchist' and the egalitarian (or collegial), England as the cheer leader for more individualistic, market driven, conceptions of higher education, and Wales as tacking back to a more recognisably 'European' and collectivist model. But, as the example of Bologna demonstrates, that is perhaps too simple. Despite Putin's neo-authoritarianism Russia has held to Bologna, regardless of its liberal democratic origins, a reflection perhaps of an older nineteenth-century debate between westernisers and Slavophiles. Its adherence to Bologna may confirm Russia's essentially western orientation under Putin, despite rising international tensions with the United States, NATO and, to a lesser extent, the EU. Germany's rather ponderous implementation of Bologna may demonstrate how deeply entrenched its post-war democratic culture has become, in terms of its deep commitment not only to liberal values (so eloquently displayed by its open-door policies to refugees in 2015) but also to the need to build genuine consent that demands careful negotiation. Her description of Wales' attempt to chart a different path from England makes me long for a Scottish case-study. Are we really witnessing the slow break-up of the United Kingdom (or perhaps Tom Nairn's UKania), begun almost a century ago with the independence of Ireland? As for England attitudes to Bologna are, with hindsight, deeply revealing and disturbing, prefiguring the persistence of old dogmas and the advance of new illusions culminating in the insularity and arrogance (but also complacency and insecurity) of Brexit.

The value of Marquand's book lies in its capacity to stimulate such thoughts. Not only has she provided analytical tools for understanding the Bologna Process better and the wider evolution of twenty-first-century higher education systems, but she has also suggested new ways of thinking about the 'character' (and future direction?) of our societies in a more general and fundamental sense.

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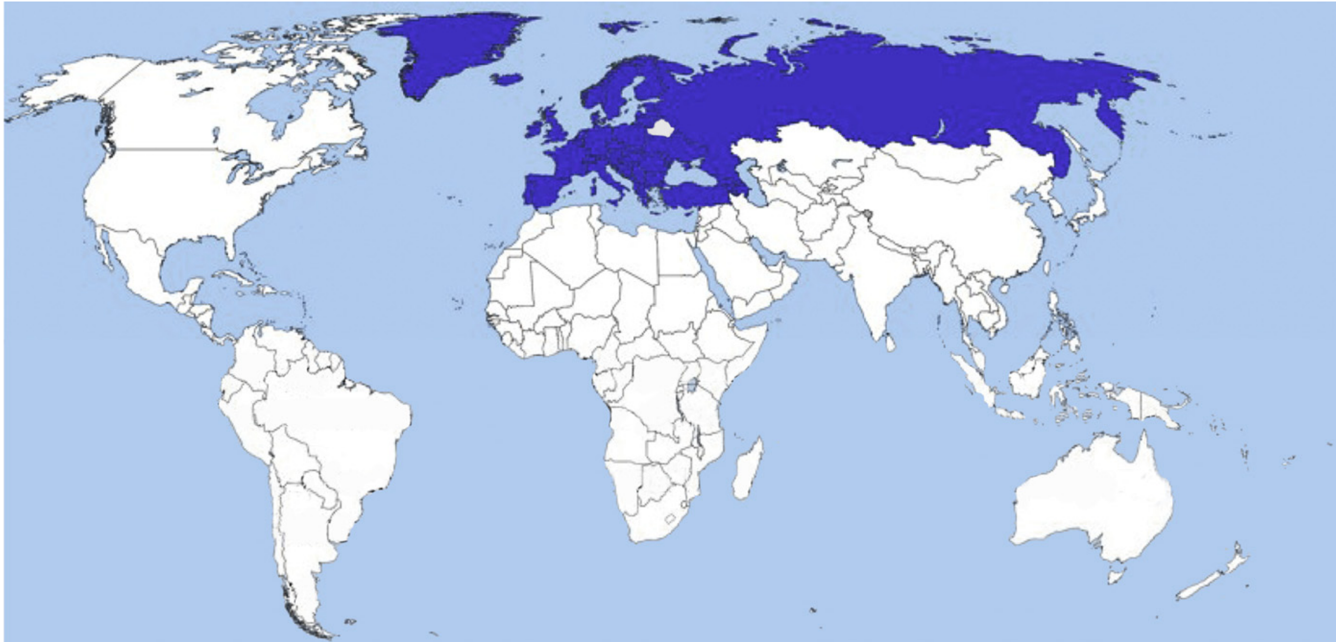
Map of Council of Europe and European Higher Education Area (EHEA) members



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European Higher Education Area and the Members Committed to the Bologna Process

Kazakhstan, while not a member of the Council of Europe, is a member of the EHEA and is committed to the Bologna Process.

Belarus is not a member of the Council of Europe, but is a probationary member of the EHEA.

The European Commission is a member of the Bologna Follow-Up Group (BFUG).

The full members of the EHEA and BFUG include 48 countries (including each of the Belgian Flemish and the Belgian French Communities) and the European Commission. They are party to the European Cultural Convention and have declared their willingness to pursue and implement the objectives of the Bologna Process in their own systems of higher education. They are listed below, with the dates when they committed to the Bologna Process.

	Year of Commitment to the Bologna Process
Albania	2003
Andorra	2003
Armenia	2005
Austria	1999
Azerbaijan	2005
Belarus: Probationary member	2015
Belgium Flemish Community	1999
Belgium French Community	1999
Bosnia and Herzegovina	2003
Bulgaria	1999
Croatia	2001
Czech Republic	1999
Denmark	1999
Estonia	1999
European Commission: (Bologna Follow-Up Group)	1999
Finland	1999
France	1999
Georgia	2005

(*Continued*)

	Year of Commitment to the Bologna Process
Germany	1999
Greece	1999
Holy See	2003
Hungary	1999
Iceland	1999
Ireland	1999
Italy	1999
Kazakhstan	2010
Latvia	1999
Liechtenstein	1999
Lithuania	1999
Luxembourg	1999
Malta	1999
Moldova	2005
Montenegro	2003
Netherlands	1999
Norway	1999
Poland	1999
Portugal	1999
Russian Federation	2003
Romania	1999
Slovak Republic	1999
Slovenia	1999
Spain	1999
Sweden	1999
Switzerland	1999
Serbia	2003
The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2003
Turkey	2001
Ukraine	2005
United Kingdom	1999

Source: www.ehea.info>EHEA>Members