Multi-level, multi-actor and multi-issue dimensions of governance of EHEA and beyond

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Martina Vukasovic, Jens Jungblut, Meng-Hsuan Chou, Mari Elken and Pauline Ravinet

Several inter-related developments

- Continuous **massification** of HE; more people engaging with tertiary education → politicians and citizens more sensitive and more interested in HE developments
- Transitions toward **knowledge economy and society** put pressure on **HE** (together with research and innovation) to contribute to **economic development**
- HE more relevant to other policy areas: policymakers expect their **HE** and research systems to **provide solutions** to Grand Challenges (climate change → access to resources, security etc.)
- **Macro-regional coordination and integration** → policy (concerning HE but also other sectors) **no longer only a national issue**

A conceptual challenge?

- Knowledge coordination not a neatly contained policy coordination exercise:
  - **Many issues**: not just HE or research, but also trade, foreign policy, development, home affairs (migration)…etc.
  - **Many actors**: from ministries, agencies, universities, firms, interest groups, stakeholder organisations, students…etc.
  - **Across different governance levels**: macro-regional (EU, EHEA but also ASEAN, Africa, LA), meso-regional (Nordic, Baltics), sub-regional, national, sub-national, and organisational

→ How can we **conceptualize such multifaceted features of contemporary public policymaking**?

What’s in a multi?

- Multi-Level Governance (**MLG**)
  - Starting point: how to account for changes in **governance arrangements** away from the centralised state?
  - Two types of shifts: (1) **authority neatly nested** within each other and is designed to comprise an entire system (**Type 1**: limited jurisdiction levels, durable); (2) **task jurisdiction**, which may change should needs arise (**Type II**: unlimited jurisdiction levels, flexible design)
- Too simple, **many variations** subsumed under Type II

From multi-level governance…

- **Criticisms** of Multi-Level Governance (**MLG**)
  - A **concept stretched too far**, e.g. Piattoni (2010) includes a state-society dimension – about actors, not levels!
  - Possibly also **overuse**: 'MLG has been thrown around by scholars like **a favourite coat**—a stable item in the European political science wardrobe, but perhaps one worn so often that it has now become **threadbare**' (Stephenson 2013: 817)
  - Using **MLG to look beyond Europe** has been **rather rare** (exceptions: Dabène 2009 at Latin America; Schreurs 2010 at ASEAN; Prado 2007 and Zürn 2012 at global governance)
- To address criticisms: the way forward is **conceptual** based on a greater diversity of **empirical cases**

… towards the three multi's

- Two **extensions** and beyond MLG:
  - Multiple **actors**
    - different authorities compete to exercise or defend policy competence on an issue and in a policy sector → potential cleavages include: North-South, East-West divide, Left-Right divide on the political spectrum
    - different authorities compete across policy sectors; clashes and frictions also within state (not a unitary actor) + non state-actors
  - Multiple **issues**
    - Who has **jurisdiction and ownership**?
    - HE contributes to other policy domains → should they be asked?
    - HE is affected by other policy domains → should HE be asked?

Conceptual position

- Necessary to **distinguish the three multi-s**:
  - Multi-**level** characteristics: focus on the developments leading to and consequences of distribution or concentration of authority across governance levels;
  - Multi-**actor** characteristics: acknowledge both the heterogeneity of the 'state' and its many composite institutions as well as the involvement of non-state actors in this policy domain;
  - Multi-**issue** characteristics: identify how clashes as well as complementarities between policy sectors and spill-overs move into and away from the policy domain of interest.

Conceptual position

- Possible to study the three characteristics separately
- But also possible to explore interactions
  1. Multi-**actor**, multi-**issue**
  2. Multi-**actor**, multi-**level**
  3. Multi-**issue**, multi-**level**
  4. Multi-**actor**, multi-**issue**, multi-**level**

Conceptual position

- Possible to study the three characteristics separately
- But also possible to explore interactions

1. **Multi-actor, multi-issue**
2. **Multi-actor, multi-level**
3. **Multi-issue, multi-level**
4. Multi-**actor**, multi-**issue**, multi-**level**

Multi-actor, multi-issue

Actors

- Ministries responsible for HE
- HEI associations
- Student and trade unions
- Employers' associations
- Networks of QA agencies, recognition centres,
- EU, CoE, UNESCO…

Issues

- 10 Bologna action lines
  - Including those that do not concern only HE (e.g. recognition, QF-EHEA)
  - Including still rather ambiguous ones (e.g. social dimension)
- EU driven issues – EQF, knowledge triangle

- At least two policy arenas: pan-European Bologna and EU
- Both policy arenas not equally politically salient

Multi-actor, multi-issue

- Political salience
  - Substantive – interest in shaping the process given (likely) impact of European level coordination
  - Symbolic – normative signals that “Europe matters”, in particular for European level stakeholder organizations
- Proxy measure (cf. EU studies) – who attends?
  - Rank and size of delegations to Bologna ministerial conferences varies across time and space

Multi-actor, multi-issue

- In general, size and rank of delegations decreased over time
  - More so for EU members and candidates
  - But, delegations of stakeholder organizations relatively stable
- In simplified terms:
  - EHEA seems to matter less for countries who have access to other policy arenas
  - Stakeholder organizations more recognised in EHEA than in EU policy arena → EHEA still matters

Multi-actor, multi-level

Actors

- HEI associations
- Students
- Academic staff
- Employers

Levels

- European
- National
- Institutional
- Departmental

Multi-actor, multi-level

- European stakeholder organizations
  - Multi-level organizations themselves
  - Organizations of other organizations → meta-organizations
- Great expectations
  - Increasing legitimacy of European level decision-making?
- BUT
  - Who has access? Who is in and who is out?
  - What positions are they advocating for?

Multi-actor, multi-level

- Interest intermediation at one level affects interest intermediation at the other
- Status of stakeholder organizations in their respective policy arenas
  - E.g. ESU accepted in EHEA because key members accepted in their national arenas
  - Members accepted in their national areanas because ESU accepted
- Relationship between policy positions of stakeholder organizations at different levels
  - Policy congruence or not?

Levels

- European

- National
- Institutional
- Departmental

Levels

- European
- **Regional**
- National
- Institutional
- Departmental

Multi-issue, multi-level

Issues

- 10 Bologna action lines, some still ambiguous/negotiated (social dimension)…
- Region specific issues (e.g. automatic recognition in Benelux) or coordination challenges (e.g. post-conflict context in the Balkans)

Levels

- European
- **Regional**
- National
- Institutional
- Departmental

Multi-issue, multi-level

- "surface convergence, persistent diversity underneath"
- some regions have their own coordination

→Does this make a difference?

→Comparing "Balkans", Baltics, Benelux and Nordics

  – Coordination
  – Convergence with regards to QA, QF, recognition
  – In relation to European dynamics

Multi-issue, multi-level

- Balkans – increasing similarity with European models, not with each other
- Baltics – increasing similarity concerning recognition, given AURBELL project
- Benelux – strong convergence concerning recognition, ‘patchwork’ convergence concerning QA
- Nordics – strong convergence concerning QA, increasing similarity concerning recognition

Added value of the three multi's

- Provide a framework to deal with complexity
- Compare developments in order to understand the European HE governance better
  - Within EHEA
  - Between EHEA and other regional integration projects
- Complexity and ambiguity likely to remain

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THANK YOU!