

Book Review

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BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY IN EUROPE: NEW CONSTELLATIONS IN EUROPEAN RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE

Editors: Meng-Hsuan Chou and Åse Gornitzka

Knowledge policy on a European level has emerged from the margins of political interest to become the backbone of the Lisbon and Europe 2020 strategies. Yet this is a policy area that is difficult to come to grips with even for those familiar with EU studies. As the editors write in their introductory chapter, it is an 'experimental site of mixed modes of governance' which 'has witnessed processes of coevolution between intergovernmental, transnational and supranational logics' (p.22). The book, *Building the Knowledge Economy in Europe*, takes on this task through nine chapters that each examines a particular aspect of the integration and institutionalization of knowledge policy in Europe. There is a wealth of empirical material within these chapters and numerous jumping off points for future research.

The book will be of interest to scholars in a range of disciplines. For European studies researchers, the failure of knowledge policy to conform to what have become standard integration theories makes this book a valuable source of evidence by which to test existing integration theories or develop new ones. The lessons based on integration of knowledge policy could prove relevant for scholars focused on even more nationally sensitive areas such as security. More broadly, for scholars in political science and public management who are interested in complex approaches to policymaking, institution-building, and governance, there are many insights, which can be drawn from the book. The chapters refuse to oversimplify policy and institution building processes, but instead force the reader to see how multiple ideas, interests, institutions, actors and circumstances at multiple levels of governance exert influence. For those working on knowledge policy, both in the sectors of higher education and science studies, the book fills an important gap in the literature, as a broad and coherent approach to the construction of the European Research Area. The empirical data describing the development of multiple institutions and processes will be an important reference point for scholars doing research in the area.

The volume covers a broad range of material, but the editors do offer some guidance as to how it all fits together. Towards the end of chapter one, the editors identify three overarching lessons. The first is that we, as researchers, need to move beyond the study of vertical tensions (between the national and supranational levels) because despite their importance, they are not sufficient for explaining institution-building and change. This leads to the second lesson: we need to address horizontal tensions and sequential tensions in our analyses; tensions that arise out of the conflicting views and interests of differentiated governance sectors as well as those that are exacerbated by historical legacies and path dependencies need to be integrated into our explanatory frameworks. Each of the sectors involved in knowledge policy is differently shaped by the tension between culture, politics and the economy, and therefore has a slightly different vision and answer to the question: 'What kind of knowledge policy for what kind of Europe (p.6)?' Combining these first two lessons, the editors propose an analytical framework that draws insights from the interaction of both vertical and horizontal elements. Finally, the editors claim that although this may problematize attempts to find

an elegant and coherent narrative which is based on a rational design, it is advantageous because it forces us to look for complex understandings of what we observe happening - the Europe of Knowledge is emerging.

There are numerous themes that run through the volume. I will focus on the three which struck me most clearly. The first is the enabling role of existing institutions, particularly ones that have been depicted as having a constraining role in past literature.¹ The chapters on the 'Evolution of the European Research Area' and 'The birth of the European Research Council' suggest a more complex and balanced understanding of the role that the framework programmes (FPs) have had in developing a Europe of knowledge. While the constraining path dependence argument is not contradicted, the authors of these chapters show how the pre-existence of the FPs also served an important enabling role for both the ERA and ERC.

The second theme is emergence. Again, we can find this element in a number of chapters, but it is most powerfully seen in the chapter on the 'Establishment of the EIT' where the authors trace the process of institution creation and demonstrate how the EIT emerged as something entirely different than what the original policy entrepreneur intended (Commission President Barroso planned to create a European institution modeled on MIT). Lest one think that a blueprint might still be found, one only need compare this chapter with the previous one on the ERC to see how institution-building processes in the same sector and timeframe occur very differently: the influence of policy entrepreneurs, political and stakeholder actors, ideas, multi-level dynamics, parallel events, and the DG's combine in unique ways in each process.

The chapter 'Actors and networks in the Bologna Process' also shows us how the meta-governance of Bologna emerged rather than being planned. The authors use the theory of network governance to trace the addition of stakeholders to the governance arrangements of the Bologna Process. The authors want to test the hypothesis that legitimacy was a powerful governance mechanism (distinct from either self-interest or coercion) for explaining the emergence of the stakeholder constellation that governs Bologna. The chapter also provides interesting insights into the stability of relatively closed governance arrangements that rely on collective actors.

A third theme has to do with the logics of compliance in soft governance systems: why comply with something that is voluntary? The chapters 'Translating the 'European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers' in national arenas: Norway vs Spain' and 'Quality Agencies': the development of regulating and mediating organizations in Scandinavian higher education' both look at how national ministries and agencies accept, implement and adapt to European standards. The former is a comparative study on Norway and Spain, which uses two quite different cases to demonstrate the importance of institutional conditions in strengthening compliance. The latter chapter is a most likely case study for convergence. We might expect that the similarity of Scandinavian countries would result in their creating similar quality agencies; however, that expectation does not prove true. Despite the diffusion of ideas and clear European standards in the form of ECA and ENQA (EQAR), the author demonstrates that each country, for Sweden this even led to its placement under review by the ENQA, took distinctive approaches.

This demonstration of the failure of convergence, leads us to the main argument of the chapter 'How strong are the European Unions' soft modes of governance? The use of the Open Method of Coordination [OMC] in national policy-making in the knowledge policy domain'. Here, the author argues that soft law should not be treated in the same way as hard law, and we should not evaluate the OMC's effectiveness in terms of policy convergence. Rather the author suggests that we turn our attention towards the way in which the OMC is used and its impact on the national level. She conceives of the OMC as a 'transfer platform' where the key ingredient is information and studies it from an organizational perspective using Norway as a case study. This is a likely case, and also one for which the author can use both survey and interview data to make a strong argument showing how the OMC

is important for the policy process, but in a surveillance/monitoring mode rather than a decision-making/instrumental one. It would be interesting to see whether these findings could be replicated in less likely cases.

I have only begun to introduce some of the themes and threads that the reader will uncover. This rich text is highly recommended as it adds significantly to our understanding of European knowledge policy and the institutions by which that policy is governed.

¹ See in particular Banchoff, T. (2002) 'Institutions, Inertia and the European Union Research Policy', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 40(1):1-21.



BIBLIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

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