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Higher education and citizenship in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe: exploring the links¹

Abstract

The paper examines the construction of links between higher education and citizenship in the contemporary project(s) of 'Europe of knowledge', with specific focus on the meaning and implications of these links on countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. It discusses the implications on both transnational policy level (such as European Commission's mobility programmes) and national, regional and institutional levels (such as the concepts of citizenship and role of universities in 'new democracies' of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe). The paper argues that current EU policies linking citizenship and higher education are incapable of accommodating neither the transnational/fragmented public spheres of present-day Europe, nor the specific social and political conditions on its 'peripheries', and thus, in some cases at least, actually work against the creation of European citizens. The paper concludes by inviting a redefinition of the links between citizenship and (higher) education which would aim to repoliticise the concept and add to its critical potential by linking it more strongly to the socio-political contexts, including the ongoing transformation of higher education and research in Europe.

Key words: higher education and citizenship; Europe of knowledge; Central and Eastern Europe; South-Eastern Europe; public role of university.

1. Introduction

Despite being argued for at least since Dewey (1997 [1916]), the relationship between citizenship and higher education became more prominent in the European discourse on higher education only relatively recently (cf. Englund, 2002, pp. 281-282). The UNESCO 1998 World Declaration on Higher education for the Twenty-first Century: Vision and Action stated that the mission of higher education is to "help protect and enhance societal values by training young people in the values which form the basis of democratic citizenship" (UNESCO, 1998). In 1999, the Council of Europe launched a project on 'University as site of citizenship' with the aim to "determine the capacities and activities of universities in education for democracy, map what was being done at universities to promote citizenship (...) and assess the civic responsibility of institutions of higher education" (Bergan, 2004, p. 86). The Talloires Network comprising universities from different parts of the world was formed in 2005, resulting in the signing of the Talloires Declaration on the Civic Roles and Social Responsibilities of Higher Education². In 2006, the Council of Europe launched the Forum on the responsibility of higher education for democratic culture, citizenship, human rights and sustainability, which in its declaration

¹ The paper represents a first draft of a work still in progress. Please contact the author for enquiries or if you wish to quote it.

² <http://www.talloires2011.org/the-talloires-network/talloires-declaration>

stated that “[higher education institutions] provide the most important and potentially the most effective opportunity to prepare people for a life of active participation in democratic processes at all levels, by offering education for democratic citizenship, human rights, intercultural dialogue and tolerance” (Davies, 2006, p. 16).

The rising emphasis on the relationship between higher education and citizenship, civic and political participation and democratic values, cannot be understood outside of its political context. In the case of Europe, two distinct but not unconnected trends are relevant: one is the decline of political participation, the other is the transformation of higher education and research, variously termed, among other things, ‘Europeanisation’, Bologna Process or the creation of European Higher Education Area.

The transformation of higher education and research in Europe, subsumed under the Bologna process, has been described as probably the most dynamic change of European universities since their founding (Maassen and Olsen 2007). The initial motivation was to increase the integration, attractiveness and quality of European higher education by facilitating mobility and exchange between national systems and institutions through the adoption of a system of readable and comparable degrees, based on the measurement of student workload and learning outcomes, and structured into two (later three) cycles – bachelor, master and doctorate. Commitment to lifelong learning and a social dimension were added to the process (Corbett, 2005). However, the process quickly became aligned with (and, some would argue, dominated by) – another agenda, that of Lisbon 2000, aimed at the development of European Union as the most competitive economy in the world (Olsen & Maassen, 2007). Besides the evident political disbalance (which, to some extent, will be discussed later in the text) between the concept of a European higher education area (which is in principle open to all European countries signatories of the European Cultural Convention) and the gearing of European higher education to the economic needs of the European Union (which, as is well known, is a political entity with significantly stricter membership criteria), the shift towards the adaptation of higher education to the needs of economic growth and the labour market put ‘other’ roles and missions of higher education behind. As Olsen and Maassen note,

(...) Reform documents gave little attention to the possible role of universities in developing democratic citizens, a humanistic culture, social cohesion and solidarity, and a vivid public sphere. Neither is university reform linked to the Union’s “Democratic deficit” and the limited citizens’ commitment to the Union as a political community. Furthermore, there is no serious discussion of how a commitment to economic (as well as democratic or social) goals can be squared with academic values and the potential dangers of subordinating the academic curiosity for knowledge and the pursuit of truth to some external agenda. In sum, the role of Academia and Democracy is primarily defined as serving economic purposes and the growth of competitive markets (2007, p. 9).

As Zgaga notes, only in the 2007 London Communiqué did these ‘other’ roles of higher education make a comeback, and in a somewhat limited form – that of the ‘full range of purposes’, which included the role of education in preparing for the labour market but also mentioned its role in the ‘preparation of students to be active citizens in a democratic society’ (2009, p. 176). Thus, the messages from organizations such as UNESCO and the

Council of Europe can also be understood as warnings that higher education is failing to contribute to the development and sustainability of democracy in Europe.

This leads us to the second factor, manifested in falling numbers of voter turnout in elections and changes in forms of political engagement coupled with the rising support for extremist, particularly right wing parties, and variously dubbed the ‘crisis of democracy in Europe’, ‘Union’s democratic deficit’, etc. What it demonstrated is that, contrary to the assumed link between higher education, democratic attitudes and civic engagement, the percentage of those voting in the elections from population groups which did not attend higher education exceeds the percentage of voters from population groups with an academic background. In crude terms, it appears as if Europe is getting more highly educated, but not more democratic, open or tolerant. This invites a set of questions: “Does higher education give its students the essential values of democratic societies? How should universities do that? How can universities educate not only highly skilled specialists for the labour market but also highly motivated citizens for our democratic societies?” (Damian 2010, p.5).

Unfortunately, the relatively limited number of empirical studies relevant to these questions come to somewhat ambiguous conclusions. Instead of a direct relationship between levels of education and political participation, democratic values and citizenship, the findings indicate that the role of higher education in developing democratic citizenship is overall relative or cumulative rather than direct, and attributable to modes of behaviour related to participation in higher education rather than to values or norms imparted during the process (cf. Berinsky & Lenz, 2010; Cam & Palmer, 2008; Hillygus, 2005; Luescher-Mamashela, 2011; Mattes & Mughogho, 2010; Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007). In addition, most of these studies do not focus on Europe, and measure education in terms of years spent in schooling, meaning they cannot really capture the specific impacts of higher education, and especially not the potential influence that the transformation of higher education in Europe may have on modes and ways of civic participation.

The starting motivation for this paper was to try to understand the role of higher education in developing citizenship, in the context of the transformation of higher education and research in Europe. The paper approaches this issue from a specific perspective. It does not wish to endorse normative or empirical optimism or scepticism regarding the links between higher education and citizenship (cf. Biesta, 2009, p. 146), nor to engage in attempts to empirically prove that such links exist. On the contrary, it sees the relationship between higher education and citizenship as part of the discourse following and structuring the global transformation of higher education (see Olsen & Maassen, 2007; Zgaga, 2009). In this context, the observed increase of narratives and initiatives linking higher education with citizenship and related purposes is connected to the fundamental questioning of the purpose of higher education in society, as well as both the fitness of purpose itself and the fitness of higher education systems and institutions to engage in such purpose (Zgaga, 2009). In other words, the paper places the links between higher education and citizenship in the context of the changing relationships between universities and societies; as Olsen and

Maassen put it, “what is at stake is what kind of university for what kind of society” (2007, p. 4).

Given that the relationship between higher education and citizenship is understood as a particular construct ensuing from specific historical and social circumstances, the first part of the paper will aim to examine it from the lens of critical theory. Namely, it will seek to analyse the construction of the links between higher education and citizenship, particularly in the context of international policies connected with the transformation of higher education in Europe. The second part of the paper will look at the ways these links are interpreted and understood at ‘lower’ levels – that is, national, regional and institutional. In both of these, the paper will focus on the implications that links between higher education and citizenship have for the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe – those that are usually ‘forgotten’ or overlooked in higher education research in Europe. Namely, the discourses on higher education in Europe are often based on cases in Western Europe, assuming their pan-European validity while neglecting to notice that, out of 48 countries currently making up the European higher education area, 21 are not members of the European Union, and more than half are former Communist countries with different histories of higher education and political legacies, which has profound implications for both higher education dynamics and the ways links between higher education and citizenship are constructed and played out. For these reasons, the focus of the paper will be on the importance of these links in and for this, often marginalized, part of Europe. In this sense, the paper centres on two questions:

1. What is the meaning of the links between higher education and European citizenship in the context of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe?
2. What is the role of citizenship in the roles and missions of higher education and higher education institutions in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe?

In an attempt to provide a partial answer to the first question, the first part of the paper will look at the **transnational** level - European Union policies aimed at the ‘Europeanisation’ and integration of the European higher education area, in particular mobility programmes such as Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus, and analyse their implications for the development of citizenship in different European countries, especially those that are not EU members. The second part, addressing the second question, will look at **national, regional and institutional** levels. In this part, two illustrations (case studies) will be offered. One will focus on the changing role of citizenship and democracy in higher education policies and institutional discourses in Central and Eastern Europe; the other will focus on the specific ‘ethnic’ approach to citizenship in universities in the post-conflict societies in South-Eastern Europe. Both will attempt to illustrate how current discourses linking citizenship and the Europe of knowledge fail to pay attention to specific social and political contexts and thus have limited relevance for a significant part of European societies.

The objective of the paper is to critically examine the role of ‘citizenship’ as a concept and its relation to contemporary transformations of higher education in Europe, while paying particular attention to the implications of these dynamics for its ‘borders’, that is, Central,

Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. Thus, in conclusion, the paper will aim to summarise the findings from the first two parts, and use them to point out to issues and problems inherent in the concept of European citizenship and in the ideas related to the role of higher education in its development. In particular, it will aim to challenge the universalising assumptions inherent in the concept of European citizenship and, through their relativisation from a Central, Eastern and Southeast European perspective, offer a critical re-examination of the links between the transformation of higher education and the changing patterns and modes of civic participation in Europe. It will end with an argument for the redefinition and contextualisation of the concept and role of citizenship in the context of contemporary higher education transformations in Europe.

2. Higher education and citizenship in transnational contexts

One thing that most likely all higher education researchers, analysts and commentators today would agree on is that higher education is globalizing – it has, quite some time ago, ceased to be (if it ever were) only or primarily a national phenomenon and instead became transnational, embedded in different networks that span physical and political boundaries of nation-states (e.g. Rivza & Teichler, 2007). The very project of the European area of higher education and the ‘Europe of knowledge’ is a transnational or supra-national phenomenon, despite very specific dynamics of interaction between different levels of governance (see Batory & Lindstrom, 2011; Biesta, 2009, p. 147; Corbett, 2005).

However, most notions of citizenship presume the existence of a (relatively) bounded democratic polity and public sphere to which one ‘belongs’ and where one can exercise political participation and deliberation (cf. Biesta, 2009; Balibar, 2006; Lock & Martins, 2009). In the classical, Habermasian version, the boundaries of the public sphere overlap with the boundaries of the nation-state (the ‘Westphalian’ public sphere). However, as many authors argue, in today’s globalized world public spheres have increasingly become both transnational and fragmented (Fraser 2007). Fragmentation means that, even within the boundaries of nation-states, public spheres are not homogenous; on the contrary, they consist of multiple spheres and arenas where different publics – including those marginalized from the perspective of the dominant public sphere – can voice their opinions. Transnationalization, on the other hand, refers to the growing importance of trans- and supra-national spheres and domains; in the age of globalisation, political problems cannot anymore be contained within the boundaries of (any) nation-state, but rather become transnational. However, transnationalization and fragmentation are not phenomena with only descriptive relevance. Fraser (2007) notes that the lack of critical analysis of the ways theories of the public sphere interact with contemporary transnational domains leads to the depoliticisation of the concept, and invites the reflection on the implications of transnationalization for the political usefulness and legitimacy of public spheres. In other words, it is necessary to reflect on the ways transnationalization and fragmentation are influencing possibilities and modes of civic and political participation.

Despite the significant and growing body of work on internationalisation in higher education, relatively little of it to date has specifically addressed the issues related to how this and related trends are influencing the relationship between higher education,

citizenship and political participation (for exceptions see Biesta, 2009; Britez & Peters, 2010; Lock & Martins, 2009; Zgaga, 2009). Given that the notion of active citizenship requires a reflection on the domain where it is exercised (cf. Biesta, 2009, p. 147, 151), the first part of the paper will aim to offer a modest contribution to the existing work by focusing on the ways contemporary transformations of higher education in Europe are interacting with the transformations of the public sphere, and the ways this might be influencing the concept and practice of European citizenship.

At first sight, the transformation of higher education in Europe is closely aligned with the need to create 'global citizens' adapted to the requirements of the transnational public spheres. The 'European dimension' of higher education in the Bologna process is already a clearly transnational goal. Education and training policies of the European Commission include the promotion of equity, social cohesion and active citizenship among its long-term objectives. One of the most important instruments for the development of the European dimension of higher education are, arguably, European Commission's mobility programmes such as Erasmus, claimed to be a driver in the modernisation of higher education in Europe and inspiration for the establishment of the Bologna Process (Batory & Lindstrom, 2011, p. 316; Biesta, 2009, p. 147). Movies such as 'L'Auberge Espagnole' celebrate the transnationalizing, European identity-building aspect of these programmes. The assumption seems to be that mobility creates a new class of cosmopolitan citizens, whose cultural competences span the boundaries of their home societies; as stated on the Erasmus home page, "Their experiences give students a better sense of what it means to be a European citizen"³. In this sense, educational mobility is constructed as a necessary, and essential, step towards the creation of European identity and sense of citizenship (see Rivza & Teichler, 2007).

However, as Britez and Peters argue (2010), the optimistic view of internationalisation in higher education often obscures different interpretations and logics underlying different processes that fall under this category. They criticize what they argue has become the dominant, 'neoliberal' view, which sees internationalisation primarily in instrumental terms and constructs students chiefly as sources of income, obscuring other dimensions of cosmopolitanism – especially the social and political:

(...) presently the narrative of cosmopolitanism which dominates the discourse of the internationalisation of higher education institutions operates as a marketing strategy of corporate universities informed by neo-liberalism, rather than a critical position encompassing the political, social and cultural dimensions relevant to the practice and experience of being a world citizen. (Britez & Peters, 2010, p. 204)

This invites a more critical perspective in the consideration of the impact of European educational mobility programmes on citizenship and related practices and values. What are the goals of these programmes? What kind of citizenship do they promote and, especially, who are the (future) European citizens they address? In terms of numbers, the very percentage of students in higher education who are participating in mobility programmes is still rather low. The European Commission has set the target of 20% of students becoming

³ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm

mobile by 2020, but whether this target will be reached remains a question. Even if it is to be reached, access to such programmes and opportunities is still very unequally distributed both across Europe and within European societies (cf. Rivza & Teichler, 2007, pp. 461-465). This means that mobility, as an experience, is accessible to only a small part of the student population – and often, those who are already socially privileged. This may imply that the building of European citizenship and sense of belonging is primarily reserved for those who already benefit from forms of cosmopolitanism, such as speaking foreign languages, having travelled abroad (which simplifies adaptation to new circumstances), or simply participated in student networks that make access to information concerning mobility programmes easier (cf. Britez & Peters, 2010, pp. 207-208). However, participation in the European mobility programmes is not only unequally distributed among people; the opportunities for it also differ between countries.

Arguably the biggest in scope and the number of participants within the programmes of student mobility in Europe is the Erasmus programme of the European Commission. In 2009, around 90% European universities were taking part in some actions of Erasmus and 2 million students have participated since it started in 1987. In 2007 Erasmus became part of the Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme. Erasmus is open to students from EU countries, EEA-EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland) and some 'Third' or candidate countries (Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, [Former Yugoslav Republic of] Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Turkey). In addition to student mobility, Erasmus covers teaching and business staff mobility, as well as institutional cooperation and development⁴. According to its home page, "Erasmus has become a driver in the modernisation of higher education in Europe and inspired the establishment of the Bologna Process. The general aim of the Programme is to create a European Higher Education Area and foster innovation throughout Europe"⁵. Erasmus mobility for studies includes an integrated period of between 3 and 12 months of study at another (foreign) institution, as well as language courses and other preparatory and, in some cases, follow-up programmes. The stated objectives of mobility schemes are to "enable students to benefit educationally, linguistically and culturally from the experience of learning in other European countries; promote co-operation between institutions and to enrich the educational environment of host institutions; and contribute to the development of a pool of well-qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced young people as future professionals"⁶.

Closely related is the Erasmus Mundus programme. Erasmus Mundus was initially introduced in 2004, and comprises European joint masters and doctorates, partnerships with non-European higher education institutions and scholarships for students and academics, as well as to promote European higher education worldwide. The programme is primarily intended for non-European students, but also for students from European countries that are not eligible for Erasmus (including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine). Erasmus Mundus "aims to enhance the quality of European higher education and to promote dialogue and understanding between people

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-programme/doc80_en.htm

and cultures through cooperation with Third-Countries⁷. In addition, it contributes to the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of Higher education institutions in Third Countries by increasing mobility between the European Union and these countries”⁸. The objectives of the programme are “the enhancement of quality in European higher education; the promotion of the European Union as a centre of excellence in learning around the world; the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with Third Countries as well as for the development of Third Countries in the field of higher education”⁹.

A comparison of the stated outcomes of two mobility schemes shows certain differences. The Erasmus programme aims to: “(1) enable students to benefit educationally, linguistically and culturally from the experience of learning in other European countries; (2) promote co-operation between institutions and to enrich the educational environment of host institutions; (3) contribute to the development of a pool of well-qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced young people as future professionals”, with the general aim of “creating a European Higher Education Area and fostering innovation throughout Europe”. On the other hand, Erasmus Mundus, open to students whose countries do not fall in the above categories, has the following objectives: “(1) enhancing quality in European higher education; (2) promoting European Union as a centre of excellence in learning around the world; (3) promoting intercultural understanding through cooperation with ‘Third Countries’; (4) development of ‘Third Countries’ in the field of higher education”, with the general aim of “enhancing the quality of European higher education; promoting dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with ‘Third-Countries’ and contributing to the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of Higher education institutions in ‘Third Countries’”.

Certain goals are shared by both programmes: for instance, development of intercultural understanding, and enhancement of quality of European higher education. However, whereas the Erasmus programme places explicit emphasis on learning and the development “of a pool of well-qualified, open-minded and internationally experienced young people as future professionals”, the wording concerning the development of labour force is much scarcer in Erasmus Mundus (“contributing to the development of human resources”). On the other hand, an explicit focus is put on institutional and national development in Erasmus Mundus (“the international cooperation capacity of Higher education institutions in Third Countries”). Finally, the development of European Higher Education Area and fostering innovation throughout Europe are stated as objectives of Erasmus, but not of Erasmus Mundus.

Although the intended personal (individual) outcomes tend to be similar or identical, significant differences occur in the domain of application of the knowledge and skills acquired in mobility programmes. Whereas Erasmus emphasises the development of a ‘pool’ of internationally experienced young professionals whose purpose is to contribute to

⁷ In this context, ‘Third Countries’ refers to non-EU/EEA/EFTA/candidate countries.

⁸ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/about_erasmus_mundus_en.php

⁹ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus/programme/about_erasmus_mundus_en.php

innovation and competitiveness *in Europe*, Erasmus Mundus develops ‘human resources’ with the primary purpose of developing *their home countries*. In this sense, educational mobility of students from Erasmus countries is presented as contributing to the international (European) labour market, whereas the educational mobility of students from Erasmus Mundus countries contributes to their national labour markets. A recent study in *Revue Elargissement* stated that “According to the *European Union*, student and teacher mobility is an important factor for growth and employment. Indeed, on the one hand it facilitates the dissemination of knowledge and, on the other hand, people who have undertaken part of their studies abroad are more likely to take advantage of an increasingly internationalised labour market”¹⁰. There is significantly less talk about the ‘internationalised’ labour market when it comes to consequences of mobility programmes targeted at students from European Erasmus Mundus countries. What is emphasised instead is ‘development’: European Erasmus Mundus students are expected to return to their countries and transfer the knowledge acquired during mobility in the institutional (and, presumably, political) development of their countries. In this case, ‘growth’ is associated with innovation and competitiveness in EU, while ‘development’ is associated with particular criteria that countries first need to fulfil in order to ‘qualify’ for contribution to the European pool of knowledge. In this sense, mobility programmes bring a very clear political dimension to the concept of the Europe of knowledge, separating countries into two ‘tracks’- one where are EU, EEA/EFTA and candidate countries, and the other with the ‘rest’. It is important to note that this distinction is not based on higher education-related criteria, but rather on countries’ political legacies, economic development and compliance with EU standards.

However, the ‘two-tracks’ approach to mobility does not apply only to access to labour markets or the stated objectives of mobility programmes. It also has implications for opportunities for political participation. To begin with, whereas students from EU studying in another EU country have political rights similar or equal to those of ‘native’ students in that country (for instance, can vote and be voted for in local elections), students from outside EU, as a rule, do not. Not being citizens of one of the EU countries means that they are also, in most cases, excluded from participation in politics at the local level, even if they are legally resident in their host country. Needless to say, the very process of acquiring residence and/or necessary visas is very complicated for many students coming from European non-EU/EEA/EFTA countries. Technically, mobile students from European non-EU/EEA/EFTA countries can still participate in elections and the political and public life of their home countries. However, even this form of political participation can be complicated by mobility. Access to expatriate voting posts can be difficult, and travel back home can be expensive and demanding, making it less likely that students would actually attempt it. Likewise, participation in the civil society or community activities is not only complicated by students’ virtual physical absence during the period of studies abroad, but that absence can also, in some cases, play a negative role in their participation in political and public life once they (presumably) go back to their home countries (see e.g. Bacevic, 2010; Horvat, 2004; Rivza & Teichler, 2007). This means that, for those students coming from non-EU countries, participation in mobility programmes can actually have an adverse effect on citizenship and civic participation.

¹⁰ <http://www.euractiv.com/en/education/student-mobility-positive-factor-eu/article-140514>

Similar issues can be identified in relation to students' ability to participate in deliberation and governance on the university level. Although there are organizations and networks specifically representing mobile students (such as ESN – Erasmus Student Network), the opportunities for mobile students to effectively participate in issues related to higher education policies more broadly are, at best, questionable. To begin with, the relatively short term of their stay – ranging from three months to maximum a year – makes it less likely that they would have sufficient time to get involved in and take the effort to understand local issues related to student governance. Even if they did, there may be language barriers (assuming local student organizing is more likely to be carried out in the local language which visiting students may not speak well enough to engage in debates), as well as pressures arising from the need to fulfil academic obligations – thus making it difficult to engage with other issues as well.

Although there is not enough space here for a deeper consideration, in this context attention should also be drawn to the issue of fragmentation of public spheres related to the transformation of higher education in Europe. Namely, voices and groups that criticize or question the value(s) and consequences of the Bologna process (including the 'Bologna Burns' movement, but also many local and regional initiatives) are, in most cases, excluded from the public domain of discussion of higher education missions, roles and policies, or kept at the margins – as the protests during the 2010 Ministerial Conference in Budapest/Vienna clearly showed. On the transnational level, there is a clear division between centre and margins in terms of deliberation on higher education transformation in Europe. The public spheres and policy forums where decisions are made are almost exclusively dominated by Bologna-friendly voices, regardless of whether they are coming from supranational institutions, universities or students (or researchers, for that matter). The space for the integration of voices that may be opposing or more critical is very limited.

In sum, it seems that, despite the 'family resemblances' between contemporary transnational/fragmented public spheres and the internationalisation of and growing mobility in higher education in Europe, ways in which these trends are impacting the links between higher education, citizenship and political participation remain somewhat divergent and even contradictory. To begin with, while these programmes do include an idea of building a shared identity among Europeans, the 'Europeans' this designation includes are limited primarily to the citizens of EU and, in some cases, other economically developed countries in Europe. Other European citizens are 'relegated' to a second category that focuses on national development, presumably in order to eventually qualify for the first category (cf. Balibar, 2006). In the first category, the dominant interpretation of transnationalization and internationalisation seems to equate it primarily with the development of a European labour market, aimed at, as already noted, the development of EU's economic competitiveness. Social, political and civic competences and/or opportunities for participation are almost completely absent.

In this context, it is difficult to say whether periods of educational mobility contribute positively to the students' capability of political participation either at the 'host' or 'home'

societies, but it appears as if, at least for students coming from non-EU (and, in some cases, non-EEA/EFTA) countries, there are logistical obstacles arising from the very fact of being mobile, for participation in both. Similarly, there are no indications that European Commission's mobility programmes target or enhance students' involvement with public or societal issues. Although it is possible this would occur as a side effect, it is rarely obvious in the structure, design or stated goals of programmes themselves, which often – for instance, by the virtue of their short duration – work against developing capacities for civic participation in 'host' societies, not to mention prioritise employment ('career' benefits or outcomes) over outcomes related to political and civic participation.

From the brief analysis presented here, it follows that the observation of one particular notion of internationalisation or cosmopolitanism becoming dominant and obscuring other dimensions can be, to some extent, applied to the 'transnationalization' of European higher education as well. In the European context, this concept is primarily identified with the development of labour force tied to the economic competitiveness of the European Union. Secondly, and when applied to European countries not participating in the Commission's Lifelong learning programme, the programmes include concepts of political and social development as well. However, in neither of the cases do the programmes appear particularly conducive to or target the development of citizenship or civic participation specifically. Thus, little seems to point to the conclusion that current practices of transnationalization of European higher education are contributing significantly to the development of competences required for the political and civic participation in a transnational public sphere.

3. Higher education and citizenship in national, regional and institutional contexts

The first part of the paper attempted to offer a criticism of the concepts and discourses linking the 'Europe of knowledge' and European citizenship by examining some of their implications, in particular for those European countries that are not EU members. The second part of the paper will offer a few insights into how links between higher education and citizenship are constructed at lower levels – namely, those of national education systems and universities. The paper will offer two case studies: one relates to the position of citizenship and related values and practices in the discourses of the role of higher education in three countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia); the other is the development of 'ethnic' universities in the post-conflict societies of South-Eastern Europe (Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia). Both case studies illustrate how roles and missions of higher education during and after transition are being framed in terms that do not place significant emphasis on the values and competences related to democratic citizenship. The objective of this part of the paper is to show how roles and missions of higher education are influenced by local and regional political concerns, and thus to question the usefulness of the current concept of European citizenship and its links with the 'Europeanisation' of higher education. In conclusion, these examples will be used as an argument for the stronger contextualisation or links between higher education and citizenship within the national and local systems, and thus its re-politicisation.

a. Central and Eastern Europe

In the past 20 years, the higher education systems in Central and Eastern Europe had a difficult burden of the ‘double transition’. On the one hand, they faced reforms as part of economic, social and political transformation related to the dismantling of communist regimes and transition into market economies, reforms that included the transformation of the relationship with the state, financing, governance and autonomy arrangements, and, not least importantly, introduction of private higher education. On the other hand, they participated in the same changes as other European countries at the beginning of the third millennium – the global transformation of higher education and research, and the creation of the European higher education area. How did they deal with this ‘double transition’? Studies (especially comparative studies) of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe are significantly less numerous than those concerning higher education systems in Western Europe, and yet the latter are often used to construct theories or conclusions about ‘European’ higher education as such. Those authors that did research the transformation of higher education in these former communist countries tended to conclude that, despite the trend of ‘convergence’ of education policies in Europe (to a great extent driven by the Bologna process), Central and Eastern European countries do face specific issues in the transformation of higher education (sometimes referred to as ‘two-speed Bologna’), primarily related to their communist heritage and the ensuing problems of transition into market economy (Dobbins & Knill, 2009; Jarab, 2008; Kwiek, 2004; Tomusk, 2000, 2007). This may point to the need for more and better theories that would aim to explain the transformation of higher education in this part of Europe rather than assume the pan-European validity of studies based on Western European higher education systems (see Bacevic & Miklavic, forthcoming). For the time being, however, this paper will focus on one specific aspect – namely, how the links between higher education and (European) citizenship have been understood and interpreted within systems and institutions of higher education in this part of the world.

The qualitative analysis of a sample of documents defining the roles and missions of higher education and higher education institutions (universities) in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovenia (Bacevic, 2011) shows that ‘citizenship’ as a category does not figure very highly (see Table 1). However, when combined with other, presumably related concepts, such as democratic participation etc., the ‘civic’ role of higher education becomes more prominent (see Table 2).

Table 1: Roles and missions of higher education, CZ, HU, SLO

Code	Count
Autonomy and academic freedom	35
European	33
Labour market	29
Research	24
National development/identity	22
Access, equality and inclusion	18
Economic development	18
Competitiveness	17
Internationalisation	17
Knowledge	17
Social cohesion	14
Humanism	13
Social development	12
Democracy	10
Regional development	8
Cultural heritage	7
Distance from political parties	7
Tradition	6
Effectiveness and efficiency	6
Sustainable development	6
Creativity	5
Human rights	5
Business	4
Citizenship and civil society	4
Openness	4
Critical thinking	3
Values	3
Excellence	2
Health	2
Public good	2
Secularity	2
Tolerance	1

When combined with similar categories, citizenship becomes more represented in higher education policy discourse – second only to economy-related roles and missions.

Table 2: Categories in roles and missions of higher education, CZ, HU, SLO

Category	Number of quotations
Economy & labour market	74
Democracy & citizenship	56
Internationalisation & Europeanisation	50
National development	35
Equality	34

However, these figures also clearly show that, besides autonomy and academic freedom (which represent values rather than roles or missions), the most frequent references in higher education discourse in these three countries relate to the economic role of higher education – that is, those that equate higher education with the needs of the labour market, aiming to make Europe ‘the most competitive economy in the world’. The comparison of the numbers of these quotes before and after 1999 (the beginning of the Bologna process) shows that the references to economy and labour market have significantly increased and become prominent in the latter period, whereas references to the role of higher education in developing democracy and citizenship were dominant in the period between 1989 and 1999, after which they also continued increasing (mostly as a function of the general increase of the number of documents related to the governance and management of higher education), but at a significantly slower rate (Table 3.).

Table 3: Comparison of categories before and after the Bologna Process

Category/Period	1989-1999 ¹¹	1999-2011
Economy & labour market	8	66
Democracy & citizenship	15	41
Internationalisation & Europeanisation	4	46
National development	7	28
Equality	4	30

Another two elements warrant mentioning. On the one hand, there is the noticeable growth of discourses related to the development of European and international dimensions of higher education. Although the classification of these discourses would require another research paper, for the time being it suffices to say that most of them relate to participation in international networks and attracting foreign students, and rarely contain elements related to the development of European citizenship. On the other hand, as a (perhaps) opposite tendency, the motive of the role of higher education in developing and maintaining national identity and heritage is still quite prominent. It should be noted that these roles and missions are often either conflated with the economic roles of higher education (hence, the contribution of higher education to the economic growth of the nation) or, alternatively, tied to the concepts of ‘preservation’ of national ‘heritage’ and ‘traditions’. Given that most countries in Central and Eastern Europe are multi-ethnic and multicultural, it would be worth asking whose national traditions or heritage exactly should higher education safeguard, but this would, again, warrant another research paper.

However, ‘Europeanisation’ and ‘nationalisation’ of higher education’s roles and missions are not the only notable tendencies in the transformation of higher education in this part of Europe. Parallel to these, and especially in the post-conflict environments in the Western Balkans, there is a trend of further fragmentation of the public sphere of higher education – into ethnic domains.

¹¹ It should be borne in mind that the overall number of documents related to the pre-1999 period is significantly smaller than the one for after-1999.

b. Ethnic universities – ethnic citizenship?

The conflict in former Yugoslavia left a profound impact on the societies in the successor states. In many cases, the period of post-conflict reconstruction overlapped with the period of the broader social transition that included the reform of the education systems. However, in some of the most volatile ethnically diverse areas, an interesting tendency could be observed. In the period after 2000, the region experienced a significant expansion of higher education located in the post-conflict zone comprising Kosovo, the southern border of Serbia (Sandzak area and municipalities of Presevo and Bujanovac), and Macedonia. Four new universities were established, while two that had existed in the region before the conflict were re-established in a significantly changed form. All of these institutions are connected to the preceding ethnic conflicts and divisions in the region.

The International University of Novi Pazar, founded in 2001, targets specifically the local Bosniak Muslim population and has a distinctively ethnic and religious-specific approach. It emphasizes the relevance of the institution for the ‘survival’ of Bosniak Muslims and is headed by a political leader known for his secessionist rhetoric and frequent conflicts with the central government in Serbia. In Macedonia, the Southeast European University was established after the conflict and the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, and aims to cater to both ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian populations by providing courses in Albanian, Macedonian and English, though there are indications that the Albanian and Macedonian language stream are quite separate. In the same town of Tetovo, there is the State University of Tetovo, formerly an ethnic Albanian institution deemed ‘illegal’ by the Macedonian state, which was legalized after the changes in provisions for minority rights following the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement. This university also officially caters to both Albanian and Macedonian students, but the language streams and programmes are separate. Finally, one of three public universities in Kosovo is within the framework of the republic of Serbia, and is governed and attended exclusively by Serbs in the north. The university defines its mission as the guardian of Serb ethnic interests in Kosovo. The other two public universities, in Prishtina and Prizren, though not having an openly ethnic agenda, cater primarily to Albanians, and – with the exception of teacher education programme available in Bosnian – offer education only in Albanian.

What the majority of these universities have in common is a more or less explicit ethnic framework to their missions and roles. In a certain sense, one need not fear ‘depoliticisation’ in these cases, given that their existence and institutional identities are to a high extent determined by the political heritage of post-conflict divisions. However, the role that this form of higher education can play in developing citizenship should be open to discussion. Although both the students and staff of these universities are frequently active in politics and civil society, the activities are more often than not framed in the context of fighting for the goals and rights of a specific ethnic or religious group. In this sense, the kind of citizenship likely to flourish at these institutions is more ethnic-based than cosmopolitan, European or global (see Callan, 1997). Thus, it would make sense to investigate how, and if, these concepts of citizenship relate to the broader projects of developing the ‘Europe of knowledgeable citizens’.

The two illustrations of the concepts of links between higher education and citizenship offered here, however different, have similar implications. They both show that the overarching concept of European citizenship may have different meanings in, and for, different higher education contexts. The first case, describing the positioning of citizenship and related concepts in the roles and missions of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe, shows that the relevance of citizenship in the roles and missions of higher education seems to be decreasing. With the process of 'Europeanisation', the role of higher education in developing democracy and citizenship, which was prominent in the first period after the fall of communist regimes, seems to take second place in favour of the roles related to economic growth and labour market. In this sense, it seems that, for Central and Eastern European countries, the process of transformation of higher education in Europe is not emphasizing or strengthening the civic aspect of higher education, but rather suppressing it. Of course, as the focus on national systems and institutions intended to show, this is not a direct consequence of the Bologna process or European integration in higher education: rather, it is a matter of national and institutional interpretations of these processes, in which – for a variety of reasons, whose analysis unfortunately exceeds the limits of this paper – economy-related missions and roles seem to take primacy. Similar things can be said about the second illustration, universities in the post-conflict societies of the Western Balkans. Although these institutions are hardly 'disengaged' from the political and social context they function in, their missions and roles are often – explicitly or not – defined in relation to ethnicity as a primary category. Again, the discussion of the accommodation of different, including ethnic, identities in the education system is beyond the intentions of this text, but it seems reasonable to question the meaning and relevance of the transnational ideas of European citizenship for higher education institutions so deeply embedded within their local divisions and problems.

In sum, then, what should be kept in mind is not only the relevance of the concept of 'Europe of knowledgeable citizens' in the context of Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe, but also the relevance of the examples described here – and many others – for the project(s) of European citizenship and the role of higher education in it. Namely, discourses of citizenship in the Europe of knowledge have, to this date, remained almost completely oblivious to the political realities of transitional and/or post-Communist countries. Some of these countries have had an 'early start' in transition and are experiencing (relative) economic and political stability as well as benefits of EU membership; some are, due to ethnic conflict at the end of the 20th century, still suffering from political instability at least partially related to the legacy of ethnic conflicts and the persistent ethnic and social divisions. However, what they all have in common is a different historical trajectory from other European countries, especially in the second half of the 20th century, and relatively shorter and/or interrupted experience of democracy (cf. Biesta, 2009, p. 146). It should then seem obvious that the links between higher education (indeed, any education) and citizenship in these environments would require some specific considerations, such as taking into account the history of political involvement of universities (in many of these countries, universities were both instruments of political repression and bastions of opposition to totalitarian regimes), their changing roles and relationships with stakeholders, including the shifts in autonomy arrangements or, for that matter, the overall role and influence of citizenship education. In other words, understanding the specific meaning and

interpretations of the links between higher education and citizenship in these countries would require serious and critical reflection. Currently, European discourses on the role of higher education in developing citizenship offer relatively little in that direction.

4. Discussion and conclusions

The brief analysis presented in this paper aimed to offer a critical exploration of the links between higher education and citizenship as constructed within the current discourses, policies and practices of the 'Europe of knowledge' and, in particular, of the ways these discourses relate to the parts of Europe often 'forgotten' in analyses of higher education reforms – namely, Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe. In this sense, it did not aspire to a definitive assessment of the role of higher education in developing European citizenship, but rather to its problematisation that would include more, so to speak, 'voices from the periphery' (Tomusk, 2007). Within these confines, the paper wishes to put forward the following arguments:

- On the transnational level, current policies and practices aimed at the European integration of higher education are not sufficiently reflexive of the transnationalization of the public sphere. Certain aspects of European policies and practices, such as educational mobility, are not particularly conducive to civic participation of all citizens of Europe, and in some forms may actually work against it. Of equal concern is the fact that European Commission's higher education mobility programmes distinguish between countries (and their citizens) on the basis of criteria other than educational, thus discriminating between what should otherwise be equal participants in the European higher education area. This form of 'two-track' approach may have significant implications for the potential of these mobility programmes to develop feelings of European citizenship and foster civic participation among its diverse participants.
- On the national and institutional level, European integration in higher education thus far has not been particularly conducive to the relevance of citizenship and civic participation in the roles and missions of higher education and higher education institutions. If nothing else, in some cases it appears that these elements were more prominent in the first period after the fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, but since 1999 have gradually been 'taken over' by roles and missions related to economic growth and competitiveness. Thus, at least on the discursive level, 'Europe of knowledge' seems to be associated more with the development of skills relevant to the labour market, than with the development of civic participation or European citizenship.
- On the regional level, as a few examples from Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia demonstrate, the political transformations and conflicts in parts of South-Eastern Europe have led to the development of 'ethnic' universities, whose roles and missions are primarily defined in terms of educating, and developing the distinct identity of, one particular ethnic or religious group. Despite the fact that regional, as well as ethnic, religious or linguistic identities should be compatible with the

concepts of European citizenship, in these cases it seems reasonable to question the extent to which the values these institutions aim to transmit are conducive to civic participation, and to which they are (deliberately or not) reproducing ethnic divisions in already deeply divided societies. The concept of citizenship in the Europe of knowledge fails to recognize or accommodate these cases; thus, it is questionable how (and if at all) it can be useful or valuable for such or similar contexts.

The arguments presented in this paper support the idea that, in the context of European higher education and its current transformation, 'citizenship' is an empty signifier that is, just like other 'catchwords', prone to assuming different meanings, depending on who is in the position to interpret it and use it in particular policies and agendas. Lock and Martins claim that, in the context of European Union politics, citizenship is used as a universal catchword-panacea that places the emphasis on civil society but depoliticises the meaning of citizenship. In this sense, what goes by as Union's democratic deficit is not a fault but lies in the logic of its principles of operation (Lock & Martins, 2009, p. 161). Similarly, Biesta criticised the universalising notion of citizenship that reduces it to forms of socialisation without questioning the desirability of particular forms of citizenship or their contextualisation within the political realities of Europe (2009, p. 148). Finally, as Balibar noted some time ago, the very meanings of the words 'citizenship' and 'Europe' are prone to different meanings and definitions, depending on particular policies and agendas (Balibar, 2006, pp. 3-4). What this paper intended to show were not only the inherent problems in the EU concept of citizenship in the 'Europe of knowledge', but also the ways in which this concept translates (or not) into ideas and practices in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

What we can see in this context is that the existing concept of citizenship in the 'Europe of knowledge' is insensitive to specific social and political contexts of many European countries, and, in some cases, translates into policies that can actually work against civic participation for some of Europe's citizens. Educational mobility, which is supposed to develop citizens competent to participate in transnational public spheres, in fact – at least in its current form – poses a number of obstacles to effective political and civic participation for mobile students, especially those that come from outside of EU. At the same time, current European discourses do not respond to the fragmentation of the public sphere, failing to recognize or accommodate voices and opinions that are not uniformly or at least predominantly affirmative of the project of the European higher education area. European Commission's mobility programmes, one of the main instruments in the development of the European higher education area, discriminate between European countries on the basis of a number of political but not educational criteria, leading to a 'two-track' approach to mobility. This has important consequences for the ways European citizenship is constructed, implying a sort of double standard, thus bringing into question the value and meaning of the concept itself, especially for those who are on the 'outside' (cf. Balibar, 2006, p. 4). As this paper has shown, the concept of citizenship in the Europe of knowledge is relatively blind to national or regional differences; it does not recognize or accommodate different ideas and notions of citizenship, including those in post-Communist and/or post-

conflict societies, nor offer meaningful tools for the reflection of the role of higher education in them.

However, this paper does not wish to argue that there is no value in discussing the role of higher education in and for citizenship. On the contrary, the concept has both heuristic and political power, but in order to exercise it, it needs to be redefined and contextualised. On the heuristic level, the concept of citizenship needs to be more strongly associated with the social and public role of universities, and thus contextualised in the ongoing transformation of higher education and research in Europe and globally. This means that the question should not be whether higher education contributes to citizenship or whether universities should have a role in developing citizenship, but rather how it contributes to citizenship, and what kind of higher education is conducive to what kind of citizenship. These questions would invite a critical perspective that would aim to look beyond universalising assumptions or policy clichés and instead endorse what Biesta (2009) called the ‘non-consensual’ approach to citizenship. Similarly, Britez and Peters (2010) argued for the re-politicisation of the cosmopolitan citizen, in line with Fraser’s (2007) arguments for the re-politicisation of the (transnational) public sphere. This paper wishes to join these calls. This form of citizenship should, at least in theory, be anational, cosmopolitical and thus particularly critical of the universalising discourses or the sorts of distinctions European Commission’s mobility programmes assume or impose on citizens of Europe. It should also be highly contextual – meaning it should recognize different meanings and implications of citizenship in different contexts, as well as different historical roles universities played in European societies; or, in Mouffe’s words, it should contribute to “an equilibrium among regional poles whose specific concerns and traditions will be seen as valuable, and where different vernacular models of democracy will be accepted” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 129; also Biesta, 2009, p. 152). In this way – and perhaps only in this way – it could come to bear significance for Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European societies and universities as well.

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