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Governing Education in Europe: a 'new' policy space of European schooling

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ABSTRACT European Schools are a particular type of school that are not integrated into any national education system but are nonetheless official educational establishments that constitute a European Schools System (ESS) governed jointly by the Member States of the European Union. This positioning creates particularly interesting issues of governance that mirror aspects of governing education in Europe, albeit on a smaller scale. This article makes the argument that the ESS, like the European Commission (EC), operates within and across formal national boundaries in a 'new' Policy Space of European Schooling. It suggests that analysis of this 'space' as a microcosm of European governance of education is enabled through integrating interdisciplinary concepts such as re-spatialisation with attention to new approaches to governance that stress fluid and mobile relations in analysing Europeanisation. The article argues that the ESS is an interesting policy case in itself, but also suggests that it has value as a microcosm of the extremely complex and novel forms of policy relations in education in Europe, in which elements of the local, the national and the European are merging and emerging in different ways.

Introduction: the idea of Europe and the European School

Around the corner they are now discussing the same things just on a larger scale. (ES7, referring to the EU Summit on the crisis in the euro taking place in Brussels, October 2011)[1]

In 1951 six countries – Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg – signed a treaty based on the 'Schuman Plan' which aimed to 'promote democratic stability and free markets' (McCormick, 2008, p. 210). They thus created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), which can be seen as the origin of the European Union (EU). Only two years later, in 1953, the first European School was founded to provide mother-tongue education primarily for the children of the staff of this community, who had taken up new posts in Luxembourg. The same countries that had created the ECSC agreed therefore also on a common European education structure, unique to the European School, despite the principle of national sovereign authority in education policy-making. This action was taken so that the children of the ECSC staff could enjoy mother-tongue education to enable them to be reintegrated into their national education system once their parents' secondment ended and they returned to their home country. In taking this step, it is important to recognise that the European Schools had 'embraced the ideal of cultivating a European identity as part of their raison d'être' (Swan, 1996, p. 26).

The basic organisational principle of the European School agreed in 1953 was that teaching staff would be seconded from each of the member countries. This allowed for representation of each country's language and culture on an equal basis [2] and at the same time also reflected each country's financial contribution to the school as the teachers were paid by the country they were seconded from. This guiding principle, which over 50 years later is still in place [3], created from the outset a blurred positioning of the European Schools, both in terms of governance and

location. The European School is not a national state school, nor is it normally an independent and privately run school. Indeed, it is neither a completely European nor purely national or local establishment, but rather is positioned somewhere between the national and the European, making it a particularly interesting 'case' for exploring transnational and national interactions in education policy in Europe.

The original concept of the ECSC may be regarded in some ways as elitist and technocratic in terms of 'current political and cultural norms' (Walters & Haahr, 2005, p. 36). This article, however, is not engaging with the debate about the elitist nature of either the European Schools System (ESS) or the ECSC (though it should be noted that the ESS was also a practical solution to the problem of providing schooling for seconded staff), nor is it concerned primarily with the debate about the extent of francophone dominance of this early period – rather, its focus is on the innovative and unconventional location of the ESS and the simultaneous horizontal and transnational underpinnings that they embodied, in order to foreground the question of re-spatialisation and its link to EU governance. Indeed, a historical perspective on the ESS as mirroring the development of the European Community means it can also 'be thought as a [slowly emerging] space of governance' (Walters & Haahr, 2005, p. 37), an imagining of Europe, in its earliest and simplest form.

More recently, with the development and the continuous enlargement of the European Union over the years, this initial post-World War II 'project of Europe' has developed into a space 'of multi-level policy, a space where complex processes of intergovernmental, interregional and supranational bargaining give rise to novel patterns of governance' (Walters & Haahr, 2005, p. 2). In the field of education policy, these processes have become even more complicated, yet education has largely continued to be understood in policy and political science approaches to Europe as a national issue, protected by the principle of subsidiarity (Ozga et al, 2011).

Yet education policy-making confronts complex national and transnational issues, and, as Dale (2000) argues, national economies, cultures and political subjects/citizens are built through schooling. Thus policy-making in the field of education in Europe has always prompted disputes and tensions between political, economic and cultural agendas (Ozga, 2000). However, since the rise of the knowledge economy and the growing importance of education and learning to Europe, in the context of the worsening financial crisis, the European Commission has developed a more active policy agenda, illustrated by the Lisbon 2020 agreements (European Commission, 2010), and has also looked for ways of steering national policy in particular through the development of benchmarks and indicators, and with a strong emphasis on promoting education and especially lifelong learning policy to enable economic recovery. As a consequence, tensions between the political, economic and cultural demands on education in national systems may be becoming sharper as the European Commission (EC) uses 'soft governance' (Lawn, 2006) to draw them into line with economic policy priorities. National systems in their turn respond in different ways – England, for example, has been consistently anti-European and more open to global/American influence since the 1980s (Grek & Ozga, 2010).

Alongside the growth of the institutions and the various enlargement processes of the European Union there has also been the development of the initial 'project' of a European School into a complex European Schools System [4] (see annex), and more recently, particularly after the 'opening-up' of the ESS in the context of its first reform in 2009, into what can be best understood as a 'new' Policy Space of European Schooling.

Indeed, the initial project of a European School has grown into a particular 'space of European Schooling': it has developed into a 'worksite' wherein 'the emergence of a particular Europe' can be identified (Balibar, 2004, p. 17). Furthermore, within the ESS the problem of how to govern a space without having the legal, formal or 'hard' power to do so is present, as it is in the larger landscape of Europe, while the same complex interplay of cultural, economic and political forces is also embedded in this development.

In developing and illustrating this argument, the article will oscillate between the ESS and the EC as its key points of reference, in order to show how the ESS may be used as a lens for examining education policy processes in the EU. The approach is theory-led, and the theory is developed empirically through the 'case' of the ESS.

Understanding Novel Forms of Governing in Europe:
blurred boundaries and fluid relations

> Battles over space and place in Europe are no longer only fought in the trenches, or in the
> (relatively) accessible arenas of local politics. These days they are also fought in obscure policy
> spaces, away from the public gaze, and across a complex terrain that even those in the struggle
> may not fully comprehend. (Jensen & Richardson, 2004, p. 5)

The project of Europe 'entail[s] a great deal of wrangling in each member state over issues of national identity, sovereignty, and power' (Bellier & Wilson, 2000, p. 9). Such a 'space' can therefore be understood not as being separate from nation states but as intrinsically linked to them, a feature which at the same time constitutes the 'uniqueness of Europe' as the question constantly arises as to '*how* it is able to govern extended social and economic spaces without possessing anything like the administrative apparatus, or financial capacity of a nation-state' (Walters & Haahr, 2005, p. 14, emphasis in original).

Nation-states, in turn, although historically commonly perceived as a 'unity of people, place and culture which were embodied in a sovereign political system' (Clarke, 2005, p. 407), can themselves no longer be understood to have such clear boundaries in a contemporary reality where digital networks and 'social, political, and economic complexity [work as] causes or drivers of new, emerging models of governance' (Pierre & Peters, 2005, p. 1). The 'national' is thus 'itself a mixed condition. Neither the national nor the global represents a fully stabilized meaning today' (Sassen, 2006, p. 379).

There is broad consensus among scholars (see e.g. Rhodes, 1997; Castells, 2000; Clarke, 2005; Rumford, 2006b; Sassen, 2006; Ball, 2009) that various and diverse factors, including processes of globalisation, Europeanisation and neo-liberal agendas, have contributed to a shift in governance which is commonly understood as a 'departure from traditional, state-centred styles of governing' (Bellamy & Palumbo, 2010, p. xiv) to novel forms of governance. There is a vast body of literature across disciplines examining this 'governance turn'. Rhodes (1997), for example, sees it as a 'government without governance' in which governments are limited to establishing a legal framework within networks and thus have lost their capacity to govern. According to Bellamy and Palumbo (2010, introduction), the centralised nation-state is thus being superseded by a '"networked polity" where authority is progressively devolved to task-specific institutions with unlimited jurisdictions and intersecting memberships operating at sub- and [supra-] national levels'. European Studies scholars have often adopted theories of multi-level governance, where governance is understood as processes of continuous negotiation across and within various levels (Marks & Hooghe, 2001) and through constant coordination and cooperation in multi-layered networks of relationships (Kohler-Koch & Eising, 1999; Castells, 2000).

Underpinning these understandings of governance is an idea of movement and the concept of mobility, 'a main feature in contemporary Europe: The four freedoms at the heart of the European Treaties are based on movement: of people, goods, capital and services' (Jensen & Richardson, 2004, p. 5). Taking this further, Urry (2000, p. 186) argues for a study of mobilities rather than societies whereby mobility is understood as 'criss-crossing societal borders in new temporal-spatial patterns'. Also identifying mobility as key to European policy-making, Jensen and Richardson (2004, p. 10) see it as a 'movement within and between spaces that increasingly shapes socio-spatial relationships' and thus as defining new networks and spaces. In the context of Europeanisation, policy-making processes are understood as being particularly complex; as Delanty and Rumford (2005, pp. 5-26) suggest, these processes go beyond co-operation to create a 'European space' through

> various kinds of hybridities, nested identities; interdependencies, mutually overlapping and
> interpenetrating links and networks; expanded interdependence as well as assertions of
> autonomy arising from this symbolic conflict; and the diffusion of common models and
> universalistic norms.

There are, then, considerable resources available, across disciplines, for understanding Europe without being confined to the national or to more traditional perspectives that see 'Europe' as imposing change through formal regulation – in both cases, missing the impact of 'soft regulation'

on education policy within and across nation-states (Lawn, 2006). It is thus suggested that rather than analysing policy dynamics through the nation-state, the 'analyses should start from elsewhere, from the practices of governing themselves' (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 20). In this way, and in Miller and Rose's (2008, p. 20) words,

> one might be able to start to map out the multiple centres of calculation and authority that traverse and link up personal, social and economic life. And it might even allow us to understand that 'non-state' modes of exercise of power are one of the defining features of our present.

The focus here is thus not on the outcome or impact of policy dynamics, but on the processes themselves – that is, 'it draws attention to the complex processes of negotiation and persuasion involved in the assemblage of loose and mobile networks that can bring persons, organizations and objectives into alignment' (Miller & Rose 2008, pp. 21-22). Thus the focus is on the ways in which different forces and interests are then mobilised across, between and within formal national boundaries. From this perspective, it is argued, it is useful to understand these novel forms of governance not as replacing older ones, but rather as re-structuring them and so working with an understanding of governance that accommodates 'many levels, scales or tiers that are "nested" within one another' (Clarke, 2009, p. 30), and which allows for a dynamic conception of the relationships among them. This allows for analysis of governing that recognises it as both 'multiple and mobile' (Clarke, 2009, p. 32), that develops a flexible and fluid idea of governing across and within different layers and levels. The different 'levels' are recognised, but it is also understood that they interact and that actors may move between them.

At the same time, the concept of national boundaries is not completely eliminated, but is perceived as 'both blur[red] and sustain[ed]' as nations themselves 'are a condition for multinational governance' (Clarke, 2009, p. 37). While the boundaries of a territorial state in an historical sense still exist – in particular through formal representations of the nation-state – nation states can, however, no longer be seen as solely confined to such a definition. Nowadays, the 'national' can be found in various forms and places outside traditional territorial borders, as can the 'global' (Sassen, 2006) or the 'European' within formal national territory or other even more diffuse 'assemblages' where boundaries become more and more blurred.

The following section will attempt to illustrate how features of governing in the European Schools System resemble those in contemporary Europe, and thus illustrate how the lens of the ESS can help to illuminate the complex interactions of education policy in Europe.

Understanding Governing in Europe through the Lens of the European Schools System

> Educated side by side, untroubled from infancy by divisive prejudices, acquainted with all that is great and good in the different cultures, it will be borne in upon them as they mature that they belong together. Without ceasing to look to their own lands with love and pride, they will become in mind Europeans, schooled and ready to complete and consolidate the work of their fathers before them, to bring into being a united and thriving Europe. (Monnet, 1962)

If there is one purpose and ethos that all debates and discussions about the European Schools System (ESS) refer to, whether the schools are being criticised or praised, it is this common ideal expressed in Jean Monnet's widely cited phrase. The strong socio-cultural mandate reflected in this phrase has been sealed into the foundation stones of each European School and can still be found today in the way that European Schools themselves describe their mission as being 'to provide a multilingual and multicultural education for nursery, primary and secondary level pupils' (Schola Europaea, 2009a).

The first European School was founded to provide mother-tongue education primarily to the children of the staff of the ECSC. Over fifty years later, the availability of these schools continues to play a key role in the decision of prospective employees of the EU and its agencies to accept posts as it 'remains a vital element in attracting and recruiting staff of the highest calibre' (CEC, 2005, p. 2), which reflects the fact that politico-economic elements always affect the system alongside or despite the very strong social-cultural mission.

In fact, the schools are still seen by many as being part of the 'social package' offered to civil servants and, indeed, one of the main administrative organs of the ESS is the unit integrated in the Directorate-General Human Resources & Security of the European Commission in Brussels:

> As regards its involvement in the European Schools, the Commission, as the by far largest contributor to the system, played an active role in ensuring that the children of EU Institutions staff can have access to a qualitative and recognised education in their mother tongue. This has facilitated the mobility of staff and made the EU institutions a more attractive employer. In a difficult fiscal stance in the Member States, the Commission made a major effort in 2010 in controlling the budgetary situation of the European Schools. (DG HR and Security, 2010, p. 8)

The ESS is formally 'an intergovernmental organisation independent of the European Commission' (Schola Europaea, 2009a). DG Human Resources and Security is essentially in charge of the financial aspects of the ESS through procedures that are regulated through the intergovernmental agreement and the budgetary procedure.[5] The main governing and decision-making body is the Board of Governors. Its composition provides an insight into the complexity of policy interactions within the ESS: it is formally a European-level body, but it is composed of actors working mainly at the national level (representatives of the Ministries of Education and/or Foreign Affairs of each member state of the EU), of actors with formal roles at the European level (representatives of the EC, the European Patent Office and Eurocontrol), and of actors representing formally local levels (representatives of the teaching staff and parents). Parents and teaching staff representatives, however, have only voting rights on pedagogical issues without financial implications. This board is constituted to deal mainly with strategic and political decisions. The other three major decision-making bodies – namely, the Joint Teaching Committee, the Board of Inspectors and the Budgetary Committee - deal respectively mainly with pedagogical and budgetary issues.

Like the Board of Governors, these boards and committees are formally located at the European level and are similarly composed of a complex assemblage of actors representing various institutions and roles located at various levels. None of these bodies has a physical representation in a particular territory, but they meet over several days, two to three times throughout the year. As one senior EU policy actor (2011) puts it: 'We're a travelling meeting circle' (ES9).

These complex policy-making processes well illustrate the idea of flexible and fluid governing across and within different layers and levels (Clarke, 2009). Policy-making in this arena is accurately conceptualised as a process – it is not something abstract and coherent, but is contested and struggled over, 'incomplete and unstable' (Ball, 2006). The ESS operates as a 'space' made up of a network of policy actors who seem to have multiple roles and who create constant negotiations while carrying meanings and building consensus across and within blurred national boundaries (Guiraudon, 2003). Blurriness and fluidity seem indeed to be the key features of this space – one senior EU policy actor (2011) comments: 'The ESS is a hybrid: there is a lot of uncertainty about what rules apply' (ES5).

Blurriness in this context does not, however, exclude the existence of something more defined, and likewise, fluidity of movement does not mean an absence of fixity (Sassen, 2006, pp. 382-384). National boundaries are understood as blurred, but this does not eliminate differentiation between local, national and European - these levels are acknowledged, but they are no longer seen in a hierarchical way nor are they clearly defined, but they still exist in their formal representations. Levels could thus be understood as *labels* providing information on formal positioning and representation. For example, the formal 'labelling' or designation of a meeting as 'meeting of the Board of Governors' will reveal its main location at the European level, but this is not linked to its content as this very complex assemblage cannot be allocated to one single positioning and neither can it be clearly defined.

The only other 'fixed entity' of the ESS (in addition to its representation in DG HR and Security) in a physical sense is the Office of the Secretary-General (OSG) of the ESS, which is located in Brussels. This Office, led by the Secretary-General and its Deputy, operates as the main administrative and management apparatus of the system and is essentially in charge of:

– representing the Board of Governors;
– managing the European Schools system;
– chairing the Administrative Boards of the European Schools;

– ensuring the effective preparation and organisation of and follow-up on the meetings of the Boards of Governors, the Boards of Inspectors, the Budgetary Committee, the Directors and other groups;
– coordinating and supervising the administrative, financial and general management of the Schools and of the Central Office;
– managing preparations for the Baccalaureate sessions and ensuring the organisation, setting and layout of the examination questions to a high standard;
– arbitrating, where necessary, in disagreements between members of the school community giving rise to complaints or appeals;
– producing an annual report on the Schools' development. (Schola Europaea, 2009a)

Embedded in these multiple tasks are inevitable tensions where cultural, political and economic objectives interact and possibly conflict, and thus the role of the Office of the Secretary-General could be understood to be managing relations between multiple actors with multiple roles at different locations of governance; very much in line with Borrás's (2007) understanding of the EC as a 'resilient broker'. The internal structure of the OSG [6] itself also resembles the division of the Commission into its various Directorates.

Understanding governing in the ESS as governing through networked relations does not, however, mean that no hierarchy can be observed. Hierarchical divisions occur, but they seem to take place mainly in relation to different realms – namely, political, economic and cultural – rather than being linked to national boundaries. This becomes most visible in the policy-making procedure. Formal policy-making procedures at the ESS, put simply, require that proposals must go through different boards and receive their approval before they can be implemented. In such a movement through different boards, 'a complex milieu of power struggles and contested meanings extending across Europe and reaching from local to transnational policy arenas' (Jensen & Richardson, 2004, preface) becomes visible. This movement seems to be open-ended and fluid, and thus there is no clear entry and exit point. Some of the few points of fixity (Sassen, 2006) seem to be the boards and committees when they physically meet. In these meetings it is decided whether a proposal will continue to 'flow' to the next board or not. A rejected proposal, however, does not stop its journey there. These meeting points also constitute starting points from where actors create meanings that then get mobilised and translated to other 'locations'. The outcome of these translations will then be brought into new 'meeting points' where the reception of certain meanings will be discussed and new meanings created. These points can be the formal meeting points of the ESS and thus formally located at a European level, but they can also be points formally located at national or local/institutional levels – for example, the Ministry of Education in Portugal or the European School Munich in Germany.

For example, there has been discussion of how career guidance should be provided in the European Schools since university application procedures vary considerably between different countries – that is, some are much more complex and time-consuming than others and consequently different types of advice are needed. After some input from various actors at different locations a proposal had been drafted and suggested by the OSG in the Joint Teaching Committee. It was approved, and as it also had financial implications it was also presented at the Budgetary Committee, where it also gained acceptance. The Board of Governors, however, rejected it and demanded a new draft proposal. This new proposal will now flow again into the Joint Teaching Committee, and 'round again it goes', as one senior European policy actor (ES5 2012) commented.

These movements back and forth do not, however, occur in a linear and straightforward way, and the time between these meetings is characterised by heavy lobbying and bargaining at different locations, both formal and non-formal, involving actors in both formal and non-formal roles. For example, there is quite a high number of working groups trying to find solutions for issues that have proved to be too difficult to be solved during a meeting. Their outcome will then flow again as a proposal into a meeting. Discussions and bargaining, however, also take place in non-formal environments, such as during meals, via digital communication and in individual meetings. In these power struggles the ultimate goal is to push agendas through and influence decision-making processes.

For and as a result of each of these formal meetings, documents are produced that can also be understood as points of fixity – *snapshots* – within the policy-making process. A document is likely

to be frequently negotiated and modified and thus new documents created – that is, as different versions - but it is nevertheless static in the moment of its production, and therefore a more definable moment of the policy-making process. As one senior EU policy actor (ES6 2011) comments on a document in the context of one of such meetings: 'This is an overview of the situation at the time-being'; i.e. it is a *snapshot.*

Interestingly, there seems to be a hierarchy of issues in these formal boards where the discussion of pedagogical issues seems to be the starting point, followed by financial issues, and only then by political decision-making. This means that a proposal that has been accepted by the Joint Teaching Committee, for example, is not valid until it has gained approval by the other boards, the political one being the main decision-making board. A proposal, however, might not always go through the Budgetary Committee if it does not have any financial implications, and likewise, it might start directly at the Budgetary Committee. Thus different entry points are possible, but it will ultimately always flow in some form to the Board of Governors for a final decision. This illustrates the need to maintain overarching political control of the process of education policy-making at the European level.

While the existence of the ESS as an education system at a European level seems paradoxical, in fact for more than fifty years, and contrary to principles of subsidiarity, in this space member states have agreed on a transnational European framework (Schola Europaea, 2009a) and curriculum – the European Baccalaureate.[7] Until recently, this space, located somewhere between the European institutions and the member states of the EU, has been quite invisible. It has been a space whose imagined boundaries have constantly been created and recreated. This process of bordering, however, 'is not just territorial but also involves the production of categories and identities, and, as a result, new forms of inclusion and exclusion' (Robertson, 2011, p. 282) producing constant new challenges which the ESS has been dealing with over the years.

Although the European Schools System has survived in the face of pressures and challenges in recent years despite several harsh criticisms and even the blocking of various sources of funding, now, nearly fifty years since its inception, a combination of political, cultural and economic factors, and in particular the latest enlargement of the EU in 2004, is enforcing change. The system has reached a turning point and needs to undergo profound changes if it is to avoid 'collapse' (CEC, 2005; Kallas 2006; Schola Europaea, 2009b). One could also say that the imagined boundaries of this space are becoming more and more permeable (Sassen, 2006). Thus, a further way of trying to understand these changes is to conceptualise them as re-spatialisations, as 'economic, political and … [cultural] realms … being remade in ways which realign the national and the transnational in new ways' (Clarke, 2005, p. 413).

Thus, in the following sections the concept of *space* will be discussed in more detail to illustrate its use in capturing the developments of the ESS and of the governing processes in Europe in a broader sense.

Europe as an Imagined Space of Governance

Any serious recognition of multiplicity and heterogeneity itself depends on a recognition of spatiality. (Massey, 2005, p. 11)

Space is here not understood as a frame surrounding and incorporating new policy dynamics, but rather as these complex processes and dynamics themselves – the policy-making process itself constitutes and forms this space. The national is no longer understood in a traditional territorial sense but in a rather different way in which spaces 'can be simultaneously local, national, European and global.' (Rumford, 2006a, p. 137) and are thus 'particular types of territoriality … each individual or aggregate instance evincing distinct spatio-temporal features [that can] not exclusively [be seen as] national or global but [as] assemblages of elements of each' (Sassen, 2006, pp. 386-389). These assemblages are spaces where multiple meanings coexist in 'a sphere of coexisting heterogeneity' (Massey, 2005, p. 9) and in which the meeting of 'different velocities and different scopes … make possible different kinds of engagements for which there are no clear rules' (Sassen, 2006, p. 386). Such a space 'is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed' (Massey, 2005, p. 9), enabling therefore the possibility of change as there are always openings and

opportunities to re-shape, re-construct, de-construct links or create entirely new ones through 'politics of negotiation' (Massey, 2005).

In this sense, then, the concept of *space* is used to capture the idea of movement and fluidity in relations of networked governing across blurred boundaries where different players are involved and old bureaucracies are re-shaped. Understanding this process through different spatial realms allows for a capturing of the more complex interactions that might be developing in 'different speeds and different scopes' (Sassen, 2006) with no clear boundaries.

Conceptualising Europe as a space is thus, in Delanty and Rumford's (2005, pp. 4, 26) words:

> of considerable importance in contemporary thinking about Europe ... [to move from] a discussion on whether the European Union can compete with the nation-state ... to address a wider range of issues that take account of transformative dynamics and processes ... [and to] focus ... on how these dynamics are played out within the EU's policies towards its 'near abroad', and the creation of new 'borderlands' which comprise zones of interaction without 'hard' borders.

This moves an analysis of Europe to an understanding of EU governance that

> works by constructing European spaces which the EU alone is capable of managing. In other words, EU governance is concerned with the construction and management of European spaces, borders, and networks, as distinct from the territorial places and spaces characteristic of the nation-state. (Rumford, 2006a, p. 138)

This does not, however, mean that these spaces themselves have clear boundaries, as these too are blurred. The Bologna Process, for example, was intended as a creation of a European Space of Higher Education, but it now also includes a number of countries that are not members of the European Union, and thus a 'distinction between Europe and beyond, between EU and non-EU space' (Rumford, 2006a, p. 138) becomes blurred. The openness of such spaces, however, also means that processes intended to deepen European integration through the Europeanisation of spaces 'at the same time [also] allow ... for the possibility of breaking down barriers between Europe and the rest of the world' (Rumford, 2006a, p. 138).

The emergence of a European education space is relevant to this argument, and thus in the next section approaches to understanding the emergence of Europe as a policy space with particular reference to education will be reviewed.

The Emergence of a European Education Policy Space

The 'history' of European policy-making in education can be divided, according to various scholars (Antunes 2006; Grek & Lawn, 2009), into three main periods. In the 1960s-1980s it was essentially an idealist 'project of meaning, constructed around common cultural and educational values' (Grek & Lawn, 2009) using community programmes such as 'Comett and Erasmus' to promote cultural cooperation and student mobility. The principle of subsidiarity in policy-making adopted in Europe meant that cultural policy areas have always had their place at the national level and have not been interfered with by Brussels. However, although '[l]ocal and regional actors are thus not directly involved in the co-ordination process' and the EC does not have any 'hard' powers to influence education and learning policy, the EC does exert influence which is 'largely depend[ent] on the existence of co-ordination mechanisms within the member states and the willingness of local and regional actors to subscribe to targets which have been defined at the European level' (Kaiser & Prange, 2004, p. 253).

In the late 1990s the focus began to be more on the 'outputs' rather than the 'inputs' with the development of a knowledge-based society, a 'Europe of Knowledge'. In particular this was embodied in the institutionalisation of education at the European level, following the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 (CEU, 1992) – that is, through the creation of a 'new' Directorate-General of Education and Culture, the supranational level had become increasingly important in the discussion of education policy. National Education policies had now 'also [to] fulfil commitments that were explicitly made at a supranational level' (Antunes, 2006, p. 44) and were no longer only the outcomes of bottom-up contributions; at the same time, those policies were no longer only subject to embedded national legislation.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, 'the agenda set at [the] Lisbon [Council 2000] called for Europe to become the most economically competitive and dynamic region in the world, and at the same time achieve greater social cohesion ... with concrete objectives for national education systems across Europe' (Commission of the European Communities [CEC], quoted in Dale & Robertson, 2009, p. 8). This introduction of an 'overall policy aim of a knowledge economy and the Lisbon form of constant comparison' has transformed education as a policy area in many ways (Lawn, 2008, p. 506). There was a need to act in an arena previously understood as 'national', which meant that the EU – more specifically, the Commission – searched for ways of steering education towards more economically connected designs and processes. International benchmarks and quality indicators, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), were adopted as processes and resources aimed towards an internationally competitive 'European Knowledge Economy'. In terms of governance, this meant an 'incipient shift from "national government" to "European governance" in the Lisbon agenda' (Dale & Robertson, 2009, p. 26), as it was claimed to be the only 'space' able to achieve those goals, and achieving competitiveness in the context of globalisation was to be realised 'at the European rather than the national level' (Dale & Robertson, 2009, p. 8).

For the field of Education, it is important that with the acceptance of the '"Concrete Future Objectives" for education systems enunciated at Lisbon' (Dale & Robertson, 2009, p. 31), member states agreed for the very first time to a 'new space of governing education' and a new way of practising their involvement in education. It marked the emergence of a global policy field in education (Lingard & Ozga, 2007) or a European Education policy space (Ozga et al, 2011) in which '"Europe" ... is ... more a common space where member states (under the coordination of the European Commission) shape and frame' (Dale & Robertson, 2009, p. 130) the new space of governance in education. In this space, the EU has 'no discretion over the areas that dominate national education politics and policies in most Member States' - areas that can be characterised as being 'everywhere contested, but on very nationally specific grounds, with nationally specific understandings of the stakes involved' (Dale & Robertson, 2009, p. 33). Growing pressure through benchmarks and indicators to converge (Grek & Lawn, 2009), however, meant that although there had been an acceptance of the discretion of nation-states, there is, post-Lisbon, an acceptance of the need to have a European agenda, accelerated in the context of a deepening financial crisis in the Eurozone, even if there is conflict as to how to translate that agenda into national contexts. (For a UK example, see HM Treasury, 2011.)

Pertinent to this argument is the concept of the emerging *European education policy space*, through which the European Commission seeks to pursue the Lisbon objectives and create a cultural and economic counterbalance to the forces of globalisation; that is, it has become much more active in education and also much more directly focused on education policy as a vehicle of economic growth.

These developments have also influenced the development of the ESS, in particular in the context of its first official reform in 2009 in which it has decided to 'open-up' the system. As one senior European policy actor (2011) points out: 'The purpose of the "opening-up" is our contribution to the knowledge economy' (ES4).

A 'New' Policy Space of European Schooling

The space of the ESS is a space 'full of numerous ambiguities' (ES5 2011) - it is a space in which the co-existence of different educational, political and economic values makes national differences more strikingly visible and conflicts inevitable. One could in fact argue that it is quite surprising that such a system incorporating so many profound differences still exists – and this may prompt parallel reflections on the existence and growth of the EU, which also contains many tensions and differences (Jessop et al, 2008) and is at present undergoing a particularly challenging time.

A combination of political, cultural and economic factors, as discussed above, and in particular the latest enlargement of the EU in 2004, has brought the tensions and conflicts embedded in the ESS to a point at which its continuity could be in doubt without profound change. This has led to a reform which was formally decided upon in 2009, a process that had already begun in 2002 with a report by a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) on the financing of

the European Schools which led to a European Parliament resolution and a further report and resolution decided upon in 2005 (European Parliament, 2002, 2005). In the ESS, various mechanisms were then put into practice, including a working group on the reform, finally leading to the formal reform in 2009.

One of the most visible changes in the context of this reform was the decision of the ESS and the Commission to 'open-up' the system through the introduction of a new system to differentiate the European Schools through the creation of 'accredited schools'. Schools are now labelled Type I, II and III schools, which are characterised mainly by their different economic and political links to the European Union. These links are stipulated through an Accreditation and Cooperation Agreement, and the criteria were set by the Board of Governors in 2005.[8] According to the reform of 2009, all these schools provide 'European Schooling' and are entitled to deliver the European Baccalaureate, but Type II and Type III schools are now national schools which also do so. Through an amendment to the European Baccalaureate Regulations of 1984 in 2008, all officially accredited schools are now legally allowed to deliver this curriculum.

The setting up of accredited schools fulfils, according to the Office of the Secretary-General of the European Schools, a 'dual purpose' – namely, to 'allow the development of European schooling … while at the same time making a positive contribution to the mobility of children of staff of Community institutions in Europe' (Schola Europaea, 2009a). A further element to it becomes visible through the comments of a senior EU policy actor (2011): 'The opening-up of the ESS is part of a development … [W]ith the creation of Type II and Type III schools it becomes an issue of education and no longer of hosting staff' (ES4). This shows that different and even contradictory aims are embedded in the reform, such as the satisfaction of member states' economic demands, the addressing of criticisms of a cultural nature, the rearrangement of responsibilities and thus of accountabilities, and an alignment with the objectives set by the Commission.

These developments are consequently developing interesting new *spaces* in different territorial contexts across the EU in which national schools are trying to receive accreditation to deliver the European Baccalaureate, and thus complex interactions between national education systems and the ESS occur. As national and regional contexts vary quite considerably, so does this process, meaning that each new space will bring along its own characteristics but at the same time also present features in common with others. These developments are ongoing and are at different stages in the process; thus they can be understood as open spaces in constant transformation, creating multiple and different meanings in assemblages of different elements of the European, the national, the regional and even the global while also having 'distinct spatio-temporal features' (Sassen, 2006).

Two examples of these *spaces* are currently emerging in England and Germany. To put it simply, in England it has been decided to close the European School Culham (a Type I school) near Oxford through a phasing-out process ongoing until 2017.[9] This has led to an attempt to transform it into a Type II/III school integrated into the English state education system. This transformation process coincides with parallel developments in national education policies in terms of the Academy and Free Schools Programme in England, and a first attempt to transform this school into an Academy failed. The attempted transformation process has been under way under two successive national governments, neither of which was or is pro-European. An attempt is now being made to transform the school into an English Free School.[10] These negotiations reveal a very complex and blurred interplay of legal, economic, political and cultural interests and forces while negotiating this new space on English territorial ground:

> We had to arrange co-existence between two different systems, … the English and the European, and it was really very difficult … so [our] role was to try to put all people together and try to find compromises, we had a lot of meetings, but … and our lawyer was involved … there were a lot of lawyers there, British lawyers, and we understood more and more that maybe it would be very, very difficult to find this agreement. (ES3, 2011)

> As this school operates so very differently from any school in England, almost every aspect of how to run a school was a question … . On the other side it was more about making sure that people understood, the Board of Governors and the Commission and the OSG, trying to make sure that they understood what the legal framework was within the UK, so that they understood

what we were trying to achieve and also to answer any questions they had about how the school would run in the future, particularly as we were talking about transitional funding being available from the Commission and obviously they had certain questions and requirements to be able to pay that. (ES1, 2011)

The Commission is interested in the transformation as a party interested in, let's say, the good-functioning of the European Schools System and also as a party having a significant part in financing the whole system ... the idea of transforming the school ... into an Academy would have had positive effects both, on the one hand on the continuation of a European Curriculum on the Culham site ... and so on the viability of the project, and on the other side would have also reduced the [financial] burden on the Commission. (ES4, 2011)

Another example is the creation of a Type II/III school near Frankfurt in Germany which was intended as a completely new school for which even the buildings are purpose-built. The project has been set up as a 'gemeinnützige GmbH' – a German limited liability company that resembles a trust, but is more entrepreneurial and benefits from special tax conditions. The key actors leading this company and project also felt the need to become an 'Ersatzschule' (a public–private hybrid form of schooling in the German education system) in order to meet national, regional and local legislative requirements to open a school. At the same time discussions with the ESS were necessary in order to receive accreditation as a Type II or III school. Thus the creation of this new space reveals again, albeit in a different form, a complex interplay of issues of a cultural, economic and political nature, this time on German territorial ground.

The reform of the ESS continues; it is, as one senior EU policy actor (ES5 2011) points out, 'an on-going business'. Other changes are envisaged in the reform - for example, addressing issues concerning the governance at the central/European and local level in terms of an extension of the autonomy of Type I schools. They concern the cost-sharing of member states in terms of the secondment of teachers and a reform of the European Baccalaureate in the context of the 'opening-up' of the system (Schola Europaea, 2009b).

The reform plans and actions already implemented seem to be occurring at different rates and with different scopes but in more alignment within the same realm, whether political, cultural or economic. As one senior EU policy actor (2011) comments: 'The opening-up is really happening at a pedagogical level ... but not so much at a political/legal level' (ES5 2011). And another senior EU policy actor (2011) points out: 'Legal and economic power seems to be more and more at EU level [referring to the European Parliament and the Commission], the cultural comes through member states' input' (ES5 2011).

In general, the developments in this 'new' Policy Space of European Schooling seem to support the early and tentative interpretation of the development of the European Schools System which sees the increasing strength of a political-economic mandate for the schools. There seems to be a tendency to try to separate the cultural aspects from the political-economic agenda whenever they are not sustainable, and accordingly to emphasise culture whenever it is easily combined with politico-economic decisions.

It is evident that the combination of political, economic and cultural agendas has created and is creating tensions within the ESS: the cultural agenda has co-existed with a more market-oriented set of priorities from the outset, as the EC looked for an effective way of combining the building of European identification with effective, efficient and economic ways of providing schooling for its staff. With the expansion of the European Union, the growth of economic preoccupations, and the collapsing of the cultural into the economic through the knowledge economy agenda, accompanied by a major financial crisis in Europe, the cultural role of the ESS may be in change, and the identity of these schools as 'beacons' of European culture gaining a new meaning.

Conclusion

Just as in the European Schools' original purpose and ethos, the key challenges featuring in this 'new' Policy Space of European Schooling are occurring along three main realms - the political, the economic and the cultural - though the balance between the three may be changing. Such a link and interdependence between the political, economic and cultural elements seems to be

particularly strong and apparent in the European Schools System, and its European framing also means that this 'project' is more complex than building national economies, cultures and political subjects/citizens through schooling.

In these developments, complex assemblages of the local, the national, the European and even the global are being created that can be best understood, it is argued, as a 'new' Policy Space of European Schooling. Such an approach allows for an understanding of these developments ordered along different realms that are developing at different rates and in different scope with fluid and flexible relations in networked governing involving numerous and different actors re-shaping old bureaucracies. This space and those processes present some very characteristic features that reflect key issues in governing education in Europe and they can therefore be understood as a microcosm of the problems and issues arising in the European governance of education.

At the same time, this case can be considered as an interesting development in terms of Europeanisation: the rise of the knowledge economy as a shared agenda for education policy in Europe, along with the financial crisis, has strengthened the European 'project' and put pressure on the EC and national governments to identify with and achieve the Lisbon 2020 goals (European Commission, 2010). These goals are themselves an 'uneasy mix' of social and economic aims, and their achievement requires complex processes of negotiation, persuasion and mediation between different elements of the national, local, European and global. This highlights the complexity of the positioning of the ESS and its schools – that is, are they 'beacons' of Europeanisation or opportunities for national systems to acquire elite provision – or, indeed, both?

Understanding this 'new' Policy Space of European Schooling while drawing on cross-disciplinary resources is thus, it is argued, a fruitful lens to understand processes of governing of education in Europe and therefore helps to illuminate the interplay of different forces and interests that characterise the 'project' of Europe (Jessop et al, 2008); this outlook has implications for understanding education policy and politics within and across national boundaries and ultimately for European integration as a whole.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] The acronyms stand for European School actors and these are not identified further in order to protect anonymity.

[2] The emphasis on equality is reflected in the design of the curriculum – the European Baccalaureate – and in the structure of the school: It is divided into language sections, and each official language with its cultural dimension is to be held in esteem and should be respected. This is probably one of the features that most distinguishes the European Schools from other International Schools, as in the latter there will be one or two more dominant linguistic and cultural orientations, and the emphasis is therefore on 'assimilation', whereas in European Schools the emphasis is on 'pluralism' (Swan, 1996).

[3] The ESS is funded through the contribution of the member states in the form of the national salaries of seconded teachers, through school fees (only from students whose parents are not EU staff), and through an EU contribution through the European Commission. However, this funding arrangement no longer works effectively, for various reasons, and consequently it is the object of constant tensions and conflicts. This 'cost-sharing' arrangement is currently one of the major points under review, and the results of these discussions will undoubtedly have profound consequences for the whole system.

[4] Over 22,000 pupils now attend 14 different European Schools in seven member states (Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany, England, Italy and Spain) (Schola Europaea, 2009a; see also

annex). Between 1994 and 2007, the initial four official languages spoken in the six founding member states of the European Union had increased to 23 official languages spoken in 27 member countries (Kallas, 2006).

[5] 'DG HR represents the European School system vis-à-vis the EU's budgetary authority. Based on a request formulated by the Board of Governors of the European Schools, DG HR is responsible for the Commission requesting the Community contribution in its DB [Draft Budget]. Once the EU budget procedure is finished, DG HR becomes responsible for paying the 4 instalments of the contribution to each school'; and 'The expenditure planning process involves a hierarchy of bodies outside the Commission's budgetary perimeter, and the result of this process is then submitted to the EU budgetary process' (DG HR and Security, 2010, Annex 5).

[6] The OSG is divided into seven units: the Pedagogical Development Unit; the Baccalaureate Unit; the Accounts Unit; the Administrative and Legal Unit; the ICT and Statistics Unit; the Human Resources Unit; and Internal Control/Audit.

[7] The European Baccalaureate is the curriculum followed by the European Schools and qualifies students for application to university. It is 'in part a synthesis of all those [systems] of the same Member States, together with their many different languages and separate cultural traditions' (Swan, 1996, p. 7), and used to be delivered in as many linguistic sections (not national sections) as there were official languages of the European Union. Nowadays, this latter point is no longer valid with the large increase in number of official languages spoken (see note 3 above and Kallas, 2006), and thus it is for various reasons just no longer sustainable and hence constitutes another point of constant discussions in the policy-making process.

[8] Type I schools continue to follow the same links and admissions policies that have been in place for the last fifty years, and are set up primarily for 'the children whose parents are employed by the European institutions', the so-called Category I pupils. Accordingly, Type II schools are schools in locations where there is a presence of EU institutions, agencies or other such organisations and where a Type I school does not exist. However, the financial contribution of the EU to these schools is very considerably less by comparison with the Type I schools, as it is calculated on a pro rata basis according to the number of 'Category I' children who are enrolled. Type III schools are still in the process of being defined more clearly, and therefore come under the category of a 'pilot project'. These schools are not linked to the presence of EU institutions, and consequently the European Union does not assist with financial matters, which, together with the administration, become the responsibility of the relevant member state (Schola Europaea, 2009b).

[9] The pupils at the school continue to stay, but every academic year that passes a further year group closes, meaning that at present there are no nursery, Year 1 and Year 2 groups, next year will not have a Year 3, and so on until the final closure in 2017.

[10] Rather than transforming the whole school right from the start, it is now planned that every year group that closes in the European School will be replaced by the Free School until final transformation into a Free School in 2017.

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ANNEX
A Brief Chronology of the Expansion of the ESS alongside the EU.

Year	EU	Countries	ESS	
			Type I	Type II/III *(+ European institutions)*
1951	European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), Treaty of Paris, officials based in Luxembourg	6 countries involved: Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands		
1953			Creation of the first European School: Luxembourg I, Luxembourg	
1957	European Economic Community (EEC), Treaty of Rome	Same 6 countries		
1958			Brussels I, Belgium	
1960			Mol, Belgium Varese, Italy	

1962		Karlsruhe, Germany (FRG)	
1963		Bergen, The Netherlands	
1973	First Enlargement of the Community	9 countries (+ Denmark, Ireland, UK)	
1974		Brussels II, Belgium	
1975	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)		
1977		Munich, Germany (FRG)	
1978		Culham, UK	
1979	First Elections to the European Parliament		
1981	Greece joined the Community	10 countries	
1986	Spain and Portugal joined the Community	12 countries	
1987	European Single Market (Single European Act came into force)		
1990	Unification of Germany		
1992	Treaty on the European Union (EU), Maastricht, creation of a Directorate-General of Education & Culture		
1995	3 further countries joined the EU	15 countries (+ Austria, Finland, Sweden)	
1999-2002	Creation of a single currency – the Euro	12 out of the 15 involved in the 'euro zone'	
1999		Brussels III, Belgium	
2000	Treaty of Lisbon - 'European Knowledge Economy', *EUROPE 2010* targets		
2002		Alicante, Spain Frankfurt, Germany	
2004	Large-scale enlargement: 10 further countries join the EU	25 countries (+ Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia)	Luxembourg II, Luxembourg	
2005			
2007	Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU	27 countries	Brussels IV	Parma – Type II, Italy (European Food and Safety Authority); Dunshaughlin, Ireland (European Food and Veterinary Office);
2008			Heraklion, Greece (European

2009		Network and Information Security Agency); Strasbourg, France (various European institutions, incl. EP, EC, Council of Europe); Helsinki, Finland (European Chemicals Agency)
2010	Establishment of *EUROPE 2020* targets	
2011		Manosque, France (EURATOM)
2012		The Hague, The Netherlands (Type II) (various European Institutions) Bad Vilbel, Germany (Type II/III) (European Central Bank)
Date tbc	Brussels V, Belgium (plans to open medium-term)	
2013 (planned)		Copenhagen, Denmark Tallinn, Estonia
2017	Final closure European School Culham, UK	

Source: http://europa.eu/about-eu/index_en.htm (July 2012); http://www.eursc.eu (July 2012); research data.

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