Europeanisation of Latin American Higher Education?

The shaping of the ALCUE Common Area in Higher Education

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Abstract

The international conditions of higher education have never been so much emphasised as in the last decade. This new scenario is shaped especially by the growing influence of external processes in the higher education arena, such as the need for comparable skills in a world with increased flow of labour. As a secular institution committed to producing knowledge, higher education finds itself at the centre of the stage when it is required to play multiple roles as the production (and reproduction) of knowledge are increasingly considered a fundamental instrument for societal development.

The establishment of common regional frameworks in higher education is one of the consequences of the impact of the external conditions in this sector. The intergovernmental European initiative for building a common area through the Bologna Process can be seen as an exemplary case of regionalisation of practices in higher education. Moreover, it has had impacts in other parts of the world, such as in Australia, Africa and Latin America.

In this context, this thesis aims at exploring the unprecedented process of shaping an inter-regional common area in higher education among the European Union and the Latin America and Caribbean regions. The ALCUE common area will be composed by 60 national systems, and should be established by 2015.

The study focuses on two of the participant regions in the ALCUE common area: Latin America and the European Union, with a special interest on the dynamics and rationale of this common area to the Latin partner. The case study is the strategy adopted to explore the ALCUE process. It is analysed in four dimensions: actors, sequence, objectives and instruments. Each dimension is operationalised as a set of questions to be applied in the analysis of the process's trajectory and official documents.

The arguments for analysing this unique arrangement were drawn from the neo-institutionalist approach, as well as from theories of regional integration based on the European perspective. From these theories, three arguments were identified: a *power and interest* argument, a *spillover* argument, and an *institutionalist* argument. What is more, the concept of diffusion of institutional models offers a theoretical support for the understanding of the ALCUE process. In order for diffusion processes to happen, there should be a match among three aspects: outside impulses, internal institutional traditions, and a connection in terms of historical institutional experiences.

The analysis reveals that the ALCUE common area still has a long trajectory to follow until its establishment. The reasons for that can be resumed in four points. First, this process is lead basically by the governmental representatives that compose the Follow-up Committee, without much involvement of other stakeholders. The Committee develops instruments and activities to implement the objectives defined by the Ministerial meetings. Second, there is a stronger involvement of the delegations from European Union and Latin America in the decision-making for the process, at the same, little paticipation and interest of the Caribbean in it. A third factor relates to the analysis of the objectives of the ministerial meetings. There is very little consistency in the ALCUE agenda. Over time, the objectives drawn in the second Ministerial meeting (2005) link to a very little extent to the aims proposed in the original agreement (2000). Finally, the fourth point is on the position of the Committee in restricting the involvement of external initiatives in building the common area, even though they pursue similar goals of bringing the two regions together.

In terms of diffusion of European models to external actors, the analysis points to an existing, yet limited diffusion of European practices. There is a mismatch of internal institutional dynamics in higher education between the two regions. Despite the existing historical traditions between the two regions, and the similar external conditions to which their higher education systems are exposed to, the difference on the higher education practices of these actors, in particular on the regulatory frames within Latin America, is a major aspect in the establishment of this common area. It may represent the most critical condition for this common area to become reality.

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Para a tia Marga,
quem me ensina a nunca desistir.

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Abbreviations

ACP	Africa, Caribbean, Pacific
ALADI	Latin American Association for Integration
ALβAN	High Level Latin American Scholarship
ALCUE	Latin America, Caribbean and the European Union (same as EULAC)
ALFA	Latin America Academic Training
ANECA	National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (Spain)
AUGM	Grupo Montevideo University Association
BP	Bologna Process
BRICs	Brazil, Russia, India and China
CA	Central America
CAN	Andean Community
Caricom	Caribbean Community
CAT	Diploma Supplement (6x4 UELAC Project)
CCU	Council for University Coordination (Spain)
CENEVAL	National Centre for the Assessment of Higher Education (Mexico)
CRE	Council of European Rectors (current EUA)
CRUE	Spanish Rectors' Conference
CSUCA	University Council for Central America
CUIB	Ibero-American University Council
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
DG	Directorate-General
DG AidCo	Directorate-General for External Cooperation Programmes (EuropeAid)
DG EAC	Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission
DG RELEX	External Relations Directorate-General
EC	European Commission
ECLAC	UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EEC	European Economic Community
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ERA	European Research Area
EU	European Union
EUA	European University Association

EuropeAid	Directorate-General for External Cooperation Programmes (DG AidCo)
ESIB	European Student's Union (now ESU)
ESU	European Student's Union (former ESIB)
EULAC	European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean (same as ALCUE)
EU-LA	European Union and Latin America
FLACSO	Latin American School of Sciences
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
FUC	Follow-up Committee
HDI	Human Development Index
HE	Higher education
IESALC	International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
K4D	World Bank's Knowledge for Development Programme
KEI	Knowledge Economy Index
KI	Knowledge Index
LA	Latin America
LS	Lisbon Strategy
MEC	Ministry for Education, Brazil
Mercosur	Common Market of the South
OAS	Organisation of American States (OEA)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OEI	Organisation of Iberoamerican States
PIHE	Partnership for the Internationalisation of Higher Education
SAI	System for Andean Integration
SICA	Integration System for Central America
SICA	System for Academic Credits (6x4 UELAC Project)
UASB	Andean University Simon Bolivar
Udelar	Universidad de la Republica (Uruguay)
UELAC	European Union, Latin American and Caribbean (same as EULAC)
UFRJ	Federal University of Rio de Janeiro
UN	United Nations
UNILA	Federal University of Latin American Integration
UNASUR	South American Community of Nations
UNESCO	United Nation's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

The authority of the central government with the aim of serving national interests has been a factor in most higher education systems over the last 200 years (Clark, 1983). The national government, usually through the Ministry of Education, has been the main actor for structuring, funding, regulating, and coordinating higher education. However, this situation has been undergoing meaningful changes since the second half of the last century. As many recent studies have shown, the conditions under which tertiary education operates are not the same as they used to be a few decades ago, in particular because of the increased social participation plus the impact of external forces on defining the modes of coordination. This is a reality for all levels, including the discipline, departmental, institutional, (national) system, and international.

Especially due to the influence of external factors, the international conditions of higher education have never been so much emphasised. The processes of globalisation of the economy and internationalisation of knowledge are considered key aspects in this setting. As assumed by Maassen and Cloete (2002, p. 32), the global context influences policy makers at the national level to decide upon issues that would also meet the globalisation discourse. Since this new scenario faces challenges in issues such as environment, energy, mobility of labour force, technology transfer, poverty and under-development, the production (over the *re*production) of knowledge are increasingly considered as a fundamental instruments for the improvement of human conditions. As the traditional institution responsible for producing knowledge, higher education finds itself at the centre of the stage.

What is more, the investment in scientific research is considered a key factor in international competitiveness. This reality is affecting principally those countries that are better developed and have interest in international competition; yet it has been argued that this is a tendency for the lesser developed countries to follow as well. In this context, at a system level, it may be claimed that deciding upon the future of higher education has gradually become no longer an isolated decision from the national organism responsible for

education (usually the Ministry or a State Department) and other related departments (for instance, Science and Technology). Instead, these resolutions have been shared with other government sectors at the national state level which are involved in the governance of higher education, or yet with organisms that are placed in different levels of coordination, such as the regional authorities.[1]

In 1999, a special event marked a period of reconfiguration of the international dimension of higher education, when the governmental representatives for education from 29 European countries committed to establishing a compatible framework for higher education in that region. This process, known as the Bologna Process, later defined the purpose of establishing a common area for higher education in the region, known as the European Higher Education Area. According to a recent report, the example of the European intergovernmental integration on a regional dimension[2] has been "echoing" in other parts of the world as well (Zgaga, 2006). The consequences of the effects the Bologna Process has caused outside Europe are so far understudied. In this aspect, it is where this work steps in with a contribution.

This thesis aims at contributing to the debate of the international aspects of higher education, with special interest on an inter-regional arrangement between the European Union and Latin America, in the context of the so-called ALCUE Common Area of Higher Education. The analysis presented here will have the institutionalist perspective as frame of reference. It will, moreover, allude to other theoretical approaches on regional integration in order to contribute for the understanding of this novel inter-regional setting.

The title of the thesis alludes to the idea of Europeanisation. This concept is known to be a matter of concern for the research circle on European integration and institutional dynamics within political science. As it will be further developed in chapter 2, the reference to this term is in line with one of the "faces" of Europeanisation, specifically the diffusion of European models, as argued by Johan P. Olsen (2002, p. 937 – 940). It does not pretend any

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[1] Above all, one can argue that the role of the state has not disappeared, but it has instead assumed a different position. At the same time it is observed in many nations a change from a position of controller into one of supervisor (Van Vught, *apud* Gornitzka, 1999), the central government assumes a more moderative role with regards to higher education. It seems to be sharing with society the responsibility for funding and steering it.

[2] Along this thesis the term *regional* has an intergovernmental connotation. It presupposes a particular area or activity shared among nation states under political conditions. Examples are the European Union and the Mercosur. This idea differs from a more "local" concept of an area within the same country, for example, the Yorkshire region in England.

further conceptual developments with relation to the other four "faces" mentioned by the author, such as political unification or developing institutions at the European level, or the arguments presented by Scharpf (2001), for instance. The question posed in the title should reflect not only the search for an interpretative theoretical position of whether the ALCUE common area can actually be seen as a case of Europeanisation, but also the curiosity about the possible answers that the analysis will bring.

The main objective of this study is to explore the inter-regional relationship based on the case study of a higher education common area between the European Union and the Latin America and Caribbean. The methodology is designed as a qualitative analysis, which will make use of a case study strategy to analyse the policy process for establishing the ALCUE Common Area in Higher Education.

1.2 Topic and purpose

This thesis approaches the inter-regional relationship between the European Union and the Latin America in the area of higher education. It will be studied within the topic of internationalisation of higher education, with emphasis to the political conditions which instigate internationalisation. The object of the study is the process of shaping a common area between the European Union and the Latin America and Caribbean regions, named ALCUE[3]. This project has been referenced in the media as the largest potential higher education common area in the world.

The agreement for the ALCUE Common Area in Higher Education comprises a universe of higher education systems from 60 States:

- *14 Caribbean:* Antigua and Barbados, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Granada, Guiana, Haiti, Jamaica, Santa Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago;

- *27 from the European Union:* Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia,

[3] This common area used to be referred to as EULAC or UELAC. In 2005, at the 8th meeting of the Follow-up Group, it was decided that "ALCUE" would be adopted as the only reference to it.

Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom; and

- *19 Latin American:* Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela[4].

This study will focus on two of the participant regions in the ALCUE common area: Latin America and the European Union, with a special interest on the dynamics and rationale of this common area to the Latin partner. By no means there is the intention of disregarding the Caribbean milieu in this common area. In fact, it can be argued that research on Caribbean higher education is in its infancy, hence should be widely explored. Unfortunately, matters of time and availability of data resources restrict the analysis to the Latin American and European[5] regions.

The diversity among the ALCUE countries may be seen as the biggest challenge for the accomplishment of the common area in higher education. The disparities are very evident, both in terms of the structure of their higher education systems as in their politico-economical situation. Particularly in Latin America, the differences in the higher education arena are likely to slow the accomplishment of an inter-regional arrangement. It happens because, first, the region is faced with the need to overcome the internal variety within Latin America. For example, whereas countries like Brazil show that 87% of its undergraduate students are enrolled in over 2000 private higher education institutions, its neighbour Uruguay enrols 82% of its undergraduate students in the only public institution in the country, the University of the Republic (Udelar). Second, Latin America does not have a strong tradition of cooperation in higher education in a broad regional common framework or mobility programme similar to the European experiences, such as a structure for credit transfer (ECTS), or a mobility programme (Erasmus), as it will be approached in Chapter 3.

What is more, this common area cannot be understood without reference to the political context of the two regions analysed. On the one hand, the European Union is a

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[4] The Dominican Republic may be considered as a Caribbean nation in different classifications. This list of participating countries is based on data available at the III Meeting for EULAC Ministers of Education (postponed). The data on the ALCUE Portal (www.alcue.net) includes Puerto Rico, which is a United States independent territory, and should be (politically) classified as North America.

[5] Along this thesis, "European" may also refer to European Union, because it is composed by European countries.

well-structured and institutionalised political arrangement. On the other, regional integration is current topic in the agenda of most Latin American countries, especially when it comes to reducing tariffs and taxes to improve trade, yet there appears to be a while until a strong integration can become concrete in the region. Recent developments in South America's political and economical arenas have motivated a challenging endeavour of integrating the main sub-regional (trade) blocks, the Common Market of South (Mercosur) and the Andean Community (CAN), in a single entity. The prospective Union of South American Nations (UNISA) is understood as an advance to Latin American integration. Similarly, Central American countries have established an institutional setting to promote integration, the Central American Integration System (SICA).

In 1999, the First Summit between the Heads of States and Government of European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean identified that fostering a co-operation in higher education was a special challenge for the participant regions (Declaration of Rio de Janeiro, 1999). In the following year, 48 Ministers of Education from the three regions established in France an action framework for an emergent common area in higher education (Declaration of Paris, 2000). It can be assumed, therefore, that higher education was one of the inter-regional decisions articulated with the objective of bringing these two regions closer in a strategic partnership. Why higher education was stressed and how it can benefit this partnership is also a major curiosity of this work.

This thesis takes as a starting point that these efforts of inter-regional integration cannot be seen in isolation from the development of regional arrangement in higher education within Europe, i.e. development of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Provided that the EHEA represents an unprecedented process of change in European higher education, this thesis will also approach how this process towards constructing a common area in European higher education has had consequences for the EU's cooperation with Latin American countries in this policy area.

Hence, the main objective of this thesis is to analyse the contours of a higher education common area between the European Union and the Latin America and Caribbean. The analysis will address the tracing of the political process involved in establishing and developing the ALCUE common area. In order to achieve the main objective, the analysis follows the trajectory of:

(a) analyse the evolution of the ALCUE common higher education area, and identify who its actors are and what do they want;

(b) observe the experience of similar intergovernmental agreements in common higher education areas, specially the EHEA, and see how it compares; and

(c) look at the traditional relationship between the European Union and Latin America, and see how the ALCUE process can relate to it.

1.3 Analytical framework and research questions

This study proposes the analysis of an inter-regional arrangement which could be seen as a new form of internationalisation of higher education. Its novelty is supported based on the fact it does not analyse policies to promote the international dimension in a national or state level, it neither searches for the best practices (in terms of information sharing, mobility programmes, funding schemes, research networks), which are often necessary to improve the institutional work with regards to its international dimension. As the text will reveal in the next chapters, the ALCUE process appears to be closely linked to the political arena at an intergovernmental level. There is no evidence in the literature of such ambitious endeavour proposed by two very diverse actors placed above the national level of coordination.

Due to this novel feature, the analytical framework used to explore the ALCUE common area was based on theories of regional integration (Cini, 2003; Jensen, 2003) and the institutionalist theory (Olsen, 2002, 2007; March and Olsen, 1989, 1984; Gornitzka, 1999). The institutional theory explores how endogenous institutional features, such as values, meanings, behaviour, preferences, are determining aspects to understanding how organisations change and adapt to norms and beliefs in their environments (March and Olsen, 1984, 1989; Gornitzka, 1999). Considering the close sequence of events of the Bologna Process, the first meeting between the heads of state of the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the launching of the ALCUE common area, it is very likely that the idea of the European common area had influenced the decision over the ALCUE. The diffusion of European models is defined by Olsen (2002) as one of the uses of Europeanisation. Based on his theoretical presentation of exporting European institutions, this thesis suggests a

framework for understanding the diffusion patterns of (European) regional arrangements in higher education.

Observing the aspects pointed out above, this study has the following main research question:

How can the attempt of building a common area between the European Union and Latin America be interpreted*?*

The following subsequent questions were developed to guide the study:

- Why did the ALCUE agreement come about and what factors determined its shaping and content?

- How did the past experience and traditions of cooperation between Europe and Latin America impact on the ALCUE process?

- Should the ALCUE agreement be seen as a way for the EU to try to diffuse a European "success" and a particular form of regional arrangement in higher education?

- And if so, what was the political process that carried the attempt to "spread" this particular form of regional higher education cooperation to the Latin American countries?

- Or is this agreement the result of coincidence – more determined by failure to come to a trade agreement between the two regions than by a desire to export the Bologna model to other parts of the world?

1.4 Motives and potential significance

The little knowledge available on Latin American higher education is the main motive which inspires this project. The amount of research on tertiary education conducted in those countries is lower than in other parts of the world[6]. Moreover, it is lower than the other levels of education, to be precise basic and secondary. It is known indeed that scholars in the region from different fields have been analysing higher education for a few decades. The academic contributions of José Joaquin Brunner, Carmen Garcia Gaudilla, Rollin Kent,

[6] By using the Portuguese B-ON platform to search for texts with reference to "Latin America" AND "higher education" in the Web of Science platform (ISI), it returned 71 texts. As a contrast, the similar search replacing "Latin America" with "European" resulted in 682 hits. The platform shows results in foreign languages.

Simon Schwartzman, to mention a few, illustrate that, yes, it has been conducted research on higher education in Latin America. What is more, there are several studies on a system level which are available through the UNESCO's International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC, 2007). However, because there is a considerable lack of knowledge about the situation of the region, one may be inclined to assume that research in higher education in Latin America is conducted either by the individual interest of social scientists, mostly sociologists, or on behalf of international organisations such as UNESCO, OECD, or the World Bank.

On a personal note, there is the impression that Latin American universities are not well equipped to handle internationalisation. This notion is connected to a previous professional familiarity, at the international office of a research-led university in South Brazil, and it seems to be reassured by the conclusions of a study conducted by Hans De Wit and colleagues (2005). The experience revealed a rather disappointing picture: the international office was not structured with appropriated physical space, budget or personal; its activities were little known by the central administration and mostly based on large number of latent bilateral agreements; the small number of exchanges programmes was mostly conducted by the dedication of a couple of professors with an international academic background; above all, there was a lack of staff with knowledge of any foreign language to carry out international activities.

Whether this is the reality of other international offices in Latin American institutions, it represents that these institutions are unprepared to face the changes and challenges globalisation and the knowledge society pose to higher education systems worldwide. However, this study does not focus on the institutional level. The scope of the project clearly would not allow generalisations about the region, let alone the institutions. Nonetheless, it is expected to have some significance for the future study of the internationalisation first in the Latin America region, then in similar developing countries.

The ALCUE common area can be seen as the attempt for Latin American systems to insert themselves in the international scenario of higher education, encouraged by their governments (and the European Union). What this study may reveal as well is a description of the rationale for internationalisation in a region composed only by developing countries, a field rarely explored. It can later generate resourceful research questions in terms of

regional integration and legitimacy of internationalisation practices in the systems of higher education in developing countries.

Conversely, the experience of the European Higher Education Area, through the Bologna Process and initiatives such as Erasmus, can be seen as models to be either followed by or *exported to*, other regions of the world. All of the EU states participating in the ALCUE are signatories of the Bologna Process, and have been implementing the objectives to reach the EHEA. In the same spirit of regional integration, yet in a minor scale, Latin American and Caribbean higher education systems have been developing initiatives to enhance regional closeness. Examples of these initiatives are the Project Tuning Education Structures Latin America (2007), and the 6x4 EULAC project (6x4 UELAC, 2004). Above all, it is known that the experience of the EHEA has made an impact in other regions of the world (Zgaga, 2007). Therefore, when pondering upon the ongoing European practice, and the Latin American tentative efforts for intra-regional cooperation, it may be interesting to understand what lessons can be shared and perhaps learned.

Apart from the focus on Latin American higher education, this thesis aims at offering an insight on the inter-regional process in higher education. Because of its exploratory character, plus the novelty of the theme, its contribution may be limited in many ways. Great efforts were made in terms of analytical understanding of this specific intergovernmental process, but they are just a small step into a full understanding of this scenario. Still, it is believed it may provoke a discussion on similar arrangements in other regions of the world.

Finally, this study is also expected to be a modest contribution to the work of the ALCUE follow-up committee as a reference tool – and constructive criticism – for developing effective actions with regards to the future of the ALCUE process.

1.5 Research design and methodological choices

This thesis is designed and conducted observing a qualitative approach (Bleikie, 2000; Marshall and Rossman, 2006). As Marshall and Rossman (2006) clarify, the use of qualitative research designs represents a concern for the quality, depth, and richness in the research findings, while taking into account the context, setting, and the participants' frame of reference.

It is widely known that the two main approaches in knowledge production, qualitative and quantitative, are applied to guarantee the scientific value and the legitimacy of academic research. Researchers across different fields, mostly in the social sciences, have been debating the purpose of each approach, and questioning their validity (Bleikie, 2000); others have proposed the combined use of both approaches (Newman and Benz, 1989). According to Norman Bleikie (2000), a qualitative analysis is generally applied with the aim of observing and interpreting a certain social phenomena in depth. It requires from the researcher openness and flexibility during the research process, focus on the social process and the concern with building theory. On the other hand, the design of a quantitative study emphasises statistical analysis in a structured empirical observation. Typical researchers conducting a quantitative analysis are usually concerned with measuring concepts, quantifying data and make generalisations over the research findings.

This study is exploratory in purpose. Exploratory research implies in the attempt to develop an initial description or an understanding of a social phenomenon (Bleikie, 2000). An exploratory objective seems appropriate to analyse this phenomena because the literature review and documental research on-line demonstrate that the ALCUE process has not been neither scientifically analysed nor cited to date. Above all, an inter-regional setting in higher education symbolises a rather recent development, which has seldom been approached. With this in mind, it becomes necessary to offer an initial contribution to the phenomena, perhaps as a reference to setting grounds for further research and theory-building on inter-regionalism arrangements in higher education. Despite the exploratory purpose, this thesis presents a clear descriptive component on the higher education programmes and policies these two regions share.

The case study is the research strategy selected to collect and analyse data. The literature on research methodology in social sciences tends to highlight the little scientific accuracy of the case study. Another concern is with the possible subjective intervention of the researcher. However, the works of Robert Yin (1989, 2003), and to a certain point Bleikie (2000), reaffirm the legitimate use of this strategy for scientific research. Among the features of case studies, the authors emphasise: the investigator's little control over the events; their suitability for studies with a large variety of evidence, and for the analysis of contemporary happenings. What is more, case studies are appropriate strategies for

conducting studies with explorative purposes (Yin, 1989, p. 13-14), which, again, fits to the objective of this thesis.

Therefore, the ALCUE common area is the single case study adopted for the discussion of inter-regional integration between Latin America and the European Union. It will be done by tracing this common area's policy process. Note that the analysis was developed observing the theoretical framework of institutionalism, which has been briefly introduced above and will be further elaborated in Chapter 2.

1.5.1 Tracing the process

This study proposes to trace the policy process of this agreement, with the intent to explore the development of the ALCUE process. To do so, four core features are established to guide the analysis: actors, objectives, instruments, and sequence. These aspects are largely based on the set of categories for policy analysis conceived by Åse Gornitzka (1999, p. 15-22). Each dimension is operationalised as a set of questions to be applied in the analysis of the process's documents (cf. Table 1.1). However, at the same time, it can be observed that the nature of the four aspects outline a basic framework of inquiry: "who", "what", "how", and "when".

As a start, the first dimension inquires about the *actors* of the ALCUE process. The purpose is to identify who the subjects participating in the process are and what are their intentions. The prospect with identifying the "who's" is to personify the decisions taken on the establishment and advance of the process, hence avoiding idea it has been shaped due to environmental forces, not decision-making. What is more, the information on the actors may reveal underlying aspects in process that are not clear in the text of the official documents and minutes analysed.

Because of the original features of this inter-regional agreement signed by a ministers on education on the names of a geographical region and a supranational body, there is a great deal of uncertainty in the choice of the most suitable terms to refer to the participants of the ALCUE. Therefore, with regards to the terminology, the use "actors" means a deliberate simplification of the participant entities of the ALCUE, i.e. the European Union and the Latin America, without the assumption of a unified actor.

Second, by means of temporal lenses, the *sequence* of the process can offer the idea of coherence and consistency along its evolution. It may also show the linkages with another arenas and programmes. Besides, in accordance to the institutional theory, learning about the sequence of a phenomenon demonstrates its path-dependency, that is roughly to say, that what has happened in the past may influence on the actions of the present.

Third, the process' *objectives* can reveal not only the intents of the actors, but also point out the expected outcomes and problems to be solved or faced. Identifying the *instruments* may clarify the way in which policy intentions were transformed into strategies and actions. Examples of instruments expected to be found are: working structure, programmes, projects, etc.

A number of questions are elaborated to structure the study. The findings will be presented in Chapters 3 (actors), 4 (sequence) and 5 (objectives and instruments), following the set up below.

Table 1.1 Process analysis observing an institutionalist approach

Dimensions	Questions
Actors	Who is involved in the process? What are their interests?
Sequence	What are the main events in this process? To what extent is this process linked to other policy fields and social trends?
Objectives	What are its expected outcomes? To what extent they reflect institutional intentions? What aspects was this policy designed to address or reconsider?
Instruments	How are the policy objectives to be achieved? How was their implementation process designed?

Source: Adapted from Gornitzka (1999).

The data for analysis was gathered according to on-line availability in the ALCUE Portal (www.alcue.net), as well as from contacting the ALCUE Technical Secretariat and the selected Ministries of Education. A total of 16 official documents were analysed. They are:

- 2 declarations from ALCUE ministerial meetings (Declaration of Paris, 2000; Declaration of Mexico, 2005);

- 8 minutes from the Follow-Up Committee (FUC) meetings (ALCUE FUC 2001, 2002a, 2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006, 2007)

- 2 Action plans (2002-2004 and 2005-2008) (ALCUE Plan, 2002; ALCUE strategies, 2005).

- 4 Declarations from the ALCUE Heads of States meetings (Declaration of Rio, 1999; Political Declaration of Madrid, 2002; Declaration of Guadalajara, 2004, Declaration of Vienna, 2006).

What is more, some complementary data was collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives of the Latin American actors involved in the FUC: Brazil, Mexico and Nicaragua. Three semi-structured interviews were conducted by on-line telephone calls[7] with governmental representatives in the education arena. The interviews were carried out either in Portuguese or Spanish, and the choice of the language was usually agreed with the interviewees. The eventual quotes presented in the thesis were translated into English. The questions proposed are conscious of the institutionalist approach.

Finally, the time frame of the case is nine years, from 1999 until 2008.

1.6 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is composed of 6 chapters. It began with *Chapter 1 – Introduction*, which already introduced the background and motives for this study.

Chapter 2 – Literature review and theoretical framework provides the conceptual and theoretical lenses to conduct the analysis of the case study.

Chapter 3 – Towards the ALCUE Process offers an overview of the two participant regions that are approached in this work – European Union and Latin America. With a special attention to the Latin partner, the chapter will explore the political, social and higher education aspects of the states that compose the region.

Chapter 4 – The relationship between the European Union and Latin America focuses on the antecedent happenings to the case study. It explores their historical and political relationship to understand the motives which lead to the common area.

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[7] Interviews were conducted through programmes such as Skype and VoipDiscount, and recorded with the aid of external voice recorders.

Chapter 5 – The ALCUE Common Area in Higher Education presents the analysis of the process. It explores the objectives, structure and instruments developed in order to make this agreement a reality. Last, it offers a comparative overview between the evolution of this common area and the EHEA process.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion presents the results based on the research questions. It links the empirical findings to the framework presented in *Chapter 2*. Also, it presents some suggestions for the ALCUE Follow-Up Committee.

2 Literature review and analytical framework

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter aims at developing conceptual and theoretical supports to understand the dynamics of inter-regional integration and change in the higher education arena. The analytical framework proposed is mindful of a neo-institutionalist perspective[8], with emphasis on the aspects of organisational change (March and Olsen, 1984, 1989; Olsen, 2002, 2007; Gornitzka, 1999, 2007). This theoretical approach sees institutions as "a collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in face of the turnover of individuals and changing external circumstances" (Olsen, 2007, p. 3).

The new institutionalism offers a number of theoretical assumptions and hypothese concerning the relations among institutional characteristics, performance, change, and the wider social context of politics. As indicated by Johan P. Olsen (2007, p. 3), "core assumptions of the new institutionalism are that institutions create elements of order and predictability in political life, have durable and independent effect, and some robustness towards individual actors and environments". By highlighting the autonomous and endogenous aspects of institutions, this theory explores the way that values, meanings, behaviour, and preferences are determining aspects to understanding how organisations adapt to norms and beliefs in their environments (March & Olsen, 1984, 1989; Gornitzka, 1999). Moreover, this approach highlights the importance of learning the sequence of the events in a certain phenomena. A temporal relationship would imply that the features of the current institutional setting depend on the current and the historical path of the institutional development (March & Olsen, 1989, 1998).

Provided that inter-regional arrangements in higher education are a rather new phenomenon, this work explores theories of European integration in order to understand the

[8] The "new" institutionalism contrasts to an "older" institutionalist view, which assumed that political life is organised based on formal regulations, such as policy making, and external regulation of behaviour. The novel view, on its turn, emphasises the behavioural aspects of political life (Olsen, 2007).

rationale for inter-regionalism in the ALCUE process. The arguments drawn from those perspectives may help to explain how this process can be conceived at the system level, or even broader, why and how inter-regional agreements happen in the first place.

The chapter is organised as follows: subchapters 2.2 and 2.3 will provide background for the understanding of the dynamics of the (inter-) regional integration. It will do so by first approaching the main concepts related to the international dimension of higher education, such as globalisation, internationalisation (2.2), followed by a discussion on inter- and regional integration, and Europeanisation (2.3). In the sequence, subchapter 2.4 will discuss the idea of exporting models to other actors, based on the European case.

2.1.1 One step back: the higher education system

This work focuses on the transformations the ALCUE common area as an inter-regional process may bring to Latin American higher education on a system level. Talking about higher education means looking at a unique institution that is primary concerned with *knowledge* (Clark, 1983). Moreover, the relevance of higher education can be emphasised by its four major functions: the formation and diffusion of ideology, the selection of dominant elites, the production of knowledge and the training of skilled labour force (Castells, 2002).

The fundamental concept of higher education *system*, as understood when composing this thesis, is based on the work of Burton Clark (1983). Clark refers to higher education system as an aggregate of formal entities, the sum of many individual different types of organisations (colleges, universities, institutes), together with a governmental body and the part of society who is engaged to it, such as committees, executives, trustees, managers, professors, students. This definition can vary, as the "boundaries" for defining higher education system are loose in Clark's conception. Depending on the analytical context, they may expand and include external actors, such as the corporations, the industry, and the labour market.

The clarification above also refers to other two essential concepts in higher education. First, higher education *institutions* are many individual types of institutions that deal with knowledge through teaching, learning and research; and second, *stakeholders* are understood as the parts of society engaged to higher education – in which the government and external actors are included.

In his seminal work, Burton Clark (1983) specifies that higher education systems are organised basically around three elements: a *work* structure where tasks are developed, the individuals' set of *beliefs*, ideologies and values, and *authority*, the distribution of legitimate power. The coordination of these elements depends on each system's powered structure of the interest groups. A few decades ago Clark defined three ideal 'coordinators' for higher education systems: the state, the academics and the market. Their relationship was imagined as a triangular form (Clark, 1983, p. 147). Recent studies have reinterpreted Clark's "triangle of coordination" in an attempt to include the modern transformations on higher education, in particular those related to global processes (Maassen & Cloete, 2002): the state gives place to governmental policy, the institutions as a whole assume the power once belonged only to academics, and the society embraces the market, as well as other stakeholders. Another new element is the influence of forces that are external to the system – previously unimagined by Clark back in the early 80's.

2.2 Characterising the global and the international in higher education

Higher education has been undergoing meaningful changes due to demands from a new international environment. This scenario is shaped by complex global processes, which are essentially characterised by flows of trade, capital, and people around the globe, as well as the weakening of the power of the nation state (Held and McGrew, 2000; Enders, 2004). Consequently, it can be observed an increased importance of knowledge as driver for development and growth in the context for global economy, inasmuch as the needs of economy recognised research as a strategic tool to enhance productivity and competitiveness (Castells, 2002; World Bank, 2002).

Research in social sciences has tried to define and analyse the impact of globalisation in remodelling social structures in many disciplines, including recent approaches specific to higher education (see, for example, the works of Held & McGrew, 2000; Castells, 2000; Douglas, 2005; Garcia Canclini, 2003; Marginson & Wende, 2007; Scott 1998, 2003; Beerkens, 2004). However, as Enders (2004) points out, globalisation has multiple meanings and linkages. It can mean (and usually does) different things for different people. Eric Beerkens discusses some of the viewpoints on globalisation and presents an

elaborated conceptualisation of this phenomenon[9]. Based on aspects of power, economy, identity, and geopolitics, the author understands globalisation as

a process in which basic social arrangements (like power, culture, markets, politics, rights, values, norms, ideology, identity, citizenship, solidarity) become disembedded from their spatial context (mainly the nation-state) due to the acceleration, massification, flexibilisation, diffusion, and expansion of transnational flows of people, products, finances, images and information." (Beerkens, 2004, p. 13).

In view of that, it can be argued that globalisation is a comprehensive scenario in which the transnational integration of fields such as economy, trade, and culture influence 'social arrangements' and its functions. Therefore, the complexity of the process could be interpreted as a consequence of the expanded 'flows', that is to say, a result of the way those exchanges are diffused and welcomed.

Whereas the concept of globalisation highlights the influence of the growing international exchanges in society, the idea of internationalisation suggests a nation-state centred perspective. It presupposes the existence of countries and nation-states as relevant entities (Beerkens, 2004; Gornitzka *et al*, 2003; Wende, forthcoming). Thus, internationalisation processes are mediated and modified by existing national institutions, policies and practices (Gornitzka *et al*, 2003), and consist of inter-connections between two or more nations, sometimes assuming an organised regional form. Because internationalisation has been based on existing national structures, it is expected to be a process more diverse in nature and coordination than globalisation. In the case, more coordinated arrangements may suggest a greater steering capacity (Wende, forthcoming) and consequently assume more strategic features. Motives underlying internationalisation can vary, for instance, from the need to be responsive to the pressures of globalisation (Held & McGrew, 2000; Wende, 2007), increase competitiveness (Castells, 2001), forge transnational reputation and prestige to be recognised internationally, or yet to follow an unsaid norm which defines that those who do not internationalise will simply be "lagging behind".

Moving the discussion to the higher education arena, Jürgen Enders (2004) remarks that internationalisation has lead higher education to rethink its social, cultural and economic roles, as well as its configuration in the nation state. What is more, it has

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[9] For a detailed analysis, refer to Chapter 2 – *Globalisation and higher education* (Beerkens, 2004).

instigated a whole wave of reforms and re-structuring of systems, due to the exposure to good practices and models from other nations. In the last decade the practice of bi-lateral agreements for exchange and research, a common internationalisation strategy in universities, has been paralleled by larger and more complex forms of regional integration, such as common areas or institutional networks. Among those, The European Area in Higher Education (EHEA), started with the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) and conducted by the Bologna Process, is considered as the most successful example of intergovernmental setting in higher education[10].

However, regional integration in different arenas has recently expanded into forms of *inter-regional* arrangements, including in higher education. This new and complex configuration represents more theoretical challenges to the study of institutional mutual adaptation and co-existence. The "many faces" of regional arrangements will be discussed in the following.

2.3 Regional and inter-regional integration

Regionalism is broadly understood as a form of internationalisation used to strengthen geographically close nations to better perform before the demands of international actors, other regional arrangements, or globalisation. What is more, it may also be led by the internal pressures of its member-states (Smith, 2003, p. 242). Studies on the topic tend to highlight its link to globalisation. For instance, according to Held and McGrew (2000), international cooperation and coordination of national policies became necessary arguments for managing the consequences of a globalising world. Manuel Castells (2000) argues that globalisation stimulates regional dependence, yet it can also be translated as a responsive process to the pressures of globalisation. Moreover, rationales for regional cooperation may refer to the common will to consolidate already existing relationships among states, promote peace, solve issues related to a particular area (trade, for example), and diffuse ideologies.

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[10] The trajectory to design the European Higher Education Area will be analysed in Chapter 3.

To illustrate, Maurice Doctor (2007) analyses the efforts for establishing an inter-regional trade agreement between the European Union and the Mercosur. The author provides a rich discussion of the building of theoretical and conceptual basis for the analysis of inter-regional arrangements, as well as underlines the conceptual differences between regionalisation, regionalism and inter-regionalism. On the one hand, *regionalisation* consists of a trade-driven, often bottom-up process of intensifying interaction led by non-state actors. On the other hand, *regionalism* is the conscious policy of states, a top-down process, seeking greater regional cooperation on a range of issues. Finally, he highlights the strategic motives for inter-regionalism in the context of trade:

inter-regionalism is the deliberate response from the states to external challenges of globalisation and regionalisation and therefore, a strategy employed to help balance the shift power from states to markets as well as to help states minimize the risks associated with the uncertain conditions of economic globalisation (Doctor, 2007, p. 288).

Despite the impact of the external conditions highlighted in the definitions above, internal aspects are believed to largely influence the shaping and institutionalisation of inter-regional agreements. If regional integration alone represents a complicated process to be managed, complexities take even higher proportions *inter*-regionally. It is expected that the pluralism of voices, interests, meanings, and values in an inter-regional arrangement become aspects difficult to manage. Claiming that nation-states with closer references, beliefs and cognitions tend to be located geographically close to each other, it can be inferred that the actors in a inter-regional setting may be further distant, either geographically or cognitively, therefore consolidating inter-regional arrangements would request from the actors an outstanding amount of effort and commitment.

Nonetheless, as countries start to become at the same time more fragmented and arranged in regional alliances[11], the knowledge on the matter of integration deepens the discussion and calls for new typologies and arguments. In the field of International Relations, a group of German scholars have developed an expressive contribution in terms of theoretical approach to inter-regionalism, particularly expressed on the works of Ralf Roloff, Heiner Hänggi and Jürgen Rüland. From the standpoint of main schools of thought in International Relations (Rüland, 2003), inter-regionalism may be understood as in three

[11] Even though nation-states are more integrated within regional agreements, regionalism may also be seen as a division from other blocks, or even as an exclusive grouping within a continent. The two sub-regional settings in South America, the Andean Community and the Mercosur, can illustrate the continent's paradox.

different arguments. Initially, a *realist* approach understands that states use alliances as a mean to balance and maintain power in the dynamics of regional rivalry. In the *liberal institutional* approach, states also use co-operative efforts to accommodate self-interests, however they do so by building institutions that can manage the resulting complex inter-dependence. Lastly, the *social constructivist* argument regards that international system as guided by social interests, instead of material ones, therefore regions aim at build a collective identity through inter-regional interaction (Rüland, 2002; Loewen, 2003).

In spite of this contribution from the international relations, still it has been argued that research about inter-regionalism is on its infancy (Doctor, 2007). Attempts to offer a conceptual account on inter-regional settings in the dynamics of higher education require a deeper and longer analysis, which is out of the scope of this thesis. Therefore, in order to offer an analytical tool for exploring the ALCUE process, a possible framework was drawn from looking at the process of European integration and the theoretical accounts which interpret it.

As one of the actors of this process, the European Union is probably the most widely known example of regional cooperation. It has been defined as a novel system of governance that instigates intergovernmental collaboration to address collective and trans-border issues (Held & McGrew, 2000, p. 12). One of its more important features is the presence of a regulatory framework (a Court), which regulates and contributed for the creation of permanent institutions at the supranational level. The background of the "Europeanisation" of governing functions dates back to the early economical integration of Europe in the 50's (Scharpf, 2001). However, it was the establishment of a Union in 1992 that came to consolidate this region's experience as a unique regional agreement.

Intergovernmentalism is one of the arguments developed to understand the process of European integration. Granted it is characterised by state-centrism, this theory imagines states as rational unitary actions in co-operation, more interested in sharing their sovereignty rather than transferring national power to a supranational actor (Cini, 2003). According to Michelle Cini, (2003, p. 95), intergovernmentalists believe that "co-operation has nothing to do with ideology or idealism, but it is founded on the rational conduct of governments as they seek to deal with the policy issues that confront them". Therefore, the intergovernmental position highlights that the main promoters of regional integration is the state's search for power and interests.

Another possibility to look into regionalism derives from elements in the neo-functionalist theory. The neo-functionalism, or the theory of regional integration, is another attempt to understand the process of European integration, which was developed in the 50's. The core neo-functionalist premise is the effect of *spillovers*, that is to say, the assumption that "one policy area may create pressures for another policy area, thus leading to further integration" (p. 81). Therefore, it is expected that the cooperation in one field will trigger cooperation in the other, and that this gradual dependency among the parties would lead to regional integration. According to Jensen (2003, p. 84), a key question for neo-functionalists is whether and how economic integration may lead to political integration. In the case of ALCUE, as a cultural agreement, the spillover argument may be suitable to interpret what can be the role of a cultural arrangement in eventually causing or solidifying economic then political cooperation above the existing bi-lateral arrangements, as expected by the EU-LAC Heads of States (Declaration of Rio, 1999).

Even though the two perspectives above approach the issues of, on the one side, power and interests and, on the other, of expectations of spillovers of cooperation from one arena to the other, they do not seem to acknowledge a relevant aspect in the ALCUE process: the existing historical and cultural ties between the two regions. Hence, the institutionalist theory may also provide an argument for the interpretation of this inter-regional arrangement.

By referring to the idea of Europeanisation as a consequence of European integration, Johan Olsen (2002) stresses the need for analysing whether and how it can explain the emergence, development and impacts of institutions at the European level as an institutionally-oriented system of governance. Based on this, the author would argue that the dynamics of regional integration in general can be understood as a set of processes of change happening inside and among its institutions, with the anticipation of resilience and robustness from the domestic, i.e. national, institutional structures. Nonetheless, as the developments within the European Union lead to a more institutionalised organisation, the practices considered successful by foreign actors tend to be seen as models to be copied.

2.4 Exporting European models

Johan P. Olsen distinguishes five 'uses' for the idea of Europeanisation (2002, p. 923 – 924): a the project for political unification, changes in the external boundaries, institutional-building at a European level, the influence of the European level in the nation systems of governance, and the diffusion of European models to other parts of the world.

Highlighted as one of the forms in which the process of European integration is presented in Olsen's conception, his argument on the exporting of European models to external actors may throw some light on the transformations happening in the European higher education. The choice of this theoretical angle can be spelled out in two aspects. First, the idea of a common framework in higher became very popular within governments after the signature of the Bologna Declaration, in 1999. Even though some sub-regional settings, such as the Andean Community, have shown interest in adopting a mutual educational framework, these intentions only seem to be transformed into action with and after the Bologna Process. In order to illustrate it, the Andean Community has very recently launched a document promoting a regional higher education space (Declaration of Lima, 2007). Second, in hand with the 'spillover' argument above, importing a successful model would optimise efforts for a greater integration in other areas as well. Hence, the EHEA can be regarded as an attractive model experience which has spread out to other parts of the world.

The literature on diffusion presents two main theoretical arguments. On the one hand, diffusion processes are *over-rationalised*, to the extent that recipients rationally choose the models to be adopted based on the virtues of innovations. On the other hand, an *under-rationalised* account sees the contact to major adopters generates diffusion as they are somehow "contaminated" by the idea (Strang & Macy, 2001; Gornitzka, 2007).

An institutional perspective would consider that diffusion "will be affected by the interaction between outside impulses and internal institutional traditions, and historical experiences" (Olsen, 2002, p. 938). In other words, the matching of domestic normative traditions, plus experiences that are external to the institutional environment, as well as the path-dependent component will define to what extent models can be exported to other actors. Considering that those aspects are liable to be configured differently both in the spreading model and its recipient, it becomes very unlikely that the recipient obtain a perfect copy of the original model.

What is more, diffusion can be accelerated by cultural and interactive factors (Strang & Meyer, 1993). Cultural similarities among the two parts may influence on the speed of dissemination because the shared values are expected to facilitate the homogenisation of structures. Similarly, the levels of interaction between previous and future recipients can define how the model will be assimilated. This relationship may compose the level of social relevance and attractiveness of the model. Quoting Strang and Meyer (1993, p. 488), "when the adoption is socially meaningful, it is common to think of actors as making different choices cognitively available to each other, developing shared understanding, and exploring the consequences of innovation through each other's experience".

However, as DiMaggio and Powel (1983) point out, organisations respond to an environment of responses. They are not static entities, but keep adapting and changing – looking for better ways to exist. At the same time, paradoxically, institutionalism emphasizes the endogenous nature and social construction of institutions, which tend to be relatively robust to change and innovation (Olsen, 2007, Gornitzka, 2007).

The background to the EULAC process suggests that this agreement was initiated by political action. As shown in Chapter 1, the process was initiated as a joint decision from the heads of states, followed by a ministerial meeting. It has been argued that decision-making at the international level usually takes place based on shared interests of powerful actors who seek mutually-satisfactory conclusions that will maximise the attainment of separate national objectives (March and Olsen, 1998). Actors and institutions who intend to learn in a changing world create connections and subordinate individual intentions to their interactions. Therefore, if this is the case, the analysis of the ALCUE common area will reveal a scenario in which the powerful subjects from the European Union would stimulate its Latin partners to adopt the existing common European structures in higher education. On the other hand, actors from non-European national systems may have envisaged the adoption of the European model as a sign of good-practice which could bring positive developments to the higher education in their country, and consequently to the cooperation with the European Union as a whole. Hence, by being good integrationists, Latin Americans may be looking for ways to enhance their participation in the international scene, and benefit from cooperation in subjects other than education (*spillover* argument).

However, despite the underlying rationales for adopting innovations on an intergovernmental dimension, decision-making processes in this context happen above the

national level, and are usually “top-down”. It has been argued that policies conceived at a supra-national level are likely to become a domestic policy to be adapted and implemented. Concerning the impact of top-down policies on the lower levels, Åse Gornitzka highlights the need for a normative match. That is to say, the “congruence between the values and beliefs underlying a proposed programme or policy and the identity and traditions of the organisations” (Gornitzka, 1999, p. 10) determines to what extent the institutions will react to innovation.

Above all, innovations need organised action in order to be assimilated in an organisation. According to institutional perspective, the development of capacity for action, that is to say, competencies in the service of existing institutions and objectives, becomes a stabilising force within an institution (March & Olsen, 1989). Organised capacity for action not only helps individuals to have a more homogeneous interpretation of events, but it also creates foundations for new objectives and develops capabilities for mutual engagement (March and Olsen, 1998). Mutual engagement contributes to internal consistency, which is an important means of intra-institutional coordination and increased organisational ability (DiMaggio & Powel, 1983, p. 155).

Finally, whether they have the objective of solving uncertainties, forge legitimacy, solve power disputes, imitate a model, or improve mutual understanding, innovations are the equivalent of institutional change. In principle, changes are attempts to institutionalise practices. As a final word, March and Olsen (1998, p. 948) explain that

Institutionalization refers to the emergence of institutions and individual behaviours within them. The process involves the development of practices and rules in the context of using them and has earned a variety of labels, including structuration and routinization, which refer to the development of codes of meaning, ways of reasoning, and accounts in the context of acting on them.

2.5 Conclusion

Inter-regional integration is a complex process which aims at responding to the global processes of competition, globalisation, prestige, or other forms of regionalisation. The various adaptations needed for the establishment of such type of intergovernmental arrangement depend on the level of institutionalisation of practices that are being shared, or even exported among its participating members.

In this chapter, the elaboration of a framework for the understanding of inter-regional processes in higher education relied on the contribution of theories about European integration, which allowed the formulation of three arguments. First of all, the *power and interest argument*, derived from the intergovernmentalism, asserts that inter-regionalism is lead by the self-interest of the participants, who are willing to share their power and experience in the higher education arena in order to guarantee a stronger (or leading) position in the broader international scenario in the field. Second, based on the neo-functionalism, the *spillover argument* states that a cultural agreement, i.e. a common area in the field of higher education, would be expected to trigger and eventually solidify cooperation in other areas (economy and politics), and that the gradual mutual dependency will lead to cooperation above the existing bi-lateral arrangements. Lastly, offering a perspective that will include the traditional connection between the Latin America and the EU, the *institutionalist argument* leads to the understanding that the dynamics of regional integration can be understood as a set of processes of change happening inside and among its institutions, conditioned to the expression of values and meanings of its partners.

What is more, an institutional approach was sketched as a potential frame for understanding the dynamics of institutional change by assimilating innovations. From this perspective, it is concluded that in order to analyse to what extent Latin American national systems of higher education have imported the European model of higher education, three aspects must be considered: the historical experiences, the internal institutional traditions, and the outside impulses (cf. Olsen, 2002).

In order to look into the ALCUE process and understand its dynamics, the first step will be the analysis of the past experiences in the historical, political arenas shared by the European Union and Latin America. It will depict the historical outcomes which lead to a supra-national arrangement among the regions. This analysis is expected to provide an insight on the internal traditions those regions have developed and institutionalised with regards to higher education. The second item, internal traditions, may suggest whether a normative match is to be found in the case of diffusion. Finally, identifying the external trends affecting the higher education systems of the nation-sates involved in the ALCUE can preview their influence on the rules and practices of systems. However, specific contexts and regional developments may provide a different dynamics on how political life is organised and shares meanings and values.

3 Towards the ALCUE Process

3.1 Introduction: Who are they?

This chapter aims at exploring the characteristics of two regions involved in the ALCUE[12] process, namely the European Union and Latin America, seen as the *actors*[13] in the shaping of this common area. It will clarify who these actors are, and how they became what they are today, in order to compose the context and pre-history to the ALCUE process.

The first actor to be approached is the European Union, in its political aspects, as well as the trajectory of the higher education as a policy subject. Bigger emphasis will be given to the second actor, Latin America. The chapter will explore this region's political arrangements, the diversity on the socio-economic development, and finally present some features of its higher education systems.

Before initiating the analysis of the actors of the ALCUE process, it is essential to reiterate this study's initial premise that the efforts of inter-regional integration cannot be seen in isolation from the development of regional arrangement in higher education within Europe, i.e. the Bologna Process (BP) and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Provided that the EHEA represents an unprecedented process of change in European higher education, and that many of the national systems signatories of the Bologna process have also joined the ALCUE agreement, it would be expected that the ongoing reforms towards the European common space bring consequences for the EU's cooperation with Latin American countries in this policy area.

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[12] 14 Caribbean higher education systems are also part of the ALCUE common area, but this region will be not analysed here.

[13] In conformity with Chapter 1, the term "actors" is a deliberate simplification applied to refer to the participant regions and its components in their diversity. It does not mean a unified actor.

3.2 The European Union

The European Union represents a unique politically-institutionalised partnership of 27 European nations, which brings together almost 488 million citizens (data from 2005, Eurostat, 2006).

Figure 3.1 Map of the European Union

Its maturity is the result of over 60 years of intergovernmental "clever political calculation" (Dinan, 1999), a succession of events that started with the Schuman Declaration in 1950, through the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) by the signature of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, and the more recent Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, which established an European *Union* (effective in 1993). The EU motto, "united in diversity", translates the common will in bringing these states together with the aim of promoting regional integration in many arenas. Because of its uniqueness as a political

institution, the EU and the idea of Europeanisation have inspired hundreds of academics to explore it in its many aspects, e.g. politics, history, institution-building, regulations, and higher education.

Recent studies have shown the evolution of higher education as a policy interest by the European Commission (Corbett, 2003; 2006)[14]. According to Anne Corbett, during the first three decades after the signature of the Treaty of Rome, the little activity in the higher education area can be resumed to four main policy events:

a cycle trying to establish a supranational European University ended in failure in 1961; a cycle to establish more modestly a European University Institute culminated in the 1972 Treaty establishing such an institute in Florence; a cycle to create an action programme in education, under EC and intergovernmental rules,(…) and the cycle dedicated to creating a EC programme for student mobility and exchange emerged triumphantly in the Erasmus Decision of 1987. (Corbett, 2006, p. 9)

Parallel to those first four moments that culminated in the Erasmus programme as the first Commission policy in the field, it is likely that developments in other areas may have pushed the future development in HE further. For instance, the EU principle of promoting 'freedom of professional workers' (free flow of people)[15], may have raised the awareness for common structures to recognise the qualification of European workers. What is more, Gornitzka (2006, p. 8) points out to the role of the supranational level in institutionalising the field of education as a policy area in the Union, with the establishment of a sector for education (DG Education and Culture).

The forth and more accelerated phase of the higher education policy within Europe (including the EU) reached its peak with the signature of the Bologna Declaration in 1999. Based on the proposition of a common space made the year before in Sorbonne[16], Ministers of Education from 29 European nation-states agreed on the objectives of achieving a greater compatibility and comparability of their national systems of higher education, as well as increasing the international competitiveness of the European higher education, with the final

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[14] For a detailed historical account on the evolution of European policy in higher education, refer to the work of Anne Corbett, in particular to her book "Universities and the Europe of Knowledge", published in 2005.

[15] The EU is known for promoting four "freedoms": freedom of people, of goods, of people and labour, and of money. Recently, in the Spring Meeting of the European Council (13 – 14/03/08) the Presidency has agreed on backing up a new freedom: the *freedom of knowledge*.

[16] The Sorbonne Joint Declaration was signed by the Ministries of France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom during the celebrations of the anniversary of the University of Paris in 25th of May 1998.

purpose of consolidating the EHEA (Bologna Declaration, 1999). These developments towards the European common area are often referred to as the Bologna Process (BP). However, the previous existing conditions of an intra-regional mobility programme, (the Erasmus programme, created in 1987) and the European Transfer Credit System (ETCS, created in 1989) facilitated the evolution of the Bologna Process.

The first BP official ministerial meeting was followed by other four meetings every two years to review its progress and assess strategies and actions: Prague (2001), Berlin (2003), Bergen (2005) and London (2007)[17]. As for being an intergovernmental strategy, it is important to highlight that the countries signatories have done so voluntarily. However, previous research has shown that the Bologna Process "has often served to enable, sustain and amplify developments that have been driven by deeper underlying forces or particular interests at the national level" (Wende, 2007, p. 4; Witte, 2006). The steering committee of the BP has established 10 objectives, specified in three policies: Declarations of Bologna, Prague and Berlin (cf. Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Bologna Process: objectives

Meeting	**Objectives (10)**
Bologna (1999)	Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees
	Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles: undergraduate and postgraduate
	Establishment of a system of credits (ECTS)
	Promotion of mobility
	Promotion of European cooperation on quality assurance
	Promotion of the European dimension in higher education
Prague (2001)	Fostering lifelong learning strategies
	Involvement of HE institutions and students (EUA and ESIB)
	Enhance attractiveness of EHEA to students in Europe and abroad
Berlin (2003)	Nurturing research cooperation and networks at doctoral level

Source: Declarations of Bologna (1999), Prague (2001), and Berlin (2003).

Although the majority of the higher education systems of the Bologna Declaration signatories have been promoting reforms at the Ministry level in compliance with the objectives of the BP, the process is far from being perfect and homogeneous. Different

[17] The next Bologna Process ministerial meeting is scheduled for April 2009, in Belgium. It is being prepared by a commission from the Benelux countries: Belgium (Flemish and French Communities), the Netherlands and Luxembourg.

studies reveal that some of these countries have been successful, some have realised how challenging implementing those objectives can be, such as the case of Greece. Also, reports have pointed out the position of the academics with regards of a "marketisation" of European higher education, and how much the Bologna reforms have made an impact on their work and research loads. Other studies reveal that, despite the inclusion of the European students through the European Student Union (ESU) in the BP, there seems to be an overall unawareness on the student's part about the meaning of the Bologna reforms. Nonetheless, despite these differences, one could argue that a very interesting outcome is in the fact that higher education has never been so much discussed by a variety of stakeholders, students, academics, unions, administrators, governments, as it has been in the last decade.

There is, in addition to the BP, another important aspect which influenced the dynamics of European higher education: the Lisbon Strategy, adopted by the European Commission in 2000. Among the conclusions of the Lisbon European Council Summit that year in Portugal, the Union's heads of state established the goal of becoming the "most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world" (European Council, 2000). By recognising the importance of technological development, basic and applied research and the qualification of human capital to increase the competitiveness of Europe, the Lisbon Strategy emphasised the role of higher education and training as a key element for economic growth. Also, "the Lisbon strategy has both implied a strengthening of the visibility of the education sector at the European level as well as an opening up of the sector to influences from other policy areas" (Gornitzka, 2006, p. 10). Consequently, the EU has been investing in knowledge production and in keeping in and attracting skilled researchers to Europe.

Therefore, for the last decade the Bologna Process and the EU Lisbon strategy have been the two main vehicles for policy development in European higher education (Marginson and Wende, 2007; Wende, 2007). However, it must be stressed the BP does not constitute an EU strategy. The Union became increasingly involved in the BP later[18]. The BP is intergovernmental, whereas the Lisbon Strategy consists of a broad EU strategy

[18] The involvement of the European Commission is first cited in the Prague Communiqué (2001), a document resulting from the second Bologna Process ministerial meeting at the Czech Republic.

concerning a range of policy areas, which also includes objectives related to higher education among its many deliberations. Despite their diverse nature, the BP and LS objectives seem to converge on the common goal of increasing the international competitiveness of the European higher education, and are both driven by their commitment to the EHEA (Wende, 2007).

3.3 Latin America

The term "Latin America" is a convention widely used as a reference to several Spanish and Portuguese speaking nation-states in the Americas[19]. With an average population of 550 million inhabitants (data from 2006, cf. ECLAC, 2006) living in its 19 countries, over 50% of Latin Americans live in Brazil and Mexico[20]. The map below can clarify the disposition of the countries that form the region (Figure 3.2):

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[19] The origin of the term has been attributed to the French King Napoleon III, when referring to the Latin-Speaking part of the new continent in the 17th century.

[20] There is a certain disparity on the countries that compose LA. For instance, come references may include the Dominican Republic, some Caribbean countries, and Puerto Rico, whereas others exclude Cuba. In this work, LA is composed of 19 countries (see Chapter 1, p. 12-13).

Figure 3.2 Map of Latin America and the Caribbean

3.3.1 Political and socio-economical context in Latin America

Latin America has three sub-regional political arrangements: the Integration System for Central America (SICA), the Andean Community (CAN), and the Common Market of the South (Mercosur). What is more, the states in the region are also organised in the Latin American Association for Integration (ALADI), and the Organisation of American States (OAS/OEA).

The SICA[21] has its origins on the Organisation for Central American States (ODECA), established in 1951 in El Salvador, by Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. The main objectives of the organisation were to strengthen the

[21] SICA: http://www.sica.int/.

existing cooperation, guarantee peace among its five state members, and promote mutual social and cultural development. In 1991, during the XI ODECA Presidential Summit in Tegucigalpa (Honduras), the SICA was established as a comprehensive regulatory framework for all instances of cooperation, including a Court of Justice[22]. Among the first action to foster integration, it was establishing common traffic signs and educational frames.

The Andean Community (CAN) has its origins on the Andean Pact created with the Cartagena Agreement in 1969[23]. It seems to be the only sub-region in LA that has changed its members' configuration more than once, with cases of withdrawals. The Cartagena Agreement was signed by Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, However, in 1976 Chile withdrew from the Cartagena Agreement under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. Later, Venezuela joined in 1973, but left due to political divergences in 2006, when it applied to join Mercosur. In 1996, the member states decided to implement important changes in the Cartagena Agreement and somewhat modernise the Andean Pact. A General Secretariat entered into full effect, and the sub-regional agreement became the Andean Community (CAN). The Andean Community is steered by the System of Andean Integration (SAI), which comprises all important sub-regional institutions, including the Parliament and the Simon Bolivar University (discussed further in subchapter 3.2.2.3). According to the institutionalist tradition, this set up would mean that the Andean Community is an organisation interested in building institutions at the sub-regional level, and being more than a trade agreement. What is more, it can be claimed that the presence of a university among its main institutions demonstrates that its member states have shared values with regards to the need in building capacity at the regional level. More recently, since 1996, the CAN assumed a dynamic role for the region, particularly in terms of external relations, i.e. a trade agreement with Mercosur (1998) and the beginning of a political dialogue and cooperative agreements with the EU (2003).

The Common Market of the South (Mercosur), the most Southern of the Latin American sub-regional agreements, was established in 1991 in Asunción, Paraguay. Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay decided to gather forces to build a strategy for

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[22] The Central American Court of Justice is considered the first international Court ever established. It was installed by the Treaty of Washington in 1907, many decades before the actual regional agreement. It is located in Nicaragua.

[23] CAN: http://www.comunidadandina.org/endex.htm.

market liberalisation, nevertheless without losing sight of the ALADI goal of a broader regional integration. In 2006, Venezuela applied to join Mercosur, and its full membership is currently under discussion. Much has been said about the little advancements this agreement has had in the 90's, especially because of the economical and political crises of its member states. Doctor (2007) points out as one of the causes for Mercosur's slow performance the lack of a supranational body in the agreement, such as a Court. With the intent of changing this context, after 2000 there was a strong political will in re-launching the Mercosur. Since then, curiously after the rounds for an EU-Mercosur cooperation started, the agreement has presented a different dynamics, as it can be illustrated by a more cohesive and active presence in mediating conflicts, and working towards social integration as well.

Nonetheless, in 1980 and therefore previous to the Mercosur, 11 Latin American states gathered in Montevideo with the aim of establishing an area for 'preferential' economic activities by multi- or bilateral cooperation, with the underlying rationale of a future LA common market. In that occasion, it was created the Latin American Association for Integration (ALADI)[24], joined by Cuba in 1999. As an essentially political and economical institution, ALADI is formed by 3 political bodies (Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Conference of Evaluation and Convergence, and the Committee of Representatives), and a technical body (the General Secretariat). Despite the clear the economical goal, there have been a few developments with regards to science and technology in the work of the Association. The main symbol is the *Acuerdo Regional* n. 6, which affirmed the interest for cooperation in the fields of science and technology signed in 1993, but there is no evidence of developments in this policy area in the ALADI.

In 2004, the Andean Community, the Mercosur, the ALADI and the Caribbean Community decided to combine efforts to create a Union of South American Nations (*União Sul-Americana de Nações*, UNISA). All 12 South American nations[25] will be part of this new regional organism. The political discussions are ongoing, however the public opinion

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[24] ALADI's members are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Information can be accessed on: http://www.aladi.org/nsfweb/redisenioSitioi/index.htm.

[25] The future members: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela (Mercosur), plus Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru (CAN), plus Guiana and Suriname (Caricom), and Chile.

from the future UNASUR member-sates seem to be particularly supportive of the idea, as it shows the participation of a forum in the website of the Andean Community.

Lastly, a brief introduction to the Organisation of American States (OAS)[26] works as a reminder of the existing ties between Latin America and North America, particularly the United States. The organisation was established in 1948, and its main objective is to make use of diplomatic means in order to assure that the national sovereignty of the member states is respected. Although it is an institution with national representatives, and a few common intergovernmental structures, the OAS does not have features of a supranational body, such as the Andean Community or the EU. What is more, although economic aspects are not recurring in the OAS agenda, the Organisation attempted to intercede on the negotiations for a Free Trade Area of Americas (FTAA), yet without success. When the FTAA negotiations were put aside after a strong public opposition to it, the 34 OAS member states redirected their work back to social and diplomatic issues, such as strengthening democracy, promoting human rights, and tackling poverty, terrorism, trafficking and corruption. Considering its objective of promoting democracy, one could perhaps be intrigued about the role of this organisation, principally in a region where almost all of its signatory nations have experienced military dictatorships in the 20th century.

Nevertheless, the OAS agenda is not in vain. There is a large socio-economic heterogeneity in Latin America, among and within its countries. This situation is often reflected on the performance of the LA countries in international comparative studies, as it will be shown below. The relevance of this aspect in this study relates to the general conception that the social environment is also reflected on the dynamics of higher education. Some may wonder about the relevance of inter-regional mobility programmes and common accreditation frameworks for a certain area marked by high levels of poverty, high illiteracy and low enrolment rates in tertiary education that will probably not have the opportunity to participate of it. Hence, learning about the social conditions under which these higher education systems operate may increase the comprehension of the necessity in having a stronger higher education sector in LA.

In order to introduce some of the social characteristics of the region, two different methodologies can be used to highlight aspects of wealth distribution and life quality. The

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[26] OAS: http://www.oas.org/.

first one calculates the levels of wealth equality or inequality through the Gini Coefficient[27]. Recent studies applying this method reveal that Latin America is the second most unequal region in the world, only after the Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank, 2008). Based on the comparison of Gini coefficients, the average data for the region is 52, compared to an average of 34 found in Europe. The countries with highest coefficients, hence more unequal, are Bolivia, Guatemala and Brazil (close to 60). On the opposite side, Nicaragua, Uruguay and Venezuela appear as the most equal societies in the region, showing coefficients around 45 (see Appendix 1). According to the report, the reasons for such low levels of equality are related to the highly exclusionary institutions created during colonial times. It is affirmed that:

in order to understand the high inequality levels observed in Latin America today it is important to understand the institutional framework created by the colonial powers which allowed a small group of elites to protect the large rents they were enjoying and excluded most of the population from access to land, education and political power (World Bank, 2008, p. 13).

A similar picture can be perceived by looking at the results presented by the second methodology, the United Nation's Human Development Index (HDR, 2007)[28]. The latest HDI results show that Guatemala, Bolivia, and Honduras are the least developed nations in the region. They rank 118th, 117th and 115th in the world, out of 177 countries. On the other hand, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay are the Latin states with better development indexes. These indicators place them as the 38th, 40th and 46th most developed nations according to the HDI world ranking, respectively.

The levels of inequalities and development shown by the two indicators above maintain a fairly direct relationship with the abilities those countries have in producing knowledge. Hence, it also reflects the situation of higher education in Latin countries, since the vast majority of academic research in Latin America is carried out at (public) universities. In order to capture the international performance with respect to knowledge for economic development, the World Bank's Knowledge for Development (K4D) programme

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[27] The Gini coefficient is a measure to determine the level of inequality of a country. The closest to 100, the more uneven is the distribution of wealth.

[28] The Human Development Index is a comparative measure of the life expectancy, percentage of literacy, investment in education, and standard of living. The HDI was created in 1990, and the research for the report is conducted by the United Nations. Differently from the Gini coefficient, the countries with a HDI close to 1.0 have better life standards.

has developed two indexes. The Knowledge Economy Index (KEI) measures whether the environment is conductive for knowledge to be used effectively for economic development, and the Knowledge Index (KI) analyses a country's ability to generate, adopt and diffuse knowledge (World Bank, 2007). Three countries, Argentina, Chile and Costa Rica, which sustain high levels of development and equality in income distribution, also figure among the top five states in the region in both the KEI and KI. Curiously, these nations have gross enrolment levels in tertiary education that range from 43 to 60% of the age cohort (World Bank, 2007; IESALC, 2007) (Appendixes 1, 2).

In the midst of these social inequalities, what can be expected from dynamics of higher education in Latin America?

3.3.2 Higher education in Latin America

The developments of higher education in Latin America have a different trajectory than the one presented by the European partner[29]. This chapter will introduce some aspect of higher education in Latin America with regards to history, system models, credit and grading systems, and challenges.

From the first institutions established by the Spanish settlers in the XVI and XVII centuries, there were basically two main university models in the region: the state-run model based on the University of Salamanca, and the private Catholic model, from the University of Alcalá de Henares (Bernasconi, 2007; de Wit *et al*, 2005; Gacel-Ávila, 2007). Although it was on the early 19th century that the number of tertiary education institutions grew and they were possible to be seen as what we call today a 'system', after most of the colonies in the region started becoming independent. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the Portuguese did not establish any university in Brazil until the Portuguese Royal Court moved to Salvador in 1808.

According to Simon Schwartzman (2001), in the early 19th century when the majority of countries became independent and established higher education institutions, they

[29] It must be stressed that the European higher education, even though in advanced process of integration, has also large internal disparities. It can be illustrated by the participation of both Sweden, the current first global Knowledge Economy (World Bank, 2007), and Albania, placed as number 97.

adopted the French Napoleonic model. In this model, higher education institutions are heavily controlled by the state and exist mostly to provide professional capacity for achieving national interests. Even though each LA country adopted the French model on their own way, some features remained common in the region, such as the function of the state as main steering body of the national systems. As a heritage from the Napoleonic model, not only most universities were (and most of them still are) called *Nacionales*, but it remained the relevance and prestige of a few professional qualifications, i.e. Law, Engineering, Architecture and Medicine. Until nowadays, it is a common practice in the region to indicate those professions as academic titles, such as *Inginiero, Arquitecto*, and *Abogado* (engineer, architect or lawyer).[30]

However, as Andrés Bernasconi (2007) points out, the state began losing its grip on higher education with the advent of the Cordoba Movement in 1918. This movement was initiated with the publication of a manifest by a group of active student representatives from the National University of Cordoba (Argentina), who voiced their discontentment with the procedure and results of an election for the rector in that university. The *Manifesto de Córdoba* (Cordoba Manifest, 1918) is a "rhetorical document with all strong adjectives against the mediocrity and incompetence of the university professors and administrators, and all the good words about the need for science, research, and competence" (Schwartzman, 2001, p. 2). Bernasconi (2007, p. 31) highlights the main principles of the Manifest, which shaped the essence of a higher education "model" in Latin America, and instigated reforms in higher education systems in many countries in the region:

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[30] For instance, if a male student has a degree in Engineering and later on completes a PhD, in Spanish-speaking Latin America he will be referred to as "*Señor* Ing. *Dr.* X". The professional title is always mentioned. In Brazil, on the other hand, the impact of these traditional professions is mostly seen in the regulative power of their professional councils in Engineering (CREA), Law (OAB), and Medicine (CFM and regional bodies). Graduates from those programmes are not allowed to work professionally without the registration with the Council.

Table 3.2 The Cordoba Reform: a model for HE in Latin America

1. Democratic governance, or co-governance by students, professors, and alumni, whose representatives were to be elected to Faculty-level and university-wide decision-making councils
2. Orientation of the mission of the university toward the solution of the social, economic, and political problems of the country
3. Institution of an extension function of the university, alongside those of research and teaching, the purpose of which was to bring the university to the working masses
4. Democratization of access through tuition-free education and expansion of enrolments
5. Autonomy from state intervention and academic freedom
6. Selection of faculty through competitive and public contests based on academic merit
7. Original research by full-time professors committed to the university

Source: Bernasconi (2007).

From the second half of the last century, the social pressure for reforming the existing elitist higher education institutions became an issue in Latin America and posed a challenge for the Cordoba model of university (Brunner *at el*, 1995; Schwartzman, 2001). A book by José Joaquín Brunner, *Universidad y Sociedad en América Latina* (1985, second edition in 2007), offers a comprehensive analysis of the course that Latin American universities had to follow in order to modernise and cope with the international trends in social development and education. According to the Chilean author, LA universities started to grow ideologically into a model of university for development, partially influenced by the United States model, and without references from the European higher education (Brunner, 2007). The matrixes for this model were basically the need for modernising higher education in the region, which required the professionalisation of academic work, the establishment of coordination at the system level (in opposition to the Cordoba ideal of autonomy), and massification.

Different paths were adopted to expand the access to higher education the region[31]. For instance, some systems chose to expand the public offer, as happened in Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Honduras and Peru. The second option was to allow the development of a private sector, which was the case in Brazil, Chile, and Colombia. Also, some systems

[31] The movement of massification of Latin American higher education was parallel with the efforts to decrease literacy rates in the region. Many countries had 50% of illiteracy rate. As affirm the author "Latin America started the expansion of university enrolments (until 1950) when nonetheless one in every two young people could not read or write" (Brunner, 2007, p. 29).

adopted a mixed strategy, such as in El Salvador and the Dominican Republic (Schwartzman, 2001; Bernasconi, 2007).

Many were the reactions to the idea of "developmental university", especially due to the threat to the acclaimed spirit academic autonomy by the emerging influence of the state on the decision-making of universities. According to Brunner, this model served to rationalise the existing dynamics between society and the university (Brunner, 2007, p. 45 – 46). This context resulted on a second wave of reforms in the region in the 1960's, which was full of contradictory ideas and ideologies, and that to a certain extent reaffirmed the regional characteristics of the "militant university" (Brunner, 2007; Clark, 1983). The following two decades were marked by political instability, in which higher education was under authoritarian rule (Schwartzman, 2001)[32]. Many academics were either sent to exile or arrested – there was no space for freedom of speech and autonomy during that time.

In the 90's, with most of nations entering into a period of redemocratisation, a group of experts in higher education in Latin America composed what they called a "reform agenda" (Brunner at el, 1995; Schwartzman, 2001). The conclusions raised from this study are believed to characterise the current challenges that most higher education system in Latin America face nowadays. Based on a series of comparative policy studies, it was concluded that a reform agenda for Latin American higher education should encompass: (a) differentiation and diversification; (b) the development of the private sector; (c) diversified sources funding; (d) a new contract between systems and governments; (e) the qualification of a new generation of academics; (f) special attention to institutions that are lagging behind; (g) policies for institutional diversification, and (h) the internationalisation of higher education (Brunner *et al*, 1995).

What is more, closely related to the last agenda item above, the growing impact of the international aspects in higher education may have highlighted the importance of the production of knowledge to increase economical performance. As previously suggested in the beginning of this thesis, it is vital that universities be prepared to face the influence of global aspects in the functioning of higher education systems, which was already stressed by Masseen and Cloete (2002) when they re-interpreted Burton Clark's triangle of coordination

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[32] Brazil and Chile are two exceptional cases in this scenario of military dictatorships. Whereas Brazil invested heavily on research to become a "world leader", Chile went into a significant reform as the government cut off 70% of the costs of higher education.

(1983). However, as Andre Bernasconi points out, “Latin America’s universities – only with a few exceptions – have not completed their “first academic revolution”: the transformation from knowledge preservation and transmission to knowledge production” (2007, p. 47). In view of that, how are the systems of higher education in Latin America performing?

Similar to the social conditions, the internal regional disparities in higher education persist. According to the United Nations organism for higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean, IESALC (2007), Latin America has a gross enrolment of 28.5% of the age group (Appendix 1). Argentina is the country with the highest participation rate in the region, with 60% of the population with 20-24 years old enrolled in higher education, whereas El Salvador and Honduras in Central America have the lowest enrolment rate, 17.7%. With regards to the distribution of registrations in public and private institutions, Brazil has over 70% of private institutions, whereas Cuba for political reasons has only public institutions, and Uruguay.

In the context of building a common area in higher education, two aspects appear to be central for the effective participation of Latin America, as any other region. Ideally, a common area in higher education implies in building similar frameworks. However, these frameworks depend, first of all, on the compatibility of the systems that form the common area. In this case, how comparable are the systems in Latin America? If so, how can these match with the European structures in higher education as it is expected with the ALCUE arrangement? Studies have identified the differences and similarities of systems in LA (Tuning, 2007). Based on the data about credit systems and grading scales, it can offer an idea of the regional diversification and apparent incompatibility.

The vast majority of states in Latin America do not have a common national credit system. However, most countries identify credits according to the number of hours of study or class. In Mexico, there are differences between the credit system for the public and private institutions. Most public universities consider two credits as the equivalent of 15 hours per week. In the private sector, 16 hours/week make one credit. Uruguay has only one public university, and within this institution a credit may have two different values. There is no regulation in the private sector, though. Lastly, Costa Rica and El Salvador have a national system, but they are different from each other. In Costa Rica, one credit makes for every 3 hours of work per week. El Salvador is the only example in Latin America where

the same credit system is applied to all universities: one credit is the equivalent of 20 hours of work attended by a teacher for 16 weeks.

The degree structure is not very different within the region, maybe because of the common models of education that were adopted in the past (Spanish and French). Most countries have a three-cycle structure. The first degree, usually *Licenciatura* or *Bacharelado*, takes 4-6 years, depending on the programme; masters programmes are usually planned for 2-3 years, and a PhD lasts for 4-5 years.

Latin American students are very little mobile, especially if compared to Asian and European students. It is not known whether the dynamics in mobility is related to the difference in the credit systems and the probable difficult process for recognising studies abroad. To give an idea, the number of students going abroad from the entire Latin America is very similar to the outbound mobility of students from India alone. Alternatively, it has the equivalent of the outbound mobility of students from Italy, Greece and Germany added together. The comparative data reported by UNESCO (2007), even though sometimes questionable, may present an approximate picture of mobility of Latin Americans in 2005:

Table 3.3 Outbound student mobility in Latin America in 2005

Origin	Outbound student mobility (%)	Main destinations
Argentina	10.514 (0.5)	USA, Spain
Bolivia	3.990 (1.1)	USA, Argentina
Brazil	20.778 (0.5)	USA, France
Chile	8.679 (1.4)	USA, Spain
Colombia	19.903 (1.7)	USA, Spain
Costa Rica	1.716 (1.6)	USA, Cuba
Cuba	1.688 (0.4)	Spain, USA
Dominican Republic	2.183 (0.7)	USA, Spain
Ecuador	6.668 (n/a)	USA, Spain
El Salvador	2.303 (1.8)	USA, Cuba
Guatemala	2.485 (2.0)	USA, Cuba
Honduras	2.326 (1.7)	USA, Cuba
Mexico	25.073 (1.1)	USA, Spain
Nicaragua	2.099 (1.6)	USA, Cuba
Panama	2.001 (1.6)	USA, Cuba
Paraguay	1.861 (1.2)	Cuba, Argentina
Peru	11.579 (1.3)	USA, Spain
Uruguay	2.290 (2.0)	USA, Argentina
Venezuela	10.694 (1.0)	USA, Spain
Total LA	**138.830**	

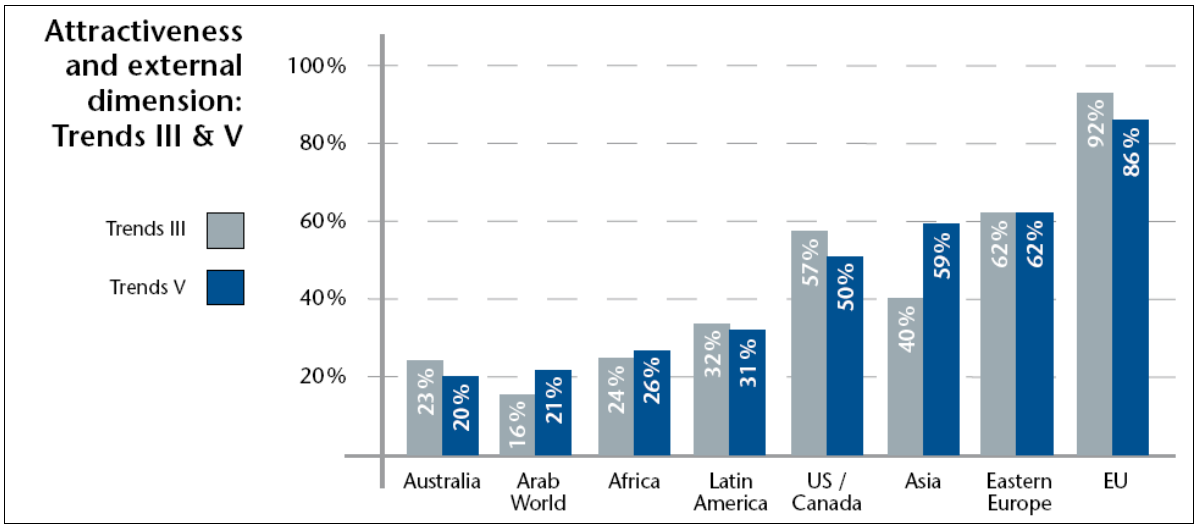
Source: UNESCO (2007).

Based on the information above, it can be argued that LA higher education is very much contained by national borders. This is so despite a natural competitive advantage that this region has in comparison to the countries of the European Union, which is the linguistic homogeneity of basically two languages: Spanish and Portuguese, furthermore, aided by the fact that the study costs would be significantly lower.

What is more, Table 3.3 offers valuable information about the three main destinations of Latin Americans: the United States, Spain and Cuba. This is rich to the extent it allows some speculation on the Spanish rationale for being a leader nation in the establishment of the ALCUE common area. The country probably has a large interest in learning about the higher education in Latin America, and helping finding common structures to manage its tradition connection with the region.

The LAC region as a whole has been largely discussed in the report on global dimension of the Bologna Process presented in the London Ministerial Meeting (Zgaga, 2007). It was also ranked by the European University Association as the fifth most attractive region for European universities to cooperate with (EUA, 2007, p. 44-45). As shown in figure Figure 3.3 below, the four years between the publications of Trend III and V has seen a meaningful increase in the interest for European universities to cooperate with Asian countries, whereas there is a small decrease on the concern with Latin America.

Figure 3.3 European universities' interest for international cooperation



Source: EUA Trends Report V (EUA, 2007, p. 46).

While the results of the report above show Latin America as the 5th most attractive region for the European Countries participating in the Bologna Process (including EU), the situation is different for the United States, for example. Latin America is the second destination with 15.2% of American students going abroad choosing Latin America in 2005/6. Europe was the first choice for 58% of US students going abroad (IIE, 2007). The leading destinations for the Americans in LA were Mexico (4.5%), Costa Rica (2.5%), Argentina (1.3%) and Chile (1.2%).

There have not been many significant attempts to build cross-border institutional cooperation. Recently, however, the Brazilian government has approved an interesting project for the implementation of a public institution with a strong international component: the Federal University for Latin American Integration (Unila). The Brazilian Ministry of Education's plans for the Unila are to consolidate a bilingual institution (Portuguese and Spanish) with 50% of its teaching staff and attending students coming from other South

American nations. The university will be built in Foz do Iguaçu, a city that is situated at the triple border between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. The space of 43 hectares has been given by the Itaipú Binational, a hydroelectric power plant between Brazil and Paraguay.

Their large diversity, still there have been a few attempts to promote regional integration of Latin American higher education.

3.3.3 Experiences with regional integration

Modest in scope and number, but existent - this is how the initiatives to promote regional integration in Latin America can be seen. In order to illustrate some of the Latin experiences with intra-regional co-operation, a couple of examples were selected: an intergovernmental institution connected to a sub-regional agreement (UASB) and a university association that basically promotes regional academic mobility (AUGM). None of these experiences are connected to the ALCUE process, as they date from before 1999.

The first example is the Andean University Simón Bolivar[33] (UASB), established in 1985 by the Parliament of the Andean Community (CAN). It is a cross-border higher education institution with units in all five CAN states: its headquarters are located in Sucre (Bolivia), with units in Quito (Ecuador), Caracas (Venezuela); besides offices in La Paz (Bolivia) and Bogota (Colombia). As the academic institution of the Andean Community, the goals of the USAB are strongly committed to regional integration: contributing to deepen the Andean sub-regional integration, promoting its external projection, and consolidate and strengthen actions related to the integration process. The successful experience of the CAN in implementing a cross-border university was different than the European Union case, in which the project for an European University did not become concrete (Corbett, 2003).

The second example has an emphasis on mobility. The Grupo Montevideo University Association (AUGM) is an association of 21 public universities from 6 South American countries created in 1991[34]. It is a bottom-up initiative from the participating

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[33] Simon Bolivar (1783 – 1830) is en emblematic figure in the history of many South American countries. He contributed to the independence of Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru from the Spanish crown. Bolivar's biggest aim was in creating a unified federation. He managed to accomplish his endeavour for a short time, when the Gran Colombia was established (1819 – 1830).

[34] There are universities from Argentina (8), Bolivia (1), Brazil (8), Chile (1), Paraguay (2) and Uruguay (1).

institutions. It does not have regulatory links to the national governments of any participating country. AUGM's structure is formed by an Executive Secretariat located in Montevideo, Uruguay, and coordinators placed in each participating institution.

Among the existing projects, there are: the ESCALA mobility programme for students and scholars[35], a yearly conference for young researchers (Jornada dos Jovens Investigadores), AUGM Chairs, and the integrated work on disciplinary nucleus or academic committees, which define the areas for cooperation.

3.4 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to introduce two participating regions of the ALCUE process, the European Union and Latin America. As previously argued in subchapter 1.5.1, the expectation with the analysis of the actors of this agreement was to understand any underlying features which may have influenced on the involvement of these actors in the ALCUE process. Also, look for features that are unidentifiable in the official documents, such as the credit systems in their higher education systems.

When looking at the European Union and Latin America as the actors of the ALCUE process, the first evidence is of how diverse the states that compose these regions are, not only between each other but internally. The European Union is an institutionalised supra-national arrangement. It naturally does not mean it is a perfect institution, but the fact that all nations have managed to establish and follow common goals and remain united despite their diversity is striking. It could be argued that the robustness of the EU could be a result of the commitment of its member states, and the appropriate coordination of political will with a wider institutional regulatory framework. However, this legal base is not very strong when it comes to higher education.

In relation to higher education at the European level, based on the arguments developed in Chapter 2, it seems that the national systems signatories of the intergovernmental Bologna process are willing to adapt to a wider regional structure in

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[35] The Student ESCALA started in 2001 with financial support from the Organisation of Iberoamerican States (OEI). Until 2005, 711 degree students participated in the ESCALA programme. The vacancies for exchange are agreed among the AUGM coordinators, and eschange last one academic semestre. Scholars stay for a lesser period, usually 2-3 months. The Scholar ESCALA has promoted 102 academic visits in 2007/2008. Information of AUGM can be found at www.grupomontevideo.edu.uy.

order to deal with the issues their own systems of higher education have. On the top of that, there is the commitment of the heads of state to the process, also instigated by the Lisbon Strategy. This can be seen, for instance, by the increased national investment on ongoing reforms in higher education. Added to that, it is the interest for increased participation in the regional and international scenario that is allowed by the BP common structures. Therefore, the power and interest argument can be seen as the stronger rationale in the case of the Bologna Process. The arguments present here will be recalled further in Chapter 5, in the comparative analysis of the EHEA and the ALCUE process.

Latin America, on the other hand, has had a different experience when it comes to regional integration. First of all, the region does not hold a unique political regional structure for all states, since it is basically characterised as a geographical region with common normative and cognitive links. It could be claimed that, to a large sum, integration to a "Latin" level has been prevented by the political instability in the region, which usually slows down the various attempts to building a stronger cooperation in many fields. Moreover, it also appears that the argument for power and interest of states suits better the current configuration of the region in three sub-regional structures. The spillover argument, on the other hand, would be unlikely to fit to the Latin case of many sub-regional settings. This is so because of the examples of the withdrawals of two countries in the Andean Community, which serves to demonstrate that not all states are keen in sharing their sovereignty with others, let alone look for common interests over their own national ones.

The social conditions in Latin America, as shown by the international studies cited in subchapter 3.3.1, gave a picture of the large internal disparities within the region. It is very interesting to note that the countries with the highest classification in the Human Development Report and the Gini coefficient are also the ones who can better perform in using knowledge for development. A more explicit link to higher education is not too far from the findings above. Trapped on a type of chicken-and-egg situation, it is not possible to know if the better the social conditions, the better the higher education conditions, or if the social development depends on a strong higher education system to produce effective knowledge.

The analysis of the Latin American higher education reveals that currently there are little conditions for the region to have an internal common framework in the sector. Despite

the common history and exposition to models, the regions' systems have grown very diverse, from the grading systems to the way the study workload is transformed into credits.

In fact, when it comes to integration of higher education structures on a Latin level, it is striking that such integration is non-existent. Granted the clear linguistic homogeneity of two main languages, the shared historical background on the establishment and models of higher education institutions, how come that Latin America does not have a common higher education structure? As far as this study can reveal, the region's higher education is constrained by national borders. There is very little cross-border and transnational activity in Latin America, and when they happen they become unique cases. Could this be a heritage from the years of military dictatorship that reinforced the idea of a nation state? Could this be the weight of the ideological features of autonomy present in most of Latin American higher education inherited from the Cordoba Manifesto? Why there was no attempt to establishing something similar to a common higher education area in Latin America? What is more, are national governments more interested in other sectors, such as health care, tackling poverty or primary education, than they are with higher education? These questions trigger many considerations about the context of the Latin systems and the possibility of having them participating in a common area. However, there is no simple answer to any of them.

In the scenario presented in this chapter, how can the actor's interests be identified? One of the possible relies may be the common sense that a state wishes to be in a better economic situation than the one it has now. To do so, it is necessary to have a political agenda for investment in human capital, and therefore increasing their economical performance. This situation connects to both the arguments that higher education is increasingly linked to economical development, and to the power and interests argument (Chapter 2).

Insofar, and without considering the historical relationship between those regions, it could be argued that both regions operate according to their interests. On the one hand, the EU rationale is to move forward its Lisbon Strategy and become a knowledge leader. On the other hand, the target for the LA countries is to increase its socio-economical situation in order to be part of the international scenario as well.

The next chapter looks onto the existing links between the two regions.

4 The relationship between the European Union and Latin America

4.1 Introduction

Even though the project for a common area in higher education between the European Union and the Latin America and the Caribbean is recent, the existing relationship among these regions traces back over 500 years. This chapter highlights some of the key happenings of this long tradition that are believed to have an impact on the shaping of this common area. It will be done by looking *backwards* – for it can show how this relationship has developed – and *sideways* – in order to identify parallel processes in other policy areas. Therefore, in line with the institutionalist view of path-dependency and the process analysis presented in Table 1.1, this section offers the analysis of the *sequence* of the ALCUE process.

4.2 United by birth: first institutions

The first bond between European states and the Latin America is mostly revealed by history books. How this (colonial) relationship evolved in the region tends to follow a trail of discovery and colonisation, continued by fragmentation, independence, and diversity. Nonetheless, as the text below will briefly show, even though the Latin American states have conquered their independence, the bounds generated between these regions were not entirely broken.

The relationship started when Italian explorer Christopher Columbus discovered the Caribbean islands in 1492 on behalf of the Spanish crown. The expedition was an attempt to reach India faster than the Portuguese by travelling East, instead of trying a route which contoured the South of Africa. This "mistake" resulted in the discovery of a new continent, a large piece of land between Asia and Europe. The news of the discovery intrigued the Portuguese, who demanded to the Pope a Treaty to establish the division of the newfound land. After the Church approval, both crowns agreed in sharing the territory on the terms of

the Tordesillas Treaty (1494)[36]. This document established the first fragmentation in Latin America, even though the Portuguese had not arrived to the new land. After the first settlements, whereas the Portuguese kept their share as a unique territory, the Spanish divided theirs in viceroyalties (*vice-reinos*), then each in many smaller governments and audiences. In the 19th century, many of these micro-regions became independent and form Latin American states of today (such as Argentina, former Viceroyalty of the Plata River).

Under the influence of the Catholic Church, the spread of Catholicism is appointed as the first and main channel for transmitting European culture in the new found region (Bourne, 1962, chapter 20). By Papal orders, monarchies in Spain and Portugal sent out missionaries to evangelise the native people living in the new continent into the Catholic belief. Therefore, Catholicism was established as the official religion in Latin America as soon as the region was discovered[37]. Despite meeting revolt and daunting situations – i.e. cannibal tribes – the missionaries' coercion lead to homogeneity of language, values, cognitions, plus cultural links and practices within the region and especially with Europe. Born out of religion, these ties compose the motivation for nourishing the connection between the New and the Old continents, "based upon shared values inherited from a common history" (Declaration of Rio, 1999).

Besides religion, the two regions have also been connected "by birth" in terms of education. In every settlement, Spanish missionaries built schools near the churches. Apart from these schools where Spanish and Catholicism were taught, a few higher education institutions were also created. The first college, the Royal College of Santa Cruz, was built in Tlatelolco, Mexico, in 1536 (Bourne, 1962). Whereas the first university in the new continent was founded in Santo Domingo, capital of the Dominican Republic (1538)[38], the first continental university was the University of San Marcos, in Peru in 1551. The few references that can illustrate the activities carried out in those institutions reveal a continuous link to European states. For instance, the college in Tlatelolco had lecturers from

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[36] The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494-1750) defined a straight line first at 370 leagues west of Capo Verde islands. The land on the east side of the line was Portuguese, the west side remained Spanish.

[37] Furthermore, the Catholic Church was one of the pioneer institutions brought to America, together with a military base and a hospital (Bourne, 1962).

[38] Pope Paul III gave his blessing for the "University of Santo Tomas de Aquino", later University of Santo Domingo, in 28/10/1538.

the University of Paris. What is more, evidence shows that the natives who were educated not only kept the preaching mission, but they also took administrative positions in the new settlements.

4.3 Political arena

The historical ties developed in the past transformed into bilateral links between LA and European countries. On the basis of trade agreements, these links were to a large extent responsible for the built of the infra-structure in Latin American countries, even after the countries were independent from their European colonisers.

Bringing to the context of the 20th century, in terms of recent inter-regional cooperation with the EU, it was expected that the existing bi-lateral co-operation would be enhanced substantially when Spain and Portugal joined the Union in 1986 (Dinan, 1999). As stressed by Dinan (1999), one of the reasons that lead to this expectation was the Spanish intervention during the crisis in the Falkland War, in 1982. What is more, Latin America was going through a decade of political instability and little economic development. The preliminary role of Spain was redeemed once it was under the EU Spanish presidency that a first document for strengthening inter-regional relations with LA countries was published in 1995 (Dinan, 1999).

The current political (and to a certain extent, economical) relationship between the European Union as an institution and Latin America as a region is growing in number and complexity. Coordinated by the DG for External Relations, there is a broader inter-regional dialogue built on two strategy papers, the EU-LA dialogue, and to a dialogue developed with the so-called Rio Group[39]. Furthermore, there are a few "specialised" agreements between the Union and the three sub-regional arrangements in Latin America, i.e. Mercosur,

[39] The Rio Group was formed in 1986 as a meditative body for the political crisis in Central America. Its main functions are foster a political cooperative dialogue and prevent crisis in the region. Nowadays it has 20 members, all Latin American countries and a representative from the Caribbean Community.

CAN and SICA[40]. Lastly, there are two bi-lateral cooperation alliances composed by the two Latin countries that do not belong to any of the sub-regions: Mexico and Chile.

What used to be a rather exclusive area for trade and politics, inter-regional co-operation has given space to broader themes, such as the environmental, energy, security, and culture. In 1999, these aspects formed part and parcel of the co-operative agenda between both regions, with the institution of regular Heads of State Summits. To date, four EU-LAC Heads of States Summits occurred: Rio de Janeiro (1999), Madrid (2002), Guadalajara (2004), and Vienna (2006)[41]. Notwithstanding, these declarations also lay out strategies that concern higher education, which will be developed below.

In line with the resolutions from the EU-LAC Heads of states meetings, the European Commission, though the Directorate General of External Relations, has so far launched two regional strategies towards Latin America (European Commission, 2002; 2007a).

The objectives established by the EU towards a partnership with Latin America in the 2002 – 2006 regional strategy delimitated four spheres of activity to be coordinated in three levels. The spheres were: (a) support for inter-regional relations by strengthening the partnership between civil society networks, (b) social initiative to reduce inequalities, (c) natural disaster preparedness and prevention, and (d) action to accompany the strategic partnership (European Commission, 2002). These objectives were coordinated at three levels: regional, sub-regional and bilateral. They were, moreover, in line with the agendas of the Heads of States summits from Rio (Declaration of Rio, 1999) and Madrid (Political Declaration of Madrid, 2002).

The Rio agenda was built in three pillars: political dialogue, solid economic and financial relations, and a dynamic and creative cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, human and social. The rather compact document resultant of the Madrid summit (2002) committed to take further the actions proposed on the previous meeting in

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[40] In 2006, after the EU-LAC Heads of State meeting in Vienna, the Central American states and the EU agreed in starting negotiations for further cooperation. The rounds for discussion started in 2007 in Costa Rica, and are scheduled to be finished in Brussels, in December 2008[40].

[41] The next EU-LAC Summit is scheduled for May 16-17 2008 in Lima, Peru.

Rio. However, perhaps under the conjuncture with the attacks in New York late in 2001 and its consequences, the Madrid declaration stressed the matter of security and terrorism.

As for the following period, 2007 – 2013, the focus of the EU objectives for Latin America shifts towards the consolidation of networking activities and the bilateral relations, plus strengthening the programmes developed during 2002-2006. The main difference between the previous strategy and the more recent is that the regional planning for 2007-2013 observes the directions from a major policy, a grant programme named Development Cooperation instrument, the DCI[42].

The DCI is a new framework for planning and delivering assistance adopted in 2006 by the Commission with the ambition of increasing the effectiveness of the EU's external assistance. A highlight of the DCI document linked to higher education is the explicit interest in the ALCUE common area, as expressed in the Article 6 (d): "Supporting the creation of an EU – Latin American Higher Education Area". Because of its constant indication on the external foreign policies made after 2006, it can be inferred that the DCI has been the chief white paper behind all the programmes created by the DG EuropeAid after that year. This influence is also clear in the policies for the ALFA programme, analysed further in the subchapter 3.3.1.

Hence, observing the decisions from the EU-LAC meetings, the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (European Commission, 2007a, p. 4; 15), plus the DCI, the current EU regional programming for Latin America defines three focal areas for the period 2007-2013: social cohesion and reduction of inequalities, regional integration and economic cooperation, and multilateralism. Higher education is explicitly mentioned in the second and third objectives. For its international dimension, it is regarded as a tool for capacity building (training) in areas of social and environmental issues. However, when it comes to the third objective of increasing mutual understanding, higher education is considered the very first priority (p. 24-25). It has received 40% of the resources allocated for the period, the equivalent of € 223 million.

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[42] Cf. PE – CONS 3663 / 06 – Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a financing instrument for development cooperation.

4.4 Higher education programmes: from aid to education

Contrasting the common expectation that the EC higher education programmes would be promoted by the area of education through the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC), the inter-regional initiatives in higher education were instead first developed by the DG of External Cooperation, a.k.a. EuropeAid. Under this DG two programmes for higher education were designed: ALFA and Alβan. A few years later (2003), the Erasmus Mundus programme was approved, now under the DG EAC.

Each of these programmes lays a different target. For instance, the ALFA programme aims at creating transnational research networks between EU and LA institutions; second, the Alβan programme targets at supporting individuals for acquiring post-graduate training in EU countries; and third, the Erasmus Mundus aims at establishing high-quality joint degrees at a Master level in Europe and offer funding for nationals from third countries, included Latin America, to take part of these master programmes.

4.4.1 ALFA

The Programme ALFA, acronym for Latin America – Academic Training, is the first co-operation programme between European Union and Latin America in higher education[43]. The programme was launched by the EC's Directorate-General for External Development (EuropeAid) in 1994, and has had three phases: ALFA I (1994 - 1999), ALFA II (2000 – 2006), and ALFA III (2008-2013, recently launched). The basic premise of the programme is to foster institutional networks among higher education institutions in LA and the EU.

Despite of the different structure of each chapter, as shown in Table 3.4, the overall objective of the programme remains to contribute to the development of the higher education in LA and training of skilled human resources through cooperation between the EU and Latin America, as a mean of contributing to the economic and social sustainable development of the LA region. The concern with regional development remains the main rationale for the ALFA, made evident on the fact that it is coordinated by the EuropeAid

[43] The basic information in this section was collected from a variety of official sources, available at the EC ALFA webpage: http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/latin-america/regional-cooperation/alfa/index_en.htm.

office (DGAidCo), instead of the DG for Education (DG EAC). In terms of funding, the EC commits to fund up to 70% of the costs of each approved proposal.

However, the reports and evaluations along the 14 years may have caused the programme leaders to rethink its structure for the last call. Table 4.1 below offers an overview of the ALFA programme in its three phases:

Table 4.1 Summary of Programme ALFA

Phases	ALFA I (1994 – 1999)	ALFA II (2000 – 2006)	ALFA III (2008 – 2013)
Number of calls	7	10	6
Received applications	2918	565	
Approved projects	842	225	50-60 (est.)
Participant institutions	903	777	
(EU + LA)	(530 – 373)	(427 – 342 (+8))	
Approved EC funding	€38.4m	€54.6m	€85m
Structure	Inter-institutional Cooperation Postgraduate Mobility Undergraduate Mobility	Institutional and academic cooperation Cooperation to Technical and Scientific training	Joint projects Structural projects Accompanying measures

Due to the fact that the ALFA programme encourages inter-regional institutional cooperation, many of the approved proposals are designed to increasing the compatibility of higher education systems, or isolated areas and subjects, between the two regions. Two of these projects under the ALFA II call deserve special attention, in particular, for the link to the ALCUE common area. They are the PIHE network and the Tuning Latin America.

The PIHE Network's main goal was to provide means for international cooperation between Latin America and the EU. The acronym stands for "Partnership for the Internationalisation of Higher Education", a project developed during 2006-2007 under the "International and Academic Cooperation" window of the ALFA II. By gathering information about good practices, finance resources and quality assessment exercises related to internationalisation practices, the PIHE aimed at assisting the region to improve their internationalisation strategies (PIHE, 2007). The final report highlights those three aspects: first, a guide for good practices exposed the tendencies in international cooperation in EU and LA; second, it was developed a guide for financing the activities, and third, mechanisms for assuring the quality of the internationalisation strategies.

The final report of the PIHE network publishes the results of a survey about the motivations for cooperation between the regions (PIHE, 2007, p. 22). The survey was applied to 56 institutions in LA (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico), and 75 in the EU (Germany, the Netherlands and Spain), in a total of 131 responses. Results show that 83% of Latin respondents have specific strategies for developing international cooperation with the EU. The two main reasons for that are, first, the dynamic European academic community and second the high quality of educational services offered in the EU. On the other hand, 61% of the European institutions surveyed have strategic plan for partnerships with Latin America, first because of the existing cultural and political ties, and then for the dynamic Latin academic community. What is more, it is remarkable that the cultural bonds were appointed as the reasons which matter the least for the Latin Americans when it comes to establishing academic cooperation with the Union. The results of this survey carried by the PIHE Network reveal a mismatch in the institutional rationale for international cooperation – which is a crucial aspect for the diffusion of models, according to Olsen (2002). It seems that Latin American institutions are making an effort to increase their academic networks based on excellence and quality, whereas the Europeans surveyed are surprisingly willing to use international cooperation to foster cultural ties.

The second ALFA project to be highlighted is Tuning Latin America project (Tuning, 2007). This project consists of a transnational experience at the discipline level, based on a previous model of the Tuning Europe. The main objective of the Tuning Latin America is to enhance intra-regional dialogue by analysing the disciplinary structures of 12 subject areas in Latin America[44] with the know-how acquired from the Tuning Europe. What is more, the Tuning aims at fostering disciplinary networks, enhancing transparency of information about the structures in the region, and exchanging information and good practices in terms of curricula development. The Tuning LA had a complex structure which covered all 19 LA countries, and involved 186 universities.

The idea for a Latin American version of the Tuning programme to harmonise the educational structures and studies contents in Europe programme[45] was elaborated from the

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[44] Architecture, Business, Chemistry, Civil Engineering, Education, Geology, History, Law, Mathematics, Medicine, Nursing and Physics. The Tuning Europe, in contrast, analysed 9 subject areas in its phases 1 and 2. Currently, 19 new areas are on the way of being "tuned".

[45] Tuning Latin America:http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningal/index.php?d=0&option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1&lang=en. Tuning Europe: http://www.tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/.

presentation of the advances of the Tuning Europe project in the IV ALCUE Follow up Committee in Cordoba, Spain (Tuning, 2007), in 2002. Hence, this project is particularly interesting not only because it was conceived during a meeting of the Follow-Up Committee, especially for the reason that it demonstrate the commitment of the several institutions involved in fostering such inter-regionalism based on transnational disciplinary frameworks.

The ALFA programme has been very important for dynamics of the relationship between the EU and LA in higher education. As one of the examples show, it also has a connection to the ALCUE process with the Tuning Latin America. Its tradition of over 14 years has created or solidified many inter-regional research groups, and has contributed for the straightening of ties not only between the regions, but also within them. What is more, as the text will reveal in Chapter 5, it was pointed as a sign of good practice by the ALCUE Ministers of Education.

4.4.2 ALβAN

The Alβan programme[46] is another initiative of the DG EuropeAid, approved by the EC in 2002, to last until 2010. Differently from the ALFA, it aims at giving out scholarships for individual Latin American[47] students who wish to pursue post-graduate training, i.e. specialisation diplomas, Masters, PhDs, in any knowledge field, except language learning, in the EU countries. The scholarships were expected to cover 80% of the total costs of the programme, including fees and living expenses.

The programme was designated to enhance the academic quality of Latin American countries, enhance the visibility of the EHEA, in line with the Bologna Process, and third, strengthen the cooperation and networking between the two regions. However, the programme was not renewed, and will terminate by 2010. A mid-term evaluation highlighted the limitations that this type of unilateral programme may present (Alβan, 2005). Two aspects were pointed out. First, the Alβan does not have an impact in the promotion of academic networks, nor on mechanisms to foster inter-regional integration.

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[46] Information to compose this section was collected from the official Alβan webpage: www.programalban.org.

[47] The Dominican Republic was not eligible for the Alβan programme.

This point is incoherent with the goals set to the bi-regional cooperation defined by the DG EuropeAid and the DCI. Second, that it also fails in divulging the findings resulting from the studies conducted under the Alβan scheme by the scholarship holders (Alβan, 2005, p. 9).

Statistics show that, from 2002 to 2006, five calls were open and 3319 Alβan scholarships were awarded to students from the 18 eligible countries. These students were hosted by higher education institutions in 12 EU states. Brazil, Mexico and Colombia were the highest beneficiaries of the Programme. In the EU, the biggest host of scholarship holders was, unsurprisingly, Spain with 1165 awards (35% of total), followed by France (672, 20%) and the UK (588, 17%).

With the termination of the Alβan programme, the Erasmus Mundus programme will be the main EC project for attracting international students to pursue higher education training in the EU, counting the Latin American candidates.

4.4.3 Erasmus Mundus

The Erasmus Mundus (EM) programme is the first programme in higher education promoted by the DG Education and Culture on which the Latin American academic community was eligible to participate[48]. The proposal for a programme to enhance the quality and visibility of European HE was approved in late 2003 for a period of five years, from 01/2004 until 12/2008 (European Commission, 2003).

The EM is viewed by EC as a "response to the challenges of internationalisation faced by European universities". The Commission's rationale also takes into account several international statistical indicators which stress that there are only a few European countries that have international prestige, such as the United Kingdom, France and Germany, instead of the Union altogether. Because of this, the EM overall aim is to enhance the quality of

[48] Prior to 2004, when the EM decision entered into force, there were a few initiatives in higher education with an external dimension, but these did not involve Latin America. They are: the Tempus programme (1990), directed to Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Mediterranean regions; an EU-Canada cooperative agreement for Higher education (1995); an EU-Japan agreement (2002) proposed actions to increase mutual cooperation in the Academic world; and a project in agricultural sciences between EU-Australia (2002).

European higher education and the cooperation with "third countries"[49]. What is more, the Erasmus Mundus has been claimed to be a response to the US's Fulbright Programme, which awards scholarships to highly qualified researchers to pursue studies in the United States.

4.4.4 Other initiatives

Apart from the EU-funded programmes cited above, there are other initiatives which also aim at integrating the higher education systems in Europe, not only EU, and Latin America.

One example is the Columbus Network, an association of universities from Europe and Latin America with the goal of promoting good practices of institutional management and development in both regions. Founded in 1987, the network was created in the former Council of European Rectors (CRE, now European University Association, EUA) and the leaders of some higher education institutions in Latin America. In August 2007, the Columbus network counted 62 members (41 from LA and 21 from Europe). The activities of the network include give support for the development of efficient management strategies and offer training for staff in leadership positions.

A recent initiative of the Columbus network together with the Mexican National Centre for Assessment of Higher Education (CENEVAL) is the project "6x4 UELAC – A dialogue among universities". The project proposes to analyse six professions in four analytical 'axes'. The professions are: public and business administration, electronic engineering, medicine, chemistry, history, and mathematics. They would be analysed according to: professional experiences, academic credits, evaluation and accreditation, and training in innovation and research. What is more, it proposes the creation of a credit system for Latin America (Sistema de Créditos Académicos - SICA), which would be compatible with the ECTS, as well as a Latin Diploma supplement (Complemento al Titulo – CAT). On a brief move ahead into Chapter 5, the ALCUE Follow-Up Committee has knowledge of this project, and discussed (with certain scepticism) the feasibility of its endeavours (ALCUE FUC, 2004a, p. 4).

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[49] Third-countries are understood as states other than the EU-27, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey.

The rationale for this transnational disciplinary and project is a consequence of the ALCUE process. Quoting the report, the 6x4 UELAC is a "CENEVAL and Columbus contribution to the European [Union], Latin America and Caribbean higher education common area". The project highlights that Latin America should be aware of the Bologna process, moreover, the region "can and should take advantage of the European experience of structural transformations of its higher education systems and of mechanisms that encourage the harmonization of different educational systems and facilitate the movement of students and professionals within the region" (6x4 UELAC, 2004, p. 6).

Another example of inter-regional is proposed by the Organisation of Iberoamerican States for Education, Science and Culture[50] (OEI). OEI promotes the Programme for exchanges and academic mobility (PIMA), an initiative that funds different mobility programmes within the organisation's member states (Latin America plus Portugal and Spain). For instance, PIMA awards scholarships for the students going under AUGM's ESCALA Programme (as mentioned in subchapter 3.3.3, p. 57-58). Moreover, it supports the student mobility under the PIMA Andalucía scheme, a joint initiative with this Spanish region to foster institutional networks based on academic fields.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided the antecedents of the relationship between the European Union and Latin America in different arenas, such as historical, political and with respect to higher education programmes. It aimed at offering a perspective on the events that happened before of, and parallel to, the ALCUE process.

Sequencing is an exercise very much centred on the notion of the path-dependency, a core assumption in the institutionalism theory. In a simplistic view of the this concept, the events that happened in the past may influence on the actions of the present – and now it is time to understand whether this is the case with the ALCUE process. Therefore, in line with the institutionalist tradition, this chapter was essential to the analysis of the ALCUE to the

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[50] Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura: www.oei.es. For information on the PIMA project: http://www.campus-oei.org/pima/.

extent it revealed the events that may have contributed direct or indirectly to the dynamics of the process as it will be shown further in Chapter 5. What is more, it provided a foundation for a more precise interpretation of the developments of this common area.

Throughout this chapter it was possible to see the role of European traditions on the establishment of the primary institutions in Latin America. The brief historical perspective pointed out the role of the Catholic Church in the establishment of higher educations institutions in the region. It also highlighted the employment of the Spanish models of Salamanca and Alcala de Henares as the main institutional models for the early Latin American universities in the XVI century. As a reminder of the Chapter 3, the European tradition was still reminiscent among LA institutions after the independence of the colonies in the XIX century, since the Spanish tradition was then replaced by the French model.

Second, following the recent political evolution of the inter-regional relationship, it can also be inferred that the cooperation at the intergovernmental level has a longer tradition than the one at the inter-regional level. This is obvious for the bi-lateral relations are existent for a long time. One could argue, however, that in a matter of a decade this relationship has taken new proportions, as never predicted. Assuming that the first official round of negotiations between the EU and LAC in an inter-regional level took place in 1999, the five "specialised" agreements to support that broader arrangement may lead to different speculations. On the one hand, once there is an awareness of the tradition of political instability in LA, it would be acceptable that minor cooperative networks be formed to tie together and legitimise the agreement in case of instability. Without a further look in the essence of the specific bi-lateral agreements, on the other hand, it could also be said that there is a strategic preoccupation in working on specific interests with different sub-regions.

On the higher education arena, the trans-national programmes in this sector are basically promoted and funded by the European Union. It was not found record of any scheme originated from any Latin American sub-region that supports joint research or mobility for European academics, or for mutual cooperation. In this context, ALFA, ALβAN and Erasmus Mundus consist of three supra-national strategies launched by the European Union. Specific to Latin America, the ALFA and the ALβAN are carried out by the DG EuropeAid under a major external development programme, the DCI. The Erasmus

Mundus consists of a programme to enhance the attractiveness of the European higher education through the offer of post-graduation programmes, projects and scholarships.

Considering that the sequencing presented here included events that are parallel to the ALCUE process, the chapter anticipated a couple of spin offs from the agreement for a common area. These are the cases of the Tuning Latin America, a large-scale transnational project that evaluated disciplinary differences and similarities between institutions within LA; and the 6x4 UELAC project, with similar nature but offering a parallel between the disciplines in Europe and Latin America.

What is more, it could be claimed that apparently the first inter-regional cooperation between LA and EU may have happened in the area of higher education, with the launching of the ALFA programme in 1994. This programme is prior to the regional strategy papers from 2002 and 2007.

The notion of path-dependency seems to be very appropriate for the interpretation of the sequencing of the relationship between the EU and the LA. The results of a survey with the offices for international relations conducted under the PIHE programme can demonstrate that. On the survey, the cultural bonds are the weakest argument for Latin American institutions to cooperate with Europe, whereas for the European institutions it is the first motivation for cooperation with Latin America. What does it mean in the context of the ALCUE? Based on the prior conclusions from Chapter 3, and the data presented by the sequencing chapter, do the interests of the actors change when a path-dependency component is added?

According to the information presented in this chapter, it seems that, yes, history is a crucial element for understanding the behaviour of actors and shaping institutional development. The responses of the survey above offer an insight on the how different the regions face inter-regional cooperation. As Chapter 3 has shown, it was through cultural coercion that the Europeans have established their institutions in Latin America and ignored the existing practices of the natives in the XV and XVI centuries. It can be inferred that these events from the past still influence on the Latin Americans' position before the Europeans in a way that cultural cooperation may be translated into cultural dominance.

With regards to the European programmes towards Latin America, the guess is that the Europeans intend to reach a more consistent integration through smaller steps, such as the programmes and the bi-lateral "specialised" dialogues with the LA sub-regions, in

conformity with the spillover strategy. At the same time, the funding programmes through the DG EuropeAid might result on financial dependence for conducting research. On the other side, even though there is no counter-project from the Latin American countries to fund research on a regional level with the European Union. The Latin still appear to participate on the programmes not for the sake of the cultural closeness, but for considering that inter-regional cooperation is a valid tool that helps them to cope with their own problems.

What is more, this chapter has shown that higher education has been included in the agenda of different sectors within the EU. There is a linkage to other policy fields, in particular to development and external aid. The programmes from the DG EuropeAid are the main examples if the inclusion of higher education in the planning of policies for development.

The background information presented in both Chapters 3 and 4 sets the stage for the analysis of the development of the *objectives* and instruments of the ALCUE common area, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

5 The ALCUE Common Area in Higher Education

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter approaches the case study of this thesis: the process of shaping a common area between the European Union and the Latin America and Caribbean regions. Until now, this work has relied on historical and political contexts, also on recent and past higher education experiences, which were trusted to help the building of preliminary arguments to interpret this common area. The information on the actors and sequence presented so far is linked to the institutionalist tradition, first, by questioning which values and cognitions the participants bring to the dynamics of this process; and second, by highlighting the importance of path-dependency in the way institutions change and adapt along the time. Both dimensions composed the analytical scheme for tracing the process based on the work of Gornitzka (1999), as it was illustrated in Table 1.1.

The following chapter will address the two remaining dimensions proposed in the framework for tracing the process. The first one is related to the *objectives* of the common area. It intends to find out what the expected outcomes of the ALCUE are, and which aspects do the policies want to address. The second dimension refers to the *instruments* developed based on that can lead to the fulfilment of the process's objectives.

In order to reiterate the purpose of this work and shed light on how the trajectory followed so far will lead to significant conclusions, it may be a good opportunity to recall this thesis's research problem. The question posed in Chapter 1 asks: how can the attempt of building a common area between the European Union and Latin America be interpreted? What this chapter aims at is bringing the case study forward to evaluate whether the expectations raised with the theoretical choices can be met.

The chapter starts with the presentation of the events that lead to the creation of a declaration for the ALCUE common area, its objectives, structure, and instruments (subchapters 5.1 to 5.6). Later, it proposes a comparison with the European experience of the EHEA (5.7), and finishes with a discussion on the dynamics of the ALCUE common area so far (5.8). Last but not least, concluding thoughts are presented.

5.2 Designing the common area

The First Summit between the Heads of States and Government of European Union, Latin America and the Caribbean held in 1999 established the guideline for a strategic bi-regional partnership among the regions in different arenas. In this first meeting, the Heads of State committed to three priority goals: a fruitful political dialogue, solid economical and financial relations, and a dynamic cultural understanding, which included educational, scientific, technological, cultural and human fields (Declaration of Rio de Janeiro, 1999).

Related to the last of the inter-regional priorities, the field of higher education was specifically posed as a special challenge (cf. § 63, Declaration of Rio, 1999). Accepting the Heads of State's suggestion for a meeting at the Ministerial level in the field of Education, in the following year 48 Ministers of Education gathered in Paris and established an action framework for an emergent inter-regional common area in higher education (Declaration of Paris, 2000). It was declared:

The need for an action framework for cooperation on specific themes to foster the emergence of a "European Union – Latin America – Caribbean Higher Education Area" (EULAC) as one of the key elements of the strengthening of bilateral and multilateral relations among States, with the mission of facilitating and sharing of knowledge, the transfer of technologies and the mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrators, while paying particular attention to the links between training, employment and scientific knowledge in the countries concerned (Declaration of Paris, 2000).

The totality of representatives of Ministry of Education from the (then) 15 member states of the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean attended the meeting. The EC was also present. After the EU expansions in 2004 and 2007, the ALCUE common area counts 60 national systems. What is more, it should be stressed that all EU members had signed the Bologna Declaration a year before (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

Despite the encouragement from the EU-LAC Head of States meeting, which lead to the Meeting in Paris, there are parallel conditions which may also have influenced the emergence of this common area. The Declarations of Sorbonne and Bologna (1998 and 1999), plus the emphasis on knowledge emerged from the Lisbon Strategy (2000), anticipated the novel wave of transformations in higher education undergoing in Europe. Moreover, the EU negotiations for inter-regional arrangements with the Mercosur and the

ACP countries[51] (Africa, Caribbean and Pacific) started during this period (Doctor, 2007; European Commission, 2007b). These events may have increase the EU exposure to the region. In respect to the agreement with Mercosur, Maurice Doctor stresses that the Mercosur states not only considered the European Union as a model for their own regional agreement, but they also aimed at "enhancing the potential benefits of integration into global production networks" (Doctor, 2007, p. 292).

At the same time, discussions over a Free Trade of Americas (FTAA) generated controversy in South America, and destabilised the relationship between Latin America and the Unites States. One could claim that this situation motivated the European Union to try to diminish the North-American influence on the region. Last but not least, historical linkages in culture, language and higher education traditions may also have benefited a move into increasing closeness, particularly between European countries and their former colonies.

Since its establishment in 2000, the ALCUE common higher education area has had interesting developments, although not always successful. In order to illustrate the evolution of the common area, Table 5.1 offers an overall picture. The main events are underlined, and will be developed with more detail below in the text.

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51. The relationship between the EU and the ACP group was established in 1975. The Conotou Agreement reinforced the ACP-EU partnership for 20 more years, from 2000 to 2020 (European Commission, 2007b).

Table 5.1 ALCUE Common Area: Evolution

06/1999	1st Summit EU-LAC Heads of States – Rio de Janeiro
	Declaration of Rio: political landmark of interest in building a "strategic bi-regional partnership". Education included as one of the three priorities (§7); partnership in higher education pointed out as special challenge (§63). Education and training as a way to diminish social inequalities and poverty (§64).
11/2000	1st Meeting of ALCUE Ministers of Education – Paris
	Declaration of Paris: Encourages comparability of degrees and credits, and mobility. Establishes objectives and structures the Follow Up Committee.
10/2001	*Informal* FUC meeting, Murcia, Spain.
	Aimed at initiate the launching of FUC activities, and to accelerate the Committee's decisions. Suggestion for having an Action Plan to be presented in the next Heads of State meeting.
10/2001	I Follow-Up Committee meeting – Paris
	Decision on FUC's structure, organisation, schedule, functioning. France, Brazil and St Kitts and Nevis at the FUC Presidency 2000-2004. Defined structure for Action Plan 2002-2004. Funding agencies invited to attend the meeting.
03/2002	II FUC Meeting – Fortaleza, Brazil
	Draft Action Plan 2002 – 2004.
05/2002	2nd Summit EU-LAC Heads of States – Madrid
	Madrid Political Declaration - Approves Action Plan 2002 - 2004 (cf. § 30), acknowledges Paris Meeting from 2000. Reference to ALFA and Alβan programmes (§29).
07/2002	III FUC Meeting – Mérida, Yucatan, Mexico
	Final text for Action Plan 2002 – 2004.
10/2002	IV FUC Meeting – Cordoba, Spain
	Spain proposes Technical Secretariat. Proposal of many projects by the 5 FUC members. Brazil and Mexico invited for Bologna Process meeting in Berlin.
02/2003	International Seminar on Quality Assessment and Accreditation in Higher Education. Madrid (3-5/02/2003)
05/2003	Expert's meeting on the Recognition of study periods. Paris.
04/2003	V FUC Meeting – Paris
	Specifications about the structure of the Technical Secretariat.
05/2003	Bologna Process Meeting in Berlin
	Brazil and Mexico participated as observers.
04/2004	VI FUC Meeting – Belo Horizonte, Brazil
	Approves FUC regiment. Creates ALCUE Forum and Chairs. Invites rotative presidencies of Mercosur, Andean Community and European Union as permanent observers.
05/2004	I EUA – CUIB Meeting, Guadalajara, México.
	Declaration of Guadalajara - Aim of combining their efforts towards building a common area for higher education, research, and knowledge encompassing the EU, LA and the Caribbean. A CUIB-EUA Committee of 6 members (3 each side) was formed.

Table 5.1 ALCUE Common Area: Evolution (continued from page 79)

05/2004	3rd Summit EU-LAC Heads of States – Guadalajara, Mexico
	Declaration of Guadalajara - Agrees to extend the 2002-2004 Action Plan until 2008 (cf. § 89). Invites Ministries for a new meeting to think of strategies for 2004-2008, and consider involvement of institutions, networks and associations. Reference to quality assessment.
11/2004	VII FUC Meeting – Madrid
	Discusses Action plan 2004-2008. Committee members renovated their commitment. Debates over a Caribbean representative.
04/2005	VIII FUC Meeting – Mexico
	Definition of "ALCUE" as acronym.
04/2005	2nd Meeting ALCUE Ministers of Education – Mexico
	Declaration of Mexico – Expands Committee to 10 members. Design of 14 new strategies. Stresses role of ALCUE as strategic element on strengthening ties among its participant states.
10/2005	IX FUC Meeting – Paris
	Approves logo. Proposes seal of quality for best practices in inter-regional mobility. Peru interested in sponsoring a FUC meeting.
04/2006	X FUC Meeting – Maceió, Brazil
	Pilot Mobility project in Engineering and Teacher training. Reviews existing projects.
04/2006	II EUA – CUIB Meeting, Oviedo, Spain.
	Declaration of Asturias – Rectors from both regions established 7 priorities for the ALCUE Cooperation, and made several recommendations. Remarks to institutional autonomy, diversified funding, and institutional leadership to conduct the cooperative agreements. Suggestion for a Latin American window in the Erasmus Mundus programme.
05/2006	Panel of experts on the ALCUE agreement (Real 2006) – prior to Vienna Summit.
	Point out differences in the level of integration, and the need for interactive action, avoiding top-down processes from the European Union towards Latin America and the Caribbean.
05/2006	4th Summit EU-LAC Heads of States – Vienna
	Declaration of Vienna – HE as a headline in the Declaration. ALCUE common area as a priority, "geared towards mobility and cooperation". Acknowledges decisions made in the Mexico Meeting in 2005 and the work of the Follow Up Committee". Welcomes the European Commission's initiative in increasing exchange programmes (cf. §52).
03/2007	XI FUC Meeting – Medellín, Colombia
	Reflects upon the role of the Technical Secretariat.
06/2007	ALCUE Seminar: Quality assurance mechanisms and codes for good practices – Madrid (21-22/06/07).
12/2007	XII FUC Meeting – Lisbon
	Preparation for the III ALCUE Ministerial meeting
03/2008	Expert meeting: Universities before the V Heads of Stated Meeting of governments from EU-LAC countries. Promoted by the National Rectors Assembly, Peru.
04/2008	III EUA – CUIB Meeting – Barcelona.
05/2008	Upcoming: 5th Summit EU-LAC Heads of State – Lima
10/2008	Upcoming: III ALCUE Ministerial meeting in Madrid (postponed from February 08 to October 08)

The events highlighted on Table 5.1 are considered as key moments for ALCUE process. During these meetings were defined the structure of the process, i.e. the structure of Follow-Up Group and the Technical Secretariat, its objectives and instruments.

One can agree that the list of events presented in Table 5.1 is rather impressive. In the last eight years, there have been: two ministerial meetings; 12 follow-up meetings; the heads of states are on the watch; representatives of the European Commission, the Mercosur, the Andean Community observe eventually; Brazil and Mexico participated in a Bologna Process meeting; creation of a structure with a Technical Secretariat and a Follow-up Committee; there have been created a website, a forum, a virtual library, Chairs, a series of events in core issues (accreditation and recognition of studies abroad); and it has even received volunteered support from the institutions with the involvement of the EUA and the CUIB. Nevertheless, what has been the impact of all these events in advancing the process? Is it enough for establishing a common area creating objectives, instruments, capacity for action - besides the elements seen in this thesis, i.e. a shared history, experience in inter-regional cooperation, similar values and cognitions, and, to some extent, language? Apparently, no, is it not enough. Starting with the Ministerial meetings, let's look into the ALCUE process and understand why this is so.

5.3 Ministerial Meetings

There have been two meetings with the ALCUE Ministries of Education to discuss the common area. As already mentioned above, the first one was held in France, when the common area was established (Declaration of Paris, 2000). The second meeting was celebrated in the Mexican capital, in which the Ministers committed to establish the ALCUE common area in higher education by 2015 (Declaration of Mexico, 2005). The next meeting should be held in Spain in 2008.

More specifically, the first meeting in Paris stressed that the common area should be "built on the existing bi-lateral and multi-lateral cooperation and the ALFA programme" (Declaration of Paris, 2000). On the contrary, it seems that the closest that the ALFA programme has got to the decisions of the ALCUE process was being mentioned in a few initial presentations about good practices of inter-regional programmes and possible sources of funding. Also, the ALFA Tuning Latin America project has been debated more than once

during the Committee's meetings. Apart from this, there has been a feeling of disregarding the programmes created by the European Commission as part of the ALCUE process, as it will be revealed below.

Furthermore, the Paris meeting defined an initial structure for the ALCUE, with five countries composing the Follow-up Committee in order to operationalise the process. The FUC was formed by two countries from Latin America (Brazil and Mexico), one from the Caribbean (Saint Kitts and Nevis), and two from the European Union (Spain and France). Based on the documents available, it was not possible to learn why or how these specific countries were chosen to compose the ALCUE FUC out of the 48 possible candidates. Granted that the participants of the FUC were defined during the Ministerial events in Paris and Madrid, only the official declarations are made available, and they do not clarify the rationale behind the composition of the Committee. However, one could guess that these countries could actually have volunteered to take the lead in the ALCUE process. Spain and France have a distinct tradition in serving as models for the higher education systems in Latin America. On the other hand, Brazil and Mexico can be considered as the two chief nations acting on behalf of the region.

Five objectives were designed in this first ministerial meeting. The Declaration makes reference to the "framework of EC programmes" as inspiration for the design of instruments to reach the goals established.

After five years, the second Ministerial meeting was held in Mexico City in 2005. As the declaration mentions, it worked more as a response to the 2004 Guadalajara Heads of States Summit, than probably a need to evaluate the evolution of the ALCUE process. According to the informant from Mexico (Interview Mexico, 2008) many of the Ministers did not attend the meeting. Instead, representatives were sent to substitute them – and reaffirm the general idea that there is a governmental disinterest in the ALCUE process.

Despite that, the Declaration of Mexico (2005) has four major resolutions. First, it sets a target period for the ALCUE common area: 2015. Second, it outlines 14 strategies for the ALCUE common area (presented in Table 5.2 below), with very little connection to the agenda set in the first Ministerial meeting. Third, this meeting suggested five priorities for the Action Plan 2004 – 2008: mechanisms and networks for cooperation, mechanisms for comparability, foster mobility, LA – EU study centres, and identify financial resources. In the first meeting, only two priorities were set: mobility and comparability of degrees.

The forth important resolution of the Mexico meeting is not explicit in the Declaration, but on the Minutes from the 9th FUC meeting (ALCUE FUC, 2005). It is related to the enlargement of the members of the Committee. In this meeting, it was added Colombia and Nicaragua as Latin representatives, Jamaica to the Caribbean, and Poland and Portugal to the EU team. Hence, since 2005 there are 10 states composing the ALCUE FUC. Similar to what has been said about the first composition of the Committee, there is no indication of the reason those countries were added. Nonetheless, while the inclusion of Portugal seems a rather understandable choice due to the cultural linkages to Brazil, the role of Poland is intriguing. Poland does not seem to have any obvious national interest or historical linkages to Latin America to the extent that Spain, Portugal and France have. By joining the process, the Polish representatives bring more of a supranational perspective to the agreement, and stress the role of the EU as an actor, not only the leadership of the Iberian members.

Finally, the text makes reference to this common area's political symbolism as well as instrument for improving the quality of higher education when it expresses that:

The ALCUE Higher Education Common Area is recognised as a strategic element for strengthening bilateral and multilateral relations between the States, as well as universities and other higher education institutions, which effectively contribute to the process of ongoing improvement of quality of national education systems. (Declaration of Mexico, 2000).

5.4 Objectives

The objectives and strategies for the ALCUE process were decided on the two ministerial meetings. Again, the official declaration does not clarify about the process of creating these goals, and the subjects involved with it. This information becomes relevant in particular for the strategies in the II Ministerial Meeting, since the FUC had been working towards reaching the Paris Meeting goals for almost five years. The objectives are transformed into Action Plans by the Follow-Up Committee, as means to plan instruments to translate the goals into action. Below, it is presented the goals for the ALCUE in each Ministerial meeting:

Table 5.2 ALCUE Common Area: Objectives

Meeting	Objectives (19)
Paris (2000)	Stimulate greater comparability of degrees and credit systems
	Encourage academic, student and staff mobility
	Promotion of distance education
	Promote vocational education
	Create programmes in European Studies in LAC and vice-versa
Mexico (2005)	Increase mutual knowledge of the ALCUE higher education systems
	Identify and share experiences on exchange programmes
	Involve institutions in the ALCUE process
	Promote the comparability of courses based on previous experiences
	Foster the creation of mobility programmes
	Establish effective management of mobility programmes and networks
	Share ICT within programmes and activities of the common area
	Further the creation of quality assessment mechanisms
	Share knowledge on assessment and accreditation practices
	Creation of ALCUE quality seal
	Create study centres about the EU in LA and vice-versa
	Foster greater internal and external visibility of ALCUE process
	Identify financial sources for building the Common Area
	Reduce barriers to the process

Source: Declarations of Paris (2000) and Mexico (2005).

There seems to be a discontinuation of goals with the ALCUE. The goals from the Mexico meeting are in its majority different from those aims decided in Paris, apart from two of them: promote degree comparability and creation of LA and EU study centres. Instead of elaborating strategies over previously established objectives, it appears that the ALCUE ministers created new goals without clear relation to the previous ones. What is more, considering the time frame between one policy and the other, the Declaration of Mexico seems to present more basic objectives than the goals presented in 2000. To illustrate it, the first objective from Mexico (2005) stresses the "need to increasing mutual knowledge among the ALCUE higher education systems". One would argue that this should be the basic step for cooperation, as it is not possible to think of comparable degrees without consistent knowledge on the partner's structure.

Another remark is on the exclusion of two objectives, regarding the promotion of vocational training and distance education. The Follow-Up Committee has never proposed

any activity related to those goals. Nonetheless, they seem to be a topic of interest for the European participants. Studies have indicated that the European Commission started an agenda on the topics of vocational training and distance education, which culminated in the Copenhagen process in 2002 (Gornitzka, 2006). Both examples indicate that the ALCUE objectives elaborated in Mexico grew more purposeful and accurate, than those elaborated earlier in Paris.

5.5 Structure

The structure for coordinating the process is formed by a Technical Secretariat and a Follow-up Committee. What is more, there has been indication of the composition of Working Groups for specific projects, but there is no information available about them. The Technical Secretariat and the Follow-Up Committee will be discussed below.

5.5.1 The Technical Secretariat

The Technical Secretariat (TS) is the main a coordination mechanism of this inter-regional process. It was proposed by Spain during the IV meeting of the Follow-up Committee in Cordoba, and approved in the next Paris meeting, in April 2003 (ALCUE FUC, 2002a; 2003). In this meeting, it was decided that the Secretariat would be located at the Spanish Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA). In 2006, the Secretariat was transferred to the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, under the management of the General Secretariat of the Council for University Coordination (CCU). Therefore, the responsible for the ALCUE Technical Secretariat is the Secretary General of the CCU. What is more, the responsible for the TS has been recently appointed as the General Secretary for the Spanish Rectors' Conference (CRUE).

The main function of the TS is to support the Follow-Up Committee on the implementation of the decisions made at the Ministerial Meetings. Moreover, other responsibilities are sharing information among the members of the FUC and other members of the ALCUE, maintaining contact with other international organisms which are connected to building this common area, managing the FUC meetings, and elaborating periodical bulletins and the minutes.

The presence of a ST is very relevant to the coordination and building of the ALCUE common area. According to the institutional tradition, developing structures and appointing capacity to lead actions is a sing of legitimacy attached to the process. As previously argued in subchapter 2.5, capacity for action acts as a stability force and creates mutual engagement in institutions.

The minutes from the XI FUC meeting in Colombia (ALCUE FUC 2007) have shown the concern the FUC members with the functioning of the ST. On the document, the Spanish Minister of Education expresses the governmental willingness in keeping the ST until the next Ministerial meeting, scheduled for October 2008. The Spanish Ministers suggested the creation of a *pro-tempore* secretariat, to be hosted at the Ministry of the responsible for the next Committee meeting. This suggestion alludes to the organisation of the Bologna Secretariat, in which a Pro-tempore secretariat is established and coordinated by the hosts of the future Ministerial meetings.

5.5.2 The Follow-up Committee

The Follow-up Committee was created in November 2000. It was first composed by five members responsible for "assum(ing) the function of general coordination in the framework of national, Community and international structures which will collaborate more closely. Between meetings, the five coordinating countries will be responsible for the proper functioning of the process" (Declaration of Paris, 2000, Action Framework F). As mentioned above, the number of coordinating countries in the committee has doubled in the second Ministerial meeting, without clear specification of the reasons behind this decision. The FUC is currently coordinated by 10 countries which represent the 3 regions:

- European Union: France, Spain, Portugal and Poland.
- Latin America: Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Nicaragua.
- Caribbean: St Kitts and Nevis, and Jamaica.

Each country indicates representatives from the Ministry, either from the offices of International Relations or the Higher Education, to attend the FUC meeting on behalf of the government. According to the minutes, most of the participants have more than one representative attending the FUC meetings, and these delegates are often present in more than one meeting.

Moreover, as an indicator of the complying with objective of bringing together the European Union and the coordination of the sub-regional arrangements in Latin America and the Caribbean, the current presidencies of the European Commission, the Mercosur, the Andean Community and the Caribbean Community have been invited as observers of the FUC meetings.

Since its creation at the First Ministerial Meeting in Paris (Declaration of Paris, 2000), there have been 12 Committee meetings. The site, date and main subject of discussion of each meeting is presented below:

Table 5.3 ALCUE Follow-up Committee meetings

Meeting	Site	Date	Main discussions/results
I	Paris	30 – 31/10/2001	Defined structure, organisation, functioning, and schedule of FUC. Designs Action Plan.
II	Fortaleza (Brazil)	25 – 27/03/2002	Draft Action Plan 2002-2004
III	Mérida (Mexico)	22 – 24/07/2002	Final Text Action plan 2002-2004
IV	Córdoba (Spain)	28 – 30/10/2002	Projects for events, forum, virtual library, chairs, study centres proposed. FUC recognises problems with funding and coordination. Spain proposes Technical Secretariat. Brazil and Mexico invited for Bologna meeting in Berlin. All FUC members present.
V	Paris	31/03 -1/04/2003	Created Technical Secretariat under Spain's coordination. Caribbean absent.
VI	Belo Horizonte (Brazil)	22 - 23/04/2004	Approves the FUC's regiment. Projects for ALCUE Forum and Chairs. CAN, EU and Mercosur as permanent observers. Discusses participation of Caribbean.
VII	Madrid	23 - 24/11/2004	Discussion for the Action plan 2004-2008. Stressed need to articulate dialogue with other ALCUE countries, and institutions. FUC members renovated commitment. Discussion over a new Caribbean representative.
VIII	Mexico D.F.	28/03 - 01/04/2005	Adopted "ALCUE" as acronym.
IX	Paris	8 - 9/12/2005	Proposal of seal of quality for best practices in mobility. Logo approved. Presentations of existing bi- and multilateral, and EC cooperation programmes.
X	Maceió (Brazil)	27 - 28/04/2006	Pilot mobility project for engineering and teacher training (SMILE). Review of existing projects.
XI	Medellín (Colombia)	22 - 23/03/2007	Reflection on the role of the TS.
XII	Lisbon	03/12/2007	(The minute has not been approved yet).

The document and resolutions made by the ALCUE Follow-Up Committee are published in the ALCUE's four working languages: English, French, Portuguese and Spanish, translated by the Technical Secretariat. During the documental research and analysis, it could be noticed a certain lack of consistency with the way this agreement has been refereed to. The different acronyms used along the documents (EULAC, ALCUE, UELAC) seemed to follow a pattern according to language of the host country. For instance, if the meeting was conducted in Spain, it would be "UEALC", as in *Unión Europea, America Latina y el Caribe*. On the other hand, there was no pattern with respect to the location of the meeting, which could mean that if the FUC met in Latin America, it would be used "ALCUE", or in the European Union, "UELAC" or "EULAC" when English language was used. However, in 2005 the FUC decided to adopt "ALCUE" as the only reference to this process, even though sometimes the acronyms are mixed in one same minute.

The importance for a coherent mean of reference to this agreement is also understood as a tool for the solidifying the process's identity and increasing its legitimacy. After the decision for the acronym, it was presented a design for a logo by the Mexican delegates in the 9th meeting (ALCUE FUC, 2005). The tree was chosen as the ALCUE logo because, according to the delegates, it is "symbol of knowledge". Since then, all minutes keep the ALCUE logo as the heading.

Figure 5.1 ALCUE common area: logo

It is possible to understand the dynamics of the FUC meetings through the analysis of its minutes. Out of 12 meetings, it was possible to have access to 8 minutes (1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 11). The minutes for the 2nd, 3rd and 8th meetings were not available to be analysed whereas the last encounter, in Lisbon, still does not have an approved text. These documents reveal the dynamics of this common area. The main topics of discussion, as shown above in Table 5.2 and 5.3, are related to the objectives decided on the Ministerial meetings and the instruments proposed by the FUC members in order to achieve the Ministry's goals proposed.

The little participation of the Caribbean representatives in both the FUC and the process was one of the debated issues in the 6th and 7th meetings (ALCUE FUC, 2004a, 2004b). This region has had little partaking in the FUC, being present only in the initial meetings[52]. Even tough the minutes show little evidence of previous contact to the Caribbean delegates, in the 6th meeting it became a topic for discussion. The Caribbean representative had lost interest in the process because it had been unsuccessful in having its projects about teaching Caribbean languages approved. This lack of interest was confirmed when a representative of the Caribbean Community ignored the invitation to participate in the 7th FUC meeting in Madrid (ALCUE FUC, 2004b), but it did not receive any response. In face of that, the Mexican delegate offered to work as a mediator with the Caribbean representative during the OEA meetings. Above all, it was recognised the difficulty in the participation of St. Kits and Nevis in the shaping of the common area since it does not have a university in its higher education system (ALCUE FUC, 2004, p. 2-3). The other FUC members then proposed the choice of a new representative for that region, which would need to have a university.

A similar situation has happened to the participation of Nicaragua. Once again, the lack of information about the decision-making process of the ministerial meetings does not allow the comprehension of why Colombia and Nicaragua were chosen to compose the FUC. Nonetheless, Colombia has made a contribution by joining the FUC and hosted a Committee meeting in 2007, whereas there is no evidence of the Nicaraguan participation. In fact, when contacted for an interview regarding the possible impact of the ALCUE process, there was no governmental representative from the Ministry, the University council, or the Council for Science and Technology, who was aware of this process and the involvement of Nicaragua as member of the FUC.

The minutes show that the Committee has discussed the nature of some of the issues that are essential to a common space, such as a common accreditation framework. This can be illustrated in two moments during the FUC meeting in Colombia in March 2007. The first one happened during a presentation about possible mechanisms for accreditation in the ALCUE. After the exposition by a Colombian delegate, the French delegation commented on the country's undergoing changes at the European level, to which the Brazilian

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[52] It is unknown if a delegate from St Kitts and Nevis was present in the meeting in the 2nd meeting, in Forteleza.

delegation affirmed it does not support the creation of a supranational body that would decide upon inter-regional accreditation and quality assurance for the ALCUE area (ALCUE FUC, 2007). Despite the reference to the power argument in keeping the sovereignty of its national structures, the Brazilian position was backed by the Polish delegation, who stressed that "certification is treated very differently in the Europe and in different countries in Latin America and that the work of the different agencies should therefore by synchronised" (ALCUE FUC, 2007, p.6).

The second topic that generated rich discussion was related to collaboration with existing frameworks formed by intergovernmental institutions (read: EU) and transnational institutions. It was discussed the Colombian participation in the Tuning LA project, the Alßan and the 6x4 projects, all projects previously approached in this thesis. At the end of the presentation, there were diverging yet interesting comments from the delegations. Some of these comments are highlighted in the quote below (ALCUE FUC 2007, p. 11):

The French delegation states that the limits of the intergovernmental structure must be known and that there must be differentiation between ALCUE initiatives and those of the European Union in their integration process with other regions.

Brazil completely agrees with the position proposed by the French delegation because these are European Union programmes directed at specific regions. What corresponds to this ALCUE area is the development of projects built by the group involving the countries in the region.

(...)

The Spanish delegate (...) mentions the importance of reflecting on the existing integration systems and the need to articulate them as ALCUE initiatives.

(...)

The Colombian minister says that the value of the ALCUE lies in its nature as an area and not [as] an organisation, in which all the projects developed in the regions can be taken into account. It is important to avoid duplicating actions, knowing that this is being developed in different areas.

As the passage above shows, whereas Brazil and France seem to reject the proximity to the European Union programmes, Spain and Colombia defend the need for combining forces. The main underlying issue appears to be the restriction regarding the influence of political interests from the supranational institutions (read again: EU, as no other regional institution is mentioned in the minute) in the structuring of the common area. Once more, it makes a reference to the power and interests argument, presented in Chapter 2.

This debate leads to another aspect that is essential to the success of an intergovernmental project in higher education such as a common area: the participation of

different stakeholders. As far as the information on the minutes can tell, there is very little involvement of other stakeholders than the members of the FUC and the ST in the ALCUE process. The Ministerial Declaration of Mexico defines that regional organisms, more specifically the European Commission and sub-regional agencies in Latin America and the Caribbean, and universities associations be invited. Even though representatives from the EC[53], the CAN, the Mercosur and the CARICOM have received invitations, their status as observers who have a temporary role in these organisations does not allow, it seems, a stronger involvement in or a significant support to the ALCUE process.

It is a fact, however, that the Committee acknowledges the need for involving other stakeholders, but there is divergence about who should be invited. For instance, one delegation suggests the Ministers themselves should be invited; other, that it is necessary that educational policy-makers and researchers be present; other, that the university deans and administrative staff should be involved. In the end, it is decided to keep the invitations as suggested by the Declaration of Mexico (2005): the EC, sub-regional bodies, and universities associations, such as the EUA and the CUIB.

5.6 Instruments

The FUC has developed a few instruments to put in practice the objectives and strategies from the Ministerial meetings. As the Caribbean proposal was not approved, the four initial delegations (Brazil, France, Mexico and Spain) divided responsibility in carrying out the projects they had proposed, hence they became the main agents of the instruments for the ALCUE process. Brazil is in charge of the ALCUE Portal, the Forum for assessment and accreditation, and later became involved in the mobility programmes. Mexico was responsible for the ALCUE Chairs, and the ALCUE Study Centres. France proposed a seminar on the recognition of study periods envisaging mobility programmes, and Spain hosted two events on quality assessment and accreditation. More recent projects are related to inter-regional mobility and exchange programmes.

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[53] Represented by a delegate from the current *pro-tempore* presidency, or from the DGs and Education and Culture (5th meeting), and External Relations (9th meeting). Also, the 10th a meeting was observed by the EC office in Brasilia..

The Portal ALCUE (www.alcue.net) was first presented in 2004 (ALCUE FUC, 2004b), at the Ministerial meeting in Mexico. It is under the responsibility and financial support of the Ministry of Education in Brazil, and is maintained by the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). The portal was designed to present data on the four languages of the common area (English, French, Portuguese and Spanish), however the translations are incomplete and the information available is outdated.

The ALCUE Forum is another project that is under the Brazilian responsibility, and it is hosted by the ALCUE Portal. The project for a Forum was presented at the 6th FUC meeting, in Belo Horizonte. It was designed to act as a tool for the exchange of experiences knowledge, reflections and discussion on the quality assessment of higher education. However, so far there has been no debate in the Forum at all since the first topic was posted in March 2007. In the meeting in Medellin, it was agreed that participation in the Forum would be restricted to the higher education institutions of the countries participating in the FUC. After the agreement, a Colombian delegate reminded that it should not be restricted only to the FUC members, but there is no evidence of change in the resolution.

Another initiative is the Virtual Library is an electronic device to offer public access to the policies and documents related to the common area and to higher education in general. It is also available from the ALCUE Portal.

The Mexican representatives have been responsible for two projects: the ALCUE Chairs and an ALCUE Network of Study Centres. Perhaps for lack of governmental support and interest, the project for the networks was not successful in receiving funds, and there has been only one edition of the ALCUE Chair, named “Knowledge Society”. The Chair consists of a network of thematic activities, such as seminars, lectures, conferences, to discuss themes referent to the knowledge society. The first edition was coordinated by the Mexican Latin American School of Social Sciences (FLACSO) in 2004, and proved to be a popular event. The Chair was conducted in a virtual learning environment with the support of on-line tutorials. The contents were split in four modules taught in 12 classes, in a total of 3 months. There is no indication of a new Chair to be hosted in Mexico, which again shows recent governmental disinterest on the ALCUE process.

Moreover, there have been three events. The French delegation hosted a seminar on the recognition of study periods in 2003. Also, Spain had two seminars on quality

assessment, in 2003 and in 2007, organised by the national agency for quality assessment (ANECA).

Completing the range of instruments proposed by the FUC, there are two ongoing projects to foster mobility in the areas of engineering and the training of teachers at the secondary level (ALCUE FUC, 2006). As referred in the minute of the 11th meeting (ALCUE FUC, 2007, p. 6-7), the project for the mobility of engineering students will be promoted initially by France, based on a previous experience of programmes in exchange in the field of engineering. On the other hand, the project for enhancing the qualification of secondary level teachers is still on the elaboration phase.

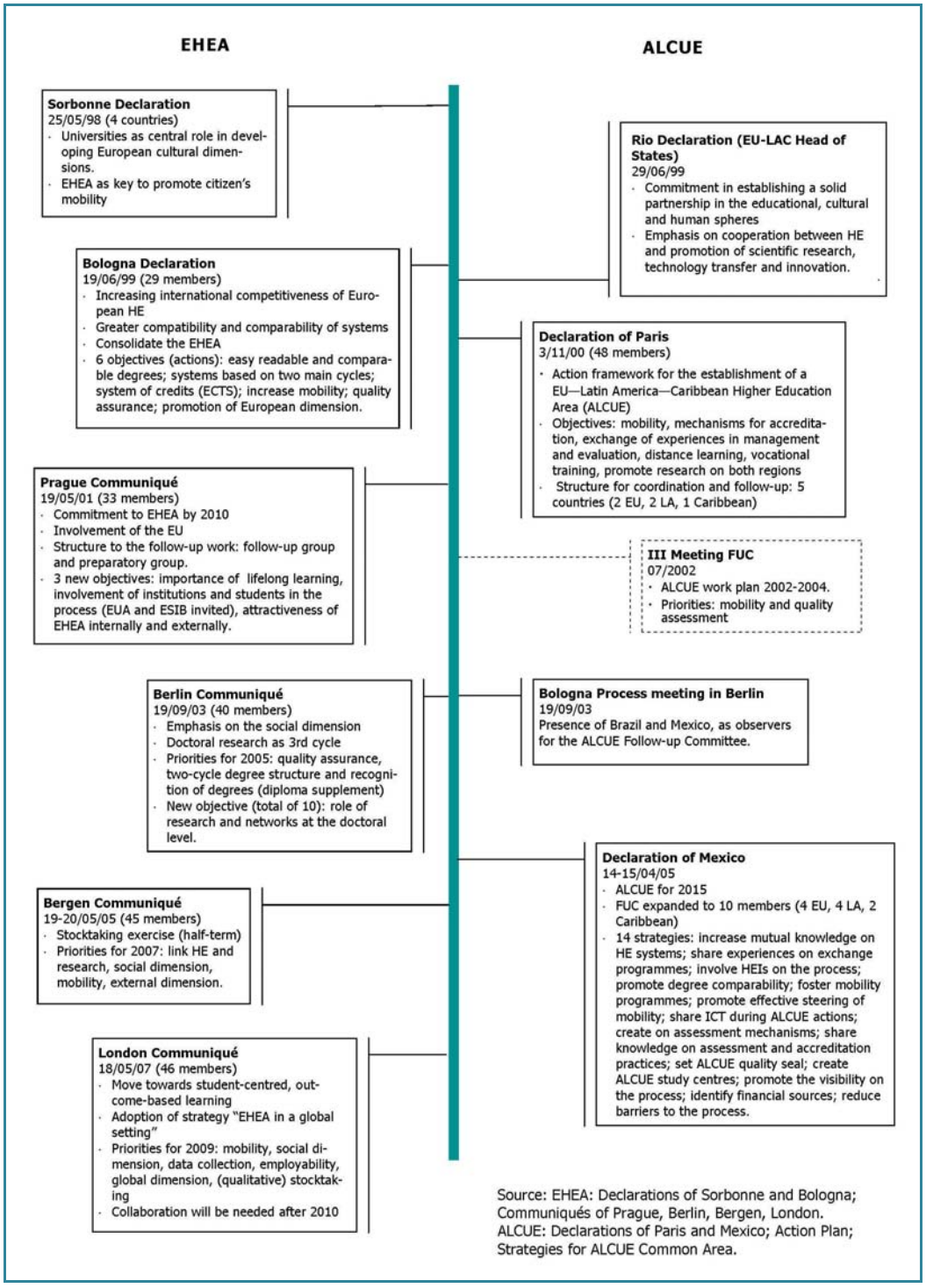
All instruments presented by the FUC are to a large extent in accordance to the objectives proposed by the Declarations of Paris and Mexico. They demonstrate that there is a certain level of commitment from the FUC in reaching the proposed goals, and that above all, they are paying attention to it and believe on its outcomes. However, there is a large discrepancy between how the actors plan and discuss the instruments, and what is actually done to implement them. There is often a delay in putting the projects into practice, since a considerable amount of energy is spent on planning and debating over the projects, and trying to reach a consensus, particularly in the recent composition of the FUC. Nonetheless, many actions have been carried out, some are on the way, such as the idea for an ALCUE seal of quality, and some had to be left aside for lack of financial resources, such as the Mexican plan for the study centres. According to the institutionalist tradition, as pointed out in Chapter 2, this mismatch of expectations and performance in implementing the instruments indicate that there is a lack of appropriate capabilities to conduct the objectives of the ALCUE process.

5.7 The relationship between the ALCUE and the EHEA

As it was previously argued in the Chapters 1 and 3, the EHEA is understood as a pre-condition for the establishment of the ALCUE. It not only constitutes a unique arrangement in higher education likely to be exported, but also became a strategic tool for enhancing European competitiveness in the higher education sector around the world, as shown by the report on the global dimension of the Bologna Process (Zgaga, 2007).

Recognised the impact of the EHEA, the challenge is to discover whether the ALCUE agreement should be seen as a way for the EU to diffuse a form of regional arrangement in higher education. In order to explore this question, in the sequence it is presented a comparative analysis of these two common areas' objectives and strategies stressed in the policies. Let's take a look at the comparison of the evolution of the two common areas:

Figure 5.2 Evolution of the EHEA and the ALCUE compared



The first evidence is the frequency of the ministerial meetings. Despite the rather similar time frame of 8 – 9 years, the Bologna Process demonstrates a much higher political support to the composition of the EHEA. Whereas the much lesser frequent meetings of the governmental representatives of the members of the ALCUE process indicates the level of interest in moving this agreement ahead.

By analysing the Bologna Declaration and its four subsequent declarations, it can be argued that the EHEA is built under a relatively coherent strategy. In every official document, its objectives are recalled, their evolution is assessed and new actions are suggested. What is more, the 10 objectives, presented in Chapter 3 (Table 3.1), seem to emphasize the main goal of increasing the international dimension of European higher education. Once again, it is important to reinforce that the Bologna Process, although considerably organised in their strategies, has faced hard times when it comes to implementation. The diverse traditions in between its 46 higher education national systems have in many countries become a hinder in the process. It is evident, for instance, with the Greek case, where the students voiced their unconformity with the reforms proposed and the government opted for slowing down the plans for the insertion of that country in the EHEA.

When analysing the goals established for the ALCUE process, listed above on table 5.5, it can be noticed that those ambitions set in 2000 present certain similarities to the goals of the Bologna declaration. These are in relation to the goals of fostering mobility, comparable degrees and accreditation. One can certainly argue that these objectives are not excusive to the BP and have been present in other transnational projects both within Europe and Latin America. The difference is that they had never be seen on the wider dimension of the system level, which requires that, first, the national structures and regulations maintain a relative homogeneity internally, and second, that those regulations be as compatible and comparable as possible to the regulations of the other members of the common area. Hence, the issues of mobility, comparable degrees and accreditation receive a new meaning in these intergovernmental arrangements – and they might have been first pictured as such with the signature of the BP.

However, these processes' differences seem to be more evident than the similarities between them. For instance, the issue of quality assurance was not only considered "at the heart of setting up of a European Higher Education Area" (Berlin Communiqué, 2003), but it contributed to the setting of a European association for quality assurance (ENQA), to which most of national agencies for assessment and evaluation are affiliated. There is a different dynamics, though, when it comes to the ALCUE. The issue of quality assessment was included a bit later in the objectives of the common area. It was made a priority in the Action Plan 2002-2004, and was included in the second meeting of ALCUE Ministers, in 2005. Moreover, members of the FUC have voiced their opposition to the creation of a supranational body for the accreditation practices within the ALCUE agreement.

Overall, the objectives from the ALCUE and the EHEA seem to demonstrate that these common areas have more differences than similarities between them, and that the divergences grow along the years. The two common areas present very different dynamics of evolution. On the one hand, the ALCUE is still working on the development of basic cooperation instruments, such as mobility structures and accreditation measures. It can be said that the ALCUE finds itself on the stage of "sharing experiences". On the other, the EHEA has gone further in the advancement of the process of building a common area, facilitated by the previously existing higher education structures (Erasmus, ECTS). Hence, the EHEA seems to be heading to a moment of solidifying objectives and increasing visibility, while it still advances on other steps such as sharing experiences, and implementing reforms.

5.8 Discussion: the evolution of the ALCUE Process

The analysis of the evolution of the process of building a common higher education area between the Latin America, the Caribbean and the European Union shows that its actions have acquired a slow pace. The FUC meets less often than before and the plans for a 3rd Ministerial meeting are once again delayed from December 2007, to February 2008, and then to October 2008. The proposal for this section is to summarise a few elements that are considered underdeveloped, which could present a different dynamics to the plans for this inter-regional agreement.

The first aspect to be highlighted is the change of the objectives. It seems that the Paris strategies were almost totally replaced by the new strategies posed by the second meeting in Mexico. They have been dropped before the complexion of the objectives of the Action Plan. In some documents, it is often referred to the 14 strategies of the Mexico Meeting, and ignored the previous five goals created in the Paris.

The analysis of the documents revealed that the delegates of the FUC from the European Union and Latin America are the main agents of the ALCUE process. It would even be reasonable to say that the FUC is the *only* agent of this process. There is a considerable uniformity of the participant delegates during the meetings, and the level of contribution is fairly balanced. In opposition, the Caribbean region is misrepresented and

does not seem to have the same motivation, confirmed by the fact that the Caribbean delegation had very little attendance to the meetings. It is often discussed the need for input and participation of other stakeholders, but this interaction has been unsuccessful.

The recent discussion about the role of the Technical Secretariat reveals a change in the role of an important agent in the process, which is Spain. When analysing the Spanish role in hosting and funding a Secretariat, it gives room to speculations about the interests of this country in leading such common area. Spain is considered the participant country in which the outcomes of an ALCUE common area would have the higher impact of all others, for all arguments presented in the previous chapter – and it seemed the Spanish ministry was aware of that when proposed to host and the TS. In the past, Spain not only implemented new cultural traditions, values and institutions, but also offered the first models for higher education in most of Latin America. However, when the Spanish Ministry is willing to share the responsibility with the other FUC country members, it may symbolize a shift in the rationale for the process, especially when the proposal seems to come from the Ministry representatives themselves, not from a consensus in the Committee, as the analysis of the Minutes shows. The argument presented was the need for a higher political involvement from the Heads of State, so the discussion can be taken to the EU-LAC summits. However, this decision may also indicate that Spain is not satisfied with the results the investment in this common area has brought so far, or that it has been reached the conclusion that the other FUC members should also be able to offer a more significant contribution to the process.

Connecting to the Latin American experience, the Mexican and Brazilian delegates in the Follow-Up Committee have a strong role in developing instruments for the agreements. The interviews carried out with a Brazilian and a Mexican informant from the Ministries demonstrates that these countries' ministries are motivated to advance further cooperation with the countries in European Union. Both respondents emphasise the leadership role their countries have in Latin America, and point out the difficulties in establishing common regulatory frameworks that support the ALCUE actions as the main obstruction to the achieving the common area's objectives. One must not forget, though, that the ALCUE process is lead mainly by the delegates of the FUC during the meetings. Moreover, the Committee has been composed only by Brazil and Mexico, the two main actors in the region, until the Colombia joined in 2005. In view of that, it could also be

questioned to what extent these countries act on behalf of the other states in Latin America.

According to the interviewee from the International Office at the Secretary for Higher Education in Brazil, the main rationale for the country's participation is the belief on the global tendencies for the internationalisation practices in higher education. On the interviewee's own words,

I think that this is the future of international cooperation in higher education, hence we are starting it now, so that in the future our institutions will be able to participate in this academic internationalisation (Interview Brazil, 2008).

What is more, the conversation revealed the expectation that the ALCUE instruments, when implemented, would motivate the involvement of other countries in the process. Also, that the respondent attaches little influence of the historical links with Europe to the shaping of this inter-regional process.

The interviewee from Mexico commented that a change of government has somewhat hindered the participation of the country in process. The shift in the priorities resulted in a higher focus on more basic levels than to tertiary education.

The EU institutions, on the other hand, do not seem to have a major role in this process, despite being one of the proponents of an increased cooperation in higher education in the Rio Summit in 1999. Spain and France maintain the historical tradition of influencing higher education in Latin America (see Chapters 3 and 4), in the form of the main actors working towards the shaping the ALCUE common area on the European side. Actually, until Poland was added as a member of the FUC, one could easily argue that this common area did not concern the EU at all.

Lastly, the Follow Up Committee has shown a certain avoidance in viewing existing cooperation programmes, in particular those proposed by the EU, as tools that can push forward the ALCUE common area. The programmes are widely discussed during the FUC meetings, sometimes repetitively, but they are often seen as a mere model to be perhaps adapted, not as ongoing transnational practices that also promote the internationalisation of higher education.

5.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced and explored the case study of the ALCUE Common Area in Higher Education since it was first suggested in 1999. The text presented its main events, objectives, structure, and instruments. It also offered a comparison with the process for the European Higher Education Area, and lastly, it presented a reflection on the evolution of this common area.

What is more, the chapter aimed at pointing out the expected outcomes and problems to be solved or faced by the common area, as stated in its *objectives*. It also aimed at identifying the *instruments* developed to clarify whether the common area objectives were transformed into strategies and actions.

The agenda for the ALCUE common area is inconsistent. In the Mexico Ministerial meeting the ALCUE objectives were redesigned without much reference to the previous goals created in Paris. Even though the changing of agenda means a rupture of the work of five years carried by the Follow-Up Committee, it must be acknowledged that the second set of goals seem to be more appropriate to the context of the ALCUE common area. In fact, the 14 strategies developed in 2005 reflect the participant's intentions in developing tools for cooperation in the area of higher education, whereas the Paris objectives gives the idea that it was created solely to follow the agenda established by the Heads of States.

The Follow-Up Committee has developed a series of instruments to achieve the goals of the ALCUE agreement. The instruments are presented during the FUC meetings by the delegates and discussed until an agreement is reached. However, the projects are hardly recognised as an inter-regional initiative supposedly because of the little involvement of other stakeholders in the process. The more the ALCUE projects are kept as an exclusive area for the FUC delegates, the less it will be visible to the other stakeholders; consequently, the longer it will take for its objectives to be achieved and the common to be institutionalised.

The Bologna Process has influenced on the ALCUE process, as expected. It served as an initial role model for the ALCUE process. The goals established in the Ministerial meeting in Paris present similarities to the agenda of the Bologna Declaration. However, as both common areas evoluted, it became clear that they have more differences than similarities between them. On the one hand, the ALCUE is still working on the development

of basic cooperation instruments, such as mobility structures and accreditation measures, without a strong governmental support and without the involvement of other stakeholders. On the other hand, the EHEA has gone further in the advancement of the process of building and institutionalising the common area, facilitated by the previously existing higher education structures.

Finally, a note on the change in the dynamics of the inter-regional relationship between the European Union and Latin America. The previous chapter highlighted the influence of historical ties in the shaping of the relationship between the states in Latin America and the European Union. So far, the cooperation in higher education had been conducted through EU-funded programmes, and based on bilateral cooperation. It was an indication of a spillover strategy that could lead to a more complete integration based on an European role model, the Bologna Process. As far as the analysis of the process shows, the dynamics may have changed to the extent that Latin American states do not participate only as candidates for the inter-regional programmes (i.e. ALFA), but they also have a decisory power on the trajectory of the inter-regional relationship. Even though the dynamics presents signs of change, the power and interest argument remains as the most suitable characterisation of the Latin American rationale for the ALCUE process.

This chapter has also revealed that there is no organised action to handle the activities, especially with regards to people and resources. There is a large discrepancy in the planning and the outcomes of the instruments. According to the institutional theory, previously mentioned in Chapter 2, the existence of competencies to implement services becomes a stabilising force within an institution. Hence, the lack of capacity for action in the ALCUE is a hindering factor for the accomplishment of the agreement's objectives.

Finally, after a long trajectory, the last chapter of the thesis will present the study's findings and concluding remarks.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The shaping of the ALCUE Common Area in Higher Education

Governmental authorities in education from Latin America, the European Union, and the Caribbean signed in 2000 a document that expressed the political intention of creating an inter-regional common area in higher education. The ALCUE Common Area, as it was later named, should be composed of 60 national systems until its expected deadline in 2015. This study has focused on two of the participant regions in the ALCUE common area: Latin America and the European Union; taking a special interest in the dynamics and rationale of this common area to the Latin partner.

The basic premise of the thesis considered that the efforts for inter-regional integration cannot be seen in isolation from the development of regional arrangement in higher education within Europe, i.e. development of the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Provided that the EHEA represents an unprecedented process of change in higher education in the world, it was expected that the process towards constructing a common area in European higher education had consequences for the EU's cooperation with Latin American countries in this policy area. Hence the title alludes to this process as being a potential case of diffusion of European models as a form of Europeanisation (cf. Olsen, 2002).

The analysis of the ALCUE process was built based on the institutionalist theory. The main premise was that, in order for diffusions processes to happen, there should exist an interaction between outside impulses and internal institutional traditions, plus a connection to historical institutional experiences. The argument tried to identify four aspects in the process: who the two selected ALCUE *actors* were, how their relationship was designed along the time *sequence*, what are their *objectives*, and finally through what *instruments* are they accomplishing the objectives envisaged. In order to understand the dynamics of the ALCUE as an inter-regional agreement, it was created a framework of three conceptions, based on theories about European integration: the *power and interest* argument; the *spillover* argument, and the *institutionalist* argument.

The research questions of the study were presented in Chapter 1. The main research question inquired:

How can the attempt of building a common area between the European Union and Latin America be interpreted?

The following questions were used to conduct the study:

- Why did the ALCUE agreement come about and what factors determined its shaping and content?

- How did the past experience and traditions of cooperation between Europe and Latin America impact on the ALCUE process?

- Should the ALCUE agreement be seen as a way for the EU to try to diffuse a European "success" and a particular form of regional arrangement in higher education?

- And if so, what was the political process that carried the attempt to "spread" this particular form of regional higher education cooperation to the Latin American countries?

- Or is this agreement the result of coincidence – more determined by failure to come to a trade agreement between the two regions than by a desire to export the Bologna model to other parts of the world?

According to the analysis, the conception of an agreement in the field of higher education between the European Union, the Latin America and the Caribbean was the result of a political meeting between the Heads of States. This agreement was shaped as an intergovernmental political process based on a spillover strategy of promoting a network of cooperation and increase inter-dependence between the regions. Moreover, a series of contingent events took place in the time frame between the late 90's and the early years of 2000, such as the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Strategy, which have influenced the conception of its first objectives (Declaration of Paris, 2000). Furthermore, the influence of parallel bilateral programmes in higher education funded by the European Union, and the political connections among the regional blocks in Latin America and the EU.

The past experience and traditions of cooperation between Europe and Latin America have influenced the ALCUE process. In historical terms, Spain was responsible for building the first institutions (language, religion, education etc) in Latin America. In the political field, there has been a long tradition of bilateral relations between the countries that now form the European Union. What is more, Spain and France offered the first higher education models to Latin American universities.

The ALCUE agreement can be seen as a case of diffusion of European arrangements. However, its dynamics has changed over time. Even though the first ALCUE declaration from Paris (2000) contain elements that refer to the European Commission's programmes as

framework for building the common area, the objectives designed on the second declaration, in Mexico (2005), gave a new direction to the trajectory of the common area. From a list of objectives connected to the some of the objectives of the Bologna Process, the ALCUE process seems to be taking more basic steps that can foster the creation of frameworks specific to the ALCUE regions, as if it gained a "life of its own".

The political intentions of the Summit of the Heads of States could represent an attemp to increase the sphere of influence of the European Union in Latin America and the Caribbean, and included higher education in the agenda influenced by the context of the Bologna process. However, this thesis reveals that the ALCUE agreement is gradually distancing itself to the idea of imitation of European arrangements. Referring back to the literature presented in Chapter 2, the limited diffusion of European practices happens due to a mismatch of internal institutional dynamics in higher education between the two regions. Despite the existing historical traditions between the two regions, and the similar external conditions to which their higher education systems are exposed to, also discussed in Chapter 2, the difference on the higher education practices of these actors, in particular on the internal diversity of the higher education systems within Latin America, is a major aspect in the establishment of this common area.

Finally, the analysis reveals that the ALCUE common area still has a long trajectory to follow until its establishment. Four main points indicate this assumption. First, this process is lead basically by the governmental representatives that compose the Follow-up Committee, without much involvement of other stakeholders. The Committee develops instruments and activities to implement the objectives defined by the Ministerial meetings. Second, it is explicit the leadership of some delegations from European Union and Latin America in the decision-making for the process. At the same, there is little involvement and interest of the Caribbean in it, and a limited attention among other EU countries apart from the countries that are in the "driving seat" and have a historical connection to the higher education in Latin America. A third factor is the inconsistency of the objectives of the ministerial meetings in the ALCUE agenda. The objectives drawn in the second Ministerial meeting (2005) link to a very little extent to the aims proposed in the original agreement (2000). Finally, the fourth point is on the position of the Committee in restricting the involvement of external initiatives in building the common area, even though they pursue similar goals of bringing the two regions together.

Finally, the attempt of building a common area between the European Union and Latin America can be interpreted as a top-down *political* resolution aimed at increasing political cooperation that is gradually assuming characteristics of a project in the field of higher education. Its success, though, is believed to be connected to the involvement of other stakeholders. Recalling the idea of a system of higher education conceived by Burton Clark (1983), there is a universe of participants that make a higher education system, and the political actors are only one of them. It is strongly believed that a common area in higher education, be it regional or inter-regional, must take into account the systemic integration in order to be institutionalised.

A necessary question is how to imagine common frameworks for these two regions? Considering the advanced stage of the EHEA, and the numerous system reforms it caused, is claimed that the establishment of new types of common regulatory frameworks, such as a system for credit transfer, particular to the ALCUE common area are hardly imaginable. Even if such plan was likely to be discussed, reaching a consensus on those frameworks would require a long discussion due to the large differences among its 60 participating higher education systems. Therefore, it is argued that the ALCUE projects are, to a certain point, expected to adapt to some of the existing EHEA structures.

6.2 Limitations

This work has approached an unexplored subject with restricted theoretical perspectives to be drawn from in order to analyse the case. The main consequence of this was the limited possibilities in making more general conclusions about the ALCUE common area. Despite this, the analytical framework adopted, based mostly on the institutional perspective, demonstrated to be very useful in offering theoretical support to develop the arguments in this thesis.

The biggest challenge encountered while producing this thesis was collecting data on a regional level, particularly about Latin America. This research did not focus on offering a full conceptualisation on the features of Latin American higher education. This is a large region, with screaming internal differences in many aspects, including education, so that visualising it as a unity require extensive experience and knowledge about its higher education transformations. The underlying idea for composing the subchapter about LA was

to collect elements from different sources, which would allow the linkage to the inter-regional context of the ALCUE common area.

Another challenge was linking the historical facts to the current state of higher education. Even tough it is not the best option to build a bridge over 400 years, it was necessary to do so because the earlier periods of colonisation are essential to comprehend how the link between the two regions was formed. As the research shows it was mostly out of the need for spreading Catholicism, language, values and beliefs are linked together. All those factors are at the core of the institutional theory, the main theoretical support for the development of this thesis.

6.3 Ideas for further research

Given the explorative features of this thesis in approaching a rather new phenomenon within higher education, many doors are open for further research. With this in mind, some suggestions and ideas are highlighted below.

For instance, a future project could be the analysis of the participation of the Caribbean in the ALCUE common area. The region has not have the same homonegeous colonisation process as Latin America did, let alone the process for creating universities. Hence such study may reveal the reasons the Caribbean delegates are not interested in the ALCUE common area.

It would also be interesting to learn what has been the impact of the ALCUE agreement on different levels (national, institutional) in Latin America and the Caribbean.

What is more, it would be important to develop research to support the built of a theoretical analysis framework to analyse the phenomena of inter-regionalism in higher education.

Finally, it is suggested a study on the regional level about the rationale for Latin American students to go abroad in order to understand why this region's students prefer to go to the United States or in Spain instead of choosing a neighbouring country with the same or similar language and much lower costs.

6.4 Reccommendations

As pointed out in subchapter 1.4 – Motives and potential significance, one of the ideas for this thesis was to offer constructive criticism for the engines of the ALCUE process, the Technical Secretariat and the Follow-Up Committee.

In order to make this agreement a project *in higher education*, the first and basic step is to involve stakeholders from the higher education sector. So far, the decision-making regarding the ALCUE is centred on the top-down structure of the FUC, on the figures of governmental delegates. Without the participation of other stakeholders, such as the academics, the administrative staff and, in a notorious Cordoba fashion, the students, it will be very difficult to design feasible objectives and instruments that can be operationalised at the institutional level. One has to ask: "who is this common area designed for?", "who is going to benefit from it?" What is more, having the ALCUE process exposed to different stakeholders, there could be a chance of receiving more input to stimulate change, especially with regards to problem-solving. What is more, it could create commitment among more than the few enthusiasts in the process.

A second recommendation is linked to the idea of visibility for engagement. Either the three regions work together, or the acronym AL*C*UE should be altered. The Caribbean must be allowed to take part in the decision-making. If the Caribbean representatives cannot be present in the meetings, one option would be making a meeting in one of the Caribbean states. What is more, there is no information about the delegates that take this project further. It is important to make it clear who are the people working towards building this common area, and what role they have in it.

A third suggestion is with regards to the ALCUE website. It is an important - and rather expensive - tool that has been largely misused. For instance, there is no reference in the ALCUE Portal about the existence of a structure for managing the common area, the texts in foreign languages are incomplete, and the Forum never produced any discussion. The ALCUE Portal could represent the main channel for triggering inter-regional integration in this sector, similar to a meeting point, since it can solve the issue of geographical distance among the participant regions.

6.5 Europeanisation of Latin American higher education?

Finally, the title proposed whether the plans for a common area proposed during a Heads of State meeting would mean that the European Union is adopting for itself and spreading the ideas of the Bologna Process to carry on the Lisbon Strategy goals, and the first *target* is Latin America.

The analysis of the ALCUE common area shows little evidence that Latin America will become any more "Europeanised" than it already is, or has been since its discovery. There has been a long tradition of cooperation between these regions already. Apart from that, the need to respond to the influence of external conditions in higher education, is not a case exclusive to European higher education. What is exceptional for European education is the initiative for a regional framework as a common area, and the manner that the higher education systems have committed to this endeavour.

From the Latin American perspective, what does it mean for the higher education systems in Latin America to be part of such common area? One possible answer is connected to the previous discussion mentioned in Subchapter 2.4 (p. 34) about the social meaningfulness of adoptions of innovations (Strand & Meyer, 1993). It has been argued that innovations are to be adopted depending on the attractiveness of models, and the extend they are better than the alternatives available. As this thesis has shown, there is little experience on integration in higher education within Latin America, little student mobility and incentives for international activities. Hence, as long as there is no sign of cultural colonialism, Latin America would be willing to strengthen its partnership in higher education with the European Union. By doing so, it will increase its participation in the international arena for higher education, learn from the experiences of the European integration in the field, and better prepare to face the new challenges that the global conditions impose to higher education and the societies of the developing world.

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7.5 Interviews

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Mexico: Directorate General for International Affairs, Secretary for Public Education, March 4th, 2008, 27min.

Nicaragua: Directorate for Science and Technology. National Council for Science and Technology. March 7th 2008, 107min

Appendix 1 – Data on Latin America

Latin America: general indicators

	Socio-economic data				Educational data			Knowledge indexes	
Country	**GDP per capita (US$ – in 2005)[1]**	**Gini index %, 2003**	**HDI 2005 (ranking)**		**% Gross Enrolment in HE (2003, 20-24 years)**	**% of spending in HE[2]**	**% of GDP in R&D (2000-2005)**	**KEI (Ranking)**	**KI**
Argentina	4728	51,3	0,869	(38)	60,0	17	0.4	5,49 (55)	6,43
Bolivia	1017	60,1	0,695	(117)	38,6	23	0.2	3,78 (86)	3,91
Brazil	4271	57,9	0,800	(70)	22,7	19	1.0	5,50 (54)	5,83
Chile	7073	54,9	0,867	(40)	46,2	15	0.6	6,74 (39)	6,41
Colombia	2682	58,6	0,791	(75)	25,6	13	0.2	4,32 (77)	4,53
Costa Rica	4627	49,8	0,846	(48)	43,3	-	0.4	6,02 (45)	5,82
Cuba	4165	-	0,838	(51)	38,0	22	0.6	-	
Dom. Republic	3317	51,6	0,779	(79)	36,8	-	-	3,62 (88)	3,60
Ecuador	2758	53,6	0,772	(89)	22,1	-	0.1	3,26 (93)[3]	3,65
El Salvador	2467	52,4	0,735	(103)	17,7	11	0.1	3,88 (85)	3,57
Guatemala	2517	55,1	0,689	(118)	18,4	-	-	2,83 (103)	2,56
Honduras	1151	53,8	0,700	(115)	17,7	-	0.0	3,15 (96)	3,00
Mexico	7454	46,1	0,829	(52)	23,9	17	0.4	5,35 (59)	5,29
Nicaragua	954	43,1	0,710	(110)	19,0	-	0.0	3,01 (100)	2,54
Panama	4786	56,1	0,812	(62)	50,5	26	0.3	4,98 (67)	4,91
Paraguay	1242	58,4	0,755	(95)	19,7	18	0.1	3,19 (95)	3,47
Peru	2838	52,0	0,773	(87)	33,1	11	0.1	4,43 (74)	4,65
Uruguay	4848	44,9	0,852	(46)	40,5	20	0.3	6,11 (43)	6,09
Venezuela	5275	48,2	0,792	(74)	42,0	-	0.3	4,26 (78)	5,36
Average LA					**28.7%**			**5.06**	**5,25**

1. Source: HDR (2007), except from Cuba on GDP.

2. Source: HDR (2007); IESALC (2007).

3. Incomplete data on Ecuador. KEI and KI data from World Bank (2007).

Regional comparison

		Gini Index	HDI	Gross enrolment	Outbound mobility[1]	KEI	KI
Top 5	1	Nicaragua	Argentina	Argentina	Guatemala	Chile	Argentina
	2	Uruguay	Chile	Panama	Uruguay	Uruguay	Chile
	3	Mexico	Uruguay	Chile	El Salvador	Costa Rica	Uruguay
	4	Venezuela	Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Colombia	Brazil	Brazil
	5	Costa Rica	Cuba	Venezuela	Honduras	Argentina	Costa Rica
Last 5	1 (last)	Bolivia	Guatemala	El Salvador	Cuba	Guatemala	Nicaragua
	2	Colombia	Bolivia	Honduras	Brazil	Nicaragua	Guatemala
	3	Paraguay	Honduras	Guatemala	Argentina	Honduras	Honduras
	4	Brazil	Nicaragua	Nicaragua	D. Republic	Paraguay	Paraguay
	5	Panama	El Salvador	Paraguay	Venezuela	Ecuador	El Salvador

[1] Countries with highest and lowest percentage of students going abroad out of the total number of enrolments. The result would be different if considered the number of students abroad. Students of Mexico, Brazil and Colombia are the most mobile, but they form a very small portion of the total enrolment in higher education.