Introduction

This paper draws on recent and current comparative research\(^1\) with colleagues\(^2\) in a number of European contexts on the governing of education in Europe. The research explores education and learning policy as an aspect of Europeanisation, and is thus directly concerned with the relationship between nation states and the European Commission in this increasingly important policy field. Our ideas are drawn from political science and political and policy sociology in an attempt to make sense of the changing European Education Policy Space (EEPS) and the shifting place of the nation-state within it. We are primarily interested in the work of governing-how it is done, what problems it seeks to solve-and in how education-shifting into a new mode as ‘learning’ is implicated in the work of governing.

We are interested in Europeanisation because the role of the European Commission, and its ‘project’ to build a cultural, political and economic entity in Europe provides very interesting material for our enquiries. Our perspective on Europeanisation is not top down, but argues for attention to the role of the ‘soft governance’ (Lawn 2006) strategies of the Commission and the responses of nation states in the ‘fabrication’ of a European Education Policy Space (EEPS) in recent years. The making of ‘Europe’ in and through education and learning policy is a process in which nation states continue to be strategic actors (Castells 2000), albeit with

\(^1\) Fabricating Quality in European Education/Governing by Numbers (ESRC: RES 00-23-1385), Knowledge and Policy (EU FP6 IP 028848-2), and Governing by Inspection (ESRC RES 062 23 2241A)

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varying capacities to mediate global or European pressures. In following a political sociology approach to Europeanisation (Giraudon and Favell 2007) we argue that EEPS is a policy space that is actively made—a space in which policy actors use new policy instruments and project the idea of ‘Europe’ through the redesign of institutions, the organisation of networks and the flow of comparative knowledge and data. Policy technologies (Lascoumes and Le Galès 2007:6) include data systems that construct policy problems and frame policy solutions beyond and across the national scale (Nóvoa and Yariv-Marshall, 2003; Ozga, 2009).

Policy actors are brokers or ‘translators’ between the European and the national—they take the European into the national, and vice-versa We focus on European and national Inspectorates, where expertise confronts and translates the mass of information carried by data within and across Europe (Grek and Lawn 2011). But first a brief look at the emergence of the EEPS and the transformation of education into learning.

Fabricating Europe through Education/Learning

Across Europe, we argue, Enlightenment ideas of education are being displaced by utilitarian concepts of learning, as a consequence of contemporary problems in governing across the European Union.

Education and learning are now understood by the European Commission and national governments throughout Europe as a key policy field not only for economic progress (and recovery) but as resources to combat social exclusion, societal fragmentation and the alienation of young people (EC 2002). Thus the Europeanising of the education field has gathered momentum, and has profound effects for the future of institutions and individuals.

Lifelong learning dissolves boundaries between schooling and workplaces and between universities and commercial organizations, its policy technologies are constantly active and discipline the learner in continuous self-improvement. The shift from education to learning signaled in the Lisbon agreement and in the Europe 2020 targets has considerable implications for governing: as a member of DG Education and culture notes:

This is such an important step. For the first time national education systems agree on some broad goals, which are increasing the quality of education and training systems, facilitating the access of all to those systems; and the opening up of those education and training systems to the world - the world beyond our national borders, but also
The "world within": the research and science sector, entrepreneurs and society at large. ...... Member States are aligning themselves behind a set of very concrete common challenges and objectives. (Tersmette 2001)

The importance of these developments and their connection to Europeanisation has not been developed in the field of political science, which does not engage with the policy field of education (exceptions in Bremen and here in Oslo). There is often an exclusive focus on formal powers and so education and learning are categorized as national policy issues, protected by the principle of subsidiarity. In comparative education, the attachment to the national remains strong. Of course, education is embedded in the national-in Europe, most national education and training systems developed in the 19th and 20th centuries as negotiated settlements between nation-building states and education workforces, who advanced agendas driven by enlightenment commitments to individual equality and collective progress. These agendas were framed by nation-building activities and by modernist scientific rationality that sought evidence about populations and developed a professional workforce of state employees to deal with social problems. This framing of education systems oriented education/schooling towards ‘problem solving’ in relation to what Dale (2009) calls ‘persistent problems’ within capitalism: preparation of the workforce, disciplining identities to ensure social order and cohesion, and legitimising social ordering despite the continued existence of inequalities. National narratives were often devised to help manage the tensions between these imperatives, and Education played a more or less central role in the shaping and support of national identity.

The knowledge economy agenda disrupts those nationally-embedded and institutionalised practices and norms in education/learning. The preferred attitudes and dispositions promoted by current policies and encouraged by new knowledge practices are coherent across the range of educational institutions and beyond them, from early childhood throughout adult working life (itself extended). This agenda also brings a shift in governing practices in education within the nation-state, from national and institutionally-based governing to governing through networks of new actors. This change requires a continuous process of governing work in managing tensions between centralised and decentralised levels of governance, deregulation and existing or new (re-) regulatory instruments of governance where relationships are multidimensional, overlapping and fluid. And governing is dynamic in these fluid, fragile and unstable contexts and relationships often marked by paradoxical and possibly contradictory relationships (Newman and Clarke 2009). It is within this framing that
we seek to understand what inspectors do and to make sense of the complex mix of auditing, measuring, performing, enrolling and translating that is apparent in their work along with the promotion of individual self-governance, informed by constant self-evaluation of performance, steered through the benchmarking and competitive performance regimes of transnational organizations, including the EU. But before I turn to the inspectors, a brief discussion of what we see as the interdependence of changes in governing and changes in knowledge.

**Governing Knowledge**

Rather than see the governance turn through the lens of multilevel governance, which attempts to capture the new relationships within a model that accommodates many levels, scales or tiers of governing bodies that are ‘nested’ within one another, we prefer to maintain our focus on re-spatialisation and a more dynamic imagining of relationships as multidimensional, overlapping and fluid (Clarke 2009: 2).

In our research we see evidence of transnational organizations (for example the OECD and the EU) working in education/learning policy across and within borders, setting up relationships directly with individuals and institutions, rather than working through hierarchical ‘levels’ (Stubbs 2002, Lawn and Lingard 2006). Exploration of governing relations in local authorities/municipalities and in relation to teachers reveals that hierarchies of vertical relationships are often displaced or written over by horizontal networks and processes (Gray et al 2011).

This brings us to *knowledge* and the particular relationship that we seek to explore and establish between governing and knowledge (Grek, Lawn and Ozga 2010, Ozga 2011). Like government, knowledge has changed – especially in relation to the speed of retrieval and transfer of knowledge (Delanty, 2001; Thrift, 2005), and we view these changes as interdependent. Governing knowledge developed in relationship with performance management regimes, alongside decentralisation and deregulation: data enabled goal-governed steering of outputs and outcomes, accompanied by the monitoring of targets.

Knowledge and information play a pivotal role both in the pervasiveness of new governing relations and processes and in allowing the development of their dispersed, distributed and disaggregated forms. **Data** support and create new kinds of policy instrument that organise political relations through communication/information and hence legitimise that organisation. Data enter the frame because the transmission of information is necessary across diverse and
networked governing forms and because ‘objective’ data support systems seeking to co-ordinate the networks of actors of many kinds. Data enable the appearance of deregulation and the development of dispersed, distributed and disaggregated forms of governing, while organising political relations through information with the purpose, in the words of Lascoumes and Le Galès (2007, 6):

.....of orienting relations between political society (via the administrative executive) and civil society (via its administered subjects) through intermediaries in the form of devices that mix technical components (measuring, calculating the rule of law, procedure) and social components (representation, symbol).

Data enable this complex education arena to be calculated, for example through the Bologna Accord (harmonising 40 different European higher education systems by creating a single degree system) and the Lisbon Process or Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in which benchmarking and comparison are core governing processes across a ‘learning society’ shaped by economic reform, citizenship obligations, employability and international comparison and performance testing in education (Grek 2009; Rizvi and Lingard 2006). Thus a range of sophisticated instruments of standardisation, quality benchmarking and data harmonisation underpin the governance turn in Europe, and act on and within the national systems within Europe, promoting ways of controlling and shaping behaviour through the use of comparative information on performance.

It is important to see the flow of data as connecting actors across the policyscape, including individual learners who are themselves active in using their capacities to produce governing knowledge in the form of various kinds of performance data. Data provide information across all the spaces in which regulation and self-regulation are attempted. Data connect new, networked governance forms, from the individual to the supranational.

In the same way as government in its governing mode appears as far more distributed and apparently democratic in comparison with the operation of traditional bureaucracies, so too do new, inclusive forms of knowledge production and distribution appear more accessible and actionable than traditional (elite) knowledge production processes. If government bureaucracies were based on local, simplified, static and centrally controlled knowledge stored in large files, post-bureaucratic governing is decentralised, future-oriented, networked, processual, autonomous and fluid (Isaakyan et. al., 2008) and generates similar knowledge
forms. Its networked nature (in the sense that it is co-produced by different networks of policy makers, experts and practitioners) promotes its easy exchange and hence its operation as one of the prime engines for its marketization within neo-liberal economies (Thrift, 2005). As well as data, governing in these conditions needs knowledge that emerges in the collective search for solutions to a problem (Stehr 2004). Governing is optimised through co-production of new knowledge that can be implemented in action. Creative thinking, innovation and problem-solving are valued over and above the consolidation of static knowledge stocks. Governing knowledge is valorised in new governing forms and processes. Some of these forms are generic-for example quality regimes (Dahler-Larsen 2011) that reference ‘universal’ principles, knowledge and skills. Others follow from the need in the new context of governing to create coherence across unstable partnerships and networks, or to enrol new actors in governing projects.

This work demands new knowledges, skills and roles-in Clarke’s words:

‘Transacting, translating, mediating and brokering characterise these new ways of working that are central to the forms of governance as partnerships, networks and collaborations’

(Clarke 2008-see also Lendvai and Stubbs, 2006; Larner and Craig, 2005).

Lifelong/lifewide learning-seeks to inculcate new norms and values that transform the conduct of organisations and individuals in their capacity as ‘self-actualising’ agents, so as to achieve political objectives through ‘action at a distance’ (Miller and Rose 1993: 1). Such attitudinal shifts require both compliance and identification with the governing project, achieved through the capacity of soft governance techniques such as benchmarking and indicators-to simultaneously attract and discipline.

Collective scrutiny requires the development of agreements about rules and standards, which in turn support the propagation of transparency and ‘best practice’. These are knowledge-based activities that both support and grow out of changing governing practices: especially those associated with soft regulation. Jacobsson (2006 208-9) identifies three sets of interconnected forms of governing activity-regulative (formal laws and directives) inquisitive-(auditing and ranking) and meditative (where experiences are compared and ideas shared).
Meditative governing practices are of interest to us because—although they build on regulation and auditing, they encompass them, and offer a space for policy learning and teaching, for the presentation of ideas and models and the claiming of status as ‘good pupils’ (as in the case of Finland—see Simola et al 2009) or as holders of specific expertise. Meditation recognises the new kinds of governing work involved in the creation of what Sassen (2007) calls ‘imposed consensus’ entailing ‘specific types of actual work, not merely decision-making’ (ibid: 37). Put differently, meditation also draws attention to what Clarke (2011:2) calls the work of ‘inscribing policies as a process of translation between the desires or ambitions of a political project and the institutional terrains of the apparatuses of governing’. Translation, as Clarke goes on to say, is a practice that is connective and transformative. Translation may also be understood as a practice that seeks to create or impose coherence on the hybrid organisations, partnerships and diverse agencies that are now enrolled in the business of governing.

Inspectorates are involved in all three governing practices, and our project finds them simultaneously regulating, auditing and mediating—in contexts where these practices themselves vary in their intensity and scope. I’m going to talk about just two—England and Scotland.

The Work of Governing: Data and Inspection in England and Scotland

In the next part of the paper the contrasting cases of Scotland and England within the UK are discussed in the first place because they reveal very different kinds of interaction with ‘Europe’, but also because they illuminate divergent approaches to regulation and to the kind of work that needs to be done in these new networked governing forms. The case of England illuminates the role of data in this new context. The case of Scotland illustrates the key role played by inspection. Both cases illustrate ways in which the relationship between the reception of European initiatives at national level is dependent on the political context and on the degree of compatibility between the national ‘policy narrative’ (Arnott and Ozga 2010) and the direction of European policy. Both cases illustrate a degree of choice by nation states in their response to European developments. They also illuminate the importance of the form that regulation takes—for example in relation to inspection—in England inspection was/is the servant of data, thus leaving no role for inspectors as active agents of self-evaluation, while in Scotland inspectors became the ‘teachers’ of the system, spreading self-evaluation at home and in Europe.
First, an illustration of data use in the European Commission, which shows how data work to make ‘progress’ or ‘failure’ visible:

It is exploding. Extraordinary. And the reason is the role of indicators and statistics in the open method of coordination.....inside the Commission we had a clear understanding that we had to develop that area because it is the strongest element in the open method of coordination. This is how the Commission can say that you can engage with certain objectives, you are not following them....[we can identify] who is following, who succeeds, where the performance lies...(EU3)

This informant goes on to argue that the Commission’s analysts know more about national systems than do the members of a national system. From Brussels, he claims, the Commission can ‘see’ a system more clearly, without distortion by national interests:

.....because when you sit up to your neck in the English or the Scottish system, everything is Scottish. Everything is Scottish. [They say] ‘This is our system, we defend it as a fortress and all these influences from outside, they should be kept away’. By sitting here and making comparative analysis, you identify what is specifically Scottish to the Scottish system. What is it that you should actually defend to keep these roots in national culture and national institutions...we know it, or we could know it, we have the information, we have this distance that is necessary to do it. And we can compare and find out what is it that shines in the Scottish system.

National systems are thus brought in to view by Europe, placed in relationship to others, and their readings of national narratives corrected by objective, scientific ‘distance’. However national systems also respond in different ways to being brought into view, and policy actors working between Europe and the national have the capacity to mobilise and adapt these technologies for their own purposes. This is illustrated with a brief discussion of England and a rather longer discussion of inspection in Scotland.

**The Case of England**

The UK government has responsibility for education policy in England and has looked to the USA rather than to continental Europe for policy inspiration. This is reflected in the New Labour administrations of 1997-2010 by the extent to which neo-liberal ideologies, along
with adherence to the principles of new institutional economics drove policy initiatives such as diversity in school provision, the adoption of parental choice, the adherence to competition as the basis of improvement, and the extent of private sector involvement in education (Ball 2006: 70-71). Our data illustrate an absence of reference to continental European practices in education policy talk in England. UK policy discourse and positioning sought to establish English distinctiveness and distinction by constant reference to a ‘world-class’ education system and consistent referencing across informants to the sophistication and capacity of the English system in terms of data production and use, with little sense of policy influence from the European Commission or other European organisations. Instead their references are global, and the Commission is seen to be less advanced than the OECD: indeed, England has better data:

_Because we have all this Key Stage Data and because it is longitudinal, we are practically, without boasting, we are probably the leading administration in the world as far as value-added measures and schooling are concerned_ (CP5E).

A review of policy texts produced in the 1990s and 2000s in England produces repeated references to a world class system creating competitive advantage through driving up standards of performance and becoming a world leader in data design and use to measure and monitor performance (Ozga, Grek and Lawn 2009). Indeed data-reinforced by punitive forms of inspection constituted the ‘project’ of governing education (Lawn and Ozga, 2009).

The inspection system delivered by the Office for Standards in Education from 1992 (Ofsted) reflected this approach, and indeed, accompanied it with a confrontational style of public ‘naming and shaming’ of so-called failing schools (Croxford 2011). Handbooks of inspection specified in exhaustive detail how evidence was to be gathered and analysed, and put the emphasis on objective data analysis not professional judgment. New kinds of Inspector were recruited and most school inspections came to be carried out by Additional Inspectors (AIs) employed by commercial companies. This was a highly regulated and highly centralised system that created a direct link between Sanctuary Buildings in Whitehall and individual schools, teachers and pupils.  
As a senior policy actor in the central government department for education in England commented:
......it’s interesting to reflect on how the work of a central government policy department has evolved. I’m sure that in olden times here people would have never grubbied their hands with the detail of what was going on in any individual school or institution in the country – that was a job for ‘others’ not for the mandarins of Whitehall – to a system now where certainly in the schools that are underperforming we’re looking almost school by school about the kinds of intervention that are available.

(CP7 E)

In the final period of the New Labour administration there were some revisions to the performance management system in England towards what was called ‘intelligent accountability’ make it ‘less prescriptive and more strategic’ (DfES, 2004, 9). This shift included harmonised measures of output across different improvement programmes and the attempt to identify a single set of data for school improvement, self-evaluation and accountability, in order to reduce ‘excessive bureaucracy’ and ensure that schools are held accountable for pupil outcomes, ‘not process measures or filling in the correct form’ (DfES 2004, 8). The outcome was to be a centre that is ‘less prescriptive and more strategic; that builds local capacity and reduces central control’ (DfES 2004, 9).

Intelligent accountability was a response to escalating costs, information overload and the need to find ways of ‘imposing consent’ that built identification with the project of improvement. However despite considerable change in inspection since 2010 (and the arrival of a coalition government) the problem of building identification with the project of improvement while employing a heavily data driven regime remains. The practice of inspection – especially on Ofsted’s almost industrial scale (described by Field et al. as ‘the bureaucratised, pressurised and subcontracted system of school inspection’, 1998: 126) seems to consolidate distrust between teachers and the inspectorate and there are recurrent questions about the consistency of judgement between inspections and inspectors, despite the attempted standardization by handbook and training. As Field et al. further note ‘The process is standardised and therefore presented as objective and fair’ (1998: 127). But, methodologically speaking, neither standardisation nor independence and impartiality guarantee reliable and comparable outcomes (see also Smith, 2000). The Ofsted practice is seen as time consuming, expensive and corrosive of trust and professional culture. Some studies suggest that the impact of Inspection on school performance may be neutral or even negative, with some studies reporting lowered examination performance in the 12 months following an inspection. Perhaps more importantly, several studies also point to the performative character of the inspection process, with recurrent (school staff) use of
metaphors such as ‘jumping through hoops’ and ‘papering over the cracks’ or nominal compliance and the ‘performance’ of accountability and good teaching on a ‘stage managed’ basis—the overwhelming need (for all concerned, including the inspectorate) is to ‘show you’re working’ (Clarke, 2005).

The Case of Scotland

The first thing I would like to say is that Scotland is not England—all that you know about Ofsted, forget. (Donaldson speech, Joint seminar SICI-French inspectorates, December 2008).

Although there are close parallels in education policy between England and Scotland from the period of the post-war Keynesian welfare state, there is evidence of divergence from the late 1970s onwards, when the Conservative-controlled UK administrations re-made education in line with market principles. However whereas England introduced a National Curriculum with National Testing and a strong focus on hard performance indicators, these approaches were successfully resisted in Scotland (Jones 2003). Scotland did not create a data-driven system and the Scottish Inspectorate was not ‘modernised’: school inspections are carried out by Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Education (HMIe) and do not involve commercial agencies. Furthermore, the election of a minority Scottish National Party (SNP) government in Scotland in 2007 marked a break from Labour party policy influence on the Scottish political scene, and brought about considerable change in style of government (Arnot and Ozga, 2010). Decentralisation is a key principle of the SNP’s redesign of governance in Scotland, as supporting the emergence of a Scottish state through demonstrating maturity in the political process, developing from political devolution, and enabling the growth of accountability and hence trust between government and its partners, local authorities and other stakeholders.

Since 2007 the Scottish Government has attempted to ‘craft a narrative’ of joint or collective learning that connects to growing national capacity and independence through education. Expert judgment, evidence, the building of trust and constant learning from self-evaluation are referenced as elements in building this capacity, not only in relation to education/learning policy and institutions, but more broadly as a key support for governing. In this context the Inspectorate are a significant policy actors: they carry the self-evaluation agenda into a receptive European space, and they model and ‘teach’ self-evaluation within the national space.
While England has been and continues to be pre-occupied with its global positioning, the Scottish government was and is actively pro-European, and seeks to use Europe as a platform for the projection of a distinctive Scottish identity (Arnott and Ozga 2010, Grek and Ozga 2010). HMIE emphasise their role in explaining the ‘distinctiveness of Scotland’ to Europe, and promote Scotland’s approach as ‘in line with evolving European-wide models’ (CP6S).

Inspection has grown in significance within Europe, and this is reflected in the growth of the Standing International Conference of Inspectorates (SICI). SICI is very active in supporting the development of inspection regimes in the Accession countries, and the growth of international comparison especially through PISA has provided it with a stronger role in interpreting and translating international data across and within systems. The Scottish inspectorate as used SICI as a platform for promoting the role of professional knowledge and skills that contribute to European-wide initiatives while also stressing Scotland’s distinctiveness (Donaldson 2008).

The key policy technology that HMIE are promoting in Europe and within Scotland is school self-evaluation (SSE) organized in a framework that claims to bring about constant comparison and improvement, broadly focusing on answering two key questions about educational practice:

‘How good are we now?’ in order to identify strengths and development needs in key aspects of teachers’ work and the impact it has on learners; and

‘How good can we be?’ in order to set priorities for improvement.’

(HMIE How Good is our School? (HGIOS) 2007)

According to HMIE, a key factor in enabling the take up of this approach, and its adoption in many systems, is its inclusiveness (our school) and its simplicity-it is an approach that travels well:

_There has tended to be quite a lot of exchanges with inspectorates from other countries-Sweden came here for example, and the Norwegians are now looking at HGIOS. Scotland’s certainly one of the early pioneers of self-evaluation-the thing that attracted so much attention to the system here was just the way HGIOS was produced as very school-focused, schools found it easy to use, accessible-an easy way of capturing data-so HGIOS has been very much discussed and the momentum often translated-whereas other inspectorates-as in England-have tended to produce things that were written as inspection guidelines ‘(HMIE1)(emphasis in original)_

Within Scotland, as well as externally, School Self-evaluation (SSE) has provided the inspectorate with an agenda for policy teaching which requires quite considerable changes in
their mode of operation. SSE seeks to create a school evaluation framework that brings about constant comparison and improvement, broadly focusing on answering two key questions about educational practice: ‘How good are we now?’ in order to identify strengths and development needs in key aspects of teachers’ work and the impact it has on learners, and ‘How good can we be?’ in order to set priorities for improvement. 

SSE is used as a means of encoding school knowledge, creating ‘compatibilities’ and promoting self-managed and self-sufficient individuals (both teachers and pupils) in a decentralised, inclusive system. In other words, schools and their teachers and pupils become members of learning organisations, embedded within the larger learning organisation of the local authority and, indeed, of government itself. As schools learn self-evaluation, so they are asked to take more and more responsibility for sustaining improvement. The coding of knowledge about improvement constructed by HGIOS enables the shift to the apparent ‘light touch’ of new inspection practices, while co-opting schools further into the new networks of knowledge production. Furthermore, as they do more, they produce more and more new knowledge about themselves, which becomes productive for the constant improvement not only of the individual school, but for the governing of the system as a whole.

The Inspectorate developed and monitors the HGIOS quality framework which encourages schools to develop and use their own knowledge about themselves to conduct ongoing self-monitoring and self-evaluation leading to school improvement. The Inspection framework along with schools’ self-evaluation activities are designed to provide the Scottish government with reliable data about the health and performance of the sector as well as to inform policy development. A key development supporting the growth of self-evaluation has been a move away from the use of attainment data along with inspection visits and towards use of the self-evaluation/self monitoring processes that are now a constant requirement on schools. This shift emphasises the schools’ responsibility for their ongoing quality monitoring, evaluating and reporting processes. School leaders are responsible for constant self-monitoring and self-evaluation and for improving their school’s performance and attainment levels for learners within the context of responding to the ever changing and complex demands of their communities and society. The quality framework documented in HGIOS and used by both the Inspectors and schools extends the scope of assessment and evaluation so that the interrelationship of different aspects of a school’s provision is highlighted. This all-encompassing view of school performance includes different kinds of knowledge gained from learners, staff, parents and community surveys.
The Inspectorate has prepared itself for its new mode of operation through specific training, and presents itself differently to the school;

‘We’re training our people quite actively in the social skills of inspection...we’ve got some occupational psychologists working with us to develop this framework-working on relationships with people—we must be able to win the support and constructive interest that will enable initiative’ (HMIe1)

Inspection now includes ‘mid inspection assessment’ in which at a mid point in the inspection the inspectorate either agrees the school’s evaluation of itself and leaves the school, or ‘moves into development mode’. As one of our informants notes:

’a school’s never actually asked us to leave at that point, they always take advantage of another day or day and a half of consultancy on something they want to explore further’ (HMIe1)

So Inspectors are now arriving in schools to explore-in collaboration with the school—the nature of the school’s evaluation of its own performance drawing on data from three main sources (i) knowledge based quantitative data (ii) people’s views collected by surveys of parents and pupils (iii) professional/expert direct observation and documentation. They are testing and triangulating the school’s evidence, and negotiating, on that basis, the inspection ‘event’ as it unfolds. Self-evaluation ‘becomes a reflective professional process which helps schools get to know themselves well, identify their agenda for improvement and promote well-considered innovation’ (HGIOS 2007; 3).

Self-evaluation, as noted above, is inclusive and binds pupils, parents and teachers together in a common process, with a shared purpose and collective identity:

The evaluative activities involved (in HGIOS) are similar to those which we encourage pupils to engage in as part of their own learning process. Taking part in them creates a community of learners (HGIOS 2007: 7).

This construction of a community of learners sits within the wider policy framework of a ‘learning government’ (Sanderson 2009) referred to earlier. The Inspectorate, with its new ‘social skills’, supports and disseminates ‘best practice’:
‘purpose 3 is really being an engine for spreading best practice across the system – we are in a unique position seeing so much front line practice across the whole country on a regular basis – we should capitalise on that evidence base by capturing the best and putting it back to others’. (HMIE 1)

Conclusions
Governing through data is not straightforward: data do not translate automatically into action but require constant attention and effort to build and maintain consensus, with struggles and dissent around their meaning always possible. Data exist within a growing mass of accumulated information in different forms, and from different sources that are not compatible or standardised. In the regulatory framework adopted in England, the translation of data into action has been located with technocratic policy actors, operating in a highly centralized system, congruent with the positioning of English education as ‘world class’ and competitive, and framed entirely by a global discourse of economic competition and enhanced performance. The data-driven regime in England of performance management demands processes of managerial accountability and the setting of targets, the use of incentives and threats and the constant measuring of results. These activities are focused on driving up performance, but do not connect to broader narratives that draw in citizens and professionals. Nor do they offer a role to Inspectorates that recognises their expertise and their potential as ‘teachers’ or ‘translators’ of governing knowledge.

In Scotland, the self-evaluation strategy is congruent with the overarching governing narrative of growing autonomy and collective improvement, and the inspectorate has been mobilized to propagate this strategy. The SNP government was (until its convincing election victory in May 2011, when it was returned to power with a much increased majority) very reliant on discourse to manage its governing project, and thus it is hardly surprising that a
sophisticated narrative of collective engagement has been promoted that relies on co-option and collective identification, in England the focus remains on compliance and performance. In both cases examination of the nature of the policy technologies and the role of data and inspectorates in operating them enables us to better understand the ‘governing project’ of nation states, within the context of global and European developments.

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