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**Re-inventing shared governance –  
Implications for culture and leadership**

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# The social contract and the governance of higher education

- An issue of trust...
  - The message of «Modernization» - HE-performance and effectiveness should be increased
  - «Modernizing governance» – historical forms of governance in HE tend to be incremental in nature, and not very responsive to societal needs

## Forms of governance have changed throughout Europe...

- More external representatives in supervisory and governance boards
- Reduction in the number of decision-making and advisory bodies
- Increased institutional autonomy (wrt. legal status, organization, resource-allocation, etc)
- But demands for «more flexible governance and funding systems» - often pushed by the EU-Commission

## How can we interpret the changes taking place in HE-governance?

- *Advocates of change*: governance is an instrument for accomplishing more lean and strategic universities – change is needed to preserve the public trust in universities
- *Critics of change*: governance is part of the culture of higher education – change may transform universities into organizations without a distinct academic identity

## The core problem: shared governance

- «Shared governance» not easily defined due to difficulties of linking the concept to specific governance arrangements
- The general understanding: academics should be involved in decision-making...
  - But how should they be involved?
  - And what actors should be involved in the «sharing»?

# 1) The traditional collegial model

- Academic involved in all matters/academic matters
- Academic influence is secured through legislation or dependent on culture and informal arrangements
- Decision «sharing» takes place mostly among the academic staff

## 2) The university democracy model

- The «democratic revolution of universities»
- Affected interest should have the right to elect representatives and should be eligible for decision-making bodies
- Decision «sharing» included not only junior academic staff, but also students and administrative staff

### **3) The corporate enterprise model**

- There is a need for strong external representation/stakeholder interest
- Not all affected interest should have an equal influence in the decision-making process
- Need to reduce the number of decision-making bodies, and make more explicit the responsibilities and duties of those left



## 4) The entrepreneurial model

- The need for more dynamic governance arrangements
- Partners, networks and customers should be included in the governance arrangements
- Leadership is essential for forming alliances, networks, and coalitions for change, and leaders should have a major say/decide on how «sharing» takes place

## Which is the most effective model?

- Hard to identify particular characteristics of effective «shared decision-making», but studies indicate that
  - Academics can make «hard» decisions
  - Structural factors is perhaps less important than we tend to believe (centralization/decentralization, board size, power allocation, elected/appointed rector)
  - The decision-making *process* is important for the outcome

## How do modern universities think of their future governance arrangements?

- Focusing on the universities of Helsinki, Uppsala, Lund, Copenhagen, Oslo, and their strategic plans
  - the selected institutions have long traditions for «shared governance» arrangements
  - but are also current hothouses for the new knowledge economy emphasising innovation and entrepreneurship

## Some similar values and beliefs found within in the Nordic region

- The universities emphasize academic freedom, independent thinking, critical reflections, high ethical and democratic standards, and *future change* is related to:
  - Excellence
  - Competition
  - Multi-disciplinarity
  - Staff recruitment/HRM
  - Internationalization

## How do they perceive the role of governance in the change process?

- «...enthusiastic participation of a large number of staff and students in drafting this strategic plan»..(Helsinki)
- «..led to joint agreement...providing the whole university with a 'shared purpose'» (Uppsala)
- None of the universities acknowledge that the ability to change as an organization may be a challenge

## How is change expected to take place in the universities?

- Indications of the collegial model, the corporate enterprise model, and the university democracy model are all found in the strategic plans
- Still, the entrepreneurial model seems to be the dominant option, underlined by the need for:
  - «Communicative leadership» (Lund)
  - «Interactive leadership» (Helsinki)
  - «Better leadership» (Oslo)

## How is change expected to take place in the universities cont.

- All universities underline that:
  - A new type of leadership is required, along with new «instruments» (new forms of payment, personell policies)
  - There is a need for systematic leadership training
  - The leadership is given extensive responsibility for creating trust in the strategic change processes ahead

## **Re-invented shared governance: possible implications (1)**

- Is the leadership challenge to make decisions, or to make «good» decisions? (cf. The current interest in risk management)
  - how to secure enactment of options, and stimulate to creativity prior to formal decisions?
- A possible paradox: could the old collegial model be seen as a form of «risk-management» arrangement?



## Re-invented shared governance: possible implications (2)

- Is the new leadership the only ones that need «training and competence building»?
  - addressing the sometimes isolationist, secretive and defensive characteristics of collegial decision-making...
- A possible paradox: can the possible downsides of collegialism also be handled by the tools of collegialism (social integration, academic work and responsibilities)?

## **Re-invented shared governance: possible implications (3)**

- The double accountability demands for the new leadership...
  - How to achieve a balance between speed/efficiency and trust/engagement?
- A possible paradox: Is there a need for a new «social contract» for the «autonomous» leadership?

## A final word of wisdom...

«Shared governance is more than ever  
required, but in new and adapted forms»  
(Burton Clark 2004: 176)