Re-inventing Shared Governance: Implications for Organisational Culture and Institutional Leadership

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Abstract

Shared governance has been a key historical characteristic of higher education although this form of governance has come under increased pressure in recent decades. It is often argued that shared governance is less relevant for tackling the challenges related to a more dynamic environment of the sector. This paper discusses underlying premises for the current conceptions of shared governance and analyses how a sample of Nordic universities perceives the place and role of governance in their strategic development. It is found that most universities emphasise leadership and leadership development as a key measure to strengthen their governance capacity and it is argued that most universities seem to overlook the cultural and symbolic aspects of governance along the way. This may have serious consequences for the internal legitimacy and trust when universities enter into demanding change processes.

Introduction

Higher education has for a long period experienced a series of reforms and change initiatives following altered environmental conditions. As part of this process, universities have been encouraged to renew their systems of governance. While many universities historically have been governed through a system in which academic staff have played a major role in decision-making, the arguments launched as part of various reform processes are that this form of governance is not responsive enough to handle the rapidly changing environment and that decision-making involving academic staff is too slow and incremental (Birnbaum, 2004, p. 7).

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Both in the US and in Europe, serious criticism has been launched about the need for universities to streamline their governance systems. In the US, such criticisms have been addressed by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges and other stakeholders (Birnbaum, 2004). In Europe, arguments about the need for governance reforms have come from the European Commission through its ‘Modernisation Agenda’ (European Commission, 2013) but also from national reform initiatives in the sector (Musselin, 2005; Maassen and Olsen, 2007). Such initiatives are often linked to changes in the relationship between the state and higher education in which universities achieve more autonomy in exchange for stronger accountability claims (Huisman, 2009; Stensaker, 2011; Stensaker and Harvey, 2011).

A recent European Commission-funded review of changes in governance of universities in Europe found that although changes take place at various extent and pace; there are signs of more external representatives in the supervisory or governing boards of universities, increased institutional autonomy in determining internal governance structures and increasing financial autonomy of universities in general (de Boer et al., 2010). Following this review, the European Commission have still argued for the need to develop ‘more flexible governance and funding systems’, to ‘support the development of strategic and professional higher education leaders and ensure that higher education institutions have the autonomy to set strategic direction’ (European Commission, 2011, p. 9). In other words, there is continuing political drive for further reforms in the internal governance of universities: a drive that also seems influenced by the dynamics within the higher education sector (Tuchman, 2009; Wildavsky, 2010; Fumasoli and Lepori, 2011).

However, one could argue that governance could be perceived as something more than just an instrument for accomplishing more strategic and lean universities; it could also be seen as an essential dimension of their identity as institutions having a strong impact on how universities function, with possible implications for their overall performance. A key characteristic of universities has been the intimate link between governance arrangements and the core ‘production’ associated with universities; teaching and research (Ben-David, 1991). It has been argued that it is exactly this link that makes these institutions unique, not only as organisations but also regarding the ideas that emerge from them. Birnbaum (2004, p. 20) has therefore warned against
attempts to focus too much on making universities efficient, due to the danger that extremely efficient universities may easily be transformed into something else than academic institutions (see also Geiger, 2004).

The point to be made then is that while universities indeed need to adapt to changing environments, there are still good arguments for trying to maintain key characteristics of the historical legacy regarding how universities are governed. The question is how universities are currently balancing these dimensions: what are the perceptions of and place for shared governance in the strategic development of universities? The article addresses this question by developing a framework for understanding the current changes in the internal governance of universities and by analysing how a sample of leading universities in the Nordic region present future visions regarding their internal governance systems as expressed in their strategic plans.

A framework for analysis

What is shared governance?

The concept of governance is in general usually referred to as a form of steering beyond state influence, in which societal influence is secured through various networks or other steering arrangements (Treib et al., 2007, p. 3). Within higher education, the concept of shared governance has historically had another meaning hinting at the influence and representation of academic staff in various decision-making processes. Still, while the concept of shared governance may sound self-evident in higher education, it is not easy to define this concept (Leach, 2008, p. 13). Part of the problem is related to the difficulties of linking shared governance to specific governance arrangements. As demonstrated by various studies, the internal governance of universities is highly diversified (Martin and Etzkowitz, 2001; Amaral et al., 2003), dependent on national and institutional traditions and history (Clark, 1972, 1983) and to a various extent affected by national and global reform trends (Huisman, 2009; de Boer et al., 2010; Bonaccorsì et al., 2010). What these studies show is that while shared governance has historically been associated with academics being involved in decision-making, there are differences both as to how they are involved and the range of actors involved in the decision sharing. Concerning the differences in how academics are involved, Minor (2003, p. 962) distinguishes between three perspectives:
• academics involved in all decision-making issues;
• academics involved in decision-making on academic matters;
• academics should not have a major influence in decision-making.

Within these three perspectives, one could also differentiate between the extent to which academic involvement is formally secured through legislation, or whether their involvement is more dependent on traditions, culture and informal arrangements (March and Olsen, 1976; Tierney, 2004; Whitley, 2008; Lamont, 2009).

With respect to the sharing of decisions, it is possible to identify an expanding inclusion of various actors in the institutional governance arrangements. Not least an important development in shared governance took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the so-called democratic revolution of universities (de Boer and Stensaker, 2007). During this period university governance was opened up for the participation of new actors in decision-making. In some instances one could even argue that this process led to the formation of the university as a representative democracy, especially if the following characteristics were met in the governance arrangements (de Boer and Denters, 1999).

• Affected interests should have the right to elect their representatives and should be eligible for such positions.
• These representatives should have substantial powers (otherwise the university demos can not effectuate its voting right).
• Decision making powers should not be concentrated but fused or separated among the several; ideally, in a system of horizontal checks and balances, the representative council has the upper hand.

As part of this democratisation process students were also included in governance arrangements (Klemenčič, 2012), for example, in the governing of institutional quality assurance systems (Michelsen and Stensaker, 2011).

However, reform and change initiatives have also triggered the inclusion of other types of stakeholders in institutional governance. The so-called marketisation of higher education has been identified as an important driver behind this development (Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Kerr, 2001; Geiger, 2004; Teixeira et al., 2004) and has to some extent contributed to push back the notion of the university as a representative democracy in favour of more corporate governing structures streamlining internal decision-making (Power, 2007; Smith and Adams, 2009; Dill, 2012) and where it is the external rather than the internal voices that has the upper hand (Robbins, 2003; Tuchman, 2009).
Sometimes it is external representation combined with a strengthened institutional leadership that may trigger ‘managerialism’; a sort of generic narrative about the need for strategic change and institutional transformation (Reed, 2002, pp. 164–5), where the university is in need of becoming an organisational actor that respond to environmental challenges in a coherent way (Krücken and Meier, 2006). In the latter processes academics are involved more as consultants instead of being collaborators in the decision-making process; a development that academics tend to perceive as unfortunate (Tierney and Minor, 2003).

Hence, in a historical perspective one could argue that there is still much shared governance in higher education but that the perceptions of what shared governance means are being re-interpreted both regarding the processes relating to decision-making and the types of actors involved. Not least, significant changes in the organisation of subjects and disciplines can be identified with the establishments of multi- and interdisciplinary study programmes, research schools and research groups. Furthermore, increasing numbers of student and academics, as well as increased differentiation in research and education tasks, reforms in the public sector in general and in higher education in particular, have contributed to the growth of administrative staff. The social characteristics, formal training and education, roles and functional areas of the administrative corps have changed; it is better educated and consist of more advisors and fewer secretaries. Increasingly administrative staff work in the interface between management and science, in developing research networks and applications, in relation to processes of knowledge transfer, regional cooperation and development of partnerships and in implementing institutional strategies (Whitchurch, 2012). This interaction between academic and administrative involvement is perhaps an indication of what the future of shared governance may imply.

What is the effectiveness of shared governance?

There are several empirical studies that have tried to analyse how shared governance can best be facilitated and whether there are any distinct characteristics associated with effectiveness of shared governance. Several of these studies have also addressed the issues often used as points-of-departure for criticising shared governance where academics play a dominant role: that shared governance is unsuitable for taking tough decisions (implying that shared governance is less suitable for settings in which strategic change is needed) and that shared governance is too slow in a situation requiring more dynamic decision-making.

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There is considerable evidence suggesting that shared governance is far from functioning in an optimal way. In Norway, a survey showed that most academics in principle would prefer academic leaders to be elected, although their experience with appointed leaders is very positive (Bleiklie et al., 2006). Many academics may also conceive shared governance as non-productive and mostly symbolic processes that are not prioritised in a situation where the academic workload and demands for research output is significant and where external activities and profiling is perceived as more important than participating in internal decision-making (Leach, 2008). Hence, it is perhaps not surprising that studies have shown academics in some countries to be more dissatisfied the more involved they are in administrative decision-making processes (Geurts and Maassen, 1996), although it has also been found that trust in leadership increases the more frequent contact academic staff have with the leadership (Bleiklie et al., 2006). Primarily, increasing autonomy for universities mean that institutional leadership is given greater autonomy in their management of academic, organisational and financial issues. More autonomy for leadership does not necessarily mean more personal autonomy for academic staff. The quality of the relationship between academics and leadership as well as any changes in working conditions for academic staff due to new management forms is an important backdrop to an understanding of the conditions of ‘success’ with new forms of governance. However, strategic institutional autonomy can be limited by different organisational constraints. First, one should bear in mind the often complex legal status of the higher education institutions, as they are often subject to and regulated by extensive laws and guidelines at national and international levels. Second, despite strategic and other efforts to develop universities to become more coherent, with common strategic goals and ‘philosophy of management’, as organisations they are nevertheless loosely coupled as disciplines, scientific and intellectual communities and are governed by their own standards of academic work and quality. New modes of governance, as well as the rise in the number of administrative staff, is typically considered by academics to be a negative development as the administrative corps is criticised for exercising too much power over academic issues. A recent global survey of academics (‘The changing academic profession’, the CAP-study (Locke et al., 2011)) supported the picture of increasing tensions and conflict within the academy as a substantial number of academics reported both scepticism about whether top level administrators provide competent leadership and the lack of information about events taking place at their own institution.
(Harman and Meek, 2007). These findings certainly indicate tensions between management and academy, although not to the same extent in the Nordic countries (Norway and Finland) participating in the survey) as in systems such as the United Kingdom and Australia where strategic management has had more far-reaching consequences (Harman and Meek, 2007).

For the institutional leadership where the pressures for external accountability is particularly strong, internal academic issues may be perceived as less important than securing financial stability and nurturing the public relations of the institution (Leach, 2008, p. 11). In this situation, the speeding up of decision-making is one way of trying to demonstrate accountability and greater responsiveness.

However, through several detailed case-studies, Eckel (2000) showed that it is hard to identify any particular characteristics of effective shared decision-making in situations where hard decisions are required. By studying how shared governance worked at four US universities where academic programmes had to be shut down, he concluded that the governance arrangements and decision-making processes at the four institutions varied according to time-frames, regarding the number of people involved and the types of actors included. However, they were all shared governance processes able to reach hard decisions (Eckel, 2000, p. 31). In a similar vein, Kaplan (2004, p. 31) found that trying to identify specific characteristics of especially effective shared governance arrangements is highly problematic. Neither board size, allocation of power, union status, centralisation or decentralisation of decision-making, or other structural factors seems to have particular influence on outcomes of decisions regarding their effectiveness, although they may have more impact on efficiency (Kezar, 2004, p. 40).

However, as well illustrated by Albert and Whetten (1985), decisions of this type are often conceived by academics as something far more than just pragmatic adaptations to a changing environment. These decisions are instead perceived as intimately related to the identity of the institution (‘will cut-backs affect our profile as a research-intensive university?’) suggesting that shared governance is not only a means but an important end in itself (see also Dill, 2012). It is the interpersonal relationships, the level of trust in decision-making processes and a feeling of ownership that is of significance in effective shared governance arrangements (Kezar, 2004, p. 39). As underlined by de Boer (2009, p. 234) it is such informal processes and rules that seem to guide the academic staff despite numerous reform attempts.
Based on this brief review one may suggest that academics indeed are engaged in decisions that may even have a negative or challenging effect on colleagues and on the core processes of universities (Eckel, 2000, p. 32), as long as academics think decisions are made the ‘right way’ (Birnbaum, 2004, p. 12). In the literature on organisational justice, a distinction is often drawn between distributive and procedural justice, where distributive justice can be linked to the perceived fairness of how material and symbolic goods are distributed within the organisation, while procedural justice addresses the perceived fairness of the means used to determine the goods distributed (Folger and Konovsky, 1989, p. 115). Research has indicated that procedural justice in general is an important predictor for organisational outcomes such as commitment to the organisation and trust in its governance system (McFarlin and Sweeney, 1992, p. 634). Based on the studies reported above, the same seems to be true for higher education. In other words, legitimacy is an important factor to take into account when governance systems in higher education are designed.

**Dimensions for analysing the role of shared governance in strategic change processes**

The question to be asked on this basis is then which ‘right ways’ can be identified with respect to the development of shared governance in strategic development processes? What are the legitimate designs of future governance systems? Given the previous discussion, at least two crucial dimensions can be identified. The first dimension concerns the way decisions are taken. Here, one may distinguish between decision-making processes that emphasise formal rules and regulations often based on legislation stemming from the national or the institutional level (Tierney, 2004) and decision-making that is more informal where collegial processes more characterised by reaching agreement and consensus dominate (Clark, 1983; Harvey, 1995). Of course, in between these two extremes one may find much variety in decision-making processes where both symbolic and various political models fit in (Tierney, 2004; de Boer and Stensaker, 2007).

The second dimension concerns the types of actors involved in the decision-making distinguishing between a model in which academic staff has most influence to a model where a number of different actors may have a say in the process (Tierney and Minor, 2003). Again one may identify various models that may be positioned in between these extremes ranking from pure corporatist business-like models (Tuchman, 2009) to more representative democracy models (de Boer and
Stensaker, 2007). If these dimensions are combined, one ends up with a two-by-two table that, in a simple way, illustrates the variety of understandings in relation to shared governance (Table 1).

The four possible models (representative democracy, corporate enterprise, collegial and entrepreneurial) in which shared governance should be understood as ideal-type alternatives, are more intended to demonstrate key characteristics of how shared governance could play a role in strategic development than reflect accurate descriptions of change processes.

The four models emphasise different dimensions of how shared governance may play a role in a strategic development process. In the representative democracy model, emphasis would most likely be put on the close relationship between students, administration and academic staff in developing the institutions and the importance of, and respect for, formal rules and regulations for how decision-making processes should be organised (de Boer and Stensaker, 2007). In the collegial model, one would expect more emphasis on perceiving culture, ownership and decisions based on consensus as central characteristics for strategic development (Clark, 1972, 1983; Harvey, 1995). In the corporate enterprise model, one could point out that representation of external stakeholders and actors in decision-making bodies would be seen as a vital characteristic and that such external stakeholders are key to enhance the institutional links with the environment (Amaral et al., 2003). Finally, one would expect that an entrepreneurial model of shared governance in strategic development processes would put much weight on the need for leadership and the discretion of dynamic leaders to take initiative and form coalitions for change and the creation of networks, both internally and externally (Etzkowitz et al., 2000).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal stakeholders</th>
<th>External stakeholders</th>
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<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Representative democracy model</td>
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<td>Informal</td>
<td>Collegial model</td>
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**TABLE 1**
A framework for analysing the role of shared governance in strategic change processes

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Methodological design

To illustrate the assumptions above, strategic plans of leading universities in the Nordic region have been analysed in detail. The argument for picking out the Nordic region as the empirical base is that universities within this region have historically experienced all the different shared governance models outlined earlier (Maassen and Olsen, 2007). Five universities and their strategic plans have been selected as cases: the University of Helsinki, the Uppsala University, the Lund University, the University of Copenhagen and the University of Oslo. The arguments for the selection of universities is that these are (although far from the only) leading research-intensive universities in the Nordic region that through their history have a long tradition of shared governance arrangements in which academic staff have played a major role. At the same time, these institutions are also major institutions with respect to research and innovation that most likely make them exposed to pressure to adapt to new understandings and forms of shared governance. Hence, the selected institutions are likely to be exposed to difficult dilemmas regarding how they should be designing their future governance systems.

The selection of strategic plans as the key source of information for analysing the role and place for shared governance is first that strategic plans can be interpreted as the document in which the central vision and mission of a university is formulated; and the key institutional statement pointing out the paths to future development. While the strategic development of universities certainly can take a deviant course during implementation (Czarniawska and Wolff, 1998; Jarzabkowski, 2005), one could still argue that strategic plans are becoming more important as instruments for navigation in more turbulent times, not least for identifying and perhaps even imitating characteristics of other perceived successful universities (Labianca et al., 2001) or at least position them as more prominent strategic actors (Deiaco et al., 2012). In addition, one could also argue that strategic plans are important means of communication for universities; as indications of the organisational measures through which societal expectations are met.

In the analysis of the strategic plans of the selected universities, two issues have been prioritised. First, the strategic plans have been analysed with the aim of trying to identify the role governance in general is expected to have for the institutional development, not least since one could imagine that also other factors and dimensions may be important in this respect. Second, the strategic plans are analysed to find out
whether certain models (Table 1) of shared governance are seen as more relevant than others for future development. Hence, the institutional strategies are primarily seen as important empirical input to understand the discourse: the attempts to frame and legitimise the new modes of governance and other central concepts in the dialogue and negotiations between the relevant constituencies.

Perceptions of governance in the strategic development of universities

The strategic plans of the five universities selected are quite different from each other. They cover different time-periods, they are different with respect to how detailed they outline change strategies and measures and they differ in scope and length. The reason for some of these differences are most likely due to different national contexts but also due to the way these universities are organised, not least how autonomous faculties are in relation to the central administration.

Despite the differences found between the various strategic plans they also share some similarities. As expected, all strategic plans include sections related to the vision and mission of the universities and the values and norms associated with the organisational identity of the universities. Here, all the universities portray themselves in a similar way emphasising academic freedom in research and teaching, rationality, quality, independent thinking, critical reflections, human rights and high ethical and democratic standards.

Not surprisingly given the increased globalisation of the sector, the strategic plans are similar with respect to how they perceive their challenges in the years to come. The need for increased relevance of education and research, the social responsibility the university has towards society, the need to be accountable for the resources allocated to the university and the need to become even more excellent institutions to be able to compete internationally are some of the most often mentioned challenges. In addition to excellence, pathways to the future are often described by pointing to the need to become more multi-disciplinary, ensure good working conditions for academic staff and boost staff recruitment (the link between staff recruitment and the ability to perform well in international rankings is often made).

The importance of governance in strategic plans

Several of the universities maintain that the strategic plan in itself has been developed through active participation from students and staff. Some of them also provide details as to how such participation was
organised (University of Copenhagen, 2007, p. 8; University of Oslo, 2010, p. 3). For example, the University of Helsinki (2012, pp. 7–8) points out that the strategic plan has been:

. . . drafted in close cooperation with the academic community. Members of the university contributed eagerly to the process . . . numerous inspiring discussions have now culminated in this strategic plan . . . The enthusiastic participation of a large number for students and staff in drafting this strategy clearly communicates the strong commitment of the university community to together further the cause of the university.

Following such statements, there is often an implicit assumption that participation of staff and students in the development of the strategic plan have led to joint agreement among staff about the content of the strategy; providing the whole university with a ‘shared purpose’ (for example, Uppsala University, 2008, p. 3).

The issue of governance is in general not very prominent in the strategic plans analysed. Interestingly, several of the strategic plans underline that the plan has to be quite generic in nature allowing faculties to develop their own strategic plans (Lund University, 2012, p. 19). Here, one would perhaps imagine that governance issues would be brought forward to clarify the links between institutional and faculty strategies and decision-making levels but beside some statements that a clear division of work and responsibilities are needed between different levels at the universities (Uppsala University, 2008, p. 10), there are relatively few references to governance arrangements.

To the extent governance issues are addressed in the strategic plans, it is mostly found in relation to arguments about the need to reform and stimulate a more efficient and flexible administration, better integrated ICT systems and a more professional support staff (Uppsala University, 2008, p. 10; University of Oslo, 2010, p. 12; University of Helsinki, 2012, p. 14) and the introduction of various incentive-based or evaluation systems (for example, University of Helsinki, 2012, p. 26).

However, what is most striking is that none of the universities in the sample acknowledge that the ability to change as an organisation may be a challenge in itself as part of a strategic development process. If such statements are made, they are often more related to commenting upon new external expectations and external changes in framework conditions than related to internal factors within the universities. Here, one could ask if the ‘shared purpose’ assumed to come out of the strategic plans may have caused the universities to perceive the implementation of the strategy as a more technical and straightforward process? As stated by
one of the universities in the sample: ‘The university’s staff and students will implement the strategic plan’ (University of Helsinki, 2012, p. 15).

**How is change expected to take place in strategic development?**

While it may be obvious that the staff and students will be central in implementing the strategic plans of the universities, their role might be very different as indicated by the four models of shared governance outlined in Table 1.

In the strategic plans, the road-map to change is portrayed in ways that fit all the shared governance models. As illustrated by the quote from the University of Helsinki above, one can find statements that fit well with shared governance understood as representative university democracy. Student participation in planning and decision-making is for example considered as strengths for Lunds University (2012, p. 6), while at the University of Oslo (2010, p. 14):

> Employees and students shall know where decisions are made and how those decisions can be influenced, and they shall be urged to participate in university democracy. The organisation and information and competence building in this area will be improved.

In the universities, change is also portrayed to take place through shared governance along the corporate enterprise model, this is especially visible with respect to monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the strategic plan (Uppsala University, 2008, p. 10; University of Helsinki, 2012, p. 26). Here, change is mostly seen as dependent on division of responsibilities between different governance levels, the central role of the board of the institution and rules and regulations securing follow-up. Specific management tools such as the use of quality assurance are also seen as important.

Considering all models together, it is the entrepreneurial one that stands out as the dominant model in the strategic plans. This is mostly due to the great emphasis all the universities in the sample put on leadership as vital in stimulating organisational change. This emphasis on leadership is visible in three ways. First, all universities in the study underline the need for new types of academic leadership within the universities. This is formulated as the need for ‘communicative leadership’ (Lunds University, 2012, p. 6), ‘interactive leadership’ (University of Helsinki, 2012, p. 22), or simply ‘better leadership’ (University of Oslo, 2010, p. 14). Second, all universities argue strongly for the need of systematic leadership training and skills enhancement. Developing leaderships programmes for both academic

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and administrative positions and for both research and education are prioritised. Third, all universities are launching changes in the personnel policies (payment and competence development), signalling that this may be an important management tool for the leadership (University of Copenhagen, 2007, p. 26; Uppsala University, 2008, p. 10).

Links to the collegial model can also be found in the strategic plans. However, these links are mostly found in sections addressing quality and excellence and the need to strengthen the core activities of education and research. Considering the strong emphasis of the universities of the role of leadership in instigating change, it is interesting that most references to the collegial model can be found in the sections where the importance of leadership is discussed. As formulated by the University of Helsinki (2012, p. 22):

Interactive leadership will continue to be developed in the units. Leaders will set up interactive forums and other operating models in their units to promote strategic objectives and ensure good internal communication. The work of steering groups will be enhanced throughout the university.

Or, as underlined by the University of Copenhagen (2007, p. 26):

The efforts to improve the University of Copenhagen as a workplace will pay due respect to the freedom of research and freedom of speech, a high level of staff participation and close connections between research and education all of which should epitomise the University of Copenhagen at any time. More specifically, the University of Copenhagen will consciously assess its personnel and pay policies within the strategy period. The systematic development of competencies and management skills, as well as individual career planning are among the tasks that will be accorded high priority.

Re-inventing shared governance as a responsibility for the leadership?

On the basis of the considerable emphasis put on leadership in the strategic plans, one could be tempted to argue that the traditional conceptions of shared governance are in the process of being replaced by a model more aligned with an entrepreneurial ideals emphasising stronger leadership throughout the institution (see also Smith and Adams, 2009, p. 268). Of course, one should be careful in describing such changes in a deterministic way. First, as underlined by a several studies, new decision-making structures do not necessary determine the long-term development of the university (Kaplan, 2004; de Boer, 2009). Second, the emphasis on entrepreneurial leadership as a tool for strategic development is not the only model displayed in the strategic plans: it is accompanied by ideas from other models of shared governance,
including representative democracy, the collegial tradition and even the corporate enterprise model. Third, a key issue in the entrepreneurial model will also be what type of leaders that will occupy the new posts at the universities and what sort of training they will receive. This will most likely have substantial impact on how leadership is conducted in practice.

However, the latter point is of particular interest if one relates it to the responsibilities attached to the leadership positions. In addition to being responsible for the realisation of the strategic objectives of the institutions, the leadership is given quite extensive responsibility for creating trust, engagement and support from the academic staff in the strategic plans. As such, one could argue that shared governance has been reinterpreted as a responsibility for the leadership. This development may pose several challenges for the leadership and have important implications for the culture and identity of the universities.

First, and considering the new and broadened expectations directed at universities, the new leadership faces an immense task of enacting on and prioritising among the many issues that need to be addressed. This is one of the paradoxes of the current development: while more tighter-governed universities are currently introducing various risk-management techniques to cater for accountability demands, and for dealing with what is perceived as a more uncertain environment (Power, 2007), the traditional shared governance models emphasising deliberation, reflection and thoughtfulness are challenged, although these models have a lot to offer in situations characterised by high risk and much uncertainty. Here, there is perhaps a need for universities to take a more creative look into the purposes and functioning of various decision-making and governance arrangements and align established procedures and arrangements to the new expectations so that decisions are not only taken the ‘right way’ (Birnbaum, 20014, p. 12) but addresses the most significant issues facing universities. For example, the strategic plans analysed are very general where objectives, milestones and development paths can be interpreted in diverse ways, indicating that ‘implementation’ will be something far more than just a technical exercise (Jarzabkowski, 2005). The implication is that fundamental ‘risk’ issues may still have to be addressed during implementation and that there is a need for arenas where seemingly trivial issues are analysed more in-depth regarding their possible consequences for education and research.

Second, and related to the signalled need for training the new breed of leaders at the university, one could question whether it is only the leaders
that currently need ‘training’. As underlined by Harvey (1995, p. 154),
traditional collegial shared governance arrangements can sometimes be
turned into ‘cloisterist’ modes characterised by an isolationalist, secretive
and defensive behaviour. As such, one could argue for the need to ‘train’
the academic staff, rather than the leadership to stimulate change
and renewal. While one certainly could question whether any form
of traditional ‘training’ of academic staff would have much effect in
this respect, Dill (2012) has suggested that more can be gained by
attempting to stimulate social integration and sustain the integrity of
academic work in universities. Fostering social integration through
clarifying key academic norms and values through symbols, ceremonies
and during practice would more likely have substantial impact on the
interest academic staff would have in well-organised decision-making
processes.

Third, and related to the urged need for efficiency in decision-making
processes, one can identify a particular leadership challenge in that leaders
are being held accountable to hierarchies above while at the same
time held responsible for the creation of trust at the shop floor and an
engaged staff supporting the decisions taken. As noted in some studies
(Clark, 2004; Kezar, 2004), trust takes time to build, implying that
‘consultations’ with academic staff has to be perceived as something
more than just a symbolic process where it might be difficult to create a
balance between speed and efficiency on the one side and trust and
engagement on the other. Speed is hardly admirable if decisions are poor
and lack support. One option for solving this challenge is to clarify key
principles, norms and values, a priori specific decisions that have to be
taken, creating a kind of social contract between the academic staff and
the leadership on how certain issues are to be tackled.

The immense focus on leadership found in the strategic plans
will most likely in some way or another be fused together with elements
from other shared governance models when the new governance
arrangements at the studied universities are materialised. Such
organisational innovation is probably needed as ‘shared governance is
more than ever required, but in new and adapted forms’ (Clark, 2004,
p. 176). The challenge with the dominance of the entrepreneurial
governance ideal emphasising leadership is that trust and engagement
can more easily link strongly to the personal characteristics of the new
leaders than to cultural characteristics and the identity of the institution.
The more symbolic and cultural functions of governance arrangements
can as a consequence be toned down as indicated above. Here, more
studies are needed to shed light on how the new generation of leaders

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in the universities organise the governance arrangements under their responsibility and what impact this may have on the academic and administrative functioning of universities.

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