

# **MODELS OF HIGHER EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN EUROPE: FROM ‘ORGANISED ANARCHY’ TO BUSINESS-CORPORATE ORGANISATIONS**

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## Abstract

This article discusses the shift from collegial governance of higher education systems and institutions to managerial governance in articulation with the change from state control regulation to the state supervision models. The rise of *boardism* (i.e. the strengthening of managerial approach to governance and the decrease of the power of academics) influenced by the development of New Public Management approaches is convened to identify the models of European higher education governance. Moreover, under the framework of the increasing digitalisation of management and governance of higher education, the future(s) of higher education institutions as business-corporate organisations is/are debated. While the academy's ability to deal with external demands is considered, the introduction of new principles underlining the power of managers over academics emphasises the decrease of academics' power in governance and management practices.

## Introduction

Until the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many European universities had been primarily governed by academics, and the State acted as a buffer protecting higher education institutions and academics from the interference of external interests and held ruling power over non-academic matters. Less than half a century ago, some scholars still considered that in universities the supreme authority should continue to remain with the academics based on the adoption of models stemming from the metaphor of *organised anarchy*, a concept coined by Cohen and March, as it allows individuals and research teams to liberate their inventive capacity and to produce innovative ideas.

However, over the last decades, the environment within which higher education and higher education institutions are evolving has been marked by the influence of neoliberal policies challenging their traditional culture, missions, and purposes: the education of citizens to serve social and moral progress, intellectual development, and the preservation, advancement, and creation of knowledge and its free access by the community (Palmadessa, 2014). The use by governments of quasi-markets to induce competition and of New Public Management (NPM), aiming at increasing the efficiency of higher education systems and their institutions, have been inducing various and sometimes contradictory demands of stakeholders (government, funding agencies, taxpayers, students, business, and industry) with an impact on higher education institutions' autonomy. In Europe, the pressure on higher education institutions to supply the labour market with graduates having the skills necessary for the immediate needs of the economy, to promote the economic relevance of research and development, and the market deployment of innovations (Palmadessa, 2014) has been influencing the mandate addressed to higher education. This mandate claims for a closer articulation between education, research, and innovation (Magalhães and Veiga, 2018; Amaral, 2018) to promote stronger linkages between

the missions of higher education institutions and the economy, and to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education.

Since the 1980s, higher education reforms stemming from the shift from state control to supervisory models and to quasi-market regulation induced corporate-like models of institutional governance. This shift relied on increased institutional autonomy based on the assumption that the more autonomous institutions are, the better they would respond to changes in their organisational environment, and the better they would perform. Institutional autonomy was deemed to simultaneously induce self-regulation of institutions, with the aim of promoting more efficiently the public good. Criticisms against the state control model were further developed by neoliberal perspectives, transforming the relationships between governing, governance and institutional management.

The increasing use of markets as instruments for regulating public domains was an additional argument for enhancing institutional autonomy as a condition to compete in a market-like environment. Markets were introduced to regulate the role of institutions and their actors towards the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education system and institutions. The role of the state and its agencies was characterized as being socially pernicious, and therefore their action should be ultimately limited to correct the worst effects of market regulation. While institutions were assumed as providers, free to enter the market to determine prices and their products, students, and their families, were configured as consumers, on the assumption that they were free to choose the 'product' and the provider based on adequate information on prices and quality.

Under the influence of NPM, governance reforms introduced private sector management tools, emphasising market-based competition, efficiency, performance, and value for money, concentrating decision power in the central administration, while weakening the representation of academics.

The configuration of universities as corporations enhanced managerial modes of coordination and corporate-like features in higher education institutions. NPM and neoliberal perspectives induced the re-conceptualisation of universities as ‘complete organisations’ (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersen, 2000). The idea of universities as ‘complete organisations’ drove their shift from a “republic of scholars” to a “stakeholder organisation” (Bleiklie and Kogan, 2007) and empowered the management of governance structures in defining the organisation’s strategies and reshaping structures and processes in higher education governance.

This chapter starts by discussing the shift from collegial governance of higher education systems and institutions to managerial governance. This shift is associated with the change from state control regulation to the state supervision. This model induced the move from the traditional academic governance based on collegialism to managerial governance. Next, the rise of *Boardism* (i.e. the strengthening of managerial approach to governance and the decrease of the power of academics) (Veiga et al, 2015), influenced by NPM approaches will be underlined to identify the models of European higher education governance. Finally, the future(s) of higher education institutions as business-corporate organisations will be debated under the framework of the increasing digitalisation of management and governance of higher education.

### **From state control to state supervision: shifting from ‘organised anarchies’ to ‘complete organizations’**

The foundations and the development of modern universities relied on their links with the consolidation of the nation-state:

The nation-state had profound consequences for the patterns of control and administration in the university world. In the first place, by setting the university at the apex of those institutions defining national identity, it also placed higher learning firmly within the

public domain as a national responsibility. [...] And, no less important, the forging of the nation-state went hand in hand with the incorporation of academia into the ranks of state service, thereby placing upon it the implicit obligation of service to the *national* community (Neave, 1997, p. 14).

In Europe, the state control model assumed different features. The Napoleonic system was far more restrictive regarding academic autonomy, as generalized state control ranged from simple administrative acts to the contents of programs and courses. In turn, the Humboldtian system assumed that universities were state’s partners, acting as the highest expression of national culture and of the state itself, and this element of partnership gave rise to less restricted autonomy. With regard to academic autonomy, this system relied mainly on more individual academic freedom, as the individual scholar should enjoy freedom, which not only state and but also society must not interfere with. The Napoleonic and the Humboldtian systems, however, are not contradictory in nature within the social, cultural and institutional paradigm of modernity.

Despite the very substantial differences between the two concepts of autonomy, both involved a fundamental similarity in the task that fell to the state in its relationship with the university. Irrespective of whether state control involved an element of partnership or was wholly based on a principle of subordination and upward administrative accountability, academic autonomy was not simply a matter of protecting the freedoms of teaching and learning. It was also a question of protecting the modernizing sector of society against the pressures, claims and special pleading of vested interests and inherited privilege (Neave and van Vught, 1994, p. 271).

While it is of importance to underline the differences within the model of state control, there was no universal model

of the relationship between higher education and the state. However, the states assumed the primary responsibility for the provision of education (Trow, 1991) and the national contexts influenced and shaped the development of education systems. In higher education systems, the control and funding by the state entailed a low degree of institutional autonomy regarding the internal determination of higher education institutions' operations given its dependence on the 'owner/controller'. As Scott puts it, there is no inherent contradiction between state funding and control "and (effective) university autonomy, as the experience of the British universities between 1919 and the mid-1960s and of many other European universities, although formally incorporated within state bureaucracies, suggests" (Scott, 1995, p. 15).

The shift from state control to state supervision impinges on the relationship between governance and management perspectives and their weight. The workings of collegial governance and management can be captured by the concept of 'organised anarchies'. Cohen and colleagues (1972) used this concept to address the organizational specificities of universities and their governance. Indeed, "One class of organization which faces decision situations involving unclear goals, unclear technology, and fluid participants is the modern college or university" (Cohen et al., 1972, p. 11). The concept of 'organised anarchies' emphasised the lack of rationality of institutional choices as "rationalized practices whose outcomes have been as beneficent as predicted, or to feel that those rational occasions explain much of what goes on within the organization. Parts of some organizations are heavily rationalized but many parts also prove intractable to analysis through rational assumptions" (Weick, 1976, p. 1) as it is the case of universities.

The intertwining of state control and the collegial governance characterised by the concept of 'organised anarchies' is crucial to understand how higher education governance evolved into more rationalised and managerial forms. The higher education institutions as 'organised anarchies' refer to the

loosely coupling of separate units of knowledge production and dissemination as the organisational models of Faculties, Schools and Departments are. This perspective was criticised based on the argument that higher education institutions would better perform with more rationalised and management structures in line with the dominance of the rational choice perspectives.

The shift from the state control model to the state supervision implied a clearer distinction between governing and governance. The former was specially directed at tracing social objectives and goals, and the latter focused on the instruments for their achievement. State officials and bureaucrats were in charge of translating governmental objectives into norms and regulations (Peters, 2010). Under this framework, governance appeared, at least formally, as an articulated set of human and material resources and organisational structures to serve governments' objectives and goals. In this sense, and in spite of the 'technicality' and specialisation of the professionals in charge of governance activities, in the state control model there was supremacy of government over governance. In the 1980s the model of state control was replaced with the model of state supervision downsizing the interference of the central administration in the daily decisions of institutions. This transition influenced the organisational features of higher education institutions as, on the one hand, institutional autonomy induced the enhancement of self-regulatory capacities of institutions and, on the other hand, the 'organised anarchies' tended to be eroded by the rise of tighter governance and managerial structures and processes.

This process of erosion was driven by the influence of NPM over the reform of public systems across Europe. In higher education, governance reforms also reflect this influence, namely on the increased technicality of the governance and management instruments and on the enhanced management structures and processes within European higher education institutions (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007). This has been referred to by the term managerialism (Amaral, et al., 2003).

In spite of NPM dominance there was “a mix of signs and symptoms of NPM [New Public Management] and NG [Network Governance]” (Paradeise, Reale, Gostellec, & Bleiklie, 2009: 245), as well as neo-Weberian (Bleiklie, 2009) and collegial (Ferlie & Andresani, 2009) governance approaches, contributing to introduce nuances in the dominance of managerialism (Magalhães, et al., 2017). The relationships between governance and management has been assuming different configurations as NPM is being counterbalanced by other governance narratives and practices (Magalhães, et al., 2013).

Actually, governance reforms reflected different weights in the enhancement of management structures and processes in the reconfiguration of the relationship between governance and management (Magalhães, et al. 2017; Magalhães, et al., 2013). The growing influence of managerialism illustrates the complexity and substantiates the supremacy of management over governance. The concept of ‘complete organisations’ put forward by Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson captures the strengthening organisational identity, hierarchy, and rationality (Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000) of organisations and these elements are visible in the development of higher education governance reforms. However, the degree of the universities’ organizational ‘completeness’ varies to very different extents and “cannot be reduced to the complete-incomplete dichotomy, neither can the study of organizational responses be limited to the adoption-resistance axis” (Seeber et al., 2014, p. 25).

### **Models of European higher education governance through the lens of *Boardism***

Managerialism triggered the rise of *boardism* as a distinctive governance praxis in higher education as it involves both normative assumptions and technical and practical elements. The debate on *boardism* in Europe by signalling out its features in higher education governance underlines it as a core feature of higher education reforms. The concept of *boardism* represents the idea of the decrease of academic

self-governance, and the decline of the power of academics in university decision-making processes. The reinforcement of managerial powers became an important ingredient of *boardism* under the influence of NPM. Research indicates that reforms in higher education that intend to enhance institutional autonomy emphasise managerial powers, while the power of academics and students in higher education management processes and structures tends to decrease. Another ingredient of *boardism* is the role attributed to external stakeholders in governing higher education institutions. This role results from the combined influence of NPM-inspired reforms, pointing out the need for a higher education institutions’ responsiveness to their external environment and the accountability pressures as a counterpart of more institutional autonomy. These features of *boardism*, are visible in Europe and beyond (Veiga, et al., 2015).

The shift from ‘organised anarchies’ to ‘complete organisations’ brings to the centre stage *boardism* as a governance praxis. In spite of the theoretical fluidity of NPM, the idea is that efficiency and effectiveness are to be achieved through management instruments used in the private sector, specifying goals, emphasising competition for clients, performance measurement and the use of markets as instruments of regulation for the public sector. The NPM perspective is visible in the stimulation of competition; in the vertical steering of the system through the setting of explicit targets and the signature of performance contracts; in the development of a ‘management must manage’ perspective; in the focus on efficiency and value for money; and in the reduction in the representation of academics and students in higher education management processes and structures. At different paces, European higher education systems appear to converge on the need to develop a managerial approach to the detriment of the bureaucratic narrative of administration and the collegial governance narrative (Veiga, et al., 2015).

The emphasis on the managerial approach is the ground on which *boardism* finds justification and is central to

understanding its key features in Europe. The increase of managerial governance implies the reinforcement of hierarchical steering inside higher education institutions with an emphasis on stronger managerial and executive roles of rectors, deans, and heads of department. In other words, it is more than mere introduction of new structures, such as the university boards, boards of trustees or other supervisory boards. Rather, it is a praxis involving decision-making and action and their legitimating discourses on efficiency and effectiveness.

In exploring *boardism* in Europe three dimensions have been used to address the influence of NPM on the governance reforms at the national and institutional levels. When timing of the reforms is taken into account, there are NPM front-runners, late-comers or slow-movers (Paradeise et al., 2009). Secondly, the influence of the NPM perspective can be high, medium or low (Seeber et al., 2014). Thirdly, the influence of external stakeholders in governing universities is taken into account. Next, we will use these dimensions to explore *boardism* and its impact on the different models of governance and management in European higher education.

#### *United Kingdom and the Netherlands*

The United Kingdom and the Netherlands, in the late 1970s, emerged as determined reformers and widely reorganised their higher education governance and management systems. These countries can be identified as front-runners. The governance reform in the United Kingdom led to a more top-down management attitude towards academic issues with an impact on internal settings, namely on leadership and on the development of managerial norms and values (Ferlie and Andresani, 2009). The influence of external stakeholders is high as reflected in the composition of the board of governors. The main changes were the subordination of the academic board to the board of governors and the establishment of a small executive board, half of whose members must be from outside the university. The academic board represents academia

and the board of governors includes the external stakeholders and substantiates a corporate governance approach aiming at "to ensure that governing bodies can meet their obligations to their wider constituencies inside and outside the institution" (Shattock, 2006, p. 52). The subordination of the academic board to the board of governors is an example of *boardism* as, in the case of conflict, the power of the executives prevails over the will of academics.

The influence of the NPM in the Netherlands is reflected in the reinforcement of managerial governance (CHEPS, 2007). The room for manoeuvre of Dutch universities to draw up, for instance, strategic plans increased by strengthening the roles of the executives and managers and executive powers have grown at the expense of representative bodies. The influence of external stakeholders is also high, at least formally. Boards are externally dominated, as all their members are external to the university, and they are appointed by the Ministry. Boards are accountable to the Ministry, suggesting that governance accountability is to multiple external stakeholders.

While in the United Kingdom there is an interaction between academic self-governance and managerial governance (Paradeise et al., 2009) influenced networking between academics and managers, in the Netherlands this interaction is marked by a large increase in the influence of managerial governance.

In both countries, there is a strong version of *boardism* as a governance praxis, visible in the decrease of academic self-governance, the increase of managerial governance, and in the high proportion of external members in the composition of the boards.

#### *Norway and Portugal*

Norway and Portugal are late-comers to NPM and its influence over higher education reforms was medium. In Norway, the NPM influence can be traced back to the 1990s but



it assumed a more comprehensive influence with the Quality Reform introduced in 2002-2003, along with the influence of other governance approaches. However, the NPM has become increasingly influential, namely by the introduction of tougher competition for research funding (Bleiklie, 2009). Academic self-governance decreased as reflected in the fact that since 2003 academic leaders could be appointed rather than elected. In turn, managerial governance has increased, since 2003 and 2005 the law gives the authority to determine internal governance to the higher education institutions. The Norwegian legal framework imposes a balance of powers of the different academic estates, by establishing that all should be represented in the board without any group having the majority (Amaral et al., 2013, p. 13). The influence of the external stakeholders might be high, as the governing board may decide, by a majority of at least two-thirds of its members, to have a majority of external members. However, in some universities this is not the case; the percentage of external members in the university boards range from 14% to 36%.

In Portugal, the Law 62/2007, on the legal framework for Portuguese higher education institutions, was elaborated under the medium influence of NPM. This legal framework was grounded in political and managerial assumptions on governance that give predominance to managerial governance over academic self-governance, enhancement of the role of external stakeholders in decision-making bodies and the possibility to constitute higher education institutions as public foundations ruled by private law.

In this context, the role and power of academics and students in governing bodies such as senates was weakened, and these governing bodies became not obligatory and can only have an advisory role. The Law also sets a maximum number of 25 membership seats in scientific councils of faculties, irrespective of faculty size, reflecting the prevalence of managerial governance over academic self-governance. However, the Law also allows universities to establish

advisory bodies that can be seen as elements of the enhancement of academic networks to mitigate that effect and to counterbalance the underrepresentation of faculties/schools/departments and their diversity in the governance bodies (Magalhães et al., 2013). The fact that external board members are chosen by the internal members of the governing board might indicate the limited range of influence of external stakeholders in the governance of Portuguese higher education institutions.

Both in Norway and Portugal, *boardism* is being shaped by the increase of managerial governance and the influence of external stakeholders to some extent, and the decrease of academic self-governance is more visible in Norway than it is in Portugal.

#### *France, Germany and Italy*

In France, Germany, and Italy the influence of the NPM is low, and these countries are slow movers. In France, it is difficult to recognise a direct influence of NPM in higher education reforms (Musselin and Paradeise, 2009). The changing relationship between the state and the universities resulted mainly from the policy of contracts initiated in 1988. The contracts were instruments for budget allocation and do not echo the NPM influence as they were "aimed at reducing inequalities within the French system rather than differentiating and developing competition among universities" (Musselin and Paradeise, 2009, pp. 45–46). This policy dynamics has reinforced the role of Rectors/Presidents as stronger actors in higher education institutions and have strengthened managerial governance in an attempt to improve effectiveness of management structures. Simultaneously, they also induced academic self-governance as presidents of universities are elected by representatives of three Councils consisting of scientific and administrative staff, students and external stakeholders (CHEPS, 2007). The French contractual policy model can be seen as a shift from direct national administration into the direction of a more 'evaluative

state', and an attempt to limit the range of influence of external stakeholders in university decision-making as reflected in the proportion of one-fourth of external members in the universities councils.

In Germany, NPM was introduced in debates on public management in the mid-1980s and only in the mid-1990s it marked the debates in higher education. As the result of the governance reforms, hybrid arrangements of traditional university governance and NPM-inspired models of governance are identified, together with the introduction of mission-based contracts as a regulation tool (Schimank and Lange, 2009). The reason for Germany being a late-comer to NPM can be found in the fact that ministries distrusted universities, due to both the limitations university leadership had in negotiating general goals with faculties and institutes, and the frailties of the reporting process of universities with regard to their achievements of targets and missions (Schimank and Lange, 2009). These issues reflected on the institutions' internal settings and on the perceived need that general boards had to be 'educated' about how a university works (Schimank and Lange, 2009). In spite of the power of the resistance of collegial governance, the decrease of academic self-governance has become visible in the loss of competencies of academic governance bodies such as senates, councils and faculty boards (CHEPS, 2007). The managerial powers of presidents and rectors have increased, echoing that 'managers must manage' in line with NPM influence. The presence of external stakeholders in university governance has been shaped by conflicting arguments between those supporting the traditional strong influence of academics and those in favour of NPM-inspired governance. However, there are contradictory perspectives about the presence and influence of external stakeholders in institutional governance. Actually, reforms led "to a more utility oriented opening of the universities for the needs of the greater public or on the contrary to an exclusion of public and academics for the sake of a strengthened influence of a small elite of industry and business representatives" (Schimank

and Lange, 2009, p. 73). The extent to which these conflicting perspectives on the representation of external interests in German university boards is contingent to the actual configuration of university council and the proportion of external stakeholders they engage (Veiga et al, 2015).

In Italy, in spite of the fact that the 1997 Bassanini law introduced some measures inspired by the NPM, the legalist governance culture continued to stress uniformity and national procedural homogeneity, combined with a low management capacity of the public sector. The NPM market-oriented and competitive-driven policies (such as funding and resource allocation based on outcome evaluation) neither penetrated the governing of the system nor the governance of institutions. This might explain the gap between the rhetoric of the reforms and the effectiveness of their implementation. Moreover, the longstanding existence of an 'academic oligarchy' also challenged NPM-inspired decision-making procedures, seen as lacking decentralisation of power to the basic units, self-evaluation routines, and appropriate management tools (Reale and Potí, 2009, p. 78). Since the 1990s, the resistance of the academic community with respect to managerial governance has not allowed the government to accelerate the process of modernisation. The limited range of influence of external stakeholders is linked to the attempt to "reduce the number of components of both the *Senato* and the *Consiglio*" (Reale and Potí, 2009, p. 90). The mitigated influence of external stakeholders appears to reflect the fact that "NPM ideas were introduced but in coexistence with local practices" (Reale and Potí, 2009, p. 78) as reflected in the proportion of external members in universities that hardly reaches one-third.

In these countries, we witness a mitigated version of *boardism*, which is mainly the result of successful resistance of advocates of the academic self-governance model. However, there are hints that may lead to further versions of *boardism* induced by the managerial role of French university Presidents and the decrease of academic-self-governance in Germany.

*Boardism* in European higher education governance reforms affected the relationship between academics, managers, and external stakeholders in organisational governance, triggering tensions and resilience. From this perspective, the governance reforms in Europe suggest that managers and the corporate-like models can be regarded as winners, although the picture might be nuanced as governance arrangements involve governance perspectives and practices, national and institutional ethos.

### **The future(s) of universities as business-corporate organisations and the rise of digital governance**

The developments and effects associated with digital governance in the governance and management of higher education systems and institutions is apparently promoting harder versions of NPM. The increasing digitalisation of management and governance of higher education is evolving under the framework of *boardism*. Actually, the governance and management of the systems and higher education institutions are potentially strengthened by the rise digital governance. Digital tools and rationales impacting on governance and management are visible in the expansion of highly complex technical infrastructures for data collection, storage, analysis, and dissemination at the institutional, national, and international levels. These tools, instruments and rationales are intruding and reshaping the relationships between the governance and management bringing forward the importance of digital governance.

Education data are a result of the confluence of networks, technology, and policies that develop far beyond formal education systems (Williamson, 2020). If, currently, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) developments are directed towards the access to various digital learning resources and communication devices between students, teachers, and institutions, "there is reason to believe that a new ICT-based era or paradigm is emerging" (Fevolden, Tømte, 2015:

348). Adaptive learning systems, learning analytics, and big data are taking the centre stage in the governance of higher education at the level of systems, and institutions. Williamson draws attention to the fact that,

While digital governance conceptualizes the changing practices of the state - and the technical institutions that increasingly co-constitute state power - as the digital data become available to conduct a consistent audit of the population [...] algorithmic governmentality registers, in a more Foucauldian sense, how the algorithms that process digital data may be used to intervene in and govern people's lives (Williamson, 2020: 25-26).

The agenda for the study of higher education governance therefore requires, on the one hand, the identification of political networks of actors and experts, and, on the other hand, the analysis of specific ideas and techniques for achieving the goals set. How educational policies are generated, under what influences, and how the state, the private sector, experts, and civil society relate to each other brings to the centre of the debate the techniques that aim to establish discourses, new routines, and practices in higher education institutions and their contexts. Lascoumes and Galès (2007) emphasize, precisely, that policy instruments are a condensed form of knowledge about social control and, because they are not neutral, they produce specific effects, "which structure public policy according to their own logic" (Lascoumes and Galès, 2007: 3).

The trends towards digital-based governance potentially enhance the already identified subordination of governance to management. As a matter of fact, in this context of enhanced digital governance the hard influence of management on coordination, goals setting, values, control mechanisms and processes gains increased centrality.

With regard to coordination, the digital governance trend might strengthen the vertical and hierarchical decision-making and

the hard influence of management perspectives, underlining the NPM's assumption that 'management must manage' the institutions. The reason is that management of the data on the performance of institutions, their actors and their activities apparently enforce a shift from performance-based management to data-based management.

The outlining of goals as a governance dimension relies on assumptions about self-governance of higher education institutions and on their capacity to define their own goals. While the hard influence of management promoted by NPM has been inducing the tracing of goals oriented by short-medium term objectives and measurable outputs, under the influence of digital governance, the extent to which setting and managing the institutions' goals relies on data collection and storage raising questions about the multiple purposes involved in this process.

The influence of digital governance tools as they enhance the technical infrastructures of data collection and dissemination, supports and promotes competition based on the development of a data-management system based on performance indicators.

Regarding control mechanisms, the development of tighter control based on efficiency and value for money, promoting a commodification of the organization's activities and emphasizing command and control strengthens the hard version of NPM. The influence of digital-based governance may be leading to what Lima (2021) refers to as an 'augmented bureaucracy' or 'hyper bureaucracy', as intensified digital governance rationality induces the enhancement of bureaucratization. While digital governance reinforces dematerialization of decision-making processes based on the management of large masses of data, automated decision and the monitorization of compliance potentially superposes actors' participation in the institutional structures and processes.

In sum, the emerging shift from performance-based management to data management will potentially strengthen the vertical and hierarchical governance and management of the higher education systems and institutions impinging on the future(s) of universities and the trend towards higher education institutions as business-corporate organisations.

### Final remarks

To feed the debate on the futures of higher education governance, we also take up Cohen and colleagues' (Cohen et al., 1972) approach to address the organisational specificities of universities and their governance. As argued, higher education governance cannot avoid key issues stemming from tensions between (i) the influence of NPM in setting up governance and management structures and processes and institutional autonomy; (ii) the academic careers relying on allegiance to disciplinary network activities and the required professional loyalty to institutions and academic freedom; (iii) the knowledge production and dissemination as a non-profit activity and the need to co-funding public higher education. The future(s) of higher education itself and its governance and management widely rely on the way these tensions are and will be dealt with. The risks for higher education institutions to have governing structures centred on the governing boards and their executive branches hinders the importance of academic guidance in higher education governance (Shattock, 2012).

The prevailing corporate-like models have played a major influence on European higher education governance as 'good governance' models developed, for instance, by means of 'shared governance'. This concept describes the inter-group structures and processes, but it is too vague with regard to power relationships. Indeed, the meaning of 'shared governance' can range from academic involvement in all decision-making issues to no involvement at all (Minor, 2004).

In line with this, the incorporation of ‘shared governance’ in the future(s) of European higher education governance reforms, while bringing forward the academy’s ability to deal with external demands and the introduction of new principles underlining the power of managers over academics, in practice it has been emphasising the decrease of academics’ power in governance and management practices.

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