

| Distributed academic  
leadership constellations:  
| organisational learning in  
alliances and  
Schicksalsgemeinschaften?

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10<sup>th</sup> September 2015

HEIR Network Conference

University of the West of Scotland, Paisley

# Expertise profile

Ben is senior researcher and advisor on Open Innovation. He has a background in higher education management, innovation studies and international affairs. He is an active member of EAIR and board member of DAIR (the Dutch Association of Institutional Research).

Ben studied at the University of Twente, the University of Amsterdam and the Radboud University (Nijmegen) and holds a Master degree in Urban and Regional Planning. In October 2014 he defended his PhD thesis on “Distributed academic leadership in emergent research organisations” at the University of Twente, supervised by professors Arie Rip and Stefan Kuhlmann (Science, Technology and Policy Studies) and Olaf Fischer (Organisation Studies and Business Ethics).

For Saxion University of Applied Science, the Urban Studies programme, Ben prepares a “lectoraat” (UAS professorship) on “Social innovation in smart cities, focusing on the (enabling) role of ict’s in social innovation.

# Outline of the presentation

- My empirical work – long term patterns in transformational change - constellations of distributed academic leadership
- Conceptual model – DAL constellations and spaces
- Reflections on leadership learning in alliances and Schicksalgemeinschaften

# Purpose of my talk

- To contest the myth of individual, heroic academic leadership
- Add a bit to conceptualisation of leadership and change

# Research theme

**Emergent research organisations, organisational change in universities.**

Competing values, duality, Centres of Excellence and Relevance.

Scholars: Cameron, Quinn & Rohrbauch, Pettigrew, Giddens, Rip.

**Distributed academic leadership; organisational learning, protected and third spaces;** informal, entrepreneurial and ambidextrous leadership practice, boundary spanning.

Scholars: Schön, Weick, Nooteboom, Gronn, Spillane, Davies, Clark, Rip, Whitchurch, Birkinshaw, Burgelman, Fichter, Orlikowski.

## **Focus:**

- Evolving distributed academic leadership spaces and arrangements in emergent research organisations.
- Add to conceptualisation and understanding of distributed academic leadership in emergent research organisations.

# Research approach

- longitudinal, multi-case study
- observing participant ship, interviews in retrospect with key-actors at the time, archive research.
- focus on patterns in:
  - Organisational change processes
  - Leadership practices and processes

# Three case studies

- MESA+: Nano science & technology
- CTIT: ICT
- TRC/TI: Telematics and Open Systems
  
- *Substantial:*
  - In duration: fifteen+ years each, 1990 – 2005
  - Major players in their respective areas
  
- *Extreme cases:*
  - Sites of change and leadership, based at or linked to the University of Twente, the entrepreneurial university
  - Different pathways of transformation, of emerging science (& technology) areas

# Conceptual model

## ***Distributed leadership arrangements:***

- Orchestration: concerted informal – coordinated formal
- Entrepreneurialism: explorative – exploitative
- Ambidexterity: contextual – structural

## ***Leadership learning spaces:***

- Double loop leadership learning – single loop *activity* spaces
- Emergent path development – path creation
- Dynamising open – stabilising closure oriented

## ***Sites of change and distributed leadership:***

- Strategic programming
- Convergent project development
- New business model development



# Analytical models

Two diagrams

Four quadrants that help to analyse “patterns of distributed leadership practices”, projected on four functional domains of leadership and learning, based on Cameron & Quinn’s ‘competing values’ diagram.

Four process levels that serve analysis of intermediate patterns and spaces.

# Contrasting dynamics

Open

## Professional commons

- Community of Knowledge Leadership
- Knowledge driven
- Long term development

## Network society

- Leadership of open ended programmes
- Innovation oriented
- Transformational change

Internal

External

- Quality and business leadership
- Control driven
- Incremental change

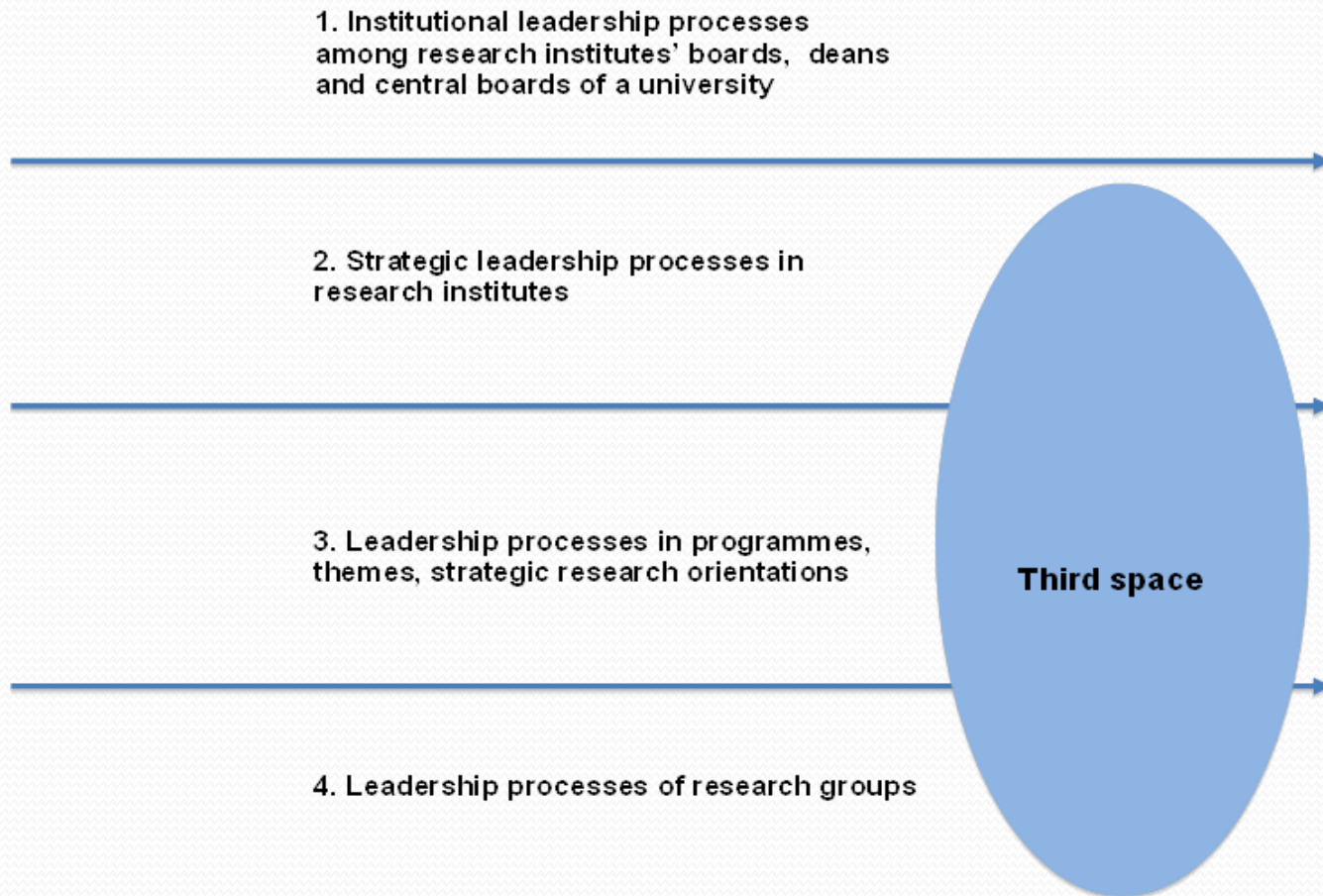
- Project, product and business development leadership
- Effectiveness driven
- Fast change

## Business organisation

## Co-operative chains

Closed

# Analytical model: processual levels



# Distributed leadership - activity

- appraise distributed leadership as an **activity** in the perspective of transformation of research organisations as centres of excellence and relevance, widen the lens to include changes in organisational culture, leadership and governance.
- leadership activities vary from **anticipating** and strategic planning, supervising or managing projects that aim at creation of *joint* research results, and developing new concepts for *external* interaction and cooperation.
- research groups seize **opportunities** to engage in multi-partner research programmes, and have academics take up informal leadership tasks in project and programme based networks of co-operation.

# Distributed leadership - constellations

- distributed leadership tasks are often not reflected in the formal structures of a university. Spaces of **informal activities** within or in addition to formal structures are necessary to let such tasks mature. A new '*layer*' of distributed leadership activities, stabilising in spaces and arrangements, occurs; activity based linked to formal management positions at strategic and at operational level.
- in distributed **entrepreneurial** leadership constellations leaders continuously stretch the boundaries of the internal organisation.
- focus should be on **ambidextrous** constellations, combining explorative and exploitative entrepreneurship, resulting in boundary spanning across value chains and networks (including partners outside research organisations), as learning spaces creating incubators of new 'values'.

# Leadership constellations – learning spaces?

Constellations seem to be a pattern in the development of the learning organisation: often quite practical and thematic, in more or less structured communities. Around multi-year multi-partner research programs, or in valorisation networks, which emerge as pathways of alliances and evolve into "Schicksalgemeinschaften".

Situational pathways of learning spaces stabilise in terms of direction and consistency due to distributed leadership arrangements that comprise informal, entrepreneurial and ambidextrous leadership activities.

Pathways comprise a first, entrepreneurial leadership phase of experimenting and fragmented protected spaces. A second, ambidextrous, stabilising leadership phase showing a more coherent pattern of protected spaces creating a learning space. A third phase of situational fits, a variety in leadership arrangements and learning spaces.

# Leadership constellations as learning communities?

Distributed academic leadership constellations serve organisational learning, while academics, when confronted with transformative challenges, co-operate and struggle in protected spaces with competing values.

Academic researchers, individuals who have to perform and live up to many high expectations, find ways to cooperate and co-create their futures. Learning, increasingly embedded in wider societal developments, is important to explore openings, to craft joint opportunities, to experiment, and while jointly reflecting in action, bringing forward the best that academic professionals can offer.

The understanding of the processes of co-evolving organisational change and distributed leadership is important to overcome a too exclusive focus on immediate and short-term problems.

# Further research

- Comparative case work: (national) organisational cultures, scientific disciplines.
- Theoretical work on DAL arrangements and models, in particular ambidexterity and boundary spanning.
- Empirical work on DAL learning spaces and transformational pathways.
- Empirical work on leadership competencies in DAL constellations.



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