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## Hybridity in Nordic Higher Education

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### ABSTRACT

This article builds on the concept of nested hybridity. It emphasizes professional practices and organizational design in studying hybridity of steering and management of professional public service organization. The article compares public sector dynamics in higher education in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The data consists of surveys and interviews on performance management in Nordic universities. Previous studies on hybridity of professional work and public organizations define hybridity as a multidimensional concept that occurs at different levels of social practices. While the multifaceted nature of hybridity is clear, demarcating between levels of hybridity and theoretical approaches remains complex. Based on our empirical findings, no clear top-down or bottom-up causality chains are identified. We question whether hybridity is nested as the levels of hybridity are intervened and connected, but not all levels have implications for all other levels.

### KEYWORDS

Hybridity; higher education; Nordic; steering

## Introduction

In the last two decades, the role of the public higher education (HE) systems has become increasingly complex and multifaceted by the influence of increasing external demands for societal relevance, effectiveness and accountability (Hazelkorn et al. 2018). One of the many consequences pertains to the coexistence of ‘new’ and ‘old’ institutional logics shaping the behavior of actors at the organizational (university) level. Most notably, in many national systems there are tensions arising from the interplay between the logic of managerialism (emphasizing performance and accountability) and New Public Management (NPM) (aiming to greater efficiency) and that of professional (academic) values centered on autonomy and the public good (Bleiklie et al., 2017; Hüther & Krücken, 2016; Marginson, 2011). In other words, today’s higher education systems and organisations are characterized by increasing hybridity as regards functions, structures and values.

This article builds on earlier work by the authors around the concept of nested hybridity in HE (Pekkola et al., 2020). It sheds light on the importance of professional practices and organizational design in studying the effects of different forms of hybridity at the institutional and systemic levels. More specifically, the analysis focuses on hybridity as regards accountability structures in the form of a multilevel approach. It is centered on

a multiple-case study design from the Nordic countries. The article builds on three cases of public sector dynamics in HE in Finland, Norway, and Sweden. The research question being addressed is: What can be said about the competing logics of Nordic public universities on different levels of hybridity? The quantitative and qualitative datasets are drawn from an in-depth comparative study (2015–2017) on the effects of performance management in Nordic universities (Pinheiro et al., 2019). The data include a document analysis of policy development, national surveys on subjective performance and perception of senior academics on performance management, in addition to qualitative interviews on performance management systems in Nordic countries.

The article is structured as follows. First, we introduce the concept of nested hybridity (Pekkola et al., 2020). Second, we describe our research design and selection of cases. Third, we analyze the hybridity of Nordic HE at different levels. Finally, we conclude our analysis by illuminating on the impacts of nested hybridity in HE.

## Nested hybridity

Hybridity is a rather ambiguous concept. It “refers to an impure existence in between pure types” (Johanson & Vakkuri, 2018, p. 1). In organisational research,

hybridity is seen as a mixture of different and contradictory logics and values, which originates from the conflicting characteristics of the public and private sectors. Karré (2020) describes the differences between the public, i.e. the state and the private, i.e. the market as follows:

“The state safeguards public interests through coercion and by providing essential public services through public organisations. And the market, driven by individual self-interest and the quest for making a profit, provides commercial goods and services through private organisations”

The mixture of logics and values, the process of hybridism, is firstly being supported by public sector reforms, mainly by New Public Management (NPM) and managerialism. They have spread from private sector organisations to public sector organisations, aiming to increase cost-efficiency and control in the public sector organisations (Bleiklie et al. 2011; Deem & Brehony 2005; Evetts, 2009; Van Gestel et al., 2020). As Karré (2020) emphasizes, society has become more complex, which generates hybridity; institutional logics are not static but mingle and they are increasingly becoming mixed. Furthermore, he identified several possible risks and benefits of hybridity to public organisations, which can be 1) financial: loss of public funding/access to new funding and other resources, 2) cultural: decline in public service ethos and moral degeneration/innovation and 3) political: loss of control by politics/more legitimacy through broader group of stakeholders (Karré, 2020, p. 42).

Johanson and Vakkuri (2018) address the conception of hybridity through four perspectives on public administration research: 1) mixed ownership, 2) goal incongruence and competing institutional logics, 3) multiplicity of funding arrangements, and 4) public and private forms of financial and social control. Other public administration scholars studying hybridity have identified the challenge of multilevel analysis. Noordegraaf (2015) identified four different levels when describing hybridity, namely the levels of professional work, the organization of work, the institutional logics, and policies. Denis et al. (2015) approached the same theme from a different angle, describing hybridity from the perspective of different theoretical traditions. They listed four perspectives of hybridity: structural hybridity, which is approached from the perspective of governance theories; institutional dynamics, centered on institutional theory; agency and practices, building on contributions from actor network theory; and role and identity, from the perspective of identity theory.

In HE research, hybridity has not been studied until recently. However, there is an exception since Clark introduced in his famous book ‘the triangle of coordination’ where the power of academic oligarchy, market and state vary in different national contexts (Clark, 1983). In their study on organisational change in HE, Bruckmann and Carvalho (2018) combined collegial and managerial archetypes as an efficient-collegial archetype. In addition, Siekkinen et al. (2019) adapted the aspects of change and continuity (Evetts, 2009), and used them to form the distinction between the organizational and professional logics and values, thus forming an idea of a hybrid academic profession. The perspective of changing HE leadership and management was considered in the study of Winter and Bolde (2020), where they identified how challenging it is for HE leadership and management to support academic work, and simultaneously fulfil the organisational needs of universities with multiple identities. Furthermore, in HE, hybridity can be also a result of mergers of different types of HE institutions (HEIs) (Pinheiro et al. 2016).

Previous studies shedding light on hybridity of professional work and public organizations lend empirical support to the notion that hybridity is a multidimensional concept taking place at different levels of social practices. While there is consensus in the literature regarding the multifaceted nature of hybridity, the demarcation between different levels of hybridity and existing (theoretical) approaches is a rather difficult, if not impossible, task. Further, traditional divisions of micro, meso, and macro levels are insufficient to account for the whole spectrum of hybridity manifestations. There are practices that cannot be directly linked to either individual, institutional, or system levels but are somewhere in between, at the interface, as is the case of professional practices.

Nestedness is a concept originally developed in systems theory. It was initially used by Bronfenbrenner (1979) to describe a systemic environment composed of a Russian-doll-like system where different layers were formed by a microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. In the HE literature, the concept of nestedness has been used to describe the complexity of competing institutional logics at different levels: in the HE system (Pinheiro et al., 2014), in system reforms and steering (Christensen, 2011), and in studies of financial management to describe changing funding streams (Parker, 2012). In addition, Hütter and Krücken (2016) has explained the isomorphism and differentiation arguments of European HEIs by utilizing the idea of nested organizational fields. They use term

organisational fields to cover local, regional, national, European and global levels of HE. Regardless of the use of the concept of nestedness, researchers have ignored the dyadic level of academic work (micro) and professional practices (meso) that are both important for understanding how the hybrid logics are transferred to processes and practices of HE.

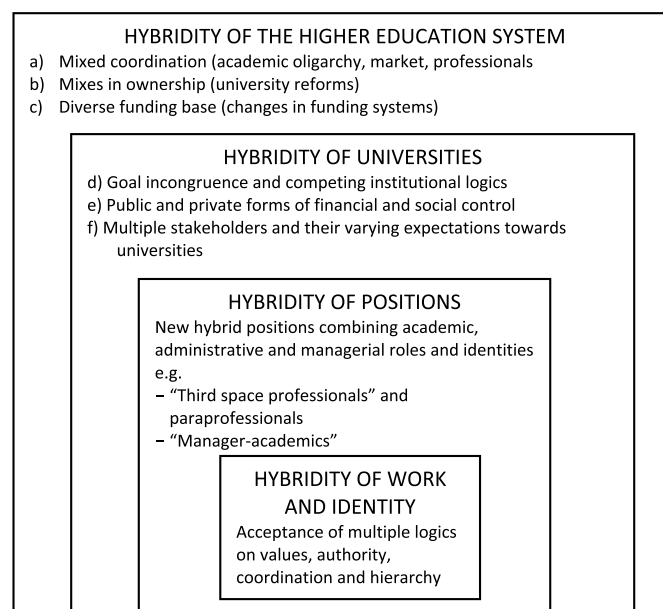
Pekkola et al. (2020) used the concept of nested hybridity to overcome and highlight the challenges and implications caused by the multiple levels of hybridity. In the study by Pekkola et al. (2020), this idea of nestedness and four different layers was applied to create a model of nested hybridity in HE, encompassing four distinct layers: system/policy, university organization, work descriptions and positions, and academic work (Figure 1). In this article we use the term nested to illustrate the different levels of hybrid logics in value formulation in HE namely; academic work, professional practices, organizational processes, and national HE policy. Next we will shortly define hybridity in nested levels by utilizing existing research into competing logics and values in HE.

At the levels of the HE *system and policy*, hybridity occurs through distinct and sometimes conflicting policy aims that stress the different societal functions at the national level. Society has increasing expectations toward HEIs (Bleiklie et al., 2017; Geschwind et al., 2019). These expectations include several aspects, such as the acting as an engine of national and regional economic development (Pinheiro & Benneworth, 2018), increased societal relevance (Brennan, 2007; Kogan & Teichler, 2007),

providing answers to societies' "wicked problems" (Coyne 2005; Ramaley, 2014), and enabling a highly skilled workforce to meet the needs of society (Geschwind et al., 2019; Välimaa, 2019).

In addition, as ownership and funding are key elements in defining private/public organization (Billis, 2010), mixed ownership and varied funding arrangements have changed HE systems in the Nordics to become more hybrid in nature (Vakkuri and Johanson, 2018). HE as a public good (Marginson, 2011) and a government-funded system has been challenged as HEIs' funding bases have become more diverse, including more competitive and external funding (Etzkowitz, 2001; Hagen, 2002), and the number of private HEIs have grown (Levy, 2018).

Hybridity at the level of the *university organisation* has also emerged, some being the same as previously in the level of the HE system and policy. As loosely coupled systems, HEIs in the Nordics have incorporated various functions and subcultures (cf. Pinheiro & Young, 2017). HEIs have changed, but more as organisations, as the basic functions of HEIs have remained. This has created new tensions inside universities (Välimaa, 2019). However, universities have widened their functions, reflecting general societal developments and expectations directed particularly on them. The term "multi-versity" (Kerr, 2001; Krücken & Torka, 2007) was introduced to address such multiple functions and roles of modern universities, and the influence of the global and national trends on them. Universities have also become more responsive to the needs of society. The concept of "entrepreneurial" universities with its



**Figure 1. Nested hybridity in different levels of higher education system (Adapted from Pekkola et al., 2020).**



emphasis on the proactive nature of universities refers to one aspect of this change (Clark, 1998). Universities are also expected to take part on intersectoral collaboration and knowledge flows, as Mode 2 (Gibbons et al., 1994; Nowotny et al., 2003), Mode 3 (Carayannis & Campbell, 2012) as well as the Triple and Quadruple Helix models suggest (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Etzkowitz & Zhou 2017; Carayannis & Campbell, 2012). In addition, the massification of HE has generated new expectations as well as challenges towards HE (Kogan et al., 1994; Trow, 1973).

International trends emphasizing market-like activities (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997), managerial ways of managing (Deem, 2004, see also Pekkola et al., 2018), and efficiency (Evetts, 2009) have caused tensions between competing institutional logics between the professional and the managerial and NPM, for example, (Berg & Pinheiro, 2016; Siekkinen et al., 2019). In addition, the variety of ways in which HEIs both adopt and adapt different logics is significant: “different organisational characteristics appear to lead to a different filtering of logics” (Conrath-Hargreaves & Wüstemann, 2018, p. 804). Individuals, especially those who have a powerful position in the organization, such as formal managers, contribute to determine how hybridity takes shape (Ibid.; Billis, 2010).

At the level of *work descriptions and positions*, the internal struggles between managerial and professional values and practices at public universities have become visible. New positions and roles have emerged, some situated at the intersection between the private and the public (Whitchurch, 2008, 2010) on the one hand, and the managerial and the professional (Deem, 2004) spheres on the other. New roles and value systems related to the marketization of academic outputs and other entrepreneurial activities have come to the fore (Lam, 2010; Slaughter & Leslie 1997).

The final aspect of nested hybridity is the ground-level *work of academic professionals*. The above mentioned competing logics influence this in a concrete way. Evetts (2009) showed how professionalism has been influenced by New Public Management (NPM). *Occupational professionalism* is characterised as collegial authority, trust, and control operationalised by the practitioners themselves. It is guided by the codes of professional ethics. This occupational professionalism has changed to *organisational professionalism*, which emphasises the discourse of control by managers. It involves rational-legal forms of authority, standardised work processes, performance reviews and accountability, as well as hierarchical structures of authority and decision-making. (Evetts, 2009.) Noordegraaf (2015) described how hybrid professionalism combines

professional and managerial coordination, authority, and values. His model of hybrid professionalism includes four stages; 1) *pure professionalism* (traditional professional logic), 2) *controlled professionalism* (professional work that is subordinate to organisational settings and structures) 3) *managed professionalism*, which aims at hybridising professional/organisational logics, in terms of structures, systems and roles, and 4) *organising professionalism*, which goes beyond hybridity by embedding organising roles and capacities within professional action and produce “meaningful managed professional work” (Noordegraaf, 2015, pp. 12–15).

## Data and methods

The data in this article were collected during the three-year FINNUT Perfect project (2015–2017) on performance in Nordic universities in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden (see Pinheiro et al., 2019). In this paper, we concentrate on Finland, Norway, and Sweden and analyze data related to the levels of hybridity in public Nordic universities. We triangulate quantitative and qualitative data related to different forms of hybridity in academic work. The analysis draws on the analysis of a survey supplemented by interviews with academic staff and university managers (for more details consult Pulkkinen et al. 2019). The empirical analysis of hybridity in HE systems consists of an analysis of recent Nordic HE policies. The analysis of hybridity in universities draws on policy documents and secondary analysis of interviews with academic university managers.

The secondary reading of the interviews is data in, which consisted of a total of six universities: one flagship and one regional university in each of the (3) chosen countries. The case universities are multi-disciplinary and include both natural (including medicine) and social sciences. Interviewees were strategically selected based on their official positions in the system. These encompass senior academics from natural and social sciences, academic managers from department and faculty levels, and professional administrators in research and teaching services in central administration. Overall, a total of 65 interviews were conducted between the spring of 2015 and 2016 (see Table 1 below) (Pulkkinen et al., 2019). For this paper, an inductive content analysis was performed on the data with the help of the NVivo software.

**Table 1.** Number of interviewees per country.

	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Total
Managers and administrators	14	9	18	41
Academics	10	24	8	24
Total	10	24	26	65

The survey on the impacts of management reforms was conducted at Finnish, Norwegian, and Swedish universities in 2015. The analysis of hybridity in management positions drew on data from a sub-sample of senior academics holding positions as deans and department heads (Table 2). The analysis of hybridity in work involved a subsample of senior academics who did not hold official management positions but accepted managerial practices as part of their professional work (Table 3).

The themes (Table 4) covered in the interviews and survey data were aligned in order to allow for data triangulation and thus enhance validity.

## Findings and discussion: levels of hybridity in Nordic Higher Education

### *Hybridity of higher education system: the policy perspective*

As alluded to earlier, and according to Johanson and Vakkuri (2018), hybridity has four primary dimensions: mixed ownership, goal incongruence and competing institutional logics, multiple-funding arrangements, and public and private forms of financial and social control. Nordic HE displays all of these dimensions. In

**Table 2.** Managers.

	Finland	Sweden	Norway
N	113	106	35
Male	72%	59%	64%
Female	28%	51%	36%
Professor	88%	59%	60%
Associate professor	12%	41%	40%

**Table 3.** Senior academics.

	Finland	Sweden	Norway
N	673	291	726
Male	58%	57%	65%
Female	42%	43%	35%
Professor	38%	39%	44%
Associate professor	62%	62%	56%

**Table 4.** Themes for primary data collection.

Survey themes	Interview themes
Perceived performance	Goal specificity and degree of autonomy
Goal specificity and autonomy	Decision making and strategy
Decision making and strategy	Control and evaluation
Control and evaluation	Support structures
Support structures	External stakeholders
External stakeholders	Trust and accountability
Trust and accountability	Incentives/recognition
Incentives	

this policy section, we look in detail at both mixed ownership and multiple-funding arrangements. At the macro level, these are related to shifts in the social contract between HE and the surrounding society (Maassen, 2014).

In the selected Nordic countries, policy discussions have concerned the role, funding, and tasks of HE. There are rising demands and new tasks for the sector, including more diversified funding bases, and growing performance orientations. However, the three case countries also show significant differences. In Sweden and Norway, universities remain state entities (with the exception of two Swedish foundations and a few private specialized colleges). Finland has private and public ownership of universities, but in both cases, the organizational entity is a hybrid of public and private legislative logics.

Finnish HE has seen the most progressive funding reform and has among the highest performance orientations globally. That said, Finnish universities do not have hybrid funding per se; external funding has remained at 20% of total expenditures for the past decade. Sweden has the highest external funding of the cases (57%) and a more moderate performance-based budget. In Norway, the amount of private funds in HE (from foundations and industry) declined by 31% in the period 2010–2020 (NSD, 2021). In all the Nordic cases, external funding of university research is predominantly public. Hence, the introduction of market-like mechanisms and new funding sources has not meant the introduction of private money, in all disciplinary fields, but instead infused the national systems with the ‘competitive logic’ associated with the hegemonic realities of the market-place (c.f. Antonowicz et al., 2021)

### *Hybridity of universities: The organisational perspective*

Organisational hybridity was analysed based on two data sources. First, we mapped the main policy changes directly affecting organisational structures and processes (exosystem), focusing on goal incongruence, competing institutional logics, and public and private forms of financial and social control (following Johanson & Vakkuri, 2018). Second, we performed a secondary analysis of the interviews conducted in the base study alluded to earlier (see Pinheiro et al., 2019).

The analysis of policy changes showed that, amongst the three cases, Finland has held the lead when it comes to the introduction of the managerial logic, manifested in changes in universities’ managerial structures. Over the past two decades, the country has strengthened rectors’ and deans’ managerial roles and instituted

**Table 5.** Main policy changes driving macro-level hybridity (1990s–2010s).

Hybridity	Finland	Sweden	Norway
Mixed ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 2010, foundations may own universities.</li> <li>• Universities (and foundations) may own companies (e.g., educational and universities of applied sciences exports)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most universities and university colleges have status as state agencies</li> <li>• In 1993, two universities (Chalmers and Jönköping) became foundations.</li> <li>• The education ministry supervises private providers receiving state support under the HE act.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under a 2005 act, the state owns and funds universities</li> <li>• The education ministry supervises private providers receiving state support under the HE act</li> <li>• Universities run cultural and natural-history museums of national importance (especially the oldest ones)</li> <li>• Universities are allowed to invest a small portion of their income in stocks, shares and related companies (e.g., regional foundations)</li> </ul>
Multiple funding arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Since 1998, funding of Finnish HE has been based of performance orientation, particularly on international standards.</li> <li>• Since 2000s external funding has provided 20% of universities' funding</li> <li>• There has been no significant change in the share of private funding.</li> <li>• The share of performance-based funding has increased.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 1993, performance-based funding for teaching and research was introduced.</li> <li>• External funding comprises more than 50% of the total funding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 2003 quality reform introduced performance-based funding for teaching and research</li> <li>• In absolute terms, external funding increased by 96% in over 2003–2013.</li> <li>• In relative terms, external funding decreased from 24% to 20% of total funding over 2003–2013.</li> <li>• Private funds from industry increased by 78% in absolute terms over 2003–2013 but decreased in relative terms from 3.3% to 2.6% of total funding.</li> </ul>

a salary system directly linked to performance-based steering, which emphasises the quantity over quality in academic work (management baults sed on resfrom the Ministry of Finance; Pekkola and Kivistö, 2012; 2016; Kallio et al. 2015), thus connecting the macro level steering directly to micro-level steering of work. The introduction of third mission and a requirement of taking into account stakeholders' needs in carrying out the research and teaching mission of universities added a new layer of logics into decision-making and mission of universities in Finland. Norway's dual-leadership model has gradually moved towards a more managerial centered model, especially since 2019, where academic managers are appointed rather than elected. Sweden has also strengthened the role of managers at all levels (Geschwind et al., 2019).

The introduction of tuition fees has created competing institutional logics and a new kind of bottom-up financial control in HEIs. Finland and Sweden both simultaneously implemented two different logics in providing educational services. While non-European Union (EU) students pay tuition fees, education is free for the vast majority of students. (c.f. Cai & Kivistö, 2013.) Norway has permitted universities to charge non-EU students since 2016, but most have not done so, despite state cuts to allocations for international-related activities intended to change this behavior. (c.f. Wiers-Jenssen, 2019) The professional logic remains well-entrenched, dominating the inner life of Norwegian universities and help maintaining the public logic, but there are increasing signs of the rise of a parallel logic of managerialism with its attendant tensions (see Table 5; Berg & Pinheiro, 2016; Geschwind et al., 2019).

At the organisational level, hybrid public and private forms of social control have enacted changes not only insofar funding streams but also as regards the status of academics. Traditionally, all the Nordic systems followed continental professional logic, seeing HE as a welfare service, universities as part of the public sector, and professionals as civil servants (Vabø and Aamodt 2008). Of the three countries, only Finland has changed the status of university-based academics (and administrators) from civil servants to employees (see e.g., Välimaa, 2012). However, it continues to apply legislation regulating public employees and (mis)use of public power to university employees, who generally still function under public law (Pekkola and Kivistö, 2019). The Finnish case thus presents a true hybrid of public and private control of employment and the labor force. Table 6 highlights the main policy developments related to goal incongruence and different forms of control across the three cases.

The secondary analysis of interviews revealed the nuanced impacts of the exo-level changes (Table 7). In all the case countries, the main tensions caused by increased hybridity were related to an imbalance between the institutional logics of quality and performance. In tensions between two hybrid logics. The analysis of public and private control at the case universities revealed an interesting phenomenon: the definition of what *public* means is changing. As global performance and managerial trends affect HE, global discourses of public (as open access and free use) typical of Anglo-American professional systems have entered the historically government-centered Nordic landscape of publicness.



**Table 6.** Drivers of hybridity at the organisational level.

Hybridity	Finland	Sweden	Norway
Goal incongruence and competing institutional logics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1994: performance based steering</li> <li>• 2005: strengthened the role of institutional managers</li> <li>• 2010: requirement that 50% of board members including chairs, be external parties</li> <li>• 2005: introducing third mission in a mission statement of universities at the act</li> <li>• 2008: new salary system with performance component</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1993: performance- based education funding according to input and output.</li> <li>• Increasing performance assessment of individual academics to varying degrees.</li> <li>• 2011: more formal autonomy, strengthened role for managers</li> <li>• 2001: abolishment of faculty boards as a legally mandated organisational unit</li> <li>• 2011: performance-based research funding</li> <li>• 2011, introduction of tuition fees for non-EU students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2003: performance-based steering (system modified in 2017)</li> <li>• 2003, dual leadership model adopted (elected rector and appointed university director work together as equals)</li> <li>• 2016: change in law making, an external board chair and an appointed rector as the default model, with discretion for universities (two models)</li> <li>• 2019: 4 of 8 universities choose the appointed model</li> <li>• 2013–present: center-right coalition government promoting an enterprise model based on unitary leadership (stronger leaders)</li> <li>• 2016: government flexibility in recruitment policies to attract and retain talent (some leeway for universities in state-set salary levels)</li> <li>• 2016, option for tuition fees</li> <li>• Possible change of civil servant status rejected in early 2000s</li> <li>• 2019: university staff remain civil servants (state regulated)</li> </ul>
Public and private forms of financial and social control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2010 Tuition fees for non-EU students</li> <li>• Change of civil servant status in 2010</li> <li>• Change from state bureau to independent financial entity 2010</li> <li>• Regardless of changes many laws regulating civil services still apply to universities and faculty</li> </ul>		

**Table 7.** Organisational hybridity: empirical accounts from the interview data.

Hybridity	Finland	Sweden	Norway
Goal incongruence and competing institutional logics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imbalance between increasing and diversifying tasks, and performance demands</li> <li>• Quality of teaching and research demanded but viewed differently across merit systems</li> <li>• Increased professional support staff and bureaucratization in accountability regime</li> <li>• Demand for new skills to balance scientific integrity and societal interaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage of the teaching-research nexus</li> <li>• Balancing of widening participation and achieving excellence</li> <li>• Maintenance of academic integrity and responsiveness to external stakeholders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade-off between performance and breadth of tasks (increasing demands)</li> <li>• Teaching quality vs. research excellence</li> <li>• Increasing bureaucratization due to the accountability regime</li> <li>• Competition vs. collaboration</li> </ul>
Public and private forms of financial and social control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open science (broadly, not only data or publication) vs. revenue demands</li> <li>• Changes to the content of research to meet funders' demands amid stiffening competition</li> <li>• Greater competition in research and teaching in a competitive environment</li> <li>• High-prestige competitive funding perceived to provide more academic freedom</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effect of increasing external funding of researchers</li> <li>• Adjustments of research content to meet funders' demands</li> <li>• Necessity for cooperation among researchers in a competitive system</li> <li>• Time demands for proposals and buying out from teaching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tradeoff between control/measurement and trust</li> <li>• Proprietary regime (revenue) vs. open data; external/competitive vs. lump state-funding</li> </ul>

### **Hybridity of positions: professional perspective**

Hybridization also affects academic positions, particularly noted by changes in the roles of managers as described by the interviewees. In Finland, managerial roles combining various tasks seemed to generally be considered common practice, and the interviewees discussed the need for the academization of positions more than hybridization per se. This suggests that hybridity is relatively well accepted, and the development of the role is undergoing discussion. In Sweden, the discussion focused more on the combination of tasks. Norway

also mixes managerial and academic tasks, but tensions and dilemmas exist, and such positions have low status and influence, especially at the departmental level. That said, there are signs indicating the emergence of a new cadre of professional academic managers who seem to depart from traditional teaching and research roles. Ministerial support for appointed-based models and centralised decision-making have met resistance from old (flagship) and from some of the new universities. Overall, as Geschwind et al. (2019) reported, the interview data showed mixed feelings regarding this managerialist trend in all the Nordic countries due to a constant

interplay between the logics of managerialism and collegiality. In all these countries, the interviewees identified the emergence of new para-academic positions (positions that require PhD education and academic work competencies but are part of administrative structures and evaluation schemes) as a clear signal of changing meso-level professional boundaries and practices. The main findings are summarized in [Table 8](#).

Our quantitative analysis focused on management positions since the datasets did not specifically cover administrative para-academic positions, although some of the administrators attested to identifying themselves as such. We operationalised the hybridisation of academic management positions (senior academics holding official management positions) as pertaining to the share of management work performed in a management position (the share in a contract and in practice), the number of full-time managers (management work consumes more than 70% of working hours), and attitudes toward managers' roles.

The contents of management positions were found to vary greatly, with high standard deviations in all countries (see [Table 9](#)). In Finland, which can be considered to have the most hybrid HE system and the strongest managerial logic, contracts assign department heads and deans the smallest share of administrative/managerial work. Considering the category "other," only every tenth manager in Finland can be considered to be full time. (see [Table 10](#), [Table 11](#), [Table 12](#), and [Table 13](#)).

Department heads in Norway had the most managerial positions among the three countries. The majority are full-time managers who do little teaching (8% of working hours) or research (15%) and working less hours than their Nordic counterparts. The considerable variations in time spent on core activities across HEIs and seniority levels in management should also be noted. Finland and Sweden presented considerable differences between actual and contracted time allocation for tasks. The most fixed component of work was teaching. According to the respondents, managerial work mostly takes time away from research tasks.

The Nordic countries showed no significant differences in the alignment of management behavior with strategies at different organisational levels. Approximately half of the managers aligned their behavior with university-level strategies, three-fourths with faculty strategies, and more than 90% with unit-level strategies. This finding is well aligned with the notion of universities as loosely coupled systems (Pinheiro & Young, 2017), where organisational proximity plays a key role. Managers seem to identify themselves in a discipline-like manner, following the identification patterns of academics, while simultaneously orienting their work more closely with the strategies of the universities than academics. This seemingly contradictory alignment suggests that managers reflect hybrid professional identities in practice.

**Table 8.** Hybridity of managerial and paraprofessional positions as perceived by the interviewees.

Hybridity	Finland	Sweden	Norway
Managerial hybridity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combination of professional manager and academic roles combined (demand for more academic leadership to balance administrative leadership)</li> <li>• Recruitment of managers reflecting increased transparency and decreased (conventional) collegiality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management roles combined with research and teaching</li> <li>• Different appointment and recruitment practices for managers across HEIs, with newer institutions favoring appointment</li> <li>• Increased emphasis on leadership training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managerial and academic roles combined (deans, department heads, and research unit/group heads)</li> <li>• Lack of authority in managerial roles seen as largely symbolic and administrative; difficulty attracting senior and elite academics "to serve" their units; managerial tasks often to junior colleagues seeking full-time employment and experience</li> <li>• Some evidence of the emergence of a new cadre of managerial academics (middle and high-level positions) who desire to become permanent managers but are limited by terms and governance models (elected not appointed)</li> <li>• Hybridity in the nomination of formal academic leaders; some HEI models combining election and appointment, but general trend (and ministerial preference) toward appointments</li> </ul>
Bureaucratic hybridity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diversifying demands leading to emergence of new professional roles in management, especially in acquiring and managing external funding and business cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergence of new support roles responding to new demands: e.g., internationalization, grant offices, business liaison, scientometric analysts, and educational development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-existence of dual leadership structures at many universities, with academic and administrative leaders working together (creating tensions and transaction costs)</li> <li>• Emergence of new support roles responding to new demands: internationalisation, technology transfer, e.g., research and grants offices, innovation incubators, and co-creation units</li> </ul>

**Table 9.** Division of managers' tasks as contracted (%).

	Finland			Sweden			Norway		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Contracted									
Administration/management	100	37.9	21.7	102	59	22	33	74.4	30.7
Teaching	100	21.5	14.8	102	12.3	13	33	7.6	14.2
Research	100	34	19.5	102	25.6	17	33	16.4	22.6
Other	100	6.5	8.2	102	2.4	6.8	33	1.6	5.1
Full-time managers, 70% or more, contracted		11.5%			35.8%			65.7%	

**Table 10.** Division of managers' tasks as actually conducted (%).

	Finland			Sweden			Norway		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Actual									
Administration/management	100	47.3	22.1	101	68.8	21.5	33	76	22.8
Teaching	100	19.6	14.1	101	11.2	11.7	33	7.8	11.6
Research	100	24	17.1	101	17.6	15.7	33	14.5	18.4
Other	100	8.4	10.1	101	2.7	7.4	33	1.7	4.6
Full-time managers, 70% or more, contracted		11.9%			57.4%			78.8%	

**Table 11.** Alignment of managerial behavior to meet strategic goals (agree or fully agree).

	Finland	Sweden	Norway	Sig.
I align my management behavior to meet goals in university strategies	48.6	45.5	48	>.05
I align my management behavior to meet goals in faculty strategies	75.5	75	66.7	>.05
I align my management behavior to meet goals in department strategies	93.2	89.7	92.7	>.05

**Table 12.** Importance of acknowledgement from different sources in motivating academic work (Likert 1–5).

	Finland			Sweden			Norway			Total			Sig
	Mean	N	Sd	Mean	N	Sd	Mean	N	Sd	Mean	N	Sd	
Acknowledgement from university, faculty and unit-management	3,4	102	1,1	3,4	99	1,2	3,7	32	0,9	3,4	233	1,1	> .05
Acknowledgement from academic staff in my unit	4,3	103	0,9	4,5	99	0,8	4,7	32	0,5	4,4	234	0,8	> .05
Acknowledgement from external colleagues	3,4	102	1,1	3,1	98	1,1	3,3	31	1,1	3,3	231	1,1	> .05
Acknowledgement from external stakeholders	3,0	94	1,1	2,6	98	1,2	3,1	31	1,3	2,8	223	1,2	<.001
Acknowledgement from students	4,0	102	1,0	3,7	99	1,2	4,1	32	0,8	3,9	233	1,1	> .05
Financial incentives	2,9	98	1,2	2,9	99	1,2	3,1	32	1,2	2,9	229	1,2	> .05
Media attention	2,1	100	1,1	1,7	99	1,0	2,5	32	1,0	2,0	231	1,0	<.001

**Table 13.** The percentage of respondents who considered that managerial practices are a normal/positive part of their academic work.

	Finland	Sweden	Norway
Evaluation and quality assurance procedures at my university have			
a positive impact on my own teaching performance (agrees)	19%	23%	24%
a positive impact on my own research performance (agrees)	19%	22%	25%
There is a tension between managerial priorities and academic autonomy. (Disagrees)	17%	16%	17%
Control and evaluation of my work is a legitimate task (agrees)	46%	51%	50%
In my opinion performance measurements are signs of mistrust (disagrees)	50%	46%	41%
In my opinion performance measurements increase transparency and fairness (agrees)	37%	33%	38%
Internal procedures for measuring academic performance are in accordance with my understanding of academic performance (agrees)	25%	23%	26%
Internal procedures for measuring academic performance have an impact on my decisions regarding academic work (agrees)	37%	27%	25%

No major differences were found in managers' motivations. Acknowledgement from students (customers) and faculty members (peers) are the most important motivational factors, when compared to financial

incentives and even acknowledgement from other managers. The one significant difference between countries pertained to Norwegian managers' indifference to external stakeholders and media, which suggests stronger

**Table 14.** Main findings from country comparisons.

		Finland	Sweden	Norway
HE-system	Differences	The ownership structure is hybrid by definition.	The ownership structure has remained public, exception for two foundations.	The ownership structure has remained public.
Organization	Similarities	The funding mechanisms and streams are hybrid (quasi-market), but public funding sources still dominate		
	Differences	The legislation creates a hybrid of financial and social control		
Positions	Similarities	The countries share the introduction of performance based steering, strengthened role of institutional (appointed) managers and external board members, and policy discussion on the tuition fees for non-EU students.		
		The impacts on teaching research-nexus. The hybridity of the managerial logic influences the hybridity of tasks and favors research at the organisational level.		
		The market logic is creating a new definition of public		
Work	Differences	Managers' position are hybrid – none is full time.	Manager position are hybrid but more managerial than in Finland	Management positions are quasi-full time. Managers operate more in internal/closed mode than their Nordic colleagues
	Similarities	Managers align their behavior to their own strategies. Managers are motivated by acknowledgement from students and faculty members.		
Work	Differences	Performance measurement has a stronger impact on decisions on regarding academic work than in Norway and Sweden	Few academics think that performance measurement increase transparency and fairness	Few academics disagree with the statement that performance measurements are a sign of mistrust than in Finland and Sweden
	Similarities	Fewer academics consider performance measurement to be a sign of mistrust.		
		Most of the senior academics do not see academic and managerial priorities as conflicting. They have not aligned their understanding of academic performance with performance measurements.		
		A significant number of managers consider control and evaluation to be legitimate task and do not consider performance measurement as a sign of mistrust.		

public social control of one's work. Moreover, across the sample, acknowledgement of external colleagues was not found to be among the top motivational factors – a clear indication of a managerial role is that it is the strongest motivation for senior academics not holding academic positions (Pekkola et al., 2020). The role played by disciplinary dimensions, therefore, is partly negated for those holding managerial positions. This intriguing finding suggests that the identity reference group or 'tribe' is other managers rather than academic peers as such, as has traditionally been the case (Trowler et al. 2012).

### **Hybridity of work and identity – micro-perspective**

Noordegraaf (2015) defines hybridity as acceptance of managerial practices within professional work. One-fifth of Finnish and one-quarter of Norwegian and Swedish respondents reported that evaluation and quality assurance positively affected academic performance (agree/strongly agree). In all countries, only one-sixth of respondents reported no tensions between managerial priorities and academic autonomy. Around half the respondents in all the countries agreed that control and evaluation are legitimate tasks, attesting to the successful institutionalisation of an 'accountability logic' in Nordic HE (Stensaker and Harvey 2011). The same tendency was seen regarding whether performance evaluation indicates mistrust; half of Finnish respondents and approximately 45% of Norwegian and Swedish

respondents disagreed. This, in turn, suggests that, in contrast to other countries and sector of the economy, the logic of accountability co-exists with, and is reinforced by, a high level of trust amongst key actors at different levels of system, as has traditionally been the case for the Nordic countries (cf. Linstead and Ringdal 2008). One-quarter of all senior academics viewed measurements of academic performance as aligned with actual academic performance. Despite the absence of historical data providing a point of reference, one could argue that this finding reflects the successful institutionalisation of a performance management regime (Kivistö et al. 2019), a central element of NPM-inspired reforms in Nordic HE (Salminen 2003; Frølich 2005).

Table 14 presents the study's main empirical findings. We introduced the concept of nested hybridity, assuming that the systems at the different levels are embedded and interconnected: hybridity at the level of HE-system has an effect through organisations, positions and academic work, making them become more hybrid as well. However, no clear top-down or bottom-up causality chain could be identified based on the country comparisons. This finding is perhaps not surprising since nested (hybrid) arrangements make the isolation of causal variables at multiple levels problematic, with system dynamics (e.g., as regards stability vs. change) being characterised by co-evolutionary aspects, as depicted by Pinheiro and Young (2017). What is more, as suggested below, loose-coupling, a key feature of hybrid

systems, makes the traceability of causal arrangements a daunting task. Based on the empirical analysis, this approach seems adequate for analyzing the different levels of hybridity within the HE policy sector. The empirical analyses also showed that the national systems are embedded in a supra-macro-level system of global HE policies. This idea was also developed by Hüther and Krücken (2016) as they describe the nested and partially overlapping organizational fields with regard to European universities.

Policy convergence influences the development of the HE sectors strongly, but the different cultural environments mold the ways in which the policies are implemented at different levels. One aspect of this is shown in how performance-based systems meet the struggle between the logic of HE as a public versus a private good. Instead of seeing either logic in “pure” form, we find that the Nordic countries have developed hybrid versions of them in the ways of viewing HE. Firstly, a kind of *managerial* public logic, which centers around the balance between inputs and outputs as well as measurability. Secondly, a *professional* public logic that emphasizes the idea of HE and research-based knowledge as public goods necessary for the development of society broadly, rather than a private commodity for the use of the few. The existence of a struggle between these logics follows through the system and influences also the ways in which hybrid forms of professionalism develop among the managerial staff. The contradictions in allocating working time to academic managers reflects these struggles between the educational and research work (professional) and managerial tasks, as well as their value in the system.

## Conclusion

Our study has three main implications for the discussion of hybridity and HE policy. First, the empirical comparisons demonstrate the difficulty of observing clear causal relations among the nested layers of hybridity. Although Finland has a more hybrid system than Norway and Sweden, no major differences appeared regarding the level of academic work. Second, our main implication for studies on hybridity is that many changes increasing and hindering hybridity do not happen at the national or organizational level but at the level of professional practices and work descriptions. Done only at the policy and institutional level, the analysis of hybridity remains detached from professional practices. For instance, the limited or nonexistent effects on work values from changes in funding structures might go unnoticed.

Based on the literature review (see also Pekkola et al., 2020) it is tempting to conclude that hybridity is a nested feature of contemporary Nordic public HE systems. We can see the interlinkages of macro-level policies, institutional managerial practices, development of new types of hybrid positions, and hybridity of the logics and roles in academic work and their identities. However, based on our empirical findings, it is fair to question whether hybridity is actually nested. Following the empirical findings, it seems that we can make a logical argument that the levels of hybridity are intervened and connected, but we cannot claim that all levels have implications for all other levels. Here, we follow the argument of Neal and Neal (2013), who stated that even if systems are not necessarily nested, they may still be overlapping and complementary in many complex ways. They also exemplified that different level systems are not always nested or even overlapping; sometimes, the connections may be one directional or occur only through a network connection rather than through a nested interconnectedness from one level to another.

Hybrid logics are penetrated in all levels of public administration. Regardless of the self-evident differences in hybridity in the different empirical and analytical layers of society, it is only seldom when the interconnections of these layers are studied. These levels are interconnected but not necessarily tightly coupled. It is logically and practically possible that on a policy-level hybridity is emphasized, but in level of work, or in the level of coordination of work through positions, the professional logics and managerial logics can be distinguished from each other and thus not necessarily occur simultaneously in a one single position. For public administration scholars, our findings are a careful reminder, that we should not confuse the level of analysis and make too simple generalizations from policy analysis to the work of professionals.

Future research is needed to study the interconnectedness and disconnectedness of the nested levels (c.f. e.g., Neal & Neal, 2013). Our study calls for research that takes into account the individual level of work in public organizations as well as the professional practises that are creating interorganizational spaces connecting individuals from different organizations and creating practises and structures that are impacting academic work, positions and organizational structures and management. Most of the studies of nestedness concentrate on the issues around multilevel governance and by doing so neglect the level of professional work and practises that are in utmost importance in policy implementation in professional fields and expert organizations. While most of the researchers into higher education are working within higher education, the active role of academics and academic profession is sometimes veiled under



public policies and system structures. This have two-dimensional implications firstly, the top down policies cannot be implemented if the professionals are not implementing them in their daily street-level activities and second, the bottom up policy formulations remains unstudied if the professional practises are not understood while research on hybridity concentrate mostly on organizational and national policies and funding structures as well as international and global trends.

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