

Fumasoli, T., Pinheiro, R., Stensaker, B. (forthcoming 2015) Handling uncertainty of strategic ambitions. The use of organizational identity as a risk-reducing device. *International Journal of Public Administration*

Handling uncertainty of strategic ambitions

The use of organizational identity as a risk-reducing device

Abstract

Public organizations face two seemingly contradictory pressures: on the one hand they have to handle more diversified demands from their environments; on the other hand they are increasingly required to act as strategic organizations and display coherent behavior. In order to shed light on the mechanisms available to public organizations to cope with this paradox, this paper investigates the strategic plans of four European universities over a ten-year period of major organizational change. It is argued that organizational identity can be instrumental to a congruent and credible self-representation of the university. In this way organizational identity is characterized by incorporating consistent narrative articulating compliance to diverse institutional frameworks, commitment to organizational distinctiveness, and creating a sensible rationale for strategic change. By this triple function, the communicated organizational identity moderates the risks of uncertainty in strategic planning, for instance in relation to the assessment of achieved objectives. The subtleties of the specific combinations of the three different functions and the implications for institutional leadership are explored.

Keywords: Strategic plan, identity management, organizational identity, university

Handling uncertainty of strategic ambitions

The use of organizational identity as a risk-reducing device

The environmental conditions under which public organizations operate have changed dramatically in recent decades. On both the regulative and operational fronts public organizations have been given more autonomy to run their internal affairs, coupled with increasing demands for accountability (Christensen and Lægreid, 2002). This accountability pressure has affected public organizations in various ways, including on how they adapt to global standards and routines (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson, 2000); internal reshuffling strengthens the role of management and leadership (Barnett and Finne, 1999); and evaluation logics support a greater focus on the reporting of the results and outcomes of their activities (Power, 1997). Public organizations have been forced to emulate key activities associated with private firms and businesses along many dimensions (Christensen and Lægreid, 2002). One such activity is *strategic planning* (Moore, 1995; Johanson, 2009), whose primary tangible output materializes into strategic plans.

In a recent review of the literature Poister et al. (2010) shed light on the various contextual factors that trigger or even force public sector organizations to directly engage in strategic planning. These range from the broader political expectations to regulative dimensions (institutional mandates and requirements) and new organizational functions. As underlined by Goodsell (2011, p. 476), handling these complex and sometimes contradictory expectations is a major challenge for public sector organizations, especially in times of economic decline. Hence, strategic plans in the public sector can be seen as the outcome of a struggle for producing fundamental decisions, actions and results to ensure long-term vitality and effectiveness (Poister et al., 2010, p. 524) while at the same time maintaining the mission mystique that often is associated with quite institutionalized functions and identities of public sector organizations (Goodsell, 2011, p. 492).

Public universities are exposed to similar challenges as other public sector organizations, especially in some national settings (Marginson and Considine, 2000). In this respect research has demonstrated that for universities strategic plans may have an important accountability function

(Hardy et al., 1983). For universities this is important as they, compared to many other public sector organizations, can be considered to have less control over their output and results (Clark, 1983). Hence strategic plans can be seen as a way to strengthen the external legitimacy of universities by demonstrating that they are modern and responsible public organizations (Paradeise et al., 2009; Stensaker and Harvey, 2011). These developments have led to a rise of strategic management regimes within universities (Toma, 2010; Zechlin, 2010; Keller, 1983), which, some argue, are conducive to transforming universities into strategic organizational actors (Krücken and Meier, 2006; Ramirez, 2010). In line with this evolution, there is a growing body of literature shedding light on processes of strategy making within public universities (Fumasoli and Lepori, 2011; Toma, 2010; Zechlin, 2010; Pinheiro and Stensaker, 2013).

However, it is important to underline that strategic plans should not only be conceived as a symbolic artefact, since they provide a framework within which organizations adapt to changing environmental circumstances. This framework is intended to offer enough flexibility to handle change, while shaping the boundaries of organizational lines of action (Hardy et al., 1983). For example, a volatile environment may put a premium on internal organizational features, like identity, as part and parcel of a *strategic scanning* process that constructs a viable trajectory (Johanson, 2009). Universities have increasingly been challenged to develop distinct institutional profiles substantiated around a sense of a unique organizational identity (Fleming and Lee, 2009). Such organizational identities have not traditionally been seen as playing a key role in university management. Rather, organizational identity has often been perceived as an inherent characteristic of a given university, i.e. oriented towards the past and related to historical events, including its establishment, as well as to its public role and public reputation (Clark 1972, 1992). While the “management” of the reputation of a university can rank high on the institutional leadership agenda when reputational risks are identified, managerial initiatives are, for the most part, mainly targeted at “repairing” reputational damage by strengthening the existing organizational identity (Kirk, 2003).

The pressure to strategically develop a unique institutional profile is associated with a high degree of uncertainty and risk (Thompson, 1967). First, many sources of uncertainty can be found

inside the university: teaching and research are ambiguous and unclear technologies, whose input-output process is difficult to disentangle and reproduce (Musselin, 2006, Cohen and March, 1986). Second, external demands towards higher education institutions have grown increasingly complex and contradictory, from societal relevance in terms of technology transfer and patents, to accommodating a growing and diversified student body, to a general requirement to contribute to socio-economic development in the context of a 'knowledge economy'. Third, institutional pressures have affected the external legitimacy of the university and its original idea, reflecting on-going debates on education as an end in itself or as a means of preparing graduates for the labour market (Maassen and Olsen, 2007). Fourth, another potential risk is associated with rapid changing environments and the possibility that current profiling activities may become 'irrelevant' if external conditions alter quickly and unexpectedly. Similarly, a stronger strategic positioning might lead to the loss of universities' inherent characteristics as such (Marginson and Considine, 2000).

Against this backdrop, while development and change can be seen as much needed and relevant, the university may still necessitate to take into consideration alternative scenarios, for instance if potential internal 'failures' or environmental shocks hamper intended change trajectories. In this respect, one could expect that, as a major communication tool for conveying agreed upon intents, the strategic plan will have to be rather broad, extensive and diversified enough to tackle the different challenges facing a given university. By analysing how a group of European universities present themselves, their visions and their priorities in strategic plans over time, the current article aims at studying how uncertainty associated with strategic ambitions is dealt with by internal actors. More specifically, the paper explores the extent through which organizational identity can become a strategic instrument when it comes to universities' manoeuvring between expectations and demands (internal and external) for change, the potential loss of legitimacy vis-à-vis certain stakeholders, and the possible departing from deeply institutionalised internal values (Deephouse, 1999). Against this backdrop, we ask the following research questions:

- *How is organizational identity constructed in strategic plans?*
- *How does it evolve over time?*

- *Which functions does organizational identity perform in strategic plans?*

By pursuing these questions, and by focusing on the interplay between what a university *is* and what it *aspires to become* on the one hand, and proactive and more instrumental efforts to improve the ‘fit’ between internal elements and the surrounding environment on the other, our aim is to address recent calls for a better “comprehensive understanding of strategic management in the public sector” (Poister et al., 2010, p. 539) by examining the role of identity in the ways in which public sector organizations respond, strategically, to changes in their environments.

The paper proceeds as follows. The analytical framework discusses the core concepts of organizational identity and strategic plan, it subsequently operationalizes the link between strategic plan and communicated organizational identity. The following section illustrates the four cases and discusses how university strategic plans articulate a coherent narrative simultaneously accounting for the rationale of strategic objectives whilst showing compliance to the demands of certain key constituencies and by paying respect to organizational values and features. The paper ends with a discussion on the nature of strategic plans and the implications for institutional leadership.

Strategic Plans and Organizational Identity

Managing Identity through Strategic Plans

While strategic plans have traditionally been seen as an important instrument for positioning an organization in the market place (Chandler, 1962), it is also common to perceive them as a form of “auto-communication” (Broms and Gahmberg, 1983) – an activity where the organization communicates to itself, to its employees, about “who we are” as an organization. The latter function points to the symbolic side of management, and to the possibility of using strategic plans as a tool for identity management (van Riel and Balmer, 1997; Balmer and Soenen, 1999).

The existing literature makes a distinction between two perspectives on how strategic plans can be used as an identity management tool (Balmer and Soenen, 1999, p. 77), perspectives that match

the classical divide between voluntaristic and deterministic approaches to organizational change as well as the scope for micro- and macro-level action (Astley and Van de Ven, 1983, p. 247). While several scholars highlight the importance of articulating a future ‘vision’ for the organization, under the auspices of central leadership structures (van Riel and Balmer, 1997), others approach identity management as a process where the actual organizational identity is revealed (Albert and Whetten, 1985). These two perspectives cater for a variety of understandings on how identity management can be performed through a strategic plan (Balmer and Soenen, 1999, p. 82). Whereas management can communicate the *actual identity* (what the organization is), it can also choose to emphasize the *communicated identity* (how the organization is perceived by outsiders), point to the *ideal identity* (the optimal position an organization may have in the market place) and/or underline the *desired identity* (the visions of the institutional leadership). In order to manage identity successfully, Balmer and Soenen (1999, p. 82) argue for the congruency between these four understandings of organizational identity. Further, they recognise the need for more research on how identity management takes place in practice against the backdrop of the challenge of bridging internal and external understandings of identity, and of past and future identities.

In general, one could argue that the main function of organizational identity, as articulated in strategic plans, is to provide internal and external legitimacy to the aims and objectives stated in such plans (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia et al., 1994). Having said that, this body of research appears to focus more on the “constructive” aspects of identity management, paying less attention to “defensive” features. The latter address the dangers involved in using strategic plans as a signal for changes in organisational identities: an obvious risk for those drawing up a strategic plan is that it might fail, i.e. the stated ambitions are not realised (Broms and Gahmberg, 1983). Another challenge is that the external environment may change in ways that make ‘bold visions’ communicated through strategic plans somewhat irrelevant (Zechlin, 2010) or even inappropriate.

Organizational Identity – Fixed, Fluid and Flexible

In general the concept of organizational identity has been associated with central character,

distinctiveness and temporal continuity (Albert and Whetten 1985, p. 265). This perspective assumes that organizational identity can be understood as 'fixed', essentialist, and attribute-based as it reflects an underlying, unique organizational character (Glynn 2008, p.416; see also Selznick, 1957). This distinct character is to a large extent dependent upon, and intertwined with, how internal actors perceive, feel and think about their organization (Hatch and Schultz, 2002). While such perceptions may differ considerably between sectors and also between institutions within a given sector, research has suggested that actors within higher education institutions are, to a large extent, influenced by the norms and values of the specific university to which they are affiliated (Clark, 1983; Tapper and Palfreyman, 2011).

However, while a given strategy might strengthen and support internal loyalty towards a given organizational identity, one can also imagine that a radical institutional strategy might create new internal tensions in relation to an existing well entrenched identity (He and Baruch, 2009). Such a situation is likely to emerge when the identity is challenged by: comparison with other organizations within the organizational field (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), by the outcome of the interaction with other organizations, or by the influence of the broad institutional environment, i.e. laws, customs, norms, etc. (Hatch and Schultz, 2002; Wedlin, 2006). While many possible new identities can be imagined as stemming from environmental shifts, the overall (desired) organizational identity can be seen as the ordering of these sub-identities into a hierarchical order where some identity-related features are allowed to dominate or are prioritized (Pratt and Kraatz, 2009, p. 394). In this context, organizational identity is instrumental in legitimizing the need for change or adaptation. It may be used to reflect the necessity for securing a legitimate position in a developing or evolving organizational field (Czarniawska and Wolff, 1998) and/or to show similarity to other (changing) organizations belonging to recognized social categories (Zuckerman et al., 2003). The latter approach shows how the concept of organizational identity can be seen as more fluid and dynamic (and even adaptive) to on-going changes in a given organizational field (see also Maassen and Potman, 1990; Hsu and Hannan, 2005, p. 475).

Characterizations of organizational identity as either *fixed* or *fluid* may be seen as mutually

exclusive. Yet, some scholars contend that contemporary organizations need to (re-)define their identity as a *bridge* between the external position of the organization in the relevant environments and the internal meanings formed around cherished organizational norms and values (Pedersen and Dobbin, 2006). This, in turn, suggests that the management of organizational identity is an important process whilst preparing for strategic change.

To sum up, there is much evidence showing that strategic plans are permeated by symbolic aspects that are closely linked to organizational identity. This includes, but is not limited to: the use of mission and vision statements (Dill, 1996); how change can be legitimized (Johnson, 1990); sense-making and sense-giving processes (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991); and, resorting to specific language that addresses the diverging interests and expectations of various stakeholders (Fiss and Zajac, 2006). Here, organizational identity plays a key role through, for example, the creative re-interpretation of organizational “labels” for self-definition (Elsbach and Kramer, 1996), the influence of internal and external audiences on such categories, as well as the meanings associated with each category (Huisman et al., 2002; Rindova et al., 2011). Hence, organizational identity can be characterized as a flexible device with a multiplicity of functions.

Identity Management as Risk Reduction?

Our discussion so far has suggested that the role of organizational identity in strategic plans has largely been associated with legitimizing the need for change. However, as noted above, creative re-interpretations of organizational identity often involve risks for management while advocating for change. Against this backdrop, we want to explore to what extent organizational identity can also function as a risk-reducing device, i.e. as a means of reducing potential negative outcomes and perceptions derived either from possible failures in the implementation of the strategic plan or from the unforeseen effects following environmental shifts.

In general, we would argue that organizational identity is likely to be more efficiently managed when it is accepted by both internal actors and external stakeholders. If, on the other hand,

organizational identity merely reflects the views of internal actors it may not necessarily be seen as legitimate by outsiders, while, in turn, creative attempts to pay lip service to values and norms considered important by outsiders may lack critical support by organizational members. What is more, if organizational identity is to function as a risk-reducing device in a strategic plan two key elements need to be in place. First, organizational identity should be articulated in a broadly accepted fashion in order to secure needed support and, most importantly, be used as an explanation for both *stability and change*. Second, organizational identity should be framed in a way that makes it difficult to *systematically and analytically assess* (i.e. out of the narrative presented in the strategic plan) the organizational trajectory over time.

In order to explore these assumptions, organizational identity is observed by analysing its main components (below), which are more or less explicitly communicated in strategic plans (Hambrick and Fredrickson, 2005):

1. *Mission*: the articulation and the purpose of organizational existence, for whom it exists, and the impact of its existence. It answers the question: “Who are we?”
2. *Values*: the core values and beliefs that drive an organization. They focus on what is most important in the ways that internal actors behave on a daily basis. The relevant question is “How are things done here?”
3. *Vision*: what the organization aspires to become in the near future. It is a statement of ambition and replies to “Where do we want to go?” It is the original declaration of intentions from which the objectives enunciated in the strategic plan derive from.

By undertaking a closer analysis of these three dimensions in strategic plans over a 10-year period, we illuminate how, across our selected case studies, organizational identity is strategically being managed (Suchman, 1995).

Design, Methods and Empirical Setting

Our research design is built around a multiple case study, a variant that includes two or more

observations of the same phenomenon. This method has the advantage of enabling both *replication* - independently confirm emerging constructs and propositions – and *extension*, using the selected cases to reveal complementary aspects of the phenomenon being investigated. The result is a more robust, generalizable, and analytically sounder account of events across a multiplicity of local settings and contextual circumstances (Santos and Eisenhardt, 2004). We have selected four higher education institutions in two small European countries where higher education is substantially funded and where universities perform well in international comparison as of scientific productivity. In the period considered, between 2000 and 2010, both national higher education systems underwent significant reforms granting increasing autonomy to universities and enhancing more competitive funding schemes. All four higher education institutions carried out major organizational change in order to adapt to new environmental conditions, and various aspects of these changes have been investigated earlier (*references to be added if paper is accepted for publication*). Institutional cases, based on previous research by the authors, have been written for each university and can be made available upon request. These institutional cases contemplate several data sources for the purpose of data triangulation: documents – besides strategic plans, annual reports and evaluation reports -, and archival material – such as minutes from internal meetings; national databases by statistical offices regarding higher education have also been extensively consulted in order to provide background to our analysis and point to general indicators of universities' trajectories; semi-structured interviews with institutional leaders, academics, representatives of the ministries of education and of broader society.

The issue of variety in our sample has been addressed by selecting four cases that display relevant differences as of institutional profile: a former college, a peripheral university, a technological institute, a research-intensive university. Since our core aim is to understand the purposive use of organizational identity by the university leadership, we therein expected to uncover commonalities in strategic plans across different institutional settings.

The Case Studies

Arianna University

Arianna University is a mid-size public university whose historical roots go back to the mid-1800s with the creation of a teacher training college. Its organizational form stems from the amalgamation of six regional public high schools in 1994, as part of a far reaching reform effort culminating in the establishment of a binary system, i.e. an academic and a professional sector of higher education. In 2007 Arianna changed its legal status from a university college into a fully-fledged university. By the fall of 2011 the university enrolled about 9'700 students (approx. 10% of national university population) and employed close to 900 people, 60% of whom were involved with core activities of teaching, research and outreach. Its academic activities span across five faculties: health and sport sciences, engineering and science, economics and social sciences, humanities and education, fine arts and teacher education. Given the change in legal status, research has become a key strategic priority. As a result, between 2009 and 2010 the scientific productivity increased by 152%.

The first strategic plan (early 2000s) provides a basic strategic framework that leads to the development or transition (as well as internal ambition) from a university-college into a fully-fledged university. The articulation of strategy and identity is shaped upon achieving academic legitimacy, both regionally and internationally. External recognition is sought through teaching and research culture, but also through an active relationship with industry and society. International recognition arises from teaching excellence, together with research-based education as a direct contribution to a "learning environment" through continued education and regionally-related research activities. The outreach mission not only focuses on the region, but also on national and international levels. Organizational identity has to combine the development of a shared (meta) culture, together with respect for the traditions of the individual sub-units. The presence of educational activities in three cities across the region is seen as a major element in the aspiration to attain university status in the near future. The multi-campus model is further pursued through the creation of a new campus in 2001.

The second strategic plan (mid 2000s) is framed on an institution that is evolving or "under construction" and that aims at setting the overall direction in light of national and international

developments. Its functions are, to a large degree, determined by governmental agencies and other independent bodies. The plan focuses more on the regional relevance, which relates to public authorities, industry and cultural agencies. Having said that, the importance of the international dimension is stated once again: for example, by highlighting multicultural dimensions and global problems across teaching and research, in addition to recruiting international students and promoting student and staff exchange. As for its distinct profile, rather than looking for inspiration at the traditional national universities, Arianna looks at recent entrepreneurial European universities that have close contacts with their localities and are rather innovative, particularly when it comes to pedagogical tools and methods. The plan presents the idea of a “learning organization” focused on a culture of change and innovative thinking, flexibility and the systematization of experiences across the board.

In conclusion, Arianna University’s first strategic plan (2001-2006) highlights the road towards becoming a fully-fledged university and builds upon the concept of the “learning society”. There is a strong focus on teaching, research and international dimensions all seen as key legitimating elements in the strategic goal of attaining full university status in the near future. The second strategic plan (2005-2010) is rather broad and provides a basic foundation for the further development of the university as a “hybrid” organization involved with a variety of teaching and research activities in direct collaboration with regional actors like industry and the public sector. This can be interpreted as a functional compromise between traditional identities anchored around teaching and regional engagement and internal ambitions as well as external (field-level) requirements to acquire scientific legitimacy.

Tero University

Tero University was created at beginning of the 70s to address the increasing popular demands for accessing higher education and the lack of skilled professionals – medical doctors, dentists, teachers, lawyers. Three key aspects came to the fore at its creation: a strong democratic orientation, an inter-disciplinary and problem-solving approach, and a focus on the needs of the surrounding

region and its various local actors. In 2009 a voluntary decision was taken to merge Tero with the local university college, thus creating a much larger institution. Following the merger Tero enrolls close to 9'000 students across its 6 faculties, and employed 2'500 staff members, 60 per cent of whom were directly involved with teaching and research activities.

The first strategic plan (late 90s) provides an overarching strategic framework for the 10 year period, 2000-2010. It strives to find an adequate balance between the expectations held by external actors (regional and national levels) and the requirements posed by an institution belonging to the international academic community – in other words, between the local relevance and the global or universalistic dimensions of excellence. The plan is organized around conflicting demands: profiling itself as locally embedded yet internationally oriented; responding to the needs of both public and private sectors; carrying out basic and applied research. The plan aims at reconciling the (stylised) models of the “service university” as per external demands and the “research-intensive university” as per internal ambitions and field-level requirements. Moreover Tero has a special responsibility for the development of knowledge related to the exploration of natural resources and sustainable development, including the rights of indigenous peoples. In short, the first strategic plan paints a picture of Tero as going through a transition period, wishing to further expand its core activities and to project its profile internationally as a research-intensive university in selected fields.

The second strategic plan (2009-2013) addresses the newly merged institution, based on the notion of a broad university combining traditional and professional studies with research and development activities across various subject areas. On the research front, the university is to take advantage of the new funding opportunities brought by the national government's strategy towards the surrounding region, by re-positioning itself as the leading player in the arctic and marine ecosystems, health and cultural research and indigenous people. External legitimation is addressed by allowing free and open access to knowledge and to the results of research activities, and by positively contributing to the broad cultural, social and economic development of society. The document tackles the need for a larger, more innovative and efficient university that is capable of responding to regional, national and international demands whilst developing a specific teaching and research profile in distinctive

fields. Tero's institutional profile is composed of three core elements: broad educational offerings across traditional university education and professional training; a research-based orientation around a large spectrum of disciplinary fields; and, active involvement with development of outreach activities. In short, Tero's two strategic plans delineate a trajectory of growth in terms of students and funding as well as its core functions or missions, thus consolidating the distinctive profile of a "globally-oriented but locally engaged" university operating across local, regional, national and transnational settings. This, in turn, implies being both relevant to the region (education and applied research) and developing global research excellence in selected niche areas. In many respects, the organizational identity builds on the initial vision of the university as an innovative and entrepreneurial entity *in and for* the region without being "locked" within it.

Larissa University

Larissa was an autonomous technological institute attached to the local university. In 1969 its oversight was transferred from the regional government to the federal government. Traditionally an engineering school, Larissa has undergone a major strategic repositioning by constructing and focusing on life sciences and by becoming a top international technological university. The school grew also by means of a series of acquisitions and, as a result, its organizational structure was reshuffled: from 12 departments (engineering with some natural sciences), four faculties were then created and an entirely new faculty (life sciences) was established. Today, Larissa enrolls about 8'000 students, a 50% increase since 2000. Its total budget accounts for Euro 625 million (2011), rising by 75% since 2000. It employs 330 professors (from full to assistant professor), growing from 180 at the turn of the new millennium. External funding nearly doubled within a decade (2000-2010), accounting for more than a third of Larissa's annual budget.

The first strategic plan (2000-2003) was drafted by the new central leadership upon its arrival in 2000. Its aim was to re-position the institution from an engineering school to a life sciences oriented technological university based on interdisciplinary education and research. The rationale presented was that scientific and technological discoveries are best carried out at the interface between the

natural sciences, engineering, and the life sciences. At the beginning of 2000, Larissa's organizational identity was articulated with reference to: world-leading technical universities such as MIT and Caltech; global developments within the life sciences; and interdisciplinary collaborations. An intensive policy of recruitment of young talents has been carried out in order to attract the best promising scientists. Thus, since 2008 half of all professorial recruitments have been assistant professors on the tenure track.

The second strategic plan (2008-2011) highlights initiatives and successes contributing to Larissa's excellence status on the global stage. For example, focus is put on trans-disciplinarity (research centres and programmes) and the intention to build a "living campus" with close synergies to neighbouring communities and institutions. Moreover, the plan highlights that Larissa's trajectory needs to be maintained and further developed as to transform the university into a "world class" technological university. In general, the organizational identity underscores Larissa's role in the knowledge economy, acknowledging local and national stakeholders. Larissa's new campus is transformed "from a working campus to a living campus", aiming at: bridging the university with its broader community; preparing its students as future entrepreneurs; becoming a place of access to knowledge devoted to the scientific community, students and society at large. The new campus further aims at closely embedding Larissa with society, in particular when it comes to strategic partnerships with domestic industry. A chapter titled "Larissa evolution" treats past and recent times as well as the current situation in terms of critical achievements in the realms of students, research, external funding, technology transfer/innovation, visibility/brand image, and quality. As in the former plan, benchmarking with international leading, technological universities like MIT come to the fore.

In short, Larissa's two strategic plans strongly endorse the rationale for major strategic change, albeit the fact that the second plan appears to be more balanced directly addressing local and national stakeholders, who, as such, are invited to strategically engage with the university. In the same vein, commitment to the uniqueness of the university is displayed more thoroughly in the latest strategic plan; for instance, by referring to its traditional values, related to its history as an engineering school, as key success factors.

Batea University

Batea is the oldest university in the country, established through papal bull in 1460. By the end of the 1990s the dispersed disciplinary subunits were reorganized into a single formal organization, which started to issue strategic plans, to control a global budget, and to apply overall accounting rules. Inter-disciplinarity was tackled in the education mission: Batea was among the first universities to introduce the Bologna reform and, in 2008, the university with the highest number of interdisciplinary degrees in the national context. By 2011 Batea enrolled close to 13'000 students, an increase of 66% since 2000. Its budget accounts for Euro 524 million, more than doubling in the period 2000-2011.

According to the first strategic plan (2001-2007), Batea aspires to integrate and link itself more closely to its scientific, politic, economic, cultural and societal environments. To support change, its mission, vision and values, dating back to 1993, require an update. Eventually the university is ready to provide an overarching strategic plan for the whole organization and not only for its subunits, i.e. faculties and institutes. All along the text, the issue of the university as a unitary organization emerges. For instance, the acknowledgement of an “environment” stems from the fact that Batea considers itself a formal organization and not anymore a collection of disciplines. It seeks a shared identity by framing its education and research activities into two headings: “culture” (grouping humanities and social sciences), related to the lively intellectual atmosphere of the city, and, “life” (grouping life sciences, medicine and natural sciences), connecting the university with the local pharmaceutical industry.

The second strategic plan (2007-2013) takes into consideration changes in the task environment: while additional governmental funding is acquired from a newly participating local government, Batea seeks to anchor itself in an extended geographical area. Internal resource allocations have become “strategic” and are no longer guided by historical reasons (“natural growth”). As in the first strategic plan, the latest document is (also) a means of communicating Batea’s identity as a unitary organization. The struggle to reconcile life sciences and culture is detectable. Interestingly, in this respect quantitative research is claimed

to be the common denominator where soft and hard disciplines can encounter, while translational research is considered a fundamental *modus operandi* to shape, intensify and maintain university-industry relations within the life sciences. Real estate emerges as an issue, since Batea is scattered across more than 90 buildings in over 40 different locations. This brings both advantages (such as quality of life within the city) as well as disadvantages as research groups and activities become geographically dispersed, especially within the natural sciences.

The text of the first strategic plan is very short and concise. Broad strategic objectives are indicated and the need for Batea to act as a unitary and coherent organization is underscored. The second document is longer and more detailed and focuses on external stakeholders. Both plans are built on the previous documents, starting with a list of recent successes, explained through academic potential, political autonomy and administrative transparency. On the one hand, the strategic plans claim to federate disciplines under the two profiling sectors “culture” and “life sciences”, on the other hand they reflect the process of internal change, i.e. transformation into a formal organization.

Table 1 summarizes our findings according to the uses of organizational identity in strategic plans in order to reduce the risks of intentional change when it comes to uncertainty and potential failures to which university leadership might be held accountable. For each case we indicate the main strategic challenge, the risk involved, how this has been tackled through mission, values and vision.

Table 1: Risk-reducing mechanisms in strategic plans

	Strategic challenge	Risk	Risk-reducing mechanisms
Arianna	Achieving legitimacy	De-legitimation	<i>Mission:</i> extension (research) <i>Values:</i> stability in “Openness and integrity” <i>Vision:</i> indefiniteness “Critical knowledge developer“

Tero	Managing growth	Not complying with external demands	<i>Mission:</i> extending scope (regional, international) <i>Values:</i> stability in “Academic freedom and engagement” <i>Vision:</i> indefiniteness “Building competence, growth, innovation”
Larissa	Changing profile	Mismatching environment	<i>Mission:</i> building on original profile <i>Values:</i> stability in “Excellence” <i>Vision:</i> benchmarking with global leaders (top US universities)
Batea	Becoming an organization	Organizational incoherence	<i>Mission, values, vision:</i> split in two different identities “Life” and “Culture”

In order to cope with different risks stemming from external sources (Arianna, Tero and Larissa), from internal sources (Batea), different uses and combinations of mission, values and vision are detected. While Arianna and Tero extend their missions by adding new dimensions, Larissa builds on its original profile to legitimize its transformation, while Batea acknowledges its split identity. When it comes to values, indeed all four universities provide stable “labels” on their ways of functioning: Arianna, Tero and Batea underline dedication to both the academic enterprise and societal relevance, while Larissa reflects distinctively its commitment to global scripts of scientific excellence. Visions are handled differently: Arianna and Tero argue for an indefinite and unmeasurable goal; Larissa clearly defines its aspired arena by benchmarking the best world universities, while Batea formulates two visions according to its twofold identity (top international universities for life sciences, European universities for humanities and social sciences). In sum, strategic plans show first, that identity-related dimensions do not disappear but are further integrated in a new hierarchy of strategic goals; second strategic change is definitely communicated and formalized; third compliance to external demands and commitment to organizational distinctiveness

are explicitly addressed.

Comparative Analysis and Discussion

All four higher education institutions balance different scopes of their mission: local, regional, national and international. In doing so, the strategic plans address more external than internal stakeholders. Thus, compliance with institutional settings appears to be more prevalent than commitment towards organizational history or path-dependency. This finding supports earlier studies underlining the fact that in times of strategic change, legitimation and recognition are sought (more) externally - in the community, region, nation, and from outside stakeholders, including students and their families (Grant, 2003; Fiss, and Zajak, 2006). This in itself is a quite natural organizational behaviour as major internal changes are required by new environmental demands, which, in turn, help ensure the long-term viability of universities by securing critical state support – funding and legal framework – as well as from the broader society. Hence, across cases, tensions emerge between internal ambitions towards excellence in the research realm and societal relevance in terms of teaching and technology transfers. Such tensions are, to a large degree, bridged or negotiated through the articulation of internal (collective) values aimed at simultaneously achieving local relevance and global excellence (Perry, 2012).

As far as mission statements are concerned, these are generally articulated around the three functions of ‘teaching’, ‘research’ and ‘service to society’, with the latter being differently defined as ‘outreach’, ‘technology transfer’, and/or ‘contribution to knowledge and to the “learning society”’ (Laredo, 2007; Breznitz and Feldman, 2012). In the cases of Tero and Larissa, the scope of services encompasses regional, national and transnational dimensions (Pinheiro, 2012). An observation that can be made is that, across all cases, the second strategic plan tends to be longer than the first, addressing new topics and issues requiring strategic attention. While university identities have traditionally been embedded around teaching and research dimensions, new issues are brought to the fore in the second strategic plan, thus indicating the on-going mission extension of universities (Enders and de Boer, 2009). In this situation, one could argue that organizational identity – as emanating from the strategic

plan - is used as an instrument to keep the university together, as internal and external forces *pull* and *push* the university in different directions (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Olsen, 2007).

As for organizational values, they tend to reflect a shared goal of being innovative and entrepreneurial universities, articulated around: new media and technologies (Tero); preparing students to become entrepreneurs (Larissa); innovation within the life sciences (Larissa and Batea); and inter-disciplinarity in education and research (all universities). The difficult balance between local and global orientations seems to coalesce around the distinctive characteristics of universities' campuses: Arianna has adopted a multi-functional multi-campus policy. Batea established a campus for life sciences and maintained scattered locations for humanities and social sciences. Larissa successfully attracted a large amount of funds from the public and private sectors in order to create a "living campus" connecting scientists and the local community around innovative knowledge.

An interesting feature of all the strategic plans analysed is how a careful distinction is made between values and the concrete activities related to those values. While the former remain stable throughout the period analysed, the latter are continuously re-defined, thus attaching new meanings to agreed-upon values (see also Elsbach and Kramer, 1996; Jarzabkowski, 2004).

As for universities' vision, we were able to identify claims concerning specific groups of universities which the four institutions aim at belonging to, acting both as benchmark and identity references: Arianna to 'innovative European universities'; Tero to the 'international community'; Larissa to 'world-leading research universities'; and Batea to 'world universities' (life sciences) and 'European universities' (humanities and social sciences). Organizational identity can thus be considered a commitment towards a specific line of action (Whetten, 2006), reflecting the organizations' self-determined and self-defining position in the social space: "we are like some, unlike others" (Czarniawska and Wolff, 1998; Gioia et al., 2010). Accordingly, these claims define also the arenas for coordination and competition (Porac et al., 1989), underlining the rather thin line between isomorphism (imitation) and polymorphism (innovation) within the field of higher education (Stensaker and Norgård, 2001; Fleming and Lee, 2009).

What is more, the evolutionary nature of the strategic plans reveals some common features.

The first strategic plans (early 2000s) rationalize main future changes: a university college shall become a fully-fledged university (Arianna); a regionally-embedded comprehensive university shall broaden its transnational scope (Tero); an engineering school shall transform itself into a research-intensive technological university (Larissa); a loosely-coupled array of disciplines shall develop into a unitary organization (Batea). The second strategic plans build on the (partial) achievements of the changes initiated in the previous plan, and reinforce their legitimation (Suchman, 1995) by *bridging* them with organizational identity (embodied both in historical and new attributes). For instance, Larissa's second strategic plan highlights the unique history of the university and builds on it, presenting strategic change as a legitimate trajectory aligned with its (actual as well as desired) organizational identity (Whetten, 2006, p. 226).

In sum, we have observed that the strategic plans of the four case universities go to great lengths to articulate the rationale for major changes connecting both the 'traditional identity' of the university (e.g. ethnic minority culture at Tero) with the "unavoidable" new identity (e.g. Tero becoming the knowledge hub for an enlarged region), thus shedding light on the degree of congruence between past and present/future organizational identities (Ravasi and Phillips, 2011). In this sense, strategic plans are instrumental (Olsen, 2007) to the symbolic alignment of values within the university and, as such, function as *sense-giving* and *sense-making* devices whereby the central university leadership structures communicate the intended course of action to the various internal and external constituencies (Gioia et al., 2010; Ravasi and Schultz, 2006).

One main issue emerges from this empirical study. The rationale for change is balanced by the articulation of arguments supporting compliance with various institutional settings and commitment towards organizational distinctiveness (Kraatz and Block, 2008). The subtle mixes of these three elements – compliance, distinctiveness and change - we argue, are affected by: the type of change; the specific conditions under which universities thrive; and leadership action. This basically means that the organizational identity portrayed in strategic plans is, first and foremost, a reflection and function of the objectives previously defined in the strategic framework of the university. Further, it is around these strategic objectives that the needs and expectations of external and internal stakeholders alike are

addressed, as a means to align them (tight-coupling) to organizational goals. This, in turn, reveals the hierarchy of dimensions (priorities) articulated in the strategic plans as well as the mechanisms through which strategic purpose and identity formation gradually become embedded with, and constrain, one another.

Conclusions and Implications

This paper shows how the concept of organizational identity has been used in the strategic plans of four European universities over a ten year period. Our analysis found that, while organizational identity in general has been used as an instrument for providing sense to strategic change to all relevant stakeholders, it can also be conceived of as a function of defending (potential) lack of change, thus supporting at the same time stability and continuity in organizational life (March 1996). In this way organizational identity, as presented in universities' strategic plans, functions as a "risk reducing device" accounting for possible (future) organizational failures or for factors that are beyond managerial control. In other words, according to these strategic plans, the university is able to account for elements of change or of stability while assessing results or organizational performance. This resonates with the resistance of professional public organizations to the increasing requirements of accountability (Trotter et al. , 2007): by subtly balancing a broad range of possible outcomes, universities comply with such requirements by keeping for themselves the possibility for re-interpreting (ex-post) what a successful strategy is. At the same time, our findings link to the chaos theory approach on organizational change: the extreme level of uncertainty as of complex environmental conditions as well as of future states of the organization are dealt with – both strategically and cognitively – by taking into consideration as many reasonable outcomes as possible (Farazmand, 2004, p. 364; Fumasoli, 2011, p. 77).

There are several advantages of featuring organizational identity as a risk reducing device as a core component of a strategic plan. First, it provides those in charge of strategy design with a legitimate way to argue positively for any organizational outcome accrued to the strategic plan itself (see also Suchman, 1995). In concrete terms this is possible due to the difficulties of assessing direct achievements in education and research, an aspect intrinsically linked to the uncertainty of future

preferences and consequences as well as information asymmetries (March, 1978). In other words, whereas *change* can be explained by arguments describing a “transformed” (new) organizational identity, *stability* can be explained by pointing to a “translated” (re-interpreted) organizational identity (Huisman et al., 2002; Maguire and Hardy, 2005). Second, the concept of organisational identity downplays the focus on time, deadlines and milestones, and, in contrast, emphasizes the timelessness of change, accentuating process instead of outcomes, thus enabling claims that “we are on a journey” and that, for complex organizations inhabiting a highly institutionalised environment such as universities (Musselin, 2006; Olsen, 2007), a long-term perspective is needed to ensure an understanding of institutional trajectories. Third, the cases shown here suggest that organizational identity can be instrumental to strategic change, particularly when framed within a context of increasing external pressures for greater rationalization (Whitley, 2008; Ramirez, 2010). While organizational identity is often perceived as posing constraints to organizational adaptation (Albert and Whetten, 1985), our analysis reveals that identity has the potential to provide organizations with substantial flexibility during strategic change processes, not only as a strategic tool for legitimating change in the eyes of internal and external constituencies (Suchman, 1995), but also as a strategic mechanism for coping with uncertainty in an increasingly turbulent and volatile external environment. Future research inquiries, both within and beyond the organizational field of higher education, could take this discussion one step further by shedding light on the sets of internal tensions (e.g. cognitive dissonance) and (power) struggles underpinning processes of identity formation/adaptation in the context of strategic change within organizations.

References

- Albert, S., & Whetten, D. A. (1985). Organizational identity. *Research in Organizational Behaviour*, 7, 263–295.
- Astley, W. G., & Van de Ven, A. (1983). Central perspectives and debates in organization theory. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28, 245–273.
- Balmer, J. M. T., & Soenen, G. B. (1999). The Acid Test of Corporate Identity Management™. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15, 69–92.
- Barnett, F. J., & Finnemore, M. (1999). The politics, power and pathologies of international organizations. *International Organization*, 53, 699–733.
- Breznitz, S., & Feldman, M. (2012). The larger role of the university in economic development: introduction to the special issue. *The Journal of Technology Transfer*, 37, 135–138.
- Broms, H., & Gahmberg, H. (1983). Communication to self in organizations and cultures. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 28, 482–495.
- Brunsson, N., & Sahlin-Andersson, K. (2000). Constructing organizations: The example of public sector reform. *Organization Studies*, 21, 721–746.
- Chandler, A. D. (1962). *Strategy and structure: Chapters in the history of the American enterprise*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Clark, B. (1972). The organizational saga in higher education', *Administrative Science Quarterly*. 17, 178–184.
- Clark, B. (1983). *The higher education system: academic organization in cross-national perspective*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Clark, B. R. (1992). *The distinctive college*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Clark, B. (1998). *Creating entrepreneurial universities: organizational pathways of transformation*. New York, NY: Pergamon.
- Christensen, T. & Lægreid, P. (Eds.). (2002). *New Public Management*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Czarniawska, B. & Wolff, R. (1998). Constructing new identities in established organization fields. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 28, 32–56.
- Deephouse, D. L. (1999). To be different, or to be the same? It's a question (and theory) of strategic

- balance. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20, 147–166.
- Dill, D. D. (1996). Academic Planning and Organizational Design: Lessons From Leading American Universities. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 50, 35–53.
- DiMaggio, P., & Powell, W. (1983). The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147–160.
- Elsbach, K. D., & Kramer, R. M. (1996). Members' responses to organizational identity threats: encountering and countering the Business Week rankings. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 442–476.
- Enders, J., & Boer, H. (2009). The Mission Impossible of the European University: Institutional Confusion and Institutional Diversity. In A. Amaral, G. Neave, C. Musselin and P. Maassen, (Eds.), *European Integration and the Governance of Higher Education and Research* (pp. 159-178). Netherlands: Springer.
- Farazmand, A. (2003) Chaos and Transformation Theories: A theoretical analysis with implications for organization theory and public management, *Public Organization Review*, 3, 339-371
- Fiss, P., & Zajac, E. (2006). The Symbolic Management of Strategic Change: Sensegiving Via Framing and Decoupling. *The Academy of Management Journal ARCHIVE*, 49, 1173–1193.
- Fleming, R., & Lee, G. R. (2009). Canada: What's in a Title? In N. Garrod and B. Macfarlane (Eds.), *Challenging boundaries: managing the integration of post-secondary education* (pp. 93–110). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Fumasoli T. (2011). *Strategy as evolutionary path. Five higher education institutions on the move*. Lugano: USI. <http://doc.rero.ch/record/23135?ln=it>
- Fumasoli, T., & Lepori, B. (2011). Patterns of strategies in Swiss higher education institutions. *Higher Education*, 61, 157–178.
- Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12, 433–448.
- Gioia, D. A., Thomas, J. B., Clark, S. M., & Chittipeddi, K. (1994). Symbolism and strategic change in academia: The dynamics of sensemaking and influence. *Organization Science*, 5, 363–383.

- Gioia, D. A., Price, K. N., Hamilton, A. L., & Thomas, J. B. (2010). Forging an Identity: An Insider-outsider Study of Processes involved in the Formation of Organizational Identity. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 55, 1–46.
- Glynn, M. A. (2008). Beyond Constraint: How Institutions Enable Identities. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, R. Suddaby & K. Sahlin (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of organizational institutionalism* (pp. 413–430). London: Sage Publications.
- Goodsell, C. T. (2011). Mission mystique: Strength at the institutional center. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 41, 475–494.
- Grant, R. (2003). Strategic Planning in a Turbulent Environment: Evidence from the Oil Majors. *Strategic Management Journal*, 24, 491–517.
- Hambrick, D. C., & Fredrickson, J. W. (2005). Are you sure you have a strategy? *Academy of Management Executive*, 19, 51–62
- Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2002). The Dynamics of Organizational Identity. *Human Relations*, 55, 989–1018.
- He, H., & Baruch, Y. (2009). Transforming organizational identity under institutional change. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 22, 575–599
- Hsu, G., & Hannan, M. T. (2005). ‘Identities, genres, and organizational forms. *Organization Science*, 16, 474–490.
- Huisman, J., Norgård, J. D., Rasmussen, J., & Stensaker, B. (2002). Alternative' Universities Revisited: A Study of the Distinctiveness of Universities Established in the Spirit of 1968. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 8, 316–332.
- Jarzabkowski, P. (2004). Strategy as Practice: Recursiveness, Adaptation, and Practices-in-Use. *Organization Studies*, 25, 529–560.
- Johanson, J.-E., (2009). Strategy formation in public agencies. *Public Administration*, 87, 872–891.
doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9299.2009.01767
- Johnson, G. (1990). Managing Strategic Change; The Role of Symbolic Action. *British Journal of Management*, 1, 183–200.
- Keller, G. (1983). *Academic strategy*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Kirp, D. (2003). *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the bottom line: The marketing of higher education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Kraatz, M. S., & Block, E. S. (2008) Organizational Implications of Institutional Pluralism. In R. Greenwood, C. Oliver, K. Sahlin, & R. Suddaby (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (pp. 243–276). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Krücken, G., & Meier, F. (2006). Turning the university into an organizational actor. In G. S. Drori, J. W. Meyer, & H. Hwang (Eds.), *Globalization and organization: world society and organizational change* (pp. 241–257). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Laredo, P. (2007). Revisiting the third mission of universities: toward a renewed categorization of university activities? *Higher education policy*, 20, 441–456.
- Maguire, S., & Hardy, C. (2005). Identity and collaborative strategy in the Canadian HIV/AIDS treatment domain. *Strategic Organization*, 3, 11–45.
- Maassen, P., & Olsen, J. P. (2007). *University dynamics and European integration*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Maassen, P., & Potman, H. (1990). Strategic decision-making in higher education. *Higher Education*, 20, 393–410.
- March, J. G. (1978). Bounded rationality, ambiguity, and the engineering of choice. *The Bell Journal of Economics*, 9, 587–608.
- March, J. G. (1996). Continuity and change in theories of organizational action. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41, 278–28.
- Marginson, S., & Considine, M. (2000). *The enterprise University. Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moore, M. H. (1995). *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Musselin, C. (2006). Are universities specific organizations? In G. Krücken, A. Kosmützky, & M. Torca (Eds.), *Towards a multiversity? Universities between global trends and national traditions* (pp. 63–84). Bielefeld Transcript.

- Olsen, J. P. (2007). The institutional dynamics of the European university. In P. Maassen & J. P. Olsen (Eds.), *University dynamics and European integration* (pp. 25–54). Dodrecht: Springer.
- Pedersen, J. S., & Dobbin, F. (2006). In Search of Identity and Legitimation: Bridging Organizational Culture and Neoinstitutionalism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49, 897–907.
- Perry, B. (2012). Excellence, Relevance and the Construction of Regional Science Policy: Science Frictions and Fictions in the North West of England. In R. Pinheiro, P. Benneworth, & G. A. Jones (Eds.), *Universities and Regional Development: A critical assessment of tensions and contradictions*. (pp. 105–123). Milton Park: Routledge.
- Pinheiro, R. (2012). The regional dimension in the High North. In M. Kwiek & P. Maassen (Eds.), *National higher education reforms in a European context: comparative reflections on Poland and Norway* (pp. 179–208). Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Pinheiro, R., & Stensaker, B. (2013). Designing the entrepreneurial university. *Public Organization Review*, (forthcoming).
- Porac, J. F., Thomas, H., & Baden-Fuller, C. (1989). Competitive groups as cognitive communities: the case of Scottish knitwear manufacturers. *Journal of Management Studies*, 26, 397–416.
- Power, M. (1997). *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pratt, M. G., & Kraatz, M. S. (2009). E Pluribus Unum: Multiple identities and the Organizational Self. In L. M. Roberts & J. Dutton (Eds.), *Exploring positive identities and organizations. Building a theoretical and research foundation*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Ramirez, F. O. (2006). The rationalization of universities. In M.-L. Djelic & K. Sahlin-Andersson (Eds.), *Transnational governance: institutional dynamics of regulation* (pp. 225–244). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ramirez, F. O. (2010). Accounting for excellence: Transforming universities into organizational actors. In V. Rust, L. Portnoi, & S. Bagely (Eds.), *Higher education, policy, and the global competition phenomenon* (pp. 43–58). Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillian.
- Ravasi, D., & Schultz, M. (2006). Responding to organizational identity threats: Exploring the role of organizational culture. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 433–458.

- Ravasi, D., & Phillips, N. (2011). Strategies of alignment. Organizational identity management and strategic change at Bang & Olufsen. *Strategic Organization*, 9, 103–135.
- Rindova, V., Dalpiaz, E., & Ravasi, D. (2011). A cultural quest: a study of organizational use of new cultural resources in strategy formation. *Organization Science*, 22, 413–431.
- Rip, A. (2004). Strategic Research, Post-modern Universities and Research Training. *Higher Education Policy*, 17, 153–166.
- Santos, F. M., & Eisenhardt, K. M. (2004). Multiple Case Study. In, M. S. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. F. Liao (Eds.), (2004). *Encyclopedia of social science research methods*. (Vols. 1-3). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Selznick, P. (1957). *Leadership in Administration. A Sociological Interpretation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: Harper & Row Publishers.
- Stensaker, B., & Harvey, L. (2011). *Accountability in Higher Education: Global Perspectives on Trust and Power*. New York, NY: Taylor & Francis.
- Stensaker, B., & Norgård, J. D. (2001). Innovation and isomorphism: A case-study of university identity struggle 1969–1999. *Higher Education*, 42, 473–492.
- Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing Legitimacy - Strategic and Institutional Approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 571–610.
- Tapper, T., & Palfreyman, D. (2011). *Oxford, the Collegiate University: Conflict, Consensus and Continuity*. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Thompson, J. D. (2003/1967). *Organizations in Action. Social Science Bases of Administrative Theory*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers
- Toma, J. D. (2010). *Building Organizational Capacity: Strategic Management in Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Trotter, L., Cutt, J. & Lee, C. E. (1996) Public accountability in higher education and health: an international perspective, *International Journal of Public Administration*, 19, 1979-2005
- Van Riel, C. B. M., & Balmer, J. M. T. (1997). Corporate identity: the concept, its measurement and management. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31, 340–355

- Wedlin, L. (2006). *Ranking business schools. Forming fields, identities and boundaries in international management education*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Whetten, D. A. (2006). Albert and Whetten Revisited: Strengthening the Concept of Organizational Identity. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 15, 219–234.
- Whitley, R. (2008). Constructing universities as strategic actors: limitations and variations. In L. Engwall & D. Weaire (Eds.), *The University in the Market* (pp. 22–37). London: Portland Press.
- Zechlin, L. (2010). Strategic planning in higher education. In E. Baker, B. McGaw, B., & P. Peterson (Eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Education* (pp. 256–263). Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Zuckerman, E. W., Kim, T.-Y., Ukanwa, K., & von Rittmann, J. (2003). Robust identities or nonentities? Typecasting in the feature-film labor market. *American Journal of Sociology*, 108, 1018–1074.