

Conditions for Change: University Structures and Leadership Practices from the Perspective of Organizational Sociology

UAS Spring Campus Berlin 2016
Connecting Communities for Sustainability:
Do Universities Matter?

Management Workshop: From Vision to Commitment: Sustainable Campus
Management

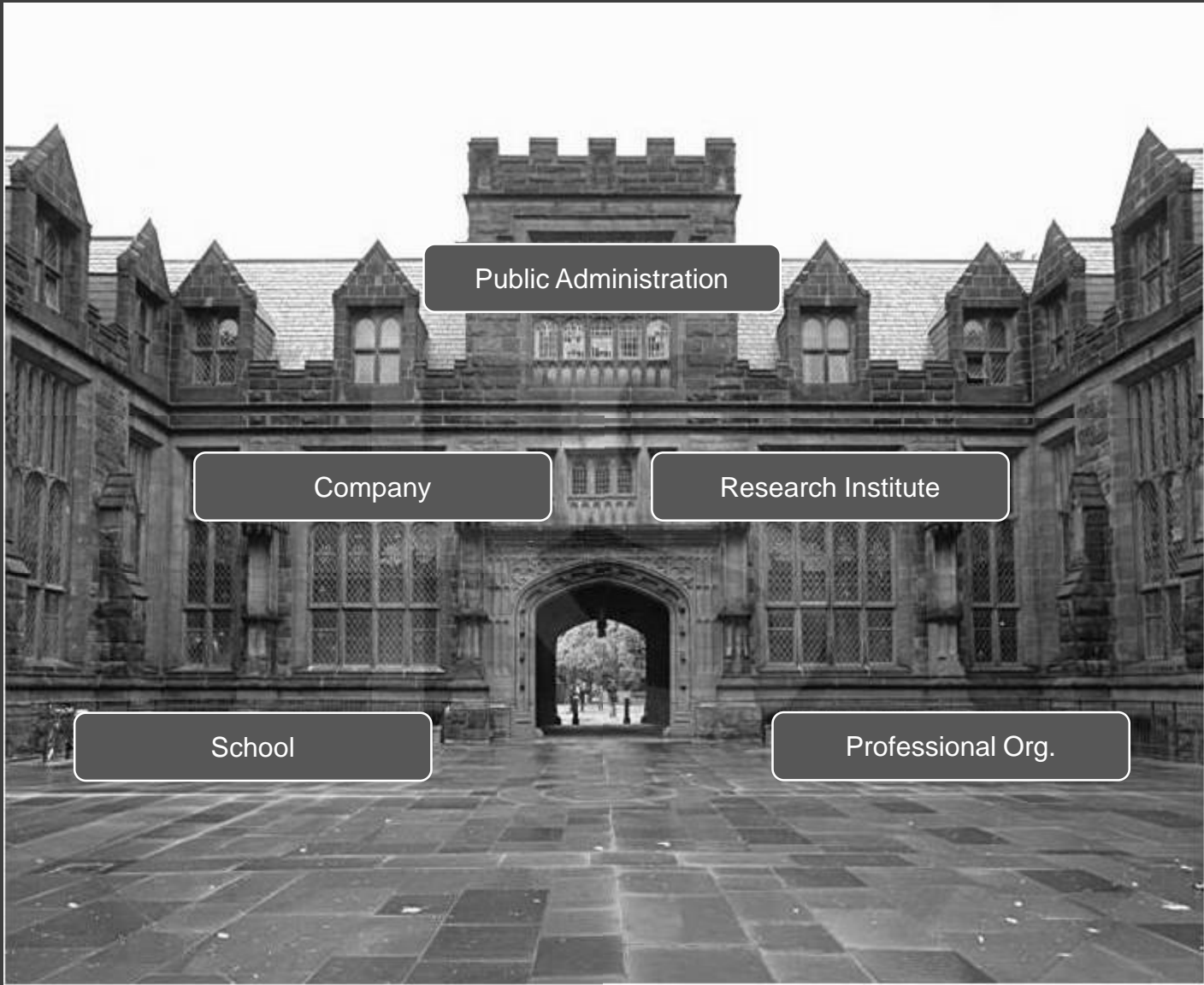
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Content:

1. Universities as multiple hybrid organisations
2. The role of the president
3. Presidential leadership practices
4. Conclusion

1. Universities as multiple hybrid organisations

- Discourse: universities as „anomalous“, „singular“, „paradoxical“ or „incomplete“ organisations
- Research literature: hybrid organisations as couplings of divergent rationalities or institutional logics (Cisielska 2010)
- **Claim:** German universities as „multiple hybrids“: contradictions and inconsistencies concerning all decision premises
 - **Personnel / Membership:** contradictory membership roles (professors as semi-professionals; students as members, users, clients, customers)
 - **Programmes:** conflict between research and education; massive increase of universities' tasks; external and internal programmes; conditional programmes (administration) vs. goal programmes (education, research)
 - **Communication channels:** double hierarchy; strong position of the professoriate; evolution of ‚Demobürokratien‘ (= new committees and bodies - Luhmann) fulfilling external expectations and providing legitimacy
 - **Organisational culture(s):** plurality of cultures (administration vs. academic sector; different status groups; scientific disciplines); university-specific decision culture (non-aggression-pacts; participation and consensus)



Public Administration

Company

Research Institute

School

Professional Org.

2. The role of the president

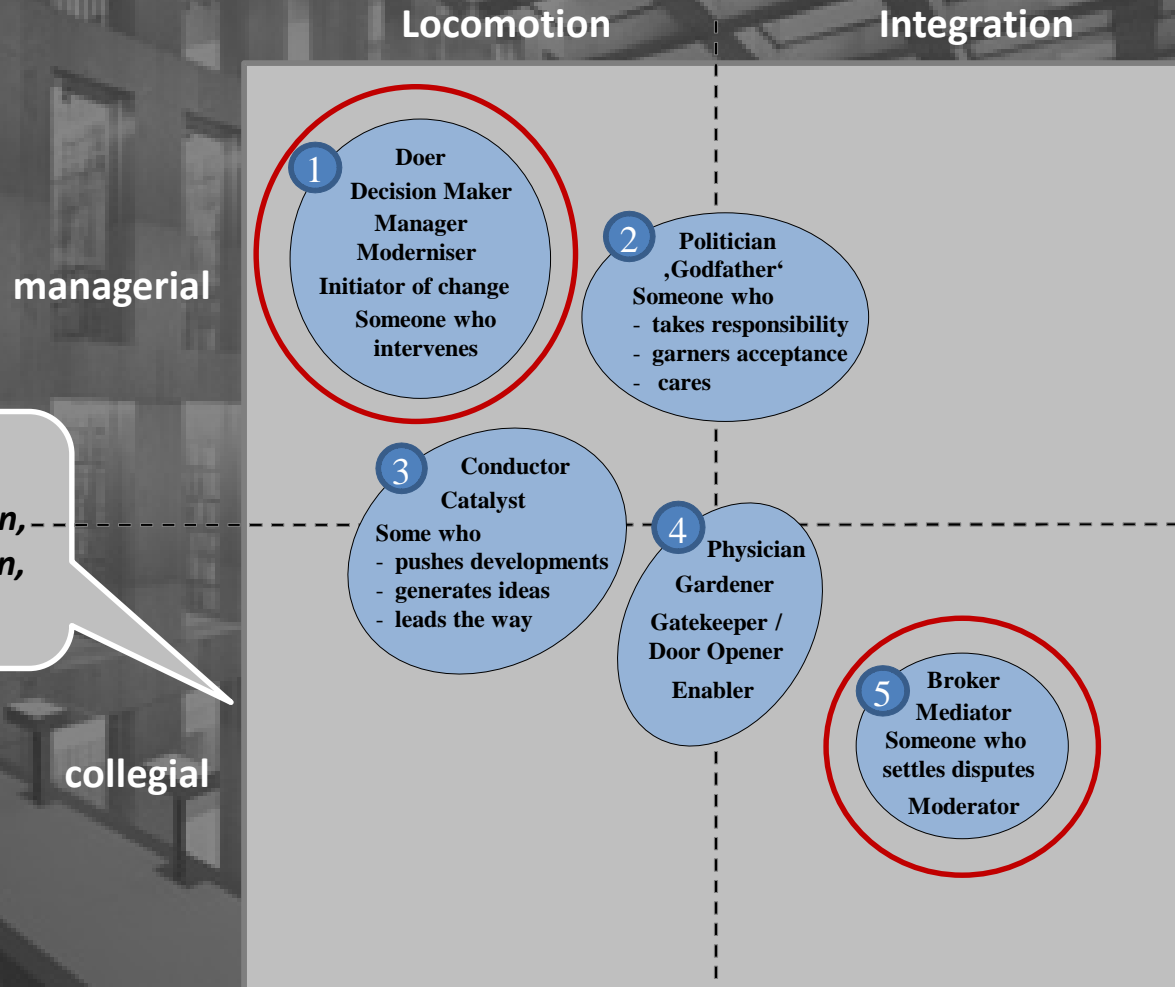
On the one hand...

- the presidents' position has been strengthened formally (Hüther 2010; Bogumil et al. 2013)
 - Full-time position, prolonged terms of office etc.
 - New and extended rights and competences to steer, control, and initiate processes and decisions (Hüther 2010)

On the other hand...

- Stability of strong informal rules and expectations that foster collegiality, participatory claims, and non-aggression pacts
 - Example: the presidents' reservation regarding the concept of power in academia

2. The role(s) of the president: self-descriptions



„... it is a role that combines moderation, organisational design, and decision.“

2. The role of the president

The university president is...

„... leader, educator, creator, initiator, wielder of power, pump; he is *also* officeholder, caretaker, inheritor, consensus-seeker, persuader, bottleneck. But he is mostly a mediator.”

(Clark Kerr 2001 [1963], p. 27)



Structural homology between the university and the presidents' position/role

3. Presidential leadership practices

Leadership Practices		
Observation (gathering of information)	Communicative Influence	Contextual Governance
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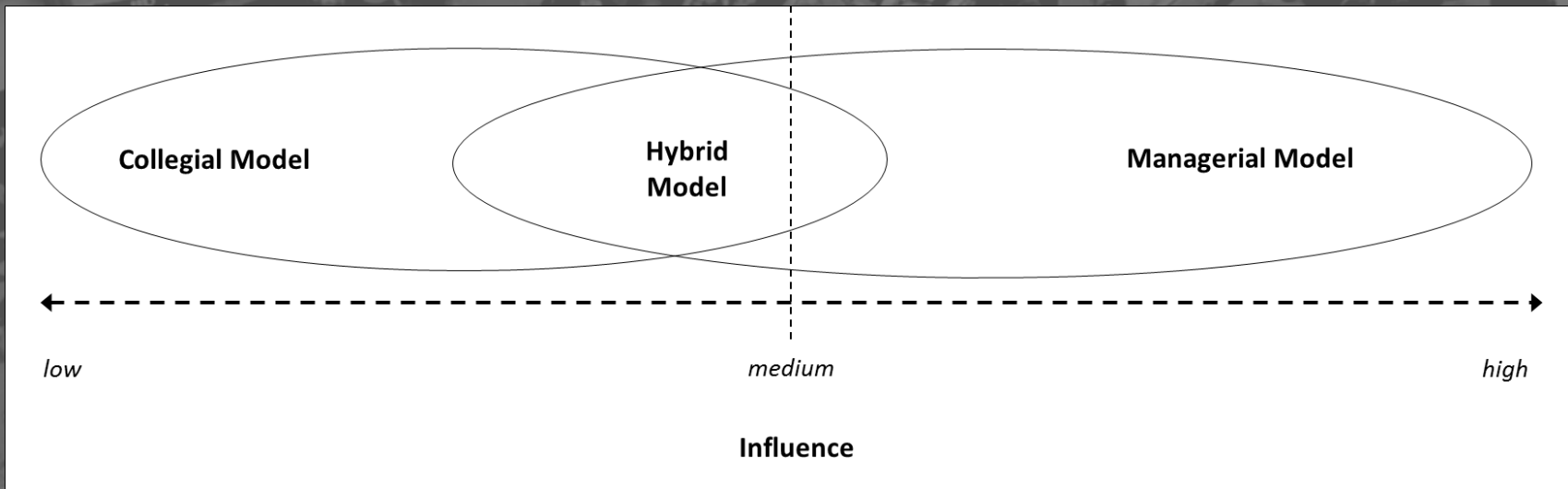
3. Presidential leadership practices: actional practices

Actional Practices

- **Orders** based on formal competences/ membership rules. **However**, the presidents' formal power is restricted by limited competences, co-decision rights, and the power of informal influence potentials
- **Leadership through order** is something,
„we do not want. I'm far from telling a colleague what he has to do and what he should not do. This is only possible in times of conflict, when there is no other way.“
- **Decisions against manifest resistance** are conceived of as ‚ultima ratio‘, i.e. they can be made only as exceptions and if they are crucial to the university and if they are accepted at least by a part of the university's members.

4. Conclusion

Presidential leadership of German universities today is located between two poles: collegial waiver of decisions and managerial determination to decide.



In order to promote sustainability and to compensate for the lack of formal power, presidents have to resort to a broad range of leadership practices.

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