2nd Seminar on Higher Education and Innovation Research:

University in Transition

**Workshop: Research in Transition - Managing the Unmanageable?**

**Time:** Thursday 12\textsuperscript{th} April 2012 at 14:00 – 15:45 (1\textsuperscript{st} session)

**Venue:** TBA

**Chairs:** Turo Virtanen & Maria Pietilä, HEGOM, University of Helsinki

The societal needs for research-based competences, knowledge and innovations in global knowledge economy have strengthened the societies' dependence on universities and research institutions and their international competitiveness. This has led many governments to review the structure of their higher education, research and innovation system, institutional missions, and funding systems. External, competitive funding of academic research has increased along with the increase of general R&D funding. The share of basic funding of university budgets has decreased at the same time. Universities have been under pressure to expand their academic output within tighter financial constraints. There are also calls for greater accountability. The research mission of universities has been reconsidered and research activities have been under strategic measures. The challenges of research management cover issues of setting strategic research areas, research performance, quality assessment, innovations and utilisation of research, international co-operation, human resources and academic career, funding, leadership, etc. These challenges cut across levels of research groups, universities and research institutions as organisations, and regional, national and supranational steering mechanisms (e.g., European Research Area). As high quality research requires creativity and intellectual leadership at the level of actual research work, the institutional structures that establish and develop supportive research environment do not emerge without management and organisational leadership. The interdependencies of different layers of leadership and management of research have brought about many types of tensions as implications of ‘unmanageability’ of research, understood both as normative and practical challenges.
ABSTRACTS

Answering “the big questions”: the impact of “mega research” on the development of institutional research strategies

John Taylor, University of Liverpool Management School

In recent years, governments, research funding bodies and universities have increasingly focussed their research efforts on “the big questions” facing the world today; ageing, health, security, the environment and new materials are all examples of key research themes visible all over the world. Based on a series of international case studies, this paper examines the impact of such research themes on the conduct of research and on the development of institutional research strategies. Important themes emerge regarding funding (both positive in favour of these themes and negative in considering the impact on other forms of research); forms of direction, selectivity and prioritisation, with possible consequences for academic freedom; new approaches to interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research, with consequences for the organisation of research and, more widely, for the structure of universities; new relationships between researchers and between their institutions, based on forms of networking and partnerships, commonly across national boundaries; and new relationships with sponsors and users of research. The paper looks, in particular, at how universities have reacted to these developments in their internal management of research activities, including strategy formation, organisational structures, resource allocation, staff development and methods of working. Interesting ideas also emerge about how such research priorities, with a strongly collaborative rationale, co-exist within an increasingly competitive research environment. Significant differences of view between institutional leaders, research managers, funding bodies and academic researchers also emerge.

In the Pursuit of Leadership in Research: Responses to Research Profiling in Universities

Turo Virtanen & Maria Pietilä, Higher Education Governance and Management (HEGOM), Network for Higher Education and Innovation Research (HEINE), University of Helsinki

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are faced with pressures to produce more with less. It is stated that both governments and HEIs have to think strategically of their activities related to research and teaching. One of the Finnish government’s goals is to allocate resources to bigger entities and to profile HEIs. University profiling, including the setting of research focus areas, is an international phenomenon: institutional leaders increasingly talk about ‘critical mass’ and profiling of research. The extent of profiling and the actual consequences may, however, vary considerably. Empirical comparative research is thus needed in order to find out, what profiling in each HEI, faculty and department means and how the process of defining priorities and implementing them is led.

We present results from the research project ‘Priority-setting in Research Management: Organisational and Leadership Reactions to Institutional Reforms in Finnish and Swedish Universities’, where we have studied the responses of leaders and managers at different organisational levels in Finnish and Swedish HEIs to profiling pressures. We concentrate especially on profiling of research.
The research design of the PrisMa project is comparative including four university organisations: two from Finland and two from Sweden. Two of them are large, comprehensive universities with many faculties: the University of Helsinki in Finland and Lund University in Sweden. The other two universities, the University of Eastern Finland in Finland and Linnaeus University in Sweden, are smaller and they have both been merged from two former institutions in 2010.

In this presentation we compare the Finnish results at different organisational levels (central administration, faculty, departmental level) and we concentrate on the activeness of leadership and management processes. As the theory of the active leadership we use change management, more specifically Burke’s (2011) framework of leading organisational change – adapted to the context of academic leadership. Our main assumption is that the effectiveness of leadership and management processes related to organisational processes of setting priorities of research benefits from systematic change management that is adapted to institutional characteristics of academic leadership.

Towards a European model of universities

*David Budtz Pedersen, Department of Philosophy, University of Copenhagen*

In this presentation, I will review a number of recent developments within European university policy. The central claim of the paper is that European universities are on the road to a unified model. More specifically, the paper shows how different policy exercises in recent years have increased the pressure on universities Europe-wide to adopt a common institutional framework, including common financial models, management structure, prioritization of research and size of institutions. Arguably, the most important reason for this intervention is the call for European universities to address the challenges of globalization-led political and economic transformations. However, as I shall argue in this paper, the process towards a unified model of European universities is not without contestation and controversies.

Firstly, according to the Lisbon Treaty, the European Union has no formal jurisdiction in universities. Initiatives to promote European integration in higher education and research have up until know been limited to ‘de-institutionalized’ coordination and funding programmes (i.e., the Bologna Process, European Research Area and Framework Programmes). For universities this has meant that their locus of legitimacy has continued to be the nation-state. National and regional differentiation has allowed universities and research communities to justify themselves according to different institutional and normative logics, e.g., cultural, social, epistemic and economic justifications. With the emerging unified model of European universities this tradition is coming to an end. Attempts to push universities in the direction of more homogenous entities are likely to eradicate local contingencies while focusing only on economic and market functions. This, I argue, follows a general shift in the development of the European community. Departing from a Continental and Scandinavian social market economy, community policies are increasingly based on a liberal market economy that extends the market principle into new social domains.
Secondly, the paper shows how the ongoing policy reform has introduced novel forms of policy orchestration that departs from standard democratic governance. Recognizing that the authority for decisions lies within Member States, European policymakers have avoided any direct institutionalization in national universities. Instead, the European Council has called for the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) to be applied to research and university policy. Within the OMC, a number of so-called Peer Learning Activities (PLAs) have been conducted as a means of orchestrating policies in a non-legally binding and thus non-political fashion. In effect, these policy exercises have devised common guidelines for universities in such diverse areas as funding, management, quality assessment, curriculum and employment structure, which are to be voluntarily translated into national regulation. Thus, I argue, that the ongoing policy reform in public universities is exhibiting a new mode of governance that is likely to influence the future of European higher education and academic life. Following Beck (1993), de Vries (2007), and Scharpf (2007), I suggest that we conceptualize this emerging model of European universities as the result of a new sub-politics aligned with a strong market-supporting principle. Correspondingly, I conclude that the emerging model of European universities is based on a very narrow conception of the social mandate of universities.