Chapter 6.

What We Stand for: Reputation platforms in Scandinavian Higher Education

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Introduction.

Reputation is derived from "being known for something" (Lange, Lee, & Dai, 2010, p. 157). Accordingly, reputation and branding literatures emphasize that reputation is built from "common starting points" (van Riel, 1995, p. 35), "an innermost substance" (Kapferer, 2008, p. 95), or "irrefutable essence" (Keller, 1999, p. 45), indicating what organizations stand for, and which "each company will be able to identify" (van Riel, 1995, p. 19). The definition of these characteristics typically results from strategy processes, and may include various symbolic expressions such as core values, visions, missions, brand propositions, and taglines. Positive associations are assumed to be stimulated in the minds of observers when all external communication is derived from such platforms in a consistent manner (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

This chapter examines the contents of reputation platforms used by Scandinavian higher education institutions. More specifically, we focus on core value statements as they are presented on these institutions' web sites. Core value statements are prominent aspects of reputation platforms not only because they define what organizations stand for and want to be known for (Sataøen, 2015), but also because they guide any work intended to influence reputation. Whereas a number of studies have revealed higher education institutions' interest in a favorable reputation (Aula & Tienari, 2011; Bowman & Bastedo, 2009; Christensen & Gornitzka, 2017; Wæraas & Solbakk, 2009), no research has, to our knowledge, examined the platforms defined by universities and colleges as the starting point for their reputation management efforts and distinguished between the different types of desired reputations associated with these platforms. For example, it is not known whether higher education institutions fill their reputation platforms with core values implicating a performative or a moral reputation (see chapter 1). Accordingly, we ask, which types of values do Scandinavian higher education institutions seek to be known for, and which type of reputation do they implicate?

We do not take for granted that *all* higher education institutions in Scandinavian countries have a core value statement. We examine whether some types of institutions, e.g. those that are in need of a better reputation, or do not have status as (research) universities – referred to by Paradeise and Thoenig (2013) as "wannabe" institutions – are more likely to define and display a core value statement in a visible way. Our second research question, therefore, is: Are core value statements a "universal" phenomenon among Scandinavian higher education institutions, or are they more common among those that have lower scores in international reputation rankings or those that are more likely to aspire to become universities?

Because core values typically emerge from unique institutional identities (Selznick, 1957), the study also offers insights into the tensions between differentiation and homogeneity pressures to which higher education institutions typically must relate. The existence of a core value statement on a web page signals conformity and legitimacy, but the contents of the core value statements may not necessarily signal the same. For example, a university may rely on completely unique values for its reputation platform, and higher education institutions in one country may display values that are different from those used by other institutions in an other country. Accordingly, our last research question asks: Do the core value statements display tendencies of convergence or divergence across institutional and national boundaries?

Given the debate on the implications of more "promotional" (Hearn, 2010), "commercialized" (Bok, 2003), and "marketized" (Ek, Ideland, Jönsson, & Malmberg, 2013) higher education institutions, an empirical focus on reputation platforms represented by core value statements seems highly warranted. The study informs us of the foundation on which contemporary universities build their reputation. It enables a better understanding of the role of "traditional" higher education values (such as knowledge, truth, academic freedom, and autonomy) in reputation management initiatives vis-a-vis more "modern" values (such as, for example, efficiency, value for money, and quality). In sum, the study contributes to our understanding of the values with which Scandinavian higher education institutions officially stand for, the type of reputation with which they want to be associated through these values, and the manifestation of differentiation and homogeneity tendencies as they pertain to the contents of core value statements. The cross-national focus of our study enables comparisons of Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish institutions concerning these aspects.

We begin with a presentation of core concepts; reputation platforms and core values, and outline potential expectations concerning the findings. This theory section is followed by a short description of the methods used to pursue the research questions. We then present the findings from our study, especially as they pertain to divergence and convergence issues as well as the four above-mentioned types of reputation. Finally, we discuss the findings in light of key expectations, and close with some suggestions for future research.

Reputation platforms and core values.

What are reputation platforms?

Reputation management and corporate branding literatures assume that reputations are best built when a clearly formulated reputation platform forms the basis for all reputation-building work. A reputation platform is the "root positioning that a company adopts when presenting itself to internal and external observers" (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 35). Without such a root positioning, reputation management work lacks direction because it is not clear which type of reputation the organization should aspire to be known for. Ideally, the platform should guide everything the organization says and does that potentially could influence reputation, including small and seemingly insignificant initiatives such as producing information brochures, or for higher education institutions, designing a poster to be displayed at recruitment fairs. Thus, a successful reputation platform unites the organization's communication into a coherent set of messages as if the organization were one person speaking with "one single voice" (Argenti & Forman, 2002, p. 57) or at least expressing itself in an "orchestrated" way (van Riel, 2000). When this is the case, external observers are presented with a consistent image of the organization and what it stands for, making it more likely for the organization to be "known for something" (Lange et al., 2010).

The contents of reputation platforms may include core values, brand propositions, visions, taglines, or simply a core characteristic. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) refer to "innovation" (3M), "life" (Pfizer), "passion" (Microsoft), and "networking" (Nokia) as examples. Such statements define what these organizations stand for, at the core. They also state how organizations are different from competitors, although in practice, many reputation platforms are likely to have the

same contents and be communicated in much the same way (Antorini & Schultz, 2005).

Values can be defined as abstract, enduring beliefs about desired end states (Rokeach, 1973). Numerous values exist inside every organization due to institutionalization processes whereby routines, structures, and forms of working gradually become "infused with value" (Selznick, 1957). These values are rarely made fully explicit, nor are they fully consistent with each other, and some are likely to be directly contradictory. Developing a finite list of values defining "this is what we stand for", therefore, is a challenging task that can hardly do justice to the abundance of values existing inside organizations. Yet, specifying such a list is a logical aspect of reputation management. Core values are central to reputation platforms because they signal the type of ideal end states to be achieved by the organization and thus the type of reputation for which the organization aspires to be known. For example, if a reputation platform incorporates the value "innovation", then the organization officially announces its commitment to be known for this value, i.e. to pursue a reputation for being innovative. If the platform includes the value "social responsibility", then the organization signals its intention to acquire a reputation for being socially responsible.

Once the platform is defined, a core idea in branding and reputation management literatures is to demand "total corporate commitment" to the platform or brand definition (Balmer, 2001, p. 281), with as little deviation from the platform in communication and behavior as possible. In this respect, core values can be seen as a form of "soft management" whereby organizational control and management occurs through values rather than rules and regulations (Martin & Hetrick, 2006). However, values may also be linked with performance scorecards used for individual performance reviews (Holzer, 2009; Paarlberg & Perry, 2007), in which case values serve a more "hard" form of management.

Values are central not only to reputation, but also to organizational legitimacy (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Parsons, 1956). Reputation and legitimacy are related constructs because they both refer to the perceptions held by external observers of a particular organization (Deephouse & Carter, 2005). However, they are also different constructs because they adhere to contradictory logics: Whereas reputation emerges from competitive logics emphasizing differentiation, legitimacy adheres to a logic of conformity and similarity (King & Whetten, 2008). According to the latter logic,

organizations acquire legitimacy when they are similar to other organizations in important respects. Having a core value statement, for example, may be one such way of conforming. When core value statements have proliferated throughout a sector or a field, organizations that have not yet adopted such a statement may find themselves pressured to define one. At the same time, growing competitive pressures encourage a unique reputation and differentiation from competitors in various ways, including through core values. It follows that most organizations, including higher education institutions, develop and define their core value statements under the contradictory pressures of conformity and differentiation.

Reputation platforms in higher education

Just like branding and reputation management experts point to the existence of a "true" inner substance in organizations that is possible to specify and define, many academics insist on a distinct "ethos" or "core" in higher education. This core, which is represented by traditional academic values such as science, truth, knowledge, and freedom, has been a central and distinct dimension of higher education since the Middle Ages and is often associated with Humboldtian ideals (Pritchard, 2004). The Magna Charta Universitatum, established in 1988 by the University of Bologna, confirms the continued importance of these values. Signed by more than 800 universities from 86 countries, the document commits these institutions to adhere to values such as academic freedom, intellectual independence, tolerance, dialogue, and institutional autonomy. These values highlight universities and colleges as moral communities (Olsen, 2007) whose primary function is to be like a "church" with educational, cultural, and expressive functions (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

However, higher education institutions are not just "church" but also "business" (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The business dimension has become more significant than before due to the general proliferation of more hierarchical, entrepreneurial, managed, and results-oriented practices in higher education. Given the general "rise of managerialism" (Enders, De Boer, & Weyer, 2013) and the diffusion of "corporate enterprise ideals" (Bleikie, Høstaker, & Vabø, 2000) in higher education, how likely, then, are traditional academic values to be included in a reputation platform? Do universities choose core values primarily emphasizing universities as "church",

primarily implicating a moral reputation, or does the growing focus on "business" call for values implicating a more performance-oriented reputation?

According to Carpenter (2010; Carpenter & Krause, 2012), it is possible to distinguish between four types of reputations, each built from separate sets of values and characteristics. These are the performative, moral, professional or technical, and procedural reputations (see chapter 1 in this volume for details). It follows from this typology that traditional academic values such as those endorsed by the Magna Charta Universitatum fall in multiple categories; moral reputation (e.g. truth, honesty), professional/technical reputation (e.g. academic freedom, science, autonomy, knowledge), and procedural reputation (e.g. objectivity). Given the continued significance of traditional academic values, a logical expectation would be to see a clear presence of them in university reputation platforms, perhaps especially values implicating a technical/professional and moral reputation. With its emphasis on competence, science, and knowledge, the technical/professional type of reputation platform corresponds directly to higher education core activities of education and research.

The same can be said for the moral type of reputation, which is consistent with the notion of universities as moral communities (Olsen, 2007) and with Albert and Whetten's (1985) observation that universities are like a "church". The relevance of a moral reputation may have increased in recent decades, as moral values and virtues are likely to inspire the emotional attachment of stakeholders. Multiple studies have described how formal organizations increasingly cater to their environments (Aberbach & Christensen, 2007; Hill, 2007; Jensen, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Wæraas, 2014), also universities (Ramirez & Christensen, 2013). The more higher education institutions act as "promotional" and "branded", the more could they be expected to include values implicating a moral reputation in their reputation platforms.

Conversely, the procedural type of reputation is less likely to stand out as one of the more frequently invoked types of reputations in this study. A procedural focus could be associated with notions of bureaucracy, red tape, and rigidity, which typically creates distrust and is likely to instill perceptions of inefficiency in the minds of observers. We therefore expect Scandinavian universities to have some reluctancy concerning the procedural type of reputation. In a time when modern higher education institutions are pressured to act and present themselves as rationalized organizational actors (Krücken & Meier, 2006), they are more likely to want to be known for being

efficient and productive (i.e. a performative reputation) rather than for simply following rules and regulations. This means describing activities in the language of business, not only on the basis of concepts such as "goals", "strategy", and "competitive ability", but also more typical utilitarian values such as "efficiency", "productivity", "excellence, and "results".

In sum, modern universities and colleges may seek different types of reputations, each built from specific sets of values. Arguments for all scenarios can be offered, albeit with different strength. It should be noted, however, that multiple types of reputations are likely to be implicated by the same core value statement. We do not expect the core values to be consistent in the sense that they display an aspiration towards one single type of reputation only. Modern higher education institutions are complex organizations consisting of different values, relating to many different constituents, and having to satisfy many different needs. This expectation is somewhat contradictory to the core ideas of consistency and coherence in reputation management and branding, but we believe it to be a more realistic expectation reflecting the complex institutional and political nature of higher education. These arguments suggest that universities rely on different combinations of values, ultimately generating tendencies of divergence across institutional and national boundaries.

Furthermore, it should be noted that higher education institutions of different types (e.g. universities, university colleges, professional colleges) are ranked differently, and may have varying needs to differentiate themselves through their core values. For example, highly ranked "top-of-the-pile" universities probably have sufficient confidence in themselves and may not experience a need for a core value statement in order to create differentiation from competitors (Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013). By contrast, middle or lower ranked but still "venerable" institutions are likely to experience a need to adopt a core value statement to accrue legitimacy benefits, and at the same time build a differentiated reputation on the basis of values shared by no other institution. Similarly, we expect university colleges and professional colleges that aspire to improve their reputation and perhaps one day be full-fledged universities ("the wannabes"), to signal their ambition through a differentiated core value statement more so than regular research universities (cf. Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013).

Methods

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The core values were collected from the institutions' web pages. These descriptions are written and published by the institutions themselves, and they tend to change often with regular updates and adjustments. Hence, it was important to gather the data within a short and limited period of time. Similarly, it was important to provide transparency and possibilities for verification. The two researchers worked together and collected the core values and core value statements in a common Microsoft Excel document. In this document, excerpts and specific web-references from the web pages were saved.

All the institutions in our sample have web pages providing information about education, research, and strategies. In order to be included in the Excel database, the core values found in these web pages had to be referred to as values or something similar, e.g. "our values", or "our core value statement", or "our ethos". Furthermore, the core values had to be open and accessible on the institutions' web pages and/or as a specific part of the institutions' strategy document. This criterion excludes core values that can only be retrieved through the institution's search engine, or that require more than four clicks to be accessed. Finally, the values had to be general institutional values pertaining to the entire organization, not specific values related to education, research, or related to specific departments, projects, or sub-organizations.

The values were typically presented as core concepts in the web pages' declaration of identity, vision, and/or strategy. As an example, in the strategic plan of the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, the core values were presented as "respectful, ambitious, independent and interactive".[1] When values consisted of two or more words with different meaning (e.g. "participation and tolerance" [Norwegian University of Science and Technology]), we counted each word as a separate value. In some cases, however, specific lists of core values did not exist. Instead, descriptions consisted of longer prose passages starting with "our values", "our ethos", "our culture is based on values such as..." etc. In those cases, we chose to include in our material the main concepts of the passages. An example is Luleå University of Technology's "Strategy and Vision 2022" stating that: "our culture is based on respect, trust, openness and responsibility. We support each other and see the value in others successes. We have a warm and creative work environment based on a common value base, where curiosity and respect for different skills and orientations is a matter of

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[1] All analyzed values are translated into English by the authors.

course." In this case, the following values are included: "Respect", "trust", "openness", "responsibility", "curiosity".

We used Provalis QDA Miner 4.1 to analyze the data, which is a computer software package for qualitative data analysis containing quantitative and qualitative content analysis modules. We relied on both modules to analyze our data. Quantitative content analysis is a method for tabulating occurrences of content units, and offers a way of exploring empirical problems in a systematical way (Franzosi, 2008). In our study, the objective of the quantitative content analysis was to identify and compare the most common higher education values presented by institutions in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, relying on frequencies of occurrence of different values. We also used correspondence analysis (Greenacre, 2007) to examine the distribution of values in relation to country affiliation, rank, and institution type.

As a preparation for the quantitative part of the analysis, we performed a lemmatization procedure in QDA Miner, which ensures that different forms of a word (e.g. adjectives and nouns, or the plural and singular versions of the same word) are grouped together. For example, "respectful" was grouped with "respect", "trustworthy" with "trust", "efficiency" with "efficient", and so on. We also removed spaces between words so that each expression counted as one value only (e.g. "freedom of expression" was analyzed as the value "FreedomOfExpression").

We used QDA Miner to code the values on the basis of the typology described in chapter 1 in this book (cf. Carpenter, 2010; Carpenter & Krause, 2012). Accordingly, a value was coded as aspiring a performative reputation when it described how effective, productive, output-oriented, or excellent the university is. A value was coded as implicating a moral reputation when it emphasized relational bonds between universities and their constituents. If a value described a university as knowledge-oriented or in pursuit of values emphasizing academic virtues and skills, it was coded as promoting a technical/professional reputation. Finally, if a value fostered an impression of the university as oriented towards procedures and bureaucratic merits, it was coded as aspiring a procedural reputation. This coding was performed by the first author, whereas the second author re-coded a reliability sample of the data representing 20 per cent of the values. Inter-coder agreement was 88.9 per cent (kappa=.84).

Findings

General overview

Among the 36 Scandinavian higher education institutions displaying a core value statement on their web sites are several well-established universities such as Lund University, the University of Oslo, and Copenhagen University.[2] However, having and displaying a visible core value statement does not seem to be a typical feature of Scandinavian "top-of-the-pile" universities (cf. Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013). Of the eight Scandinavian institutions ranked among the top 200 universities in the world according to the Times Higher Education World Reputation Rankings, only the three above-mentioned have added a core value statement on their web sites (Table 6.1). Having a core value statement seems to be a more typical phenomenon for unranked institutions and those ranked "in the middle", i.e. among the top 201-500. For example, for universities, six of those that are middle-ranked, and six of eight unranked universities have a core value statement.[3] For university colleges and professional colleges, the tendencies are weaker.[4] Although the majority of the core values in our database are retrieved from these institutions, it seems to be more common for university colleges and professional colleges to not have a core value statement than to have one. Overall, the tendency to have a core value statement seems to be slightly greater for unranked than for middle-ranked university colleges and professional colleges. Nevertheless, taking into account the rather low number of observations, the findings offer support to our expectation that core value statements are more typical for institutions in need of a better reputation, i.e. "the wannabes" (cf. Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013).

Insert Table 6.1 about here

The content of core value statements: differentiation and divergence

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[2] According to the 2018 Times Higher Education World University Rankings, Lund University is ranked 86th in the world, the University of Oslo is ranked 146th, and Copenhagen University is ranked 109th.
[3] The relationship is not statistically significant. Cramer's V =.25 (p>.05)
[4] Cramer's V=.23 (p>.05)

As for the contents of the core value statements, important tendencies of differentiation and divergence can be observed. Only 1.4 percent of all values occur more than seven times. 46.4 percent of all values are unique, appearing only once in the full list of values. The most frequently occurring values, quality and respect, can only be found in about one third of the core value statements. Most of the values appear between two and four times overall. Thus, there does not seem to be a typical core value statement in terms of specific values. This is in accordance with other studies reporting variety in related expressions designed to influence reputation such as mission statements and university symbols (Delmestri, Oberg, & Drori, 2015; Kosmützky, 2012; Morphew & Hartley, 2006). It is also consistent with Sataøen's (2015) study, which identified core values expressed by Norwegian and Swedish universities similar to those observed here, albeit with slightly higher frequencies.

The differentiation patterns become even clearer when comparing across the three countries, where no value stands out as particularly more common than other values (Table 6.2). For Danish institutions, no value occurs more frequently than twice, and the presence of unique values occurring only once is as high as 61.9 percent. Swedish institutions seem to display more internally similar values than the other countries, something which could be attributed to a particular Swedish culture of consensus (Pamment, 2011). They also rely on a larger number of values in total and per core value statement.

Insert Table 6.2 about here

Figure 6.1 is a correspondence plot placing the values in relation to the universities' country affiliation. The plot shows three groups of values clustered around each country, located in different quadrants at opposite sides of the axes. Because a large number of values are used only once per institution within each category, a dense concentration of unique values around each country can be observed (indicated by circles in the figure). According to printouts from QDA Miner, unique values presented by Norwegian universities include "social "responsibility", "ambitious", "constructive", "Christian faith", and "scholarly pride". For Swedish universities, examples are "humor", "utility", "for a living

world", "community engagement", and "solving real problems". Danish universities claim to stand for "commitment", capacity for action", "international vision", "responsiveness", and "reflection". These values can be found once in their respective clusters only, suggesting that Scandinavian universities place great emphasis on unique values as a platform for their reputation management.

Insert Figure 6.1 about here

Figure 6.2 explores the differentiation tendencies further by plotting the core values in relation to institution type (university or university college/professional college) and rank (unranked, middle-ranked, highly ranked). The plot shows a total of five clusters of values grouped around each category of higher education institution (marked by circles in the figure),[5] located in different quadrants at different sides of the axes. It shows that highly ranked "top-of-the-pile" universities are the least likely to choose differentiated values, as all the values associated with this category are grouped around the intersection of the axes. The values located around the intersection are values shared by all types of institutions. By contrast, middle ranked and unranked "wannabe" universities are associated with separate sets of unique values, confirming our expectation that lower ranked institutions seek differentiation through their core values. The tendency is the same for unranked university colleges and professional colleges, which is the largest sub-group with 59 members. This category is located at the bottom of the plot, in close proximity to a very dense cluster of values not shared by the other categories.

Insert Figure 6.2 about

Patterns of convergence and reputation types

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[5] The sixth category, highly ranked professional colleges and university colleges, is not included in the plot because the two institutions (Karolinska Institute and KTH Royal Institute of Technology) in this category do not have a core value statement.

Although differentiation and divergence tendencies are strong, the contents of Table 6.3 and Figures 6.1 and 6.2 also offer evidence of homogeneity. First, Table 3 shows how the same values are used by institutions from all three countries. Interestingly, the three most frequently occurring values ("quality", "respect", "diversity") represent ideal end states to which any organization could subscribe. The majority of the values are in fact so abstract and generic that any organization regardless of industry might want to be known for them. They resemble what Lencioni (2002) refers to as "permission-to-play" values, reflecting minimum social and behavioral standards rather than deeply ingrained institution-specific values. Moreover, with some notable exceptions (e.g. "academic freedom", "science", "independent"), most of the core values are unrelated to the specific context of higher education. These findings support the study by Sataøen (2015), where Norwegian and Swedish universities were found to conform to a standard repertoire of generic values in their core value statements such as "openness/transparency", "diversity", "quality", "critical", and "commitment". These values are clearly present in our study as well, albeit with somewhat lower frequencies of occurrence.

Second, by examining the differences across the axes and the distances between country affiliation and values in Figure 6.1, several important observations concerning similarity and convergence can be made. For example, the plot shows which core values tend to be shared by all higher education institutions in the sample regardless of country affiliation. The closer the values are to the intersection of the axes, the less their presence is associated with a specific country affiliation. This is the case for the values "creative" and "responsibility", which are not necessarily the most frequently occurring values overall, but they are shared by institutions from all three countries. It is also the case for the values "critical" and "equality", "openness", "respect", critical", "equality" (Figure 6.2). Again, these are not the most frequently occurring, but are shared by institutions regardless of type and rank. We also note the generic and abstract nature of many of these values.

The plots also reveal which values are shared between different categories of institutions. Norwegian and Danish institutions, for example (Figure 6.1), share the values "innovation", "inclusion", "credible", and "holistic", among others, as these are located between and in proximity to both countries. Norwegian and Swedish universities share the values "closeness", "equality", and "environment", whereas Swedish and Danish universities share the values "freedom of expression", "honesty",

and "courage", among others. Highly ranked and unranked institutions share the values "closeness", "engagement", "credible".

Convergence and homogeneity tendencies are further confirmed by the emphasis on values implicating the same types of reputation. Table 6.4 shows the results of the qualitative content analysis whereby the values were coded according to the typology of performative, moral, technical/professional, and procedural reputations. Overall, the technical/professional type of reputation is the most frequently implicated by the values, followed by the moral type of reputation. Typical values implicating the technical/professional type of reputation include "academic freedom", "science", "quality", "collegiality", "critical", and "curiosity". Examples of values aspiring a moral reputation include "respect", "diversity", "compassion", "closeness", "credibility", and "environment". Both of these dimensions of reputation are present in the core value statements regardless of country affiliation. Some important cross-country variation should be noted, however: Whereas Norwegian institutions tend to emphasize the moral and technical/professional types of reputations almost equally, Danish institutions have a particular affinity for values implicating a technical/professional reputation, with almost 60 percent of their values being of this type. Conversely, Swedish universities are more oriented towards a moral reputation.

Swedish universities also clearly emphasize a procedural reputation more than their Danish and Norwegian counterparts. As an illustration, they are about eight times more likely to build their reputation on the basis of values aspiring a procedural reputation than Danish universities. This emphasis on procedure may be due to Swedish universities' status as administrative authorities and the status of university teachers as civil servants, in addition to the "long tradition [...] of close relations between the universities and the state" (Bauer & Kogan, 2006, p. 26). Thus, compared to similar university systems, Swedish universities have had less legal autonomy and may be more inclined towards values such as objectivity, equality, legality, democracy, and impartiality. Moreover, we observe an even greater tendency for highly ranked institutions (of which five are Swedish) to emphasize a procedural reputation. Almost a third of all values presented by highly ranked institutions implicate a procedural reputation. This, however, occurs at the expense of values invoking a moral reputation, in sharp contrast to unranked institutions, whose values display the opposite tendency. The more highly ranked the institution is, the more it

appears to rely on values reflecting a procedural reputation, and the less likely it is to display a moral reputation compared to unranked institutions.

Insert Table 6.3 about here

By contrast, very few core values implicate a performative reputation. This is somewhat surprising given the proliferation of organization-building reforms in Scandinavian universities and the global tendencies of turning universities into strong organizational actors in pursuit of efficiency and rationality (Krücken & Meier, 2006). The implication is a reduction in tendencies of differentiation and divergence. A performative reputation can be associated with an emphasis on individualistic values such as efficiency, excellence, and simply better than others (Brickson, 2005). The institutions in this study have implemented structures encouraging goal-oriented behavior, but they do not seem to want to build their reputation on the basis of such values. This observed pattern is in accordance with findings in other chapters of this book (e.g. Christensen and Gornitzka's chapter) and with previous research (Christensen & Gornitzka, 2017). The pattern also seems consistent with observed tendencies in the higher education sector of reluctant or even hostile attitudes towards business-like style of management, as evidenced by, for example, a study by Bleiklie, Lægreid and Wik (2003) of the implementation of management by objectives in Norwegian universities.

Discussion and conclusion.

Core values statements are central elements of the reputation platforms of Scandinavian higher education. The statements not only reveal the values for which the institutions claim to stand, they also inform us of the type of reputation for which the institutions want to be known. Our study aimed at identifying and comparing these values, and at revealing the relative prevalence of the implicated reputations. The study provided a number of answers to our research questions, which we discuss below in light of the expectations outlined earlier in the chapter.

Despite employing rather strict selection criteria, we found that almost half of the institutions studied here have included a visible core value statement on their web sites. We interpret these findings as tendencies of institutionalization of core value

statements in Scandinavian higher education suggesting that official core values are symbols that a contemporary higher education institution should have and make visible in order to signal that it stands for something and wants to be known for something. Although the tendency is not universal, it seems particularly strong for unranked universities as opposed to ranked ones, perhaps because these "wannabe" institutions experience a stronger need for a favorable reputation than the other types of institutions, particularly compared to "top-of-the-pile" institutions (cf. Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013). In general, core value statements contribute to the rationalization of higher education whereby institutions are pressured to state with clarity who they are and what they stand for. The mere presence of a core value statement signals legitimacy and increases similarity with other institutions relating to the same rationalization pressures.

The tension between differentiation and similarity is a recurring theme in the contents of the core value statements. On the one hand, we found strong tendencies of differentiation and divergence across institutional as well as country levels, rank, and institution type. This is consistent with an "old" institutional perspective on organizations (Selznick, 1957) suggesting that institutions define unique core values that follow from their distinctive identities. We see these tendencies as evidence of core value statements being symbols of difference and similarity at the same time: Whereas the presence of a core value statement reflects institutionalization and legitimacy, the contents of the statements are meant to reflect institutional idiosyncrasies and strategic differentiation.

On the other hand, differentiation tendencies are nuanced by findings pointing to strong tendencies of similarity and convergence. The more abstract and generic reputation platforms and their contents are, and the less institution-specific they appear, the more they can be assumed to conform to prevailing legitimate repertoires of values (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Our study suggests that Scandinavian higher education institutions differentiate themselves through the chosen values in their reputation platforms, but mostly without relying on deeply ingrained institution-specific values. Curiously, and in contrast to previous research on categories where high- and low-status organizations seek differentiation whereas middle-status organizations seek conformity (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001), the findings suggest that high-status universities display the weakest differentiation tendencies compared to others. Overall, conformity tendencies appear stronger because of the dominant

pattern of generic and abstract values. Although many of these values are unique in the sense that they appear only once in the data, they reflect little uniqueness in practice due to their generic nature. As such, the findings also stand on contrast to previous literatures emphasizing differentiation from peers (Deephouse, 1999; Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). On the other hand, they confirm the observations by Antorini and Schultz (2005) that formal organizations, although being unique at the core, often end up in a conformity trap when they try to define and communicate their unique and differentiating characteristics. This trap typically involves the use of abstract and generic values, or general permission-to-play values (Lencioni, 2002), which are compatible with virtually any organization's identity. Moreover, in our study, the values are mainly "organizational" rather than "higher education", reflecting a frame of reference neither tied to Scandinavia nor to higher education. This is in accordance with previous research pointing to rationalization and actorhood-building reforms in higher education whereby higher education institutions favor organizational models reflecting an identity as "organization" rather than something more specific (Krücken & Meier, 2006).

Consistent with our expectations, we found the core value statements to implicate multiple reputations. No higher education institution in this study relies on a reputation platform consisting of a one-dimensional core value statement. Although this finding may seem contradictory to the notion of organizational actorhood in higher education, which builds on the assumption of a "bounded" (Drori, Meyer, & Hwang, 2006, 18) and "integrated" (Krücken & Meier, 2006, 241) actor, it makes sense when considering the fact that higher education institutions not only have different functions ("church" and "business") but also relate to a variety of stakeholders (students, parents, education ministries, employees, and the media). Their core value statements can be understood as a reflection of these complex relations. A core value statement implicating multiple reputations makes sure that the institution has a broad appeal and does not confine itself to one function or to one stakeholder group only (Christensen, Morsing, & Cheney, 2008; Weick, 1979).

Overall, Scandinavian higher education institutions prefer to be known for values highlighting their status as professional and moral communities rather than production, reflecting the fact that they are more "church" than "business". We interpret this finding as a validation of the importance of typical higher education values through which Scandinavian universities and colleges primarily confirm their

membership in the category of higher education (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Moreover, the emphasis on "soft" values implicating a moral reputation is consistent with previous research (Christensen & Gornitzka, 2017) and with the view that contemporary formal organizations must connect with their constituents on an emotional level in order to build and maintain a favorable reputation (Hill, 2007; Jensen, 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1999), also in the public sector (Aberbach & Christensen, 2007; Wæraas, 2010, 2018). In our study, unranked "wannabe" higher education institutions seem particularly eager to stand for values invoking a moral reputation with an emphasis on "soft", relational values, perhaps because these institutions feel a more pressing need to appear attractive to prospective students and future employees than the more established types of institutions. Highly ranked, "top-of-the-pile" institutions are less interested in building a moral reputation than the others, probably because they do not share the same need (Paradeise & Thoenig, 2013). This finding should also be seen in conjunction with our observation that highly ranked institutions tend to seek less differentiation through their core values than the others. Instead, these institutions are considerably more eager to claim a procedural reputation. This is a type of reputation not particularly suitable for creating differentiation, nor for creating emotional appeal. However, given the high status of these institutions, they have sufficient self-confidence to "afford" to focus on procedure without jeopardizing their standing. An other explanation, of course, is that several of the high-status institutions are Swedish, which tend to pursue a procedural reputation to a greater extent than the others.

Contrary to our expectations, the values invoke the performative reputation rather modestly. The explanation could be that universities and colleges have few measureable "production" outcomes, and that it is more appropriate and natural for these institutions to resort to abstract and generic symbols in their reputation management rather than concrete symbols denoting performance and excellence (Krücken & Meier, 2006). In addition, the egalitarian culture shared by all three Scandinavian countries may serve as a potential explanation (Painter & Peters, 2011): "Too much" differentiation, or a too strong focus on excelling, might be seen as problematic and not a legitimate practice within the fields of Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish higher education, where norms of equality and conformity are strong. Consequently, higher education institutions are likely to tone down their differentiation attempts and make their self-presentation more abstract and generic.

Studies have reported similar tendencies in the context of reputation management in other important social institutions such as Norwegian and Swedish hospitals, which seek to be "all things to all customers" (Wæraas & Sataøen, 2015) and "special in an ordinary way" (Blomgren, Hedmo, & Waks, 2016).

The emphasis on professional/technical and moral reputations highlight the need for future research to examine in more detail the extent to which reputation management in day-to-day activities aspires towards these types of reputations. Official core value statements retrieved from "surface" self-presentations on the web provide interesting and important data about the direction in which reputation management work is intended to take (Christensen & Gornitzka, 2017), but we currently know very little about the values that are considered in practice when higher education executives build and protect their institution's reputation. Espoused values, i.e. those values that institutions claim to stand for, may not be values used in practice (Schein, 1992), regardless of whether they are considered "soft" or "hard" managerial tools. We also do not know much about how, and the extent to which, the definition of official reputation platforms and their associated core values imply "total corporate commitment" (Balmer, 2001, p. 281), from staff and faculty members to the institution's core values and desired reputation. Both of these areas open up promising avenues for future research on core values in higher education. The latter is a particularly interesting endeavor because such a level of commitment to a selected set of core values and desired reputation might entail a restriction in the academic freedom of employees. Academic freedom is a strongly institutionalized value in higher education and also a value for which many higher education institutions claim to stand. Future research should seek to determine the extent to which higher education institutions experience conflicting demands in this regard and if so, how they cope with this dilemma in practice.

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