Navigating through the 'patchwork' university. The critical position of the third space professional

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NAVIGATING THROUGH THE 'PATCHWORK' UNIVERSITY

The critical position of the third space professional

ABSTRACT

The original duality between academics and administrators has changed as a result of changes in the higher education field. Between academics and non-academics, a third space professional has developed itself into an influential group. At the same time universities are characterized as hybrid organizations with a lot of strong and weak links between clusters of individuals, which results in a lot of micro-cultures. Until now these micro-cultures has proven to be one of the explanations for the adaptive power of universities to stress the developments and changes in the higher education field.

This paper describes research on the extent to which these third space professionals are experiencing influence on the different processes from the domains. The results show the existence of the third space professionals forming a new specialized buffer zone between academics and administrators. Moreover they show the way third space professionals are navigating through the 'patchwork' university and its micro-cultures. The position and activities of third space professionals shows striking similarities in various countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark). The conclusion is drawn that these third space professionals typically consist of "self-made men" who must maintain their position among the interacting spheres, while experiencing criticism from several actors and it is recommended that the third space professionals before and during the performance of this role, are trained and guided by theoretical deepening and skill development in the areas of (educational) leadership, policy, organization and management.

HYBRID ORGANIZATIONS: ACADEMICS VERSUS ADMINISTRATORS

Descriptions of the relationship between academics and administrators[1] in universities have, for a long time, included terms such as 'conflictual', 'competitive', 'negative' or 'tension' (i.e. Birnbaum, 1988; Conway, 1998). While some consider that this tension is simply an organizational characteristic of universities and not necessarily a bad thing (for example: Warner & Palfreyman, 1996; Lauwerys, 2002; Bacon, 2009). Others suggest that it creates a dysfunctional divide with the two groups having different values and pursuing different goals within the one organization (for example: Dearlove, 1998; Tourish, 2000; Wohlmuther, 2008).
The separation between academics and administrators has become more strict in the later years of the last century because universities, as a result of shifts in technology, consumer behaviour, demographics, social attitudes and government funding constraints,

have been driving towards a business model for operations. Universities were no longer perceived as communities of scholars researching and teaching together in collegial ways; and those running universities were not longer regarded as academic leaders, but more and more as managers or chief executives (Deem, 1998). Managerialism is the term used to describe changes in management approaches from collegial to more business-like practices, and the subsequent responses to shifting academic and administrative roles (McInnes, 1998; Szekeres, 2004; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Winter, 2009; Conway, 2012).

Because of this shift to more commercial practices, the administrative role has changed from a primarily supportive role to a coordinating, organizing and managerial role, including the need to strategically respond to external influences. This has implications for decision-making processes and has led, among other things, to the emergence of new management layers in the organization. As a result, the administrative staff experienced a sense of being increasingly removed from the primary process of education and research, while the academic staff experienced a sense of being more removed from the decision-making process. Because of this, the gap has widened between the values and beliefs of both groups on the question of how universities should be managed (McInnis, 1998; Conway, 2012).

Thus, there are two types of actors who are more or less in "two worlds" working at cross-purposes within the same hybrid university organization.
Academics are engaged with the primary tasks of the organization, namely education and research. Their authority is predicated on autonomy and individual knowledge. Administrators are focused on the management and support of the primary process. Their authority is predicated on the control and coordination of activities by superiors. Both groups try to influence each other, but at the same time they also try to maintain the most autonomous possible position relative to each other. It is also called the basic conflict between academics and administrators. Hanson (2001) describes this as the interacting spheres model, where conflict and dysfunctional behaviour arise from too much use of hierarchy, vehement disagreements and insufficient dialogue, respect and acceptance of each other's expertise.

Due to the ever stricter separation between the academics and administrators, a third group of actors has emerged that is trying to stimulate the cooperation and integration between the academics and administrators (see for example: Conway, 2000; McMaster, 2003; Szekeres, 2004, Whitchurch, 2006, 2008b; Scheijderberg & Merkator 2013). This group of actors partly came into existence due to the shift to more commercial practices by the universities. In addition, due to the increasingly decentralized decision-making on education-related matters, there has been an increased specialization in the faculties. This new group of agents is referred to as blended professionals, new professionals (Klumpp & Teichler, 2008) or third space professionals (Whitchurch, 2006, 2008a). In this 'third space' two types of professionals are employed, namely academic (middle) managers and educational administrators Academic middle managers are scholars who - in addition to their academic position - are charged with administrative tasks and perform roles and functions such as Academic Dean, Academic director, Head of Study, programme coordinators, Directors of Studies, academic programme directors, Head of Departments, etcetera (see for example: Kallenberg, 2013, 2015; Harboe, 2013; Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2012; Nguyen, 2013). Educational administrators are highly qualified administrators who play a key role on strategy, policy processes and education development and have gained a certain degree of autonomy and power within the

academia. They perform functions such as director education affairs; head quality control, etcetera (Kallenberg, 2013, 2016a, 2016b).

Recent research shows that for a Dutch situation there is still a strict separation between administrators and academics regarding their activities and interests. Moreover, it shows that the interacting spheres in itself also consist of various independently operating departments, teams and groups, resulting in the idea of a patchwork university. Finally, it appears that - compared to academics and administrators - third space professionals experience having influence throughout the various university processes (Kallenberg, 2016b).

The results of this research on Dutch universities are interesting to look at from an international perspective. Hence, in this study, a similar research has been conducted in Flanders and Denmark. These two countries have been chosen because both the systems of Higher Education and the overall social situation in these two countries are comparable to that in the Netherlands. Therefore, it is plausible to expect that similar results will be obtained. By comparing the results of the three countries with each other, this could give a more robust character to the results.

This research focuses on the question of whether the group of third space professionals (seen across multiple countries) experience greater influence on the various processes within the university. Moreover, it will be researched how this group manoeuvres between and through the different cultures, islands or 'patches' and how they use their influence to 'get things done'. In short: What degree of influence do they experience, and how do they navigate the university?

DESIGN/METHODOLOGY/APPROACH:

This research investigates the way the third space professionals (academic middle managers and educational administrators) act in the 'patchwork' university. To this end, it will be examined to what extent the third space professionals differ from academics and administrators regarding their perceived influence on different processes within the university. To answer the research question, the research method was a dual phase: an online survey (Surveymonkey) and interviews, by applying the Actor Network Theory.

Online survey

The online questionnaire was distributed among employees at six Dutch universities during May and June of 2015, five Flemish universities during April and May 2016, and four Danish universities during June and July 2016. The online survey was sent to 1,632 Dutch-addresses, 2,521 Flemish-addresses and 1,580 Danish addresses. The survey was in Dutch language to Dutch and Flemish universities and in Danish language to Danish universities. The reason for this was that the survey was also sent to less highly trained staff within the university, of which it was expected that this would lead to a lower number of respondents. It has been realized that this may affect the response rate of the number of foreign workers at the university.

These addresses were obtained from the universities' websites. The addresses were manually selected to achieve the best possible allocation between representatives of the three different spheres: academics, administrators and the new professionals (academic managers and educational administrators). Employees of a different type[2] were either not selected or removed from the database. The 1,632 Dutch-addresses yielded 548 respondents (31.63%). The 2,521 Flemish-addresses survey yielded 768 respondents

(30,46%). The 1,580 Danish addresses yielded 453 respondents (28,67%)[3]. In addition to the invitation email, two reminders were sent at intervals of eight days. A non-response study has not been conducted.

The raw data set was then analysed and tested for aspects such as normality, relationships between the research variables, missing values and outliers. This has led to the removal of several respondents for various reasons (such as incompleteness, obstruction, etc.) from the three data sets. These were respectively 61 (Dutch), 157 (Flemish) and 144 (Danish), so that a workable dataset remained for each country of respectively 490 (Dutch), 611 (Flemish) and 309 (Danish). The three data sets have been merged into one workable dataset of 1,410 respondents.

The questionnaire sought basic information, including: age, gender, qualifications, nature and organizational location of the post, etc. Furthermore information was collected about the extent to which they experience in having influence on several processes in the academic and administrative domains and about the extent to which they want to have influence on processes in these domains. The study considers processes on three levels: (1) curriculum processes (content, development, implementation, and testing); (2) education support processes (study & student counselling, education logistics & planning, students & exam administration, educational engineering & infrastructure, internal & external communication); and (3) education conditional processes (like financial affairs, human resources, governance, quality assurance, strategic issues).

These three levels of processes represent all processes that come up within an educational organization and can therefore be seen as both a teaching process model and an educational-organizational model (Kallenberg, 2016b).

Figure 1 - Model of educational processes. The inner circle shows the educational process (curriculum), the central circle shows the education support processes and the outermost circle shows the education conditional processes (Kallenberg, 2016b).

Interviews

To extend the quantitative results with qualitative meaning, a second phase has been conducted with interviews and (short) observations with representatives from the three spheres, by applying the Actor Network Theory. The Actor Network Theory (ANT) provides an opportunity to understand communication pathways where meaning is negotiated. The ANT is a practical, challenging and intriguing tool for studying organizations, as its unique approach to connect people, artefacts, institutions and organizations. It enables to shed light on complexities that so far have escaped works on organization theory (Latour, 2005). The ANT-oriented methodology is used to look at the micro-interaction through which various elements or actors with agency perform. It is this knowledge that contributes to a better understanding of the spheres of influence among academics, administrators and third space professionals.

The following first describes the results and analysis of the quantitative data. Then a summary of a case is described, after which the article concludes with a discussion and conclusions section.

RESULTS SURVEY

General

The number of respondents is 1,410, of which 47,2% is male and 52,8% is female. There is an even spread of age in clusters of five years, with a median in the cluster between 41-45 years. 56,9% of the respondents belong to the academic staff, of which 69,1% has obtained a doctoral degree (PhD). Within the administrators' group, more than 13,1% has obtained a doctoral degree and 44,7% a Masters degree.

Firstly, in Table 1, some data is presented on the entire group of respondents, such as the male/female ratio; the average age; and the highest level of education. Then, the respondents have been categorized by job category (academics, administrators, academic middle managers and educational administrators). Later in the article, the number of respondents in the tables has not been specified unless, in a given situation, these numbers deviate significantly from the number presented in Table 1.

Tables 1 to 4 present the data both by country (The Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark) and for the entire group of respondents. Where relevant, comments have been made on remarkable scores.

Table 1 - some general information on respondents divided between the three countries.

	The Netherlands	Belgium	Denmark	Total
Male / Female	52,0% / 48,0%	42,5% / 57,5%	48,7 % / 51,3%	47,2 % / 52,8 %
Age (median in)	46-50 year	36-40 year	41-45 year	
Degree (Ba / Ma / PhD) in % **Other degree**	10,7 / 23,9 / 58,7 5,9%	15,7 / 37,1 / 31,8 15,3%	10,3 / 33,3 / 52,3 3,9%	13,1 / 32,6 / 45,6 8,6%
Academic	245 51,1%	290 47,6%	160 51,8%	695 49,7%
Administrator	161 33,6%	246 40,4%	84 27,2%	491 35,1%
Academic Middle Manager	54 11,3%	43 7,1%	46 14,9%	143 10,2%
Educational Administrator	19 4,0%	30 4,9%	19 6,1%	68 4,9%

From Table 1 it is noticeable that the majority of the Belgium respondents is female and the average age is younger than in the Netherlands and Denmark. In terms of education, the percentage of respondents that receive a doctorate is highest in the Netherlands (58.7%). Of the Flemish respondents only 31.8% received their doctorate, which is significantly less than in the Netherlands and Denmark. The discrepancy is explained by the fact that the group of Belgium academics consists, for a larger part (than the Netherlands and Denmark), of PhD students who have not yet received their doctorate. Another striking difference is that among the Flemish respondents there is a much higher percentage (40.4%) of administrators, especially compared to Denmark (27.2%). The percentage of respondents from third space professionals (= the sum of the academic middle managers and educational administrators), however, is higher in Denmark (21.0%) than in the Netherlands (15.3%) and Belgium (12.0%). Although it is not claimed that the group of respondents is representative of the population of employees at universities in the different countries, there seem to be fewer actors involved in the overhead in Denmark (33.3%) compared with Flanders (45.3%).

Educational Processes

On education processes four questions were posed, namely about the content of education; the provision of education; the development of education and the testing and assessment of education.

From the results (shown in Table 2) it appears that the differences in each country are relatively small, and that the four types of groups score recognizably. The academics indicate on all four questions that they experience a fairly high influence. As expected this does not apply to administrators. They experience relatively little influence (and do not want to have much influence) on the four subjects. The academic middle managers

score high on all four questions and would like to have even more influence on the four subjects than they are experiencing now. Interestingly, the educational administrators already experience quite a lot of influence on the four subjects and their ambitions for more influence are also evident.

If looked at more closely, there are other remarkable results. It is, for instance, remarkable that academics in Flanders experienced much less influence on the content of education (2.73) than their Dutch (3.56) and Danish colleagues (3.73). Another notable difference is that the Danish educational administrators experienced much more influence on the content of education (3.99) than their Dutch (2.42) and Flemish (2.27) colleagues.

The same difference can be seen for the subject 'provision of education'. Here too the Danish academics (4.23) and the educational administrators (3.95) score significantly higher than the Dutch (respectively 3.71 and 2.74) and Flanders (respectively 3.63 and 2.73). Danish educational administrators apparently have a specific role when it comes to their influence on the provision of education.

We also see a similar difference on 'testing and assessment of education'. Here, Danish educational administrators also indicate that they - compared to their Dutch and Flemish colleagues - experience much more influence.

Table 2: educational processes - content, provision, development and testing & assessment of education

CONTENT		Netherlands		Belgium		Denmark		Total	
1 = have / 2 = want to have influence		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Academics	M	3,56	3,92	2,73	3,29	3,73	4,13	3,25	3,71
	St.D	1,222	1,080	1,379	1,240	1,332	1,123	1,387	1,211
Administrators	M	1,27	1,63	1,31	1,61	1,26	1,38	1,29	1,58
	St.D	,652	,999	,807	,993	,866	,925	,769	,986
Academic Middle Managers	M	4,31	4,30	4,26	4,49	4,50	4,70	4,36	4,48
	St.D	,820	,792	1,061	,810	,782	,662	,886	,771
Educational Administrators	M	2,42	3,11	2,27	3,30	3,26	4,21	2,59	3,50
	St.D	1,170	1,150	1,337	1,291	1,195	,787	1,307	1,203

PRACTISING		Netherlands		Belgium		Denmark		Total	
Academics	M	3,71	3,98	3,63	3,86	4,23	4,43	3,80	4,04
	St.D	1,181	1,038	1,373	1,193	1,128	,951	1,275	1,107
Administrators	M	1,29	1,46	1,50	1,68	1,47	1,54	1,43	1,58
	St.D	,780	,910	1,083	1,180	1,162	1,157	1,011	1,097
Academic Middle Managers	M	4,26	4,34	4,65	4,68	4,65	4,83	4,51	4,60
	St.D	,902	,783	,783	,756	,766	,486	,840	,718
Educational Administrators	M	2,74	3,11	2,73	3,33	3,95	4,26	3,02	3,20
	St.D	1,284	1,286	1,413	1,470	1,129	,872	1,396	1,628

DEVELOPING		Netherlands		Belgium		Denmark		Total	
Academics	M	3,34	3,67	2,78	3,27	3,44	4,02	3,13	3,59
	St.D	1,262	1,152	1,402	1,292	1,386	1,155	1,382	1,246
Administrators	M	1,39	1,65	1,46	1,76	1,31	1,43	1,41	1,67
	St.D	,822	1,038	,953	1,130	,882	1,007	,900	1,084
Academic Middle Managers	M	4,13	4,20	4,42	4,60	4,37	4,65	4,29	4,46
	St.D	,933	,877	,879	,545	,853	,604	,895	,734
Educational Administrators	M	3,00	3,47	3,03	3,67	3,42	4,21	3,13	3,76
	St.D	,816	,964	1,299	1,124	1,305	1,182	1,183	1,121

ASSESSMENT		Netherlands		Belgium		Denmark		Total	
Academics	M	3,66	3,82	3,21	3,46	3,44	3,82	3,42	3,67
	St.D	1,210	1,134	1,404	1,233	1,565	1,398	1,391	1,250
Administrators	M	1,31	1,38	1,37	1,55	1,31	1,35	1,34	1,46
	St.D	,752	,806	,871	1,008	,918	,973	,841	,942
Academic Middle Managers	M	4,04	4,11	4,37	4,48	4,04	4,43	4,14	4,33
	St.D	,919	,934	1,024	,707	1,115	,834	1,022	,849
Educational Administrators	M	2,42	3,42	2,73	3,37	3,37	3,74	2,72	3,49
	St.D	1,216	1,261	1,258	1,351	1,342	1,284	1,304	1,299

Education support processes

Generally, an image emerges in the educational support processes of a clearly dominant role of the educational administrator. Compared to the other types of actors they experience distinctly more influence on these subjects. The academic middle managers score most similarly to the educational administrators on these subjects. The experienced influence of the administrators on these subjects is limited and this in itself is conspicuous.

Regarding differences between countries, we see, for example, that Danish academics clearly experience more influence on the education logistics (2.49) than their Flemish colleagues (1.78). Apparently, they are more involved in the education logistics processes (such as creating and scheduling timetables).

Flemish academic middle managers experienced more influence on student and examination administration than their Dutch and Danish colleagues. Danish educational administrators experienced both more influence on the student and examination administration, and the in/external communications & relationship management, than their Dutch and Flemish colleagues. In regard to the study and student counselling something remarkable occurs, namely that the Flemish academic middle managers experience more influence than their colleagues from and the Netherlands and Denmark, while the Flemish educational administrators clearly experienced less influence than their Dutch and Danish colleagues. This is remarkable because this role responsibility would actually appear to be vested in the educational administrators.

Table 3 - Educational support processes - study & student counselling, education logistics & planning, students & exam administration, educational engineering & infrastructure, internal & external communication

EDUCATIONAL LOGISTICS & PLANNING		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
1 = have / 2 = want to have		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Academics	M	2,07	3,00	1,78	2,46	2,49	3,26	2,04	2,84
	St.D.	1,060	1,141	,968	1,207	1,269	1,394	1,109	1,273
Administrators	M	1,73	1,84	1,56	1,75	1,80	1,88	1,66	1,80
	St.D.	1,317	1,274	1,065	1,194	1,333	1,374	1,202	1,251
Academic Middle Managers	M	2,78	3,46	2,98	3,24	3,07	3,91	2,93	3,54
	St.D.	1,208	1,145	1,205	1,078	1,289	1,029	1,231	1,115
Educational Administrators	M	3,00	3,74	3,00	3,45	3,63	4,00	3,18	3,69
	St.D.	1,155	,933	1,232	1,121	1,165	,745	1,209	,988

EDUCATIONAL ENGINEERING & INFRASTRUCTURE		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
Academics	M	1,58	2,46	1,42	2,14	1,45	2,24	1,48	2,28
	St.D.	,868	1,218	,750	1,132	,882	1,386	,826	1,232
Administrators	M	1,46	1,59	1,77	2,03	1,89	2,17	1,69	1,91
	St.D.	,942	1,063	1,246	1,356	1,151	1,387	1,148	1,291
Academic Middle Managers	M	1,89	3,13	2,07	3,21	2,04	2,78	1,99	3,04
	St.D.	1,127	1,214	1,203	1,048	1,134	1,281	1,148	1,196
Educational Administrators	M	2,26	3,32	2,60	3,23	2,26	3,16	2,41	3,24
	St.D.	1,046	1,057	1,248	1,251	1,046	,898	1,136	1,094

STUDENTS & EXAM-ADMINISTRATION		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
Academics	M St.D.	1,56 ,930	2,04 1,164	1,46 ,864	1,82 1,226	1,45 ,937	1,79 1,175	1,49 ,904	1,89 1,196
Administrators	M St.D.	1,79 1,299	1,88 1,347	1,76 1,209	1,91 1,249	1,64 1,105	1,70 1,166	1,75 1,221	1,86 1,268
Academic Middle Managers	M St.D.	2,21 1,348	2,63 1,284	2,67 1,128	2,86 1,026	2,09 1,151	2,56 1,235	2,31 1,237	2,68 1,193
Educational Administrators	M St.D.	3,05 1,129	3,26 1,098	3,07 1,413	3,47 1,196	3,37 1,342	3,42 1,387	3,15 1,307	3,40 1,211

INTERNAL & EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
Academics	M St.D.	1,85 1,071	2,32 1,221	1,71 ,946	2,01 1,105	1,75 1,023	2,13 1,231	1,77 1,010	2,15 1,184
Administrators	M St.D.	2,10 1,375	2,26 1,425	1,81 1,112	2,06 1,253	1,89 1,182	2,25 1,447	1,92 1,221	2,16 1,347
Academic Middle Managers	M St.D.	2,74 1,403	3,34 1,315	3,00 1,195	3,21 1,220	2,89 1,059	3,33 1,012	2,87 1,233	3,30 1,188
Educational Administrators	M St.D.	2,37 ,895	3,11 1,100	3,07 1,337	3,57 1,165	3,26 ,991	3,68 1,003	2,93 1,176	3,47 1,113

STUDY & STUDENT COUNSELING		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
Academics	M St.D.	2,17 1,248	2,48 1,274	1,70 1,027	2,08 1,208	1,46 ,868	1,73 1,110	1,81 1,113	2,14 1,242
Administrators	M St.D.	1,70 1,235	1,89 1,332	1,71 1,246	1,87 1,358	1,80 1,287	1,92 1,433	1,72 1,248	1,88 1,360
Academic Middle Managers	M St.D.	2,49 1,203	2,66 1,176	2,98 1,165	3,10 1,114	2,57 1,186	3,04 1,264	2,66 1,196	2,91 1,196
Educational Administrators	M St.D.	3,79 ,976	4,05 1,079	2,87 1,358	3,33 1,213	3,84 ,765	4,11 ,809	3,40 1,199	3,75 1,125

Educational Conditional Processes

A striking result in regard to the educational conditional processes, for example, is the extent to which the third space professionals (academic middle managers and educational administrators) want to have more influence on financial affairs. Especially in Denmark, this ambition is very strong. Danish educational administrators, who already

experience more influence in this area in comparison to Flanders and the Netherlands, want to have significantly more influence here (from 2.42 to 3.95).

The same Danish educational administrators want to have much more influence on the field of human resources (from 2.53 to 3.84). In this area, Danish educational administrators, together with their Flemish counterparts, already experience significantly more influence than the Dutch educational administrators (respectively 2.53 and 2.60 versus 1.89). In the field of human resources, it is the academic middle managers who experience the greatest influence in relation to the other actors.

In terms of quality assurance, it is the Dutch educational administrators who experience the greatest influence (4.21), which is significantly more than their Flemish counterparts (3.34). The subject of quality assurance appears to be a clear subject for the third space professionals, because their experienced influence is substantially larger than the other actors. Incidentally, there are no large differences between countries on this issue.

Governance is a topic on which the academic middle managers experience the most influence and the differences between countries are also quite small. An exception to this are the Danish educational administrators, who scored highest on this subject (3.22) and thus, for example, score significantly higher than the Dutch (2.58).

Strategy, finally, is a subject on which virtually all types of actors especially want to have much more influence than they have now (regardless of the degree of influence they experienced now). In this area too, the Danish educational administrators scored the highest.

Regarding the educational conditional processes, it is remarkable that the Danish educational administrators experience the most influence in relation to the other actors, also including the academic middle managers. Only in terms of human resources do the academic middle managers experience more influence. It is a remarkable difference since both in the Netherlands and Flanders the academic middle managers score consistently higher on these subjects than the educational administrators.

Table 4 - Educational conditional processes - financial affairs, human resources, governance, quality assurance, and strategic issues

FINANCIAL AFFAIRS		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
1 = have / 2 = want to have		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Academics	M	1,62	2,34	1,27	1,73	1,22	1,84	1,38	1,97
	St.D.	1,008	1,284	,682	1,072	,568	1,113	,810	1,191
Administrators	M	1,60	1,78	1,78	1,88	1,46	1,75	1,67	1,82
	St.D.	1,002	1,149	1,185	1,220	,987	1,286	1,099	1,208
Academic Middle Managers	M	2,39	2,98	2,37	2,93	2,15	3,17	2,31	3,03
	St.D.	1,510	1,367	1,254	1,295	1,210	1,217	1,339	1,293
Educational Administrators	M	1,68	2,74	2,40	3,10	2,42	3,95	2,21	3,24
	St.D.	1,057	1,284	1,354	1,185	1,216	1,224	1,264	1,294

HUMAN RESOURCES		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
1 = have / 2 = want to have		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Academics	M	1,77	2,39	1,42	1,95	1,30	1,79	1,52	2,07
	St.D.	1,129	1,337	,829	1,189	,725	1,133	,945	1,255
Administrators	M	1,63	1,89	1,64	1,91	1,74	2,11	1,65	1,94
	St.D.	1,042	1,206	1,091	1,231	1,204	1,490	1,094	1,271
Academic Middle Managers	M	2,78	3,31	2,86	3,45	2,78	3,26	2,80	3,34
	St.D.	1,410	1,146	1,246	1,194	1,428	1,541	1,360	1,293
Educational Administrators	M	1,89	3,11	2,60	3,40	2,53	3,84	2,38	3,44
	St.D.	1,049	1,100	1,303	1,276	1,219	1,425	1,234	1,286

QUALITY ASSURANCE		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
1 = have / 2 = want to have		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Academics	M	2,19	2,61	1,70	2,24	1,76	2,39	1,88	2,41
	St.D.	1,247	1,254	,941	1,236	1,049	1,364	1,104	1,282
Administrators	M	1,75	1,91	1,80	2,02	1,67	1,84	1,76	1,95
	St.D.	1,157	1,281	1,171	1,233	1,010	1,163	1,139	1,237
Academic Middle Managers	M	3,57	3,66	3,47	3,69	3,26	3,72	3,44	3,69
	St.D.	1,185	1,108	1,279	1,000	1,290	1,148	1,246	1,083
Educational Administrators	M	4,21	4,32	3,34	3,69	3,95	4,16	3,76	4,00
	St.D.	,918	,820	1,317	1,137	,621	,688	1,102	,969

GOVERNANCE		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
1 = have / 2 = want to have		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Academics	M	2,17	2,69	1,42	1,84	1,50	1,97	1,70	2,17
	St.D.	1,231	1,281	,777	1,062	,869	1,182	1,037	1,234
Administrators	M	1,92	2,24	1,54	1,78	1,70	1,98	1,69	1,96
	St.D.	1,140	1,325	,901	1,047	1,170	1,297	1,045	1,205
Academic Middle Managers	M	3,37	3,69	3,16	3,24	3,00	3,54	3,19	3,51
	St.D.	1,186	1,146	1,379	1,246	1,282	1,168	1,278	1,189
Educational Administrators	M	2,58	3,68	2,97	3,37	3,22	3,83	2,93	3,58
	St.D.	,902	1,108	1,189	1,159	,943	,924	1,063	1,089

STRATEGY		Ned	Ned	Fl	Fl	Den	Den	Tot	Tot
1 = have / 2 = want to have		1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Academics	M	1,93	2,88	1,46	2,17	1,43	2,12	1,62	2,41
	St.D.	1,159	1,339	,819	1,169	,858	1,248	,986	1,296
Administrators	M	1,80	2,25	1,60	1,95	1,60	1,94	1,66	2,05
	St.D.	1,073	1,315	,972	1,187	1,043	1,291	1,021	1,254
Academic Middle Managers	M	3,09	3,78	3,37	3,62	2,80	3,85	3,08	3,75
	St.D.	1,248	1,058	1,291	1,125	1,392	1,095	1,319	1,086
Educational Administrators	M	2,74	4,16	3,10	3,93	3,26	4,21	3,04	4,07
	St.D.	,991	1,015	1,094	1,015	1,284	,976	1,125	,997

Breakdown by type of actor

It is interesting to describe the results broken down by type of actor. Table 5 shows a breakdown of the experienced influence on the various processes by type of actor and area of work. Note that only a distinction between the academics and the administrators is made. The academics are shown in three groups, namely Professors; Associate/Assistant Professors; and research assistants, researchers in training and researchers. The administrators are displayed by type of process in which they operate. The so-called third space professionals are included in these two groups. Academic middle managers are often also Professors or Associate Professors, while educational administrators often also work with the content of quality assurance or governance. If a country employs a significantly different structure, it has been mentioned separately.

Regarding the academics, it is remarkable that the Professors both experience influence on the educational processes and on the educational conditional processes. Professors experience little influence on the educational support processes. The exception to this is the experienced influence on the logistic processes. Moreover, from the degree of influence they want to have on these processes (clearly more) it is clear that they apparently have an interest in being involved at certain times in (the provision of) education Associate/Assistant Professors and research assistants, researchers in training and researchers admittedly experience influence on the educational processes (though less than the Professors), but they experience little to very limited influence on the processes of the educational support or the educational conditional processes.

The administrators generally only experience influence on their own area of work. Outside their own area of work they experience no influence whatsoever. The exception to this are the administrators who have the planning of education in their portfolio (monitoring). They apparently have more coordinating tasks, so that they work together with other actors and therefore experience more influence. Additionally, the administrators who work on governance and quality assurance score high on multiple subjects. It should be noted that the scores of this group could be influenced by the fact that this group also includes many third space professionals (such as Head of Education; Head Education affairs, etc.). From this table it is clearly visible that the cooperation between the various departments and sections is very limited.

Table 5 - breakdown by type of actor
(scores above 2.50 are marked in grey).

	content	provision	development	testing	logistics	technique	administration	communication	student guidance	finance	HRM	quality	governance	strategy
Professor	4,06	4,25	3,82	4,01	2,51	1,79	1,91	2,33	2,34	2,25	2,66	2,93	3,03	2,90
Assistant/Associate Professor	3,80	4,18	3,68	3,81	2,34	1,60	1,64	1,98	2,02	1,39	1,61	2,12	1,83	1,68
Research Assistant/ Researcher in Training/Researcher	2,42	3,28	2,43	2,80	1,72	1,36	1,38	1,62	1,53	1,16	1,18	1,57	1,29	1,34
Scaffolding	1,63	2,04	1,82	1,46	2,04	1,51	2,23	2,35	4,00	1,25	1,28	2,04	1,63	1,73
Monitoring	1,59	1,59	1,83	1,80	3,67	1,96	2,69	2,41	2,56	1,46	1,43	2,02	1,78	1,55
Administrating	1,18	1,38	1,24	1,31	1,69	1,35	2,73	1,96	1,61	1,59	1,55	1,48	1,49	1,43
Facilitating	1,13	1,36	1,29	1,21	1,29	3,23	1,25	1,42	1,23	1,68	1,48	1,57	1,51	1,42
Communication	1,12	1,10	1,20	1,10	1,12	1,20	1,24	3,75	1,41	1,37	1,29	1,35	1,73	1,90
Finance	1,07	1,14	1,09	1,16	1,20	1,30	1,22	1,36	1,09	3,78	1,87	1,57	1,71	1,56
Human Resources	1,02	1,02	1,02	1,00	1,07	1,26	1,10	1,12	1,05	1,49	3,70	1,33	1,60	1,42
Governance / Quality Assurance	2,07	2,37	2,61	2,38	2,46	1,89	2,53	2,36	2,53	1,94	2,00	3,57	2,82	3,00

When we compare these scores with the four types of actors it creates a varied picture as shown in Figure 2. From Figure 2 it is clearly visible that the third space professionals (academic middle managers and educational administrators) clearly experience more influence on the various subjects than the academics or the administrators. Administrators experience only really experience influence on their own area of work, while the academics mainly experience influence on the educational processes. Third space professionals experience more than average influence on all processes.

Figure 2 - experienced influence of the four types of groups.
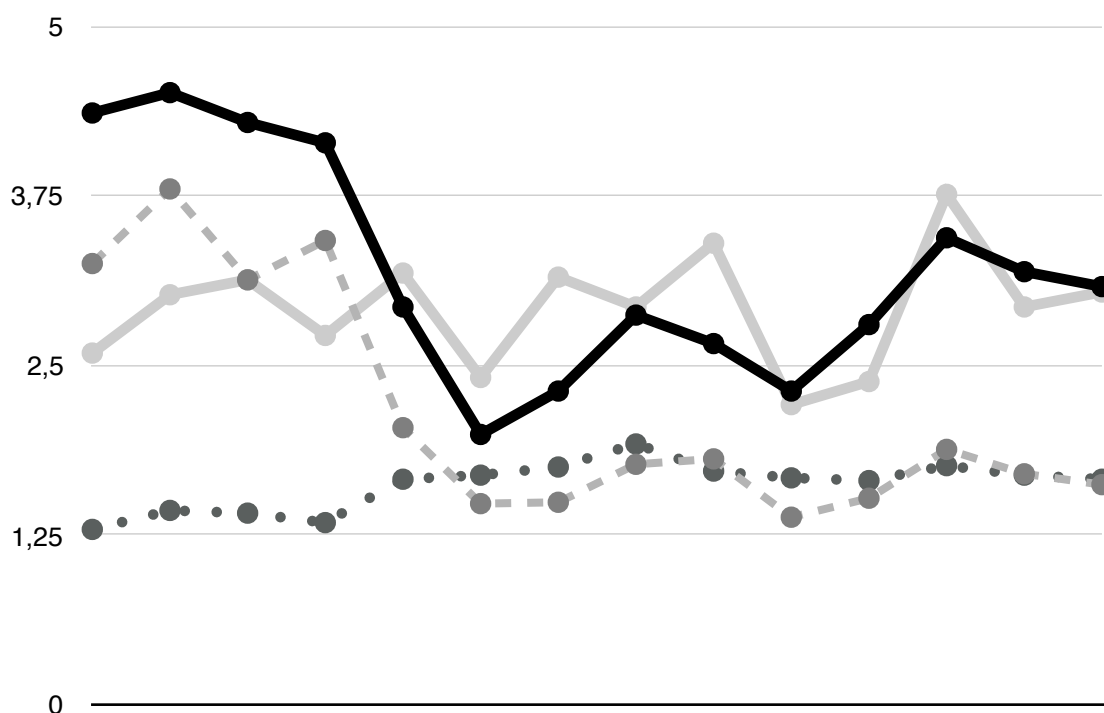
SOME CONCLUSIONS OF THE QUANTITATIVE PART: AN INTERMEZZO

The results of the research show that a clear distinction can be seen in the experienced influence on the various topics by the three groups: academics, administrators and third space professionals. The administrators only experienced influence on their own area of work, academics only experienced influence on the educational processes, and third space professionals experienced influence on most subjects and work areas. Of course the academics will also experience influence on the educational processes, however, this was not included in this study. However, the academics in regard to the field of educational processes should not be seen as a homogeneous group, because here too each academic feels particularly responsible for the educational processes in which they themselves are involved. This aspect was not taken into account in this study, but there are several reports that have previously shown this (see for example: Birnbaum, 1988; Conway, 1998; Roxå, 2011; Harboe, 2013).

It can therefore be argued that the university can be seen as a 'patchwork' of various interests in which employees within the university characterise themselves by being focused on a very small fraction of the many products that the university provides. In other words: everyone pursues a different objective; there is a lack of clarity and agreement on the goals of the organization as a whole and this affects the way people work. In regard to that orientation, there is no difference between the academics and the administrators whatsoever. Thus the results of previous research (Kallenberg, 2016b) are again confirmed.

Between the three countries there are several relevant differences that can be named. It seems that in Denmark there is a larger percentage of third space professionals than in the Netherlands and Flanders. Additionally, the Danish educational administrators experience more influence on educational processes than their Dutch and Flemish colleagues. Furthermore, the Danish educational administrators are a group of actors who on the field of educational conditional processes experience by far the most influence. In short: the Danish educational administrators seem to have an important position within the universities. Finally, it seems that the percentage of administrators (also referred to as 'overhead') is larger in Flanders than in the Netherlands and Denmark.

Now that it has been established that third space professionals indeed experience more influence on the various differentiated processes and thus perhaps also have more 'attention for the greater good' of the institution than the other groups, the question arises of how they deal with the situation of the patchwork university. After all, the fact that the university is characterized by all kinds of small isolated groups also means that there is a wide variety of habits, customs, rules and specialties, in short, all kinds of micro-cultures. How does the third space professional navigate these micro-cultures?

To illustrate this particular area, the second part of this article will describe a case within the framework of the Actor Network Theory. To this end, first, a brief explanation of the Actor Network Theory will be provided; then a description follows, after which this paper concludes with a number of shared conclusions.

ACTOR NETWORK THEORY

The Actor Network Theory is a somewhat lesser-known methodology of social science research and is characterized by the fact that it focuses on relationships and connections that develop between social and material phenomena. The Actor Network Theory (ANT) is based on the ontology[4] and describes the properties of things, or more broadly: the being of all of things (entities), of which it is assumed that they exist or better: 'are'. ANT's analyses follow how social (human) and material (non-human) entities come together (assemble), and subsequently exert a certain force on each other during a shorter or longer period of time (associate). The operating entity is termed the 'actor' and the influenced entity the 'actant'. The starting point of ANT is that nothing exists before it reveals itself. It is about 'symmetrical analysis', a principle which holds that the material en non-human elements of any network should be treated analytically in the same way as the social and human elements (Latour, 2005). ANT looks at everyday 'things' (objects, memories, intentions, technologies, texts) that are able to exert force on each other. They can convince each other, force, seduce, resist and change. ANT is aimed at understanding 'how' these things ('actants') develop together into networks that can act. These networks (in ANT-language called 'assemblies') produce forces and other effects such as: knowledge, identities, routines, behaviours, policies, curricula, innovations, repressions, reforms, diseases, and so on (Fenwick, 2010). The formed networks can continue to expand over wide areas, long distances or time periods. Of course, networks can also shrink, dissolve, or be abandoned. Thus, a network is dynamic with changing dimensions and connections and should not be seen as a technical network (such as a train or subway system or a 3G/4G network).

An example of an Actor-Network is a playground. A playground is a melting pot, in which there is continuous cooperation between balls, bikes, swings, lawns, children and their

capabilities, games, supervisors, safety rules, and so on. The playground is a composition or a 'network' of things that are composed in a particular way. An Actor itself is also something that can evoke all kinds of things: fears, policy, education, ways to play and resistances. The objects, such as people, knowledge, and locations are all a part of this Actor-Network and are in fact relational 'effects', which are produced by the interaction between the actors.

The ANT methodology dates from the late 70s, but has been further developed through the work of Latour (1999, 2005) in sociology; Law (1992, 1999) in organizational sociology; and Mol in health and policy.
More recently, among others, Fox (2005), Fenwick & Edwards (2011) and Viczko (2015) pointed out the relevance of the Actor Network Theory for education related research. In their view, ANT shows how the entities that we generally work with in educational research - lecture rooms, innovation, teaching, students, generating knowledge, curriculum development, policy, standardized testing, inequality - are in fact assemblies of countless things that order and guide educational practices.

RESULTS DUTCH CASE

The case concerns an illumination of the position of the academic middle managers within a Dutch faculty. The description of the case in this article is a summary of the extensive ANT description.

To illustrate the context of the case, academics and administrators within the faculty were asked how they view the relationship between the academics and the administrators within their own institution. This type of context offers relevant information because it contributes to a position description of the academic middle managers within the faculty.

Several administrators indicate that their expertise and knowledge necessary for managing universities is more or less denied and undermined by the academics and, subsequently, that this disdain influences their interaction with the academics. An administrator described this disdain as follows: [Ad4] "We never question their expertise in their discipline, but they question ours." Administrators regularly see themselves as less important than the academic staff. Moreover, the view exists that their role is secondary to the role of the academics. This last viewpoint has been ... more often (i.e. Szekeres, 2005; Iten, 2015). Academics too think in this way and this has also been noted before by i.e. Cullen (1998): "There is an old adage that administration is too important to be left to the administrators." The academics are under the impression that they do the 'real work' (education and research) and that this is what the status and reputation of the institution depends on. Indeed, universities are never praised for the way in which they are managed.

Another administrator [Ad7] indicated: "When I started working here, I expected I expected that we would share the same goals and that we would regularly talk about the way in which we could pursue those goals, or how we should accomplish them ... But I noticed very quickly that scientists are not at all interested in what we do and how we do it ...They simply want nothing to do with us and above all do not want to be bothered by us! They aim for something completely different than us. When, for example, I am trying to see what I can arrange for a student, I really don't have to go round knocking on their door for assistance. They pursue very different goals in their work and I also have the impression that we have totally different views about values, and such."

Academics, from their point of view, indicate that they have the impression that administrators only burden them with unreasonable requests and tasks: [Ac4] "the administrative mafia", [AC14] "the bureaucracy is endless," [AC17] "my time is much too costly to have to deal with scheduling and timetables."

The relationship between administrators and academics within this faculty is not optimal. They distrust each other and live separate lives, as much as possible. [Ad8] "Of the five working days a week there are at least three that I don't even exchange a word with someone from the academic staff. I see and speak only to my colleagues."
The arrival of a new academic middle manager in the role of Programme Director should improve this situation.
When he took office, the expectations were - euphemistically expressed - not very high on the part of the administrators, while the academics have hope that it will improve their situation. An administrator [Ad5]: "He's hardly trained in educational management, but is asked to fulfil a management role (and this based on his performance as an academic!). Then, he is the Programme Director and he has to make decisions about all kinds of things. That makes no sense! Everything we have built up over the years, he can break down in a few months time. And we are left cleaning up the mess caused by his decisions." An academic [Ac11]: "I assume that he will now make quick decisions about the scheduling and timetables. He is a colleague of mine and knows exactly what I am faced with. I want to have more time for my research. It cannot be that I am forced to give lectures throughout the whole year? He'll take care of it."

The academic middle manager is aware of his embedded position and positions himself in a surprisingly different way than his predecessors did (and than his colleagues expected). His leadership is characterized by precisely not centralizing himself as the individual leader who focuses his influence on the rest of the program. Moreover, he does not see himself as being tasked with solving education issues with targeted actions and developments. [AMM3] "My position is so localized that I not only have to take into account the staff, whether they are academics or administrators, but also with the force of the processes as they take place within the university and on which you cannot always simply exert influence. Sometimes, things just are what they are. I think we have to learn to take into account that certain processes take more time to develop, or that processes develop in a different direction than we expected."

In practice, it quickly becomes clear that the academic middle manager shows a twofold change in his views and actions. First, he pulls the focus away from people by also taking into account objects (things, the non-human, etc.) as sources of equivalent force. Second, the academic middle manager also views organizations in a new way. [AMM3] "I approach an existing practice or method of educational processes from the most comprehensive perspective possible: thereby I not only look at the people, but also at the things. It is no use trying to solve a scheduling problem by only looking at the possibilities of a teacher "…"Such a scheduling problem has several components and we should be able to approach these problems from a balanced consideration of people and processes."…"That teacher is in fact also just an effect of the schedule that has placed him in a specific lecture hall with a specific group of students, to give a specific lecture" … "But what kind of effect do, for instance, his lecture preparation, the student assignments, the textbooks, and even the lighting or the technical facilities of the lecture room have on the entire teaching-learning situation? This should also be considered." And also [AMM3]: "A process of educational policy takes place between and through different networks of relationships and things. Educational policy cannot be restricted by political or social boundaries. We must therefore examine which 'who' and above all

'what' has become involved in such a process and what is thereby created that makes it powerful."

Within a few months, the consequences of his actions lead to a shift in the relationship dynamics within the programme. First, there is a visible improvement in the relationship between academics and administrators. This is seen, for instance, in that they more jointly examine issues and challenges and become more aware of each other's expertise and each other's problems. Second, more acceptance is created among both academics and administrators of the power of a certain (administrative) process or 'thing'.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The strength of the academic middle manager in the above described case lies in the fact that he is able to remove the inability of administrators to prove their value and their contribution to the academics. Primarily, he did this not only by focusing on the people in the issues at hand, but also by explicitly including the material aspect. By placing greater emphasis on a comprehensive perspective, the administrators (especially) are better able to clearly demonstrate what their value and contribution to the academics is and how their work forms a valuable contribution to the work of the academics. This mutual recognition of and respect for each other's values and professionalism leads to a significant improvement in the quality of work and the welfare of the employees. Something that was also previously noted by, for example, Conway (1998).

Subcultures and Micro-cultures
The results of the survey have clearly shown that the different departments and types of actors vary greatly in regard to the influence they experience on the various processes within the university. The university can be seen as a patchwork in which many processes do not fit together or are closely related. This is both due to a kind of "working-apart-together" relationship between actors and departments, and due to a layering of university subcultures and micro-cultures, or, in other words, there is a multi-coloured palette of subcultures containing a variety of micro-cultures. Subcultures that can be distinguished are for instance the 'academic culture' of the academics and the 'machine bureaucratic culture' of the administrators. Within (and between) these subcultures, micro-cultures also exist. Micro-cultures are, even more than subculture, defined by aspects such (physical) small-scaleness, for example, within a team; a collaborative group of students; or the work situation on a (small) corridor at an office (Roxå & Mårtensson, 2011).

Because of this situation, a strong appeal is made to the capacities and abilities of the third space professionals. They find themselves in a critical position within the organization, and both academics and administrators individually have high expectations of their contributions to the organization. In another paper, I will elaborate on this situation (Kallenberg, 2016c). Third space professionals are negotiating and looking for alignment, consultation, cooperation, etc. To get things moving and to make decisions in consultation, it requires certain competences to act effectively and efficiently in this zone. It's their challenge to align people and policy in order to increase the institutions' efficiency. To do this, they have to navigate smoothly between the subcultures in the organization. Each HE-organisation hosts many subcultures that may more or less explicit oppose the norms and value systems dictated by the predominant culture. And although academic cultures are often described as collegial with an emphasis on the archaic term

peer, everyday experience and network theory contradicts this assumption (Vickzo, 2015). Third space professionals have the advantage of having access to more information than others, and they participate more often in discussions where meaning is negotiated (Kallenberg, 2013). Therefore they become key-players in the cultural process where meaning and values are assigned to different types of behaviour.

Because of the fact that individuals not communicate in the same way with everybody, and each individual belongs to a smaller and denser network, the communication in these smaller networks is more emotional and characterized by reciprocal confidence. Each small network is situated in a context of many other small networks each connected to the others by weak links. The gap between these networks and clusters are linked together by bridges (pathways), which tend to be connected to a few individuals in each cluster, the hubs, who have more links than the average person in the networks: the third space professional. Through these pathways culture is constructed, maintained and possibly changed. Mapping these networks give us a clear idea about the possibilities of the third space professionals to align policy and people. In another paper, I will elaborate on this situation (Kallenberg, 2016c).

Third space professionals have to perform a balancing act in order to meet expectations from the formal organization that has assigned them as leaders (external mandate), but also in order to gain and maintain an internal mandate from the teachers they work with and lead (internal mandate) (Mårtensson & Roxå, 2016). Mårtensson & Roxå, in a research on the role of mid-level leaders in the development of local cultures of learning and teaching, conclude that "the internal mandate is the most crucial for leaders timing at development in their local teaching and learning culture." After all, leadership is extremely difficult and complex. Kallenberg (2013), in a research on the role of the academic middle managers in strategic innovations in higher education, concludes that the role of 'Diplomat is the most important role for these actors. In their role as Diplomat 'they explore ways to realise their vision, purpose and strategy by obtaining and maintaining legitimacy, image, reputation and resources. They propose new ideas on the topic of education and educational processes. Their vision is inspiring and based on substantive arguments. They offer room for adjustments and changes. They are politically sensitive and have powers of persuasion. They act both as liaison persons and as spokespersons.' Alvesson (2011) describes this type of leadership as: "The position of the third space professionals is not to be envied because within organizations a common view is that management should not ask for too much money, energy, and attention, on the grounds that money, energy and attention is then taken away from the primary processes and goals for which the organization was created. Especially in the context of education this view is 'fashionable'; no one wants to be known as someone who puts all his heart and soul in administration, management and organization without regard for the students who are ultimately the ones it is all about. Good management is therefore, in the best case, experienced as something self-evident and, in the worst case, associated with unnecessary bureaucracy, administrative pressure, 'red-tape' and to-do-lists that stand in the way of the actual work that must be done. For the academic middle managers, this means that he tends not to position himself too firmly, while a similar position for the educational administrator would mean that he is seen as a typical bureaucrat. Thus, third space professionals have nothing to gain but everything to lose!

At the same time, the third space professionals also have much 'power,' as they see a lot of information pass by and subsequently translate and interpret this information and can pass it on throughout the organization. It can lead to information being 'bent,' or revised, or sent into the organization in a completely different form. This often leads to

extra bureaucratic viscosity because ambiguities arise, misconceptions and misinterpretations, etc. But, depending on how the third space professional handles this, it can also provide him with many benefits. That translation and interpretation by the middle manager is also called the "prism effect" (Kallenberg, 2013, 2015).

The third space professional comes into its own when he manoeuvres between all these groups and while doing so establishes connections in a smart way. By doing this, he is able to establish things within the university, not by being able to, for instance, bring unity within the university (the university indeed also benefits from remaining an archipelago, because it is then much better able to react to developments in society), but by being able to bring in short-term successes or qualities from which the university can benefit by, for instance, rankings, external accreditation, etc.

The skills required of an academic middle manager are extensive. Academics who take on administrative roles such as heads of departments and even vice-chancellors require a set of skills and knowledge very different to those used for their academic work. It is not self-evident that an academic middle manager 'just' has these skills and knowledge. Therefore, academic middle managers should first be properly trained in education management before being appointed their roles.

Keywords:
Academic middle manager, educational administrator, third space professional, interacting spheres model, academics, administrators,

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[2] Examples include staff from central services, such as real estate / library / student counsellor / academic affairs / personnel / finance / Admissions Office / maintenance / special collections / IT support / copy, print & mail / facilities / audiovisual service and reception staff. At the faculty level, employees such as secretaries of the board, reception staff and research staff such as analysts, conservators and (policy) employees were excluded. The same applies to visiting researchers / external PhD students / guest staff / interns and student assistants.

[3] In this concept paper not yet all the Danish respondents have been taken into the dataset because of lack of time just in front of the conference.

[4] An example of the operation of a particular ontology is, for example, empirical research. Here the nature of the research object is ontologically seen as an objective element, an unchanging structure, measurable, and independent of human knowledge. In particular the first term (objective element) is important because experiments on the object are useless if the structure keeps changing. In the case of variable objects, an inherent fixed regularity is sought. An ontology establishes a theory on reality. Within a scientific framework, an ontology enables a useful measurement of that reality. The measurements may lead to a revision of the theory and thus to new measurements.