



**UiO • Det utdanningsvitenskapelige fakultet**

# **University Strategy: structural and institutional trends and dilemmas**

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# Why is university strategy becoming important?

- Domestic policies increasing the institutional autonomy
- The marketization of higher education – especially related to university funding – and the (global) competition that follows
- Concerns about the institutional diversity within the higher education systems
- The changed perceptions of higher education institutions – universities becoming “normal” organizations

# The overarching policy agenda

- What are the main objectives of policy-makers in Europe?
  - Develop system effectiveness (diversity)
  - Strengthen academic quality
  - Increase system efficiency – especially in a situation where resources are more scarce and ambitions regarding quality is increasing

# **Trends and challenges in the public steering of higher education**

- Increased fragmentation of public steering:
  - Challenge: more autonomous (and supra-national) public bodies contribute to less coherent actions at systems level
- Many policy instruments emphasising academic quality and efficiency - through new areas for competition
  - Challenge: Identifying instruments that addresses diversity, division of labour, and relevance

# University strategy: challenges at institutional level

- Institutional strategies, student demand and research quality not always in sync
  - Challenge: How to balance long-term ambitions, and (attractive) short-term (expansion)
- Institutional strategies often highly dependent on historical and environmental characteristics. Key challenges include the risks that:
  - institutions are "doomed to be entrepreneurial" (Stensaker & Benner 2013)...
  - "strategic inertia" will become the result

# Strategic HE issues from a..

## Structural perspective      Inst. perspective

- Diversity important wrt students needs
  - Increased (social) mobility
  - Specialization increases efficiency
  - Diversity creates the basis for innovation
- Diversity not as important as market adaptation
  - Keep the students within the region
  - Specialization increases the economic risk
  - Diversity is pushed back in favour of standardization

# On-going developments and unresolved issues

- Increasing interest in mergers, alliances and strategic collaborations as a way to strengthen the institutional positioning
  - what are the implications for effectiveness, quality and efficiency?
  - Is the race for research excellence only a way for universities to escape strategic actions?