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Analysing Finnish steering system from the perspective of social space: the case of the 'Campus University' / Leena Treuthardt and Jussi Välimaa

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Abstract

The present study analyses Finnish higher education steering system, management by results, from the perspective of higher education institutions. We ask what happens inside a higher education institution, called here the 'Campus University', during the actual negotiations related to the national steering system. We analyse not only the management by results as a steering system but pay close attention to the social space created by this managerial fad. The social space of the negotiations is constructed by different kinds of unofficial elements of social interaction; the physical space, the expected behaviour of the negotiators, the seating arrangements, the coffee servings, and the 'small talk'. These elements of interaction are part of the polity of the negotiations and they are controlled by the chairperson of the negotiations. They form the modes of the social space of these negotiations. Therefore, the social space of the negotiations not only supports the hierarchical character of the ritual, but also makes it natural for the Rector to use power to allocate resources because s/he represents the institution. The analysis is based on qualitative and ethnographic methods of research.

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