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**Abstract**

This paper contributes to the debate on strategic capability of academic organizations by presenting three case studies of Swiss Higher Education Institutions. Strategies are conceived as instruments by which universities manage their organizational processes and deal with their environments in order to select a portfolio of activities and find an appropriate position in the higher education system. Our findings show that strategies are at the same time a matter of intentions and actions: first, they relate to current HEI's position within the national Higher education system?and to relevant normative models?as well as to the degree of institutional autonomy. Second, even within participatory governance structures, organizational strategies appear to be initiated by the academic administrators, then substantially shaped and subscribed by academics at different stages. In this perspective, the dynamic relation of formal and informal processes holds diverse functions from making academics accept a strategy, to controlling and coordinating decentralized organizational structures. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Fumasoli, Tatiana, E-Mail: tatiana.fumasoli@usi.ch