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**Abstract**

Strategic management and leadership has been a vital catchphrase in most European higher education reforms over the past decade, and has in many countries resulted in a strengthening of the top level management tiers. Rectors and Deans are increasingly tasked with the responsibility of turning HEIs into more active, entrepreneurial actors in society, and are in this way required to take on and inhabit the role as strategic managers to a much higher degree than ever seen before in higher education systems. This role, apart from being new to many of the managers, is at the same time complicated by the upending of the traditional governance structures, and the rigorous defence of the very same structures stemming from the academic staff. The article examines how these strategic managers simultaneously attempt to make sense of these changing circumstances, and how new and old ideas, values and norms play into these sensemaking processes. The findings suggest that while traditional academic norms may still be very influential, new ideas about HEIs have found their way into both sensemaking and sensegiving efforts, and that both old and new ideas significantly affect the goal construction and strategic management practice. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Degn, Lise, E-Mail:

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