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**Abstract**

The emphasis on competitiveness and the knowledge-based economy in European policymaking has resulted in a heightened focus on monitoring and steering the science system, particularly through metric-based instruments. Policymakers' general aims of fostering excellent research and breakthroughs are shared by researchers as well; however, below the surface is a paradox that is rarely discussed. The political system and the science system understand and pursue these concepts and objectives differently. Through two case studies on high-performing university-based research environments in Denmark and Sweden, this article uncovers the ways in which highly successful researchers often behave in ways that run counter to policy steering attempts. They do this by shielding themselves and their research group from steering pressures originating in the political system. Using Luhmann's systems theory, the cases demonstrate why the relationship between the science system and the political system needs to be understood as a horizontal rather than a vertical relationship, and using concepts from organizational theory, provides a model and terminology for

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identifying and analyzing the types of mechanisms and strategic responses that the science system uses to shield itself from political steering pressures. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Young, Mitchell,

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