



Complexities, challenges and implications of collaborative work within a regime of performance measurement: the case of management and organisation studies

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3 Complexities, challenges and implications of collaborative work within a regime
4 of performance measurement: the case of management and organisation studies
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10 **Abstract**
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14 The current demands on higher education institutions (HEIs) to become more efficient and
15 effective have led to increasing performance pressures on researchers, and consequently on
16 the practices and outcomes of researcher collaborations. In this paper, based on a qualitative
17 study of collaborative experiences of management and organisation studies scholars, we
18 explore the complexities and challenges of researcher collaborations under the current regime
19 of academic performance measurement. Our study suggests that researcher collaborations are
20 underpinned by four main rationalities: traditional-hierarchical, strategic-instrumental,
21 scholarly-professional and relationship-orientated. We find that strategic-instrumental
22 rationalities are the most prevalent and typically infuse other rationalities. Our research
23 demonstrates that there are potential adverse consequences for the quality and purpose of
24 outputs, the effects on collegial relationships and risks of exploitation and reinvoked
25 hierarchies in collaborative relationships. The study reveals some of the problematic
26 implications for academics and HEIs that emerge as a consequence of research productivity
27 measurement.
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39 **Keywords:** Academic hierarchy; Business Schools; New Public Management; researcher
40 collaboration; research performance measurement.
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Introduction

Across the world, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been undergoing transformations intended to make universities more entrepreneurial, market-oriented, managerial, accountable and productive (e.g. Davies and Thomas 2002; Nikunen 2012; O'Connor and O'Hagan 2016). Governments in a number of countries have introduced periodic research audits aimed at improving universities' competitiveness and efficiency in their use of resources. Arguably, academics have never before so strongly experienced performance pressures (Adcroft and Taylor 2013; Clarke and Knights 2015; Ylijoki 2013).

These transformations have been underpinned by the gradual withdrawal of state funding for higher education (HE) and an increasing requirement for universities to generate their own financial resources, combined with New Public Management (NPM) inspired reforms, such as the introduction of academic performance management. These have impacted academic practice and the ways in which academics relate to their work and to each other (e.g. Deem, Hillyard and Reed 2007; Ylijoki, 2013), and have led to a literature analysing the consequences of increased demands on academics (Bogt and Scapens 2012; Cadez, Dimovski and Groff 2017) to demonstrate high productivity (De Vita and Case 2016; Gill 2014). In particular, there has been a growing body of work addressing the multi-faceted implications of academic performance measurement, especially research productivity evaluated through criteria such as publication ranking and success in attracting external grants (Leišytė 2016; Shore and Groen, 2009).

This paper contributes to the critical literature on NPM in HE, and specifically on the impacts of research productivity measurement. It does so through addressing the complexities, challenges, inherent power struggles and implications for academics and HEIs of researcher collaboration (Berman 2008; Leahey and Reikowsky 2008; Smith, 2001). The subject of researcher collaboration – understood with regard to a relationship between researchers, rather than, for example, researchers and research participants or other stakeholders (Engstrom, 1984) – has previously been explored in relation to motivations for, and patterns and strategies in, collaborative relationships (Jeanes, Loacker and Śliwa 2014; Morrison, Dobbie and McDonal 2003). However, the implications of collaboration for researchers at different career stages and for academic *practice* in general remain under-explored. This is partly due to the fact that studies of researcher collaboration, especially those conducted in the medical and natural sciences, have typically adopted bibliometric approaches consisting of

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3 quantitative measurement of different collaboration-related variables (Birnholtz 2007; Knobel
4 et al. 2013; John-Steiner 2000). As such, they have not addressed the more complex and
5 challenging aspects of collaboration that do not easily lend themselves to measurement.
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9 To complement existing debates on research productivity measurement and researcher
10 collaboration, our paper draws on a qualitative study of collaborative experiences of
11 academics in management and organisation studies (MOS) at different career stages within
12 three institutional contexts, namely British, Germanic and Nordic. These contexts have
13 undergone NPM-inspired reforms, with an emphasis on research productivity which is now a
14 common feature of university management across Europe (Barrett and Barrett 2011; Leišytė
15 2016; Musselin 2005). In the analysis we identify and critically examine four rationalities,
16 understood as 'ways or systems of thinking' (Gordon 1991, 3), inscribed in and underpinning
17 accounts of collaborative practices. We discuss the consequences of researcher collaboration
18 under conditions of research productivity measurement for academics and HEIs with
19 reference to these collaborative rationalities. The following sections present, respectively, a
20 brief overview of key relevant arguments from the literature on research productivity
21 measurement and researcher collaboration, an outline of fieldwork methods, an analysis of the
22 empirical material, and a discussion.
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32 **Research productivity measurement in contemporary academia**

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35 The term New Public Management typically refers to a set of reforms initiated in the 1980s
36 and involving the introduction of management methods previously applied in private sector
37 organisations to the public sector, with the intention of making the latter competitive, more
38 efficient in its use of public resources and more effective in delivering goods and services
39 (Christensen and Lægreid 2007). In HE, NPM has come to be associated with discourses of
40 excellence (in research, and more recently in teaching), relevance and accountability, and
41 managerial approaches to monitor and evaluate the work of academics according to a variety
42 of performance criteria (Davies and Thomas 2002; Deem, Hillyard and Reed 2007). While
43 such discourses and modes of managing have been widespread across all university
44 disciplines, schools of management and business are often considered as characterised by a
45 remarkably 'heavy presence of managerialism' (De Vita and Case 2016, 354), which makes
46 them a particularly apt setting to study the impacts of NPM on academia.
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56 Critics of academic performance management, and especially research productivity
57 measurement, have highlighted that it gives rise to individualistic behaviours and practices,
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3 reinforcing competitiveness and potentially undermining collegiality (Ball 2012). Lynch
4 (2015, 1999) warns that those who have internalised the productivity imperative are likely to
5 develop an ‘actuarial and calculative mindset’, and to adopt a way of relating to the
6 university organisation and to other academics, including collaborators, in purely
7 transactional, career-oriented terms.
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12 Amongst specific practices impacted by research productivity measurement, a recent study by
13 Nygaard (2017, 529) has identified those associated with ‘decisions about what to produce,
14 how high to aim (including how to know when something is finished), whether and how to
15 co-author, and what to prioritize’. Academics are expected to focus on the production of
16 publication outputs that ‘count’ within a research measurement regime, which in MOS
17 primarily means highly ranked academic journal articles. Different institutions and contexts
18 develop their own journal rankings – such as the Chartered Association of Business Schools’
19 Academic Journal Guide (CABS 2015) widely used in the UK– which ‘are applied by
20 (university) managers to assess and direct staff’ (Willmott 2011, 437) and influence and
21 predict performance outcomes. This incentivises collaborative publications since both quality
22 and quantity of output matter for assessing research productivity and can even impact global
23 rankings.¹ However, questions have been raised about the quality of outputs produced under
24 the regime of ‘excellence’. For example, it has been argued that as a result of these
25 measurements, academics might be more concerned with producing publications that conform
26 to external quality evaluation criteria rather than striving to produce what they consider their
27 ‘best work’ (Nygaard 2017). Following Willmott (2011, 437), the increasing predominance of
28 journal lists and rankings as performance measurement tools tends to exert a ‘homogenizing
29 impact’, stifling scholarly diversity and innovation. A specific study of management scholars
30 has further shown a tendency to approach writing for academic publication as a ‘game’ rather
31 than a process of critical inquiry (Butler and Spoelstra 2014).
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45 Not being able to satisfy research performance (typically publication) expectations can have
46 detrimental effects on academics, manifested in feelings of insecurity and other negative
47 thoughts, which in turn affect an individual’s ability to produce further publications (Clarke
48 and Knights 2015; Sherry et al. 2010). This can lead to an individual’s inability to secure
49 academic employment, to remain employable or to gain promotion. Such far-reaching
50 personal impacts have been found to particularly strongly affect women and early career
51 researchers (ECRs) (Davies and Thomas 2002; Laudel and Gläser 2008; Leišytė 2016;
52 Nielsen 2017; Ylijoki and Henriksson 2017), and add to the appeal of researcher
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8 **Complexities and challenges in researcher collaborations**

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10 Katz and Martin (1997, 7) describe researcher collaboration as ‘the working together of
11 researchers to achieve the common goal of producing new scientific knowledge’. More
12 broadly, collaboration is commonly considered a vehicle for building professional networks,
13 sharing knowledge, ideas, skills, experiences, workload, resources and risks associated with
14 the research process, and for improving future employment prospects as well as attracting
15 research funding for the collaborating parties (Bammer 2008; Bozeman and Corley 2004;
16 Ritchie and Rigano 2007). Existing literature generally views collaboration as a positive and
17 desirable aspect of the research process (Cheek 2008), one that brings about greater creativity
18 in individuals (Smith 2001). Collaboration is also understood as a way to counter the feeling
19 of loneliness in research with a sense of solidarity, friendship and enjoyment (Katz and Martin
20 1997; Shore and Groen 2009).
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29 Researcher collaboration can, however, also lead to feelings of disappointment, resentment
30 and anger (Ritchie and Rigano 2007). Collaborations can be messy, since collaborative
31 relationships involve two or more individuals ‘with potentially contrasting viewpoints,
32 interpretive frameworks, personal characteristics, histories, and experience, that all contribute
33 to knowledge production’ (Thomas et al. 2009, 313). However, there is more to understanding
34 collaborative relationships than can be captured by the idea of individuals working together,
35 since researcher collaborations are embedded in a broader politico-economic and institutional
36 socio-discursive context. Historically, a key element of this was the ‘hierarchical social
37 system of science’, which manifested, among other things, in ‘dependency, financial or
38 intellectual’ (Beaver and Rosen 1979, 232), particularly of junior researchers on senior ones.
39 This situation of institutional and personal dependency, that still exists today, can result in
40 practices disadvantaging the more vulnerable collaborators. Examples of these practices
41 include the ‘Matthew effect’ (Merton 1973), where greater credit for joint work is attributed
42 to the more eminent researcher in the collaborative partnership regardless of the actual extent
43 of their contribution, and the ‘Matilda effect’ (Rossiter 1993), where contributions by female
44 researchers are not acknowledged and/or are attributed to her male colleague(s).
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56 The power inequalities associated with institutional hierarchies and differences in career stage
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3 can result in unequal influence on decision making, and/or shaping the final ‘product’ of
4 collaboration (Melin 2000). For junior researchers, working in a hierarchically structured,
5 ‘vertical’ (Morrison et al. 2003) team might denote a formal reporting relationship with the
6 senior academic, rather than co-operation and an ability to express one’s ‘voice’, even though
7 they may make a substantial contribution to the research. Even in ‘horizontal’ (*ibid.*)
8 relationships, i.e. those where the collaborators are broadly equal in status and/or may be
9 personal friends outside the work setting, there is a risk of imbalances in power, manifesting
10 in ‘impositional tendencies’ (Lather 1991) or even ‘conceptual imperialism’ (Stanley and
11 Wise 1983) being exercised by one party over an/other(s).
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18 In the context of an academic performance measurement regime, not only do pressures on
19 research performance present drivers for increased collaborative activity, they also influence
20 the choices and practices of collaborators. It is therefore crucial to explore whether and how
21 the present context impacts individuals as well as collaborative practices and outputs
22 associated with researcher collaborations. In the remainder of this paper, we empirically
23 address the complexities and challenges of researcher collaborations experienced by
24 management and organisation studies academics.
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33 **Methodology**

34 *Data collection and analysis methods*

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39 Fifteen interviews (seven men, eight women) were conducted with Early Career Researchers
40 (ECRs, n=6), Mid-Career Researchers (MCR, n=6), and Senior Career Researchers (SCR,
41 n=3) to reflect a breadth of research experience and effects of levels of seniority on
42 collaborative practice. All participants were employed in business or management schools, in
43 one of five countries: Austria, Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the UK, representing three
44 broader academic contexts: British (BC, n=5), Germanic (GC, n=5) and Nordic (NC, n=5).
45 The aim was to include different regional and institutional environments in Europe affected
46 by NPM and productivity measurement in order to reflect some of the diversity of the
47 academic contexts without seeking to present a comprehensive picture of different European
48 systems or provide a representative comparative study. Most participants had experience of
49 more than one context and of inter-institutional and international collaborations, therefore
50 classifying participants based on their current employment can only be seen as a guide (see
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3 Table 1). This diversity enables us to explore experiences beyond, and therefore irreducible
4 to, a specific national or institutional context. The specificity of the field of study, which
5 limits broader cross-disciplinary analysis, and the inclusion of those with prevailing
6 performance management regimes, makes it possible to focus on those facing similar
7 discipline-specific challenges.
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11 The semi-structured interviews explored questions around: 1) the institutional context in
12 which participants were employed; 2) participants' understandings of academic work and
13 specifically researcher collaborations; 3) reasons for researcher collaborations; 4) experiences
14 of researcher collaborations including both successful and unsuccessful collaborations; 5)
15 practices of collaboration; 6) challenges and costs, as well as benefits and value of
16 collaborations; and 7) reflections on researcher collaborations. Each interview, undertaken by
17 a member of the international research team (all of whom had experience in at least two of the
18 selected contexts) was recorded and transcribed. For the purposes of anonymity we refer to
19 the participants using pseudonyms throughout the analysis, indicating their position and
20 employment context.
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24 Participants were selected through a stratified purposeful sample taken from a wider study,
25 which drew on our broader research networks, to incorporate academics from the three
26 contexts, and a balance across the genders, and across seniority, with a deliberate bias towards
27 early and mid-career researchers to reflect the profile of the academic workforce. Determining
28 the position of potential participants in the selection process was based on a number of factors
29 including job title and length of service, with the former being the most significant factor.
30 Classifications were agreed amongst the research team (see Table 1).
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49 The empirical material was analysed iteratively, with each member of the research team
50 exploring the data to draw out themes, which were then discussed and agreed. Initially we
51 categorised the data by four meta themes that broadly reflect the interview topics, resulting in
52 56 subthemes. Across these themes we identified underpinning rationalities that sustained,
53 justified or explained motivations, attitudes, practices, experiences and responses to the
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3 context. Of these we agreed there were four meta rationalities which we use to present the
4 findings. Whilst individual stories were unique, there was significant consistency in the
5 rationalities recurring in the interviews, leading us to consider the findings to be robust.
6 Career stage was an important factor in our analysis, and gender differences were also evident
7 but less strongly so. We therefore do not draw out the gender-based arguments in this paper,
8 given the need to be focused in our analysis.
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12 *Background to empirical contexts*

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16 The three regional contexts in Western Europe from which we have drawn our sample of
17 participants have all undergone NPM reforms and are characterised by cultures of academic
18 performance management and research productivity demands. In all of them, universities are
19 expected to compete against each other for resources, staff and the ‘best’ students, and to
20 operate in an efficient manner. Here, schools of business and management lead the way in
21 terms of ‘student-centricity’ and demands for ‘financial sustainability’ and ‘commercial
22 orientation’ (De Vita and Case 2016, 354; Kallio et al. 2015). Schools of management and
23 business, in particular, are subject to international comparisons through accreditation and
24 ranking (Engwall, 2007).
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32 The British academic environment, and in particular that of business schools, is commonly
33 seen as one within which the culture of performance management is particularly strong
34 (Chubb and Watermeyer 2017). Since 1986, HE has been subject to periodic evaluations to
35 assess the quality of research and determine funding. These have been key in shaping the
36 norms of the sector, which make an explicit link between quantity of so-called ‘high-quality’
37 publications of academics and levels of government funding provided, as well as an
38 institution’s place within national and international rankings (Leathwood and Read 2013).
39 The effects have significant career and behavioural implications for individuals, whereby the
40 generation of highly ranked publication outputs becomes the main rationale and career
41 strategy of academics, as it is more likely to lead to promotion than other types of academic
42 activity (see also Fernando 2016).
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51 Similarly, an emphasis on efficiency and competition dominates the Germanic academic
52 context, which includes HE institutions located in Austria, Germany and Switzerland (Müller-
53 Carmen and Salzgeber 2005). The performance of universities is regularly evaluated through
54 audit instruments and performance targets (*Leistungsvereinbarung*) between the university
55 and the state (Welte, Auer and Meister-Scheytt 2006). Traditionally, a unique cultural feature
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3 of the Germanic academic context was a system of professorial patronage and patriarchal
4 relations associated with the 'chair regime' (Müller-Carmen and Salzgeber 2005). While this
5 system, with its hierarchical inequalities, is still influential, HE reforms in the Germanic
6 context have led to increased numbers of mainly ECRs and MCRs being employed on
7 temporary, short-term and often third-party funded contracts (Sander 2012).
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12 As with the Germanic environment, universities in the Nordic context, with institutions based
13 in Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, are largely funded by tax revenue and
14 regulated by agreements between the state and the institution, rooted in the principle of HE
15 sector's autonomy (Aarrevaara, Dobson and Elander 2009). Nevertheless, academic
16 performance management and research productivity pressures have a strong presence in the
17 Nordic context. This is not only because of NPM reforms and the adoption of business
18 management models, but also because of Nordic institutions' ambition to be amongst the most
19 highly ranked universities in the world (Engwall 2007).
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26 Below we present an analysis that identifies common themes across the three regions in
27 relation to the challenges, complexities and power struggles within researcher collaboration,
28 taking particular account of the career stages of our participants, which was identified as a key
29 differentiating factor.
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36 **Rationalities in researcher collaborations**

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39 A variety of rationalities inform prevalent practices of researcher collaboration. Below we
40 critically discuss these rationalities, which we term as: a) traditional-hierarchical, b) strategic-
41 instrumental, c) scholarly-professional, and d) relationship-oriented.
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45 *Traditional-hierarchical rationalities*

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48 Participants' narratives suggest that researcher collaborations remain underpinned by
49 traditional-hierarchical rationalities, whereby emphasis is placed on the seniority and
50 institutional position of collaborators. Most academics share similar understandings as to who
51 makes a 'good' collaborator, such as equal and meaningful contributions (for example, going
52 beyond providing access to a network) and reliability. On closer inspection, however,
53 responses often differ with respect to hierarchical position. Junior colleagues only
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3 occasionally mention benefits gained from collaborations with senior scholars, arguing,
4 instead, that inequality (e.g. of contributions and voices), power asymmetry, and exploitation
5 were integral to collaborations. In particular ECRs employed within the Germanic context
6 tend to refer to their institutions as being hierarchically ordered. As one participant indicates:
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8 “more than 99% of the collaborations are kind of decided for me... [by] a well-known person
9 in the community” (Karl-ECR-GC). Elsewhere in the interview, the same participant
10 comments on a situation where a senior collaborator, “never wrote a single line for a
11 publication. This just has to be accepted because of the hierarchical system in Germany and
12 Austria”. This experience was shared by others in different contexts:
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18 “[E]ven though his name (senior collaborator) is last in the alphabet, he puts his name
19 first ... I’ve tried to address it but there’s been no response. So you kind of feel like
20 the hierarchy has been slipping in... I didn’t really know how to handle that” (Peder-
21 MCR-NC).
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26 These “less mutually collaborative research teams that come together more because of
27 employment and institutional relationships” (Louis-MCR-BC) were widely evident. Such
28 tolerance for inequality results in systematic burdens and challenges placed on those lacking
29 an established institutional position, who are compelled to collaborate (see also Morrison et
30 al. 2003).
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35 Unbalanced ‘position power’ (Macfarlane 2017) and hierarchy sustain a collaborative culture
36 of discomfort, insecurity and anxiety which limits the scope for developing scholarly ideas.
37 James, for example, struggled with a PhD examiner who became his boss and felt he had
38 “some ownership” of James’ thesis, referring to “our paper (to) which he contributed nothing
39 aside from a few comments”. In the end, James refused but also abandoned the intention to
40 publish from his PhD to avoid conflict, also noting:
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46 “It’s not a really good position to have as he’s an editor of a journal and he’s...
47 situated in a social network of great power” (James-ECR-BC).
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50 Where seniority-based collaborations have been experienced as problematic, some researchers
51 have developed a ‘calculative mindset’ (Lynch 2015) towards collaborations:
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54 “I avoid working with big names... they wouldn’t be putting any effort in and would
55 be taking all the glory... I would now be very upfront about expectations, about
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3 ownership of this, that and the other, so I would almost go in it with a semi-legal head
4 on: this is what is going to happen; this is who owns the data, this is what your
5 contribution will be” (Sally-MCR-BC).
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9 While some are sceptical about the benefits of collaborating with senior academics, others
10 point to the longer-term advantages of such collaborations that also hint at a strategic
11 rationality and reflect the pressures for publication (Nygaard (2017):
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14 “Maybe you should join a senior researcher first in order to get published, and then you are
15 within the circles and then you try to get more established” (Edward-MCR-GC).
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18 “Career-wise, proximity to senior scholars is still very important for me... You won’t get
19 published, if you don’t have a network” (Agneta-ECR-NC).
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23 In contrast to ECRs, senior academics stress their mentoring role towards junior colleagues
24 who “are dependent on you” (Philip-SCR-BC), which manifested in contributing to
25 collaborative efforts and in working with ECRs “to help them develop their career” (Danika-
26 SCR-BC). Their views of hierarchy and the associated inequality of contribution in
27 collaborations tend to be less disapproving, as illustrated by Georg’s quote below:
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32 “I have the classic history of the younger scholar who will do more work than the professor
33 he publishes with... Of course, one of the questions is whether I am becoming that too
34 myself... now that I am a tenured full professor, I’m kind of edging towards the same role
35 I guess, by way of my trajectory... Maybe it’s also ok this way, I don’t know... tricky”
36 (Georg-SCR-GC).
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42 Georg also gives examples of specific practices he engages in to benefit junior colleagues,
43 such as putting first on a paper the name “of the one who needs it” (Georg-SCR-GC), and
44 argues for a critical appraisal of the different consequences of institutional power and
45 hierarchy, which he also believes he may now be complicit in sustaining.
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49 Another senior scholar advises junior researchers to frame the inequality of collaborations
50 informed by hierarchical rationalities in positive terms:
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53 “Work with the best people you can... learn a lot from that... Be cognizant if you’re being
54 exploited, but also questioning your own ideas about what it means to be exploited...
55 because I think sometimes it’s learning” (Philip-SCR-BC).
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3 These responses indicate how unequal relations can be perpetuated and justified despite some
4 of the SCRs also reflecting on how they experienced and suffered from unequal collaborations
5 as ECRs.
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8 *Strategic-instrumental rationalities*

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11 There is a sense among all participants that collaborations are an institutionally expected norm
12 (Berman 2008). Many participants argue that “it would raise eyebrows” (Christine-ECR-BC),
13 or even be accompanied by “informal sanctions” (Eva-ECR-NC), if one did not comply with
14 the “pressure to collaborate” (Odette-MCR-GC). Several of the interviewees relate
15 institutional collaboration norms to strong demands for performance- and output-orientation
16 and strategic thinking and practice (Clarke and Knights 2015; Lynch 2015). While being
17 “strategic” is often denied, the narratives show that instrumental rationalities underpin
18 practices of researcher collaboration regardless of institutional context.
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25 When asked about the reasons for researcher collaboration, participants often refer to
26 “collaborators offer(ing) something you can’t” (Louis-MCR-BC), the “pooling of
27 competences and resources” (Odette-MCR-GC), and “combining of fields of expertise” (Karl-
28 ECR-GC). Collaborations are seen to make scholars more “efficient” (Louis) and to “get more
29 things done” (Katharina-ECR-GC) in a context where scholars are “so time-conscious”
30 (Suzanne-MCR-NC) that, in some instances, face-to-face meetings are replaced by, digitally
31 supported, “distance collaboration” (Agneta-ECR-NC). The key role of instrumental
32 rationalities is further revealed by practices such as “name dropping” and seeking “big
33 names” (James-ECR-BC) in collaborations, reinvoking hierarchies. Especially ECRs and
34 MCRs note that “trophy-hunting collaborations” (Odette) can be “very important for one’s
35 career” (Agneta-ECR-NC), and in extremis can involve strategies of “find(ing) an American
36 professor” to “get to the American journals” (Katharina). “Mutual benefits” (Georg-SCR-
37 GC), such as a willingness to bring to the collaboration one’s experience and reputation in
38 exchange for empirical material are also mentioned, especially by more established
39 researchers.
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51 Interestingly, however, purely transactional collaboration practices are mainly ascribed to
52 *others* (and in particular to UK-based colleagues and institutions (DeVita and Case 2016))
53 rather than oneself, as exemplified by the following quote:
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3 “I’ve heard of colleagues who have included another very well-known author because
4 this raised their publication chances... I don’t know if I want to apply [this strategy], but
5 it seems to work” (Karl-ECR-GC).
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9 Participants commonly argue that it is the contemporary ‘academic climate’, underpinned by
10 performance management pressures, that makes strategic-instrumental considerations and,
11 concomitantly, a short-term outlook in collaborations necessary (Smith 2012):
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14 “I have to work on projects that will not last for years without any output. We are forced
15 to think like that” (Karl-ECR-GC).
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19 While performance pressures tend to increase the need for ECRs to take on potentially
20 exploitative collaborations, the narratives suggest that peer-peer collaborations can also be
21 affected by these pressures, such as balancing speed of publication with journal ranking,
22 leading to some adopting a formal-contractual or “explicit approach” (Louis-MCR-BC) to
23 collaborations to agree objectives and minimise the “risks of being used” (Agneta-ECR-NC).
24 Challenges are also faced when collaborators have conflicting needs – such as James (ECR-
25 BC) who needed a ‘quick’ publication for his probation, whereas his collaborator wanted to
26 take his time and target a 4-rated journal.
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33 There are also justifications of output-oriented rationalities on intellectual grounds that draw
34 upon NPM notions of efficiency and accountability:
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37 “Maybe there’s nothing wrong with [output-orientation]... If we believe that publishing is
38 a way to get the best ideas out into a public format so that they can do some good, then
39 okay, why not streamline and bring the best people together and make the process really
40 efficient” (Eva-ECR-NC).
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45 Furthermore, strategic rationalities are often portrayed as imperative, especially for junior
46 researchers who have not (yet) secured stable employment, particularly under the “pressure to
47 produce papers in certain journals” (Odette-MCR-GC) (see also Ylijoki and Henriksson
48 2017).
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52 But the strategic-instrumental collaborative rationalities are also seen to lead to a reduction in
53 scholarship, quality, originality and novelty (Nygaard 2017), or the corrosion of ‘scholarly
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3 competence' through efficient processes of producing highly ranked publication outputs
4 (Willmott 2011):
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7 “People are forced to strategically map the collaborations – that might become a little sick
8 if it’s just about the journal ranking or the list of publications... The ranking encourages a
9 superficial take, first of all, and a very instrumental take on bodies of thought. It’s this kind
10 of approach that dominates collaborations, and that’s sad.... [Many collaborations] cannot
11 be innovative. It is not rewarded. Creativity is not rewarded... [What] remains [are] sort of
12 dull collaborations.” (Georg-SCR-GC).
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17 “In my main collaboration I come up with the ideas and the data. I do the conclusions and
18 (my collaborator) does the literature... I do worry that my reading of the literature... has
19 become more superficial because I know somebody else is doing a damn good job on it... I
20 worry that my ability to craft a good literature review is deteriorating” (Sally-MCR-BC).
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25 The strategic instrumental rationality best exemplifies the effects of strong performance
26 management and measurement cultures on academics, their collaborative practices and
27 collegial relations.
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31 *Scholarly-professional rationalities* 32 33

34 Several of the narratives, across all career stages, suggest that collaborative practices and
35 relations are driven by scholarly curiosity, the development of common interests and
36 understandings, “intellectual discussion” and “learning” (Philip-SCR-BC). While perhaps
37 idealising researcher collaborations, they show that strategic-instrumental rationalities, even if
38 predominant within many collaborations, are not exclusive or determining. Participants
39 argued that publications were secondary to “solving an interesting problem or being with
40 interesting people, sharing information” (Eva-ECR-NC) and “getting an idea that you have on
41 paper” (Peder-MCR-NC).
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47 It is not unusual for researchers to portray collaborations as a means for scholarly-professional
48 and personal development:
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51 “What I love most about being an academic is that opportunity to have deep, meaningful
52 and powerful conversations with other people, and the challenge and the critique and the
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3 learning from others and the inquiring with others, and getting interesting perspectives... It
4 enriches... what it is that's of value in what I do" (Christine-ECR-BC).
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7 Although some assumed that scholarly-professional rationalities were not occurring in the
8 UK:
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11 "There are two different understandings of research. The first thing is that you provide
12 your career with papers and the other thing is fulfilling your ethos as a researcher: that you
13 try to find out something and you are really burning to learn... This is similar with Austria
14 and Sweden, but with someone from the UK, it's more in the direction of a publishing
15 industry... In other countries... you have a more research-oriented choice" (Edward-MCR-
16 GC).
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22 Many narratives reflect contestation and ambivalence regarding academic work being an end
23 in itself or a means to an end. Indeed the participants often promote an understanding of
24 researcher collaboration as being simultaneously about pursuit of ideas and scholarly
25 development, *and* efficiency and output, as illustrated below:
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30 "I do want some output of my collaborations... And it has often been (that) a collaboration
31 is starting with a publication. But it's also for my personal gain. I learn through working
32 with others. I just think it is really a great experience... I have never entered a
33 collaboration because I think that I end up getting a publication" (Agneta-ECR-NC).
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37 While attempts to mobilise collaborations for individual and collective development and
38 learning are evoked by some participants, they do not always seem to prosper. In several
39 instances, collaborations, despite aiming for the promotion of 'multiple voices' (Smith 2001),
40 result in a reduction and homogenisation of voices and creative ideas in which the mutual
41 adjustments to encompass the thoughts of the collaborator lead to "a more average paper in
42 the end" (Edward-MCR-GC). As we have seen above, hierarchies can also challenge
43 scholarly rationalities.
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49 *Relationship-oriented rationalities*

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52 The narratives suggest that many collaborations are underpinned by an aspiration and desire
53 for a 'culture of friendship' and 'ethics of care', invested by mutual support and help, that
54 challenge purely instrumental collaborative rationalities (Nygaard 2017). This is especially
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3 evoked where researchers speak about the similarities between collaboration and friendship,
4 “trust” (Peder-MCR-NC), “love” and “marriage” (Danika-SCR-NC), thereby emphasising
5 that collaborations can be “like duet(s)” (Danika), often borne out of “long-term
6 relationships” (Odette-MCR-GC).
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10 The following excerpt, addressing the journal publication pressures that ECRs face, illustrates
11 how a friendship-based collaboration helped a scholar to secure continuity of employment:
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14 “The Dean of the School... basically told me that if I didn’t produce [papers] in two ‘three
15 star’ journals in the next year, I didn’t have a job... [One of my colleague-friends
16 responded:] we want to make sure you have some job security. Let’s come up with a topic,
17 and write a paper and target just a mid... two/three star journal... That was a wonderful
18 collaboration where somebody saw that I was in need and really helped me out” (James-
19 ECR-BC).
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25 While this account can be read as an illustration of mutual support and friendship within
26 collaborations, it also demonstrates instrumentality-invested rationalities and specifically how
27 individualised performance measurement, exemplified here by the REF in the UK, (re)shapes
28 collaborative practices and rationalities (Cheek 2008) and the purpose of research more
29 generally. The interconnectedness of relationship-focused and strategic-instrumental
30 rationalities is also evident in accounts claiming disciplining effects to be a key positive
31 consequence of researcher collaborations, as illustrated by a participant declaring that
32 “collaborators keep me honest – I owe someone something” (Eva-ECR-NC), and similarly a
33 personal relationship can be seen to guarantee that the collaborator “will feel a greater
34 responsibility for contribution” (Suzanne-MCR-NC) and will contribute at an “adequate
35 level” (Edward-MCR-GC).
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44 While collaborations could be experienced as joyful and enriching they can also be
45 accompanied by multi-faceted personal and professional dependencies and inequalities, such
46 as where someone has “their ideas as number one” (Philip-SCR-BC), which can damage the
47 relationship upon which the collaboration relies. The “fading away” (Georg-SCR-GC) or
48 “dissipat(ion)” (Louis-MCR-BC) of problematic relations can, like damage to friendships, not
49 always be prevented. The following excerpt offers an insight into the vulnerabilities,
50 dependencies and pain that can emerge from long-term collaborations:
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3 “It was someone very, very close to me, and this was much more difficult to handle... I
4 challenged her and she couldn’t take it at all... She was really very cross, angry and very
5 hurt. We were involved in huge projects at the time, we had a half million pound research
6 grant, we had a number of ongoing papers, conference presentations, and it was very
7 difficult to disentangle from that... I walked away from it all, really... It’s like if you’re
8 having a romantic relationship... and then saying something which is so hurtful that there
9 is no going back, you can’t undo it” (Sally-MCR-BC).
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15 Individual conflict and ambiguity over what should be done when friends do not contribute
16 reflect the contested notions of contribution and ownership of ideas that often remain in place
17 and echo experiences of traditional-hierarchical rationalities:
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21 “I wanted to be involved with (collaborator) because she did fire me up with her energy
22 and ideas, and I felt we had a connection, intellectual, emotional... But it ended up being a
23 very protracted, painful process; very unsatisfactory. It felt extremely unequal, very
24 unbalanced... So, when someone hasn’t contributed enough, at what point is it a joke
25 really to even leave their name (on a paper)?” (Christine-ECR-BC).
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30 Yet our researchers often tolerated inequalities exactly because of friendship, and it was
31 uncommon for these to be explicitly addressed. Silence about these concerns is sustained by a
32 number of factors of both personal and professional nature: the personal costs involved in
33 speaking out, perceived lack of institutional support making it “very difficult to hold someone
34 to account for non-performance” (Christine-ECR-BC), as well as the risks to networks where
35 there are “people who don’t speak... around the country because of these damaged
36 relationships” (Sally-MCR-BC). Practices that are ethically problematic in a professional
37 context are glossed over as dissatisfied collaborators convince themselves that “this is just a
38 paper” (Eva-ECR-NC), and therefore it is preferable to “let things go” (Philip-SCR-BC).
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49 Discussion

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51 A range of observations and implications with regard to collaborative and individual
52 academic practices, as well as relationships within the academic community and HEIs emerge
53 from our study. The empirical material shows that researcher collaboration, and how
54 institutional research performance pressures shape collaborative practices and relations, are all
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3 but taken for granted (Katz and Martin 1997). Specifically, the study provides insights into
4 the complexities and challenges of collaborations that are informed by four rationalities,
5 which are sustained by both institutional discourses and norms of academic performance
6 management and the specific dynamics immanent to collaborative practices and relations.
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10 Our study has aimed to address collaborative experiences and practices beyond a focus on co-
11 authoring and publishing. However, the accounts of the MOS academics we interviewed
12 suggest that the main understanding and focus of collaborations is on the production of highly
13 ranked publications and, specifically, journal articles rather than, for example, funding
14 applications or the scholarly project itself. As such, the ‘publish or perish’ imperative can be
15 seen as the key aspect of academic performance evaluation in business and management
16 schools. Even collaborations with emphasis on relationships and scholarly interests were often
17 subsumed by, or only feasible because of, their output-generating potential, although there
18 was the belief that the British academic context was the most extreme in this regard.
19 However, output generation in highly ranked journals was commonly not seen in the quality-
20 ascribed sense of scholarship, hinting at the adverse effects of pressures to publish on output
21 quality and the purpose of research, collaboration and knowledge production (Nygaard 2017).
22 Rather than collaborations achieving greater creativity (Smith 2001) and pluralism, under the
23 current regime of academic performance measurement, it is likely that collaborative practices
24 foster a scholarly ‘monoculture’ (Willmott 2011, 429) and thus lead to narrow, incremental,
25 often self-referential and superficial projects being embarked upon – i.e. ones that are seen to
26 hold the promise of bringing highly evaluated, quantifiable and thus ‘excellent’ outputs, and
27 contributing to researchers’ career progression.
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40 This output-orientation in relation to the main objectives of collaborations reflects a broader
41 observation stemming from our study in that strategic-instrumental rationalities underpinning
42 collaborations were the most widespread in our sample of participants. This demonstrates
43 that, in a ‘partnership or perish climate’ (Berman 2008, 167), strategic-instrumental
44 considerations tend to suppress other collaborative rationalities such as those focusing on
45 scholarly activities, projects and relationships. Even where academics claim a relationship-
46 and friendship-based ‘ethics of care’ and ‘gift giving’ to be core to collaborations, they
47 simultaneously express an instrumental approach to collaboration and, specifically, an
48 underlying need for the creation of ‘added value’ (Macfarlane 2017) through publications.
49 The study hence suggests that individualised research performance pressures support and
50 sustain the emergence of certain types of (instrumentally-oriented) friendships and alliances.
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3 Such an instrumental orientation can pose a challenge to amicable relationships and – due to
4 the potential for tensions and conflicts to arise as academics pursue the objectives they are
5 individually assessed against – can be seen to promote separation among management
6 scholars (Harvie 2004; Lynch 2015). This is a problematic and somewhat paradoxical effect
7 of the performance measurement and management regime dominating contemporary HEIs
8 (see also Butler and Spoelstra 2014).
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13 The dominance of strategic-instrumental rationalities and practices in researcher
14 collaborations notwithstanding, most participants were keen to eschew them personally or
15 relate them to regulative performance measurement instruments, such as journal lists and
16 rankings, and associated discourses prevalent in management and business schools (De Vita
17 and Case 2016). They distanced themselves from the new ‘archetype’ of the modern strategic,
18 careerist scholar, who uncritically conforms with research output and productivity demands
19 (Clarke and Knights 2015). As a result tensions between scholars’ professional values and
20 identity, and their performance and career success, were evident.
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28 However, rather than engaging in self-reflexivity about one’s own role, scholars at different
29 career stages drew on it to explain and justify their actions in contradictory ways – such as the
30 different understandings of what constitutes a contribution. While SCRs consider their
31 patronage to ECRs in terms of support and generosity, ECRs perceive their disproportionate
32 contribution to a project as a manifestation of inequality which they frame in terms of
33 unavoidable, temporary exploitation and/or necessary ‘career investment’ given the increasing
34 pressures on performance. Formal hierarchies – particularly outside of the Germanic context –
35 have sometimes been replaced with new dependencies and reinvoked hierarchies that are
36 oftentimes self-imposed in order to secure employment (Laudel and Gläser 2008; Ylijoki and
37 Henriksson 2017).
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45 Problematic collaborative practices and relations are however not limited to ‘vertical’
46 collaborations (Morrison et al. 2003). As our findings illustrate, struggles over power are
47 likely to occur irrespective of the collaborators’ career stage and position relative to each
48 other. The study suggests that strong performance cultures in HEIs tend to encourage
49 academic malpractices, delineated by a lack of contributions, reliability, mutual
50 responsiveness, trust and, thus, a lack of collegiality and engagement within collaborations.
51 Such practices obviously counter notions of scholarly responsibility – to one’s colleagues,
52 community and the field of study. Indeed scholarly responsibility appears to be replaced by a
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3 sense of *institutional accountability*, mainly defined by meeting performance targets and
4 metrics. The management scholars interviewed, however, do not or not effectively question
5 prevailing institutional discourses and norms around productivity and scholarly
6 accountability. In the absence of such critical reflexivity (Cheek 2008), researchers'
7 individual and collaborative practices tend to perpetuate and reinforce the performance
8 management regime within management and business schools and academia in general
9 (Clarke and Knights 2015). While we do not wish to glorify academic cultures of the past, our
10 study demonstrates that current performance and research productivity pressures in HEIs
11 'crowd out' some important academic values and ideals, such as the pursuit of research out of
12 scholarly curiosity and an aspiration for critical inquiry, and the cultivation of diverse and
13 mutually supportive collegial relationships – in support of an unquestioning acceptability of
14 demands for strategic, output-oriented and career objectives-driven academic practices.
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29 **Conclusion**

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31 This paper contributes to the critical literature on NPM in higher education by addressing the
32 complexities, challenges and implications of researcher collaborations for academics and
33 HEIs (Leišytė 2016; Ritchie and Rigano 2007). Through analysing the narratives of
34 management scholars across seniority based in different institutional contexts in Western
35 Europe, it has considered the effects of performance management, and in particular research
36 productivity pressures, on researcher collaborations. The findings demonstrate the multi-
37 faceted consequences of the contemporary 'publish or perish' regime and the discourses it
38 promotes, which inform both the choices behind the formation of collaborative relations and
39 the practices of researcher collaborations. The study identifies four, often intertwined,
40 rationalities, namely: strategic-instrumental, traditional-hierarchical, scholarly-professional
41 and relationship-oriented rationalities, and the dominance of strategic-instrumental
42 rationalities.
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52 The strategic-instrumental rationalities tend to suppress and 'crowd out' other collaborative
53 rationalities and thereby highlight most notably the fundamental challenges faced by
54 academics in pursuing scholarly practice under pronounced research performance pressures
55 (Nygaard 2017), adding to the impression that intellectual curiosity and passion, a
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3 preparedness to take risks and a willingness to devote energy to intellectual challenges for
4 their own sake are not seen as being at the heart of scholars' professional values (Butler and
5 Spoelstra 2014; Willmott 2011). Instead we see the ascent of the opportunistic, career-driven
6 scholar who cultivates strategic, low-risk high-output collaborations, which may foreclose
7 more interesting, inventive and valuable forms of research and jeopardise collegial
8 relationships informed by critical reflexivity, equality and mutual trust (Cheek 2008). While
9 we do not argue against the aspiration to produce high-quality research, our study of
10 researcher collaborations among MOS academics underlines that the (un)intended
11 consequences of the prevailing performance management regime and its emphasis on
12 efficiency, excellence, relevance and accountability are far-reaching, for academics and for
13 HEIs.
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27 Note

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30 ⁱ The CWTS Leiden Ranking exemplarily illustrates this point. The Leiden Ranking is a
31 global university ranking based on bibliometric indicators. The number of academic
32 collaborations – with other universities and industry – is, next to citation impact, the key
33 indicator underpinning this global university ranking (CWTS Leiden Ranking 2017).
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For Peer Review Only

| Interview participants categorised by seniority, sex and location | | | | | |
|--|------------|------------------|-------------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Participant | Sex | Seniority | Current Location | Context | Interview duration |
| Karl | M | ECR | Austria | Germanic | 65 min |
| Katharina | F | ECR | Germany | Germanic | 73 mins |
| Agneta | F | ECR | Denmark | Nordic | 62 mins |
| Eva | F | ECR | Sweden | Nordic | 74 min |
| Christine | F | ECR | England | British | 68 mins |
| James | M | ECR | England | British | 60 mins |
| Edward | M | MCR | Austria | Germanic | 60 min |
| Odette | F | MCR | Austria | Germanic | 90 mins |
| Peder | M | MCR | Sweden | Nordic | 86 mins |
| Suzanne | F | MCR | Denmark | Nordic | 72 mins |
| Louis | M | MCR | England | British | 73 mins |
| Sally | F | MCR | England | British | 45 mins |
| Georg | M | SCR | Germany | Germanic | 62 mins |
| Danika | F | SCR | Sweden | Nordic | 55 mins |
| Philip | M | SCR | England | British | 65 mins |

Notes:
Classification of seniority agreed on the basis of:
1) Status of position (primary determinant) using equivalent status of positions across different contexts.
2) Years of service (secondary determinant) using years in post as a moderating factor. For example, if someone had been in employment for less than three years, they would typically be considered an ECR.
Where there was a conflict between position and tenure, we reviewed the discrepancy to come to a decision based on: 1) the extent of their experience and 2) influence in their role attributable to their status. In only one case (Katharina) was there a slight discrepancy between status and experience. It was agreed that given the very recent nature of her promotion, and limited experience, she were appropriately classified as an ECR for the purposes of this study.

Table One