Two things are more important than anything for academic identities (Henkel, 2005):

**Academic freedom**

*The discipline*

Academic freedom rest in a continuum between loyalty and autonomy

(Åkerlind & Kayrooz, 2003; Mårtensson, Roxå, & Olsson, 2011)

A view on knowledge-intensive organisations

(Hannah & Lester, 2009)

Meso-level: loosely coupled microcultures

(Roxå, Mårtensson, & Alveteg, 2011)

And they are and they should be different
If that is true, how can we compare microcultures?

Fallacies:
- Bureaucracy: establish the same norms as the best practice
- Market: adapt through competition (it limits the variation)

Functioning microcultures are different because they adapt to different environments and tasks.
That is: their normative structures should vary considerably.

Conclusion:
With the support of Ostrom’s research, microcultures can be compared through the study of the function of norms (design principles).
Allowing for variation and sophistication in relation to local needs.

A study of academic microcultures (MCs)
(5 strong and 4 developing)

Selection based on:
- Interviews (23) with leaders (deans, HoDs) and student-union representatives. (Could not point out strong MCs.)
- Course/program-evaluations, Quality audit results
- Local knowledge
- Three faculty contexts; same university

Method:
- Ethnographically inspired
-Interviews with local leaders and academic staff (35)
- Focus-group interviews with (25) students (in the 5 strong MCs)

Microcultures can be described and related to each other through Ostrom’s (1990) design principles – following Roxå & Mårtensson (2014)

1. Clearly defined boundaries and memberships.
2. Rules [norms] in use are well matched to local needs.
3. Members can usually participate in modifying the rules.
4. Members right to devise their own rules is respected by external authorities.
5. An established system for self-monitoring members’ behaviour exists.
6. A graduated system of sanctions is available.
7. Access to low-cost conflict-resolution mechanisms
8. Commons are organised in a nested structure with multiple layers of activities

Four types of microcultures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trust</th>
<th>Shared responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High level of trust</td>
<td>High significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong ties</td>
<td>Sense of belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low level of trust</td>
<td>Low significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak ties</td>
<td>Sense of coexistence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experience of a shared responsibility:
- The Commons
  - Share a concern for a practice. Things are being negotiated in relation to the shared concern. An undertow of consensus. ‘We’re in this together.’
- The Market
  - Share a concern for a practice. Ideas compete. Things are negotiated with an undertow of conflict. Relationships are formalised through contracts. ‘I look after myself.’
- The Club
  - Members are together without sharing a concern. Descriptions from practice are not challenged. Friendship and consensus is highest priority. ‘We’ll always support each other.’
- The Square
  - Members share a space with strangers. Things are negotiated only when necessary. Members enter into relationships and leave them continuously. ‘Who are these people?’

(Roxå & Mårtensson, accepted)
How to develop this environment

- Brokers
- Trading zones
- Strong ties internally
- Weak ties
- Artifacts