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Governance, Management and Internationalization in Mexican Higher Education

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Our central premises in regard to the subject of "Governance and management in higher education in the light of internationalization programs" are:
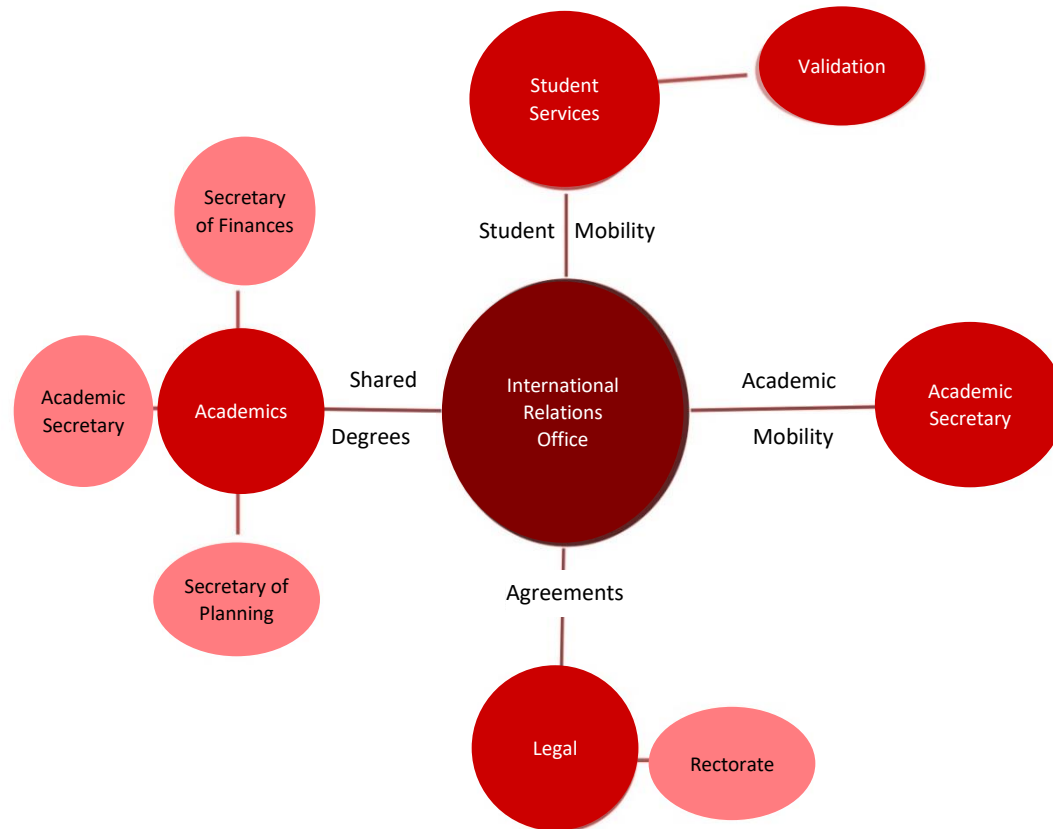
The model of governance in higher education in Latin America is burned out. In Mexico, this due to the negative effects of the policies on results-based funding programs, quality assurance system and academic evaluation implemented from the mid-eighties onward.

HEIs were focused on strengthen measurement indicators and generating "evidence". They have hindered the design of programs based on problem solving at institutionnal scale and at external level (in relation with local environment).

Why is it interesting to analyze good and bad governance practices through internationalization programs?

- Internationalization is a key part of the rhetoric on higher education. an element of its quality assurance strategy, mainly in private institutions, and a component of public and institutional policies, now, in LAC region.

- Its operation crosses multiple spheres of activity: regarding user support cores, international affairs offices facilitate and expedite administrative processes overseen by other administrative dependencies, principally those in charge of regulatory and legal matters (office of the general counsel, for agreements), academic records (for recognition of credits), teaching of foreign languages (mainly english, french and German), cultures and Spanish (for students both entering and graduating)

- There is a lack of precise data on results by type of activity: academic and teaching activities are less easy to count than flows of students abroad or number of international agreements by countries

- We need to solve the information and data gap but at the same time elaborate a comprensive evaluation model for internationalization

Chart 1: Main interactions between Internationalization offices and other administrative areas at Public Universities, Mexico, 2017

Student Services

Validation

Secretary of Finances

Academics

Academic Secretary

International Relations Office

Shared Degrees

Student Mobility

Academic Mobility

Academic Secretary
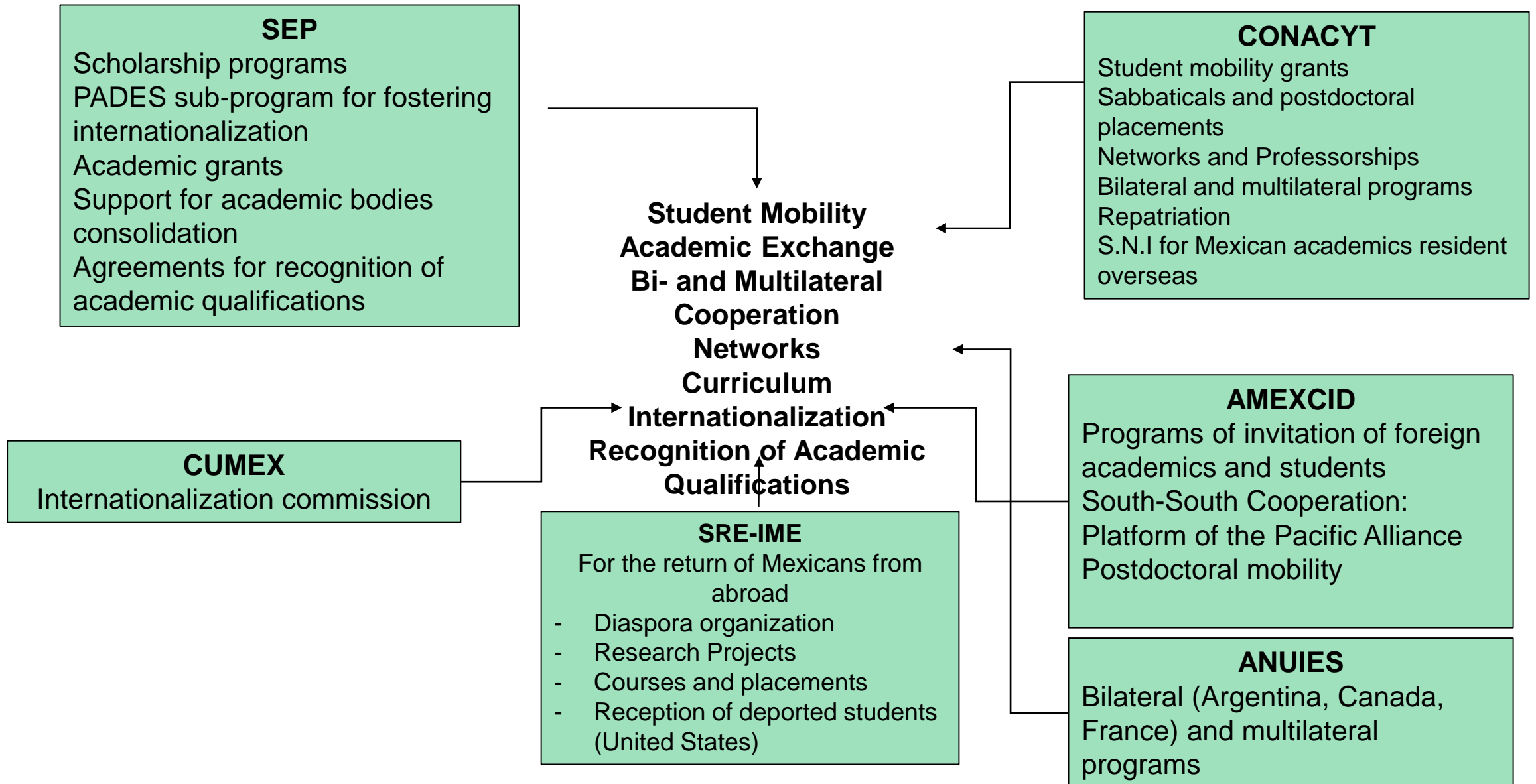
Secretary of Planning

Agreements

Legal

Rectorate

Source: design Sylvie Didou Aupetit, graphics Dira Plancarte

However...

- As yet, internationalization depend mainly of federal programms supporting joint research or student and academic mobility, and, to a lesser extent, joint degrees and international academic networks.

- The planning and managment schemes for internationalization are congruent with the national model of governmance, characterized by federal centralization.

- This is defined as either direct or indirect interference by the government in institutional affairs through the supply of ordinary and extraordinary financial resources and authorized opinions. That is an hyper-regulated model with the aim of fighting corruption, inefficient in terms of internal decision-making process and response times.

- We need to control the syndrome of doing more and more the same things and to thinks differently. We need to dialogue about what is "rationale" in relation with teaching and research, not efficient in terms of indicator´s production

Areas of impact of federal government agencies and associations from internationalizing universities, Mexico 2017

SEP
Scholarship programs
PADES sub-program for fostering internationalization
Academic grants
Support for academic bodies consolidation
Agreements for recognition of academic qualifications

CONACYT
Student mobility grants
Sabbaticals and postdoctoral placements
Networks and Professorships
Bilateral and multilateral programs
Repatriation
S.N.I for Mexican academics resident overseas

Student Mobility
Academic Exchange
Bi- and Multilateral Cooperation
Networks
Curriculum Internationalization
Recognition of Academic Qualifications

CUMEX
Internationalization commission

AMEXCID
Programs of invitation of foreign academics and students
South-South Cooperation:
Platform of the Pacific Alliance
Postdoctoral mobility

SRE-IME
For the return of Mexicans from abroad
- Diaspora organization
- Research Projects
- Courses and placements
- Reception of deported students (United States)

ANUIES
Bilateral (Argentina, Canada, France) and multilateral programs

In this environment of federal governement dependency and therefore, restricted autonomy, public HEIs have opted to be instrumental in regard to internationalization.

- Nearly all have opened an office for international affairs. Their profiles, tasks, personnel, responsibilities and hierarchies are totally different. That´s fine or not?

- They issued regulations to standardize student mobility, recognition of credits (with a tendency to manage this point through agreements) and academic exchanges, as a minimum.

- Some developed shared degrees and networks, recruited "international" academics, that is, graduates from overseas.

- Thus, their location of their offices on the organizational chart is varying an there exists a certain confusion regarding their profiles and functions.

- We need to have a better programmation of international office tasks and a planned programm of activities as well as a good information and suitable datas of what it is posible to do and ahat not. We don´t need to have more and more regulations, more and more constrictive.

Names of offices for international relations at Mexican public universities, 2017

Name of of International Relations Offices	Institution
Academic Cooperation and Exchange Area	Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero
International Relations Unit	Universidad Juárez Autónoma de Tabasco
Academic Exchange Department	Universidad Autónoma de Aguascalientes (UAA)
Sub-Coordination for International Cooperation	Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas (UAZ)
Coordination of International Cooperation and Academic Exchange	Universidad de Baja California
General Coordination of International Relations	Universidad Autónoma de Coahuila
Subdirectorate of Cooperation and Internationalization	Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez
General Directorate of Internationalization	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
Secretariat of Cooperation and Internationalization	Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México
Others	Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León Center for Internationalization

What, actually, are the roles of international offices at university level?

- Managing flagship initiatives (scholarships for short-term mobility, agreements, academic exchanges).

- Supporting networks, international placements for practitionners, sabbaticals, attendance at international conferences and bi- or multilateral research projects.

- Assessing students through their processes of credit transfer in relation to inter-institutional agreements or in situations of free mobility.

- Representing their institutions at international fairs.

- Functioning as spaces for services oriented toward attending to certain needs of students, authorities and academics.

- Running the programs, in accordance to institutional requirements designed to reinforce internationalization activities capable of being measured and translated into indicators.

- On the negative side, they lack the attribution and, as yet, the authorithy to organize internal collectives that would foster thinking about "Why internationalize?" at every institution in relation to its history and its environment.

- We don´t need to have umbrella´s office. We need well organized office with building capacities for the design of internationalization projects linked with institutionnal profiles (teaching or research, descentralization, disciplinary áreas, and so on) and priorities - Two good practices- ITESM for geostrategy/ UADY in agriculture

Why are we in this situation?

- These offices have difficulty articulating the three processes of internationalization inside HEIs; that is, the official (agreements signed and negotiated by the authorities), the academic (faculty and research projects run by individuals, teams or networks) and the student (incoming and outgoing exchanges, scholarships and recognition of credits). They are very present in the third of these but less so in the other two. We need to try how articulates the three processes: UIA/UDEM

- They have internal problems at two levels: first, human resources (profiles and training of their officers and personnel) and second internal organisation of office. We need to define better who is doing what : a good practice is at Autonomous University of Hidalgo.

- We need to develop innovative practices in terms of internationalization for equity (Guanajuato University), shared resources for internationalization (UIA)

Some good practices ….

- Student mobility for dual training in university and fabrics (Nissan University and UAA)

- COIL for horizontal co-teaching and collective student co-learning by TIC´s(UDEM at undergraduate level)

- Organization of international research activities for bachelor undergraduate students in bilateral and multi-institutionnal networks and short term mobility frameworks (U.Guanajuato)

- Shared credits and shared courses by the way of physical and virtual mobility (CETYS)

- Taylor made programs for ingoing mobility

- Korean langage learning at UANL

- We need to share capacities and know how.

But also, important dysfunctions in the system of university government adopted in Mexico.

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- Korean langage learning at UANL
- Nowadays, its mechanisms - both individual and collective - ceased to better the rules of the university game, as was sought in the 1990s.
- As they expanded and became more rigid, they promoted indicators based on the belief (as opposed to the proof) that performing measurements produces positive aggregation effects.

First example

- The National Council on Science and Technology (CONACYT) believes that the standard length of educational periods is two and a half years and four and four and a half years masters' and doctoral degrees, respectively.

- HEIs wishing to share in the benefits of the National Register of Quality Postgraduate Courses (grants for students and resources) must produce 50% and 70%, respectively, of the students studying for those periods, according to category they want to reach. These are supposedly those that hold sway in the world's best institutions. However, the average duration of a doctorate in the US is between six and seven years (NSF, 2016)

- This is regardless of the quality of the theses and disciplinary knowledge and abilities of the students at the time of their selection. Mexico is among the countries with the worst results on the PISA, something that has not stopped it from deliberately fostering over the last two decades an increase in postgraduate enrollment.

- This set of criteria is obviously not based on a scientific perspective, so is it political? What is the objective sought? To chip away at the status of academics as central actors in HEIs? To limit the autonomy of HEIs? To do more with less, following a logic of economizing?

Where should this example direct our thoughts? Intersectional power relationships and their redistribution.

HEI directors recommend internationalizing the institution and pressure academics and students to carry out international activities. The institutional bureaucracy (generally poorly paid and with low specialized qualifications) usually does not have the capacity nor the interest to manage external resources *just-in-time* and with efficiency to respond to the aspirations and needs of students and academics, either collectively or individually.

A good practice to develop will be the continuous training of burocracy

Beyond making speeches, ¿how to evaluate the process of implementation of internationalization programs at Mexican HEIs?

- It demonstrates the advent of an "era of suspicion" in which HEIs have serious difficulties supporting innovative programs

- It reveals a routinization of actors' everyday behaviors

- Low interest in internationalization because of conflictual conditions of implementation and excessive pressures of administration on academics .

- It reveals a model of governance and management incapable of "responding to the growing and multiple demands for participation in the distribution of resources", which breakdowns in the chain of command and decision making process.

Program X for support of academic networks
Criteria for allocation of resources

Criterion/Year	2015	2016	2017
Technical-Academic Placements	Unlimited	% of total resources allocated to each Network	One international and three national allocations of support for 30% of Network members
Administrative coordinator	15 thousand pesos per month	Maximum 150 thousand pesos over the duration of the project	Same
Auditing	No fixed amount	No greater than 1% of total cost of project	No fixed amount
Total amount authorized	4 million pesos	3 million pesos	1.5 million pesos
Project manager	There is none	175 thousand pesos	175 thousand pesos

Example 2

The operational rules change in relation to the distribution of resources and more for academic activities than for administrative ones. Their volatility is worsened by the austerity criteria imposed by the Mexican Treasury following the economic crisis.

These uncertainties hinder planning academically what to do within the network.

It makes it difficult to adapt the amounts received to the demands of disciplinary work or internal strategies for the promotion of each network.

Best practices will be to remove the anual uncertainty on ressources caused by the fiscal requirements and to alligerate burocratic-academic pressures (as a top-down scheme) for accountability

How efficient, then, is the current model of university governance, inspirated by NPM?

- Initially, it was the basis for processes for the rationalization and transformation of higher education by giving order to the procedures and demands involved in accountability and transparency. Now, it inhibits change and innovation in favor of the status quo. We need evaluation but not too much…..

- It sponsored a multitude of focused programs capable of being added to in order to supply academics with the resources necessary, providing they agreed to undergo a multitude of evaluations. We need a trusty sistem of academic evaluation, not a lot of diverse and contradictories mechanisms, with scarce legitimacy and expeditures driven controls

- Instead of bolstering the self-regulation of academic communities, it pressured them to "standardize" their behaviors, the length of courses and periods of entry into the scientific professions, the orientations of their work and the rhythms of their productivity. We need to reinforce the role of academics as central but autonomous actor of institutional life and knowledge production.

- In sum, we need to rescue a collegiate model of academic life, and to articulate better competing and opporsite models.

This is corroborated by the case of internationalization...
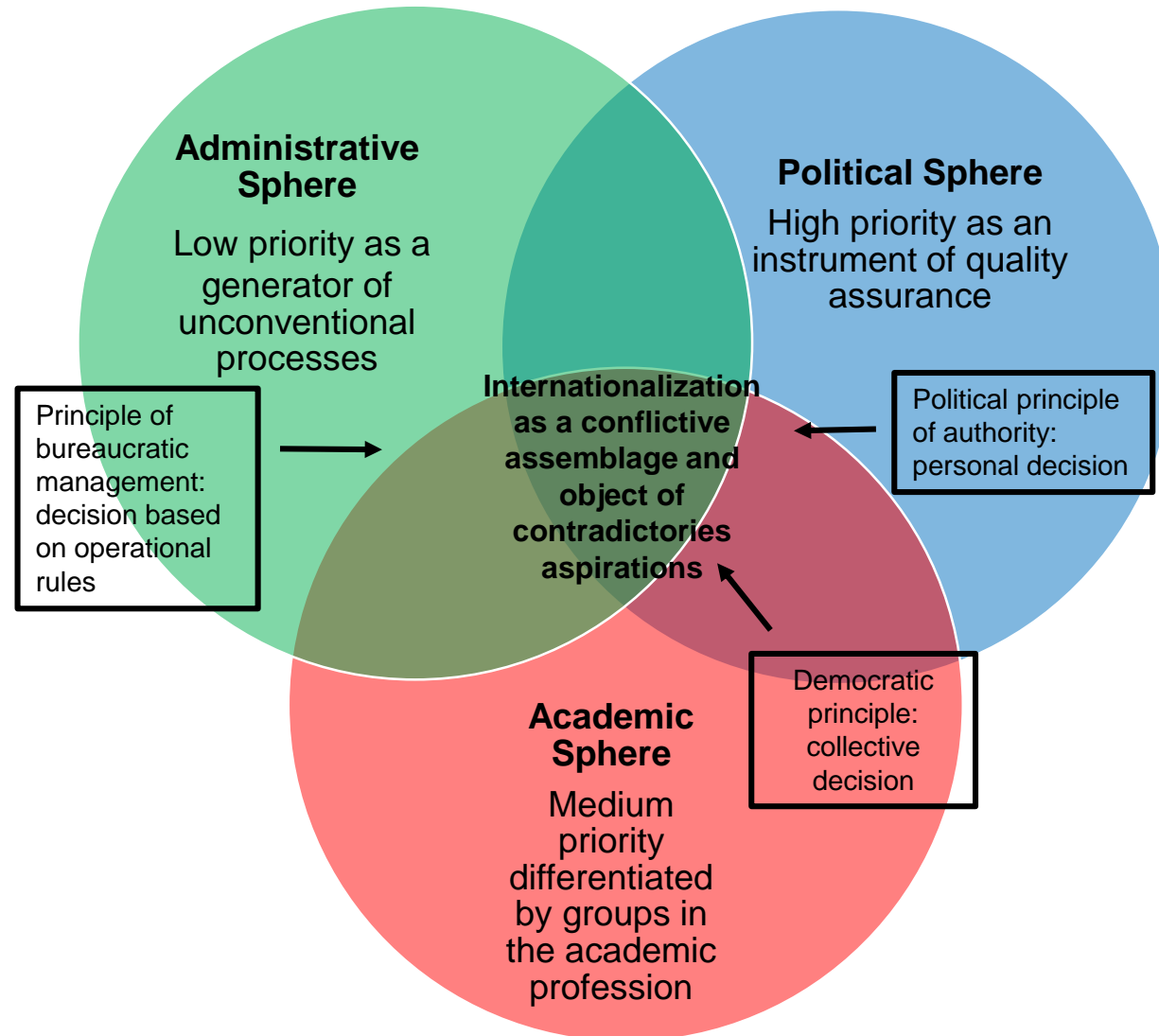
Some concluding remarks

- The models of governance, on passing from a monitoring role to one of control, have become, more and more, unsuited to circumstances of political transition in a context of democratic federalism.

- By being subsumed in schemes of government that hinder the identification and enunciation of increasingly evident problems which decrease autonomy in the design of academic and scientific projects, academics waver between apathy, cynicism and revolt.

- We need to develop again academic rules of management for HEI´s intitutions and system if we want to avoid intrasectorial conflicts

Some challenges to improve the governance model

- Apply principles of rationality and administrative simplification to the procedures of governance, academic evaluation and accountability.

- Consider the fact that the length of the fiscal year of 5 to 7 months hinders academic work, principally in networks, and promote multi-year financial arrangements.

- Foster integrated funding programs instead of a multiplicity of initiatives involving reduced amounts and scopes.

- Support greater participation from academics in decision-making process

- Evaluate the impacts of current administration model on the mercantilization of higher education (firms offering consultancy, management and auditing of projects or networks, training oportunities and foreign language learning)

- Pay attention to provide work conditions and norms that enable efficient administration, not more and more administration.

- Move toward a model of governance based on trust, dialog and responsibility rather than founded on distrust, as demonstrated by the deluge of mechanisms for accounting oversight and auditing.

- May be we need to do less with more and to have a more humanistic style of management .