

Chapter 8

THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY REPERTOIRE

The function of a governing board is always twofold: it serves, on the one hand, to ensure the public responsibility and accountability of the university and, on the other, to defend the autonomy and integrity of the institution against erosion or attack, both from without and within. (The Glion Declaration 2000, Rhodes 2000: 199)

The university community repertoire is the voice of hope and disappointment, of politics, power and change. It is also the voice of resistance to the transformation of the academy by managerialist and business models (cf. Miller 1998; Sosteric, Gismondi & Ratkovic 1998; Knight 2002).

This repertoire is based on the university as a university, rather than as a business or an instrument of public policy. That is, it is an idealised repertoire that stresses the university as a unique form of institution - the 'brain of the community' (403, student) - with worldwide and longstanding traditions and specific purposes. As one council member puts it:

...what I'd almost want to call the mystical role of a university to think, to be what I would call the republic of the mind where there is a community of scholars dealing in ideas, often very difficult ideas, necessarily difficult and complex ideas, which don't have obvious spin-offs immediately. (501, staff)

The repertoire relies on an argument that the field of universities is distinctively different to other organisational fields and that the field itself should shape its form of governance (see Hodgkin 1993 for similar arguments in regard to not-for-profit organisations). A critical concept is respect by the board for organisational history (Holland, Chait & Taylor 1989a, 1989b).

The logic is transcendent or inspirational (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991) but has absorbed traces of a familial or clan logic, and a civic logic, where collegiality is equated to democracy. An underlying image is the quasi-religious ideal of a community devoted to particular purposes, in which external council members may be given the status of 'lay brothers' (or sisters).

Ownership, at least in a moral sense, belongs to members of the university community, a view which Corcoran (1999) suggests has some validity in law. The language of this repertoire is a values-based 'mission' language (Daley, Netting & Angulo 1996), a feature it shares with the community stakeholder repertoire, although with a stronger emphasis on internal organisational culture.

While this repertoire does not equate to any specific theoretical model identified in Chapter 2, its underlying governance approach can be related to the form of professional partnership organisation (Shattock 2002a). This governance approach also has similarities with co-operatives or other communal forms of governance. More broadly, this underlying approach is related to the concept of 'governance of society', i.e. of governance in a much broader sense than that of corporate governance. To this end, a parliamentary democracy model of governance is employed.

In a negative sense, the university community repertoire offers a language of critique. Disillusionment with current practices is a theme, as is a sense that staff and student hopes for control are doomed to fail. The model of governance as managerial hegemony (Clarke & Clegg 1998) is reinforced, as the idealised logic of this repertoire dictates a deep suspicion of bureaucratic hierarchies, as opposed to those based on academic merit. This repertoire is used to oppose the legitimacy claims of the business repertoire and, more generally, the techniques of managerialist practice (Meek 2002, 2003b).

Organising concepts are drawn from ideas of the pursuit of knowledge, self-governance through representation, peer-reviewed inquiry, and open debate and challenge. If the external stakeholder repertoire is used to present a view from the outside looking in, the university community repertoire presents the view from 'inside' looking out. While this repertoire is most obviously used by internal council members (other than those who are members of the executive management team), it is also used by external members to show support for the values that define a university and to express personal philosophical positions.

Governance model and ownership (university community repertoire)

For some council members, the concept of a university community is a useful organising device for university governance: 'I think it should be somebody that represents, you know, the wide range of interests that are part of the university community' (111, staff).

The university community repertoire can be used to advance claims for the need for a collegial governing body, as this speaker suggests:

They need them [councils] for two reasons: they need them symbolically, but they also need them for very pragmatic reasons. Symbolically they need them because they are a proclamation that this is not a business, that there is a broader interest which must be brought to bear and which needs to be taken into account, and they are important symbolically because they say collegiality is important and forums for these processes to occur are fundamental. Pragmatically they're needed because I think collegiality does improve the way things operate...I actually think that the politicised environment which you get from collegiate bodies is a better one than you get from the line management approach and you get better decisions and you get a better sense of identity of the university, because we are not a private business. It is not a management committee of a private enterprise, it is fundamentally different and the line management approaches that apply in private industry can't apply in that framework.
(503, staff)

Commonly, a collegiate model is moderated by the language of the stakeholder repertoire, where concepts of 'participatory governance' (Edwards 2000a, 2003a) or 'stakeholders' (Maassen 2000a) are used to bring together both internal and external members in a counter-argument to corporate models: 'you have to have a university culture that includes all people' (504, external). This model forms the basis for an attack on business models, as in this example:

Can I just say that in standing for the council I've got two models of universities and councils at the back of my mind and I think they're competing, conflicting models. There's the model of what I would call the scholarly collegial university community, which I think has been enormously brutalised in recent years, and the second model is what I'd call the managerialist model and that's the one that's regimented if you like, it's very dominant in universities and university policies. Really in standing for the council I was in part wanting to defend the first model against the depredations as I see it of the second model. (501, staff)

An alternative way in which to conceptualise governance within the university community repertoire is through a parliamentary model (Foley 2002), as in this council member's account:

A senate is a very good analogy to start with I think, the Senate as in the Parliamentary upper house. [In Australia, the upper house of Federal Parliament is known as the Senate.] The notion of an upper house sort of watching over, has a watching brief and sending back to the lower house things that are not good enough, things to do with, in my mind, accountability, to do with transparency...(411, external)

A parliamentary model, by implication, views councils as essentially political, as a forum for open debate and challenge, with university management as 'government' and other council members as the 'loyal opposition'. Alternatively, but still within a broader governance context, one council member suggests a vice-regal model:

I think it's a bit like 'the crown', you know, it's a sort of symbol of authority and it is probably governmental as the crown, in fact, inserted into these structures...That sort of language is all about ultimately the highest authority in the land, being here and place, but I do think it is almost totally metaphorical. (412, staff)

Size, membership and remuneration (university community repertoire)

Given its emphasis on participatory governance and internal focus, the university community repertoire is used to make claims for larger councils with greater proportions of staff and student members (de Boer, Denters & Goedegebuure 1998a; Shattock 2002a). As this council member asserts:

Well, there has to be a diversity of views, there has to be full representation of the various constituencies, which means there has to be students on the council...There has to be representation of the staff, the academics on council...(114, external)

Any further reduction in the size of councils is presented by one Chancellor as threatening collegial and participatory principles at the heart of the conceptions of a university:

Well, I think it has to have reasonable representation of important viewpoints, that's the first thing. If you go back to really what a university is, which is a

collection of staff and students with aims and objects that are fairly well known, without spelling them out, you've really got to be able to listen to the staff and the students on the council, that's the first thing, otherwise you're not hearing it all from your shareholders, if you like...I don't think you could have a good university council of twelve people, whereas you can have a good industrial board of twelve. (211, Chancellor)

One student points out that small numbers of internal stakeholders generate problems in a political sense:

Talking to a Danish student, he said that the councils over there, the numbers are very even from the different stakeholders. So he's basically saying that if students do the numbers with the academic staff they can actually get things through. The way things are structured in Australia that's impossible and... I think that hinders the democratic process. I would never argue against not having external business people. I think they can add a lot and they certainly do, but I don't think you can have proper debate unless all of the stakeholders are represented in reasonably even numbers... (115, student)

And, for the unfortunate individuals who are the sole representatives of particular groups, such as academic or general staff or postgraduate students, being the only elected member provides both 'enormously more power...and enormously less' (412, staff). That is, there is more power because the person has the sole right to speak for the group but less because of the difficulty in forming coalitions of interest.

The university community repertoire, as noted above, can be combined with the external stakeholder repertoire. Its internal logic does not dictate the exclusion of external members of council, although there is some scepticism towards council as composed of 'big wigs in town' (115, student). In the university community repertoire, external members need to be people who understand what a university is about and who are committed to the university, not so much as a community institution but as a representative of the values of all universities. In the words of one external member, council must be:

[A council] that's able to be passionate and fight for good resources into education and developing the reputation and fighting for the reputation of the university. So you've got to have people who are committed, passionate and understand the issues and are prepared to put the time into thinking and debating them. (203, external)

As in the following example, external council members are able to be positioned by internal members as potential or actual supporters of an ideal that has been eroded from within by managerialism:

I think some parts of the university have really taken that on board too much and I think some people outside the university are saying, you know, 'Hang on a bit. Remember what your job really is'. (301, staff)

At the same time, this repertoire does not provide a strong voice for the inclusion of alumni and alumnae. Even the strongest supports of an idea of self-governance seem to accept that convocation (the assembly of graduates) no longer plays a significant role in the affairs of the university.

The university community repertoire, lacking the ideology of community voluntarism expressed through the external stakeholder repertoire, allows some flexibility around the concept of remuneration of council members. While there is an argument that 'it would really taint the kind of activity' (501, staff) by encouraging people to serve on council for the wrong motives, alternative views are permitted. On the one hand, there is the view that external council members do not require remuneration:

I don't see that the prime role or people should be going on to university councils for the purpose of getting paid. The reason that you're there is because you care about the university and that you want the best results for the university, not because you're going to get so many dollars at the end of the week or whatever. (506, external)

On the other hand, the university community repertoire can be used to express appreciation of an equity argument for remuneration, as in the words of this external council member:

I can afford to drive to [regional campus] and to [other campuses] and so on, and if necessary down to [another campus], but I look at the student representatives on the board and wonder how they do it. I think it is iniquitous that we're not at least given something to cover the costs of transport. (410, external)

The suggestion that council members should not be out of pocket and should be compensated properly for expenses reflects some of the concerns over opportunities to participate expressed through the community stakeholder repertoire.

Council roles (university community repertoire)

As suggested above, the university community repertoire mandates a role for council of a form of soviet, a forum where self-governance is realised through open debate, criticism and challenge. However, a significant number of staff and students describe council's main role in terms of a watchdog against managerial hegemony - or dictatorship - by the Vice-Chancellor and executive. It is in this sense some members use the parliamentary analogy of a 'house of review, upper house, senate-like court of appeal' (501, staff). Council is conceived, in the words of one member, as a counterweight to an increasingly powerful senior management cadre (Scott 2001):

With the rise and rise of CEOs I think there needs to be some check against that and I think a well constituted group, or a well meaning in the best of all possible worlds, a council is probably a very good way to govern a university. It's a last vestige. Not the last vestige, it is another vestige of collegiate governance.
(401, staff)

Most often, the university community repertoire is used to describe the role of council in maintaining or enhancing the university as an example of its type: 'I think perhaps their major responsibility is that the university is a thing which has a tradition going back 800 years and they've got to remember that' (211, Chancellor).

A second role of council, in this repertoire, is therefore to embody the ideal of a university, as in this student's account:

If you look at the goals of Amatil, their vision statement is that we will maximise the return to shareholders by having a prudent mix of new investment and continuing our existing, or something like that, which is exactly what a private company...one of the reasons that private companies are, you know, that there's a successful way of organising use of production and capital is that there is a sense in which they're disposable, that if it isn't doing well, if it's not doing the right thing we just throw it away and get a new one. Now, there's a sense in which... universities come out of a different tradition to that, they come out of the tradition of social institutions, of monasteries and things which have a higher order purpose, a purpose that almost is embodied in their existence. You know, a monastery has an existence in itself, to serve God, but it is an institution which has its own being and thinking. The tradition that universities arise out of, and even the great universities within America, is that they have that kind of inherent value, inherent value because what they do is scholarship and teaching. Now,

how council is involved in that and how council continues that kind of feeling is a very difficult issue in the way present debates are structured. (303, student)

The orientation of these comments is that of stewardship of the asset of reputation, and while the word 'stewardship' is mentioned only a few times, the university community repertoire is used to suggest that council plays some role as a protector of the well-being of the institution: 'it's a custodian and guardian role in a sense' (408, staff).

This conception of stewardship is wider than Donaldson and Davis' theoretical model of stewardship in corporate governance (1991) but shares a fundamental belief that the interests of board members should differ little from the interests of the community being governed. In this stewardship role, maintenance of core values, including the right to autonomy, is appealed to as a moral responsibility (cf. Smith 1995; Abdo 1998, 2002). The roles of council are portrayed less in terms of business oversight than in terms of protection of an institution from external pressures. One academic staff member describes his desired roles for council as follows:

The ideal model for me is the council has got really three roles, or should have three big roles - I mean, they're overlapping and so on but I think you can identify them initially. Firstly, defending academic autonomy and freedom, providing, if you like, a framework in which academics will feel safe to intellectually and publicly engage in debates with all sorts of intellectual issues of our time. So that's the first role of a council, ideally. I think, secondly, council should be publicly defending the university community in the public domain, particularly in terms of gaining support, that the council members should see that they've got an active role to play in promoting the university, defending the university, arguing for speaking up on behalf of universities. Thirdly, I think councils have got to be the domain in which the universities themselves are publicly accountable to the wider community. Somewhere in those roles I think that there should be a role for council. (501, staff)

Council's main role is thus cast as a global one of 'protecting the essence of the university' (404, Vice-Chancellor), which can also mean defending the rights and interests of existing members of the university community. This repertoire is used by some council members to legitimise a concern with issues of the immediate health and wellbeing of staff and students. Such a concern can, in turn, be used as an argument for council becoming involved in human resource issues, although several Vice-Chancellors reject this role for council. One council member explains how the mantra of a manager's 'right' to manage functions as a counter-discourse:

...[Staffing Committee] has been eliminated from the university council. I tried to get that in and I was knocked on by the CEO at the first meeting. So, going back to the stereotype, I think that pointed out very well that that's what the CEO thought of a Staffing Committee, which then probably relates to the staff representatives as well, because the quote was made, 'He has a right to manage'. (302, external)

The university community repertoire is also used to convey a key role of council as being to offer an effective process (Edwards 2002b) for the airing of views: 'I love the idea of having a big hotbed in council with good informed, rich, provocative debate. I think it's great' (102, student).

Given the emphasis on process, the ability to be represented or to have a 'seat at the table', becomes critical: 'The interesting thing is the council has fairly poor - poor, that's too strong a word - limited representation from the stakeholders' (301, staff).

The argument that council's role is a global one can be used to present councils as having the right to address questions already decided by the Academic Board or Board of Studies:

I think the important point is that members of council have to recognise they're charged with a responsibility to oversight or to superintend the welfare and future direction of the university. That means they have to look to making sure that it's appropriately financed, that the academic decision making structures especially are sound and that they have regard for the academic direction of the institution. (510, external)

As indicated by some of the extracts above, the universalising thrust of the university community repertoire leads some council members to suggest a proselytising role for council. Several council members temper their support for this role, as in the example below, with a concern for external legitimacy:

That would be an incredibly useful function for a council to have, but it doesn't seem to me to ever have been the way in which councils have been formulated or thought about at the government end either. I mean, they've been thought about as watchdogs for the government, not as people who would feed that stuff from the universities to the government. (412, staff)

Individual roles on council (university community repertoire)

In accordance with its logic of council as a form of parliament, the university community repertoire provides a way for council members elected by an internal constituency to voice views about their roles as representatives or to discuss tensions between individual and representative roles. To this extent, it offers possibilities for countering the delegitimation of representative roles offered by the repertoires of business and professionalisation.

For many internal members, as for external members, the tension between individual and representative roles is addressed by the concept of bringing 'a perspective', discussed in Chapter 7 as part of the community stakeholder repertoire. One difference lies in the value that members of the university community place on expertise, so that members of council believe they can bring expert and specialised advice to council rather than merely a 'perspective'. This fine distinction, present in the university community repertoire, allows a case - even if heavily qualified - to be made for representing specific interests, as this council member proposes:

But, anyhow, my point is that there is a subclass of staff who are appointed directly by council and who in that sense are responsible directly to the council. I mean, I've argued a sort of very old fashioned view to hold these days, very old fashioned, to say that, you know, I was appointed by [University] council to profess the discipline of [xx] and, in a sense, it's my duty that if I see the discipline being damaged in some way then I really need to speak up and say it's not appropriate for this to happen. (301, staff)

The university community repertoire is used, however, more to highlight difficulties than to advance positive claims about the roles of individual council members who are elected. It expresses the tensions of representative roles, manifested in a lack of time to consult, to fulfil that part of the role that requires the canvassing of views. The role of the internal council member is presented, often by student members, as strategic, political negotiation over key issues:

To do the job properly I suppose it'd be time consuming, a bit lonely, when there's only one or two of you to be able to do that and I think lonely's perhaps too emotive a word. Consequently there's a battle going on behind the benevolent looks, one's always, 'How can I get these bastards to play it straight?' etc. And the constant frustration is - I mean as I said it's a political role and a

constant frustration is balancing what you know, what you'd like to speak on and try to get some outcomes. (102, student)

The dilemma for activist members is selecting the right matter to fight on: 'it's a kind of keeping your powder dry I suppose on an issue, you know, you don't bring every small thing' (512, staff).

The university community repertoire affords internal members who are also senior managers a means to express the tensions between defending, in council, the views of an internal group (Academic Board, a faculty) and supporting the executive. One council member expresses a concern, voiced by others, about role overload (Widmer 1993) and conflicts of interest:

So, in a sense you can't maintain...you've got to sort of be co-opted and that probably compromises to some extent your position but also means you can be much more effective in many other ways...That on occasions caused me some conflict of interest between that co-option into the executive and therefore implied, or expected, loyalty to the Vice-Chancellor, and the necessity, which is a fundamental one, to represent the Academic Board fully. (408, staff)

In keeping with its emphasis on politics and control, the language of power is also used in this repertoire. Council membership confers access to both information and opportunities for status, as this student member comments:

You know, when you want to say ... because so often you say, you know, 'I'd really like to go and tell John Howard [Australian Prime Minister] that this thing sucks' and you can in a university sense. You can go up to the Vice-Chancellor, like I can ring him up and say, 'Look, can I see you in the next couple of days', go in and say, 'Oi, we all thought that this...and what's happening here?' I think it's a power, I think it is a power and I think is a power you only realise you have until you don't have it. Then you go, 'I wanted to say that ... oh, I can't any more, I'm not there'. But when you've got it you can use it. (403, student)

The university community repertoire is used by external council members to establish their own claims to a legitimate role through their insider knowledge of the 'secret' values of universities and of the importance of preservation of those values, as in this example:

...the ethic of scholarship and the community of scholar idea, I think, is the difference. In other words, people who understand the history of universities know how important those things are and councils have got to know that too. If they don't know it then they cause, apart from irritation, depression and lack of confidence and optimism, all those things in the academic staff, academic and technical staff. (204, external)

External council members frequently put themselves forward during interviews as 'friends' of the university, advocates for the values of scholarship and an understanding of universities that is broader than merely instrumental. One council member contrasts universities with other organisations to make a point about independence:

I've come to the view that the only body in the country that can say what it likes is a university. The number of bodies that have been set up over the years whose job it has been to give advice, to have opinions, they don't do it any more because they by and large are fearful of their survival. (504, external)

Another member makes a similar claim in support of academic freedom:

I'm a very old fashioned girl in that regard. I believe it's absolutely essential that we have intellectual freedom to express ideas. You know, if we don't have a good provocative and stimulating academic community then we're a very much poorer society. So I think it's an absolute and it's disturbing to note that on occasions, too many occasions in Australia, that seems to be under challenge. (203, external)

Accountability (university community repertoire)

The university community repertoire is less concerned with to whom university councils are accountable than for what they are accountable, in part because an internal community can be seen as accountable only to itself, as this speaker suggests:

Now if you think of it as an organisation, council is also accountable to its own community because it's supposedly the place to give a just, fair hearing to the concerns of its own community. (411, external)

The stakeholder and university community repertoires in combination provide a model of dual lines of accountability, with council accountable internally to 'academic staff and academic pursuits, and then administrative staff' (501, staff) and externally to the community in which the university operates.

However, even if external accountability is accepted as legitimate, the university community repertoire offers a view of accountability as much broader than compliance. In the words of one council member:

I actually don't think there is any accountability for the broader issues of what is education, defending good quality education etc. So, if you like, there's no accounting, in my view, of universities to the broader community...I suppose the biggest area where a council should account to the community is defending the role of public investment in education and defending education beyond that of the crude instrumental...So those need to be - the ideas need to be accountable rather than council as such, if that makes sense, if I can make that distinction. And that's not happening. (102, student)

As noted above, the university community repertoire provides additional concepts through which to address questions of moral responsibility and accountability to future generations, as one staff member asserts:

I still again come back to that public accountability issue about universities and there is a kind of almost a Gramscian kind of intellectual role for universities to play that extends more beyond than just its enrolled students. There is a kind of intellectual leadership role that universities and intellectual bodies should be playing, in the same way that perhaps a generation or two ago church leaders might have played a kind of a role, a social role in that respect - I think the medical profession is the only one that's left that people universally kind of think of as somebody who can speak on major ethical issues... (512, staff)

Universities are presented as having an accountability for shaping society rather than for merely socialising students to the established order. One staff member of council expresses, in a slightly embarrassed way, this idea, which comes close to views of society presented through the community stakeholder repertoire:

In the very broadest sense they're accountable for, you know, enhancing the life of a society through the possibility of people to engage in self understanding and in a broader social understanding and all that sort of stuff. (503, staff)

More pragmatically, in the university community repertoire, accountability is given an overarching sense of upholding the university's reputation in academic terms:

The thing about academic reputation is so ephemeral; so difficult to define yet, you know, it's so important. I mean, if you get the reputation of being a Mickey Mouse place it's very hard to overcome. (301, staff).

Establishing the importance of internal accountability is not the same as accepting that this accountability is delivered. The university community repertoire provides a platform from which to criticise the failures of management to deliver internal accountability: 'If there was a real belief in accountability to the staff and students then we would report back to staff and students, wouldn't we?' (303, student).

This criticism may take the form of demands, of calling management to account. It allows speakers to distance their own personal accountabilities from the accountability they view as not being exercised by council as a whole. The lack of overall accountability to internal stakeholders is mentioned by many internal members of council, as in this extract:

So I think the accountability to students is more on, you know, a speaking level but not at an action level. Like there's no evaluation, you know, there's nothing for them to be accountable for because the students can't question it. Then you'd like to think they're accountable for staff that they employ but, again, I think that the meetings of staff are few and far between. So, again, there's no way to test that accountability... (205, student)

Within the university community repertoire, individual accountability to council consists in bringing expertise or being expertly informed about specific internal issues and speaking out on these issues. It also includes a proximal sense of accountability (Jensen 1998) on the part of student members in particular, who often report back to the student representative body: 'I think I'm very accountable for the way I give people a view of what council is about. I'm accountable for making sure the students know what it is about and know that it's there' (205, student). While some elected internal members of council are at pains to demonstrate that they do not 'report back' to a constituency, others describe the ways they aim to provide accountability to their constituency through a variety of means, such as email reports.

Expectations of council held by others (university community repertoire)

In common with the business repertoire, council members using a university community repertoire present external communities as largely unaware of any features of university governing boards. However, while the business repertoire emphasises

the anonymity of boards and board members, this is done within a general expectation that the community is aware that public companies do have boards of directors. In the university community repertoire, the external society does not know and is not expected to know about the internal workings of universities. One member comments:

I don't think the community knows a university council exists. I don't think they would have a clue. They see universities as big places with young people coming in and out all the time and I think unless they've been to a university themselves...they're not a part of us, they're different. Something goes on in there, we don't know what it is, we don't understand what it is, we don't really want to know, that's up to them, that's what they do. We do our thing, they do their thing, and maybe one day when they're finished they'll come out and do our thing too. (505, external member)

Some council members suggest that a university council is equated to a school governing council in the minds of the general public. One Vice-Chancellor uses this idea to assert his primacy while rhetorically dismissing the construction that permits it:

...firstly the community as a whole is probably confused or not well informed or whatever and many members of the committee may well not know there is such a thing as a university council and would think of the Vice-Chancellor a bit like the principal of a school, so they may well think the accountability rests with me and not the council, which is wrong. (304, Vice-Chancellor)

For staff members of council, there is a palpable sense that staff expectations of council are destined to be unfulfilled, not that the expectations are seen to be high in the first place. This latter view is consistent with findings from academic staff reported in Meek and Wood (1997), where councils are perceived to not be highly effective bodies. The university community repertoire allows staff and students to suggest a sense of disengagement by external council members, in contrast to the 'contribution' ethic voiced through the community stakeholder repertoire:

Some of them are very responsible community worthies who do take it very seriously, but nevertheless they have their real lives to go on with and if they can contribute something to council then they're quite happy to and if council operates as a rubber stamp they'll turn up to that and have the luncheon and discuss with people. So there's really not a huge drive from within council. (303, student)

In regard to staff expectations of council, one senior academic who is also a manager reflects on his role in the following terms:

The worst is the tension I think of the inevitable disappointment by your academic fellows in not carrying forward their particular wants and wishes and making them triumph... The fact that there's definitely two councils, a university employee council and an external council and that's an unstated divide, and the expectation of the staff-elected and student-elected that they should caucus as a kind of resistance movement, and their disappointment if you're not part of that caucus or won't become part of it, so you've gone over... (106, staff)

Council members often present students as viewing council as their 'last hope', where staff and students 'might see it [council] as sort of the ultimate court of appeal.' (208, external). The same senior academic quoted above distances himself from identification with student views while conveying the logic of a university community repertoire:

Do you remember when you read the history of the last Czar of the Russias, in that it was always difficult for the peasantry to think that their oppression was due to the Czar. The Czar was the father and if only they could get past bureaucrats to the Czar, he would save them. I think there's an element of that, if they [students] can get past Chancellery and the bureaucrats and all the money spenders and penny pinchers and get to council, council would save them and save education for them. I think that's another illusion but it's an illusion to have. (106, staff)

Several staff members mention specific expectations of TAFE staff or general staff, particularly in regard to ensuring that TAFE is recognised and given some form of parity in dual-sector universities: 'I think they expect council to come up with a process or a university that integrates them, right. That's very high on the agenda' (207, staff).

Role of Academic Board (university community repertoire)

Not surprisingly, the role of the Academic Board receives greater prominence within the university community repertoire than in other repertoires. It may be used to suggest that Academic Board's role needs to expand. One Board chair comments:

But in terms of there being a general discussion, you know, for example, Academic Board moves a motion that HECS fees be waived, things like that don't happen... I'm hoping within the new Academic Board structure that we've set up, that there will be room for that. (301, staff)

Claims can be made to reinforce the demarcation between the Academic Board and council, or to position Academic Board as the second arm of governance, an equal but different partner, as in this council member's comments:

Academic Board thinks, I think with some justification, that it's the body that really represents the academic life of the university, the real hub work of the university. Academic Board works very hard here, much harder than council, its meetings are longer, its agenda is always much more crowded, it debates the issues much more intensely, and maybe that's as it should be. It's the other house of the parliament, if you like - the lower house I sometimes think of it...
(501, staff)

However, the same staff member also reflects, not uncritically, on expectations of council held by the Academic Board:

Academic Board here sees itself in opposition to the senior management and it's somewhat condescending as far as council is concerned, 'Oh, they'll have to learn to understand', blah, blah, 'That pack of lay outsiders, who do they think they are?' It's a bit like that. (501, staff)

Another council member also distances herself from direct endorsement of the views of the Academic Board, reporting rather than supporting her colleagues:

It would not be clear to me that the Academic Board as a whole thinks actually that there's anybody above it. I mean, they sort of see themselves as making the decisions that matter. (412, staff)

These accounts suggest the care that senior academic staff who are also managers need to take in negotiating differing repertoires. They may also indicate a difficulty among academic staff in expressing an affirmative picture of the Academic Board's current governance roles.

Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (university community repertoire)

Of all the repertoires, the university community repertoire is most alert to the possibility of managerial hegemony, which it sees as an ever-present danger, requiring external vigilance by a parliamentary-style 'loyal opposition'. One Vice-Chancellor describes the frustration this entailed when he first entered the job:

...council meetings tended to be a debate between myself and the staff and possibly the students on those matters with the external members looking on, probably unhappy. (304, Vice-Chancellor)

With its deep suspicion of management, this repertoire provides language in which to present Vice-Chancellors as expecting that their councils will either be a nuisance or a rubber stamp, or are there only as window-dressing. Not unexpectedly, it is in a context of this repertoire that the pejorative cliché of a 'rubber stamp' is most evident. One Chancellor reflects:

I think most Vice-Chancellors think of a council as something to be endured. Council's main use, as far as a lot of senior university people are concerned, is to get a rubber stamp on things that they think have to be done. It's a shifting of responsibility in a way. (406, Chancellor)

The criticism of councils within the university community repertoire centres around the muzzling of argument or challenge. The achievement of consensus is presented as a sham, achieved not through robust discussion but through processes that preclude debate, as this student implies:

I think in a funny kind of way I'd like to see the university council to be a little less formal as far as people discussing and debating but the meeting procedure, I feel, should be a lot more formal. It's reasonable as far as people getting rights to speaking and stuff...But I think it would be a good thing if people were a little bit more used to debating motions...if there are real debates that the processes haven't worked that they should be debated at council. You've got to be careful in the way that it's debated, but I don't think that the governance argument should be used to stop people talking about things. (115, student)

The control of debate and delegation of tasks to committees serve to delegitimise full council meetings, and this is a criticism made by those who endorse a parliamentary model of council. Within such a framework, internal members of council express their consciousness that strategies of exclusion are being practised against them:

There are those that are listened to, those who are consulted, those who are rung up and those who are tolerated...I think an elected staff member of council, as I am, will always be in the latter part. They'll be there to make up the numbers and will be on the committees because you've got to have a staff member of council on it...Of course, every now and again somebody will slip out, 'Well,

'we'll discuss that with senior members of council'. They wouldn't say anything so silly these days but...there are members and there are members. (401, staff)

However, the university community repertoire affords opportunities for speakers to raise the prospect of alternative governance models. One speaker reflects on a time when staff and student participation in governance was stronger (cf. Harman & Selby Smith 1976):

I think the council could actually, in its new, reduced, reformed state, actually could take steps that could ameliorate some of the problems or some of the obstacles that are put in the way of councils in the way they operate at the moment. Things like university meetings and forums of various sorts, consultancies with people, ranges of ways in which you can go out and allow some kind of reporting back again. I'm reminded that when I was at Melbourne the response of senior management at Melbourne to the whole 1970s student unrest and political dissension and so forth was to set up a body called University Assembly...it was an extremely valuable way of debating and for people to become practised at debating major issues affecting the university and its students and staff. (512, staff)

At the same time, the same staff member expresses some scepticism about retreats or forums as an alternative modus operandi: 'Again, I think there are ways in which management then try to limit the outcomes of those kinds of things - they're usually very, very well timetabled with rigid running sheets' (512, staff).

In common with other elements of this repertoire, descriptions of the role of the Chancellor tend towards the inspirational and transcendent. In the extract below, the Chancellor is expected to symbolise the values a university stands for, signalling the legitimacy of the institution in its own terms:

I mean the university is a university so despite everything...you've got to respect the organisation, the organisational culture, the organisational history. I think it is meaningful to a lot of people and a Chancellor is a symbol of the value of an open mind, of research, of learning, of breaking down the frontiers, etc, etc, of understanding. So that's real, that's something that is absorbed and you've therefore got to have a person who understands that and will represent that set of values very well. So they've got to meet that qualification. Then they've got to actually chair the meeting and understand the soul of the council, which will in the end be the sum of the value sets of the people and all that sort of thing. (502, external)

The ideal, in the university community repertoire, involves the Chancellor stepping in to resolve issues, as this speaker indicates:

What I would ideally want from a Chancellor is a good manager who consults widely and is open to ideas from other people...So, the kind of role of the Chancellor is that wise old matriarch or patriarch or whatever who likes standing as a public figure and a bit of kudos, but who is also prepared to intervene at various times to direct discussion and keep the various members of council and the Vice-Chancellor and even the Vice-Chancellor's executive, working together in a useful way... (303, student)

And, speaking of a former Chancellor but using similar concepts, one staff member states:

She was profound and pastoral. She knew the university community...She listens patiently and gently. She's a kind of mother figure...She was a superb example and people could talk to her without feeling that they were being indiscreet or that their confidence would be betrayed and so on. So I've got that model of a pastoral, caring, open, loving if you like, figure in the university. (501, staff)

A degree of projection is evident and, if the business repertoire favours a conception of the Chancellor as Zeus, the university community repertoire may present Athena as its ideal.

Summary of the university community repertoire

The university community repertoire supplies a radically conservative view of council membership, roles and functions - radical in its distance from models of corporate governance and conservative in its support for the traditional and magnificent principles of a 'republic of the mind'.

Although some of its positions overlap those of the community stakeholder repertoire examined in Chapter 7, especially in regard to participatory and empowering processes, the university community repertoire gives voice to internal dynamics of power and interpretation of the ideals that universities espouse. Its focus on ideals and political debate can leave those using the repertoire open to charges of being unrealistic or obstructionist.

The next chapter examines the repertoire of professionalisation, which is of a different character to the other three repertoires and which, in varying ways, can be used to bolster each of them.

Chapter 9

THE REPERTOIRE OF PROFESSIONALISATION

Two activities which do not require any training, or any licence to practice, are parenthood and directorships of companies. What they have in common is that parents and company directors may have the greatest effect for good, or ill, on third parties who have absolutely no say in the selection of the parent or the company director. (Rogers 1991:1)

In contrast to the other three major repertoires identified in my research, the repertoire of professionalisation takes as its reference point not a type of institution but the concept of a governing board itself. Legitimacy claims made using this repertoire are based not on the traditions of universities, community participation or business-like efficiency, but rather on generic normative appeals to 'good governance' practices, themselves derived from management literature (e.g. Carver 1997; Davies 1999; Widmer & Houchin 2000; Gregg 2001; Robinson 2001; SA 2003). It draws on a logic that has some support in the literature, namely, that more effective boards use more of these recommended practices (Herman & Renz 2000).

That is, this repertoire allows the expression of reflexive or self-conscious reflections on how governance is practised and how it could be improved. Unsurprisingly, it emphasises the factors that empower or disempower boards (Lorsch & MacIver 1989) in the conduct of their governance functions.

This repertoire assumes that, whatever the sector, there are certain identifiable features that can be used as benchmarks to assess the extent to which a board is likely to be effective and not just a 'rubber stamp'. It is most evident in discussions of council roles, expectations of the Chancellor as 'head' of council and improvements to council performance, including repeated suggestions by university council members for induction and evaluation (cf. Henderson 1990; SHEFC 1999; DETYA 2000; CUC 2001; TAMU 2001c). By implication, this repertoire supports proposals that university councils should become more professional in their operations.

In this sense, the repertoire of professionalisation supports the repertoire of business, but it can be used to support claims made using other repertoires, such as the desire of external members to make stronger contributions (Herman & van Til 1989). It serves as a background repertoire to bolster arguments about the best form of governing board within the other repertoires.

The logic is industrial (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991) and its antecedents lie in professionalised discourses of management, which use concepts such as roles, mission statements, objectives, evaluation and performance monitoring, and the discourse of managerialism (Miller 1998; Meek 2003b). The organising concepts of this repertoire are drawn from a range of texts on both governance and management and may include legal concepts as well as some tenets of managerialism. There is no one established canon for this repertoire, although certain texts on not-for-profit governance, including those mentioned in Chapter 2, provide the basis for a number of ideas. However, the repertoire of professionalisation is not sector-specific. Council members' own experience of managerial roles and of other boards provide additional norms of good practice.

This repertoire makes available to council members opportunities for identifying 'gaps' between normative expectations and actual practice. It therefore offers opportunities to critique council performance additional to those used in the other three repertoires. Such critiques are not 'dangerous' because, to a greater extent than other repertoires, the repertoire of professionalisation is naturalised, in the sense that many of its prescriptions are put forward as self-evidently 'a good thing'. That is, the repertoire of professionalisation has the potential, over time, to become a dominant discourse of governance.

At the time of my interviews, however, this repertoire was far from naturalised, being used only sporadically by council members and appearing to offer an incomplete range of prescriptions on which to draw. This repertoire is most evident in discussions of council roles and the performance of members, and less evident in talk of accountabilities and of expectations.

Governance model and effectiveness of council (repertoire of professionalisation)

In the repertoire of professionalisation, no one governance model is overtly accentuated over another, although the managerial hegemony model is, by definition, one to be resisted. A core concept is that the governance model should be one that promotes the effective performance of the functions that have been granted to council. This repertoire is used by my interviewees to identify the legal powers conferred on council as the starting point for any discussion of governance. However, this starting point also serves to highlight the gap between the words of a statute and council as enacted by its members. As one council member states:

Well, it's a body which, in theory, has all the control and power and everything else, but in reality has very little, in respect of universities. (302, external)

For some council members, there is a marked difference between the sense they have from council minutes and reviews (Hoare 1995; West 1998), and the reality:

So what influenced my opinion in that was seeing it emerge as an identity, then realising that the identity which you pick up from the literature and the language was nothing like the practice...you know, seeing the wrong image emerge out of the amorphous sludge...In my experience what the council does in terms of the actual day-to-day operations and setting agenda and control and true accountability is negligible. (102, student)

The majority of responses using this repertoire point to a need for councils to provide general oversight as some form of final authority or 'backstop'. In some council members' views, council is needed because the institution 'needs a driving head' (107, external) or 'an overseeing body' (505, external). The key point in this formulation is the requirement for overall control of an organisation. In response to a question on whether universities need councils, one member states:

To me there's no question that they absolutely do - unless, you know, you're a private university that's owned and controlled by some philanthropist, then you must have a governing council, someone who puts the chief executive in place and sets the vision and passes judgement on that executive and his team. (114, external)

One way for senior management and other internal members to account for the need for councils is by reference to the need for a final sign-off, showing that processes have been observed and providing at least the possibility of scrutiny, keeping the institution honest:

My feeling would be that the main value added is that the council exists...we have a council meeting next Monday and we have a number of papers and because we know council has a number of people that are sensitive about some of the aspects to do with the papers, and based on previous discussions we know there are a number of things that need to be tied down fairly fully and thought through, and we therefore would have thought those things through more than we probably would have otherwise done. So I think there's probably a tendency if you are just signing things off at the Academic Board level or the management level, you wouldn't dot all the i's and cross all the t's as much as you would do in going to that next stage. (408, staff)

Commonly the phrase 'checks and balances' is invoked, by both internal and external council members.

Council roles (repertoire of professionalisation)

As noted in Chapter 5, most council members use a semi-standardised language to describe the roles of a university council as a mix of strategic planning, monitoring, financial accountability and appointment of key staff. That is, strategic planning, compliance and oversight of senior management are widely used as a professionalised repertoire around council roles. Two interview extracts are presented below, to demonstrate the extent to which standard formulations are used:

Obviously, one of the first things is to appoint a CEO to ensure competence, academic and financial management and performance and to monitor these things, and I think to set up the committee system which would help in the monitoring of these things... we have to look for a few performance indicators, certainly with some of the senior staff and the CEO... (206, external)

I think that the three tasks of a council are to set the strategic directions, in other words have a lot to talk about a strategic plan for the future. I think the second task is to ensure that that is implemented, which in an operational sense means having a management process with the Vice-Chancellor. The third, I think, is to ensure that the finances are well managed...and of course there are a whole range of other requirements...basically if each council did those three things well they would add value to the university. (504, external)

The phrase 'good governance' is also used as a marker for the professionalised repertoire, in discussions of changes in council roles that reflect a focus on the norms of appropriate board behaviour. In this context, the Guide to Best Practice in TAFE Institute Councils (ATII, 1996) was mentioned by a few council members as offering prescriptions that university councils should emulate. The council member quoted below was one of the few to mention risk management, a concept that had not emerged strongly in the governance literature at the time of my interviews:

...I think there's a greater emphasis on principles of good governance, on issues such as risk management, on pro-active approaches, rather than sort of just nice frameworks within which to operate. Thinking ahead, predicting where risks might be, in the broader sense of risk management, that would be financial risk, risk to do with competitors and all of that. (109, staff)

As observed in Chapter 5, a striking number of responses about council roles elicit the mantra that 'council's role is not to manage'. Like the 'Fireman's case' mentioned later in this chapter, it is one of the few 'rules' about Australian university governing boards that appears to have wide circulation.

Within the professionalised repertoire, a problem for many council members is the extent to which council is expected to take a leadership role. Some writers refer to the governing body as an initiator of policy (Carver 1997) while others accept that the governing board ratifies policy (Middleton 1987). University council members usually express a preference for a more active role in strategic planning, as this Chancellor remarks:

Council should be, as I say, a bit more on the front foot than all the time just trying to correct the direction the place is trying to head...My model of a good council would have it far more proactive than most councils are. It would actually spend a lot more time on developing the components of a strategic plan and so on, rather than just reacting to papers that are put forward. So, more proactivity would be to me a better council, particularly in the strategic directions, asking, 'What sort of university are we going to be in five or 10 years time? (508, Chancellor)

Several external council members agree that a change in the balance of power would sit better with their ideas about effectiveness. However, the comments are couched in

terms that soften any sense of direct criticism of the existing regime, as in this member's account:

...I think at times there's a tendency for issues which emerge not to be brought to the attention of council. To that extent I think it's probably fair to say that there needs to be a shift of power perhaps back towards council rather than the Vice-Chancellor. (110)

Notwithstanding the use of standard descriptions of roles, a small minority of council members highlight situations where board roles seem to not have been worked through. The need for clarity over the roles of a governing board is mentioned in most major texts on good board practice (Duca 1996; Widmer & Houchin 2000; ANAO 2003) and, therefore, provides an opportunity for critique, where there is still '... a wondering, even at the senior levels, of what role they want council to play' (501, staff). Several council members question whether the university knows what role it wants for council. As one member comments:

...there's no attempt to take people and cultivate them within that...I think that's just a reflection that council itself hasn't thought through what's the role of council, what's the common purpose, what are we really on about? (502, external)

The question of council's leadership role also impacts on the leadership role of the Vice-Chancellor. Many council members indicate that Vice-Chancellors cannot accept that council should work in partnership with them: 'Very few [Vice-Chancellors], I would think, have a strong belief that council can be an effective partner with the management with the Vice-Chancellor in running the organisation' (506, external).

For their own part, council members identify a tension between support of the Vice-Chancellor and their responsibility for oversight of the Vice-Chancellor's performance. While council members do not want to undermine the authority of the Vice-Chancellor, council meetings are structured in ways that make it difficult to differentiate between 'not undermining' and acceding to the Vice-Chancellor's wishes on any issue.

While the idea that council, and not the Vice-Chancellor, should provide leadership, is not necessarily accepted by all council members, the repertoire of professionalisation endows councils with some tools to address the issues. Council members indicate they are trying to move towards a 'mutual respect' form of professionalised non-adversarial relationship, with the council and Vice-Chancellor as partners whose views may differ (cf. Otto 2003). Talking of the best board she had ever been associated with, one council member says approvingly:

Why was it successful? Because it had an excellent chair...and an excellent executive. It had a very strong management and the relationship between the two was always discussed, always thought through, because it is not as simple, it's never as simple to say, 'You do that and I'll do this'. It is all about relationships... (504, external)

Changing external accountability is advanced by one council member as a reason for the professionalisation of council functions:

I think one of the interesting things that is happening in that front...is the emphasis now from the auditing body about the need to have an audit committee, and an audit committee which can actually act independently if there were reason to believe that there were problems. And that's another way, now I'm thinking it through, that council roles are changing. Because once upon a time they used to be pretty comfortable, internally focused, possibly almost incestuous organisations. (109, staff)

Allied to this is an increased concern about professional indemnity and responsibility, as this council member comments:

Well, I suppose it's like a lot of things, like if something goes seriously wrong the community might want questions asked as to how that came to be the case and I think that's the case with all sorts of boards like that. The National Safety Council [a celebrated case in Australia], for example, like if there was gross fraud or negligence or even just poor decision making that caused the university to collapse I think the community would want to know why it had been managed so badly. (111, staff)

Individual roles on council and selection of members (repertoire of professionalisation)

A central tenet of the professionalised repertoire is that members of governing boards are appointed to provide independent judgement and advice. For this reason, council

members are not expected to be captives of any particular interest group (Wood & Smith 1992; DEST 2002d). Many council members are at pains to stress their adherence to this view, quoting one legal case that has wide circulation among council members:

Are you aware of that landmark legal Justice Street?¹ ... Not many people know that but I think it's very relevant. Once you're put there you forget about who put you there to the extent that you're not their mouthpiece. (401, staff)

For many, simply referring to the 'Fireman's case' is enough of an answer to the question of individual roles on council in the professionalised repertoire. This component of the repertoire can be paired with the language of the business repertoire to undermine the need for elected staff and student members, where some form of constituency is implied.

One council member demonstrates his knowledge of the 'Fireman's case', while suggesting that its meaning deserves further consideration in the case of universities:

I mean, ideally, we always get each issued here with - what do they call it? - the fire commissioner's case, Mr Justice Street...I just feel that in the case of the students and staff where there are hotly contested elections frequently, that it isn't totally realistic to expect them to think of themselves not representing anyone. But that, nevertheless, should be the direction in which we go. (204, external)

Rodan (2000) argues that traces of a representative approach will always remain for elected members, a view echoed by the interviewee above. However, in the repertoire of professionalisation, the more nuanced consideration of how personal and overall interests intersect, evident in other responses by external and internal stakeholders, is blanketed by reference to a largely naturalised principle.

Regarding council membership, selection processes are presented as in need of professionalising. One Vice-Chancellor comments candidly:

¹ The reference is to a judgment by Mr Justice Street in *Bennetts v Board of Fire Commissioners of New South Wales (1967) 87 WN (Pt 1)*. Justice Street held that once a member has been elected to a board, he or she is subject to an overriding duty to serve the interests of the board, in preference to the interests of the group that elected him or her, on every occasion on which a possible conflict arises.

The selection of council members in this university tends to be rather ad hoc. We don't go about it systematically, we do pay lip service to certain things like gender balance, like balancing the expertise of council members, but in the end it's pretty ad hoc. (513, Vice-Chancellor)

For some council members, the repertoire of professionalisation offers a way to express concerns over an uncritical acceptance of committee or executive reports. One external member states:

Even, say, in the finance area you're reliant on the next rung down having actually assured themselves that everything is kosher. You're presented with a great swag of figures and figures are figures. I mean...anybody could produce a set of figures, say you've got a problem, you poke them a bit and they seem to fall into place so that's okay. I get presented with a budget and I ask the Vice-Chancellor, 'Does this accord with the policies of the university?', and I don't know what the policies of the university are. I don't know how he does but he says yes and so away I go. (302, external)

There are also council members who are frustrated at the extent to which their fellow council members are relaxed about their potential liability: 'They don't perhaps recognise that they've got a duty of care there that might go beyond just being a member of a council' (209, external). However, as another council member says, his colleagues have some way to go before this view is likely to be accepted:

Well, if this university were, for example, to go broke, someone would be held accountable and one would expect it would be the council...I think councillors might tut tut and say sorry but could just walk away. (409, external)

Professionalised governance practices generally suggest a separation between governance and executive roles (ANAO 2003). However, this separation is not always observed in regard to university governance, most noticeably in regard to the Vice-Chancellor's position, but also in regard to academic senior managers or Board chairs who are ex officio members of council: 'I'm proposing a lot of the changes I'm supposed to be reflecting on' (503, staff). These staff may also be members of the Vice-Chancellor's senior management group.

One staff member who is also a Board chair reflects on his complex lines of accountability, using a formulation that is more analytical and less anguished than concerns expressed using the university community repertoire:

I'm accountable for bringing an academic point of view to council, not, as I said before, a caucused vote, but the kind of values sense that a thinking sort of person working in that area would bring to a decision. I'm also responsible to Chancellery and the Board to understand and not subvert policy issues which might be sensitive or difficult. I'm accountable to the academic community to report issues back to the community which have academic ramifications, or to facilitate that or certainly not obfuscate at the very least. (106, staff)

Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (repertoire of professionalisation)

Many council members express doubts over the extent to which council is a fully effective body. Asked whether council makes a difference, one member replies: 'My initial off the top of my head response, which is usually the true one, is not as much as I'd like' (116, external). Another says:

Well, I think the council has a very good and useful role to play in the university, being the governing body, but sometimes it's really not allowed to carry out the function for which it was designed... (406, external)

The repertoire of professionalisation allows council members to identify those elements of council functioning that inhibit effective performance. While these difficulties are sometimes presented less as direct criticisms of the way the university treats its council members than as the personal feelings of individual members, there is a feeling that universities should be able to do better.

The largest number of council members, external and internal, present the worst aspects of being on council as feeling disempowered or not being able to contribute (Herman & van Til 1989), either through poor information or through an inability to influence the proposals of internal management: 'I think most council members feel they're treated like the proverbial mushrooms' (401, staff).

Disempowerment can also be expressed as a sense of not being valued, as one council member comments:

A lot who left after their two year appointment didn't seek to be re-appointed, I think out of frustration, a feeling of being redundant, a feeling of not being able to contribute, a feeling that the Vice-Chancellor really was going to do what he was going to do anyway. (201, external)

The repertoire of professionalisation can also be used to voice concerns that universities ignore the need to support council members. Even the 'trivial things' mentioned by some council members suggest at least a lack of sensitivity on the part of some universities to minor points of detail that are significant for some members:

...most of the meetings are [on a campus in outer Melbourne]...That's always been a little bit of a drag. If the meetings were held in the city within a city office there'd be no negatives involved for me. It's just the getting to meetings that is a bit awkward. (409, external)

In Lorsch & MacIver's (1989) account of disempowering aspects of governance, various forms of institutional power are used by senior executives to dilute or preclude effective scrutiny of the organisation's management. One of these is restriction of access to information, identified by a number of council members through comments about the control of agendas or inaccessibility of information. The following example is typical:

The major impediment is who controls the information, and the nature of the beast is that Chancellery has the information at hand and external members can't possibly know. Internal members don't necessarily know either, but external members can't possibly know all the detail of the coalface and that sort of thing. I think they need to take a much more active role in finding it out; I think they should demand it. But I think there's too much passivity and uncritical acceptance of information that is given. But that's the single biggest factor you know, who controls information. (101, external)

However, too much information can be as disempowering as too little. Many council members mention as problematic the amount of papers and the time required to read them thoroughly:

...the worst is the sheer weight of information which you've got to get and your sense that even if you read and try and absorb and talk to people that it's such a complex organisation in which you're bound to wonder whether you've got really all the necessary information to make any proper decisions, and it really is very hard... (410, external)

This 'weight of information' is also disorienting, as one council member suggests:

I am a bit surprised at the mass of paper that is fed up to us in a very short period of time, and it doesn't have to be read. I don't need to have a report on how well the TAFE's gone for the six months to June. I don't need a report - all I want is an executive summary of that. So I think there's too much paper that's being fed to us. I'm a bit frustrated, I suppose, in trying to get on top of looking down on the whole thing, and knowing how this is operating as a business and what drives it. (107, external)

A related concern around meeting papers is the lack of meaningful and focused information on the university's performance.

Yes, and that's one of the areas where a whole raft of clear performance indicators are actually of value. Now, we all know that there's all sorts of problems with what indicators and what they might mean, and you can invariably end up measuring inventories and measuring other stuff. But if you constantly work on good indicators, then that makes it a bit more difficult for anyone to baffle and flannel... (102, student)

In addition to these calls for a better quality of information, council members use the repertoire of professionalisation to stress the need for council to focus more on key issues. Control of the agenda is another point mentioned by a few council members. However, these comments are usually heavily qualified, as in the example below, indicating some conflict between the dictates of 'good governance' and a reluctance to been seen to criticise existing practice:

Another principle of good governance that I don't know that I necessarily agree with in the educational context but which is worth considering is that the executive work of the council should be totally separate from the CEO's office. That the agendas and - the basic agenda and follow up should be the role of the chairperson, and not the employed CEO. We don't follow that practice at [University] and I didn't follow it in the past, although I can see that if we're managing for the absolute best practice in good governance, that it's certainly worth considering... (109, staff)

Another cluster of proposed improvements addresses issues of effectiveness of council processes, stronger use of council power and, by implication, removal of the constraints imposed by management control of agendas: 'it's very easy not to get any input if you don't wish it. You've got to structure it properly' (207, staff).

Induction of members and evaluation of council performance

The repertoire of professionalisation is perhaps most clearly visible in the many proposals by council members for induction programs and the assessment of council performance. Many council members indicate that they are familiar with these activities from their own working lives and are comfortable in putting them forward as improvements for university councils. For some, a sense of exasperation with the behaviour of universities is palpable:

I think it's silly. If you're going to go into an organisation, assuming the organisation has an ethos, I should have known about it and I wouldn't have spent seven months trying to learn what it was. (502, external)

Council members report that induction, in particular, is not well done, and should involve more than just being 'given a copy of the Fireman's case' (208, external) or gradually making their own interpretation of how a university works. Describing his induction, one interviewee reflects, not without glee:

It was a funny one. It happened two months after I'd been put on council. I was very quickly briefed by the senior administrative official and it was an embarrassed kind of briefing. Dare I say, it reminded me of when my father decided to teach me about the facts of life. It was all very embarrassed and looking around and saying, 'Well, here's a book, read that, and if you've got any questions come and see me', and rushed out the door, that kind of briefing. (501, staff)

Others describe similar experiences:

No, not a formal one, but [name] who's head of the Secretariat here, had me down...asked if I had any questions and I had an interview with the Vice-Chancellor. That was pretty much about it and 'I'll see you at council'. Yes, none. (403, student)

Council members' recipes to improve council effectiveness may also emphasise improved orientation and teambuilding. In the words of one member:

I would have a very good induction process with them. See, I've been a member of council for nearly 18 months and I've never had with me a listing of the members' names, preferred Christian names, given names, to make me feel more interactive. (401, staff)

Where a form of induction is provided, it tends to be after repeated requests from individual council members: '...a bit up to you and "we'll do it if somebody wants it". It wasn't sort of an obligatory arrangement, if you like' (104, external).

One reason for a good induction is to reduce what several council members see as confusion among their colleagues. Although individual members may claim to be clear about their roles, uncertainty and role confusion are projected onto others as an indirect criticism:

...new members are coming along on council and they take a little while to get the drift of what is expected of them. I think we, and perhaps other places, don't do that well...There should be, you know, if you have an induction program, clearly one of the things you do is the new council member and the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor have a spot of lunch. It's very important, otherwise you end up with an ambiguous job role, you know: what am I doing sitting here? And I'm sure there are people around our university council [who] would be perplexed about why they're there and therefore what contribution they can make. I think the people around our table could make a greater contribution but they haven't quite worked out how to do it. (506, external)

Although two Vice-Chancellors claimed that they did have induction programs, their statements do not match those of members of their councils. Another Vice-Chancellor manages the issue differently by openly admitting to shortcomings:

But actually, one of the great lacks that there is in this institution, if I can particularise, is we do not have sufficient training for council members - I would even say we don't have any training for council members - and that's an enormous lack and it's one that has to be addressed. (513, Vice-Chancellor)

Seen from a sensemaking perspective (Weick 1995), the lack of an induction program ensures that council members have to find their own patterns, that they have to assume there is a larger, appropriate pattern of behaviour, able to be deduced from watching others. These 'silencing mechanisms' can be powerful deterrents to action, as observation provides only a vague base from which to interact (Lorsch & MacIver 1989; Daley, Netting & Angulo 1996; Monks & Minow 1996). Management may also

use the absence of induction programs to inhibit the development of coalitions among external and internal council members.

A professionalised discourse around ongoing training would also be expected to be available for use by council members. However, few council members mention this element. One of the few members who does mention the topic, speaking of the AVCC courses for members of university governing bodies, states:

And there was a seminar in Brisbane that we were all able to go to but I think only one of our council members went. And she came back quite a new person, she improved her performance a great deal...It ought to be made compulsory... it's called further education... (201, external)

Another element of good housekeeping in respect of council membership and functioning is the assessment of council performance and the performance of individual council members. Expressing a common view, one council member suggests a possible process:

There has to be, I think, a review process, perhaps a stronger review process than there is today, and maybe that just makes it more difficult to get councillors, but I think that, you know, most of us have a use-by-date and I don't think you can be a councillor for 20 years. So I think there has to be perhaps a more structured approach in cycling councillors...I think that should be stronger. I frankly think there should be a structured encounter with the Chancellor and each council member at some interval, perhaps annually or once every two years.
(114, external)

While external and internal management are confident to assert that assessment of council's performance should occur and does not, Vice-Chancellors, council insiders and senior management claim that such evaluations do occur in respect of individual council members:

The Membership Committee, which is council members but with a couple of outsiders on it...We deliberately put some outsiders on to try and do a review. In essence it virtually comes down to: do we ask the person to do a second term or do we try something new? But there is a review process. Prior to that it used to be very much a question of just a nudge and wink between the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor, but now we do have a more formalised system.
(405, external)

In this example, the council member appropriates the professionalised language of performance review in order to indicate that any possible issue is already under control.

At the same time as admitting a need for performance review, some council members express reservations:

I don't know about formal appraisal because these are honorary positions...But I think there should be some way of at least if perhaps informally get people to judge the effectiveness of council as a whole. (208, external)

Less controversial for external members is the idea of a collective review of council's performance: 'I think councils should look and see whether they are adding value. They should ask the question' (511, external). The benefits can be couched in terms of improved accountability, as one council member remarks:

I think what there needs to be is some sort of performance objectives, performance appraisal process that then becomes public information. I think that's the kind of accountability I would like to see. If you try and be accountable to particular groups, each group is going to have something different, so why not be basically accountable to yourself in terms of what you think you should be doing and whether or not you're doing it and then put that out to the wider community to look at. (507, staff)

However, scepticism about the extent to which the process can genuinely contribute to a better culture of governance is also voiced, as in these remarks:

I think there has to be some outside input. I have real problems, whether it be industry or whatever it be, where there is this self-regulation thing...I think in the sort of atmosphere that I was referring to earlier you're going to find that they'll let themselves off and they'll puff themselves up and they'll tell everybody what a damned good job they're doing, even if they might be stuffing the whole show up. (505, external)

Expectations of the Chancellor

The repertoire of professionalisation provides some of the language in which the weighty expectations of the Chancellor can be discussed. As noted in Chapter 5, there is also a transcendent logic involved because the figure of Chancellor is significantly

mythologised. However, many of these expectations are cast in the form of normative appeals to good practice in leadership.

Chancellors are endowed with symbolic capital by many interviewees, in return for which they are expected to resolve critical problems facing a university. Most council members - including Chancellors - expect the Chancellor to take a leadership role, even if council as a whole does not do so: 'Well, I think good leadership. Certainly that is important' (206, external).

Both external and internal members of council suggest that a professional Chancellor would establish her or his independent authority, as these extracts demonstrate:

I think he has to be a very strong leader, I think he has to be someone who has a feeling of respect from everyone, has a vision in his own right, has respect of the CEO yet can still stand off from the CEO and say, 'Look, I don't think you're doing the right thing', or at least can query the CEO on equal terms. (202, staff)

I think a Chancellor ought to try to keep a certain distance from the Vice-Chancellor because technically - and this is one thing I think I'm right in about the way things are structured - technically the council is the Chancellor's business. The Vice-Chancellor is just one of the people there really. So the Chancellor I think ideally needs to do that...If the councillors and the wider community feel that there is no difference between the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor, then they lose confidence, they do not have a second arm as it were. (409, external)

Council members also expect the Chancellor to have a role in setting council's agenda, to ensure that major issues are included, and to manage council processes in a professional manner (Robertson-Cuninghame 2001: pers. comm.). The importance of being a good chair of meetings is mentioned by many council members:

I'd have a Chancellor of stature - that's the titular role coming out - who was completely independent, supportive of the Vice-Chancellor but an independent Chancellor, an excellent chairman of meetings. (401, staff)

The Chancellor is expected also to provide a model of exemplary citizenship and public service. One Chancellor wryly observes: 'I think they expect that I'll be fair, that I won't be caught coming out of a brothel and that I won't be run in for drunk

driving' (406, Chancellor). Another council member expresses a requirement for the Chancellor to preserve order when institutional reputation comes under pressure:

...it's a question of the public face of a university being absolutely pristine and the Chancellor can make that happen. Or if it isn't pristine, if the Vice-Chancellor or professors get charged with fraud, the Chancellor would play a role as a kind of, I suppose as a head of company role in doing a mopping up operation and preserving the integrity of the place. (512, staff)

However, in addition to a role as the symbolic embodiment of virtue, the repertoire of professionalisation is used to suggest that the Chancellor should serve as the public face of the university in order to attract resources. The ideal is summarised by one council member in the following terms:

I think that the Chancellor is really the public figurehead of the university. He's got to be - or she's got to be - somebody who can open doors for the university, someone who's respected in the community, and who's well known, well-respected, who can lend weight to the points of view that the university is pushing and be able to talk to the right people. And be a - at things like graduation ceremonies, which are very important because of the number of people that you are exposed to, to be somebody that is impressive, in both of - in all senses of the word. Somebody who is successful in their profession, be it in the law or medicine... (205, student)

Recognising the weight of expectations, some council members express a concern over the extent to which Chancellors are cast in an heroic mould:

I think it is an enormous job and I really feel some concern about how universities expect their Chancellors to operate, just at a physical level. Chancellors are expected to front up at most graduations... You get people who are at the peak of their career, they can't give the time, and then there are all these people who are perhaps nearing the end of their career, they will often give unstintingly of their time, but I wonder at what costs to their health and strength. So it's a very, very difficult issue... it's a bit odd I think, the way the Chancellor's role has been maintained in the public face of the university, going to all the graduation ceremonies and at the same time the role of the council in the business and the planning side. I don't think that's been reconciled really... I think it probably needs rethinking, the role of the Chancellor at the university. (410, external)

Chancellors themselves may also need support from time to time, as one notes:

Well, we have this amazing institution in Melbourne called the Chancellor's lunch where we get together about four or five times a year for a couple of hours and just talk about how things are going. It's quite useful because it's all off-the-record stuff and everyone sort of shares their fears and experiences. I think that it would be fair to say that all eight who turn up at that meeting all have had at different times problems that were very similar in the fact that the Vice-Chancellors really think it's their job to run the place and they don't really need [councils]. (508, Chancellor)

If council members have criticisms of a particular Chancellor, it is normally that she or he is too remote and has failed to take an interest in the processes of council.

It probably would be useful as part of the induction process to have meetings with the Chancellor, to have the councillors have meetings with the Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor, not only for councillors to get a feel for what the Chancellor's vision of council is, but also for him to see what he can draw out and use. (303, student)

However, most council members assert that they are not sure what the Chancellor expects of them. The repertoire of professionalisation is used to suggest that greater ongoing dialogue between the Chancellor and each member of council could create a more cohesive governance team.

Summary of the repertoire of professionalisation

As noted in Chapter 1, there are now signs of willingness on the part of universities for public dialogue and debate about the roles of councils and how to encourage good governance (AVCC 2002, 2003b). The extent to which council members were already, at the time of my interviews, making use of a professionalised repertoire suggests that such developments are likely to be welcomed by council members, external and internal, not least as a check on the power of the CEO (Scott 2001).

However, contrary to an often-expressed view that council members are not clear about the role of council (DEST 2002d), most council members demonstrate a level of comfort with a professionalised discourse of council roles. Most appear perfectly able to discuss their roles, at least, in terms of the accepted canon of responsibilities for a governing board.

The comments made within this repertoire suggest that support for professionalising the practice of university governance was lacking in Victorian universities when my interviews were conducted. This is not to suggest that the councils of these universities are not effective, although many council members observe that they are not able to contribute as effectively as they would wish. In this regard, Wiseman & Warburton (2002) draw similar conclusions in regard to community-managed welfare organisations. However, an appetite for professionalisation among university council members appears to have been addressed only slowly (AVCC 2002; CHEMP 2003). My interviews show little evidence of a drive from the university executive to assist councils to become more effective, despite the ready articulation by council members of the need for better induction and performance review. The extent to which the Chancellor's role is well supported by the university is another issue.

The final chapter revisits my five initial research questions to draw together some general conclusions about the four repertoires, the influence of managerialism, and ways in which an understanding of the four repertoires can contribute to more effective university governing boards.

Chapter 10

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The chief role of a university council is to make sure that the university is doing what it should be doing. There's a number of different ways that you can look at that. I guess government needs to be happy; the community needs to be happy; students need to be happy; teaching staff, admin staff. I guess if those interests are somehow put into the mix of a university council then it can work. It's problematic because there are so many different viewpoints about what a university should be about. I guess at its best a university council can provide a bit of debate about those issues; get some of those things out in the open. (115, student)

It was hypothesised in Chapter 1 that members of university councils in Australia use not one dominant discourse but several repertoires or systems of value when discussing governance. My research has identified four specific repertoires, each of which is indexed to different generic concepts, such as the idea of 'community'. In Chapters 6 to 9, the internal logic of each repertoire was explored. The implications and significance of these repertoires in council members' discourses about governance are discussed in this concluding chapter.

Five initial research questions were posed, as follows:

1. If Australian university governing bodies form a 'community of interpretation' (Abdo 1998), which interpretations of 'a university' are significant in terms of board governance?
2. How do the interpretative repertoires that are identified map onto theoretical governance models? For example, are both corporate and stakeholder models of university governance supported or does one form dominate?

3. In what ways do these repertoires show the influence of managerialism, in either a 'hard' or 'soft' form (Trow 1994; Meek 2002, 2003b)?
4. What are the political implications of different repertoires of legitimisation in terms of conflict or collaboration among university governing board members?
5. What does the presence of these repertoires suggest for improving the 'culture of governance' within university councils?

The language of university council members and my findings as they relate to each of these five questions are discussed below. In a later section of this chapter, I generate the outline of a process of reflexive discussion by university councils, using research findings from the literature combined with the results of my study. The chapter ends by drawing some general conclusions and ideas for further research.

Australian university council governance as presented in language

The language of governance of Australian university council members is a language of values as well as of 'operations' (Daley, Netting and Angulo 1996). To a significant extent, but with varying emphases, it is the same language, or cluster of discourses, regardless of the age or prestige of the specific university.

It is a language that differs somewhat to that of earlier studies (e.g. McCaig 1965; Harman & Selby Smith 1976), because the catchphrases and permitted discourses, as well as the situation of Australian universities, have changed. However, it is also a language that earlier writers would immediately recognise, in its ongoing exploration of the tensions between 'business-like' and 'participatory' principles or, in Cornforth's terms, between professional and representative boards (2003a).

The defining relationships for university councils are those with the Vice-Chancellor and, for some regional institutions, with their local community. Some individual members present themselves as friends of the university, while others refer to themselves as

directors. Some offer 'perspectives' and others see themselves as experts, while insiders juggle dual managerial and academic responsibilities to council.

For a few council members, involvement with the governance of a particular university is woven into the fabric of their life. For others, being on council is ephemeral, a form of occupational tourism that may or may not provide a satisfying or meaningful experience and that does not affect other rhythms of life. Interview responses suggest that few university council members find it any easier than their private sector counterparts to exercise their governance responsibilities in a meaningful way.

Which interpretations of a university are significant in terms of board governance?

Each of the three values-based repertoires identified offers a significant interpretation for board governance. My research suggests that three distinct 'objects' are being governed: the university as a business, the university as a public resource and the university as its own unique form of organisation. These frames (Morgan 1986) can also be conceived as 'regimes of justification' (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991), as each appeals to a wider 'commonwealth' of ideas (*ibid.*), available and used by board members to construct their accounts of board governance in universities.

The utility of repertoires lies in their untangling, or separating out, distinctively different bodies of interpretation. As **Appendix H** indicates, each can be used to construct its own preferred model of governance. Council roles, performance objectives and the preferred conduct of council business are interpreted differently in each repertoire.

The repertoires have significance for both political purposes, as discussed below, and for the types of board practices that councils adopt, as the behaviour of council members may be based on the persuasive logic of certain types of discourse. For example, if a council member views council as a parliament, she or he may seek parliamentary-style debates.

If a council member uses a model where logic dictates that accounting to stakeholders is more important than accounting to government, he or she may seek to change institutional governance practices or may experience existing practices as largely meaningless.

To use another example, council members vary in the extent to which they understand their legal position as board members or believe they would be held personally accountable for problems. Most indicate a preference, through the community stakeholder repertoire, for a position where they have autonomy in the extent and nature of their contribution, regardless of their legal responsibilities. That is, the logic of the community stakeholder repertoire does not fit entirely with the business model, its regulated duties of care and its implied financial liability for directors.¹

The civic logic of the community stakeholder repertoire uses the idea of 'service', as a duty or as a pleasure, as its own reward, which may explain the tenacity of the idea of honorary membership, demonstrated in Chapter 5. This form of social contract, based on volunteerism, or rewards in terms of social or cultural capital, intersects awkwardly with the 'commercial' or 'industrial' logic premised on financial rewards (remuneration) in return for a 'mandated' contribution of responsibility.

In terms of the business repertoire, the processes of discussion and debate expressed through the two stakeholder-based repertoires appear inefficient and unfocused. On the other hand, in terms of the university community repertoire, a failure of councils to focus on issues such as the defence of academic freedom generates a sense of frustration and disappointment.

One approach is to consider university governance as a process where several fields are simultaneously mapped into being. Of the four repertoires identified, each can be taken as representing a particular field, within which the repertoire has wide currency or is generic.

¹ This point resonates with a wider current issue in Australia in regard to professional indemnity insurance for all types of organisations, where smaller community associations are unable to afford to insure.

When viewed in the light of particular institutional fields:

- The business repertoire is generic at the level of private for-profit business;
- The community stakeholder repertoire is generic for public organisations;
- The university community repertoire is generic for one particular type of institution, namely universities; and
- The repertoire of professionalisation is generic for boards of all types.

This mapping would suggest that university governance is not firmly situated within any one field but rather occupies a space where fields overlap and may be nested within others. For example, the field of 'universities' may be seen as residing, to a large extent, within a wider field of public sector organisations. However, it can increasingly be located as well within a field of for-profit business. Australian university governance is constituted by the organising concepts of these three fields, but is also constituted through the generic field of management through a professionalised discourse of governance.

It is evident, however, that there is a failure of closure around the idea that universities are no more than a particular type of business. Council members use multiple logics of action to explain their views on governance topics, drawing substantially on concepts of participation, the public good, democracy and community. The community stakeholder repertoire in many ways reflects council members' mainstream view of university governance, relying to a considerable extent on the interpretation of universities as located in a public space, where governance needs to be efficient because it is undertaken in the larger public interest.

One finding from my research is the significant extent to which new universities, in their accounts of governance and forms of governance practice, have adopted the models of their older counterparts, rather than importing previous modes of operation from their time as institutes of technology or Colleges of Advanced Education. Isomorphism is a major driver in constituting any organisational field (DiMaggio & Powell 1983) and Australian

universities seem to be no exception. However, the changes in membership of the field 'Australian universities' have now produced their own reaction, with some splintering of the field between older and newer institutions. This is reflected only to a small extent in the accounts of university governance offered in interviews, but is present nonetheless in the emphasis given by regional universities to civic engagement.

The broad middle ground of the community stakeholder identifies the university as an institution with community as well as educational objectives. For regional universities, the importance of links to their local communities, and a more immediate sense of accountability to those communities, are features that have not otherwise been widely explored. That is, for newer regional universities, the interpretation of the university as a public resource appears to be more significant than for older institutions. Recent reports (DEST 2002c) are beginning to suggest a special or diverse role for regional institutions. My research has revealed some of the implications of regional 'character' for university governance.

In addition, my findings suggest that certain repertoires may be more prevalent in one university than another. Although the effect was relatively slight and should be considered in the context of a limited sample, the council members of two universities exhibited more marked use of a 'business' repertoire than those of the other three. It is possible that newer universities seek to be 'business-friendly' and therefore are more likely to emphasise immediate, instrumentalist goals of education.

In common with many other authors (Hall 1994a; Daley, Netting & Angulo 1996; Brower & Shrader 2000; Steane & Christie 2001; Edwards & Cornforth 2003), I adopt the view that institutional governance must be understood in the light of differing values and views of the institution that is being governed. The strength of the values-based 'business', 'community stakeholder' and 'university community' repertoires indicates they should be considered and discussed in any processes to enhance governance, to encourage a governance culture appropriate to universities (AVCC 2003b) while incorporating the best

features of normative governance practice. That is, more effective governance needs to address important values and the sometimes conflicting rhetorics that give voice to them.

Relationship of the repertoires to theoretical models of governance

Consistent with recent research from other sectors (Kiel & Nicholson 2003), elements of each of the six major theoretical models of governance discussed in Chapter 2 (Clarke & Clegg 1998; Hung 1998; Cornforth 2003a) are present in council members' repertoires of governance.

Each of the three repertoires of value maps broadly onto one or two specific theoretical approaches. The business repertoire equates to agency and stewardship models, the community stakeholder model of course maps to stakeholder and possibly resource-dependency models and the university community repertoire relates to the model of managerial hegemony and possibly to an institutional model.

That is, each of the theoretical models of corporate governance may be discovered in council members' views. In the case of 'agency/stewardship', 'stakeholder' and 'managerial hegemony' models the associations are quite strong, suggesting a degree of correspondence between the fields discussed above, theoretical models and the repertoires that were identified. At the same time, however, there are also references, in comments on the 'decorative' and 'elitist' nature of councils, to ideas of class hegemony.

When interviewees describe councils, agency and stewardship models tend to be fused and difficult to distinguish. The definition of 'owners' in this sense is not clear, although it seems evident that government and 'society' generally have supplanted the traditional (staff, student, alumni) owners of universities in the views of most council members (cf. Corcoran 1999). Stewardship is used by some council members in the sense of meeting a set of responsibilities laid down in a university's enabling legislation, but sometimes also in the broader meaning of 'trusteeship' (AVCC 2003b). Alternatively, a few council

members present council as effectively responsible to the 'owners' and therefore obliged, in the first instance, to protect the interests of these owners.

Viewed from a resource-dependency approach, the community stakeholder repertoire and especially the university community repertoire demonstrate the extent to which the position of universities continues to be legitimised through discourses other than that of business.

Also recognisable in council members' accounts of governance are life cycle models of governance, particularly in regard to the commitment shown by council members at the foundation stage. As some commentators have noted (e.g. Harman and Robertson-Cuninghame 1995), the period of institutional amalgamations and mergers in Australia during the late 1980s and early 1990s was one of considerable tension and political activity. This was particularly the case for regional universities. Many council members active in these efforts were still on council when the research interviews were held and they expressed a need to defend what had been achieved. That is, their ideas of governance are coloured by recent history: council members of new universities are likely to use 'hero' stories about others - narratives of personal virtue and integrity - but also to discuss cases of shabby treatment where founders have been supplanted.

These 'founder' council members express themselves as having 'delivered' the university (in both a midwifery and a business results sense) and they have a nurturing intent towards it; to an extent they are still in a war zone in which protection of the interests of the university is paramount. Their vision of councils is closest to the foundation or post-foundation stage of Wood's (1992) life cycle typology. Many council members mention the impact of 'periodic crises' of the kind identified by Zald (1969), such as an amalgamation or reputational problem, suggesting that life cycle models could be usefully applied to the contemplation of Australian university governance. Seen from another angle, my research suggests that 'proximal' events, such as amalgamations, are likely to galvanise councils, just as the presence of 'proximal' accountabilities does (Jensen 1998).

The analysis of the repertoires presented in Chapters 6 to 9 indicates that theoretical models are articulated in ways that are multi-layered and multi-faceted. The weight of discourse, taken as a whole, reflects a stakeholder model, which locates universities in a public space or, in the words of one interviewee, 'fundamentally a public good and individual good type context' (409, external).

The influence of managerialism

The three repertoires of value can also be viewed as reflecting attitudes to managerialism in universities. In general, the business repertoire reflects a form of 'hard' managerialism, the community stakeholder repertoire a 'soft' managerialism (Trow 1994) and the university community repertoire an anti-managerialist view (Miller 1998).

Over the past decade there have been changes to rules of meaning and membership and innovations in practice for the field 'Australian universities', most notably in the expansion by government of membership of the field (Clegg 1989). More general changes in higher education have produced a new accommodation to oversight by external and internal management, while staff and students are adjusting in various ways to a more 'business-like' environment.

Much recent writing on universities discusses the impact of the practices of managerialism (Meek 2003a), suggesting that, in Bourdieu's terms, the field of universities has moved towards the heteronomous and away from the autonomous.

The extent to which a business repertoire for university governance is possible, coupled with the uncritical acceptance of the idea that universities should be 'business-like', suggests some colonisation by the 'hard' form of the language of managerialism in university governance.

However, given references to business functions in earlier studies (McCaig 1965), and the strong presence of other repertoires, this finding should be interpreted with caution. As a counterweight, the conception of universities as occupying a public space, evident in the community stakeholder repertoire, legitimises a concept of public interest governance, generally associated with a softer form of managerialism (Miller 1998; Cain & Hewitt 2004). The university community repertoire is a discourse of resistance that aims to reclaim 'the academic public space' (Sosteric, Gismondi and Ratkovic 1998: online).

If, as Marginson and Considine (2000) suggest, many Australian universities have adopted the forms and language of the 'enterprise' university, my research suggests that the governing boards of universities are taking a path that more closely resembles public sector governance and the 'softer' forms of managerialism. That is, the governance of Australian universities has a public interest head, even if grafted on to an increasingly entrepreneurial body (cf. Bargh, Scott & Smith 1996).

In the context of Australian universities, public interest governance is characterised by:

- Primacy of the longer-term public interest (stewardship of assets);
- Concepts of community participation and social justice;
- A significant stream of government revenue (and strong contractual accountability to government);
- Substantial public aspirations / expectations;
- Some awareness of corporate governance issues; and
- A 'consent-making' rather than a 'consensus-making' approach.

There are several ways of reading this positioning of universities by council members as essentially 'public' rather than partially-privatised institutions. It is possible to see councils as largely composed of people who attended university in the more or less distant past, whose interest is in conservation or preservation of tradition and who will inevitably act as

a brake on the efforts of managers to generate non-government sources of revenue. This first reading would suggest that councils are essentially out of touch, operating in an anachronistic space that fails to come to grips with the inevitable commercialisation of university operations. Recent government reports (DEST 2002a) have implied that this reading does indeed apply.

A second reading, however, would suggest that council members largely reflect the attitudes of the wider Australian public towards universities, and that the extent to which universities have become truly entrepreneurial has been overstated. Most council members support the 'publicness' of financial support for universities from government. While universities may seek to generate private revenue, the concerns expressed over any threat to public funding due to poor commercial decisions indicates that there are strong countervailing pressures for the quarantining of risk and limitation of non-government-funded activities.

A more subtle form of colonisation by managerialism is evident in the repertoire of professionalisation, which privileges managerialist practices at all organisational levels, for example, in espousing induction and performance evaluation. That is, the influence of managerialism may be seen overtly in the 'hard' managerialism of the business repertoire or in the 'soft' managerialism of the community stakeholder repertoire, but it is also quietly at work in other ways. In the repertoire of professionalisation, the apparent 'neutrality' and naturalisation of the language of professionalisation suggests that this repertoire is less likely to be challenged and more likely to achieve a form of hegemony over council discourse in future.

The professionalisation of the language of university governance is most evident where relations of meaning are being re-fixed, for example in council roles. However, this new discourse of professionalisation also brings with it other concepts that in turn may shape future governance practices. Although the immediate effects of managerialism (Miller 1998; Scott 2001; Meek 2003a) have been to provide greater power to Vice-Chancellors

than to councils, in the medium-term it seems possible that the professionalisation of council will provide council with its own managerial discourse, able to be appropriated by council members to increase the accountability of university management.

Political implications of differing regimes of justification

As various commentators have pointed out (e.g. Jacobs 1995), the identification of different repertoires has meaning only in context. The ends to which the repertoires are applied are inevitably political, serving to reinforce or diminish the power of one or several groups. The use by council members of multiple justifications drawn from different fields does not, of itself, imply that power relations on council are unstable but it does suggest that at various points, political struggles for the primacy of a particular discourse will emerge (Kogan et al. 1984).

Nonetheless, the uncovering of divergent repertoires does not imply that the dynamics of university councils are reducible to simple pluralist models of competing interests. The shorthand involved in ascribing simple communities of interest to actors underemphasises the extent to which people assert multiple and sometimes contradictory positions, or use different repertoires to address different topics. In my research, for example, council members tend to use the repertoires of professionalisation and business to discuss council roles but the stakeholder repertoire to address the subject of accountability.

The research findings suggest that the four repertoires can be made to work on or with each other, to magnify or reduce the legitimacy of particular claims. One example is the way in which the legitimacy claims for a wide stakeholder representation on council are supported by both the civic logic of the community stakeholder repertoire and the transcendent logic of the university community repertoire. This finding points also to the 'oscillatory' nature of meanings in discourse (Laclau & Mouffe 1985), where one repertoire evokes ideas from another. It can also be viewed as one of the paradoxes of governance, where:

The idea of institutional contradictions is central to understanding some of the approaches that boards take, or do not take, to develop their strategic contribution, and the tensions they then encounter with their other board roles.
(Edwards & Cornforth 2003: 81)

Although four distinct repertoires are identified, their boundaries are permeable and their concepts may bring to mind other connotations and lines of argument. Attempting to delegitimise one repertoire may have the effect of establishing it more firmly, as when the business repertoire is employed to position staff and students as a politicised and parliamentary-style opposition party.

It is helpful, as an analytical device and as a demonstration of 'practical politics' of governance, to identify the ways in which varying repertoires set up points of contradiction or, potentially, of collaboration (Foucault 1972). Some of the ways in which council members' four repertoires intersect are set out below.

The business repertoire:

- Reinforces the repertoire of professionalisation in respect of council roles, skills, and acknowledgement that council's role is not to manage;
- Aligns with the community stakeholder repertoire in respect of accountability to government as primary;
- Opposes the community stakeholder in respect of a diversity of external membership and remuneration of members;
- Opposes the community stakeholder and university community repertoire in respect of accountability to a wider group of stakeholders;
- Opposes the university community repertoire in respect of representation of internal members and participatory practices; and
- Stands alone in its emphasis on primacy of ownership by government as the investor rather than as a representative of the community as a whole.

The community stakeholder repertoire:

- Reinforces the repertoire of professionalisation in respect of the need for professionalised induction and evaluation processes and other forms of empowerment;
- Opposes the business repertoire in respect of limited and skills-based membership;
- Opposes the business repertoire in respect of voluntary rather than remunerated service;
- Opposes the repertoire of professionalisation in respect of a plurality of individual roles;
- Aligns with the business repertoire in respect of accountability to the government responsible for the university's enabling legislation and ownership by government;
- Aligns with the university community repertoire in respect of representation of multiple stakeholders and accountability to them;
- Aligns with the university community repertoire in respect of an emphasis on participatory practices;
- Opposes the business repertoire in respect of an emphasis on participation; and
- Stands alone in respect of the value given to accountability to local communities and meeting the needs of these communities for social and economic sustainability.

The university community repertoire

- Reinforces the repertoire of professionalisation in respect of the need for forms of empowerment that limit managerial hegemony;
- Opposes the business repertoire in respect of limited and skills-based membership;
- Opposes the repertoire of professionalisation in respect of representational roles;
- Reinforces the community stakeholder repertoire in respect of representation of multiple stakeholders and accountability to those stakeholders;

- Aligns with the community stakeholder repertoire in respect of an emphasis on participatory practices;
- Opposes the business repertoire in respect of an emphasis on participation; and
- Stands alone in respect of the value given to self-governing mechanisms, challenge to hierarchical authority and expectations of parliamentary-style debates.

The repertoire of professionalisation:

- Aligns with the business repertoire in respect of council roles, skills, and acknowledgement that council's role is not to manage;
- Reinforces the community stakeholder repertoire in respect of the need for professionalised induction and evaluation processes and other forms of empowerment;
- Opposes the community stakeholder repertoire and the university community repertoire in respect of a plurality of individual roles and representational roles;
- Reinforces the university community repertoire in respect of the need for forms of empowerment that avoid managerial hegemony; and
- Stands alone in respect of the unquestioned value ascribed to normative and generic prescriptions for board governance.

Use of the repertoires is thus likely to produce some points of disagreement but also to lead to shifting alliances according to the specific governance issue at stake. When operating in conjunction, these four repertoires may be able to generate agreed compromise positions for Australian universities in regard to:

- Council roles;
- The desirability of a range of stakeholders as council members;
- The need for relevant information and for induction and performance review;

- High expectations of the Chancellor; and
- A sense of accountability of council to the government (usually a State Government) responsible for its enabling legislation.

Although Boltanski and Thévenot (1991) would suggest that attempts to reconcile different orders of worth can only result in compromise, not consensus, my findings are that the logics of the four repertoires do not necessarily compete at all times.

However, the different repertoires do offer opportunities to delegitimise counter-repertoires and also the users of those repertoires, by placing them in unflattering subject positions. The most obvious example occurs with student and elected staff members of council, who are the group most likely to advocate orders of worth based on traditional university values, wider ideas of democracy and self-determination, and opposition to management. The business repertoire provides a discourse through which to present these values as unrealistic and inevitably leading to tensions between 'individual' and 'representative' roles. Staff may be presented as troublemakers or ill-disciplined in terms of governance responsibilities, unable to consistently maintain a position agreed in council.

The business repertoire also delegitimises the claims of a wider group of stakeholders, by suggesting that boards should be largely 'skills-based' and primarily accountable to government rather than to stakeholders. Conversely, the university community repertoire is used to criticise some external members of council as having little idea of how the institution operates and not being interested in finding out.

Improving the 'culture of governance' within Australian university councils

Members of Australian university governing bodies form a collection of voices and habituses in a 'surface of emergence' (Foucault 1972) of the discourses of university

governance. They perform in a space located within the domains of public sector governance and business as well as within the general field of universities.

If the forces shaping university governance are regarded as legitimate for a public institution with strong stakeholder representation, the underlying tensions of performance are very much the same as for private sector governance (Lorsch & MacIver 1989). As noted in Chapter 5, for council members, the worst aspects of being on council are related to concerns over effectiveness.

Interviewees' responses to questions about the roles of a university council show that many council members have learnt or adopted a standard repertoire of the 'right' answers about board roles. The naturalised repertoire of professionalisation, legitimised through self-referential language and internally bounded is evident in these responses. However, board governance in Australian universities is to some extent still a 'cottage industry', heavily reliant on the legitimacy granted by the presence of members who are seen to be 'pillars of the community' (Deem 1995).

University councils in Australia did not, at the time of the study, match many normative criteria for effective board performance. Power appears to be increasingly concentrated in the position of Vice-Chancellor. Induction programs were weak and offered only reluctantly, the board agenda was inevitably determined by the CEO, agreed performance measures were lacking, there was no systematic evaluation of board performance, and many council members were frustrated by their inability to contribute fully to the setting of strategic directions. Whatever their preferred repertoires or models of governance, members of university councils want their council to be more effective and are questioning the adequacy of symbolic roles that ask them just to 'show up'. Most council members wish to make a more active contribution, given their awareness of the 'director'-like roles some espouse, or the wishes of others to influence directions for the good of the community or for wider social outcomes.

Conversely, university governing board members are wary of fully asserting the controlling functions prescribed in most accounts of 'good' board governance. The reasons for this may be found in the simultaneous push and pull of government in attempting to reposition Australian universities in national life. On the one hand, economically, governments (and managers) are directing universities to 'private' life, to the world of private market-based exchanges.² On the other, governments are also aiming for universities, socially, to be instruments of social policy and thus to take a greater role in the 'public' sphere (VDET 2002b). Board members are left somewhere in the middle of these countervailing forces - economic and social - and this may limit the extent to which they feel justified in pursuing one governance model over another.

Many board members do not have close personal knowledge of the activities of teaching and research, and the nature of academic specialisation means that even academic members of council may not be aware of 'how things are done' in differing academic 'tribes' (Becher and Trowler 2001). For these reasons, discussions at council can often only address broad parameters for development.³ Shared governance is, to an extent, devolved governance and this devolution of governance may explain in part the very considerable restraint or 'hands-off' approach of university councils in Australia.

Of course, other university systems also have strong traditions of shared governance. However, in those systems, the board's role usually also encompasses fund-raising, lobbying or hosting activities designed to strengthen the infrastructure of the institution.

As this study has aimed to show, university governance in Australia is characterised by intertextuality and the use of multiple logics of action by individuals and among

² Several commentators have noted that increased independence from government funding has the potential to reinvigorate the concept of university autonomy and to weaken the role of the Federal Government in employing universities as instruments of social policy (Marginson 1997). Were Australian universities to become more self-funding, a new, more autonomous field of 'Australian universities' could emerge.

³ This is not to say that university councils always lack influence or indeed that they are always information-poor. When major changes or crises arise, councils are likely to be well-informed, well-briefed and many members may play significant negotiating roles.

individuals. Some of these logics agree but others do not. Intertextuality is demonstrated in the use of language from business and the public sector, through concepts of leadership, social justice and community service obligations, juxtaposed with an academic discourse of free inquiry and debate. In the absence of strong organising concepts or frames of meaning, board members are more likely to bring logics of action from their other activities to council meetings. Aided by weak socialisation and induction and short terms of office, university governance is permeable to differing interpretations of what council should be focused on, to whom council owes accountability and the ways in which council should work. It is perhaps for these reasons that many aspects of council performance are managed by highly ceremonial and ritualised practices.

One clear finding from my research is the extent to which university councils have not paid attention to their own processes⁴, in order to be able to use a strategy of 'voice' rather than 'exit' (Lorsch & MacIver 1989). If development of a culture of governance is about more than the enforcement of a set of prescriptions couched in a professionalised language (Edwards 2003a, 2003b), then consideration of the different legitimacy claims made through the various repertoires offers the promise of greater appreciation of the virtues of each. As one recent Australian report comments:

...perhaps the focus should shift away from a sole focus on questions of codification, representation and the composition of the governing body to issues of communication, roles, trust and the ability of broader systems of governance to bring to bear the most appropriate expertise and experience to policy matters and to understand the conditions under which a university can flourish.
(Coaldrake, Stedman & Little 2003: online)

That is, improved governance cultures are likely to emerge through processes of discussion, debate and reflexive consideration of how differing values might be reflected

⁴ Certainly, there was little evidence in my research that Vice-Chancellors or the university executive had devoted time or effort to improving council processes and information flows. Although some streamlining of agendas and business had occurred, this was usually at the request of council and not initiated by senior management. The comments in Chapter 9 on induction programs reflect a similar approach. It is likely, however, that a number of these matters have now been addressed, in the context of the national university quality audits discussed in Chapter 1.

in the practice of governance. Consideration of the paradoxes of governance (Cornforth 2003b) will also be important.

My research suggests that governing board effectiveness has two key dimensions: the extent to which members do not understand each other's concerns or behaviour because they are operating with different models of council, and the extent to which empowering factors for effective performance are present or absent. While many writers locate problems of effectiveness in the latter, it would appear likely that the presence of multiple repertoires further complicates the question of effectiveness, as some empowering devices may not sit appropriately with a preferred values-based model.

It is therefore proposed that, in parallel with the ongoing professionalisation of the discourse and practices of Australian university governing bodies, council members be encouraged to develop reflexive understandings of the ways in which differing 'regimes of justification' may be applied to university governance. It does not follow that a council is less effective for the presence of different models of governance but the extent to which those models are articulated and discussed can shed light on how council performance might be improved.

The outline of a process

A process for enhancing the culture of governance within Australian universities could begin with an 'uncovering' of main repertoires of value. Other research findings could also be brought to bear on a reflexive process designed to achieve greater understanding and appreciation by council members of the factors that influence their governance practices. These findings include insights on board life cycles, accountability and power relations.

An agenda for such a process might thus ask council members to consider the following matters:

- Can university governing boards, in addressing particular matters, be more explicit about whether they are considering the university as a business, as a community or public resource or as an embodiment of scholarly values, including the value of reputation?
- What council practices are supported by each of the three values-based repertoires that are significant for university governance? How could governance proceedings be restructured to support elements of all these practices?
- How can a professionalised language of governance be reflected in these practices?
- How can council members' contributions, and their satisfaction with their own involvement, be maximised?
- How can a sense of accountability to others be made more 'proximal' (Jensen 1998) or immediate?
- How can councils best plan to meet inevitable life cycle changes in board members' sense of involvement?

An ongoing process of discussion around such an agenda would, I suggest, offer the potential for genuine involvement and the design of university governance processes that are not 'one size fits all' but rather tailored to meet council members' different value sets and specific institutional circumstances.

Conclusions and future research

Both managerialist ideas but also structural changes have affected university governance in Australia. Increased emphasis on regionalism has led to greater emphasis on community involvement in university governance, with a concern for local issues. At the same time, and given the continued status and desirability of a university education, the changes in the sector have also led to a renewed interest in the reasons why universities are valued and the qualities that underpin their existence (Shattock 2002b).

The findings of my research support my thesis that board members of university councils in Australia use not one dominant discourse but several repertoires of value, and that an examination of these increases our understanding of the ways board members interpret the principles and practices of university governance. It is also suggested that the uncovering of these repertoires could play a role in processes to develop an improved culture of Australian university governance.

Unlike much writing on university governance, my study offers the words of governing body members themselves and in doing so, evidence of the varying discourses through which governance is constructed by council members.

The broad conclusions from my research are that when governance is discussed by members of Australian university governing bodies:

- It is described in terms of several distinct repertoires, suggesting the use of multiple logics of action by and among individual council members;
- It is not defined by a dominant 'business' repertoire but uses the logic of this repertoire to marginalise other discourses, which in turn assert their legitimacy and attempt to marginalise the 'business' repertoire;
- It is characterised by appeals to legitimacy based on broad ideas about the public good, participation and the traditional idea of a university;
- It suggests that Australian universities are viewed as essentially public organisations, operating within a framework of public interest governance and a 'soft form of managerialism (Trow 1994); and
- It is being shaped by an emerging professionalised discourse of governance that is not specific to universities.

If it is accepted that the differing repertoires used by members of Australian university governing bodies imply different models of governance and different governance practices, then articulation of these models is likely to be important for future improvements to governance.

My research provides a baseline and an approach for future studies of university governing bodies. The extent to which the repertoires I have identified are valid for all Australian university councils could be examined through further empirical work, using the various repertoires or 'regimes of justification' as a basis for questionnaire and survey research. Changes in the use of repertoires over time could be mapped using interview methods similar to those I have employed. A more comprehensive analysis of university governance in Australia could use multiple methods of data gathering, including statistical analysis of responses by a broader sample of council members to questions based on the repertoires identified in my research. The governance role of Academic Board and other academic decision-making bodies could also be explored and compared to council roles.

It would be refreshing to see experiments in enhanced sensemaking for council members among Australian universities, based on a reflexive understanding of the various repertoires members bring to the table. Further research on university governance might therefore use processes of 'generative interchange' (Gergen 1999) between academics and governing body members, to further tease out the purposes to which different repertoires are put.

Another line of research could explore 'logics of action' by investigating whether these logics are reflected in the words and concepts used when councils arrive at decisions on specific topics. An illuminating example of such work is provided in Dugdale's (1999) study of the performative arrangements into which individuals are 'inserted' in a specific case of science policymaking. Dugdale also suggests a further line of enquiry, into the extent to which council outcomes, developed as negotiated compromises, do not result in a convergence towards one object but of an ongoing oscillation between the singular 'product' and the multiple objects reflected in that product.

The method of interpretative repertoires may provide a useful vehicle for ongoing research on governance practices, as differing governance models are likely to influence views over which roles and accountabilities are most valued and which are devalued. Differing models may also dictate preferred council practices, for example in the conduct of meetings, working parties outside meetings, and the content of discussion (see **Appendix H** for an indication of the preferred practices in each of the three valued-based repertoires identified in this study).

My study was limited to examining discourse practices. Complementary research on university governance might consider the material practices of council meetings and how they provide sensemaking cues (Weick 1995) that subtly guide council members to an understanding of the roles they are expected to play. In this respect, attention might be paid to the various modes of ordering that are present in different forms of council gatherings, such as the formal, even grand occasions, complete with dinner, that are council meetings, and their accompanying artefacts, the mountains of paper.

As Widmer (1993) has suggested, a productive area of future research may be the closer examination of the different roles played by individual governing body members and the tensions involved in multiple roles. Council meetings do not emphasise the representative character of members: to an extent members are 'de-identified'. Nor do council meetings serve to locate members as 'experts' except in so far as particular members may chair council committees. A study of the dynamics of exchanges within council meetings could therefore shed light on insider and outsider roles within the broader analysis of individual roles.

In showing the utility of the constructs of 'interpretative repertoires' and 'regimes of justification', I have aimed to demonstrate how an understanding of multiple repertoires can assist us in better understanding how governance is enacted and how governance systems are reproduced or changed.

The accounts of council members identified through my research suggest that university governance is close to emerging models of public sector governance (ANAO 2003) but also suggest that identification of multiple repertoires could be a powerful tool for better understanding public sector boards of all types. Tensions in governance behaviours imposed by complex, multiple objectives have been posited in most writings on public sector governance (Day & Klein 1987; Ashburner 1997, 2003; Horrigan 2001) and the preferred governance practices of public sector boards are always likely to be drawn from several commonwealths of value.

Future research might usefully examine the repertoires that exist for boards in different fields and whether there are commonalities across fields. Discourse analytical methods could also be applied to the assessment of the degree of professionalisation among boards of various types.

In identifying multiple repertoires of governance, I am not suggesting that these can somehow be hammered out to form a single or even a 'stranded' language of governance. Rather, I am suggesting that attention by governing boards to the many repertoires and legitimacy claims their members bring to bear, and a teasing out of the implications of these repertoires, could lead to more richly-textured interactions and productive governance practices. Effective governance would pay attention to various regimes of justification and recognise the ways in which they interact.