

# INTEGRATING INTEGRITY - TRANSLATING POLICIES ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY



DANISH CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN  
RESEARCH AND RESEARCH POLICY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
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# INTEGRATING INTEGRITY – BACKGROUND

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- The responsibility of science, researchers and HEIs is more important than ever
  - Fields of research has emerged focused on responsibilities
    - RRI, incl. citizen engagement, citizen science, gender equality, open science etc.
      - Outwards responsibility
    - Research integrity, incl. data management, data protection etc.
      - Inwards responsibility
- The focus in this study is on the inwards responsibility: research integrity

# INTEGRATING INTEGRITY - BACKGROUND

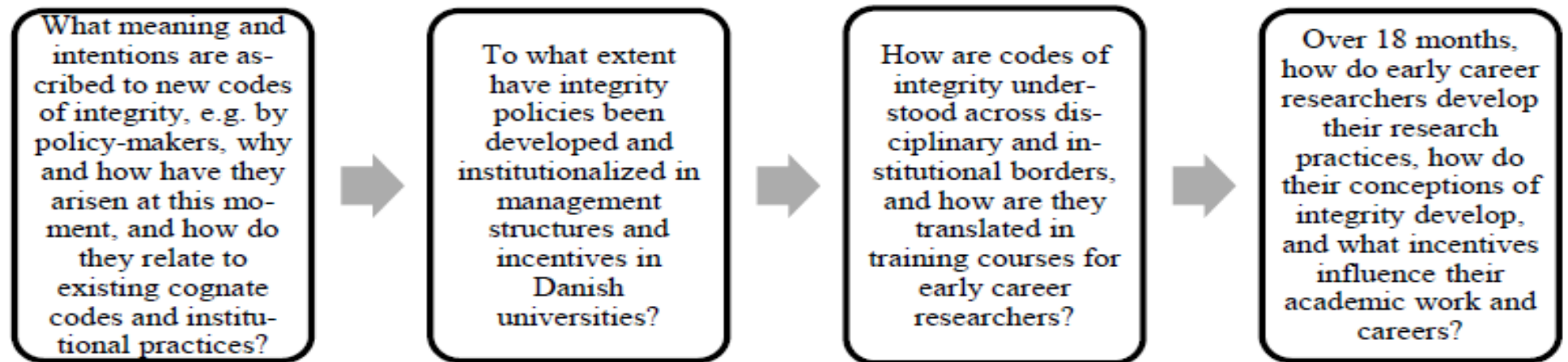
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- Responsible conduct of research (RCR) is a rising policy concern
  - Driven by scandals and the “reproducibility crisis in science”
  - Emerging focus on Questionable Research Practices – “sloppy science” or “the steroids of scientific competition” (John et al. 2012)
  - From a focus on “rotten apples” to “rotten cultures”
- Codes of Conduct e.g. at the European level attempt to address the cultural problems
- Studies indicate a gap between the codes and the perceptions and practices of researchers

# THE PROJECT - PRACTICING INTEGRITY

## Aims of the overall project:

- To explore the demands and norms of codes of conduct for research integrity and (how) are they ingrained in academic practice in universities and university colleges
  - *organisationally* (by leaders, managers, supervisors)
  - *institutionally* (in the education of early career researchers)
  - *individually* (in navigating day-to-day incentives and pressures of academic research)



# THE STUDY – INTEGRATING INTEGRITY

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The aim of the substudy:

- To explore the mediating “layer” between policy articulations and the individual researchers and research groups
- How do research institutions translate codes of conduct into workable structures and practices?
- How do they navigate pressures for performance etc. with responsible conduct of research?

# THE STUDY – INTEGRATING INTEGRITY

## Denmark as a case

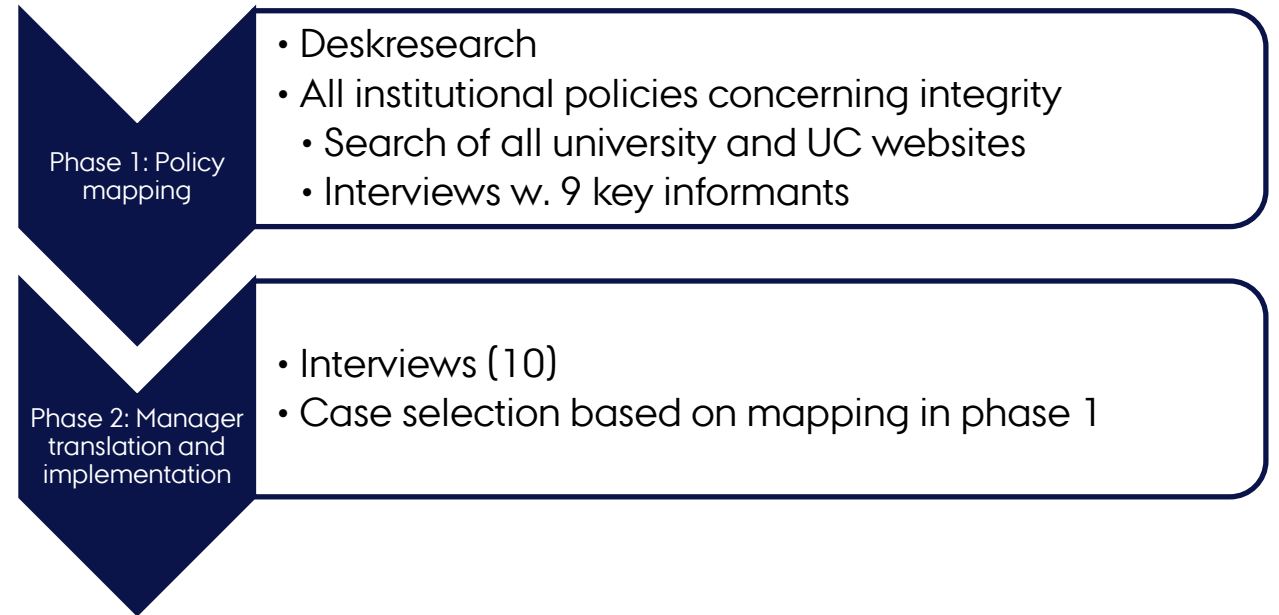
- Prompted by scandal, Denmark has made great efforts to strengthen research integrity
  - National Code of Conduct from 2014
  - Research misconduct regulated by law
  - QRPs also mentioned in the law – but handled by institutions



# THE STUDY – INTEGRATING INTEGRITY

## Methods

- Document study of all policies developed by universities and university colleges
  - Focus on org. translation and institutionalisation
  - Interviews with key "translators"
- Interview study with Department heads and research leaders
  - Focus on navigating demands and sensemaking



# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

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A basis in Scandinavian institutionalism (Czarniawska & Sevón 1996; 2005; Sahlin & Wedlin 2008)

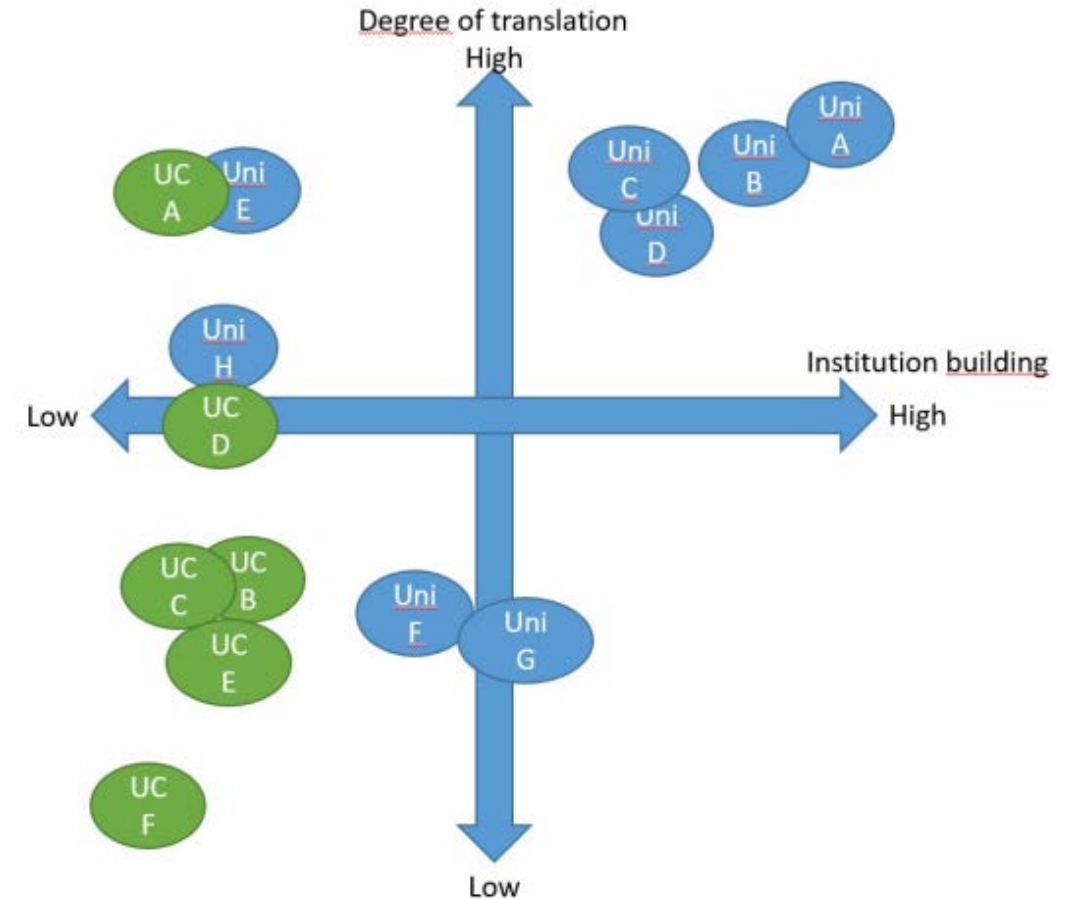
- A focus on translation and how ideas travel across contexts
- The analytical objective becomes following this process and exploring how the idea is translated into new forms (objects)
- Offers a specific eye for agency
  - Translation is a dynamic process where *translators* matter – as well as the *contexts* that they find themselves in

Sensemaking as translation (Weick 1995, Mills 2003)

- An framework for looking at the ongoing creation of meaning done by individual leaders/managers – and how it affects their actions
- Leaders are seen as co-authors of the own environments

# FINDINGS

- First step: policy mapping
  - Variation mainly on 2 parameters
    - Degree of translation
    - Institution building (infrastructure)
- Policies are being written, but to a varying degree
- Interviews suggest that the process is a matter of formalization rather than an "academic exercise"
- Translation often left to consultants, integrity officers or other "para-academics" (Macfarlane 2011)



# FINDINGS

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## Phase two - Making sense of integrity

- Ambiguous valuation
  - Important but "don't know much about it"
- Research integrity described often as part and parcel of a "research ethos"
  - Integrity is linked to research quality
  - "A kind of decorum"
  - Far from the definitions in the code of conduct
- Leaders tend to use disciplinary vocabulary in their sensemaking

# FINDINGS

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## Making sense of integrity

- The location and severity of the problem
  - Locally a "non-problem" – globally a big problem
  - The problem is dis-located
- A strong belief in the (local) self-regulatory nature of science
  - Helps leaders with the construction of the non-problem
- Still many tell stories about QRPs happening locally
  - Used to illustrate the self-correctional "nature" of local culture

# FINDINGS

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## Translation of policies through sensemaking

- National policies are largely invisible
- Organisational policies are important to have
  - But not always important enough to read
- Particularly Humanities and Soc.Science leaders see policies as "a bit hopeless to work with"
  - Designed for other types of data/research processes
- Institutional infrastructure is seen as helpful, and as a safety net in matters of integrity
- But culture remains the most important thing – and for that policies are not seen as helpful

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

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- Eventhough research integrity is high on the policy agenda – and with cases of misconduct and QRP – research integrity is described as a non-problem
- The problem is located elsewhere - often abroad
- Organisational policies seem to be a formalization exercise rather than an occasion for academic discussion
- Codes are seen as valuable to demonstrate org. awareness – but less useful in the building and maintenance of research cultures
- Integrity is seen as part of research ethos – and researchers themselves are thus responsible



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