

A university of value(s)

Towards future-proof organisation and
governance of the University of Amsterdam

SUMMARY



**DEMOCRATISATION &
DECENTRALISATION
COMMITTEE**

SUMMARY FINAL REPORT

**Lisa Westerveld
Herman van den Bosch
Eva Groen-Reijman
Rob Hagendijk
Pieter Pekelharing
Kyah Smaal
Mattieu Weggeman*
Gloria Wekker**



**DEMOCRATISATION &
DECENTRALISATION
COMMITTEE**

Secretariat and assistance
**Danna Harmsen, Daan Tillie
and Camiel van Hove**

* Until September 1, 2016

EDITOR Gene Moore DESIGN Bas Cornelissen

TRANSLATION Tashina Blom & David de Graaf

Background

2015 was an eventful year for students, staff, and executives at the University of Amsterdam. The occupations of the *Bunghuis* and the *Maagdenhuis* created quite a stir among both advocates and opponents. After a turbulent period, the action groups, the representative advisory bodies, and the labour unions have made agreements with the Executive Board about a process of change. As part of this process several committees were installed, on finance, democratisation, and diversity respectively. This report is the result of the efforts of one of these committees: the Committee on Democratisation and Decentralisation (hereafter: D&D Committee). One of the agreements was that the D&D Committee's findings should be presented to the university community. Moreover, the Executive Board has committed to respect and honour any clear outcome of this consultation.

It took several months for the D&D Committee to be fully installed (December 2015) and before it had the necessary budget at its disposal (February 2016). Still, during this period a lot of preparatory work was done and a work schedule was drafted, which was discussed at a public meeting and with the Contact Committee.¹ In accordance with the provisions of the mandate, this work plan emphasises the importance of discussion and deliberation at the various faculties and also within the university community as a whole. In order to ensure ongoing communication and regular feedback, three consultation rounds were planned with the Contact Committee, the faculties, and through university meetings. Given its mandate and configuration, the Committee is primarily a deliberative body that combines research and discussion among the committee members themselves with conversations held with staff and students from different faculties and services, including the works councils, student councils, deans, and other administrators.

Unfortunately, it proved impossible to implement the working plan to the letter. An important contributing factor in this respect was that the Committee became operational months later than foreseen. But the changing situation at the University of Amsterdam was also an important factor; at several faculties intense debates were already taking place about ways to bring about the desired changes. The work plan stipulated that the Committee should avoid repeating discussions that were already taking place and that it should try not to disturb processes that were already underway. However, in some places it turned out there was only limited interest in debates and discussions about problems and potential solutions. Often those who did show an interest to participate were already involved in these discussions in some other capacity as well. Moreover, most people were simply too busy with their own work, which is not surprising given that work-related stress is one of the most common and widespread problems at this institution. This led the committee to conclude that independently organised, open, and large-scale debates would not provide added value to what was already being organised by the units themselves. Therefore, in March the committee decided to adjust its approach.

The members of the D&D committee have engaged in dialogue with people from all over the university and have read numerous reports concerning the situation at the University. As they read and exchanged ideas with others concerning the problems at the University of Amsterdam, what emerged was not a univocal image but rather a multifaceted one. Both between and within faculties and groups (staff, students) there are points of agreement and points of great disagreement. The same holds true for the solutions that were brought to the table. Moreover, the University of Amsterdam is not entirely independent: it is subject to Dutch law and regulation. The University is dependent on decisions made in The Hague, among other places, for its policy decisions.

¹ The following groups are represented in the contact committee/contact group (both terms are used interchangeably): ASVA, Central Workers Council (COR), Central Student Council (CSR), the New University (DNU), Humanities Rally, Rethink UvA, and the University of Colour.

The university is part of a complex system of funding which has several branches; decisions about these funding streams are made outside of the university.

In 2015, parallel to the work of the D&D Committee, there was a Parliamentary debate in the Netherlands on changing and strengthening the forms of governance and co-determination at universities. The bill promised to create more extensive forms of democracy and more possibilities for autonomy; its implementation, however, has been piecemeal at best.

The D&D committee is especially indebted to two internal research reports: a study carried out in the spring of 2015 which inventoried various bottlenecks as experienced by UvA staff and students; and the Satisfaction Monitor 2015, a survey in which 45 per cent of university staff took part.² The respondents to the Bottleneck research were presented with a list of 26 bottlenecks, most of which had emerged during the discussions at the time of the occupations and had been carefully formulated by the initiators after broad consultation. Of all the participants in the research, 95 per cent identified one or more bottlenecks as important. Given the multitude of views within the university community, it became clear that the D&D Committee had to look for an approach that would do justice to this plurality. The Committee sees its work and its final report as part of a comprehensive process of change that was already under way before the committee began its work.

After taking stock of the problems at stake at the University of Amsterdam, the D&D Committee came to the conclusion that it was crucial to distinguish between problems that are directly related to how management is structured at the University of Amsterdam (*governance issues*) and problems and issues identified in certain policy areas (*policy issues*). The two types of problems are closely interrelated.

The D&D Committee was established to provide the University of Amsterdam with recommendations on how democratisation and decentralisation can help solve some of the problems the University is facing. Its mandate also includes proposing a number of alternative governance models. Governance and policy issues are interrelated, even if it is not always clear how. They are also closely connected to the substantial changes the University underwent in the last 50 years. The Executive Board and the deans have been given more freedom to 'produce policy'. However, the representative bodies have gained only limited advisory powers, and their divided representation tends to place the emphasis on defending vested interests rather than on developing the University as a whole. Moreover, most of the actual work takes place at a subsidiary level where people who have been appointed by the dean have ample autonomy in their areas of responsibility, whereas at the same time there is no formal representation and co-determination for staff and students at this level.

Policy Issues

In order to gain insight into how a more democratised and decentralised university could deal more effectively with problems relating to education, research, housing, finance, staff and recruitment policy — while at the same time avoiding new forms of centralised rule-making and bureaucracy — the D&D Committee has paid special attention to the following policy issues:

² Tom van der Meer, Thijs Bol, Christian Bröer, Linda Duits: Rapport Inventarisatie Knelpunten Medewerkers & Studenten UvA, Amsterdam, 24 April 2015. IVA Onderwijs, UvA Medewerkersmonitor 2015, Tilburg, 2015. In addition to a general section, a large number of reports with regard to specific faculties and services have also been consulted.

Staff

The Bottleneck research and the Satisfaction Monitor clearly show that the University gets a poor rating as an employer. The main issue is the large number of staff members hired on temporary contracts with no prospect of permanent employment, who lack the possibility to gain further qualifications and face limited career prospects, a heavy workload (especially in teaching), vague procedures for promotion, and little transparency in the processes of decision-making. Feelings of uncertainty and dissatisfaction are exacerbated by the complexity of the governance structure as it is often not clear who is making decisions and on what basis. With regard to internal promotions, it often seems that acquiring research grants is considered more important than the responsibilities that normally take up most of one's time, namely teaching.

There is a strong need for a set of clear and widely endorsed principles that delineate what constitutes good employment practices. Together with principles for education and research, these need to form the basis for a decentralised policy.

Education

Students consider the quality of education policy to be by far the most important bottleneck. Especially in the first few years of a programme, education is tightly organised with little room for flexibility in the form of electives or the possibility to study at a different pace. A distinction can be made between students who flourish under such a strict regime with a prescribed structure, and students who look for more flexibility because they want to study a broad range of topics or delve into a single issue for an extended period of time. Since student grants are often limited and insufficient, and so-called 'long-term students' accrue substantial debt, some staff members and students consider the tight organisation of study programmes to be a symptom of the decline of academic culture. They are afraid that the one-sided operationalisation of 'study-success' as measured in ECTS credits and awarded diplomas threatens to sacrifice truly academic forms of education, which are successful in different terms: by teaching and inspiring students and introducing them to ideas and texts which are both formative and informative. The quality of education is not the only policy concern; another starting point for policy should be the wide variety among students concerning their ambitions and the form and duration of study. This will only be possible if the relationship between central and faculty policy on the one hand, and policy at the departmental level on the other hand, is revised in order to find solutions that ensure greater autonomy in the workplace.

Figure 1
The 26 bottlenecks from the bottleneck study

-
- Measuring and evaluating education and research performance
 - Current UvA allocation model (allocation distribution of internal finances)
 - Right of approval in establishing UvA allocation model
 - Decision making and participation in decision making of students and staff
 - Bureaucratisation and overhead
 - Cooperation with the VU
 - Study success rates
 - Temporary staff and contracts
 - Career opportunities of young staff members
 - Financing and preservation of studies with a limited amount of students
 - Semester format: 884-system
 - Scale of education
 - Housing policy of studies and departments
 - Maagdenhuis: administrative centre or debate centre
 - Ratio education/research
 - Distance between staff/students and management
 - Cooperation with the HvA
 - Transparency of policy
 - A sense of fear to address issues
 - Quality of education
 - Number of contact hours student
 - (De-) centralisation of the Board
 - Real estate development of the University
 - The selection process of board members on faculty and central levels
 - Workload
 - Other, namely...

Research

In many respects the University of Amsterdam is an accomplished and successful academic institution. Unfortunately, this success also has a downside. A one-sided emphasis on quantitative output measures results in frustration among staff members. Moreover, the increased importance of external funding for research leads to problems both in the relationship between teaching and research, and in the relationship between the content of research and how it is conducted and staffed.

The old ideal where teaching and research are part and parcel of what defines universities is undermined by the separate funding streams and the competition for external funds. Staff policy overemphasizes grants and publications, which seem to be more important in determining career opportunities than teaching and work related to education. On closer inspection, it seems that in contemporary universities education and research are organised into two entirely different domains. The way education is shaped, organised, offered and assessed has no bearing on the mechanisms of academic research, as the latter is an endeavour that extends beyond the borders of the university. The appreciation and remuneration of teachers is almost entirely disconnected from what determines their reputation as researchers. And their achievements as teachers are not taken into account when assessing their ability to find the time to apply for the funding required to engage in research and advance their careers. In order to sufficiently accommodate this diversity in professional ambitions and the means to pursue these ambitions, it is necessary to have a governance structure and allocation model which is transparent. Moreover, this has to lead to fully integrated strategies and policies that give those in the workplace ample space and authority to develop and implement policy that will contribute to both high-quality education and excellent research. Many are convinced that both the current governance model and the allocation model need to be adjusted to better suit this purpose. The allocation model is currently under revision by a university working group that will most likely take into account the recommendations and considerations formulated by the independent Committee on Finances and Housing (COFH). This report addresses governance reforms.

Strategic alliances

During the last few years there have been considerable tensions regarding several of the University of Amsterdam's large-scale, regional collaborative projects, in particular the collaborations with the Free University (*Vrije Universiteit*) and with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (*Hogeschool van Amsterdam*). The goals envisioned by these projects differed, as did the fundamental ideas of what constitutes a university. The cooperation with the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences was initially meant to accommodate increasing variety in the student population. When this process ran into problems, the idea emerged that more administrative cooperation and integration would help. Subsequently this idea became more of a goal in itself than a means to an end. In the meantime, it seems that *de facto* the decision has been made to end the administrative merger. The merger with the Free University was mostly aimed at collaboration in education and research. The natural sciences were the driving force behind this initiative.

The plans to merge the natural science faculties of both universities were abandoned after resistance emerged; instead there was a preference for a common dean and cooperation on a smaller scale at the level of research institutes and departments. Within the university community people are mostly sceptical about the added value of these two collaborative projects, which were both considered to be over-ambitious. Insofar as success has been achieved, this is mostly due to a change in perspective as those directly involved came to see collaboration as desirable. The most important lesson to be drawn from this for administrators at the central level is that they should provide

better grounds and arguments for collaborative projects with external partners, and large-scale mergers should be avoided altogether. Successful collaborative projects in teaching and research employ a bottom-up approach and should not be scaled up to mega-projects prematurely. This is the most important lesson to be drawn from the past years, and this holds true for more universities than just the University of Amsterdam. Moreover, it is necessary to ensure that an appropriate monitoring process is in place that is at least partly independent, and to ensure broad accountability and a willingness to change course when necessary.

Unbeknownst to most of those in the UvA community, an administrative merger is taking place between the AMC and the VUmc. Unless one is entirely acquiescent about the Faculty of Medicine being pried loose from the University of Amsterdam, this merger deserves more attention. Furthermore, the development of policy to ensure further regional and international cooperation is a matter that should not be left to the Executive Board and a few deans and trustees; this involves the University of Amsterdam as a whole, as well as communities who are directly involved and implicated in the policy proposals.

The policy issues discussed above have led to the conclusion that institutional policies can only be successful when long-lasting agreements are made concerning both strategic interests and substantive goals. For this reason, it is essential to develop a fundamental and widely supported idea of what the University of Amsterdam actually wants to be and what it wants to become.

Governance issues

Many of the governance issues identified by the D&D Committee are closely related to the substantial changes in university governance that took place in the 1990s, as established in the MUB law of 1997 (*Wet Modernisering Universitaire Bestuursorganisatie*). This law precipitated a shift in the discourse on governance as it endorsed restricting the participation of staff and students in decision-making processes while at the same time substantially increasing the numbers of professional administrators.

When the predecessor of the MUB, the WUB (*Wet Universitaire Bestuurshervorming*), was still in place the university and its faculties were governed by university and faculty councils, in analogy with public administration. The Executive Board and the deans — chosen by the councils — prepared and implemented university policy. The MUB gave these councils the opportunity to revise policy through a system of legally defined rights regarding consultation and consent.

More than before, the new professional administrators drew on a centralist and managerial paradigm: sometimes by specifying detailed rules, but also by formulating all sorts of quantitative indicators as a starting-point for measuring the success of teaching and research, as well as establishing budgetary frameworks and personnel policies. These kinds of indicators, and the specific 'performance targets' derived from them, were meant to boost the productivity and efficiency of subsidiary units and to provide a means to assess and consolidate target-oriented policy. A so-called 'flexible layer', consisting of staff with temporary contracts, was supposed to absorb fluctuations in the number of students and the amount of acquired external research funding. Slowly but surely, this meant that the notion of a university community was side-lined.

Almost everyone the D&D Committee spoke to mentioned the deficiencies of governance, but these accounts could also be quite different from one another in certain

respects. Usually they reflected the speaker's personal experiences with the system and its managers. Many of the problems can be grouped in the following categories.

Limited power of the representative advisory councils

There are both advantages and disadvantages to formalising regulations about co-determination and participation in a legal framework. The system of representative advisory councils is based on a certain 'right', such as the right to consultation or consent. In the current system, there is practically no right of initiative, and this is exacerbated by the lack of information and means that the representative councils have at their disposal. The right to consent has been suspended for important issues such as the budget. The right to consent on, for example, the outline of the budget often leads to a discussion about the limits of this right. Since the representative advisory council is bound by strict rules, a lot of time is wasted on discussions about procedures and authorisations. The main disadvantages of this system are procedural red tape and the bureaucratisation of decision-making. What is needed is a more flexible approach in order to deal with this increasingly complex labyrinth of rules and regulations. However, this is only possible if management is willing to share responsibilities and engage in joint management with others, and if the representative advisory councils embrace a constructive approach. This type of flexibility is often lacking. Discussions about reforms can easily spiral into discussions about formal procedures and the detailed and complex system of rights and responsibilities, even though these rules are often conveniently ignored when others are not paying attention.

Another problem is that staff members and students who are not members of the representative advisory council or the study programme committee have little to no influence on how the programme, faculty, or the institute is managed. A large number of staff members and students want more influence on matters they feel strongly about or that directly affect them. The governance structures that are currently in place hardly offer enough space for this kind of democratic participation. This results in disinterest, an unwillingness to participate in councils, and a low voter turnout at elections. It also allows certain members of the representative advisory council to extend their terms again and again.

Top-down governance and the governance model

Those who are familiar with the University of Amsterdam and have been at the institution for a long time are drawing attention to the gradual but significant shift of authority and influence away from (former) institutes, departments and faculties and towards the Executive Board and the deans of mega-faculties that have emerged in the process of upscaling. The separation of teaching from research, and from personnel policy and management, has concentrated power at the faculty and university level. The argumentation is that different policies converge at the faculty level. However, authority is also delegated within faculties themselves, but this is not taken into account. The implementation of a matrix organisation, where a single manager is responsible for the separate and formally independent organisational units for research, bachelor programmes, master programmes and personnel policy, has led to a concentration of power in the hands of a small and partly informal group. Meanwhile the other involved staff members and students point to a lack of clarity and transparency. The result is an exceedingly complex and diffuse organisation where there is a lot of deliberation, both within the representative councils and outside of them, but where most teachers and students have little influence.

Bureaucratisation and lack of autonomy

It is a widely held belief that the concentration of power at the top has exacerbated the uniformity of rules and regulations, as evinced by protocols, accountability policies, models for examination regulations, appeal procedures and so on. Many on the teaching staff, however, doubt that these rules have a significant impact on the quality of education. Some even consider certain regulations to be dubious at best and disastrous at worst. While others, most often administrators, point to the advantages and positive effects. Many staff members also point out that the effect of this bureaucratic audit culture is that they no longer feel recognised and respected as professionals. Something similar also applies to students who are left with strict study programmes that offer little flexibility, exacting inspections, overzealous protection of disciplinary boundaries and a plethora of rules. During the conversations the committee has had with members of the university community the uniformity of the 8-8-4 model for the academic semester was mentioned dozens of times as an example of harmful over-regulation. Other examples of overzealous but detrimental regulation were rigid measures intended to speed up study pace. Occasionally this will elicit a response from others who argue that these complaints are not inherently related to the 8-8-4 model. However, this does little to mitigate the feelings of frustration and perplexity. Generally, the first conception is the more desirable one that people wish to strengthen — even if this means diminishing the influence of the official representative bodies when necessary.

Two core problems

Clearly not everything can be arranged informally on the work floor. The biggest challenge the University of Amsterdam is facing is on the one hand to find a balance between the need expressed by students and staff members for more control over their own working conditions, and on the other, to establish a complementary governance model that can delineate clear and acceptable frameworks invested with democratic legitimacy.

With this in mind, the two core problems the D&D Committee identified regarding how the University of Amsterdam is governed can be formulated as follows:

- The lack of involvement (both in the sense of being involved and feeling involved), even concerning crucial policy matters, of the members of the university community, especially those who are not members of any representative councils.
- The intrusive interference of managers and administrators — regardless of whether the representative bodies agree — in matters that students and staff feel confident organising (among) themselves.

In order to analyse these two core problems, the D&D committee has initiated two projects. The *Democratisation and Participation Project* was designed to evaluate the development of participation and co-determination at Dutch universities since the 1960s. The aim was to provide a representative and reliable account of the pros and cons of the various policy models. The *Decentralisation and Autonomy Project* was designed to explore ways to stimulate self-organising and self-management on the ‘work floor’, and to assess the effects of this type of policy for the entire organisation in the medium term. The findings that emerged from these projects have been of significant

3 The reports of both projects can be found at the website of the committee D&D. *Decentralisatie en Autonomie*: commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Verslag-Ontwerpproject-decentralisering-en-autonomie.pdf; *Democratie en Medezeggenschap*: commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Verslag-Democratie-en-Medezeggenschap.pdf

importance in developing the D&D Committee's final proposals. Short summaries are included as annexes 2 and 3 of this report.³

Towards a different approach

The D&D Committee's problem analysis raises a number of questions:

- How can the governance structure of the University of Amsterdam be changed in such a way that governance-related complaints are resolved? And how can we generate more support and a better framework for dealing with the many problems around a specific policy?
- How can we establish the desired connection between governance structure and policy issues themselves? How can this connection be clearly and coherently articulated, stipulated, and — after evaluation — adjusted?
- How can we respond to the desire for democratisation and decentralisation? This aim lies at the heart of the agreement between the representative bodies, the staff and students who occupied the Maagdenhuis in 2015, and the Executive Board, and led to the formation of this committee. How can it be realised?

Answering these questions requires a thorough consideration and explication of the values that the University of Amsterdam stands for as an organisation. The more diffuse these values are, the greater the confusion will be when discussing the problems related to them. Therefore, the university community has to establish a set of common values and explicitly formulate what these values entail. This is essential for the Executive Board to be able to come to satisfying solutions regarding policy issues. This holds true for both policy issues and problems with governance: solutions can only be found when there is a solid foundation of explicitly defined 'organisational values'.

This does not mean that it is impossible to work towards change in the short term. Certain problems can easily be addressed without structural reform, and this will only make the university more streamlined as an organisation. Therefore, the D&D Committee has formulated a number of remedial measures. These remedial measures are discussed in part three of the report, and they should be considered as a stepping stone towards more structural changes.

Proposals for governance reform

Based on observations, analyses, discussions, and deliberations, the D&D Committee has formulated five proposals to improve governance at the University of Amsterdam. These are:

1. The establishment of a deliberative forum with a broadly representative composition, from now on referred to as the 'Senate New Style'. Working with represent-

ative working groups, this Senate New Style will provide recommendations and advice on policy issues that concern the entire university. The charter, described below, functions as a foundational text meant to guide the Senate in its work.

2. Drafting a charter — by means of a process of broad deliberation — that establishes a number of University core values. These values will function as a guiding principle for the university community.
3. The opportunity to choose between three models, or to choose a combination of these models, each of which is based on principled guidelines concerning the best way to organise and govern the university. A fourth model represents the status quo and corresponds to the current situation. These models can be characterized as follows:
 - Dual governance (with separate managers and representative advisory bodies for students and staff respectively, to be appointed by the existing elected councils) in combination with a matrix organisation at the faculty level. This differs from the current model since it will give more clout and authority to the current representative bodies (for instance, the right of consent on a wider range of topics), as well as ensuring better support to facilitate the work of the representative advisory councils.
 - Final responsibility rests with executive councils at the university, faculty, and departmental levels. These will each elect a board in charge of day-to-day management and preparing and implementing policy.
 - Relatively autonomous institutions with ample space for collective self-organisation by students and staff members. The point of departure is the basic unit at the most local level, and this will determine the outline of the overarching structure.
4. A proposal to decide on, implement and evaluate the recommendations outlined above in a process involving several stages. The outcome of the referendum will be the point of departure; deliberation, decision-making and implementation will be organised in an open and transparent way. Moreover, this process will be closely monitored in order to ensure that the aims of the reform process are realised within the agreed upon time period and in a transparent and open process.
5. A number of remedial measures that improve the current situation, while awaiting the implementation of structural changes.

Elaboration of separate recommendations

The 'Senate New Style'

Establishing a number of core values in a charter is not enough. Values and their implications need constant discussion and reflection. The D&D Committee is convinced that the councils as they operate at present — or in the future — are not adequately equipped for this task. There is a real danger that the discussion about these core values will be driven too much by vested interests and specific aims, or that the discussion will be influenced too much by whatever happens to be the status quo at a given moment. Therefore, one of the D&D Committee's recommendations is the establishment of a 'Senate New Style': a representative deliberative forum that safeguards the normative governance and policy goals of the University of Amsterdam.

Regarding the Senate composition, the Committee believes that the Senate should contain seats for permanent academic staff (including professors), temporary academic staff, students, PhD candidates, the faculty deans, members of the Executive Board, and support staff. Since their recommendations are meant to benefit the entire university community, the participation of managers and administrators is both desirable and useful. As an advisory board focused on the long term and which considers and compares various possible scenarios for the future, the Senate New Style can contribute to a successful interplay between deliberation and formal decision-making. This Senate will convene several times each year in plenary sessions. These meetings will be prepared by working groups in accordance with an agenda approved by the Senate. This planning arrangement will leave ample opportunity for consultation with the entire university community as well as with experts. For the sake of efficiency, the Committee envisions a new Senate with a total of 60 members.

Charter

Many corporations and institutions are currently witnessing a shift in the understanding of how policy is made.⁴ This is a shift away from *objectives-driven* management and towards *value-driven* management. The D&D Committee's findings indicate that the University of Amsterdam is in need of a shared set of values that can function as a stable frame of reference for policy at all levels. Therefore, the D&D Committee has formulated eight values, each of which has a number of possible implications. The Committee believes this 'Charter of the University of Amsterdam' could function as a foundation for future policy. You can find the eight values in the figure below.

⁴ Based on personal communication with prof. Strikwerda. Emails and conversations until June 30th 2016.

Designing new governance models

Five of the values listed in the charter will form the foundation for a democratically governed university. These are values about the university community, decentralisation, autonomy and effective governance. Combining these different values does not result in one solitary model of democratic university governance. Rather, the tensions between the different models will present us with new decisions that will have to be taken. Emphasizing certain values over others can lead to different decisions. The Committee has outlined a number of central themes that present us with these types of choices. Figure 2 lists these choices and themes.

The D&D Committee has developed three governance models; these models are the result of consistently applying the same values to all of the choices that the various themes represent. Each of these three models is contrasted with the existing model: the blue university.

- The green model for a self-organising university emphasises the importance of local autonomy: teams of staff members who, in part together with students, design and develop research and education, and will formulate and implement the attendant directives, preconditions and goals.
- The yellow participatory model similarly emphasises the importance of academic self-governance, but prefers to accomplish this aim by installing governance councils. Both the green and the yellow model will reinforce autonomy at the most basic level.
- The orange model for a dual university recognises the importance of consultation and co-determination; however, it proposes a vision for principled governance instead. The orange dual university aims to realize effective day-to-day governance by appointing professional managers who have a certain degree of independence with respect to the representative councils.

Charter for the Universiteit van Amsterdam

1. Academic research and teaching at universities are public goods and they are inextricably linked with critical distance and academic freedom.
2. Academic research at universities is aimed at developing and applying new scientific knowledge in a (trans)national context.
3. The most distinctive feature of universities is that they aim to foster the capacity for critical thinking and academic reflection, both for students who want to pursue a career in academia and those whose future brings them elsewhere.
4. The university is a community composed of academic staff, support staff and students. Mutual respect and plausible arguments are more important than formal positions within a hierarchy; it is a community that respects the differences between its members concerning ambitions, personal circumstances and cultural and intellectual backgrounds.
5. The university keeps the levels of governance to a minimum. The authority and task description of each are clearly distinguishable in order to ensure that students and employees have authority over and ownership of their own work environment.
6. Employees are facilitated as much as possible in organizing their activities both independently and in consultation with their colleagues.
7. The democratic influence of employees and students is aimed at formulating collective and shared ambitions and collaborating with the board of executives in establishing policy that corresponds with these ambitions.
8. Those who take on an administrative or executive function should respect the distinct characteristics of universities and the freedom of staff and students to use public resources for the betterment of teaching, research and society as a whole.

Those who emphasize different aspects per theme will be able to compile a model that corresponds to their own preferences; this too will strengthen the democratic character of the university.

These models are based on, but not identical with, the four models that the Committee presented to the university community for discussion in June 2016.⁵ The most important difference concerns the foundations of the various models, which are now based on emphasising different values within the five core themes (see figure 2).

⁵ The results of this consultation can be found here: commissiedd.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Enquete-uitkomsten.pdf

Advisory Referendum

The referendum contains a range of questions; the answers to these questions could give a vital boost to the process of change. In this process it will also be necessary to take a number of supplementary decisions. The referendum results will function as a guideline in this decision-making process.

This process will require a number of additional decisions to be taken. This is why the D&D Committee uses the term 'advisory referendum'. This referendum will include the Committee's main proposals, namely:

1. The establishment of a Senate New Style as a forum where the university community can reflect and deliberate on the University's core values. This deliberative forum is the institutional body that must ensure respect for these values and safeguard their relevance for University policies. Are you in favour of the instalment of such a deliberative forum?
2. The proposal for a charter. The D&D Committee wants to gauge if the university community agrees with the idea that a set of shared values can help, over time, to bring about more convergence in attitudes about policy matters. The Committee also wants to assess the extent to which people agree with the values that are proposed in the report.
3. The governance models. Participants can choose from several options in a series of questions about the central themes mentioned above. This allows them to create their own model for democratic university governance.

In addition to these proposals, the report also contains numerous recommendations and suggestions that are not part of the referendum but which should also be considered. There are also a number of remedial measures which the Committee believes should lead to improvements and which could be implemented quickly and fairly easily, regardless of which governance model is chosen. These will be discussed at the end of the report.

After the referendum

After the referendum, the results will be analysed to determine what the implications of the outcome are for the reform process. Agreements should also be made about those proposals for change which are clearly supported by the university community. The Executive Board has made a commitment to implement the Committee's proposals if: a) the referendum shows that the university community agrees with these proposals; and b) it is possible to implement these proposals within the confines of the law. If the latter condition is not met, the law must first be changed.

The Committee wishes to note that in all likelihood the referendum outcome will not be accepted 'automatically'. First the question needs to be addressed of the extent to which the two conditions described above have been met. To answer this question, we should consider not only the opinions of those who voted but also the voter turnout and the representativeness of the participants. In order to make headway in the debate about university reforms it is in everyone's interest that the entire university community participate so that there will be a high voter turnout. This holds true regardless of any judgements about the respective proposals. The Committee hopes to see a high voter turnout.

The D&D Committee considers this report to be part of a process of reorientation and reform at the University of Amsterdam, one that will take several years. It is a first step, not the final step. Further steps require broadly supported agreement on how to design and monitor this process, as well as agreements on what role different parties and groups will have in this process. Hopefully, this report and the referendum results will prove to be a valuable starting point for a broadly supported process of democratisation and decentralisation at the University of Amsterdam.

| | The green self-organising university | The yellow participatory university | The orange dual university | The blue existing university |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| 1. Strengthening democracy at university and faculty level | Executive boards (undivided), in which staff and students have equal voice. Councils determine policy. Elected board members are accountable to these councils (for the green model, this situation awaits the evaluation of the relation between decentralised units and faculty within four years). | | Representative advisory councils (divided) with far-reaching accountability and correcting competences. Right of consent, right of information, and right of initiative will be extended. Right of amendment will be introduced. | The existing situation with regards to right of consent and the right to be consulted will be maintained. |
| 2. Strengthening organisation and governance at the basic level | Units within a recognisable discipline that is responsible for both teaching and research programs. Elected supervisors prepare and implement policy. | | Independent education and research institutes and departments with appointed directors/chairpersons deriving from faculty level (current situation). The dean appoints supervisors after advisory or employee participation. The deans decide but are being advised. | |
| 3. Strengthening democracy at the basic level | Staff and students will develop organisational design and set-up of units on the basic level. Starting point is as much self-management and distribution of leadership as possible. | Councils that seat staff and students equally will govern units on the basic level. | In addition to directors/chairpersons there will be a new form of participatory counselling on the departmental level and teaching and research institutes to be determined later. | How consultation with representative advisory councils is managed is decided by directors/chairpersons. |
| 4. Openness and participation on all levels | | | Representativeness of councils and participatory bodies will be encouraged with transparency, online platforms that stimulate discussion, meetings for discussions and decision making, thematic conferences, and other forms of providing and sharing information. | Existing situation, with improved representativeness and accountability. |
| 5. Continued existence of the faculties | Units on the basic level function within existing faculty structures for the next four years. Thereafter, evaluation on if/how faculties will continue to exist. | | The choice for or against the persistence of existing faculties is not part of the choice for one of these three models. | |

Figure 2: Central themes and their relation to the governance models

**Lisa Westerveld
Herman van den Bosch
Eva Groen-Reijman
Rob Hagendijk
Pieter Pekelharing
Kyah Smaal
Mattieu Weggeman
Gloria Wekker**



**DEMOCRATISATION &
DECENTRALISATION
COMMITTEE**

Secretariat and assistance
**Danna Harmsen, Daan Tillie
and Camiel van Hove**

* Until September 1st, 2016