

Pioneering Research on Actual Board Behaviour: A Special Issue in Honour of Morten Huse

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Editorial

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The need for studies of issues such as board-stakeholder dynamics, board members' interactions, board leadership, and the decision-making culture within the boardroom is today widely acknowledged among management scholars who research corporate governance and boards of directors. While challenging the 'black box' approach that for so long has characterised the research field, such studies are also providing important inputs to practitioners and policy makers who ask for guidance on how to revitalise and develop boards as a key instrument of governance. Morten Huse is a distinguished scholar who, during the last two decades, has published extensively in international Editorial 117 journals on these topics. His body of research brings together behavioural, institutional, entrepreneurial and ethical approaches to the study of boards and governance. From these approaches, he has developed novel concepts and systematic frameworks that have been widely diffused in scholarly research on an extensive range of related topics. The research conducted spans legal and political debates on corporate governance at the macro level to micro level behaviour inside and outside the boardroom and relates to a variety of different countries and contexts, from small and medium-sized enterprises to large corporations. During his career, Morten Huse has also been heavily engaged in higher education policy and in the development of scientific standards. With his vast experience of universities in different countries across Europe, in Australia/New Zealand and in the USA, he has contributed widely to internationalisation efforts in research and student education and in the dissemination of scholarly research to policy makers and practitioners. These interests are reflected in the topics of this special issue published in honour of Morten Huse for his 60th birthday on 24th November 2013. Morten Huse started his career as a student in management at the Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration in Bergen (NHH), from where he graduated in 1976. After ending his military service in 1977, he started his research education at NHH from where he was recruited to an action research project for the Church of Norway in 1978. In 1981, he was employed at the HR department in the financial service company UNI Insurance, and he continued in various positions in the company until 1986. During this period, he was involved as a training manager for the Norwegian Church Aid in Sudan and he also completed a 4-year Cand. Mag. in a combination of Law, Insurance and Religion in 1986. In 1987, he became Director of Administration and Finance

at SAS Royal Hotel in Bodø and from 1988 to 1989 he was involved in Bonitas Management Consultants (Ernst & Young) as a partner and director. In 1989, he joined the Nordland Research Institute (NRI) in Bodø for a research position and it was in this place he completed and defended his dissertation in 1994. He continued to work as a senior researcher at NRI until 1997 when he became a senior researcher at the Norwegian Centre for Church Research. In 2002, he was appointed as a full professor at the Norwegian School of Management BI, where he was active in building up and developing an international research network of scholars interested in boards and governance from strategic management and organisation behaviour perspectives. Since 2012, he has been on part time leave from the Department of Culture and Communication at the Norwegian School of Management BI for his current position as a professor for the Reinhard-Mohn-Endowment-Chair of Management and Governance at the University of Witten/Herdecke. Morten Huse is very much characterised by his international orientation and involvement, and he has held several academic positions as adjunct or long time visiting professor in addition to his main affiliations. These engagements include University of Juväskylä and Hanken School of Economics (Finland), Lund University and Halmstad University (Sweden), Bocconi University, University of Naples (Federico II), University of Rome Tor Vergata and Sapienza University (Italy), University of St. Gallen (Switzerland), University of Minnesota and Arizona State University (USA), and Sydney University of Technology (Australia). He has served as an international expert for the United Nation Economic Commission on Europe (UNECE), and he has also been involved on the editorial board of academic journals such as International Journal of Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, Journal of Management 118 J. Gabriellsson et al. and Governance, International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, and Corporate Governance: An International Review. He has also served as associate editor of Journal of Small Business Management and he is currently area editor of Magma. During his career, Morten Huse has also been actively engaged in providing service for a wide range of academic conferences such as Strategic Management Society (SMS), Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics (SASE), International Association for Business and Society (IABS), Academy of Management (AOM), International Council for Small Business (ICSB), European Group of Organization Studies (EGOS), International Family Enterprise Research Academy (IFERA) and the European Academy of Management (EURAM). He is a founding member of EURAM and he served as the chair of the Corporate Governance SIG of EURAM in 2009–2010 and as the President of EURAM in 2010–2011. Morten Huse has also been committed to develop communities of engaged management scholars, for example during his period as president of EURAM and through founding and developing networks such as the Norefjell Board Governance Workshops and the Women on Board Cruise Workshops, which have become annual meeting places where academics, practitioners and policy makers can network and interact with each other. Morten is also committed to make a change through his work when working with businesses and business associations, policy makers, PhD students and other scholars. For many years, he has given priority to researching and consulting on topics of women on boards, and he has been speaking at about one hundred seminars on this topic all over the world. In 2013, he received the TIAW global award for championing the empowerment of women. While the research conducted by Morten Huse spans across a broad range of topics, he is probably best known for his long-term involvement with boards of directors with a focus on research about value creating boards and boardroom dynamics. When working as a manager and consultant in the 1980s, Morten Huse developed an interest in boards of directors with special attention to how interactions and relationships inside and outside the boardroom influence the

processes board members follow in making decisions. This interest also became the topic of his dissertation entitled *Distanced Closeness*, which was a study of board-management relations related to actual board behaviour (Huse, 1993). In the dissertation, it is possible to identify several issues that will become typical landmarks in many of his later studies; the interest in theoretical paradoxes, the attempt to integrate different theories into systematic frameworks, the development and operationalisation of novel theoretical constructs, and the interest and attention to replicate studies across firms, industries and countries. It is beyond our scope to systematise his contribution to the field of corporate governance and boards of directors. At the same time, we would like to briefly present some of his major accomplishment and provide an overview of the impact he had on the field. Since 1990, Morten Huse has authored and co-authored more than 100 publications on corporate governance and boards. His works are highly eclectic as they address issues of relevance for both a Scandinavian (mostly Norwegian) and an international audience and for both academic scholars and practitioners. His impact on the academic audience is evidenced by the large number of citations of his works, i.e., more than 4,000 citations at the end of March 2014. Among his articles, the most cited ones – all with more than 200 citations each – are Zahra et al. (2000) that explores the role of ownership structure and governance mechanisms in fostering managerial support to corporate entrepreneurship; Huse (2005) that presents an accountability framework and a research Editorial 119 agenda for understanding actual board behaviour; and Johannisson and Huse (2000) that investigates alternative theoretical frameworks for director selection in small companies. Amongst his many books, the most cited one is Huse (2007) where he presents the results of his extensive research on corporate governance and, in particular, on boards of directors. The book is the culmination of his long experience as a scholar researching boards and governance. As such, it presents and systematises the results from several studies applying a wide set of theories and using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In sum, his pioneering work during the 1990s and 2000s has been influential in developing a stream of research exploring relational dynamics and behavioural processes inside and outside the boardroom from strategic management and organisation behaviour perspectives. His research outputs on governance and boards of directors span from the early 1990s up to today, with an increasing attention in recent years to family firms (e.g., Gnan et al., forthcoming; Zattoni et al., forthcoming), women on boards (e.g., Machold et al., 2013), and board leadership and task performance (e.g., Huse and Gabrielsson, 2012; Minichilli et al., 2012). In this respect, we are many that are grateful for his scholarly contributions that in many ways have pioneered research on actual board behaviour. We are very grateful to the participants for the Norefjell X workshop at which the idea for this special issue was born. We are also grateful to the researchers who have contributed to this special issue by authoring articles on topics that in various ways follow or relate to the scholarly work of Morten Huse. In the first article, Thomas Steger provides his reflections on the ‘blind spots’ of corporate governance and board research. Steger acknowledges that research on corporate governance and boards of directors has made some important contributions to the field of management and organisational behaviour. However, he also emphasises a range of topics and approaches that have remained underestimated, neglected, or unexplored in the field. By recognising and discussing these ‘blind spots’, the article takes a somewhat critical position in order to reflect on potential opportunities and challenges for further research that may enrich our knowledge and understanding of corporate governance and boards of directors. In the second article, Axel Walther and Michèle Morner open up the black box of nomination committees through a case study of non-executive director selections in German supervisory boards. Based on in-depth interviews with nomination committee members in 12

German supervisory boards they identify three prototypical nomination committees; active, consultative, and box ticking. In their analysis, they also show the impact of each nomination committee prototype on the board selection process. Stuart Farquhar, Silke Machold and Pervaiz K. Ahmed in the third article develop a conceptual framework where they show how the task performance of a non-executive director may change over their period on the board. Based on a three-stage process and embedded in capture theories of regulation, they argue for an initial stance where monitoring and control is high and strategy and service is low to the reverse where monitoring and control is low and strategy and service is high. In the fourth article, Lucrezia Songini and Luca Gnan compare family and non-family SMEs with regard to the role of women in ownership, governance and management roles, and they also examine its relation with firm managerialisation. Based on a quantitative deductive design and using data from a questionnaire survey to SMEs in Italy, they find 120 J. Gabrielsson et al. that family SMEs constitute a more favourable context for breaking through the glass ceiling. Their results also show that managerial mechanisms are more relevant in non-family SMEs when women are involved in governance and managerial roles. The final article by Wim Voordeckers, Anita Van Gils, Jonas Gabrielsson and Diamanto Politis is a project that was initiated together with Morten Huse at one of the first Norefjell workshops. In the article, the authors integrate ideas from institutional theory and the behavioural theory of the firm to examine and compare formal board structures and actual board behaviour in privately held SMEs. Using empirical cross-country data from Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway they find support for that privately held firms have specific governance needs that 'decouple' board structures from actual board behaviour. The results imply that it is possible to coordinate and disseminate board development research and practice across countries despite national differences in formal board structures. Finally, we are personally grateful to Morten Huse for being a mentor and a sincere friend for all of us and for inspiring most of our scientific work for more than a decade. We would not probably be where we are today without his continuous support, generous encouragement, and professional advice.

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