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STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AS KNOWLEDGE INCUBATORS
The two utilities of student organizations

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Synopsis & Keywords

Student organizations have two utilities; one social and one educational, but only the first of these utilities see national and common focus. This thesis will present the second, educational, utility and will find a role for this utility that better suit its potential. It will do this by discussing the current usage of student organizations by the state and universities, and show how student organizations can be compared to small- and medium sized enterprises. The educational potential in student organizations will be analyzed on the background of this comparison, and this will be put into the frames of the theory of the triple helix and its notion of universities third mission. This ends up in an argument that the best role of the second utility is that of a knowledge incubator, placed in the boundary of academia and industry. The thesis ends with a batch of suggestions of possible initiatives by the state, universities and student organizations.

Keywords: triple helix, third mission, incubator, knowledge incubator, student organizations, extra-curricular activities, two utilities, knowledge, silver bullet

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Tables & figures

Table of Contents

> "The university will make you study, we, the student society, will make you into students. He who is merely the first without the second, he will not be a man, no whole person, - he can at best become a professor"[1]
>
> *- Edgar B. Schieldrop, the first leader of the student society in Trondheim*

Introduction

With every university come students, and with students come societies, organizations, clubs and extra-curricular activities. These organizations provide a myriad of pastimes with or without scholarly reference and they are an important source of knowledge not traditionally attained through curriculum. While the universities provide the academic arena where teaching and research reside, these student-organized activities deliver both social and educational utilities outside of formal academic barriers. These two utilities, however, are unbalanced in terms of recognition and focus, and this thesis will pose the following main question: *"What could be the role of student organizations in future universities?"*. While the first, social, utility already have a firm role, I will throughout the thesis work my way towards a potential role for the second, educational, utility. I will develop my arguments by putting the second utility into the arena of innovation theory as part of the knowledge transfer between university, industry and society. I will investigate this question by posing a number of sub questions.

I will start by discussing the question *"What is a student organization and what does it do*?", where I will argue that the bigger student organizations share both the numerical and structural similarities with traditional businesses. This similarity is

[1] My translation. The original text in Norwegian is as follow: "Høiskolen vil gjøre dere til studerende, vi, Samfundet, vil gjøre dere til studenter. Den som blott er det første uten å være det annet, han blir ingen mann, intet helt menneske, — han kan i høiden drive det til professor."

important, as it will provide an understanding of the potential knowledge that lies within the second utility.

Secondly, I will ask; *"How are the two utilities of student organizations presently regarded?"*. Here I will give an insight into present use of student organizations both by the state and universities themselves in an attempt to show the current prioritizing of the first utility over the second utility.

Thirdly, I will pose the question *"What is the place of student organizations within current frameworks of innovation theory?".* Here I will discuss the potential knowledge gain and current usage of student organizations trough the lens of the triple helix theory to find a possible role for student organizations in future universities.

This thesis then argues that a possible role of student organizations, as an arena providing non-traditional academic knowledge, could be as a knowledge incubator within the third mission of the triple helix.

As I will discuss in the next chapter, the triple helix theory is chosen partly because of its overlay between the industry and academia and how that conjures new and untraditional arenas of knowledge, partly because of the possibilities of placing the niche of student organizations within its third mission (the universities role as entrepreneurs and contributors to social and economic development) and partly because the current role of students (the largest mass of the universities) within the triple helix, or any other theory of innovation, are vague and unspecified before they actually research or invent. The triple helix, thus, provide a good futuristic framework for how the universities will develop over the next decade and will therefore work as a guide towards placing students organizations in future university.

It is not a secret that students involved in these organizations and particularly students holding leadership positions in the bigger organizations attain knowledge and experience not normally attained during lectures or curriculum. Employees value this form of engagement, and the universities do, to variable extent, acknowledge and encourage it. There is, however, a lack of knowledge on experience attained, the actual level of responsibilities given to leaders, and the real magnitude of these medium-sized firms. There is also no unified policy on what role these organizations have within the university.

The oldest university in Norway, the university of Oslo, got its main student society in 1813; just two years after its foundation. The landmark student society of Trondheim followed its academic institution in 1910 with two weeks, and the "Student Society of Bergen" was established even before the university was founded. As mentioned, student organizations have always followed in the path of institutions of higher education; but what is their role – and does the role change with changes in the universities?

The role of the university and the arenas of knowledge is changing from pure academic hothouses to a closer and more seamless connection to the private sector. 65% of Norwegian students continue their education after high school. Many of them get their education at the universities, but few end up with a career within academia (Dahlum, 2008). With an increasing gap in students' motive for higher education and the curriculum content (Johansen, 2008), a discussion should be initiated and searches should me made to where knowledge that often give more practical and work related experience reside. In a poll by Spekter in 2008, 50,7% of leaders in private sector claimed that newly educated job seekers were not well prepared for the demands posed in work life. 38,8 % of the same leaders also disagree that public higher education is capable of facing changes in the private sectors' need for new competence (Spekter, 2008). These numbers are not in any way new and shocking, and the universities have for years created new courses and programs in attempts to bridge this gap. But – is it always necessary to invent new courses and create new and costly relationships external to the universities, or could a better utilization of student organizations help enrich the education provided by universities.

Student organizations and their extra-curricular activities have a yearly economic turnover reaching several tens of million. These organizations may be likened to small- and medium-sized enterprises, and their work force of several thousand volunteers run TV and radio stations, newspapers and cultural houses and smaller activity organizations which arrange thousands of activities each year. These organizations are already in the universities backyard and they are places where students get experience and knowledge that is both relevant and useful to the private and public sectors. The potential for knowledge within these organizations is high and they often bring a practical experience not usually attained before several years of work. This begs the question: Are student organizations included in the universities' hunt for knowledge? How do they regard, use and promote the before mentioned second utility of this arena? Could future universities be strengthened by a different mentality towards the value of student organizations? What role could student organizations play in the future development of the university?

This thesis does not have any goal of accurately describing and/or analysing the types of knowledge and responsibilities obtained by those involved in student organizations, but aim to shed light over an unexplored arena and to act as a possible gateway into further studies. It is also based on student organizations in Norway, but the possible potential of student organizations could be transferable to the use of student organizations and/or student-run companies within other universities. Most universities throughout the world include a number of student organizations of various configurations, and some of these already incorporate student-run companies and organizations into their innovation policy with great success (Pei-Lee & Chen-Chen, 2008). Although data is gathered and processed through a Norwegian setting, the findings of this thesis could be relevant to how universities also outside of Norway approach this arena.

This introduction has provided a backdrop on the theme of this thesis and has defined the main research question and its supporting questions.

Chapter two will present the different theories within the field of innovation studies, and will explain the use of triple helix theory. It will also introduce and explain the term “the two utilities” and other terms surrounding student organizations used throughout this thesis.

Chapter three will discuss the choice of method for the interviews that form the main source of unique empirical data in this thesis. In addition, information has been gathered on the numerical and structural status of different student organizations and the present usage of student organizations both by the state and the university. This chapter will present the sources and reasons behind this data.

Chapter four will present the results from the collected data. In order to provide a foundation for the relevance of the second utility, I will compare student organizations to traditional businesses. The inner workings and scale of the bigger student organizations will be presented both numerical and descriptive. This chapter will also show today's focus on the first utility by presenting the current attitude of the universities and the government towards the second utility of student organizations.

Chapter five will analyse the results presented in the previous chapter and look at possible kinds of knowledge gained by those involved in the second utility of student organizations. I will also discuss the potential relevance and inclusion of student organization in the "third mission" of the triple helix theory. This and earlier chapters will form basis for the argument that the best use of the second utility is through acceptance and use of student organizations as knowledge incubators.

Chapter six will on the basis of the previous chapters look at possible ways for the different actors (state, universities, student organizations) to provide better framework and environment for enhancing the second utility as knowledge incubators.

The thesis ends with some final words in chapter seven.

Theory & conceptual framework

In this chapter, I will discuss different theories of innovation studies, place the thesis in an STS-perspective within innovation theory and argue for the use of the theory of triple helix. I will then present the theory of the triple helix and the conceptual framework I will use throughout this thesis. The role of triple helix in this thesis is one of guiding the second utility towards a more usable role in future universities, and I will in a later chapter use its notion of the third mission to place student organizations inside the triple helix. The conceptual framework consists of terms and definitions essential for the understanding of student organizations and to clarify those included. The framework will also give a closer presentation of the term "two utilities" used extensively throughout this paper.

Choice of theory

In the arena of innovation theory, there are at the moment three theories that could be used: National Systems of Innovation, Triple Helix and Mode 2. These three have seen different kind of utilization and following (Shinn, 2002), but share the similarities of being theoretical frameworks for the usage and production of knowledge in modern society.

Bengt-Åke Lundvall introduced the concept of a "system of innovation" in 1985, and the expression "national system of innovation" (NSI) was first defined in 1987 as "the network of institutions in the public and private sectors whose activities and interactions initiate, import and diffuse new technologies" (Freeman, 1987, s. 1). The idea, however, dates back to Friedrich List's conception of "The National System of Political Economy" in 1841 (Freeman, 1995). After its conception, the NSI approach has seen in development in both empirical, Nelson (1993), and theoretical, Lundvall (1992), directions and the present use of NSI lacks a generally accepted definition (Edquist, 2005). A more general definition of NSI includes “all important economic, social, political, organizational, institutional and other factors that influence the development, diffusion and use of innovations” (Edquist, 1997). Hence, the NSI is a holistic perspective on the organization and structure of the innovation process in national, regional and local settings.

The theory of Mode 2 does not envision the all-engrossing system of the NSI, but rather argues that the way actors organize and structure the processes of innovation, whether in form of scientific knowledge, technical practices, industry, education and society at large, are today in sharp contrast with the relationships and structure of the past (Shinn, 2002). Mode 2 has been developed through *The New Production of Knowledge* (1994) and later revisited in *Re-Thinking Science* (2001). The authors of these books speak of two distinctly different modes of knowledge production. “Mode 1” is the described as a paradigm of strict separation of academia and society with little or no interaction between academia and industry. The new “Mode 2” is by contrast characterized as context-driven, problem-focused and interdisciplinary. It involves multidisciplinary teams brought together for short periods of time to work on specific problems in the real world (Shinn, 2002). Mode 2 makes use of concepts like *co-evolution*, *contextualization*, *socially robust knowledge* and *socially distributed narratives* to describe the new process and form in which knowledge and innovation emerge in a Mode 2 configuration (Nowotny, Scott, & Gibbons, 2001). This new process is visible in the argument that social and economic problems should be guiding what arenas of knowledge to be prioritized and developed (Shinn, 2002).

Between the umbrella of the NSI and the specific processes of knowledge production in Mode 2 lies the theory of Triple Helix. Conceived by Loet Leydesdorff and

Henry Etzkowitz, this theory of innovation stresses historical continuity by keeping earlier relations between the university, industry and government, but rather focusing on the changing interaction between them (Shinn, 2002). The “Triple Helix” model works as a supplementary layer of “knowledge development” (Shinn, 2002) where actors and institutions within the three different spheres of the knowledge production (university, industry and government) meet and interact. As Etzkowitz puts it:

> The model helps explain why the three spheres keep a relatively independent and distinct status, shows where interaction takes place, and explains why a dynamic triple helix can be formed with gradations between independence and interdependence, conflict and confluence of interest. (Etzkowitz, 2008)

Within this layer, the university absorb some of the industry’s roles, as firm-formation and technology transfer, while the industry may form teaching institutions and research facilities. These auxiliary actors within the synergy of the triple helix are however not true enterprises or teaching facilities, as the different spheres should not stray too far from their core missions (Etzkowitz, 2008). The theory of the Triple Helix is thus a description of the new and changing formations and interactions between the spheres of innovation and a way framework for recognizing and defining new arenas of knowledge.

This thesis has its focus on student organizations and the role of these within the university. It is therefore also a thesis with focus on the role of the university within society. This role is of importance both to studies of science & technology and innovation. The role of universities as an important source of knowledge production and knowledge transfer is long established, but analysis and further research on the role of universities as more than an arena of education or research is hampered by lack of empirical data (Mowery & Sampat, 2005). This lack of research trickles down to an even bigger lack of exploration on the role of students, besides that of training for future roles within knowledge production. It seems that most STS and innovation theories do not treat knowledge production and transfer as activities that occur during the period that students receive education. These theories register the involvement of students in knowledge production and transfer only when they are inventing, patenting or researching. The role of students and student organizations at universities within innovation theory is therefore an extension of the question of the role of universities within society, and should therefore be regarded as relevant within the field of STS.

Most innovation theory includes discussions on the changing and crucial role of universities in society and knowledge production. This thesis, however, wants to find a possible role for student organizations in present and future universities and must therefore make use of the theory that best accommodates and makes room for the placement of students and student organizations as part of knowledge production and transfer.

All three mentioned theories of innovation include discussion on the role of the university in knowledge production[2]. Neither explicitly exclude or include students from their versions of knowledge production, but it won't be a big leap of faith to assume that the overwhelming focus is on the mechanisms in play after students graduate.

The NSI calls for a conscious organizations of the different chains in the process of innovation. In a NSI, the chains consist of organizations (formal structures),

[2] E.g. Mowery & Sampat in *The Oxford Handbook of Innovation*, the chapter on universities in *Re-Thinking Science* or several articles in the Triple Helix issue of *Research Policy (2000).*

institutions (habits, norms, laws etc) and the relationships between them (Edquist, 2005). The specific set-ups of organizations and institutions vary among systems on both a local and national, and one of the weaknesses of the NSI approach is the lack of a specific instruction on what should be included in such a system (Edquist, 2005). An ultimate list over what to include and how to structure them would be unrealistic and counter-productive, and Lundvall insisted that, “a definition of the system of innovation must be kept open and flexible” (Lundvall, 1992). While the university certainly have a strong and obvious place in any configuration of a NSI, the theory does not give rise to any specific role of both students and students organizations other than it’s inclusion by default as part of the university. How to use these organizations, where to place them and what role to give them, are however not best reached through the theory of the NSI.

Mode 2, on the other side, is to process-oriented to give student organizations a specific role within universities or an innovation system. Both The New Production of Knowledge and Re-Thinking Science were written as reflective essays rather than as empirical studies, bordering sometimes to political intentions (Shinn, 2002). Their purpose was rather to address the need to invent a new language of research, as it was to point out a pattern or structure of innovation. This new language and concepts would surely also fit the different processes and structure within student organizations, but it’s not adequate as a tool for giving student organizations a place and role within the university and the innovation process. The change from Mode 1 to Mode 2 creates a more open university with responsibilities outside of the traditional arenas of teaching and research. But - rather than providing a set of tools to identify new arenas of knowledge production, Mode 2 sets out to describe the new and changing processes and methods within these arenas.

This leaves us with the triple helix theory as the middle actor in this Babushka doll of innovation. Triple Helix sets out to be a way of structuring the different actors within a NSI, and within this configuration, the processes and methods of Mode 2 could be applied. The triple helix layer provides several arenas and combinations of arenas where student organizations could find its role. Either as a unique part of the university, or as a combination of two or more arenas. The triple helix theory is also specifically targeted towards the changing university, as one of the pillars of triple helix is how the interactions between the arenas also change the arenas themselves (Etzkowitz, Webster, Gebhardt, & Terra, 2000). A closer relationship between the university and industry will by necessity change both actors to different degrees. Triple helix describes the change within the university as the “Third Mission” of universities, or the “entrepreneurial university”. The third mission creates a space where student-organized firms are able to develop within an innovation theory (Etzkowitz, 2008), and provide a handler on which we can place student organizations.

I have thus chosen to use the Triple Helix theory because of its potential for placing the second utility of student organizations, discussed below, in a position of optimal use. Student organizations have traditionally existed in a space between academy and society, and my intention of using the triple helix is to show that they also exist in the borderlines of academy and industry. This borderline, and the effects of it, is best captured and used through the triple helix. This thesis will therefore use the triple helix theory as a framework to find a possible role for student organizations in future universities.

Triple Helix

The theory of the triple helix states that the university can play an enhanced role in innovation in increasingly knowledge-based societies, and that interaction between the university, industry and government could be a key to improving this role (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). In the Triple Helix, industry function as the source of production; government, through contractual relations, function as a hub for stable interactions and exchange; and the university function as a source of new knowledge and economy (Etzkowitz, 2003). Innovation is beyond what takes place in a singular institution. An emphasis on arrangements and networks among different institutions, rather than isolated institutional spheres, will provide the optimal source of innovation (Etzkowitz, 2003).

The symbiotic trifecta between the industry, university and state is not in any way new, but the theory of the triple helix provides a new way of configuring their relationships.

First, we can distinguish a configuration where a strong state encompasses academia and industry, and directs the relationship between them (Fig. 1). Secondly, we can find a model where the separate institutional spheres are divided by strong borders and with restricted relations between the spheres (Fig. 2). Finally, the model of Triple Helix is generating a knowledge infrastructure in terms of overlapping institutional spheres, where the institutions take multiple roles and create hybrid organizations at their convergence (Fig. 3)(Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000).

While the first model is mostly regarded as giving too little room for initiatives, and discouraging rather than encouraging, the second model is seen as advocating a shock therapy for those states wanting to reduce their role in the first model (Etzkowitz

& Leydesdorff, 2000).

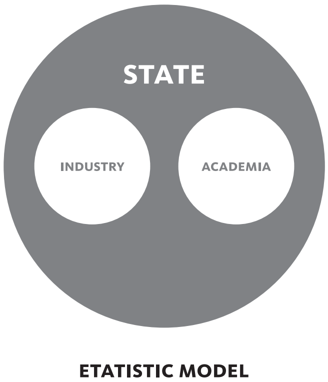

Fig. 1

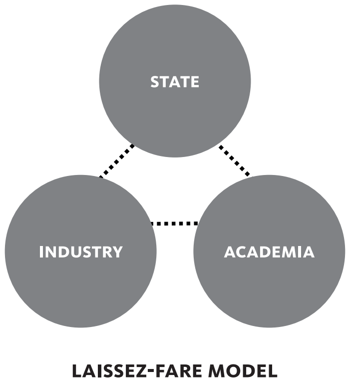

Fig. 2

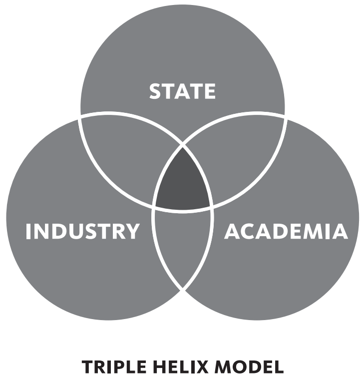

Fig.3

The triple helix, however, takes into account the growing need for a new global model for the management of knowledge and technology that enables analysis of the dynamics of innovation in terms of historical trends, new structural arrangements and emerging moments of change (Etzkowitz, 2003). There is more potential in combining strength than to manage them in isolation. The triple helix is developed in four dimensions: Internal transformation of the helices, helix influence on each other, creation of tri-lateral organizations and networks, and the recursive effect of these networks (Etzkowitz, 2003). The first dimension, the internal transformation of the helices, is of special interest for the topic of this thesis.

THIRD MISSION

This closer relationship, and mixed roles, between the state, industry and university push academia into what's been dubbed "the second academic revolution": the emergence of the third mission of universities. The first being teaching and the second being research. Universities and other institutions of learning are advancing into a new societal role. Universities within the triple helix do not only teach students and conduct research, but they also make an effort in putting this knowledge effectively into use. The

"Third Mission" of universities is thus that of social and economic development and entrepreneurship; e.g. taking control of patents created by its researchers, establishing spin-off firms, establishing incubators and guiding knowledge from the academic sphere to the public and industrial sphere through managed technology transfers. The entrepreneurial universities retains the traditional academic roles provided by the first and second mission, but places them in a broader context as parts of the new role as promoting innovation.

The main characteristic of the third mission is said to be "relational" in a way where universities, incubators, knowledge transfer offices and other actors develop a common framework and share good practice (Laredo, 2007).

The Triple Helix is thus a framework for interaction between the industry, state and academia, and the third mission is a method for academia to develop and grow according to this new framework and those synergies created by the third mission. I will later in this thesis place the second utility of student activities within these new frames and changes established by the third mission.

Conceptual framework

This thesis has the subtitle: "The two utilities of student organizations". In order to move forward with empirical findings and the analysis of these, we need to have a firm understanding of what lies within the term "two utilities" and also what is included from the big pool of student organizations. This section will therefore clarify a couple of terms in order to get a better grasp on this thesis' use of the two utilities of student organizations.

THE TWO UTILITIES

The “two utilities” of student organizations is the term in which I put the meaning, aim and mission of student organizations. This is a term coined by myself even before this was initiated, and developed and crystallized further during this process. It is the classic tale of how something has several sides, but one side gets the most light. It is not a tale of opposites like black and white, but on complementary and equally important utilities where one is clearly defined and the other is known - but out of focus.

The *first utility* covers those obvious social benefits students and universities get from student activities. The students get a place to stay outside of the teaching spheres, they are offered a myriad of possible activities and events and through these activities they form friendships and networks. Universities benefit from this by being able to use student activities in their recruitment material and each of them promote their university and town as a student-friendly. The first utility is thus best described from the vantage point of universities by the term “happy students equals better students and eventually more students”. The trademark of this first utility is that it’s mainly focused on the benefits of student activities and the social benefits of taking either an active or passive part of it.

The *second utility* covers the benefits gained by those involved in the student organizations on a volunteer basis in terms of knowledge and experience. As shown later, this ranges from ordinary work-experience to leadership skills. It also benefits the traditional university knowledge by providing an eco-system in which students interact with other students both inside and outside their own courses and institutions. The trademark of the second utility is that it has its focus on involvement in the organizations rather than the first utilities’ focus on activities.

As I will show later, the first utility is widely recognized, used and cherished by both the state and the university. The second utility is known and applauded internally by the universities, but rarely used or recognized externally and neglected by the state. The second utility seems to be a victim of the difference in internal/external and implicit/explicit recognition. While praised by university leadership, the praise seldom materializes into real initiatives and focus by the universities towards both existing, new and potential students.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The phrase “student activities” is used with the same meaning as the more Americanized expression “extra-curricular activities”. I define student activities as activities chosen by students to occupy their spare time outside traditional curricular work (lectures, reading, colloquial groups). These activities are provided as an offer by the universities themselves or by student organizations. This can be both as a user of these activities or as a provider. E.g. working at a local pub is not considered a student activity, but working at the local student pub is. Going to a concert or party organized by a student organization is a student activity both for the students attending and the students organizing. Working out at the local gym is not, but training with the local student badminton team is a student activity. Their common denominator is that it’s for students, by students.

Some places use this expression to describe activities students undertake to improve their academic level. E.g. how they work with their studies, if they take extra classes or if they seek out professors for regular follow-ups. This thesis will not be using “student activities” to describe this kind of activity.

STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

"Student organizations" is used to describe organizations that organize the activities described above. These organizations are of variable size and topics, but they are all mainly targeted towards students, students run them and except from some hired people at the largest cultural houses, all workers are unpaid volunteers. The structure and roles within these organizations are very much similar to those of ordinary business life.

WHO ARE INCLUDED?

There are a substantial numbers of student organizations at our universities, and an important part of this thesis is to define and isolate what kind of student organizations I include when I look for their future role at the academic eco system.

I distinguish between four kinds of student organizations: 1) the political & humanitarian organizations (political parties, student political fractions, Amnesty, Red Cross etc.), 2) the media organizations (newspapers, radio, TV), 3) the athletic organizations (gyms, soccer, tennis, fencing, volleyball etc.) and 4) the cultural organizations (student houses, chess club, role-playing club, organizers of musical, theatre, debates and movies etc.). Although it's important for society to focus on student organizations and activity as a totality, this thesis will only focus on a small part of the fourth category, the cultural organizations.

The main reason why I choose to focus only on this small segment of student organizations is that almost every university and university-college in Norway has its own student cultural house and these houses have an organization I find most similar in structure to a business in the private or public sector. The political and media organizations do have a business-like structure and organization, but these organizations already have a clearly defined role in present universities and they also have a clear link to the outside professional life. Student politicians often go straight on to their mother party or other political positions and workers in student media have an obvious and well-known link to the respective professional media. These two arenas are well known as a training ground and recruitment hub for students wanting to pursue this particular career path. The athletic organizations are often organized by special parts of the universities or are of a too small scale to be included in this thesis. The student cultural houses in Norway have the most business-like organizational structure of all four categories, but they do not have a predefined link to the professional life or the same clearly defined role and value in present universities as the political and media organizations have.

There are of course numerous student cultural organizations besides the big student houses, but they do not inhabit the same business-like structure and content as student houses. I would not disagree strongly with those arguing that some of these smaller organizations are just scaled down versions of the bigger organizations, but this thesis chooses to focus only on the bigger ones.

ROLES WITHIN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

Within these bigger student organizations, several levels of responsibilities and workers exist (Table 1).

Table 1 - Overview of roles within student organizations

	Level	Focus area	Work areas (examples)	Main responsibilities
Student leaders	Highest level board	Organization as a whole	Board work, sponsoring, media relations, employer responsibilities, strategy, economy	Making sure the organization is managed and run on a day-to-day basis
Middle managers	Mid-level work groups/boards	Individual groups within the organization	Personnel, shifts, group economy, social events	Making sure the employees in the different work groups do the work they are supposed to do
Employees	Workers in groups responsible for the day-to-day work	Tasks done by the individual groups	Bartending, cooking, graphical work, technical maintenance, rigging and control of sound and light systems, security, photography etc .	Doing the actual day-to-day work in different sections of the organization

Almost everyone start his or her career in a student organization as an employee and gradually ascend the hierarchical ladder. When jumping from one organization to another, the experience gained in the previous organization(s) may help individuals to start their career in the new organization on a higher level. This mirrors the professional work life.

A common phenomenon in student organizations is that both leaders and middle managers are often also involved in groups as ordinary employees. Every individual involved on a volunteer basis at any level of the organization is included when referring to the "workers" of student organizations.

Summary

This chapter has discussed the different innovation theories, and presented the theory of Triple Helix, and its notion of the third mission of universities, as most suitable towards the goals of this thesis. The third mission will in later chapters be used in my discussion in how to best utilize the second utility of student organizations. In addition to defining the theoretical framework for further discussions, this chapter has also clarified and explained the main terms used throughout this thesis. These terms have been important to clarify in order to better understand the arena for my thesis. This chapter has also stated that the main focus on this thesis is the second, educational, utility of student organizations, and that the student organizations included are mainly the student houses of each of the institutions of higher education.

Method

This chapter will explain the methodological choices done while gathering data. A total of 12 interviews have been done with the directors of studies[3] and vice rectors[4] at all Norwegian universities.

In addition to the interviews, information has been gathered from various student organizations in Norway and from official state documents. These sources of data make up the empirical base of this thesis.

Choice of methods

This thesis sets out on trying to define possible role student activities and student organizations could have in future universities. It does not include the question of how such activities enhances or weakens the academic level of the students involved, as this issue has been documented by American research even as far back as the late 1920-ies (Mehus, 1928)(Mehus, 1932). Rather than looking for any academic benefit, I aim at showing how these activities could be better integrated by universities as knowledge transfer from the viewpoint of more business and non-academic benefit like innovation and leadership training. To do this, two questions are important to examine. First, what are student organizations, and their educational potential for active students? Secondly, how does the state and universities view this segment and what roles do they currently see student organizations as holding.

[3] "Studiedirektør" or "Undervisningsdirektør" in Norwegian.
[4] "Viserektor" or "prorektor" in Norwegian.

The first question will be examined through a presentation on the size and structure of student organizations. This presentation is based on data gathered from relevant organizations, and my experience within the arena will add depth and nuance.

The second question has minimal previous empirical sources. Size and structure can be described by documents, but attitudes and mentalities must be retrieved from people. The second question will therefore be examined partly through official documents and partly by interviews with university leadership. Because it is necessary to understand the present in order to se a potential path for the future, the main unique source of data in this thesis is therefore collected through these interviews.

Combined, this data will hopefully give an impression on what student organizations are, what they do, how they work and in what way they presently is being used and regarded by the state and universities. Analysis of the results from data collected will then provide a way to examine a possible future role for the second utility within the triple helix theory.

Interviews

An important factor for my choice of personal interviews was the possibility of a more intimate and personal setting where I could have a genuine discussion around a few pre-determined questions. It was important to pose open questions at the beginning of the interviews to have the informants themselves explain what they included in the term "student activities", and to progress slowly towards an understanding of the second utility. This would also help expose the lack of understanding if the informants in the first more open questions showed a tendency to focus on the student activities and leadership of other activities rather than those in student cultural houses. The intention of the interviews was to establish a relationship of trust towards the informants and for me to be seen as objective and understanding, but at the same time knowledgeable and challenging if needed. This enables a candid discussion where the subjects speak not only from the university playbook, but also of own opinions (Thagard, 2003). With these considerations in mind, a qualitative method seemed best suited.

There is, as earlier mentioned, not much research available regarding student organizations and student leadership[5]. There is even less research on the university leaderships specific visions for the present and future role of such work and the second utility. The interviews done have provided a picture of what is currently the mentality and focus of universities towards student leadership and the universities' usage of the knowledge gained by these individuals. The understanding of these factors can best be achieved through the usage of a qualitative method (Thagard, 2003). Qualitative interviews allow for open questions to be asked, and for the informant so talk freely on the facets important and relevant to them. During the interviews, I was able to add new questions and do follow-ups on existing answers based on information presented by the informants (Thagard, 2003). Even though all interviews followed the same procedure and standard questions, they all developed differently.

The aim of this thesis is to find possible roles for student organizations in future universities, in order to better utilize the second utility, and an important step of getting to the future is to reflect on the present. The qualitative interviews made visible the present role defined by the universities themselves.

[5] With the honest exception of the recent report by Bragen, Nilsen, Thomassen, Tryggset, & Østli on extra-curricular participation of students at the SV-faculty at the University of Oslo.

CHOICE OF INFORMANTS

To get the best possible insight of the universities' attitudes, I chose to interview individuals in the university leaderships. I wanted to know how student organizations are viewed from both the position of curricular leadership, those who direct and promote the different courses, and from the rectorship, which set the general direction and focus of the universities. The reason for my preference towards the universities' higher-ups is quite simply that they, in contrast to student or faculty leaders, are in a position where they are able to see, direct focus and influence the whole picture and not only their own organization or faculty. I needed to understand if their view on the totality of the university domain of knowledge included the arena of student organizations and leadership. And in what way and with what focus it was included?

To achieve this I have interviewed the director of studies and one of the vice rectors (there are normally two) at all seven universities in Norway. These individuals were chosen by me based on the notion that when the pool of selection is small, a selection based on the researchers own judgement often yields better results than if the selection was based on chance (Hellevik, 2002). Most of the interviews have been done face to face, but interviews with the vice rector of the University of Bergen and informants from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim and the University of Tromsø have for various reasons been done by e-mail. Unfortunately, only one at NTNU and one at UiT answered my questions, and therefore these institutions are represented by only one voice. The interviews done by e-mail have not received all the previously mentioned benefits from a qualitative method, but are nevertheless valid statements from their institutions. Those asked were all helpful and positive towards the interviews. The biggest problem has been the agony of not knowing when the interviews done by e-mail would return.

CHOICE OF QUESTIONS

The interviews consisted of 10 pre-determined questions. All were open for different answers and directions during the course of the interviews. All questions were "open" questions, meaning that I asked a direct question and let the informant formulate an answer without providing any alternatives (Hellevik, 2002). Some questions were more specific than others, asking for direct answers about funds and courses, while other questions were non-specific, asking for the informants view on types of knowledge and importance of this knowledge. The questions started as wide as possible, but were intentionally narrowed in during the progress of the interview[6]. In an effort to see if the conversation during the interview had sparked new associations of the role of student organizations, the first and last question was almost identical.

Open questions were also chosen because I needed to introduce the first and second utility as terms. Without the possibility of a dialogue back and forth, the content and meaning of these terms could face risk of being misunderstood or misinterpreted.

I found no reason to create questions with alternatives or scale-based answers (Hellevik, 2002), as this would not give answers with depth and nuance. If asked simply if student organizations is good or to place the answer on a scale from 1 to 5, I suspected a "yes" or 5 from each subject. In addition, scale-based questions would run the risk that a 3 in one informants answer would be equal to a 5 in the answer of another.

The interviews were done in May and August of 2008 at the offices of the informants. None lasted for more than 50 minutes and all were recorded on my laptop.

[6] A complete list of questions asked is provided as an addendum to this thesis.

I later transcribed all interviews. This was done by verbatim transcription of the answers, and a personalised system of references of my questions (e.g. I used "q1" instead of actually writing down myself asking the informant question 1). I also noticed a pattern of regular follow-ups and introductions by myself and gave these different follow-ups unique names to refer to them in the transcription.

ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative studies is the process through which data are transformed into findings (Patton, 2002). The data collected during the interviews was analysed based on the goal of uncovering the present attitude of universities in Norway towards student organizations and their potential of knowledge production. One characteristic of qualitative research is the often-simultaneous occurrence of collection and analysis of data (Patton, 2002). During interviews I made continuous analysis of the answers given and used this data both in forming new questions and later on in shaping my analysis of the interviews as a whole.

When analysing the data collected by these interviews I mainly used an ad-hoc method (Kvale, 2001). The ad-hoc method does not use any pre-determined method for analysis, but allows for the researcher to form a holistic impression of the transcribes interviews and thereby make certain interpretations of individual statement, make quantitative assessments on different answers towards a certain attitude or place parts of the interviews in a narrative context. These methods to uncover meaning and attitudes can, especially when the interviews on a first read seems without a general structure, help bring forth similarities, structures and data meaningful to the research (Kvale, 2001). As my interviews provided no similar structure other than the standard questions, this method of holistic analysis provided a way to create a general overview over the attitudes of universities based on interpreting and cross-referencing specific sections of the different interviews.

I focused mainly on how (and when) the informants, either implicitly or explicitly, mentioned or discussed the two utilities. Focus was also on what they associated with student organizations. The interviews were transcribed and the different answers (and types of discussions that followed each question) were crosschecked with each other to get an overview on the general attitude towards each question. This was done in order to find broader lines instead of detailed clues.

Within this analysis I also made a point out of determining if the informants, when presented with the thought of student organizations as part of the traditional knowledge transfer of the universities, regarded it as farfetched and with scepticism or as natural and unexplored. This was done in an effort to see if whether the second utility was already present within the attitudes of the informants and either rejected or accepted, or if the thought it was yet to be placed under scrutiny.

WEAKNESSES AND POSSIBLE THREATS

A possible weakness of this choice of informants is that they are too well trained in the talking points of their institution to get a real discussion, and the interview boils down to a PowerPoint-like presentation. This threat was recognizable at the start of some of the interviews, but when asked follow-ups and being confronted with the progression of the questions, talking points were put aside. Some may perhaps also see a possible weakness in that I didn’t interview those with direct responsibilities towards the arena of student organizations. This is a valid objection, but I will argue that the overwhelming majority of those have responsibilities directed only at the first utility and don not have the mandate or the strategic backing to focus on the second. And, as the aim of these interviews was to find the present mentality of the university leadership, the identified informants used should be the ones to give the most qualified answers.

Another threat to the interviews could be that the informant would answer what they thought I wanted to hear. During the interviews I did not get this impression, and as I interviewed adult people with high experience in their field and with good knowledge of the work of a researcher, I do not think this is a realistic threat for this thesis. What I do think could be a possible threat, is that my presence and my questioning, on the basis of my background, could have an effect on the answers given (Thagard, 2003). I do believe the informants were mostly affected to give broader answers and perhaps also to think of answers and angles they had yet to see themselves (Kvale, 2001), but the risk does nevertheless exist that some answers could be negatively coloured by my presence. My previous experience from the field of student organizations could also potentially make me overlook certain questions or clarifications, as I would take it for granted. It was therefore important that I didn't assume the informant shared my opinions, that I tried to watch out for attitudes taken for granted by myself and that I didn't interpret what the informant answered based on my own horizon (Thagard, 2003).

Lastly, the topic and form of the interviews creates a situation where, if one were to interview the same individuals once more with the same questions, the results would differ and the study would not be replicable. As I've tried to uncover the current disposition towards student organizations

INFORMED CONSENT

The informants were given a short introductory on the thesis by e-mail, and those who asked for it received their transcribed interview for approval. None of those asking for the transcription did any changes to it's content. As it is difficult in a qualitative interview to provide the informant with an accurate description on the possible content and progression of the interview, a form of informed consent is necessary to assure that the informant have knowledge of what they agree to (Thagard, 2003). All of my informants were given the introductory e-mail and they were all individuals in positions where I must assume that the content and principles of such interviews are known. They were also asked to agree on a recording of the interview, and none declined this. On this basis I conclude that all informants provided informed consent during the interviews.

Other sources of data

In addition to the interviews, this thesis collected data from several sources. In addition to these sources, my direct experience with student organizations have helped guide much of the choices made during data gathering and analysis.

This thesis is not only instigated trough my experience and knowledge of the arena of student activities and student organizations, but it is also inevitably coloured by it. I will, of course, do my best to treat the subject and questions with the objectivity and academic respect they deserve, but this is something the reader will have to be aware of.

My background from student organizations comes mainly from my three years at the University of Bergen, Norway. I've been active in the students movie club for one year, member of the graphical group at Det Akademiske Kvarter[7] (Kvarteret), the student cultural house, for half a year, leader of the graphical group for one and a half year and vice president and head of information at the main board for one year[8]. In addition to that, I am also the co-founder of a student organization organizing club nights at Kvarteret. This work started during the last of my 3 years in Bergen. The mentioned background puts me in the position of having worked both within the culture house and with an organizer at Det Akademiske Kvarter[9]. I have, as head of information, visited many other student societies and cultural houses and have participated in several organized meetings where delegates from most of the cultural houses in Norway were represented.

I have been an active participant in the field of student organizations and although I did not do any official or implicit research while working with these organizations, the knowledge I got lay the foundation for not only the choosing of this topic itself, but also for most of the questions asked in the interviews, the insight in how these organizations works and what kind of experience a person involved can achieve. It is therefore not only relevant in preparing interviews and questions, but it also gives depth and nuances to the structural presentation of student organizations and in analysing the results.

As no literature or earlier studies describing student organizations in Norway exist, I was forced to gather data from several relevant student organizations in Norway. In

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[7] "The Academic Quarter" in English.
[8] As mentioned in the next chapter in the definition of the term "employee", people often have roles in several levels of the organization. So did also I, and therefore the combined years at Kvarteret and Filmklubben is more than my stay in Bergen.
[9] As I will explain in the next chapter, those two sides are separated at Kvarteret

addition to the seven universities, several university-colleges also have their own student organizations. The organizations I collected data from were selected based on distinctions between student organizations made during the previous chapter. There is no compiled list of student organizations, but many of these are members of a subgroup within "Norsk Rockforbund[10]" called FAST[11].

FAST produces the most complete list of organizations within the parameters set fourth in the theory chapter and has, according to its membership list[12], 29 registered organizations. I was able to get adequate data from 15 of these organizations (including all of the universities except the University of Agder). Some data was collected from websites or available yearly rapports, while some data was unavailable via the Internet and was retrieved by sending a mail and asking for it. Where a mail was sent, it was sent to the leadership of the organization based on contact information either gathered through FAST or the site of the organization. Those organizations without adequate data didn't have information on their websites and was unreachable by mail.

To best paint a correct picture on the size and extent of these organizations, I focused on getting the following data:

1. Yearly turnover
2. Yearly number of unique events
3. Number of volunteers
4. Average hourly workweek for people with positions on the main board
5. Individuals on the main board

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[10] Norwegian Rock Associations
[11] Fagråd for Studentarrangører / Guiding Council of Student Organizers (crude translation)
[12] http://www.norskrockforbund.no/nor/pages/545-medlemsarrangoerer

6. If any academic follow-up or integration for those with leadership positions exist?

Points 1 to 3 focus on the size of the organizations, 4 & 5 focus on workload and leadership while point 6 focus on the existing interaction between university and organization. To be counted as providing adequate data, the organization had to at least give data on points 1, 3 and 5. This requirement was created so it would be possible to create a basic comparison between these organizations and real-life businesses.

In addition to the data gathered by these points, I also gathered information on the structure of some of the organizations. Organizational charts and other strategic documents available provided this information. My experience from Kvarteret did also provide insight into the structure of these organizations.

Data on the present use and mentality from the state was acquired through governmental rapports and policy decisions. I also tried to contact and talk to someone within the state, but was not able to find anyone with knowledge and responsibilities within this arena. In the case of the state, the data circled mostly around the exclusions of student organizations rather than actual facts on how it's included and utilized.

Summary

During this chapter I've provided backgrounds and explanations for my choice of methods for gathering data. The main methodological choice has been the qualitative interviews, but I've also discussed my other sources for data and presented my experience within the arena of student organizations as a source of nuance and depth.

These sources of data will in the next chapter lay the foundation for the description of student organizations both numerically and structurally. They will also provide the background on which the present attitude towards student organizations and the two utilities is analysed.

Results

There are a multitude of student organizations scattered throughout. As mentioned earlier, student organizations and the activities provided by them have always been a part of student life. This chapter is divided into two sections and will present the results of the interviews and the data gathering.

This first section will present student organizations, and show in numerical and descriptive ways their size and structure. The aim is to present the claim that they are comparable to a business, or SME. To reach a point where we can investigate a possible role within the triple helix theory, we need to understand what kind of knowledge these organizations produce and in what structure this knowledge is produced.

The second section will focus on the present use and role of student organizations in the Norwegian state and universities. In order to se the relevance in why this thesis choose to focus on the second utility of student organizations, it's important to see how student organizations at present is treated mainly as the first utility. From this understanding, we find relevance in discussing a better usage of the second utility.

Numerical & structural presentation of student organizations

The student houses in Norway are represented at almost every major institution of higher education, not only at the universities. But – size of the organization is, normally, proportional to the size of the institution and the numbers of students, and therefore the largest student houses are to be found with the traditional universities[13]. From this follows that the most business like environments will be found at the student houses of

[13] This thesis will in no manner imply that size is an indication of quality, but it is necessarily linked to the quantity of activities and events provided by the organization.

the universities. The student organisation of NHH[14] might be an exception given its size relative to the number of students at NHH.

Table 2 - Results of data gathering

Organization	**Turnover**	**Events**	**Workers**	**Leaders**	**Hours**
Det Akademiske Kvarter, Bergen	14 000 000	2 000	300	7	35
Studentersamfunnet, Bergen	600 000	80	50	8	10
Immaturus, Bergen	340 000	17	70	7	7
BORG, Bergen	200 000	80	11	4	15
NHHS, Bergen	12 700 000	50	1 250	7	50
Hulen, Bergen	5 328 112	140	120	9	14
Det Norske Studentersamfund, Oslo	26 000 000	700	250	8	8
Studentersamfundet i Trondhjem	26 000 000	600	1 300	8	30
Driv, Tromsø	16 000 000	550	120	20	20
Folken, Stavanger	13 900 000	594	200	8	9
Studentsamfunnet I Ås	4 282 286	124	986	7	21
Galleriet Studenthus, Harstad	1 000 000	25	40	7	2
Studentenes Hus Gjøvik	1 260 732		60	5	5
Brannvakta Studentersamfunn, Hamar	1 700 000	150	60	17	10
Kroa i Bø	3 500 000	127	125	9	6
Total (NOK)	**126 811 130**	**5 237**	**4 942**	**131**	**242**

Data was gathered from 15 different organizations throughout Norway and contains information on *yearly economic turnover*, *yearly number of events*, *number of volunteers (workers)*, *number of people with positions at the highest board levels (student leaders)* and an *estimate on number of hours worked weekly by the leaders* (Table 2).

[14] Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration - located in Bergen.

The estimations on hours are highly speculative and vary from organization to organization. There are several reasons for this; one is that the amount of work required to run the organization is proportional to the size of the organization (as the numbers show a big leap from the smaller houses to the bigger ones), and another reason is that the lines between official board work and just doing something for the organization or working at another level is quite fluent. My experience is that a board member often works many hours with board meetings and official tasks regarding their position at the board, but also do work not directly related to their board position and/or work for subgroups of which they are members. The nature of volunteer work also often creates an environment where you don't count what you do as actual work. If these variables were taken into account, I would assume that the total reported hours for some of the organizations would go up. It is also almost certain that I have either forgot or overlooked some student houses and organizations while gathering data. This is mainly because the sheer number of events, organizations and noteworthy happenings are staggering, and a centralized list of information does not exist. I apologise to those who feel left out.

This section will make comparisons between student organizations and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). According to the European Union, the category of SMEs is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million (The Commission of the European Communities, 2003) (table 3). When we take a look at these student organizations from a numerical vantage point, it's this category in which they reside.

Table 3 – Overview of the range of small and medium-sized enterprises

	Micro	**Small**	**Medium**
Turnover	< €2 000 000 (Ca. NOK 17 700 000)[15]	< €10 000 000 (Ca. NOK 88 500 000)	< €50 000 000 (Ca. NOK 443 800 000)
Employees	< 10	< 50	< 250

Student organizations most commonly take the form of foundations or organizations while a few are stock-based companies. Regardless of form, they all operate as a regular company within their boundaries. While I will present these organizations as comparable to regular companies within the SME category, they differ from most companies by having a non-profit and idealistic vision – similar to that of most NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations). NGOs are commonly used to describe organizations working to further the political or social goals of their members or funders. They only have to be independent from government control, not seeking to challenge governments either as a political party or by a narrow focus on human rights, non-profit-making and non-criminal (Willetts, 2002). Examples include improving the state of the natural environment, encouraging the observance of human rights, improving the welfare of the disadvantaged, or representing a corporate agenda. However, there are a huge number of such organizations and their goals cover a broad range of political, cultural and philosophical positions.

Student organizations could easily be included as an NGO as they are non-profit making, with an idealistic vision and are mostly run by volunteers. However, one of the main traits of an NGO is involvement in global politics and transnational issues (Willetts, 2002), while the main focus of student organizations is cultural activities for a

[15] Conversion made 18.02.09

small and localised segment. Additionally, the main activity of these student organizations is to sell tickets, food, drinks and other goods to students. This focus on consumable products is in stark contrast to most NGOs.

Whether or not the organizational form and intention come close to that of an NGO, student organizations still reside within the boundaries of an SME. Many NGOs are multi-million dollar organizations and are themselves definable within SMEs. Therefore, status as an NGO does not exclude status as an SME. While the organizational intentions of student organizations might be closer to NGOs than SMEs, they are managed and structured as regular companies and share the numerical traits of an SME (as does many NGOs).

Because of this, this thesis will use the confinements of SMEs to describe the numerical and structural aspects of student organizations.

SIZE AS A SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISE

This section will show the size in economic turnover and employees (volunteers). The figures would be even higher if data from more organizations were available. And even higher if some future research would be able to include all cultural student organizations in Norway.

The student cultural houses and student organizations of Norway included in this thesis have yearly turnovers ranging from 200 000 NOK to 26 000 000 NOK, which ads up to a combined yearly turnover of ca. 125 000 000 NOK. Two of the organizations report a turnover in the “small business” category (between 2 and 10 million euro) and the rest report turnovers in the category of “micro business”. This combined turnover places the niche of student organizations in the same category as e.g. Norwegian video game developers (NOU 14, 2008)[16]. These numbers does not include the turnover of the major student festivals often arranged by or together with these organizations. These festivals often contribute positively to the organizations' budget[17].

There is an argument to be made against the use of the word "employees" to describe the students volunteering in different positions in these organizations. They do not, most of them, work full time within the organization and none are paid. There are, though, work contracts signed at most of the organizations between the student and the organization, and they do receive "payment" often in form of reduced prices and other internal "offerings". This thesis will nevertheless use the word "employee", meaning the people active within the organizations on a voluntary basis (or as described above: employees, middle managers and student leaders). The figures from the different organizations do again vary according to size of their institution. The organizations have employee numbers varying from 11 to 1300, and it adds up to a total of 4942 employees. 4 of the organizations have employee numbers exceeding that defined as a "medium-sized" firm (250 or more), 9 have numbers placing them in the category of "medium-sized business" (between 50 and 250), and the rest are placed in the category of "small business" (between 10 and 50). None have a number of employees that falls under the category of "micro business" (10 or less). Again, the definition of what constitutes an employee in traditional business might be slightly different than what is experienced in this arena, but they are nevertheless bound by a contract to do a certain amount of volunteer work for the organization. Therefore the use of these figures is relevant as a gauge of the number of active people in these organizations. The fact that many of these organizations show employment figures putting them in a business

[16] That recently got a governmental rapport.
[17] E.g. in the case of Uka in Trondheim, it makes a deficit possible in the main organization.

category beyond category based on economic turnover can be explained by the work hours of the individual employee. Only a very few individuals put down enough hours to make it the equivalent of a full time job, and the rest works between 5 and 20 hours a week. This makes these organizations dependent on more employees to do the same work as businesses placed in the same category regarding turnover.

OTHER FIGURES

Besides the financial figures and total numbers of employees to place the organizations within the frame of SMEs, information were also gathered on board positions, number of working hours for those with board positions and number of activities/events arranged by the organizations.

The number of persons with positions at the top board level varied from 5 to 20, with 7 as the most common number. These people work from 2 to 50 hours a week with responsibilities directly attached to their positions with the board. The average figure is 16, and with the bigger organizations the number of hours are close to and sometimes also exceed the hours counted as a full week at work (37,5 hours). This, in addition to the 29,5 hours the average students puts in on his/her studies (Michelsen & Aamodt, 2007) shows that student leaders often work much more than the normal 37,5 hours counted as a full working week. In addition many of these individuals also have paid work to finance their living expenses during their time as students. As stated before these figures are almost impossible to get exact, as the board duties vary with the size and structure of the organization. I will, from experience, assume that the number of actual hours worked within the organization is higher than reported for most of the leaders, because as noted above, they often don't count a number of work related activities as work.

The event figures aims to show the number of activities provided by these organizations. It can be everything from concerts in all genres, debates, theatre, movies, clubbing, political meetings, other open meeting activities and several other kinds of small activities.

The organizations have between 17 to 2 000 yearly events. The combined total yearly activities and events provided by these organizations are 5 237, or 21 each day if we subtract 17 weeks for vacation and other periods of inactivity. There are undoubtedly many more, as the myriad of smaller organizations not represented in this thesis are substantial. It's worth noting that these activities in most cases are not exclusively for students, but are available to the public as a whole.

These figures represent the number of activities either arranged by the organization or arranged within the localities provided by the organization. The houses are structured in many different ways, and some organize all activities within the organization of the student house, others provide the housing in which other organizations can have their activities and events as well.

THE VERY CRUDE WAGE THOUGHT-EXPERIMENT

As purely a thought experiment, let's try to calculate what the combined hours put down by these employees would be worth in a paid job. What would society otherwise have to pay to get theses services available?

I 'm no economist and the numbers I base my calculations on are highly speculative and generic, but I do believe it will give a rough estimation on the monetary worth of these organizations' work force.

I make the assumption that all 4942 employees mentioned earlier work 10 hours each week for 35 weeks. 10 hours each week is chosen because the minimum required weekly hours for volunteers at e.g. Kvarteret in Bergen is 4 hours and while some work only to this minimum, most work more than that and many work a good amount over 10 hours per week. Therefore I believe that 10 hours is a reasonable estimate on the weekly work done by the average employee of these organizations. Again, I calculate with 35 week of activity because 17 weeks can be subtracted for vacations and periods of inactivity.

This gives us a total yearly workload of 350 hours for each volunteer. When these 350 individual hours is multiplied with the 4942 employees of these organizations, we end up with a total of 1 729 700 hours each year of work made by employees of the student organizations included in this thesis.

To convert this in to real money, we need a realistic hourly wage. This is complicated as there are many forms of jobs done, and if we should transpose them to their equivalent positions in professional work, we would have a multitude of different wages. The foot workers would perhaps be given the minimum wage; the middle managers would be given the nations average salary, and the leaders would be given leadership wages. This would, of course, be hard or almost impossible to achieve in the scope of this thesis, so I will use one fixed hourly wage that I apply to all employees.

Finding one fixed rate is at best a shot in the dark, but I will in this experiment make use of the wage tables NHO provides in their "Statistics of functionaries" of 2007. The number I will use is that of the average monthly salary of employees between the age of 20 and 24 working in ordinary shops. The average monthly wage in this niche is 21 677 NOK (NHO, 2007). If we assume that the average work month consists of 22 workdays and that each workday is 7,5 hours long (37,5 weekly hours divided by 5 working days each week), we end up with 165 working hours a month with an hourly wage of 131 NOK.

When multiplying the hourly wage of 131 NOK to the yearly number of hours worked, 1 729 700, we end up with a total of 226 590 700 NOK, almost a quarter of a billion NOK, in total yearly wages and a yearly wage of 45 850 for each employee. I believe I have used conservative numbers when calculating this experiment, and I'm certain that the real monetary value is beyond what this experiment provide.

This is, however, not an argument for paying the people involved in this kind of work, but rather an example to provide an understanding of the magnitude of the work done for free by these student organizations. And it will perhaps also help in establishing these student houses as serious businesses with real figures.

After having given figures and adding them up to present the niche of student houses as a whole, I will now give a brief presentation on the structure of one of the actors; Det Akademiske Kvarter (Kvarteret) in Bergen. This is not a case study, but serve as a description on how one of these organizations is structured. Almost every student house has its own unique structure and ways of organizing its day-to-day activities and financial responsibilities. Still, they work in quite similar ways and even though this part will focus on Kvarteret, as that is where I have my experience, many nuances will be easily recognized by parts of the other student houses. This presentation is given in an attempt to show the structural similarities between student houses and ordinary, professional businesses. It's based mainly on strategic documents from Kvarteret and my own experience.

KVARTERET

Kvarteret was established in 1994, and is therefore one of the youngest student houses associated with a Norwegian university. It 's run by an estimate of 300 volunteer employees, one paid civil national worker, two full time paid employees and a handful of people hired part-time as responsible for the house during the day (often recruited from the volunteer staff). The two full time employees are the head chef and the administrative leader. The full time employees and the part-time employees are hired and managed by the board of SKiBAS (Studentenes Kulturhus i Bergen AS), which is the joint stock company that owns Kvarteret. SKiBAS is comprised of representatives from the university of Bergen (UiB), the Student Welfare Organisation in Bergen (SiB) and Kvarteret. They each own one share of a total of three shares, but while UiB and SiB have one representative each, Kvarteret has three. This is to ensure that students have the formal control of Kvarteret. KVAST (the elected board of Kvarteret) choose, in addition to its leader, two individuals to represent Kvarteret in SKiBAS.

BOARD

KVAST is Kvarterets highest political body and consists of 7 members responsible for the daily administration of the organization and its budget. Kvarterets' General Assembly, held once each semester, elects the members of KVAST. The General Assembly is open for all, but the right of vote is given to all of Kvarterets members. The members of Kvarteret are every student from institutions in Bergen associated with SiB and who has paid the SiB-fee. The general assembly is organized by Kvarterets board of representatives, who are a collection of people that's either elected by the general meeting or chosen by organizations and institutions associated with Kvarteret. The board of representatives is consulted on changes in the organization and is the last instance of appeal on decisions made by KVAST.

Besides the leader, KVAST has positions with responsibilities ranging from economy to external and internal relations, marketing, café, pub and projects. These areas of responsibility, as in professional companies, mirror the different departments in the organization.

DEPARTMENTS AND WORKING GROUPS

There are departments for marketing & communication, IT, security, personnel, photography, sound and lights, law, interiors and separate departments for of the bars (at the moment: one wine bar, one café with food servings and one pub).

Each of these departments is made up of employees bound by contract to work at least four hours a week. An elected department board of middle managers consisting of a leader, one responsible for the economy and one responsible for personnel lead the departments. Board positions other than these are created to suit relevant needs in the department. These middle managers are in direct contact with KVAST through the board member responsible for their department and through regular department meetings.

The departments are usually divided into smaller working groups (e.g. the marketing & promotion department includes sub-departments like the graphical group, marketing group, web group and newspaper group), and these working groups all have their own group leader. Regular meetings are held with the department board and the leaders of the working groups.

The employees of these departments are the backbone of the organization and responsible for the day-to-day work that assures the daily activities and offerings a student house is expected to provide.

ORGANIZERS

Most student houses have departments that organize, book and arrange the cultural activities taking place in the premises available to the organization. These departments are often some of the biggest and most important department at the student house. Kvarteret has a slightly different approach to this duty as a cultural arena for students and is not allowed to arrange cultural events of its own, but rather acts as an umbrella organization for other actors' events and activities. Kvarteret act as a housekeeper, and all registered student organizations in Bergen have the right to book rooms for their events free of charge. To ensure a permanent and good quality cultural level of activity, five organizations have committed themselves as permanent organizers of debates, theatre, movies and concerts. These five are autonomous organizations only associated with Kvarteret due to their commitment and use of its venues. As mentioned previously, this is an area that most other student houses does in-house, and this is neither a better nor a worse structural solution that the one applied by Kvarteret.

The structure of Kvarteret (which can be echoed in other student houses) is similar to most companies in the "professional"[18] world, but the fact that it's run and organized by volunteer students does not make it "unprofessional". The money is real, the guests are real, the products are real and the work is real.

COMPARISON

A non-profit agenda does not exclude an organization as a serious business. Both in numerical and structural sense student houses are highly comparable to ordinary and traditional companies under the standard SME definition, and the experience gained by those involved is comparable to that gained through ordinary professional work.

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[18] I surround the word professional with quotation marks because it's become distorted and used wrong. The word itself does not actually reflect quality, but rather the paid or unpaid status of its actors. An amateur can be just as good (or better) in his/her work, but is not paid to do it as regular work, like the professional is.

When we in addition take into account Etzkowitzs usage of research communities at universities as quasi-firms within the triple helix (Etzkowitz, 2003), it's not only plausible, but also correct, to place the organization of student houses under the same definition. Student organizations are therefore, at their worst, quasi-firms relevant inside the triple helix model, but in most cases comparable to real and serious businesses under the umbrella of SMEs.

This gives credence to the claim that student organizations, among other things, provide practical work-experience and work knowledge on several levels: knowledge highly sought by the industry, but rarely provided by traditional curriculum. This claim will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The present role of student organizations

After the presentation on what student organizations entail and how they are structured, we will now focus on presenting how this arena is used and regarded in present society. In this discussion I'll focus on its usage by the state and the university. In an attempt to present the state's usage, or lack of such, I will point out several areas of interest where student organizations, and especially the second utility, have been left out. To show the current mentality of the universities, this chapter will present the data collected during the interviews described in chapter two. The aim of this section is to show how the second utility of student organizations is under-prioritized and scarcely included in the universities search for relevant knowledge.

STATE

While doing research for this thesis, I tried getting an interview with someone within the state, but quickly realized there was no one to speak to. It could have fallen under three different departments, but it looks like it's fallen in between all three. At the

Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs, they deal exclusively with the first utility (although many festivals and cultural venues are driven by people with background in the second). The woman I spoke to at the Ministry of Education and Research had student welfare as her area of responsibility, but she did not seem to include student organizations and their activities as part of that responsibility. And - the Ministry of Trade and Industry could have some focus on the business side of student life, but enquires into published material does not give any indication of this.

The common denominator for the present attitude of the state toward the second utility of student organizations seems to be that it is overlooked. It's not mentioned in any strategic documents available, and the only reference to student organizations I could find was a point in the political program for the political party Venstre in Bergen (Hordaland Venstre, 2007). It simply stated that Venstre actively supported backing of student culture in the city of Bergen.

The three mentioned ministries all have released, or are about to release governmental rapports on topics that absolutely could have include the first and/or second utility. The Ministry of Trade and Industry is working on their rapport on innovation. Though not yet released, it will probably include chapters regarding the importance of higher education in innovation, but similar rapports released in the past does not give an impression of knowledge of the effect and value of the second utility. The Ministry of Education and Research did recently release the rapport on new structures in higher education from "Stjernø-utvalget"(NOU 03, 2008). While regarding structures and arenas for future higher education and research, it did not mention student organization as part of any plan or strategy. It did, however, include a chapter (21) on a knowledge-based future education- and research policy where the inclusion of the second utility in the proposed research would be beneficiary.

But - a real indication on the present mentality of the state towards student organizations, both in form of the first and the second utility, are displayed in the Ministry of Culture and Church Activities recent rapport on volunteerism.

Norway has a strong mentality for volunteerism, and it's been the subject of two governmental rapports: one in 1988 (NOU 17, 1988) and one as recent as 2007 (NOU 39, 2007). One could believe that a segment as important to both those involved in student organizations, their institutions and their local communities as the voluntary work done by thousands of students in student organizations would be mentioned in such a rapport. I've heard the minister of Culture and Church Affairs, Trond Giske (AP), speaking at the Student Society in Trondheim calling it a "castle of volunteerism", but when his ministry released the 2007 rapport on voluntarism in Norway, it was barely mentioned once: as a part of concert organizers under the umbrella of Norsk Rockforbund. By reading the rapport, you could easily get the impression that the student arena is not driven by volunteer work or that it only consists of rock concerts. It seems like the Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs jumped from adults organizing activities for children to organizations of adults assisting other adults. The arena of student organizations, a huge segment, is passed by in silence.

The point I'm trying to make here is not that student organizations should have a prominent and defining role in either of these rapports. They are not the primary focus of any of them, but in omitting the second utility they miss out on a possible useful dimension in forming better policies in the field of innovation, culture and education.

Why is this? One possible explanation is that our understanding and use of the almost mythic term "the full time student" only include time used for traditional studying and not that beyond curriculum. A full-time student is commonly defined as someone studying a full workday without having to do additional paid work to finance his/her studies. As long as the state define students as an entity placed inside a work-like frame, they do not have any incentives for including activities outside this frame. Does it benefit the student and the arenas of knowledge external to traditional academic frames that student life is defined as something similar to work? Or does the state only see student activities as the first utility and therefore places responsibility with the universities and other special interest groups? If the present mentality of usage from the state is that of unintentional neglect, what role does student organizations have at the universities?

UNIVERSITIES

In searching for the role student organizations have vis-à-vis the first and second utility at present day universities, I chose, as described in the chapter on method, to conduct interviews with two representatives from the leadership of all 7 universities in Norway. Of 14 possible interviews (whereof 5 by e-mail), only 2 requests by e-mail were not returned. This adds up to a total of 12 conducted interviews: 3 by e-mail and 9 in person.

I will not go through the interviews person-by-person or institution-by-institution, as the aim for the interviews was not one of comparison, but one of viewpoints. I wanted to get a view of the present mentality towards this segment from the university leadership. Therefore the questions were not about specifics or fact on student organizations, but rather general questions that could show if and/or how the second utility was present in their thinking of student activities.

On one specific issue the universities split into two groups, and I will comment on this outside the analysis of the interview. Only three of seven universities provide special courses or credits[19] for those holding leadership positions in student organizations. None of the other institutions of higher educations offers any such options. While gathering data from the various student organizations, I checked if they received any formal training or help from the universities. Three out of fifteen organizations had such formal connections to their institutions. This corresponds with the institutions that provide credit-giving courses to those involved in the upper echelons of student organizations. This was also mirrored in statements made by those interviewed at these institutions. Two of these three also referred to existing or pending strategies on student activities at their universities.

I will not identify individuals or their institutions in the following analysis because I'm more interested in the general opinion of universities as a whole than differences in institutions. The previous paragraph, though, shows that the arena of both the first and second utility is being treated on an individual institutional basis and lacking a common national policy.

INTERVIEWS

This section will point out the different role of the first and second utility at present universities. The main finding of the interviews is that it's a big difference in the type of recognition given to the two utilities. While most of them acknowledged the value of both utilities, the first utility is expressed and given an active role in explicit use toward students while the second utility in most cases stays passive as an implicit value not communicated properly as part of any strategy.

An indication of this mentality was expressed when asked if they could define the current role and utility of student organizations. Only 4 of 12 named the second

[19] Studiepoeng

utility as part of their answer, 2 described it as a utility after being pushed by me, and half of the informants, 6 persons, did not name the second utility at all as a current role of student organizations. The common denominator of all informants was their immediate focus on the first utility. This is illustrated by the following answer (and mirrored in many others):

> “It plays a significant role in making sure the students have a good life at the university. This is why we have created a strategy for student life. Because we believe that it’s important that the students are happy with the life they live while studying. And thereby acquire knowledge. Students that aren’t happy do not acquire knowledge.
>
> It has a utility for the university in the way that we can promote a good student life as an argument for choosing us. We make use of it in our marketing, and that’s direct utility.”

During the interviews I also noticed a general attitude of association of the second utility towards student politicians. A typical answer to how participation and leadership positions in student organizations were integrated or followed up by the university (if in any way) was a description of the board positions demanded by law to be filled by student representatives. Apart from those with credit-giving courses for leaders of student organizations any kind integration or follow-ups for leaders of student organizations was either absent or associated with political positions. Only one university reported including student leaders in forums exceeding the demanded board positions via bi-weekly meetings with student leaders from both student political and student organizational spheres. They also reported this to have a positive effect on the development of the university.

While every individual I conducted an interview with or received answer from by e-mail, regardless of institution or position, pointed out almost identical types of knowledge gained, and that these types of knowledge was important and valuable both to universities as an institution and especially to the industry, they also agreed that it is rarely used or provided by universities. As one informant put it:

> "It's a multi-faceted knowledge. It's project knowledge, general leadership knowledge, and communication knowledge. It develops team-working skills, it promotes the skills of cooperation, and it promotes the creation of ideas and entrepreneurial skills: the whole spectre of skills needed by an employer in almost every organization. It also gives added value to the student in terms of an understanding of the topics they study. I believe it [working in student organizations] enhances a transferrable value related to their studies. They can train their competence as leaders in other areas [than their chosen studies], but this is competence has also a great transferrable value related to the topics and curriculum the student is a part of."

One informant also pointed out the possibility for student leaders to develop "both respect for leaders in society and less fear of the role as a leader". This demystification of leadership is, in my opinion, one of the most important traits provided by student organizations. This trait is one definitely not available in the curriculum at universities.

Almost everyone mentioned entrepreneur courses as an arena where these types of knowledge could be found, but whether these courses can provide practical work experience both for normal employees, middle managers and leaders outside of an academic setting I'm able to assess. In any case, only one course with relevant leadership and business training is perhaps too little to bridge the gap between industry and academy in terms of education.

It was also observed that the knowledge gained from student organizations were "more practical than theoretical", and it was therefore not available at the university in "this form". One informant, when mentioning courses giving practical knowledge, noted that these courses

> "... could give some of that knowledge student organizations can give, but it will never be the same. We cannot provide the knowledge you get by accepting a leadership position. We can't give that through education."

So, while there is a broad consensus to the educational value of student organizations, there is a difference in focus on the first and second utility, with the first getting most immediate explicit attention. Most of the informants points to speeches given either by themselves or the rector where some paragraph or section emphasise the value of the student organizations and the benefits of joining one as a student. However, this is often to a limited crowd, and the extent in which the second utility is promoted is vastly inferior to that of the first. Making an effort to personally promote student organization to those they meet in certain settings can hardly be described as a strong strategy. As one of the informants said:

> "Our rector held a speech on Tuesday for several thousand new students, and he talked pretty much about how student life isn't just courses and he also talked a lot about voluntary activities and appealed strongly that they should try to participate."

This is all well and good, and happens at every institution of higher education at the start of each semester. It does, however, mainly apply to the first utility of student activities as the second utility is only implicitly stated. The second is recognized and applauded, but we see a difference in implicit and explicit recognition. This is echoed in student guides and promotion material provided by universities. All include sections on student life and how important student activities are at the university and how much the institution can offer in terms of activities outside of lectures. None, however, mentions the possible educational benefits one can gain by being involved in these organizations.

After going through all 10 questions, most of the informants recognized the gap between their own recognition of the value of the second utility and the actual promotion of it towards new and yet-to-be students. This is especially sad when also taking into account, as one informant noted, the fact that "these are the people we meet again in leading positions in both the cultural life and other businesses", and that this kind of knowledge is highly valued by the industry. As one informant put it:

> "To signal to the students that they can acquire much competence by accepting these positions is something we don't do well enough. I have to think more about that. That we could emphasise more, not only that life around the studies is important, but also that it revolves around expanding your academic development or give perspectives not available in any other way. We could surely do this better, and we try to some extent, but we could surely do better."

Summary

This chapter has shown the numerical and descriptive nature of the cultural student house of Norway. It has shown that these organizations differ neither in numbers nor in structure from traditional SMEs, and that the potential for knowledge and experience therefore is similar to that in professional work-life.

The chapter has also shown how the two utilities see big differences in terms of type of recognition and focus. It has argued that the official role of student organizations by the state is perhaps unintentional that of void, and its current role at the universities is that of the first utility.

The neglect of the second utility when considering its potential is unfortunate, and the next chapter will analyse and propose how the knowledge of the second utility can be better utilized by universities.

Analysis

We have now discussed what student organizations are and how they work. We have also looked at the present usage of this the second utility, and what role these organizations currently play for the Norwegian state and universities. This chapter will reflect on the possible knowledge and experience available to those involved at different levels of student organizations. I will argue that a good way of developing the knowledge of the second utility is to define this part of student activities as a knowledge incubator. I will further develop and use the theory of the triple helix to make room for students involved in student organizations and for the organizations themselves to be natural parts of the third mission of universities.

Possible knowledge and experience

Mark Twain noted, over a century ago, "I never let my schooling interfere with my education". And this observation is still valid today when we read articles like the one in "Dagens Næringsliv" on the 5th of September 2008, stating that employers count extracurricular experience and engagement as a highly important factor in recruitment(Kaspersen, 2008). It is also strengthened by the argument that work experience during studies can improve the post-study transition to employment (D'Amico, 1984), and made even more relevant with the report from Spekter stating that newly educated job seekers were not well prepared for the demands of in professional life (Spekter, 2008). The OECD also criticizes Norway for having a higher education that too seldom focuses on covering the need of the industry (OECD, 2006).

With this, and the previous chapter in mind, I will try to paint a picture of the kind of experience and knowledge that is gained by those involved in these organizations. There is no Norwegian literature on this topic, only some general studies made in America. Most of them do not directly discuss student organizations, but the findings are transferrable to the arena of student organizations. Hopefully, a future study will delve into this question on a much more scientific and detailed way, but this thesis relies on the American studies, the experience generally associated with work life and my own background to paint a broad and general picture on the potential knowledge available in the different levels of student organizations.

According to American surveys recruiters consistently rank interpersonal and/or leadership skills at the very top of their lists. Work with student organizations has long held appeal as an element in a well-rounded education and a place where such skills could be easily utilized, developed and refined (Eberhardt, McGee, & Moser, 1997). These skills are available on all levels of a student organization, especially in big organizations like student houses, and studies shows that participation in student organizations is related to the demonstration of interpersonal skills and stronger communication, initiative, decision-making and teamwork skills (Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002). Student organizations also have the added value of being an academic workplace where people from all kinds of academic fields interact and discuss throughout the hours of the day. In my personal experience, I discussed academic topics and issues more frequent during my time at Kvarteret than during lectures or colloquies. In addition to the immediate individual benefit of being able to discuss school assignments at any time and with several people with a multitude of academic angles, this also work as an arena where the university and its different courses gets promotion and recruitment. Those burdened by shyness during lectures feel more at ease in asking questions on this arena. Student organizations work as an active and informal channel of information on e.g. what courses and directions students should take next semester.

In addition to the possible knowledge within administration and day-to-day work discussed below, we also have to take into account the specialized knowledge gained by those involved in organizing cultural activities. This mainly takes the form of movies, debates, theatre and concerts of various kinds. Those involved in this part of student organizations gain not only specialized administrative and organizational skills, but also often a big network within this cultural arena. Many of these go on to have professional positions within the same cultural arenas and therefore serves as a direct example of knowledge transfer between student organizations and industry[20].

EMPLOYEES

The work experience gained by employees in student organizations are comparable to that gained by doing paid work in shops or other positions students usually choose for financing their student budget. For some, like technicians, designers, programmers and so on it may be even more relevant than doing paid work at the local supermarket. This is so because they have the opportunity of working in departments directly relevant to their studies or interests, while at the same time getting real experience and responsibilities not usually given to students with little work experience. At a minimum they have the opportunity of gaining the normal skills and knowledge usually acquired during work (regardless of its paid status). For those reaching slightly beyond the ordinary work as an employee, positions as group leader will also provide some personnel and leadership skills and knowledge and understanding on the workings

[20] A study on e.g. the number of people in Norwegian cultural festivals with background from student organizations would be highly interesting. I would assume, without any empirical backing, that many music festivals would perish if not for the recruitment of paid and volunteer workforce from student organizations.

(structural, democratic and bureaucratic) of a SME. This kind of knowledge and experience is usually not available behind the counter of 7-11.

MIDDLE MANAGERS

Middle managers usually come from the position as ordinary employee, and accept the nomination to a department board. This willingness to take responsibility is an experience and a skill on its own, and studies show that individuals with high potential often seek out new challenges and responsibilities (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000). Not all who take on a position as middle manager are good at it. The possibility of practising through student organizations can help in filtering out those not suited for leadership roles and also help identify those who are suited (Gundersen, 2008). Middle managers have the potential of gaining direct personnel, economical, strategic and leadership skills. They learn how to arrange meetings, create and upholding a budget, maintain a level of productivity within the department and they also learn to navigate a bureaucratic structure and communicate with other middle manager and the organizations leaders.

LEADERS

Those in leadership positions gain a high level of knowledge, experience and skills. These are students with perhaps 2-4 years of higher education, who are given responsibilities for a big work force, a budget of some millions NOK and an organization with often long and important standing in the community. They do seldom inhabit the pre-required skills usually associated with this level of responsibility, and the learning curve is steep. Especially as student organizations change its leaders routinely and is notorious for not having good mechanisms for knowledge transfer. They get the same potential of gain, though on a higher level, as middle managers. They are often responsible for the full time employees and need to have a professional take on their role as an employer and the laws and regulations that follows. They are also responsible for official cooperation with partners, sponsors, suppliers, media, local government and the academic institutions. As in every other business the leaders need to develop their skills in diplomacy to solve many obstacles, and this is especially true in student organizations with a high flow of new and old employees. The need to attain and absorb new skills and knowledge is substantial, and not all leaders are able to do an adequate job. Some authors suggest that learning new skills and learning from experience may be the key predictors of high-potential managers, and that such new learning also happen outside the formal arenas of the university (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000). Other authors also find a correlation between holding leadership positions in student organizations and an increasing interpersonal skill level vis-à-vis those without leadership positions (Rubin, Bommer, & Baldwin, 2002). The skills and knowledge these leaders gain, and to some extent also middle managers, spans over several boundaries and provide these individuals with what is known as dynamic capabilities, where adaptation to new and different challenges based on already established frames is essential (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

The second utility as part of the triple helix

With these possible types of knowledge and skills in mind we move on to see if the second utility of student organizations is something we can place within the theory if triple helix. If triple helix puts emphasis on a more tight relationship between universities and industry, does the knowledge required from the universities also evolve to better suit this development? Could student organizations be one of several arenas where this knowledge could be harvested, and what form would be best suited?

Triple Helix, and the third mission, is oddly silent on the role of students (and for that sake, researchers as well) before they invent, produce or patent something. This is, perhaps, due to the notion that students, and their knowledge, are encapsulated within the first and original mission: teaching, and that the work done before a patent emerge falls under the second mission: research. Student houses are organizations that exist beyond the first mission of universities because of their direct contact to professional life, their non-teaching environment and their location outside of the traditional academic sphere. Student organizations should never be an integrated part of the academic life at universities like lectures, curriculum or colloquies are. They will not thrive in such an environment, and will stagnate by the rigidity of the academic system. They will not fit inside the first mission, and neither are they part of the second mission. Students involved in these organizations do not have a thesis or theory to prove with their volunteer work. They do not work with publishing or a PhD in mind. Therefore student organizations do not fall under either the first or the second mission of the universities.

As we remember, social and economic developments are the two key features of the third mission. A recent project (Schoen, 2006) branches the third mission into eight dimensions:

1. Human resources
2. Intellectual property
3. Spin-offs
4. Contracts with industry
5. Contracts with public bodies
6. Participation on policy-making
7. Involvement in social and cultural life
8. Public understanding of science

While the nature of the first four dimensions is one of economy the last four is societal.

On the economical side, one can argue that student organizations provide both suitable training and transfer of human resources to the industry. As shown earlier, student organizations provide a great deal of potential knowledge in an arena traditionally not included in the academic sphere. One can also argue that student houses and student organizations provide a proving ground for spin-offs within a certain niche. This may seem far-fetched, but there are numerous commercial organizations, especially within the cultural sector, that have founders or key individuals within the main administration with background from student organizations[21]. Many of these companies would not have seen daylight without the network and experience gained during engagement in student organizations. Student houses and larger student organizations also have several contracts with the industry, and private actors show a great interest in creating opportunities and connections within this market. This is not only achieved through sponsoring and marketing, but student organizations also acts as an arena where commercial actors obtain knowledge of and input on how to reach the student market. The symbiotic value of this relationship is of great value both to the arena of student actors and to the arena of industrial actors.

On the social side we can easily identify the substantial social and cultural product these organizations provide to the society as a whole. In an even larger part than the majority of spin-offs and start-ups, these organizations are the second face of universities towards recruitment and the public at large. Many student houses have deep roots and long traditional ties to the local community, and have also become social and cultural institutions of their own. This value, both monetary and non-monetary,

[21] When e.g. the university of Oslo started preparations for their 200-year anniversary, they asked the people behind "Øyafestivalen" (a Norwegian festival in Oslo) to assist with arranging several days of concerts. Many of the people involved at Øya are old members of student organizations and replied that the university should rather ask their student house, as they could do it better than Øya could.

should not be underestimated. Unfortunately, student organizations do not shape national policy like other actors within the third mission, but they are often both involved in shaping university policy towards life outside of traditional academic activities. On the other hand, they often have fruitful relations with the local public bodies as important representatives of students living and studying at the local institutions. Bergen, as an example, often promotes itself as a cultural city. This would to a lesser degree be possible without the activities organized by students.

The second utility of student organizations can be included in the third mission of the triple helix because they contribute to economical development by training leaders and middle managers, and by preparing students to a life outside academia. They provide society as a whole, and their local communities especially, with consumable products and they have a good and often profitable connection with local and national businesses and public bodies. I therefore place student organizations well within the boundaries of the third mission. The question is: in what form could they be optimally included?

INCUBATOR

According to the National Business Incubator Association (www.nbia.org), incubators are created to “nurture the development of entrepreneurial companies, helping them survive and grow during the start-up period, when they are most vulnerable” (NBIA, 2007). Incubators should also aspire “to have a positive impact on its community's economic health by maximizing the success of emerging companies”, and should be “a dynamic model of a sustainable, efficient business operation” (NBIA, 2007).

Just as incubators and technology transfer offices are preparing start-up and spin-off firms to gain foothold in the industrial sphere, student organizations are, according to

NBIAs criterias, doing the same for students. Student houses are, as shown in previous chapters, in themselves helping students getting valuable work experience and, for those who choose, high-level business knowledge. The knowledge gained by those involved has shown to contribute to better prospects for the industry, and the organizations are administered and run as efficient firms. Student organizations should not be formally included in academia and neither should what they offer in terms of knowledge be formally integrated in academia. But official and recognized status as knowledge incubators by the universities and state would provide these organizations with the autonomy they need and the moral and concrete backing and support they require for fully utilizing the second utility. Just as you would say that academia in itself is a huge knowledge incubator, we have to include student organizations as a similar knowledge incubator on the fringes between academia and industry. The sources of innovation and knowledge in a triple helix configuration are not known a priori (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), but in good triple helix spirit new sources and arenas for innovation and knowledge are created in the interactions between spheres.

Summary

This chapter has shown that it's plausible that students are able to get traditional and "normal" work experience (like the one achieved by paid work) through student organizations and that they also have the opportunity of gaining even more relevant and high level knowledge by accepting other roles in the organization. The amount of individual gain is, as always, dependant on the effort put in by the student. In conjunction with the fact that this is all done in an active and lively academic setting the question is posed whether it is better for society (and the students) if students gets their work experience during their studying years from these organizations in an academic sphere rather than from ordinary work behind the counter of H&M.

The potential knowledge, combined with the comparison of student organizations with SMEs, the similarities between student organizations and the before mentioned notion of researchers as quasi-firms and it's relevance towards the needs of the industry show that student organizations could be included in the triple helix as part of the third mission. Furthermore I claim that the most optimal role they could have within the third mission is that of a knowledge incubator.

NIBA states that critical to the definition of an incubator is the provision of management guidance, technical assistance and consulting tailored to young growing companies. If the role as a knowledge incubator is the optimal role for the second utility of student houses, perhaps the challenge of better transfer of administrative knowledge could be one focus area for the universities' support towards student houses.

Possible initiatives

There is no single way of creating an ecosystem where the second utility can thrive in more profitable ways. The arena of the second utility is an important and valuable part of student life, a place where individuals gain knowledge beyond that available through academic curriculum, but so far a place outside present strategic focus and usage.

The acknowledgement and status of the universities' student houses as knowledge incubators, who provide an arena for the development of interpersonal and practical knowledge and work experience may in many cases be purely semantic. But - in defining these organizations as knowledge incubators, the state and universities commit themselves to a more formalized relationship beyond the traditional first utility. This is a relationship not necessarily in terms of direct involvement, but one of guidance and recognition beyond the present norm. In recognizing these organizations as knowledge incubators they help elevate the relevancy and public knowledge of those highly relevant skills available in their backyard, currently lacking attention.

This would give student organizations a defined role and status both within its first utility: social and cultural products, and within its second utility: many levels of work-related skills, experience and knowledge. It would therefore be natural for all actors (state, university, organization) to give focus to both roles when developing future strategies and focus involving student organizations.

The rest of this chapter will discuss some ways these tree actors could possibly enhance the usage of the second utility within the frames set forth by this thesis. It is not in any way a complete list, and more detailed work must be done in each individual case if some of them are to be followed up. This, however, is outside the scope of this thesis.

State

As the intention of student organizations as knowledge incubators is to provide students with high-value experience, knowledge and skills beyond that available by curriculum, the main goal of any governmental initiative would be that of getting students to be involved in these organizations. The simplest and most effective action would thus be to raise the annual student loan and stipend and to pursue a version of the “full-time” student that encapsulates the entirety of a student life. If we accept that learning during higher education is an ongoing process not confined between 08:00 to 16:00, and that this process, during the years of a student, continues outside the traditional academic frames through a myriad of activities: then we need to create a financial situation where students have the possibility to use their time outside of lectures on volunteer work. As of today, the scale tips firmly to the side of paid work over volunteer work.

The state should also be the initiator of a broader, national strategy made by universities on the two utilities of student organizations. As of today, universities exhibit different strategies and focus towards student organizations. Some award those in leadership positions with extra courses that provide academic credits, while others do nothing. These gaps should be filled so students can be more aware of the frameworks of both the first and second utility and be acquainted with, on a national scale, the possibilities available in work within student organizations.

To achieve this, I would propose that the government work towards an official report on the topic of student organizations in Norway. This is an important arena for many actors (e.g. university, student, community, industry), available at a period where the main goal for the students “existence” is to learn skills so that they can become valuable members of the society in a myriad of arenas and levels. Student organizations provide a frame for a great part of that period and an official report would recognize and instigate a debate on the topic that hopefully would end up in a national strategic framework between the institutions of higher education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand the notion of the “full-time” student
- Increase student loans and stipends
- Initiate a national focus on student organizations
- Develop a national report on student organizations with focus on both the first and second utility

University

While the state should initiate a national strategy between institutions of higher education and create a framework that enables students to involve themselves more often in student organizations, the universities must make this a relevant and recognized choice. In the same vigorous manner they promote the first, social, utility, they should also promote the second, educational, utility.

They should include all student organizations as arenas of equal and complimentary knowledge in their marketing material, and take the Bologna-process one step further in also including the learning outcomes available in these arenas. All Norwegian institutes of higher education include a chapter on student activities in their catalogue, but none include the potential learning outcome and knowledge obtainable for those who choose to go one step further than just consumption. This needs to be done, not on an individual level, but as a common policy between the institutions of higher education. For the second utility to become more relevant for students, they need to know that it’s a part of a sphere of knowledge just as commonly accepted as that of the knowledge gained in any other course. As mentioned earlier, it should be in the interest of the educational institutions that work experience is gained within an academic environment vis-à-vis a non-academic environment. Therefore a focus beyond the first utility would benefit the recruitment to student organizations.

To assist and help develop the role as a knowledge incubator the universities should provide assistance for leadership transitions, have a mechanism in place for helping preserve knowledge within the organizations during and between transitions and making sure those in leadership positions gets followed up after they leave office. Other than that, the student organizations needs to be independent and self-serving (even when causing mischief), in order to function as a knowledge incubator outside of traditional academic frames. The main role of universities towards student organizations as knowledge incubators is to make sure that relevant knowledge and skills are preserved and developed continuously on its own without having to invent the wheel over and over again.

One of the few direct connections between academia and student organizations, should be the knowledge transfer made possible if faculties were allowed to accept different kinds of work done within organizations as valid within certain courses. This would be relevant to only a few topics and courses, and must be discussed on individual basis, but e.g. a course in new media should be able to accept a live project from a student involved in the media group of a student organization as part of its compulsory hand-ins. I've personally seen design students refusing to take on live design projects within student organizations because they need to finish their portfolio-assignment at their course. A quick question to design firms would easily show that live projects is more valuable in getting job and experience than that of creating a portfolio or doing non-live projects at school. A better cooperation with a selection of branches of education could drastically increase the learning potential of these courses.

A number of universities and other institutions now provide advanced courses in entrepreneurial leadership and/or business. To even further promote the educational value of leadership positions, those in these positions could be offered, without other pre-requirements, admittance in these courses when their time as leaders expire. The direct experience these individuals have gained would perhaps be wasted if they just go back to their original studies. Admittance into these courses would be a natural bridge for those still intrigued by leadership and willing to take it even further on an academic level.

The main questions, though, are 1) should credits be given to those in leadership positions or not? If so, should they be handed out with or without a supplementary course? 2) What kind of attestation should be provided to these individuals?

These two questions are inevitably conjoined, and must be treated as two parts of a whole. I believe credits and attestations should be given to those accepting and completing term as elected leaders of student houses. I also believe that it should be up to the individual institution to define those positions that qualify, as responsibility and workload differs from institution to institution. The challenge of attestations will always be how to give an objective and relevant evaluation on the quality of work done.

The obvious argument against this position is that it will also reward freeloaders who perform poorly and/or neglect their duties. This is a phenomenon we also see regularly in ordinary work-life. A discredited leader in one firm is awarded with a high level job in another firm.

My counter-argument would be that credits and attestation could be given for the time and effort they nevertheless have made, but that the attestation of these individuals would only be that of a standard description of role and time; and silent on quality. Another argument would be that by giving credits, you provide time the student can use on, hopefully, doing a better job as a student leader. I've already shown how being a student leader, a full-time student and, in many cases, having a part-time job creates a mountain too steep for many students.

I would propose that the institutions create a support group existing of external consultants and academic resources. This group would be available for consultation in times of crisis or challenging questions. Without intruding on the autonomy of student organizations, such a group would give advice and help on the request of the leadership. I would also propose that this group should be responsible for creating and maintaining a course offered to these student leaders. This would be a course consisting of, perhaps, 3-4 seminars tailored to suit those organizations included, and it should be without a final exam. This course would replace those special courses pointed out as already existing at a few universities.

The group could also be responsible for attestation of the individual leaders. This would provide a recognized evaluation of quality and award those filling their position on a satisfactory or better level.

A common form of attestation should also be developed on a national level between institutions. As of now, those who give attestation all have their own types with varying content and quality. Some give more detailed feedback based on courses and follow-ups, some give generic attestation describing the role being filled and others give no attestation. I believe that a common type of attestation would be more recognized and a more valuable piece of paper.

The topic of credits, course and attestations is a touchy topic, and this proposal may not be the final answer. I do, regardless of its final shape, firmly believe that a common policy on how to give incentives, reward or inspire students to take on leadership positions would be the optimal route to take.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a common policy towards the second utility
- Present and treat student organizations as an incubator of knowledge not commonly available through academia.
- Include both the first and second utility in promotional material
- Look at possible cooperation between individual courses and work tasks at student organizations
- Provide guidance and help during leadership transitions
- Have regular meetings with student leaders (not only with student politicians)
- Give incentives for taking on leadership positions
    - Decide what group of student leaders are included by credits, course and attestations
    - Award credits to student leaders (provide more time to focus on organizational work)
    - Give attestations to student leaders (provide incentives to take roles)
    - Create a common attestation using similar basic elements (provide national recognition for attestation)
    - Provide a group of external consultants and academic resources

  - Make this group responsible for developing and maintaining a course (without a final exam) given to leaders
  - Make this group responsible for writing individual attestations (thereby rewarding those doing a god job with more than just credits)
  - Offer, if available, advanced courses to those whose positions expire
- Include student organizations in marketing towards the industry

Student organizations

The organizations should do what they do: arrange cultural and political events, provide products like restaurants, cafeterias, and pubs, host obscene parties and be a hub for student life outside the curriculum. Knowledge is produced through informal learning regardless of status and focus, and the autonomy from formal academic frames is the basis for its continuous development.

But - if student organizations are to benefit fully from a potential bigger focus on its second utility by the state and universities, they also need to do some improvements. Student organizations need to include the second utility in future strategies and raise awareness of their role as a provider of informal learning. All organizations are different, but just as much as universities would benefit from a standard for attestation of student leaders, student organizations would also benefit from creating a shared template of attestation to their workers. Even the smallest job has learning potential, and every worker should get an easily recognized attestation that outlines what kind on experience and skill their role provides. In addition to this, external partners could be approached to provide training and courses for the different work groups. This would be a mutual beneficiary relationship, as the organization gets training for its workers while the external partner gets to promote their organization and perhaps seek out future employees.

Student organizations also need to maintain and use their alumni for promotional purposes. Some have good and strong alumni, while others neglect it. The easiest action is to provide every single worker with a permanent e-mail address, but in the longer run dedicated alumni software would be optimal. Many individuals in high positions have background from student organizations and could be used more actively in promotion both to new students, employees aspiring to take on bigger roles and to the industry to point out the immediate relevance of this kind of work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop better cooperation between student houses, including a common template of attestation
- Map and express the different kinds of knowledge available to the different tasks and roles in the organization
- Regular follow-ups and performance reviews of employees
- Provide good and relevant attestation for all employees at all levels
- Seek out external partners for courses relevant to the different tasks of the employees
- Maintain and use an alumni

Summary

This chapter has, in light of defining the second utility of student organizations as a knowledge incubator, discussed and presented several initiatives that could be applied to strengthen the second utility of student organizations. Many more initiatives can undoubtedly be included to enhance student organizations in both utilities.

The focus of the state should be to initiate a strategy consensus and make it financially possible for students to involve themselves in student organizations.

The focus of universities should be to make volunteer work in student organizations interesting and relevant for students in regard to both the first and second utility. It should also, by promoting and recognizing the value of the second utility, help create an environment where leadership positions are contested and sought after, and provide academic alternatives when leadership positions come to an end.

The main focus on the second utility in student organizations is that of informal learning to gain knowledge and skills, and better routines and guidelines would help enhance this process. To develop the second utility to a higher level, the student organizations need to make it worth the effort for the student also beyond the first utility. Student leaders need to be aware of the task of their organizations as a house of learning. For all those involved.

Conclusion

Student organizations have two utilities; one social and one educational, but only the first of these utilities see national and common focus. This thesis has presented the second, educational utility and the goal has been to find a role for this utility that better suits its potential.

In the process of developing a possible role I have explained the dual utilities of student organizations, and through interviews with university leadership I have shown how the first utility is prioritized. The second utility is known and appreciated, but what it actually entails and imply in a Norwegian setting have not been explored. I have by means of numeric and structural presentations provided data for a relevant comparison between student houses of Norwegian institutions of higher education and traditional small- or medium-sized enterprises. With these presentations, I have shown why these organizations should be treated like firms, and I have discussed the possible types of knowledge and experience available within the second utility of student organizations. A consequence of this comparison is that the same type of work-experience available to workers in traditional businesses is also available within student organizations.

As these forms of skills and knowledge are more directly connected to the professional life in the industry than it is connected to academic education, I have proposed that the role of the second utility of student organizations lies in the boundary between academia and industry. This boundary is best captured by inclusion in the triple helix theory. I have therefore argued that the best role for the second utility of student organizations is to be included in the third helix as knowledge incubators within the third mission of universities. This provides the second utility of student organizations with a clear role at their institutions and will also help develop a better use of its potential.

The role of first utility in the boundary of academy and society provides direction and clarity on usage by students and academia. The role as a knowledge incubator within the boundary of academia and industry will provide the same for the second utility.

To complete this argument, I have included several initiatives by the state, universities and student organizations that could help in the transformation of the second utility into a recognized knowledge incubator.

The current attitude has been to treat student organizations as a whole, and with focus primarily on the first utility. I've argued that an expansion of the use of student organizations to better encapsulate both utilities will be beneficial both for students, academia and the industry. But - why is this important? The knowledge is already available and is produced no matter the policy surrounding student organizations. So why is it important to give it focus and a defined role?

None of the persons interviewed for this thesis mentioned that the combination of a solid academic education and the leadership experience from student organizations has the potential of being an extremely potent leadership education. Within the right form, this education could compete with that offered by recognized leadership. This example shows that a more defined role will provide a focus that could expand the second utility to perhaps be part of something like this.

It will benefit the industry if more students have this experience before entering professional life. It will also benefit the industry if those in leadership positions get standardized attestations and further possibilities within the university to develop their leadership skills.

It will provide the student organizations with better clarity and focus on the second utility. This will perhaps give a boost in recruitment and therefore also help enhancing the results of the first utility. It could also help developing better leaders even during their period of office, which in turn will benefit the future growth of the organizations.

It will give universities more credibility towards meeting the needs for the industry, and it will be a good tool for marketing towards new students.

And, finally, it will give students the opportunity of work experience providing much more than just informal skills learning beyond academia. It will also provide work experience that is recognized as part of an education just as much as traditional studying is.

The arena of student organizations is indeed an untapped potential, and could be a silver bullet for higher education regardless of country. Increased focus on the second utility will have the potential of creating positive ripple effects long into the future. A good start would be to recognize and use student organizations not as something outside of academic barriers, but as knowledge incubators within the sphere of academia.

Topics for further research

There is almost no literature on student organizations in Norway. My hope is that this thesis perhaps could influence other students in writing on this topic. Perhaps to prove me wrong, or perhaps to show other sides of student organizations not included by this thesis. I will below list some topics I think would be valuable to shed light on.

- How are does knowledge transfer work within student organizations?
- A more detailed look on the extent of student organizations.
- What kind of individuals accept candidacy to leadership positions?
- Does the involvement of the Norwegian student in student organizations have a negative or positive influence on academic achievements?
- In what ways could the industry learn from student organizations and vice versa?
- Do HR personnel in firms see the difference between roles in student organizations?
- A better and more detailed study of knowledge potential in the different levels of student organizations.
- What kind of money goes into student organizations from universities, and how is it used?
- To what extent have student organizations been a proving ground for new artists and bands?

This is only a handful, and more could certainly be added.

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Appendix

A: Interview questions

1. What role and utility do student activities have at present universities?
2. What kind of funds is used on student activities by the university?
3. In what way, if any, are participation and leadership roles integrated at the university?
4. What kind of knowledge is attainable in leadership positions in student organizations?
5. Is this knowledge relevant for the university?
6. Is this knowledge relevant for the industry?
7. Is this knowledge available through curriculum at the university?
8. Could a closer connection between the university and student organizations help towards a better usage of this knowledge?
9. What role and utility can student activities have at future universities?
10. Do people with experience from student organizations benefit from this when applying for jobs and/or do the knowledge gained in student organizations help in gaining rank within a company?