TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

An Interpretation of NORHED

By

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Abstract

The present study examines the organizational programme of NORHED, the standing acronym for the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development, operating in the organizational environment of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (i.e. Norad). In particular, this study analyzes how NORHED positions itself in the debate regarding sustainable development, both in the public domain (via official documentation) and internally (via interviews with its officers and collaborating academics). Using a qualitative, single case study approach, we evaluate how NORHED interprets and articulates sustainable development in the context of higher education environments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Through this case study, we aim to surface both the rich prospects of using the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development for higher education institutions as well as its limitations if peremptorily used.

Acknowledgements

"Pain is inevitable: suffering is optional"
Haruki Murakami (2008), *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* (vii)

If you don't like personal notes, read no further. This part is not for you.

But if you do like to know the story behind this study, this section lists a few, very special people that have truly driven me in this process.

First in line, Bjørn Stensaker. Bjørn is perhaps the most productive academic I have ever met. Still, despite his tireless intellectual scrutiny, he is able to maintain a work-life balance, his sense of humor, his motorbike, and his writing flair. Nobody really knows how he can do it: Bjørn is, even for a true skeptic like myself, a beacon of academic hope.

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Last but definitely not least, my wife, Linn Trude. Αγάπη μου, καλή μου γατούλα. You are the best and brightest person I have ever met. You have supported me like nobody else to run this ultramarathon.

This thesis is devoted to you and you alone.

Zacharias E. Andreadakis
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The present study examines the organizational programme of NORHED, the standing acronym for the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development, operating in the organizational environment of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (henceforth Norad). In particular, this thesis analyzes how NORHED positions itself in the debate regarding sustainable development, both in the public domain (via official documentation) and internally (via interviews with its officers and collaborating academics). Using a qualitative, single case study approach, we evaluate how NORHED interprets and articulates sustainable development in the context of higher education environments in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Through this case study, we aim to surface both the potential of using the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development for higher education institutions as well as its limitations if peremptorily used.

1.1. The Research Problem

One of the most well-documented problems in the field of higher education studies is how to develop a university environment under conditions of financial scarcity (Altbach 2013, 2016; Arrow 1973; Arrow et al. 2000; Barr 2004; Becker 1964; Benhabib and Spiegel 1994; Birnbaum 1988; Blaug 1978; Bourdieu and Passeron 1970; Burke 2002; Cloete and Bunting 2013; Cloete and Moja 2005; OECD 2006, 2007, 2012, 2017; Perlman 1973; Rabovsky 2012; Sachs 2015; Shafiq et al. 2018; Shimeles 2016; Thomson 2008; Toutkoushian and Paulsen 2016; Ubels et al. 2010; Uetela 2015, 2017; World Bank 2000, 2002, 2012). This problem, often subsumed by scholarship under the rubric of "the university as the engine of development" (Castells 1993, 2001), concerns the choice between two arguably competing priorities in the development of a higher education environment, namely, outcome-driven economic development and process-driven social equity (Altbach 2013, 2016; Castells 1993; 2001; Cloete and Moja 2005; World Bank 2002, 2012). The problem has been deemed as polarizing and persistently escapes scholarly consensus. In an attempt to account for the issue of how a financially constrained university environment is enhanced, two schools of thought have emerged.

The first scholarly approach, commonly known as the rational choice model, considers the development of a university environment as an economic issue and assumes a neo-classical economic stance towards it. The university, according to this approach, is the financial motor of the society at hand, which creates the economic conditions for prosperity and sends ripples of positive effects in its environment (Altbach 2013, 2016; Arrow 1973; Arrow et al. 2000; Barr 2004; Toutkoushian and Paulsen 2016). In this school of thought, development is ascribed with some function of utility which can be first disaggregated and then quantified, ordered, predicted, and replicated with measurable and satisfactory degrees of confidence. This quantifiable utility relies on a stable Nash equilibrium and a Pareto optimality model, in which actors who either compete or cooperate reach a sweet spot of behavioral balance regardless of their intentions (Daskalakis et al. 2009; Greenwald and Stiglitz 1986; Hoff and Stiglitz 2010; Negishi 1960; North 2005). In other words, for this school of thought, the development of a university environment is about quantifying and maximizing, in a predictable fashion, the outcomes of an endeavor (Espeland and Sauder 2016; Hartley 1995; Tuchman 2009). Rational choice theory postulates that, under conditions of scarcity, humans perform (i.e. think and enact their thoughts) solely on account of maximizing their utility, namely, their calculus between pleasure/profit and pain/loss (Dhami 2016; Guillamont and Chauvet 2001; Kahneman and Tversky 1972, 1984; Thaler 1994). Upon this basic postulate, i.e. the constant maximization of one's utility, this theoretical account presupposes four additional axioms, namely, that a rational agent is in possession of a) self-regarding preferences (egotism), b) boundless calculative reasoning (reasons upon reliance on Bayesian statistical reasoning), c) boundless willpower (freedom from temptation and self-control problems), and d) cardinal and consistent preferences (choices are hierarchical and bereft of surprise rearrangement) (Dhami 2016; Green 1996, Kahneman 2003; March 1978; Thaler 1994, 2000). Upon logical obsequiousness to these axioms, this theory maintains that human activity and the social change that it inculcates can be measured, fine-tuned, replicated, and predicted. And, ultimately, this paradigm aims to assert scientific rigor, reliable solutions via elegant and replicable formulas, and intellectual control over one vital element for our cognitive apparatus: closure (Kahneman 1994, 2003, 2011; Kahneman and Lovallo 1993; Pinker 1997; Thaler 1994, 2000).

The second scholarly approach, known as capabilitarianism (Adriansen et al. 2017; Alexander 2016; Breidlid 2013; Halvorsen and Nossum 2017; Nussbaum 2011; Richardson 2007, Robeyns 2003, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2018; Schokkaert 2007, 2009; Sen 1977, 1993, 1999; Steward and

Deneulin 2002; Varoufakis 1991, 2014), revisits the neo-classical economic stance and prioritizes equity and freedom, that is, the ability of a university environment to reach environmental and social goals/effects that are relational, affective, unquantifiable, historically embedded, symbolic, and alien to the rational calculus of cost-benefit analysis. This approach challenges the ascription to instrumental utility, the ordinal preferences, and the pursuit of maximization (Sen 1977). It advances the concepts of freedom and prosperity, and it denies the understanding of instrumental utility or the Nash equilibrium that underpins it.[1]

This capabilitarian approach is, in short, about qualifying and "satisficing" (Simon 1957, 1983), in a non-predictable fashion, both the process and the outcomes of an endeavor, with priority to the former.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, these two approaches can be encapsulated in a tug-of-war between causality and indeterminacy, which are archetypical rivals in the pursuit of conducting social science (Elster 1984, 1989, 2015, 2016; Hollis 2010, 2011; Hollis and Nell 2006; Kahneman 2003, 2011; Sen 1993, 1999; Varoufakis 1991, 2014). Causality and indeterminacy reflect what Martin Hollis (2010) has seminally dubbed as the dilemma between "explanation and understanding", i.e. between positivistic chains of causality and probabilistic, explorative narratives. The battlefronts drawn between closed/causal and open/exploratory systems of interpretation in social science have also found their way in the study of systems of higher education and particularly in the distinction between purposeful, Taylorist models (Evans and Holmes 2013) and loosely coupled models of interpretation in knowledge institutions (see Bastedo 2015, with extensive bibliography, harking back on March 1978, 1984 and Weick 1976, 1995).

Recently, a new conceptual vocabulary has emerged that has the potential to shift and resolve this debate between rational choice (causality) and capabilitarianism (indeterminacy), and ultimately to ameliorate a university environment in conditions of financial scarcity (Baker-

[1] Note that Daskalakis et al. 2009 have proven, from a computer science perspective, the impossibility for the computability of a Nash equilibrium in real life, turning the core assumption of a Nash equilibrium and, by proxy, of the "homo economicus" moot. Economics has not (and may never) recovered from this assail on its mathematical foundations.

Shelley et al. 2017; Banerjee 2003; Barth 2013, 2015; Barth et al. 2018; Beynaghi et al. 2016; Carayannis and Campbell 2010; Christie and Miller 2018; Christie et al. 2015; Clugston and Calder 1999; Cullingford and Blewitt 2004; Curran 2009; Curren 2009; Dodds et al. 2014; Edwards 2015; Evans 2018; Fadeeva et al. 2014; Figueiro and Raufflet 2015; Hegarty 2008; Lozano et al 2013; Molnar et al. 2010; Ndaruhutse and Thompson 2016; Rowe 2007; Shephard 2015; Sterling 2009, 2010-2011, 2012; Sterling and Thomas 2006). This conceptual vocabulary has been dubbed by scholarship as *sustainable development* and has attained paradigmatic status in natural and social sciences (Caradonna 2014, 2018; Grober 2007; Grober and Cunningham 2012; Heinberg 2012; Heinberg and Lerch 2010; Jackson 2017; Jacques 2015; Keiner 2006; King 2009; König 2013; Lang et al. 2012; Miller 2013; Miller et al. 2014; Nidumolu et al. 2009; Schendler 2010; Sen 2013; Sustainable Development Solutions Networks 2013; Tomkinson 2011). As a most exemplary case in point, the UN, the leading authority regarding international development, has made education, including higher education, a key component of sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all").[2]

In light of this paradigmatic status in the scholarly debate, sustainable development has invited a copious and wide gamut of interpretations over the past three decades.[3] These interpretations, as

[2] These Sustainable Development Goals are: SDG 1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere SDG 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture SDG 3 Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages SDG 4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all SDG 5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls SDG 6 Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all SDG 7 Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all SDG 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all SDG 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation SDG 10 Reduce inequality within and among countries SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable SDG 12 Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns SDG 13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts SDG 14 Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development SDG 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss SDG 16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels SDG 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Finance. These goals have 169 associated targets. A full list of targets for each goal can be found at http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-developmentgoals/.

[3] See e.g. Becker ad Jahn 1999; Caradonna 2014; Jacques 2015, with extensive bibliography. A full outline of the gamut of definitions on sustainable development is provided in Chapter 2 of this study (see e.g. footnote 14 of this study).

Chapter 2 of this study will outline in detail, are far from aligned or unequivocal. Rather, sustainable development is construed as a befuddling intellectual exercise which undertakes the task of articulating a balanced interconnection between environment, society, and the economy. As scholarship puts it, in fact, sustainable development is a "contradiction in terms", both static but also moving, development but also developing (Kim and Bosselmann 2015: 197).[4] In other words, sustainable development as the pursuit of "development that can sustain itself" is nothing short of a paradox: it is the pursuit of change that is supposed to remain stable. However, as we shall see, the paradox within this conceptual vocabulary, which is best construed as a balancing act, is a most necessary and useful intellectual exercise in order to unlock and, ultimately, to develop the potential of higher education environments.

Specifically, for organizational environments like NORHED that seek to develop higher education institutions that face financial scarcity, the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development presents a way to balance the two competing theories of rational choice and capabilitarianism. As we discuss in Chapter 2, the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development allows one to have it both ways, seeing the inherent tension as a source of strength, and thus include an attempt to balance an approach that looks to an end result and one that looks to the process. Instead of reconciling the causal, outcome-oriented and indeterminate, process-oriented approaches discussed above in relation to rational choice theory and capabilitarianism, sustainable development juxtaposes the two against each other in a way that requires a balanced approach in order to achieve results both in the immediate and long-term by providing an agreed upon goal that is constantly updated to reflect changes in society. As we will see in Chapter 4, NORHED is exemplary of this issue in that it articulates its commitment to sustainably developing institutions of higher education along both of these lines, which are divided between the two methodological techniques that we discuss in Chapter 3, (1) analyzing external and public official documentation and (2) performing and examining internal interviews with officers and collaborating academics. As we discuss in Chapter 5, however, leaving these two approaches to sustainable development in sharp contradiction and unresolved in theory might make it

[4] Curran 2009:8 "The evolution of environmental strategies over the years has moved from a single medium, regulatory strategy to one that aims for sustainability across all media for the short and long term. In this movement, environmental managers have begun to realize the need to look holistically at the impacts of products and processes from cradle-to-grave (or cradle-to-cradle, as it is sometimes called)."

challenging to achieve its desired results in reality. At the same time, Chapter 6 suggests that this is not an insurmountable challenge, providing concrete recommendations for how to interpret and articulate sustainable development, as well as pursue its rich research prospects.

1.2. The Scope of This Case Study

This study explores the ramifications of this new conceptual vocabulary, namely, sustainable development, in a very narrow epiphenomenon of the overall research problem. Specifically, it investigates the interpretation of sustainable development by a narrow unit of analysis, NORHED, and the way that NORHED positions itself in the horns of the aforementioned problem of developing higher education environments facing financial scarcity.

The selected scope of this case study is principally motivated by two factors. A first motivating factor is the paucity of information about a unique institutional entity that works in the fringe of higher education and has declared its commitment to the pursuit of sustainable development, namely, NORHED. As a program within the broader umbrella of international development agencies (IDAs) and particularly Norad, NORHED is a blend between a knowledge institution which produces knowledge (see e.g. the World Bank) and a branch of public administration (the Foreign Affairs Ministry) which implements knowledge-based decisions. To compound its uniqueness, NORHED is also an outlier, pioneering case within IDAs, since it has decided to transfer the decision-making powers and the ownership of the programs directly to the Southern institutions which currently operate under conditions of financial scarcity with non-negligible sums of money (Norad 2018 with detailed accounts about the operational status of NORHED; Zachrisen 2018). This dearth of scholarship on this fringe entity in higher education studies, and the exceptionalist case of NORHED within the class of IDAs, has accentuated the need to offer insight into this phenomenon.

Second, the scope of the study is motivated by a narrower historical contingency, and, in particular, a finding by the external evaluation of Technopolis that the sustainability levels of NORHED were considered “very low”:

> Overall, it seems that the attention on sustainability was very low in the design of the programme. Very few projects consider the future of their project activities, generally expecting that Norway will continue to provide funding that will enable training those who now obtained qualifications through the NORHED-funded projects, to turn Masters into PhDs, PhDs into postdocs, and to continue the research activities and work started (Norad 2018: 59).

Based on this remark, this study sought to understand why this elusive conceptual vocabulary has not achieved the desired ends of NORHED.

In the final analysis, this case study seeks to understand how NORHED interprets and articulates sustainable development in its attempt to support the most vulnerable higher education systems. It seeks to understand how the conceptual entity is interpreted by an understudied entity of higher education. And, ultimately, it seeks to explicate how the epistemological paradox, sustainable development, could become less paradoxical and, eventually, perhaps lead to attainable results within its given operational context.

1.3. The Organizational Environment

To provide a comprehensive outline of NORHED, let us start by taking a bird's-eye view of its operational setting and then zoom in on its portfolio. A first remark: NORHED is a dependent entity. It is a programme designed to operate within the organizational environment and interpretative frame of Norad. As a government agency operative since 1968, Norad is a public organization of foreign aid located in Oslo and a directorate mainly under the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, along with a small reporting mandate to the Norwegian Ministry of Climate and Environment.[5] It currently counts in its ranks approximately 260 employees, with an annual financial cycle of operations of 31,4 billion Norwegian Crowns (3,8 billion US$). Norad has an organizational mandate of five main tasks: aid advisory services, quality assurance and monitoring services, grant delivery, communication and dissemination to the Norwegian public, and independent evaluation of its activities.[6] These tasks are ordained, economically and politically, within the legal bounds of the Norwegian political economy, which has a distinguished record for rule of law and distributive justice.[7] Legally, Norad's activities are

[5] The part of Norad that reports to the Ministry of climate and Environemnt is Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative (NICFI). See https://www.norad.no/en/front/about-norad/

[6] For further information on Norad's tasks, see https://norad.no/en/front/about-norad/five-main-tasks/

[7] For the sway of rule of law in Scandinavia and Norway in particular see Bondeson 2017 with extensive bibliography and charts.

provisioned by §6 of the regulation for the economic state steering and chapter 6 of state decision making, with the financial range of foreign aid being clearly mandated in the annual state budget, under the financial rubric of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Currently, this budget frame for foreign aid is characterized as above OECD average (around 1% of Gross Domestic Product) yet has diminished in the past years, under the latest right-wing coalition. Overall, Norway features in the top third position of the donors listings per Gross National Income (see Figure 1), and in the eighth place in the net disbursements of Official Development Assistance by the members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC). In the distribution of this budget, the allotments in different priorities are fairly evenly dispersed, with education receiving 9% of all the disbursements (see Figure 2).

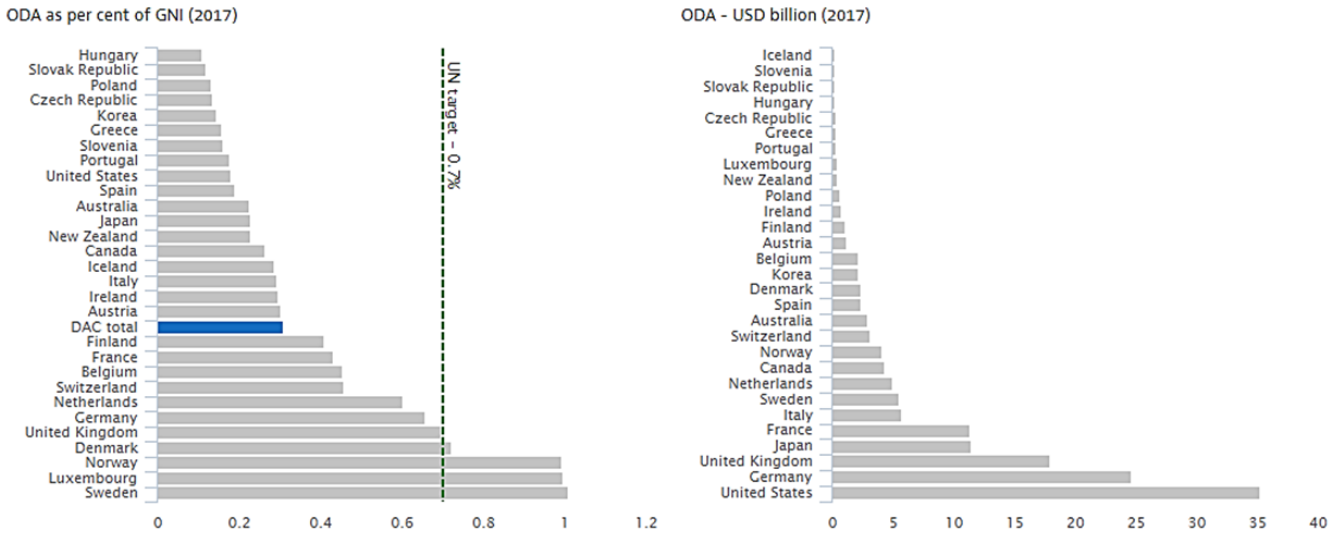

Figure 1: Official Development Assistance 2017-Preliminary Data. Retrieved from http://www2.compareyourcountry.org/oda?lg=en)

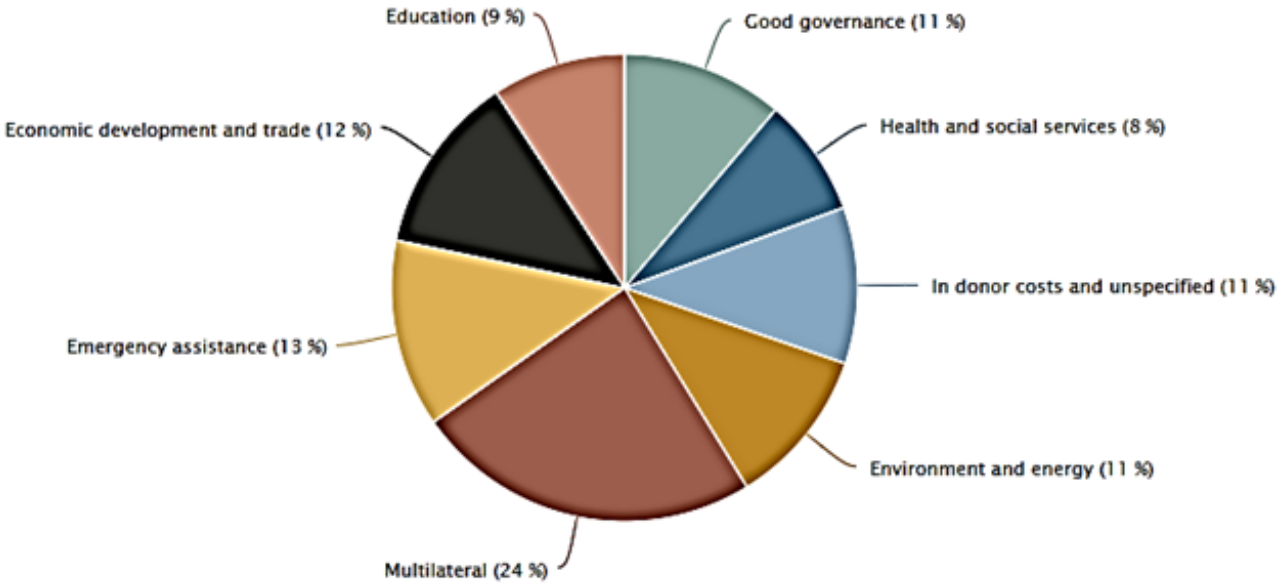

Figure 2: Norad Statistics: Norwegian Development Aid 2017, Distribution by Sector. Total 34,108.7 Million NOK. Retrieved from: https://norad.no/en/front/toolspublications/norwegian-aid-statistics/?tab=sector

Given this epigrammatic exposition of the broader geospatial, legal, and financial scaffold of the organization's undertakings, we shall now zoom into the particular division of labor in the organization.[8] As Figure 3 below makes clear, there are six sections which operate under the Director General's office of Norad: the Knowledge Bank; the Department for Climate, Energy, and Environment; the Department for Education and Global Health; the Department for Economic Development, Gender, and Governance; the Civil Society Department; and the Department for Quality Assurance. Our study focuses on the branch of the Knowledge Bank and, in particular, on the subcategory of Research, Innovation, and Higher Education, to which NORHED belongs. This study will seek to offer a thicker presentation of the NORHED's

[8] The general legal framework that preordains foreign aid is found in Norwegian Government 2003/2015 and the annual budget is referenced under Norwegian Government 2017-18. For the purposes of accuracy, the Norwegian legal text reads as follows: "Regelverket er utarbeidet i henhold til § 6 i Reglement for økonomistyring i staten og kap. 6 i Bestemmelser om økonomistyring i staten. Regelverket gjelder for Norads forvaltning av Kap. post 160.75, og Kap. post 168.70 når denne benyttes i sammenheng med Kap. post 160.75. Reglement for og Bestemmelser om økonomistyring i staten er overordnet dette regelverk." Available at https://norad.no/globalassets/import-2162015-80434-am/www.norad.no-ny/filarkiv/regelverk-for-norads-tilskuddsordninger/regelverk-for-stotte-til-internasjonale-organisasjoner-og-nettverk.pdf?id=8313. See also Norwegian Government 2003-2015 and Norwegian Government 2017-2018.

thinking and acting profile by exploring the modalities of its activities, as well as the logic that underpin them. Simply put, the following sections seek to capture the pulse of this program, while simultaneously doing justice to both the theories and practices that are in play.

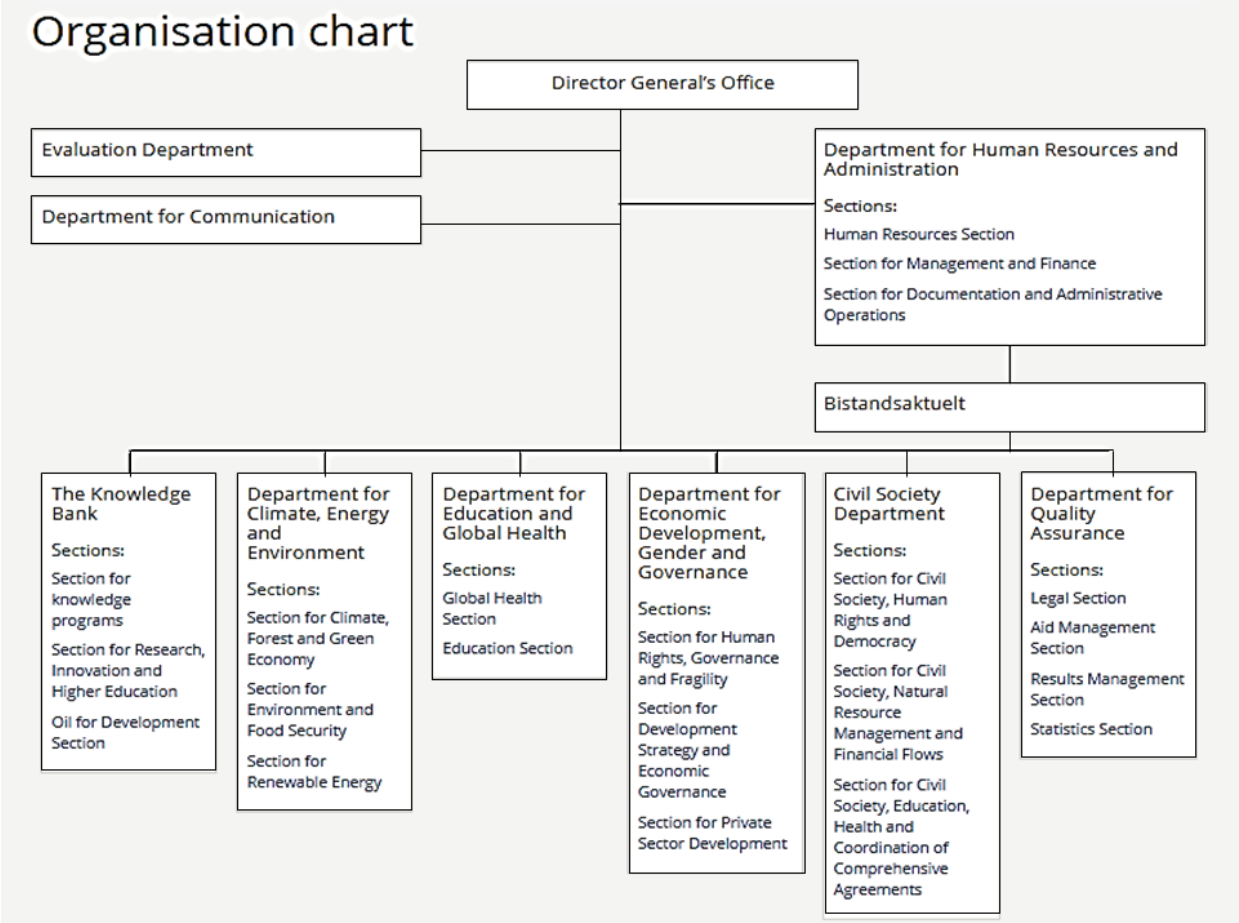

Figure 3: Organizational Chart of Norad. Retrieved from https://norad.no/en/front/about-norad/organisation-chart/

To further understand the operational conditions of NORHED, a few historical and administrative portfolio facts will afford us a better view inside the programme's workings. NORHED was launched in its present form in 2012 in an attempt to combine and reform the preceding initiatives of international capacity development of LMIC higher education, namely, NOMA (Norad's programme for Master's Studies) and NUFU (The Norwegian Programme for

Development, Research, and Education).[9] NORHED belongs, as described above, in the Knowledge Bank and features as a rather new but clearly high-profiled branch of Norad (patently distinct from the Department for Education and Global Health). The section currently consists of 11 employees, with 7 of them working directly on the NORHED portfolio.[10] What is more, NORHED cooperates directly with at least 50 contractually collaborating (5-year cooperation contracts) academics from all projects, which are the ones that undertake the management of the projects upon commission. NORHED manages a substantial portfolio of 50 projects of higher education, 45 of which are funded as part of the 2013 call for higher educational proposals in LMIC. This NORHED portfolio is divided into six thematic sub-programmes, including ones for a) health; b) education and training; c) natural resource management, climate change, and environment; d) democratic and economic governance; e) humanities, culture, media, and communication; and f) capacity development in South Sudan.

This portfolio pertains to a total budget of approximately NOK 756 million (appx. $100 million with 2018 value exchange rates), with its annual budget spanning up to 150 million NOK.[11] The budget frame for the individual projects of higher education institutions amount to numbers between 14–18 million NOK over a period of five years.

NORHED's sponsored projects are multifarious and currently include institutional partnerships from a wide variety of countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America. The exact list contains institutions from the following countries (in alphabetical order): Baglandesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Colombia, DR Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Myanmar,

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[9] NUFU lasted from 1991 to 2012. NOMA was created in 2006 and administered by SIU (Center for Internationalization of Higher Education), in an attempt to assure the quality of Masters programs in the South and corroborate the institutional capacity of the Southern partner universities. For a detailed analysis of the trajectory and results of NOMA, see the following portal, available at: https://www.siu.no/publikasjoner/Alle-publikasjoner/Norad-s-Programme-for-Master-Studies-Final-Report-2006-2014.

[10] The detailed list of employees is available at: https://www.norad.no/en/about-norad/employees/dept-climate-energy-environment/.

[11] The general legal framework that preordains foreign aid is found in Norwegian Government 2003/2015 and the annual budget is referenced under Norwegian Government 2017-18. For the purposes of accuracy, the Norwegian legal text reads as follows: "Regelverket er utarbeidet i henhold til § 6 i Reglement for økonomistyring i staten og kap. 6 i Bestemmelser om økonomistyring i staten. Regelverket gjelder for Norads forvaltning av Kap. post 160.75, og Kap. post 168.70 når denne benyttes i sammenheng med Kap. post 160.75. Reglement for og Bestemmelser om økonomistyring i staten er overordnet dette regelverk.". See also Norad 2016c.

Nicaragua, Nepal, Palestine, South Africa, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia, Zimbabwe. The breakdown of the 45 projects goes as following: 8 projects in education, 11 projects in health, 13 in natural resources management, 4 in democratic and economic governance, 6 in humanities, culture, and media communication, and 3 projects aimed at capacity building in South Sudan. Of the total of 53 academic programmes within the undertaken 45 projects, 16 are bachelor, 31 are master's, and 6 are PhD programmes. The map below (Figure 4) illustrates the global distribution of these projects.

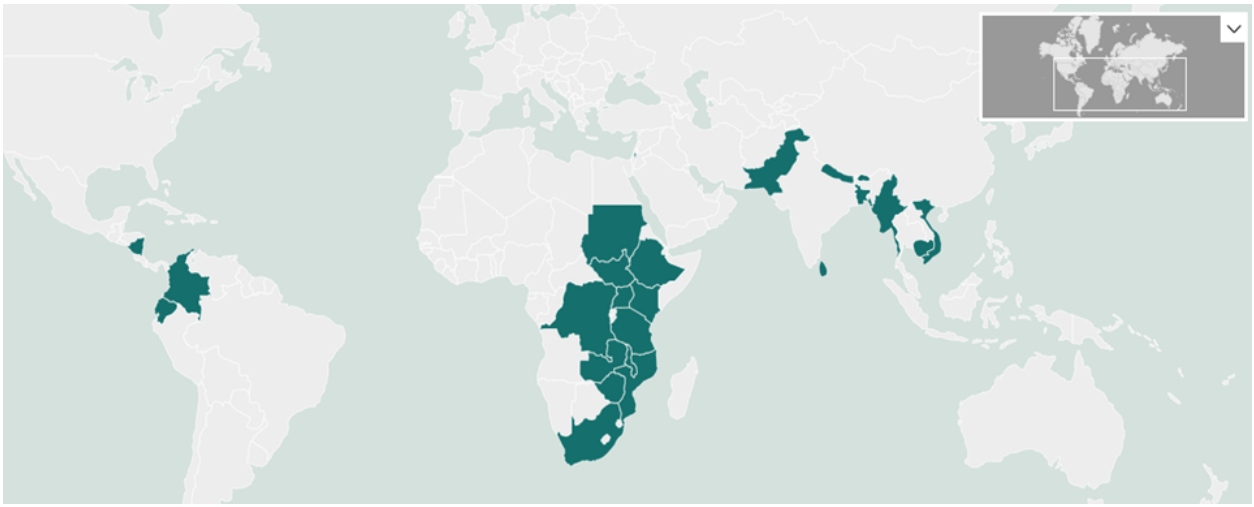

Figure 4: Map of NORHED Projects, Retrieved from https://norad.no/en/front/funding/NORHED/projects/#&sort=date)

With this portrait of NORHED's organizational environment in mind, let us know lay out our specific research questions.

1.4. The Research Question

The previous section offered an outline of the organizational rudiments of NORHED. However, to parse the logic, namely, the choices, values, and frames (Brunsson 2000, 2017; Kahneman and Tversky 1984, 2000) that underpin and animate these organizational rudiments, we inquired into the interpretative framework of our case study.[12] Consequently, this study is not concerned with

[12] For understanding the importance of interpretative intentions behind the study of organizational logics see Brunsson 2000, 2017; Kahneman and Tversky 1984, 2000 and, also, Tuchman 2009.

how to implement sustainable development, per se. Rather, its focus is on how organizations, and in particular a knowledge-oriented programme like NORHED, interpret and articulate sustainable development, and on how the way that they use its conceptual vocabulary can generate real effects on its implementation.

The overarching research question can then be phrased as follows:

How does NORHED interpret and articulate sustainable development in higher education?

This question ramifies into three subquestions:

> A) *How does NORHED interpret and articulate sustainable development in its official documentation?*
>
> B) *How does the NORHED's staff and collaborating academics interpret and articulate sustainable development?*
>
> C) *In what ways does NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development promote or hinder its mission of sustainable development?*

From the outset of this question, together with its subquestions, it becomes evident that the unit of analysis of this question is specific, namely, the unit of NORHED. As it will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4, the main data will come both from public-domain documents and from interviews with its officers and collaborating academics. On the one hand, in the documentary evidence from NORHED's public domain, there are 301 occurrences of the word variants relating to sustainable development in 17 documents that span about 1,000 pages, which is an average frequency of one variant every three pages. Moreover, in its flagship mission statement (Norad 2015a), the variants appear prominently in the organization's own construal of mission and value statements, as well as taking a prime position on its operationalization conduits, which demonstrates not only a commitment to the concept but also several clear instances of its interpretation and articulation. On the other hand, interviews with the officers and collaborating academics provided insights into NORHED's real-life interpretation of the concept and helped us to see how the organization positions itself within the larger debates surrounding sustainable development. This documentary and interview-based analysis demonstrates clearly the frequency, significance, and depth of NORHED's interpretation of sustainable development. In using this evidence to answer our research questions, we were able to bring forth the assumptions that underpin the notion of sustainable development within NORHED's articulated goals and evaluate whether these assumptions help or hinder change within the organization towards

fostering an environment of sustainable development among its partner institutions. Ultimately, the data we gathered allowed us first to answer in Chapter 4 whether these assumptions are the same as presented in the official documentation and the interviews, and then, in Chapter 5 whether NORHED's interpretation of sustainable development benefits or limits it in trying to enrich higher education environments. Last, in Chapter 6, we explored whether there are ways that NORHED can improve its interpretation toward achieving true and research-based sustainable development.

1.5. The Theoretical Orientation of this Study

This study positions itself within the case study protocol and endorses a qualitative vocabulary (i.e. discourse analysis), with a particular stance of philosophical pragmatism that binds the data to the context in order to analyze the empirical setting (Hollis 2011; Rorty 2017). It is informed by the critical realist research program that identifies patterns (Hollis 2011, with extensive bibliography). Regarding its underpinning philosophical and epistemological standpoint, this analysis is anchored in the philosophical program of pragmatism, namely, the research commitment to understand how beliefs in a given setting are tightly coupled with results (Rorty 2017). Philosophical pragmatism considers epistemological concerns a communal, contextual, and self-corrective cognitive activity. In simpler terms, then, pragmatism functions in this study as the endorsement of the pragmatist theory that works best in order to describe the specific, historically/linguistically bound phenomenon at hand, that is, the interpretation and articulation of sustainable development in higher education.

Chapter 2: Overview of Research

This section takes stock of the theoretical debate inherent to the pursuit of sustainable development, and in particular to the pursuit of sustainable development in higher education. First, we continue to analyze the background of the higher education debate outlined in Chapter 1.1 between an outcome-oriented approach based on rational choice theory (causality) and a process-oriented one based on capabilitarianism (indeterminacy). Then, we examine the theoretical underpinnings of the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development and how these might help to address the issues raised in the higher education debate discussed earlier in the chapter. In particular, we analyze how the epistemological tensions within sustainable development contain simultaneously both a "built to last", outcome-oriented approach and an iterative, process-oriented approach, with a goal being to balance the two, rather than choose one over the other. Finally, we discuss how this conceptual framework directly leads to our adoption of the heuristic for our analytical framework, namely, the "process versus outcome" heuristic. In providing this overview, we seek to outline how we will analyze the empirical data in Chapter 4, as well as to furnish a new and brief synthesis of an under-researched bibliographical landscape, in order to better parse NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development.

2.1. Theoretical Perspectives on Higher Education Institutions Facing Financial Scarcity

In order to account for the emergence of the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development within the discourse of higher education, let us begin by providing an overview of the debate. Perhaps the most apposite way to situate the debate is by probing into its history and look back at the rich scholarly debate in regards to empowering institutions that lack financial means (Arrow 1973; Arrow et al. 2000; Barr 2004; Birnbaum 1988; Blaug 1978; Becker 1964; Benhabib and Spiegel 1994; Brewer 2013; Burke 2002; Cloete and Bunting 2013; Cullingford and Blewitt 2004; Easterly 2001, 2002, 2003, 2006a, 2006b; 2008; Massy 1996; OECD 2012; Perlman 1973; Qian 2015; Sachs 2015a, 2015b; Sachs 1992; Shimeles 2016; Shafiq et al. 2018; Toutkoushian & Paulsen 2016; Ubels et al. 2010; Uetela 2015, 2017; World Bank 2000, 2015). From 1950 and onwards, this debate was subsumed under various labels, such as Institution Building,

Institutional Strengthening and Institutional Development, Human Resource Development, New Institutionalism and Capacity Building, and recently "Capacity Development" (Kühl 2009).[13]

These labels of developing higher education institutions under financial scarcity are standardly considered to stem from two divergent approaches, as outlined in Chapter 1.1. The first approach ensues from the rational choice theory, which in the context of higher education examines development through the lens of economic performance (Arrow 1973; Arrow et al. 2000; Barr 2004; Busch 2017). This construal found its moorings in higher education institutions around 1970 and with the massification of higher education (Dougherty and Natow 2015, Dougherty et al. 2016; OECD 2017:48; Trow 1975; Sarrico 2010; Stensaker and Harvey 2011). According to this school of thought, performance is associated with the agenda of modernization and economic progress (Cave et al. 1991; Chang 2000; Neave 1988) and is the combination of two measurable attributes: productivity and economic growth (Chang 2000; OECD 2017). In this paradigm, which displays affinities with the global script of academic capitalism (Slaughter and Leslie 1999; Cantwell et al. 2014), higher education development is approached quantitatively and in light of three values: economy, efficiency, effectiveness (Busch 2017; Espeland and Sauder 2016; Tuchman 2009). This approach interprets higher education as one of the many entities of the marketplace, which both requires capital investment and is expected to yield returns, be that public and private, as well as externalities for agents and their environment. Further, by some accounts in this paradigm, higher education is afforded with a prominent role in the attainment of this financial development and is deemed as the "engine of development" (Castells 1993, 2001), a machine of contradictions which may quantify and standardize its benchmarks for performance and maximize positive effects. The key word here is measurable: the notion that the outcomes of academic endeavors can be captured by indicators and metrics (Cave et al. 1991; Guimezanes 2015; Kingsbury et al. 2012; Morse 2004; Tuchman 2009). This

[13] Its latest name, Capacity Development is, like all its antecedent variants, a process of helping others to help themselves. Standard definitions span across several official attempts, which all converge towards the most cited OECD (2006: 12) definition of the concept as: "the ability of people, organizations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully."[3] In higher education, capacity development was particularly associated with the effort of international development agencies to invest in educational infrastructure, human resources, revised curricula, and overall research and teaching quality for higher education programs which attract student interest and are relevant for the local and global labor markets, while endowing students and faculty members with freedom to navigate towards new educational paths.

approach of indicative metrics for performance follows the principles of rational choice theory, focusing on utility maximization and ordinal choice predictability in behavior. Higher education is one of the areas where economic development and productivity emerges through the development of work-related skills, capacities, and intellectual outputs. These outputs are in turn transferred into both public knowledge and intellectual property, which consequently impact individual and collective outcomes, such as financial products and economic growth. By most scholarly accounts, this perspective has the stronger hand in accounting for how a university system develops (Espeland and Sauder 2016; OECD 2017; World Bank 2017). The appeal of this perspective, according to most accounts, has been attributed to its deliverables: measurability, accountability, and predictability (Espeland and Sauder 2016; Hartley 1995; Jackson 2017; Mulgan 2000; Nadeem et al. 2018; OECD 2017).

The second scholarly ramification on the issue of development in higher education environments, commonly defined as capabilitarianism (Adriansen et al. 2017; Alexander 2016; Breidlid 2013; Halvorsen and Nossum 2017; Nussbaum 2011; Richardson 2007, Robeyns 2003, 2005, 2006, 2009, 2018; Schokkaert 2007, 2009; Sen 1977, 1993, 1999; Varoufakis 1991, 2014), challenges this quantifiable and context-free, rational interpretation of the higher education environments via economic performance or its metrics. Rather, it pays attention to the linguistic and historical conditions which underpin performance. It attributes existing academic discourses and paradigms of higher education development as a power play, which is historically and linguistically enveloped, and which should be treated with suspicion (Adriansen et al. 2017; Alexander 2016; Breidlid 2013; Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010; Easterly 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Halvorsen and Nossum 2107; Haq 1976, 1995; Isenman and Shkow 2010; Kingsbury et al. 2012; Kothari 2005; Kumar 2017; Lancaster 1999; McAuslan 2003; McEwan 2009; Nussbaum 2003, 2011; Spivak and Harasym 1990; Sumner and Tribe 2008; Contra Banerjee 2007; Kenny 2011). This theoretical approach considers higher education's financial development, and any form of development, as largely a variant of colonialism and hierarchical primitivism, riddled with internal contradictions, unconfirmed assumptions, partiality, and a pernicious track record (Adriansen et al. 2017; Alexander 2016; Breidlid 2013; Qian 2015; Ramalingam 2013; Shimeles 2016). The specific discontents with the rational choice school of thought in developing higher education environments span from concerns about oppression, top-down decision-making, disregard for local values, quick fixes/best practices that are inapplicable to different contexts, educational ineffectiveness, and, occasionally, brain drain (Asongu 2016; Adriansen et al. 2017;

Breidlid 2013; Halvorsen and Nossum 2017). In fact, this side of the higher education debate posits that the failures are not just circumstantial to the context, but rather that they inhere to the very project of development, which, due to power and information asymmetries, is intrinsically conditioned to overlook or disregard local choices, historical values, path-dependencies, and frames, which leads to its eventual failure (Asongu 2016; Bovard 1986; Crost et al. 2014; Currie-Alder et al. 2014; Dijkstra 2005; Djankov et al. 2008; Gary 2010; Easterly 2001, 2002, 2003; 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Esteva 1992; Hobart 1993; Horsthemke 2009; Koch 2017; Koch and Weingart 2016; Kothari 2005; Kumar 2017; Lahiri 2009; Lancaster 1999; Levy and Fukuyama 2010; Martinussen 1997; McAuslan 2003; McEwan 2009; McNeil 2007; Moyo 2009; Polman 2013; Ramlingam 2013; Ridell 1999; Ridell 2007; Shimeles 2016; Sumner and Glennie 2015; Sumner and Tribe 2008; Teferra 2014; Toye 1987; Uetela 2015, 2017; Ulvin 2001; van de Waller 1999; Walz and Ramachandran 2011; Whitfield 2009; Whitfield and Fraser 2009).

Both research threads display strong intellectual merits. On the one hand, we find the context-free, ahistorical, apolitical, elegant, technically sophisticated language of the indicative metrics and quantifiable parameters of rational choice theory. This theoretical perspective promotes outcomes and practical results in higher education. It crystalizes questions, it simplifies, and it promotes initial cognitive engagement (see e.g. Furnham and Marks 2013; Kahneman 2011; Pinker 1997). Moreover, it can allow for real-life operationalization, since it seeks to identify and handle causes and effects (Elster 1984, 1989, 2015, 2016; Hollis 2010, 2011). On the other hand, we find the language of capabilitarianism, where the activities for the development of higher education lend themselves to analysis only through language and historical contingency. This perspective promotes reflection and open-endedness. It casts a critical light on chains of causality, while it challenges established formulas of predictability between cause and effect in real time. And it commits to identifying the logical fallacies, argumentative leaps, and erroneous evidence that occur in the rational model of higher education development. Variants of this debate have imported great contributions to what constitutes development and progress through higher education. Knowledge of mental and affective states which defy Western translatability (e.g. Ubuntu) (see e.g. Breidlid 2013), knowledge of historical and linguistic circumstances that create persistent mental frameworks and social effects, knowledge about cultural harmony and cultural dissent in conditions of lasting civil conflict, knowledge about the limits of altruism and solidarity in knowledge communities, and knowledge about the limits of rigor and replicability regarding best practices in teaching, learning, and research constitute some of the many

contributions of this school of thought (Alexander 2016; Brinkerhoff and Morgan 2010; Easterly 2006a, 2006b, 2008; Guimezanes 2015; Halvorsen and Nossum 2017; Ramalingam 2013; Ridell 1999; Ridell 2007; Rist 1997; Shimeles 2016; Sumner and Glennie 2015; Sumner and Tribe 2008; Teferra 2014; Toye 1987; Uetela 2015, 2017; Ulvin 2001; van de Waller 1999; Walz and Ramachandran 2011; Whitfield 2009; Whitfield and Fraser 2009).

Fundamentally, however, these two basic perspectives clash. And their conflict can be traced back to their orientation regarding the nature of causality and, in the final analysis, rationality (Adorno and Horkheimer 2016; Choi et al. 2014; Green 1996; Elster 1989, 2015, 2016; Halpern 2003; Hollis 2010, 2011; Nozick 1993; Sen 1977, 1995; Stanovich 1999; Stanovich and West 2000; Varoufakis 1991, 2014). Rational choice theory, on the one hand, approaches theory as an explanatory mechanism which identifies chains of cause and effect. This perspective endorses strong notions of causal, explanatory, and predictive power. On the other hand, capabilitarianism dismisses strong claims of causality and predictability. It is primarily concerned with theory as a tool for understanding, not explaining (see Hollis 2011; Sen 1977; 1995). It is dialectic and aporetic. It seeks refinement and iterative correction, but it has no claims to finality or prediction. In light of this fundamental disagreement between causal explanation and dialectic understanding, these two basic perspectives have generated the two persistently divergent bodies of research regarding their construal and bearings on the development of higher education systems which are financially constrained.

2.2. The Conceptual Vocabulary of Sustainable Development

The conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development offers international development agencies, including those who are concerned with higher education, a new way to address the aforementioned clash of the perspectives between rational choice and capabilitarianism. In order to see how sustainable development engendered a vocabulary that fits within the debate within higher education, it is necessary to briefly examine the origins of this conceptual trajectory. Caradonna (2014:7) provides an illuminating tour of the historical trajectory of the word, noting that:

> From Latin, the word passed to Old French as *sostenir* and then to modern French as *soutenir*. [...] From French, the word passed to English as the verb 'to sustain' and was in widespread usage by the Early Modern Period; it can be found in John Evelyn's influential treatise called *Sylva* (1664), for instance. The Oxford English Dictionary states that the adjective "sustainable"

> entered common usage in 1965 via an economics dictionary that used the phrase 'sustainable growth'.

What is important for our purposes here is the last sentence of this quotation. The idea of "sustainable" entered common usage via the discourse of economics. Emerging from this economically infused setting, the conceptual vocabulary of "sustainable development" has come to separate itself from economic growth and its rational underpinnings (Caradonna 2014, 2018; Jackson 2017; Jacques 2015; Sen 1984; Sumner and Glennie 2015). Its very first appearance on the international public stage came in the World Charter for Nature (United Nations 1982), in an attempt to assuage environmental concerns and "reconcile two seemingly contrasting paradigms: lasting economic growth and an efficient protection of environment" (Hák et al. 2016: 565). First hesitantly (Borowy 2014) and then with progressively greater urgency, the international community, with the United Nations as its spearhead, fully endorsed the notion in the World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995 (United Nations 1995), and has recently announced the forthcoming decades (most recently at the Rio + 20 outcome document "The Future We Want" [United Nations 2012]) as the Age of Sustainable Development, affording the notion utmost priority in both international and domestic affairs.

Sustainable development is directly and primarily linked by many to environmental concerns. However, the concept itself has invited many interpretations that speak to an epistemological difficulty of its very interpretation. As Becker and Jahn (1999: 29) summatively note, sustainable development is not "a well-defined concept" but "a contested discursive field" that attempts to articulate an interconnection between environment, society, and the economy.[14] Beyond being a "contested discursive field" in terms of its definition, the concept is just as contested in terms of

[14] Conway (1987: 96) defines sustainable development as "the net productivity of biomass (positive mass balance per unit area per unit time) maintained over decades to centuries". Turner 1988: 12 "In principle, such an optimal (sustainable growth) policy would seek to maintain an "acceptable" rate of growth in per-capita real incomes without depleting the national capital asset stock or the natural environmental asset stock". Jacques 2015: 19 defines sustainable development as follows: "the imperfect process of building and maintaining global social systems of capable, accountable, adaptive, just, and free people who can make important decisions and trade-offs with foresight and prudence and who foster the robust, self-organizing, dynamic, and complex ecosystems around the world for now and for future generations". Dryzek 2013: 16 defines sustainable development loosely and in a fragmentary fashion as a "imaginative and reformist" discourse that attempts to eliminate the conflict between economic and environmental values. For him, it is a discourse (i.e. a way of talking about a body of knowledge that takes place over time and generates categories of what is true) and not a model or a system. Hjorth and Bagheri 2006: 74 define sustainable development as a "moving target" which changes direction according to its actor.

the interpretation of its vocabulary.[15] What gives sustainable development power as a conceptual vocabulary is that it is a paradox in which it is both static but also moving, development but also developing. Is it *sustainable* development as a process that continues to develop? Or is it sustainable *development* as in development as a goal that once reached must be sustained? In fact, true sustainable development is "a contradiction in terms, because genuine sustainability and genuine development would be irreconcilable. [...] It should be remembered that, in the concept of sustainable development, 'sustainability' is what conditions 'development', not vice versa" (Kim and Bosselmann 2015: 197).[16] In other words, this paradox of sustainable development is an intellectual exercise into a precarious balancing of two seemingly contradictory approaches along a spectrum between a development which prescribes its outcomes and a moving, adaptive process which needs continuous updating.

As far as the outcome-oriented approach is concerned, this can be summed up in Atkinson's (1999: 3) definition of sustainable development as "development that lasts". This "built to last" school of thought is foregrounded on the assumption that sustainable development is about designing and reaching prescribed outcomes that have a "lasting impact" (UN 2011). For instance, the Fairtrade Foundation (2015, cited in Stafford-Smith et al. 2017: 914) speaks of designing "trade systems with sustainable development in mind" in order to "deliver a lasting impact". The goal in this approach to interpreting sustainable development is to build a system that is sustainable when achieved. Such a system would need to be carefully designed as to predictably deliver stable and reliable results in the future, without compromising the present. As Ramirez (2014: 39) suggests, "the goals we set and eventually monitor and evaluate must be measurable, realistic, objective, and based on the element of time." This approach can be best

[15] Banerjee 2003: 174 is perhaps the most avid critic of sustainable development as a disguise for economic concerns "Current development patterns (even those touted as 'sustainable') disrupt social system and ecosystem relations rather than ensuring that natural resource use by local communities meets their basic needs at a level of comfort that is satisfactory as assessed by those same communities. What is needed is not a common future but the future as commons". Ratner 2004: 53 acknowledges the problem in the same way "When advocates use the term [sustainable development] to mean 'sustained growth', 'sustained change' or simply 'successful' development, then it has little meaning, especially when development is considered as growth in material consumption. More meaningful interpretations are multidimensional, often distinguishing among social goals (including justice, participation, equality, empowerment, institutional sustainability and cultural integrity), ecological goals (including biodiversity preservation, ecosystem resilience and resource conservation) and economic goals".

[16] See also O'Riordan 1995: 21 "'sustainable development's' very ambiguity enables it to transcend the tensions inherent in its meaning".

encapsulated by Sachs's (2015) manifesto on sustainable development where he issues the challenge: "Let us build a world of sustainable development" (Sachs 2015: iii).

The other side of the interpretative spectrum, the iterative, process-oriented approach, sees sustainable development as an "imperfect process", one of "building and maintaining global social systems of capable, accountable, adaptive, just, and free people … who foster the robust, self-organizing, dynamic, and complex ecosystems around the world for now and for future generations" (Jacques 2015: 19). This approach to interpreting sustainable development is "adaptive" and does not seek something that is "built to last" but is itself always evolving. Sustainable development is a "imaginative and reformist" discourse (Dryzek (2013: 16)), i.e. a way of talking about a body of knowledge that takes place over time and generates categories of what is true, and not a model or a system. It is, simply put, a "moving target", one that changes direction according to its actor (Hjorth and Bagheri 2006: 74). Rome might not have been built in a day, but as Jacques points out, it also was not built with sustainable development in mind (2015: 16-17).[17] To put it bluntly, then, all of Rome's marble and promised stability of stone, a true "built to last" approach, was not able to anticipate the societal, cultural, and economic upheaval that led to its decline. And in that sense the attempt to build something that lasts, something that seems sustainable, is in fact not approaching the issue sustainably at all.

Although these two approaches might seem irreconcilable, the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development actually allows one to have it both ways. The inherent tension is in fact a source of strength, as it enables and allows the creative space for one to include simultaneously and also, more importantly, to balance an approach that looks to an end result with one that looks to the process (Kim and Bosselmann 2015). These theoretical underpinnings are what give sustainable development the ability to renegotiate the interconnection between competing factors (e.g. environment, society, gender equality, wealth disparity, the economy) towards a new balance that transcends past divisions and blindspots of humanity, a so-called "'metafix' that unites diverse people" (Bosselman 2001: 171) and attempts to improve society for now and the

[17] See also Jacques 2015: 43 "Rome became a classic example of social collapse. Such collapse has occurred with regularity across human history and often with breathtaking and shocking velocity. Societies can appear stable, just as a forest appears stable before a forest fire, but then at unpredictable times, small changes can hurl the society into chaos and disintegration. Causes for these social collapses are typically overlapping economic, social, and ecological problems."

future. It is precisely because the two sides of the interpretative spectrum, outcome-oriented vs. process-oriented, construct sustainable development differently, as built to last or iterative, that makes its conceptual vocabulary so amenable to being translated into the context of higher education, and especially in university environments under financial scarcity, that was discussed in section 2.1.

Certainly, the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development has not fully escaped the attention of higher education discourse.[18] On the one hand, several accounts have construed this notion as a way of making educational practices more attuned to improving the literacy of sustainable development to attain existing learning structures and their learning outcomes (Rieckmann 2012, Shephard 2015; Svanström et al. 2008). On the other hand, new and emergent accounts of sustainable development configure this notion as something that has real revamping value to higher education, namely, a process that can entirely transform the outlook in the very foundations of how we approach higher education as an environment currently facing challenges (Barth 2015; de la Harpe and Thomas 2009; Higgins and Thomas 2016). It has initiated environmental and climate concerns in the standard debate between economic development and egalitarianism. The environment, according to this approach, is promoted as a first-order priority of higher education, which envelops and subordinates economic and egalitarian concerns (Barth 2015; Caradonna 2014; Jacques 2015; Miller 2013). In other words, sustainable development in

[18] The Talloires Declaration (1990) was, historically, the first official statement by university administration that expressed a commitment to sustainability in teaching and research in higher education, signed by over 500 university leaders in 50 countries. The following declarations and charters supported higher education have followed: The 1991 Halifax Declaration, 1992 Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development; Agenda 21, Chapter 36: Promoting Education, Public Awareness and Training. 1992 Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future founded. 1993 Kyoto Declaration, International Association of Universities Ninth Round Table, Japan. 1993 Swansea Declaration, Association of Commonwealth Universities' Fifteenth Quinquennial Conference, Wales. 1993 COPERNICUS University Charter, Conference of European Rectors (CRE). 1994 The Earth Charter 1996 Ball State University Greening of the Campus conference was held. Since then conferences were held in 1997, 1999, and 2001. 1997 Thessaloniki Declaration, International Conference on Environment and Society: Education and Public Awareness for Sustainability, Greece. 1999 Environmental Management for Sustainable Universities conference first held in Sweden. Following conferences in 2002 (South Africa), 2004 (Mexico), and 2006 (U.S.A.). 2000 Global Higher Education for Sustainability Partnership (GHESP) 2001 Lüneburg Declaration on Higher Education for Sustainable Development, Germany. 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa (Type 1 outcome: decade of education for sustainable development; Civil Society outcome: the Ubuntu Declaration) 2004 Declaration of Barcelona; 2005 Start of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). In a similar line, UNESCO (2005) initiated the UN Decade of Sustainable Development towards integrating and effectuating the values of sustainable development in all aspects of education. The source is adapted from Wright 2004. For a rich debate on sustainability declarations in higher education see Sylvestre et al. 2013.

higher education challenges a strictly anthropocentric view of human enterprises. At the same time, the conceptual vocabulary has revised the questions of disciplinarity and loyalty to "academic tribes and territories" (Becher and Trowler 2011) and all their allegiance to short-term interest groups (Barth 2013, 2015, de la Harpe and Thomas 2009; Higgins and Thomas 2016; Kezar 2012). The arguments in favor of sustainable development maintain that in light of the current and unforeseen technological advances with regard to knowledge velocity, knowledge accumulation, and knowledge accessibility sustainable development approaches the field of knowledge holistically and seeks to revise the quality of higher education by means of accounting for these technological advances (Higgins and Thomas 2016; Sterling 2009; Shephard 2015).[19]

In sum, the use of the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development in higher education remains emergent, but the potential to resolve the issues facing higher education with financial scarcity institutions has been noted. While the different ways that institutions adopt this vocabulary demonstrates that a consensus has not yet been reached, and the execution of which has still not been fully developed, it is easy to foresee the advantages of combining an outcome-oriented and process-oriented approach to address the ongoing debate between rational choice theory and capabilitarianism discussed above.

2.3. The Analytical Framework

To operationalize the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development for a higher education context, and, ultimately, in order to answer our research questions, we are using the heuristic tools from a salient category of analysis in sustainable development, namely, the process versus outcome orientation heuristic (Bosselman 2001; Göpel 2016; Kim and Bosselmann 2015;

[19] Certainly, the bearings of these two contributions of sustainable development in higher education environments have been occasionally noted in certain lines of scholarship scholarship (See Barth 2015; Beynaghi et al. 2016; Evans 2018, with extensive bibliography; Trencher et al. 2014). Ideas from education for sustainable development (ESD) pedagogies (Barth 2015), interdisciplinarity (Lattuca et al. 2004) and Mode 2 knowledge curricula (de la Harpe and Thomas 2009; Higgins and Thomas 2016; Kezar 2012, 2014), or constructive alignment (Christie and Miller 2018) have been investigated as thought experiments for how to bring to bear future sustainability scenarios for sustainable universities. However, like with all discourses seeking to transcend their limitations, the scholarly community still lack a clear orientation on exactly what a higher education environment which promotes sustainable development should look like in practice (Baker-Shelley et al. 2017; Velazquez et al. 2005).

Schneidewind 2013). As it has been argued in several bodies of research, and most saliently in cognitive psychology and organizational studies (Kahneman 2003, 2011; Pham and Taylor 1999), there is a strong division between processual and outcome-driven orientations in the perception of a task. According to this fundamental distinction, processes are iterative exercises in focusing on the steps that one must go through to achieve that goal (Pham and Taylor 1999: 251), while outcome-driven orientations are exercises in "envisioning him- or herself in the desired end state" and visualizing the end-result of a process.[20] In other words, the distinction between process and outcomes orientations conveys a difference between the focus and priority in attention as much as the potential enactment itself. Agents who decide to act may possess the exact same motor skills and cognitive bandwidth in the performance of a task. However, the shift in focus between outcome and process relays a distinction regarding expectations and rhetorical room for maneuvering the activity itself. And this shift in expectations and rhetorical positioning can bear real consequences in the execution of the task by the same agent.[21] Simply put then, the same acting agent can deliver two different results, depending on the processual or outcome-oriented focus of the activity.

[20] For a more detailed account of these two fundamentally different approaches to thought and action, see the magisterial study of Pham and Taylor 1999: 251 "At least two types of mental simulations may be distinguished conceptually: outcome simulation and process simulation. Outcome simulation involves mental simulation as a goal rehearsal or goal-setting technique. This approach maintains that envisioning the outcome that one wants to achieve may facilitate efforts to achieve the goal or enhance perceptions of self-efficacy. Thus, for example, a student who imagines herself as a successful surgeon may be more likely to see the goal as within her reach and be more motivated to achieve her goal of becoming a surgeon than one who does not rehearse that vision. This approach espouses an I can do it effect of outcome simulation on goal pursuit and has been popularized in a variety of self-help techniques in goal-setting and time management… Research on mental practice embodies a second approach to mental simulation that emphasizes process. From this perspective, the simulation of the process leading up to a desired outcome may enable a person to achieve his or her goal. According to this viewpoint, a student who wishes to become a surgeon would improve his or her chances by mentally simulating the steps he or she must go through to achieve that goal rather than envisioning him- or herself in the desired end state. Process simulations may enhance goal achievement by helping people construct viable and effective plans of action to reach their goals, ultimately prompting goal-directed actions."

[21] Pham and Taylor 1999:252 "Specifically, by making the goal salient, outcome simulation may lead people to identify their actions at a high level, whereas process simulation, which focuses on the individual steps to reach the goal, may lead people to identify their actions at lower levels. Lower level action is thought to facilitate performance on complex and difficult tasks.'

This analytical distinction between processes and outcomes has not gone unnoticed in the scholarship on sustainable development. Rather, by its very nature, sustainable development is underpinned by the same analytical division:

> For an analytical approach it is important to make this explicit and not conflate process-design with desired outcome. One is descriptive and the other one normative: transformation is a qualitative degree of change that might happen in a system, and research seeks to describe typical patterns of such change processes so that they can be understood or at best guided (Göpel 2016: 2-3).

Göpel's framing of the approach to sustainable development here communicates a recurrent pattern of division in the scholarship of sustainable development. On the one hand, a focus on the process of sustainable development is descriptive, namely, focused on outlining the observed degree of change in a given system. On the contrary, a focus on outcomes is normative, namely, a referent to how things should be, not how they truly are. Normative standards, alternatively dubbed as "positive" standards (Friedman 1953; Elster 1989), surface accepted protocols and patterns that are surrounded by "social or peer opprobrium" (Sunstein 1996) but are not necessarily correct or factually bolstered (Elster 1989, 2015; Sunstein 1996, 2008, 2011). In fact, normative beliefs can steer towards value-judgments and subjective assessments, which, in turn, can polarize debates on complex issues such as sustainable development and climate change (Jackson 2017; Sunstein 2008, 2011; Moore 2015).[22] However, these two approaches are not irreconcilable (Elster 1989; Moore 2015). To be sure, this distinction is arguably between two ideal types, which represent crystalized dichotomies more than unequivocal empirical realities. In the final analysis, however, the two orientations can complement and reinforce each other, providing a spectrum of possible interpretative positions.

This analytical framework emanates directly from the conceptual framework discussed in the previous sections of this chapter, that is, the notion that sustainable development has the conceptual vocabulary to address the tension within the debate of developing higher education institutions facing financial scarcity. Within the bounds of this analytical framework, we

[22] Curran 2009: 8 "The evolution of environmental strategies over the years has moved from a single medium, regulatory strategy to one that aims for sustainability across all media for the short and long term. In this movement, environmental managers have begun to realize the need to look holistically at the impacts of products and processes from cradle-to-grave (or cradle-to-cradle, as it is sometimes called)."

examine where NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development falls along the interpretative spectrum between process-oriented and outcome-oriented (Bosselman 2001; Kim and Bosselmann 2015; Schneidewind 2013: 83).[23] On the one side of the spectrum, we would expect, due to accountability expectations and legitimacy concerns, the documentation of NORHED to demonstrate a focus on outcome-oriented rhetorical choices that shift the weight more into the vocabulary of causality and rational agency, which emphasise rhetorical choices about predictability, causality, certainty, and closure. On the other side of the spectrum, we would expect the interviews to show a propensity towards the indeterminacy and prospective thinking, which squares with the agenda of capabilitarianism, namely, the articulation of freedom and iteration. In other words, then, the interviews could be construed as a way to understand the extent to which formal descriptions are endorsed and internalized into the organization (on such strategies see e.g. Brunsson 2017, with extensive bibliography).

To test these expectations, our first step relates to our first research question. We look at documentary realities in order to test to what degree they communicate a priority on outcomes. In that way, we seek to parse how the documents construe sustainable development as an end result. Our second step, in correspondence to our second research question, scrutinizes the interview data from our empirical setting. In particular, this step seeks to determine how the interviewees construe sustainable development in real life. The third and final step of our analysis is to provide a thorough assessment of the range of convergence between the two sets of empirical data. Ultimately, this analysis of the data will allow us to understand the complex nature of NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development, which is made difficult by the need to think simultaneously both about the end and about the process used to achieve that end, in order to attain "genuine" sustainable development (Kim and Bosselmann 2015: 197).

[23] See e.g. Schneidewind 2013: 83, who construes sustainable development as a "transformative literacy": "the ability to read and utilize information about societal transformation processes, to accordingly interpret and get actively involved in these processes").

To equitably assess this range of interpretations and articulations of sustainable development by NORHED, the following section will provide the methodological grounds upon which this study is based.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter presents and argues for the methodological design of this study. First, it attempts to articulate the ways in which its choice of the qualitative method of a single case study accounts for the research topic it seeks to pursue, namely, the interpretation of sustainable development in NORHED. It then proceeds in analyzing the means (methodological techniques) by which the research questions and research objectives of the study are achieved, and subsequently explicates the procedural issues and limitations that govern its qualitative, explorative design.

3.1. Research Design for this Study: The Qualitative Single Case Study

As chapter one of our introduction made clear, our topic of inquiry is the interpretation of sustainable development of higher education in the empirical setting of NORHED. NORHED is a new, real-life organizational environment, with rule-bound, enacted practices and a predefined scope of activities (see most characteristically Norad 2015a). Moreover, as a new real-life empirical context, NORHED has remained rather unexplored and understudied (Norad 2018; notable exception Halvorsen and Nossum 2017), and can consequently invite intensive, focused analysis, which may, in turn, lead to building new theories or perspectives about the phenomenon at hand, namely, the interpretation of sustainable development.

Given this background, this study undertook a qualitative, single case study design. Let us analyze those two modifiers separately. Qualitative is an approach that allows for surfacing a multitude of interpretations in a hermeneutic process that is explorative, that is, admitting theoretical approaches as iterative and bound to contexts.[24] Regarding the choice of a qualitative vocabulary in this context, this choice is mandated primarily from the interpretative subject

[24] Nelson et al. 1992: 4 define qualitative research as follows: "Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities, as well as the social and the physical sciences…Qualitative research embraces two tensions at the same time. On the one hand, it draws to a broad, interpretive, post-experimental, postmodern, feminist, and critical sensibility. On the other hand, it is drawn to more narrowly define positivist, post-positivist, humanistic, and naturalistic conceptions of human experience and its analysis. Furthermore, these tensions can be combined in the same project, bringing both postmodern and naturalistic, or both critical and humanistic, perspectives to bear." For an excellent introduction to the definitional topic of qualitative research see Lincoln and Denzin 2013, with extensive bibliography. For further, detailed studies on the potential and prospects of qualitative inquiry see Denzin and Giardina 2008, 2015; Dennis et al. 2013; Guba and Lincoln 2005; Patton 2002; Tracy 2010. The classical study on this however is from Eco 1981.

matter of this study. Sustainable development in the higher education environments under financial scarcity is a particular, historically and linguistically imparted, specific, understudied, complex, contemporaneous, real-life and context-bound process.

A qualitative approach is a necessary, then, but not sufficient qualifier in and of itself for the research strategy of this study. Admittedly, qualitative strategies ramify further into several design protocols, such as ethnography, narrative analysis, phenomenology, grounded theory and qualitative case studies, all of which seek to offer a contextual, interpretative, and constructivist approach to a phenomenon (Creswell 2007; Meriam and Tisdell 2016). However, for this particular research subject, which is emergent, predefined in scope, and on the fringe of the research spectrum, the single case study offered the most fertile approach.

To explore the fertility of the case study, the most telling and sophisticated definition of a single case study is provided by Gerring (2017: 29): "A case study is an intensive study of a single case or a small number of cases which draws on observational data and promises to shed light on a larger population of cases." Gerring, who seeks to revise and synthesize the definitions by Yin (2013), Gomm et al. (2000), and Bryman (2011),[25] argues that a case study is intensive, observational, and illuminating, while it observes a phenomenon in its own context. In other words, a case study is definitely detailed, intensive, and small in scope, while simultaneously edifying.[26] It makes sense of a specific aspect of a phenomenon in its chronological condition

[25] Yin (2013: 13), who has contributed the most often-cited definition of the case study, defines it as "an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". This is a necessary but not sufficient definition. For Yin, a case study emerges as a pertinent research design when the context and the topic of inquiry are in a symbiotic relationship and evidence is required in order to shed light on the particular phenomenon, as inflected in broader situational contexts. However, scholarship has met a lot of opposition, for very few, if any, phenomena are deemed context-free. A case study is enmeshed in the context, but that is not all there is to a case study. A second definition, by Gomm et al. (2000) define the key characteristics of the case study as "the collection of a large amount of detailed information about a limited number of units of analysis. Case study researchers construct cases out of naturally occurring social situations." This definition gives a second necessary condition about the case study: detail about the particular. However, naturally occurring social situations are still situations which do not outline what is the expected relationship with the topic of inquiry. A combination of this definition is followed and nuanced by Bryman (2011) who considers case study as a specific location, which emphasizes the intensive examination of the setting (Bryman 2011: 67): "The most common use of the term 'case' associates the case study with a location, such as a community or organization. The emphasis tends to be upon an intensive examination of the setting." For a comprehensive debate, see also Gerring 2012.

[26] The early study of Kazdin 1982 on the single case study reflects exactly the same spirit of the case study as with Gerring 2017 (but just with greater caution about generalization) for narrower epiphenomena.

and with empirical means, which could otherwise go unattended while allowing for an intense, deeper examination of its nature. And ultimately, it pushes the boundaries of knowledge of an area in an intensive, focused way, which allows new and meaningful theoretical inferences.

This qualitative, single case study method was selected due to the need to investigate a context-bound, empirical phenomenon in its real-life context (i.e NORHED, a real-life program in an organization), in which the dissociation between the phenomenon and the context was not evident or effortless, while the investigation itself can bear exploratory and interpretative ambitions for the analysis of other cases. Its single case design draws its strength from its rationale, namely, its emphasis on analytic intensity, descriptive detail, and, ultimately, depth. Its purpose is to draw attention to sustainable development in higher education from an empirical standpoint and provide insight into implicit particulars of this broader social phenomenon, which could not only problematize standard assumptions, but also inspire other work, or, eventually, generate a new sort of model or theory (Gerring 2017; Leiulfsrud and Sohlberg 2018; Stake 2005). The end goal of this case study was to provide deeper insight into the interpretations that inhere in NORHED and allow for a meaningful interpretation of the patterns that emerged.

3.2. Methodological Techniques

This single case study of sustainable development in the context of NORHED was carried out based on two established methodological techniques, namely, document analysis and interview data analysis. The two methodological techniques were chosen due to their reinforcing complementarity and the fact that are standardly deemed as the most appropriate ways of conducting interpretive and explorative studies (Bryman 2011; Denzin and Giardina 2008, 2015; Dennis et al. 2013; Gerring 2017; Gomm et al. 2000; Guba and Lincoln 2005; Patton 2002; Tracy 2010; Yin 2013).

3.2.1. Document Analysis

Document analysis is an acclaimed technique in qualitative inquiry, as it includes “texts and images that have been recorded without the researcher’s intervention” (Bowen 2009:27; see also Atkinson and Coffey 1997:47, who refer to “documents as facts, which are produced, shared, and used in socially organized ways). According to standard bibliographical studies on the issue, document analysis provides several advantages and drawbacks (Atkinson and Coffey 1997;

Bowen 2009; Bryman 2011). Regarding the advantages, documents have the ability to indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomenon under scrutiny (Atkinson and Coffey 1997; Bowen 2009; Bryman 2011). Second, due to their nature, documents are an invaluable means for tracking change and development (Bowen 2009). Further advantages include efficiency (they are less time and energy-consuming to retrieve than other research methods), stability (i.e. lack of obtrusiveness and reactivity), vast coverage (they can span along a long span of time, events, and settings) and exactness (they can offer minute and exact details) which are otherwise difficult to retrieve from memory. The drawbacks may standardly include low retrievability (organizations may block or hamper access) or biased selectivity (documents and details being manipulated, reframed in a way that does not do justice to the context) (Atkinson and Coffey 1997; Bowen 2009; Bryman 2011).

For the purposes of this study, document analysis was selected as the first method of investigation for two reasons. First, because NORHED, as being vested in the organizational bounds of Norad, displays an abundance of programme documents (Norad 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c. 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, Norad and SiU 2011), all of which are online and in the public domain. These documents include not only organizational self-presentations but also, and perhaps most importantly, external assessments and evaluations. These external evaluations were conducted with a mid-range, longitudinal design and included thorough triangulation with interviews across NORHED and its partners. In other words, the documents analyzed under the umbrella of NORHED's organization embed various strategies and rival discourses, which allow an open and credible debate about the current processes and operations of NORHED.

The second reason why document analysis was preferred was due to the interpretative intentions of this study. In that sense, and unlike contexts of orality, documents represent effortful, deliberative, and pupil-dilating exercises in cognition, which signify effort, cognitive load, executive attention to thought, and commitment (Eco 1981; Kahneman 2011; Levy and Ransdell 1995; Pinker 1997; Piolat et al. 2005; Mullainathan and Shafir 2013), which other media of thought transmission do not share to the same extent. In other words, written documents can be the outcomes of the highest form of cognitive exercise, comparable only to mid-way processes of chess-playing (Piolat et al. 2005). This is not the standard rationale of choosing a document

analysis methodology for most studies. However, for this study, document composition represents one of the most rigorous and intense exercise in human reflection and meta-cognition.

In order to sufficiently analyze documents, I sought to take into account the original purpose of the document at hand and the targeted audience, namely, the stakeholders and interested parties in NORHED. J. Scott (1990; as cited in Bryman 2011) proposed four criteria of assessing the quality of documents: (1) authenticity – if the evidence is genuine; (2) credibility – if the evidence is free from error; (3) representativeness – if the evidence is typical of its kind; and (4) meaning – if the evidence is comprehensible. This study concurs with this approach and took several precautions on the level of all four parameters. Regarding the first two factors, namely, authenticity and credibility, all consulted documents for this study were available on public domain and their interpretation was subject to several external reviews, all of which provided the multiplicity of voices that was important to ensure that the evidence is not subject to bias. Regarding representativeness, this study included, in fact, all of the documents that were available online since the inception of NORHED in 2012 (and even earlier landscape documents of 2011 and its antecedents in 2009). What is more, all of the listed documents and the study itself has been shared with all the informants from NORHED, none of which protested the credibility or authenticity of these online written sources. Finally, regarding meaning, the study sought to ensure that the evidence is comprehensible by ironing out any jargon (e.g. sustainable development or capacity development) and fronting any evidence and empirical data (e.g. charts, numbers, and figures) which could simplify and elaborate on the assumptions behind sustainable development in an accessible manner.

3.2.2. Interview Data Analysis

The second methodological technique employed was interview data analysis. Interviews represent in several cases the only pathway to capturing informal practices and procedures, since they allow the encapsulation of experience and individual perspectives on a real-time basis and on a reflective, iterative fashion (Chirban 1996; Kvale 1996; Kvale and Brinkman 2009; Rubin and Rubin 2016).

To ensure the multiplicity of approaches and the synthetic polyphony of my study, I conducted first 5 semi-structured interviews (three with case officers of NORHED and two with academics collaborating with NORHED), which were followed by one focus group interview (with three case officers of NORHED) and five immersive/unstructured interviews with one informant,

where conversations were very casual, informal, and not recorded or cited in the final study. Further, among a variety of interview orientations, e.g. exploratory, systematizing, or theory-generating (Kvale and Brinkman 2009; Rubin and Rubin 2016), my interviews primarily undertook an explorative approach, which is concerned with encapsulating the perspectives and interpretations of the actors, and only secondarily with the attempt to actively build a new theory. According to this methodological technique, then, the researcher can retain a balance between the perspectives that inhere in the analytic framework and the sensitivity towards the emergent perspectives that might occur in the empirical sphere.

This type of interview sequence, namely, semi-structured interviews followed by a focus group interview, was chosen due to the fact that it diminishes the steering pressure of the interviewer towards the respondents and encourages them to raise issues that are of importance and may have perhaps escaped the expectations of my analysis. Moreover, this type of design is more in line with a pragmatic, exploratory type of research, where the topics are fluid, the process is co-constructed, and the relationship between interviewer and respondent is interactive and performative, or as Kasper and Ross (2018:3) put it, "interviewer and interviewee produce their ongoing interaction in the here-and-now of the interview setting" (see further Rapley 2001:307 "In interviews, language is performative (…), it is not a neutral carrier of information"; Seale 2007). In that respect, this approach to interviews was selected in order to bring forth perspectives on the issue of sustainable development that might be emergent, tacit, and unexplored.

3.3. Field Work and Data Collection

This section provides a self-reflective outlook of the process of fieldwork and data collection. The fieldwork and data collection for this case study was carried out over the period of March-October 2018. Document analysis began in January 2018 and included a collection of eighteen internal documents (one mission statement and 16 organizational documents), and two externally commissioned documents (external evaluations: see Norad 2014c, 2018). The main bulk of interviews was conducted during March-May 2018, and the interview data was also analyzed during that period. In order to ask the types of question that this study warrants, there was a fundamental need to establish high levels of trusts with the subjects. This trust was achieved in several cases. However, the general time constraints and the explorative nature of such a project

could not allow for full disclosure of all aspects of the question around sustainable development from all participants.

In total, I conducted a) 5 semi-structured interviews, three of which with NORHED employees and two of which with collaborating academics, as well as b) one focus group with three interviewees (all NORHED officers), and c) five immersive/unstructured interviews with one informant. The number of interviews was mandated primarily due to the exigencies of time constraints in NORHED's work but also due to the travelling constraints. NORHED was very welcoming, and I received an invitation to attend a day-long seminar at its facilities in March 16th, 2018. After that, I had the opportunity to conduct two longer, semi-structured interviews with two officers at NORHED. This allowed a snowballing sampling method, in which I was encouraged to recruit further interlocutors among the first respondents, which are deemed to increase the perspectives heterogeneity even more (Creswell 2007). This mode of sampling is standard and coherent with the pragmatist approach, which allows the researcher to follow the way the agents perceive the world around them.

From this snowballing sampling, I was able to recruit six more interviewees. The first three were NORHED officers, who agreed to see me over lunch in a conference room. Due to time limitations, the interviews were conducted in the style of a focus group, which is considered as very effective regarding its dialectic potential among participants (Carey and Asbury 2016). Next, an interview was conducted with one officer, and after that, two separate interviews with two academic faculty members who have collaborated with NORHED for several years and knew the perspectives and operational protocols of the program very intimately. The interviews were around 60' in length, some being slightly longer. The interview guide (see appendix I) was tailored to meet the respondent's role broadly, be that a collaborating academic or a NORHED officer.

NVivo10 qualitative software was used for coding and analysis of the interview data. The overall approach followed a pragmatic style of what I would dub as "iterative but self-corrective" inquiry (which in bibliography could be termed as bricolage, see e.g. Denzin 1994). My method was to identify and nuance categories of interpretation of sustainable development from my data, and then to sufficiently condense and translate these interpretations into what ended up being accruing into the analysis of interpreting sustainable development. The end of this method was to produce a thick and careful description of the empirical setting.

3.4. Methodological Limitations and Strengths of this Study

One limitation of, and potential cause of criticism for, the methods of this study could be the very idea of pursuing qualitative inquiry. Language is, beyond reasonable doubt, a historically-bound, limited instrument of intrinsic ambiguity. Translation of words and thoughts is an act of active reconstruction, not a transcendent reality. Dictionaries get revised, words emerge or disappear. And as such, notions and linguistic terms such as sustainable development surge and change. Logically, then, critics that lean towards a positivist paradigm (see description in Bryman 2011: 29-30) can assail this study for being invested in exploring such transient notions in a qualitative investigation.

A second limitation of this study, directly emanating from its qualitative nature, is the reliance on a single case study design as it is, too small a fragment to lend itself to generalizability and, consequently, does not contribute knowledge that can allow for safe inference. In very simple terms, several positivist accounts may dismiss the case study research as mere "storytelling" (Angen 2000; Diefenbach 2009). In this line of work, researchers have repeatedly pointed out the fact that case studies are subject to several conscious and unconscious biases and pitfalls, which can span across the entire span of the research process (design, collection of data, interpretation of data, extrapolation from data findings, implications of findings) such as unexamined philosophical assumptions, unduly selectivity, low quantity and debatable quality of data, ambiguity about grouping and evaluation of the data, inability to generalize or formulate a theory, inability of replication, and low broader impact of such research endeavors (Diefenbach 2009; Lincoln and Denzin 2013; Flyvbjerg 2006, 2011).

Document analysis is the analysis of something too stable and too procedural (bureaucratic) to allow for deeper layers. Most official documents, after all, seem to lack the intentionality of a reader who is a researcher. The documents included, in their vast majority, do not have bibliographical references, counterevidence, and argumentative outlines in their design. Rather, they are constructed as legitimation responses mirroring, intertextually, other procedural documents. Several of the documents I examined reflected precisely this procedural intentionality. Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, fell on the opposite end of the spectrum and might be deemed as too performative, transient, and interactive to yield any stable meaning. However, this study sought to counteract the weaknesses in each of the methodological techniques, document analysis and interviews, by balancing them out, and allowing this study to

provide a more complete picture of the notion under scrutiny, sustainable development at NORHED.

To be sure, this constructive divergence between methodological techniques is one that is expected to be found between formal official documentation, especially documentation dealing with mission statements or objectives, and interview material, in particular in organizational environments with many layers where exist more space for informal or semi-formal interpretations of organizational realities (Brunsson 2000, 2017). In fact, as a growing body of scholarship illustrates (Christensen and Gornitzka 2017; Giusepponi and Tavoletti 2018; Morphew and Hartley 2006), the analysis of documents such as mission statements require a clear orientation towards normative, outcome-oriented goals, namely, a list of desired results and outcomes which can communicate a strategic priority towards competitive and rhetorical positioning among a normative and symbolically charged rhetorical vocabulary, rather than a descriptive outline of a step-by-step process of how a strategy unfolds.[27]

Regarding the limitations of this particular study, as it found its way on the practical fieldwork, time constraints also became notable. By the very nature of a development agency's work, in which officers undertake a large list of portfolios, time and planning come at a premium. In other words, finding time to coincide with the packed schedules of the officers was not easy. The program was definitely accommodating and generous, given its constraints. However, a repetitive round of interviews, with several officers, which might resemble an ethnographic approach, was entirely out of the question. There is simply too much work happening for any such research effort to be construed as unobtrusive.

While gathering information and carrying out interviews, my research inquiry was met by significant inner cognitive dissonance. Part of my primary concerns were first concerned with finality and closure of the data collection process, such as the question of "do I have enough data" or "how much of the information I have gathered is redundant". Another issue that

[27] Morphew and Hartley 2006: 458 put the normative function of mission statements thusly: "Mission statements are normative-they exist because they are expected to exist… mission statements and knowingly describe them as ritualistic or mythological. From this point of view, mission statements are certainly important but not for the direction they provide. Rather, they serve a legitimating function. Mission statements are valuable because they - and the elements within them - show that the organization in question understands the "rules of the game".

consumed inner cognitive bandwidth was the issue of distance from my perspectives. To be sure, as an astonishing body of cognitive research on human error and bias argues, stripping away one's bias (i.e. choices, values, and frames) completely is out of the question. All humans are wired to be biased: the scotomas of our eyes create blindspots and that is simply a fact of life a researcher has to live with (Banaji and Greenwald 2013). However, I sought through my questions to bring forth the different perspectives and give voice to a plurality of voices. My principle was that a meaningful synthesis of empirical data within a broader debate occurs only upon the collision between thesis and antithesis. It took significant energy to bring forth the conflict and tension in the encountered perspectives and, often, this was not fully possible. In the final analysis, however, the data collection ended when the conflicting perspectives were sufficiently articulated, to the point of perceived saturation and adjudicated consensus by not only the researcher but also the participants.

Still, the researcher had several rounds of debates with himself regarding on his role in the conversation and the degree of impartiality that his questions carry. The participants were acutely aware that the researcher was versed in philosophical discourse, so they seemed to weigh their words carefully. Moreover, the individuals, almost all of which had doctorates and academic accolades, did change and nuance and at times directly challenge the nature of the questions asked. Their analytic input was, in fact, one of the greatest challenges of this project, since their attitude was constantly synthetic, dialectic, and in fact displayed what Hollis (2011) has proverbially called "the cunning of reason", namely, a unique ability to walk the intellectual tightrope between analytical and affective responses. In other words, the interviewees displayed, to their credit, an acute awareness of the divide between rhetoric and reality, symbolic and analytical rationales.

Such treats to the quality of the case study have not gone unnoticed in the wide span of scholarship on the subject.[28] However, this study took decisive steps to curb the bias that ensues

[28] A very analytical stance towards the phenomenon of the case study comes from Foucault 1977:191, who destabilizes the bounds of what counts as a case: "The examination, surrounded by all its documentary techniques, makes each individual a 'case': a case which at one and the same time constitutes an object for a branch of knowledge and a hold for a branch of power. The case is no longer, as in casuistry or jurisprudence, a set of circumstances defining an act and capable of modifying the application of a rule; it is the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc." On a similar vein, see the study of Feyerabend 2010.

the intrinsic challenges regarding the methodological and epistemological status of the case study. The primary crux of all discontents concerns one issue: is this case study representative? Yin (2004; 2013), whose analysis has become a staple in the examination of case studies, has argued that there are four criteria which define the quality standards of case study analysis: construct validity, reliability, internal validity, and, perhaps most significantly, external validity. However, Gerring (2017) provides a more nuanced diagnosis of the pathologies of the qualitative case study: the most serious stochastic threats to a case study are the claims to internal and external validity, since it is these two areas that precondition the norms of construct validity and reliability, and which have in turn repeatedly faced fire from scholarship.

First, regarding internal validity, i.e. the degree to which a finding that incorporates a causal relationship between two or more variables is sound, this study carefully listed and explicate both the propositions, the research debate, and the research steps, in order to reduce the face-value arbitrariness of its findings. Secondly, this study has taken this step by a common measure in assuring the quality of qualitative scholarship, namely, *triangulation*. Triangulation has been defined as "a process of using multiple perceptions, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation" (Stake 2005: 454). The intention behind triangulation is, ultimately, intersubjectivity, namely a way to create descriptions that are thick and systematic, while avoiding systematic bias and naïve interpretation of common sense.[29] This study took careful measures for triangulation, by combining the multifarious document analysis with the data from the interviews, in order to provide a more deliberative baseline for the arguments it proposes.[30] What is more, the content of this study was debated with the participants and produced in a consensual, transparent fashion, by constantly inviting NORHED into the debate, while remaining bibliographically informed by the latest scholarship on the field, in order to follow the

[29] Silverman 2001: 289 describes an aspect of triangulation as dissociating "common sense with social science- a recipe for the lazy qualitative researcher who settles for simply reporting people's experiences".

[30] However, in the establishment of internal validity, an entire generation of cognitive experimental research has carefully documented the inherent restraints of cognitive and psychological biases in the analysis of causal mechanisms. In fact, perhaps the greatest summative exposition of these biases is encapsulated by a paper that has received little attention regarding methodological issues, entitled "the illusion of control" (Langer 1975). Thusly, the degree of avoiding such biases is largely anchored to the familiarity and transparency with our own mechanisms and biases for interpreting causality- how much do we actually acknowledge their force in our lives-, but the exact mechanisms to eradicate these biases are still under investigation in social science research, and are amalgamated under the provisional title "debiasing techniques" (Soll et al. 2015, with extensive bibliography).

standards of scholarship (e.g. Bryman 2011; Gerring 2017; Stake 2005) and verify the repeatability of interpretations as much as possible.

Next, regarding external validity, namely, the extent to which the results of this case study can be generalized beyond the specific research context in which it is conducted, a case study is inherently going deep, not wide, in the axis of analysis. This study sought primarily this: depth. Standard criticism against the external validity of a single case study is its high degree of contextuality, lack of replicability, and the perceived idiosyncrasy in theory and operationalization (Bryman 2011; Gerring 2017. To ensure external validity, this study sought to ensure its external validity by providing and collecting a comprehensive list of bibliography with a breadth of rival discourses, as well as reflection data, which could scrutinize the area in depth, so that the various conclusions could be reflected in the theoretical assumptions and operations of other areas. The attempt to fodder for generalizable inferences is not eliminated altogether. Researchers can in fact aim for a balancing solution- a set of scope/conditions that are neither too narrow or too broad. The key is, in other words, to establish and argue for the difference of the manifest and the potential scope of the inference. If cognizant of each other's work and mindful of framing the theories/research in ways that facilitate accumulation, research tradeoffs do have the potential to become synergies, with the cleavage not always conform to disciplinary lines. However, such claims about external validity of any single case study, including this one, should be made with caution.

Last, but definitely not least, one of the major problems with social research at large and especially with the study of higher education through interviews is reactivity, namely, "the idea that people change their behavior in reaction to being evaluated, observed, or measured" (Espeland and Sauder 2007; Gorden 1956; Gubrium 2013; Kvale 1996; Kvale and Brinkman 2009; Mishler 2009; Procter and Padfield 2014). To address this difficulty, this study employed conventional (reactive) methods (interviews) in conjunction with unobtrusive (non-reactive) ones (document analysis) (Bryman 2011: 326), insofar as this is possible in situ. By completely opening up to the participants about my research interest and its strengths and shortcomings, as well as by switching occasionally to speaking Norwegian, I sought to slowly gain their trust and reduced the reactivity and resistance of the project. In other words, I chose NORHED precisely because of its low threshold of reactivity due to my familiarity with the Norwegian context, the

language, and the topic of inquiry, as well as NORHED's own familiarity with my study programme (Higher Education Studies at the University of Oslo).

In the final analysis, as Alversson and Sköldberg (2018) argue, the most significant tool of a methodological process is reflexivity itself – that is, the understanding of how the researcher, the context, and the research process intertwine. My work sought to engage towards an exercise in reflexivity by means of studying and bringing out the inherent tensions in notion of sustainable development. I concentrated my efforts towards allow myself to suspend judgment and interact in the research setting by promoting the understanding of why and how: why does NORHED interpret sustainability in this way and how can alternatives interpretations be sought (Beaulieu et al. 2007).[31]

This methodological process is iterative and attends to how the data are collected, argumentatively arrayed, and, eventually, how knowledge is created. Consequently, reflexivity of methodological nature is not to be foresseen. And, as Pyett 2003: 1172 exemplarily concluded, "the human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis".

3.5. Ethical Assurance in this Study

Ethical concerns were prioritized throughout the data collection and interpretation. The utmost priority of my research project was to ensure the transparency, informed consent, and anonymized confidentiality of my research and the rights of the participants. To this end, the online directives of Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) regarding the ethical consent, the rights of the participants, and the assurance of the complete anonymity were followed.

Specifically, I started with clear documentation about my own interdisciplinary background, my credentials (I shared my certificates/grade transcripts, while making my relevant published research available online) and the theoretical propositions that underpin this study (I shared with all the participants my research proposal). Then, during the semi-structured interviews, several of

[31] Cf. Beaulieu et al. (2007: 2): "[a] focus on the "why" and "how" (and not just on the results) of our own use of cases enables us to reflexively sketch the institutional and cultural context in which the elaboration of cases is selected as a strategy for making knowledge, and to posit benefits of using case studies in new ways".

the interview contents were recorded with informed consent from the participants in advance. In one case, practical constraints (bad telephone communications) prohibited recording and required notes to be taken by hand.

The interviewer was in advance cognizant of power and gender asymmetries that inhere in the process of interviewing and the ethical concerns that such issues can cause (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). To counter such effects, the researcher sought to maintain a rather casual and dialectic tone (even trying to come up with informal and humorous thoughts which could enliven the atmosphere). The transcription ended up producing over 50 pages of data. The recordings exist only at one compute device: my working place at the University of Oslo. Nobody has access to these recordings besides the researcher himself. Moreover, these recordings are double-password encrypted and biometrically protected (fingerprint). To further ensure the participants' rights, all data are to be erased after the completion of this project in April 2019.

To further ensure the participants' rights, I followed the bibliographical advice from Parry and Mauthner (2004) and I asked all the participants to review carefully, revise how they see fit, and only then consent to their quotes before these could find their way in this thesis. No notes or quotes appear in this study without the prior written (e-mail) consent of the interviewee (Gmail exchanges (andreaza@umich.edu) 19/11/2018, 29/12/2018, 12/7/2018). Further, all interviewees were given the opportunity to exercise their right to modify, alter, or simply withdraw their quotes and participation on this study (Gmail, andreaza@umich.edu 19/11/2018). Some exercised their right to revise (see Appendix III). Further, several conversations were conducted as to consult the participants regarding what they felt comfortable with sharing. The research is entirely confidential. To ensure the quality, equanimity, and transparency of my research, the entire thesis was shared with the agency and the participants. Moreover, the researcher, after sharing his complete research product with the agency, was invited from the agency itself to present his views and research findings, which could be a further credential to the priority of informed consent in this thesis (see also Appendix I).

Chapter 4: Interpretations of Sustainable Development by NORHED

To illustrate how the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development is interpreted and articulated in our case study, our analytical framework and methodology were marshalled to examine NORHED's interpretation and articulation through the lens of its official documentation and interviews with its officers and collaborating academics. As discussed in Chapter 2, sustainable development requires a dual approach that allows one to think in a complementary manner about both the outcomes and the processes that can generate them. And by examining the empirical data in this chapter, we will ultimately be able to assess the degree to which NORHED does just that.

Sections 4.1 works in tandem with 1.3, which offers the empirical lay of the land for the case study. It seeks to work simultaneously as a statement of the context of my inquiry and as an outline of the key facts and figures that underpin my analysis. My ultimate purpose is to comprise the relevant data and the evidential backbone that the case study and my investigation seek to detail. Section 4.2 then presents the evidence resulting from my two research strategies (discussed in Chapter 3): first, document analysis of published documents (mission statements, reports, evaluation studies, websites figures and data); and, second, semi-structured interviews, with NORHED personnel (followed by a focus group) and with the academics that are involved in the NORHED-sponsored partnerships. This chapter ultimately addresses our first two research questions -- A) *How does NORHED interpret and articulate sustainable development in its official documentation?* B) *How does the NORHED's staff and collaborating academics interpret and articulate sustainable development?* -- leaving the final research question -- C) *In what ways does NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development promote or hinder its mission of sustainable development?* -- to the Discussion in Chapter 5.

4.1. NORHED's Modalities of Work

The primary goals of NORHED's development work with the undertaken higher education projects are a) to provide and administer their funding and b) to provide advisory support towards the successful development of these projects, particularly through administrative

support.[32] Under these two primary goals, the programme conducts a range of activities and initiatives.

First and foremost, it ascertains that the funding finds its target. This operation includes a meticulous and painstaking process of completing administrative forms, signing partnership agreements, tracking expenses in expense forms, replying within agreed deadlines, wiring funds internationally, and reporting on progress with transparency. This is a process that requires careful attention and effort by the officers, since it is not uncommon for projects to fail to match the reporting requirements and, consequently, to fail to absorb the funding or, worse but far less commonly, to outright mishandle the funds and be annulled as partners. The funding seeks to cover both material and human capital needs. With regards to material needs, such as infrastructure and physical capacities, these investments include library facilities, research laboratories, field stations, E-learning platforms, video laboratories, and equipment for teaching and training. With regard to human capital needs, funding seeks to cover stipends.

As an additional task, NORHED undertakes the task of advising organizations to achieve the success of the development projects and the successful management of the human capital resources. NORHED seeks to introduce or enhance human resource practices by offering guidance and informed perspective on trust-building practices that succeed to enable collaboration, knowledge creation, and success. Next, it seeks to espouse salient and mainstream gender perspectives in all spheres of its institutional engagement. The programme also puts emphasis on outreach by organizing research conferences, workshops, research publications, and general public outreach Further, NORHED seeks to enhance managerial and research capacity

[32] Norad 2015a: 8 lists them as follows: "• Number and type of education programmes established at institutions in the South, including regional programmes. • Number of curricula newly developed and/or revised. • Net entry rates by age and gender. • Staff/student ratios per education programmes. • Number and percentage of female teachers by level of education. • Student retention and progression rates. • Graduation by age, gender, field and level of study. • Change over time in number and gender of higher education students by field of study. • Graduate employment. • Reasons for failure or non-completion of courses. • Presence of female administrators and managers. • Personell in higher education engaged in research and development by sectors. • Administrative/academic staff ratio. • Number of Norwegian-South country joint research projects Number of publications per academic staff. • Number of publications from Norwegian-South country joint research projects • Number of teachers/educators/teaching assistants who successfully completed in-service training with NORHED support. • Number of host-country institution faculty and/or teaching staff who enrolled in training programs for qualifications strengthening • Number of individuals from underserved and/or disadvantaged groups accessing tertiary education programs • Number of direct beneficiaries reached annually by the partnership."

by enhancing network activities among business, governments, civil societies, communities, and academia. The knowledge exchange also allows the emergence of research findings that can be translated into policy recommendations.

The work in NORHED is not undertaken exclusively by its bloc of officers. This is beyond the scope and intentions of the program, which is designed as a mediating force, assuring the administrative, consulting, and financial support needed to empower the academic programs of the South to reach their goals. However, the work of NORHED is conditioned by the range of interventions it encourages and sponsors. And the range of encouraged interventions span from in-country/regional bachelor and master's education programmes, PhD and PostDoc fellowships, joint research projects, institution and systems strengthening, and systems for knowledge management, information, and dissemination of results, along with scientific equipment and small-scale infrastructure.[33]These interventions are sponsored by NORHED and executed primarily by the academic institutions, but with the collaboration of the programme. Nonetheless, they are constitutive of NORHED's programme profile and of its strategic approach.

Finally, perhaps the largest part of NORHED's work on quality assurance rests with engaging, fixing, and assuring the progress manifested in the reporting of the work with indicators, which is the precondition for assuring that the funding finds its target. To assure this progress, all sponsored projects are governed by a list of performance standards, which set the bar and reflect on what accounts for the success of the continuous efforts of the projects.

NORHED currently employs 14 standard indicators common to all projects, 10 of which are quantitative, while the rest are qualitative (assessed using narrative text). They are listed as follows in the subsequent table:

[33] "The tasks that face higher education in LMICs are daunting: modernization of infrastructure, a better balance between the human social sciences and science and technology; addressing gender and class equity/access imperatives are but a few of the most important". Higher education planning within ministries, systems development and sound governance at national and institutional levels are all critical for quality and efficiency purposes." Norad 2011:1

1.	Number of new and revised BA/MA/PhD programs
2.	Inclusion of gender perspectives
3.	Capacity to enroll and advance to graduation for students
4.	Relevance of programs to local, national, and regional needs and labor markets
5.	Number of academic staff with strengthened qualifications
6.	Ratio of qualified academic staff to students
7.	Retention rates of qualified academic staff at relevant unit (institute, department, faculty)
8.	Number of scientific publications (peer reviewed and others),
9.	Number and type of other dissemination activities
10.	Uptake/influence of NORHED supported research in public policies
11.	Uptake/influence of NORHED-supported research findings/new technologies/innovations/solutions by local communities/civil society/private sector
12.	Knowledge transfers within South-South and South-North networks and partnerships
13.	Changes in the broader institutional environment at NORHED-supported institute/ faculty/department which strengthened the capacity for education and research
14.	Access to libraries, laboratories and ICT for staff and students in NORHED-supported institutes/departments/faculties

Table 1: NORHED's List of Indicators (Norad 2015a: 16)

NORHED does not qualify or provide further details in its self-presentation about this list of common indicators.[34] Rather, it antecedes this list by providing a further list of indicators relevant and specific to each of NORHED projects, which partially or fully overlap with the general indicators (understandably, given that the general indicators are derivative to the particular ones), and which are to be identified early in the project in order to reach judgements about the progress made. The existing added list includes 19 further indicators specific to individual programmes, which cover a wide gamut of factors under assessment, such as administrative/academic ratios, graduation by age, gender, field, and level of study, reasons for failure, number of underserved and disadvantaged groups, graduate employment, and change over time in number and gender of higher education students by field of study.[35]These indicators,

[34] For lack of qualification in indicators see Guimezanes 2015; Morse 2004, with comprehensive bibliography.

[35] "[t]he new programme is designed to be demand-driven, thus responding to the priorities of the partner countries, more flexible, and with a longer-term perspective. It will encompass support to in-country Bachelor's and Master's

general and specific, are all agreed upon at the inauguration of each project, and then are self-reported (along with a financial statement) annually (fall or winter, depending on the inauguration date) by the host institutions. In response, NORHED officers review the self-reporting of these indicators and either approve or ask for clarifications, explanations, or further reporting. Once the academic work is achieved, and in addition the reporting by the academics on the academic progress reporting is finished (complying with the approved budget and the account balance that warrants it), then the financial disbursement is procured. These modalities of work, namely, the articulation of sponsored interventions, the quality assurance of the reported indicators and achieved progress, and the procurement of funding, constitute the sum of all the parts which comprise NORHED's empirical setting.

4.2. NORHED Towards Sustainable Development

In light of the aforementioned modalities of work by NORHED, this section seeks to identify the role of the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development in its operational environment. To answer its research questions, it is divided into two parts, as discussed in Chapter 3 on our methodology. The first part surveys NORHED's online document repository, namely, its self-presentation mission statements, reports, and external evaluation studies, in order to outline the presence of sustainable development in the organization's body of publicly available, programme specific documents (Norad 2009; Norad 2011; Norad and SiU 2011; Norad 2012; Norad 2014a; Norad 2015b, Norad 2014c; Norad 2015a; Norad 2015b; Norad 2015c; Norad 2016a; Norad 2016d; Norad 2018).[36] The second part surveys the empirical set of interview data, as collected by NORHED's bloc of officers and collaborating academics.

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degree programs, joint research projects including PhD studies, systems for improved knowledge management and information dissemination, as well as institutions and systems strengthening" Norad 2011:1-2.

[36] The full list of documents, which include also Norad's broader organizational documents (i.e. concern NORHED but do not focus exclusively on NORHED) is the following: (Norad 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c. 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017a, 2017b, 2018, Norad and SiU 2011). Due to space constraints, our analysis focused primarily (but not exclusively) on the programme specific documents (unless otherwise explicitly stated).

4.2.1. Documentary Data: Presentation of Findings

Since our scope of inquiry is to examine how NORHED construes its own standing vis-à-vis sustainable development, the main bulk of evidence is drawn from NORHED's own attempts at self-definition, in particular NORHED's flagship mission statement (Norad 2015a), while the surrounding documents have an auxiliary purpose.[37] The ultimate objective of this survey of documentary evidence is to further explicate the first research question, namely, to understand A) *How does NORHED interpret and articulate sustainable development in its official documentation?*

According to a scholarly consensus on document analysis methods, one of the best organizing principles for outlining the findings from documentary evidence is thematic and research-question specific (Ryan and Bernard 2003; Bryman 2011; Butler-Kisber 2018; Gibbs 2018). Thematic analysis is a technique that is primarily mandated due to the repetition of a theme in a body of writing. In the aforementioned corpus of documents, the words "sustainable", "sustainability", and their derivatives (adjectival or adverbial) appear in total 301 times (34 times in Norad 2009; 2 times in Norad 2011; 4 times in Norad and SiO 2011; 31 times in Norad 2012; 0 times in Norad 2014a; 17 times in Norad 2014c; 20 times in Norad 2015a; 34 times in Norad 2015b; 24 times in Norad 2015c; 26 times in Norad 2016a; 36 times in Norad 2016d; 73 times in Norad 2018), a pattern of repetition that can justify the survey of the notion on grounds of frequency alone.

To be sure, these 301 occurrences of the word variants in the above documents alone that span at about 1,000 pages (an average frequency of one variant every three pages) demonstrates the frequent use of the term. This frequency is especially highlighted due to the special semantic range of the word sustainable, which is a word that lends itself primarily to technical and specialized discursive connotations (Ihlen and Roper 2014; Landrum and Ohsowski 2018; Narayanan and Adams 2017; Owens and Legere 2015). However, frequency is not the sole indicator of sustainable development's importance. Rather, it is significant that NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development, as per our first research question, can

[37] This choice was mandated primarily by the significance that mission statements carry (see e.g. Morhphew and Hartley 2006) but, also, by to the formal length constraints of this study.

be located around two paramount positions in NORHED's agenda, ones that are standardly considered as pivotal in official documentary evidence: a) in mission statements (Morphew and Hartley 2006, with much relevant bibliography), and b) in operationalization conduits and guides for decision-making (Battilana and Casciaro 2012; Heugens and Lander 2009).

In the former category of mission statements, sustainable development is listed at the core of NORHED's agenda. To substantiate the validity of this claim, one can see that the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development in NORHED is afforded a prime position in the agency's flagship mission statement (and the first in order of appearance on its website), namely, its "Self-Presentation". What follows is the very first paragraph of NORHED's mission statement:

> Higher education and research are priority areas of Norway's development cooperation policy. Norad believes that sound, strategic investments in higher education and research in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) pay off in the form of strong academic institutions and their societal engagement. Such investments have many benefits, not least that they contribute to development of their countries' intellectual resources, competent workforces, visionary leaders, gender equality and human rights. In the long run it also contributes to evidence-based policies and decisions that enhance sustainable economic, social and environmental development (Norad 2015a: 1).

The strong commitment to sustainable development in NORHED's mission statement is unequivocal. What is less clear is what sustainable development means in this context. NORHED ties the word "sustainable" to three different factors: economic, social, and environmental. However, "sustainable" is not defined, per se, but used as a way of defining the ultimate goal ("in the long run"). Similarly, this outcome-oriented approach is likewise found later in the document, where the term sustainable development itself appears as the *first* itemized objective among NORHED's listed priorities before its launching (Norad and SiU 2011:1):

> The primary objective of the scheme is increased capacity within higher education and research in the South. By increased capacity it is meant strengthened capacity for institutions in the South to educate more candidates able to contribute to social, economic and cultural development in their own countries or regions, and to increased quality and quantity of research conducted by the countries' or regions' own researchers. Increased capacity within higher education and research shall help in:
>
> - Promoting sustainable development of society and commerce and industry, within Norway's thematic and geographical priority areas, among others
> - Increased knowledge generated by researchers from the South
> - Increased knowledge with enhanced relevance for development and poverty reduction in the South
> - Promoting women's participation in research Support for capacity building within research and higher education is provided within the framework of current policy guidelines,

particularly the annual budget proposition (Proposition No. 1 to the Storting). Support is subject to annual fiscal budget allocations.

Target groups for this grant scheme are:

- Universities and other higher education institutions in the South
- Universities and higher education institutions in Norway who collaborates with institutions in the South.
- Regional organisations that aim to build competence within research and higher education in the South.

Although this line of evidence seems to add some clarity to the scope of NORHED's definition of sustainable development, expanding its purview to "society and commerce and industry" and giving it geographic limits "within Norway's thematic and geographical priority areas", we once again see how sustainable development is viewed as an outcome of NORHED's processes rather than the part of the process itself. One might say that the rest of the bulleted list represents the process for attaining sustainable development as outlined in the first bullet point, but NORHED chooses not to give an explicit hierarchy, as expressed here through the typographical treatment: all the bullet points receive the same weight.

Notably, the centrality of sustainable development in mission of NORHED is relayed not only within its own flagship organizational value statements but also in external evaluations. What follows is a text from the external evaluation conducted by the University of Southern California:

> Norad's program to support higher education in developing countries, the Norwegian Program for Capacity Development in Higher Education and Research for Development (NORHED), has two immediate objectives. These are to produce more and better research relevant to six identified areas/sub-programs and to produce more and better qualified graduates, men and women, in these same areas/sub-programs. By strengthening capacity in higher education institutions in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), NORHED's longer term objective is to sustainably contribute to a) a more and better qualified workforce, b) increased knowledge, c) evidence-based policy and decision-making and d) enhanced gender equality (Norad 2014b: x, repeated in Norad 2014b: 3).

This external evaluation provides additional targets for sustainable development, relating to workforce, knowledge, policy and decision-making, and gender equality. To be sure, this is an external interpretation of NORHED's statement in their flagship mission statement. In that sense, "sustainably contribute" serves as a paraphrasis of NORHED's articulation of sustainable development. And here again we see the idea of "sustainably" improving these areas is expressed as a "longer term objective". As in the previous mission statements, we have the idea of sustainable development, but it is articulated as a goal to be met rather than a step in the process.

In addition to how sustainable development features in the mission and value statements of NORHED, we can see it also functioning in the operationalization conduits and guides for decision-making within the very mission statement of the organization (Figure 5).

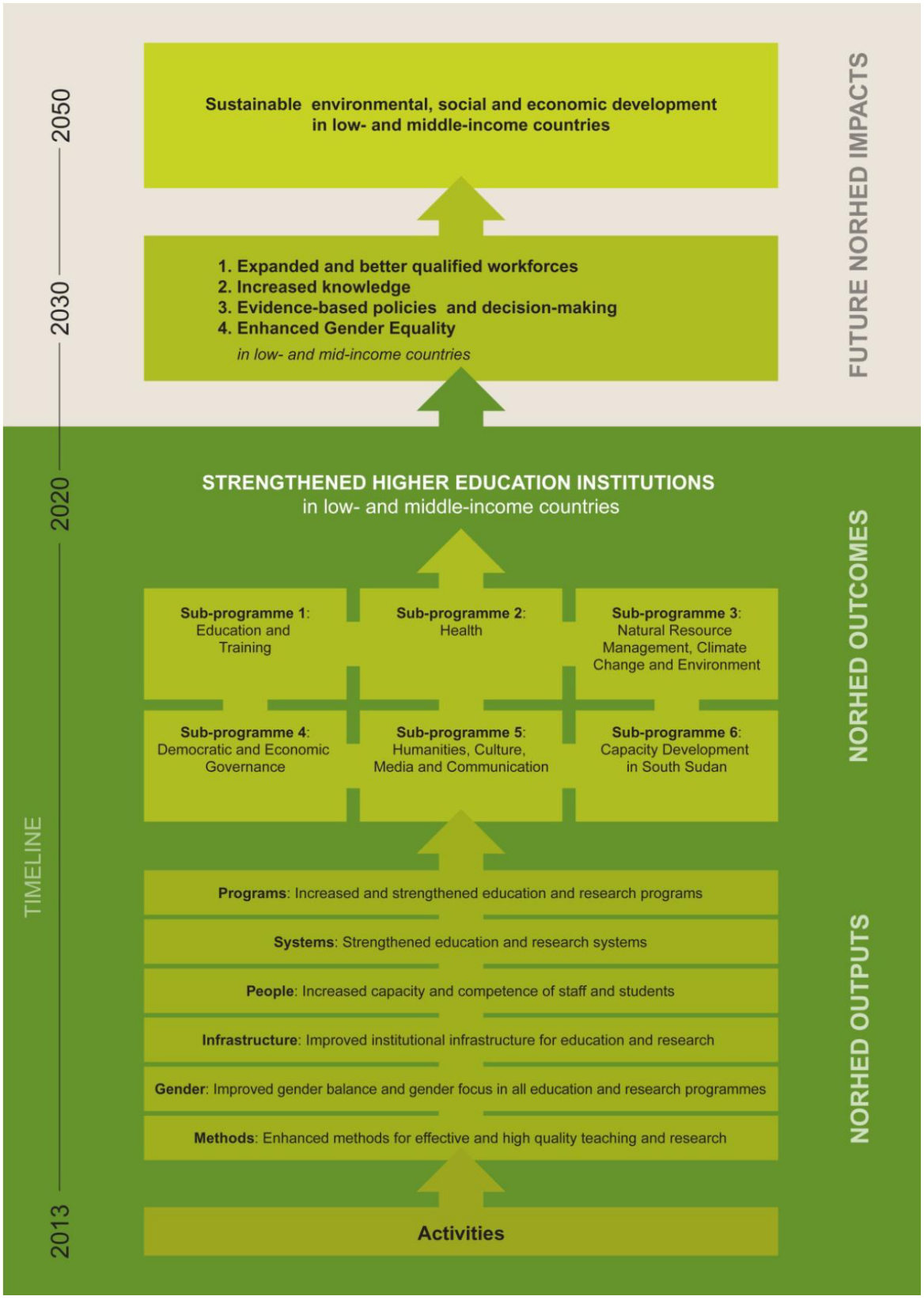


Figure 5: NORHED's Operational Conduit (Norad 2015a: 5).

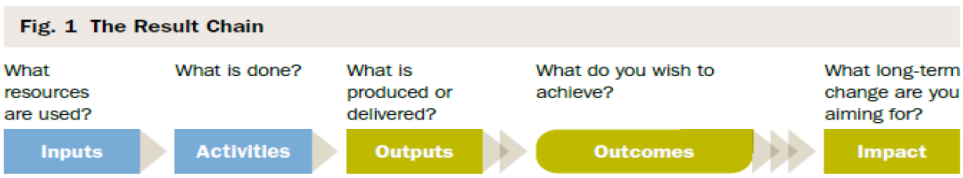
Here again, we see the centrality of the concept of *sustainable* development. The word "sustainable" itself is given extra emphasis by its typographical treatment, separated by an extra space from "environmental, social, and economic development", thus highlighting its importance in the organizational framework on display in the figure.[38] What is even clearer than in the previous quotations, however, is how the figure above makes manifest how NORHED interprets sustainable development and articulates it graphically (in almost complete alignment with Norad's own; see Norad and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008) as a time-bound, rational chain of causality between activities, outputs, outcomes, and future impacts.[39] NORHED here constructs an explicit hierarchy for sustainable development that was implicit in the mission statements examined above. We see many of the same themes emerging from the previous documents analyzed, including concerns about labor, gender equality, economy, increased knowledge, etc. What is more important for this investigation is that here for the first time we see how NORHED considers strengthened higher education institutions as directly leading to the goal of sustainable development. Outputs, outcomes, and early future impacts are not characterized by sustainable qualifiers. What is more, sustainable development is not part of the timeline up until 2050. In other words, sustainable development is clearly not envisioned as part of the process, but as the goal itself.

This goal-oriented sustainable development returns later in the document in the context of project selection and reporting:

> The selection of interventions/activities to be supported by NORHED should be based on a gender differentiated, needs assessment done at partner institutions in LMICs. Proposed interventions/activities should also be reflected in the strategic plans, priorities and budgets of the partner institutions […] Project applications must include strategies for sustainability of the

[38] For a detailed analysis of the importance of typographical treatments see Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006, with comprehensive bibliography.

[39] Norad Result Chain, Retrieved from Norad 2014b: 7, originally found in Norad and Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008: 10.



> achievements of the project, for reporting and adjustments throughout the life of the project" (Norad 2015a:10).

As with Figure 5, here again we see sustainability as related not to the processes of NORHED but to the endpoint, each project's "achievements". Instead of envisioning a continual development, sustainability is centered squarely on keeping any achievements running rather than developing additional outcomes. In fact, the very necessity of requiring the projects to predefine and forecast their strategies about the sustainability of their activities is further evidence that sustainable development is construed as an end-goal, a terminal process that can be planned for, stabilized, and predicted.

Even though NORHED puts sustainable development as a rather central focus in its mission, it displays a rather broad definition of its conceptual moorings. It relates sustainable development to "economic, social, and environmental development", to "society and commerce and industry, within Norway's thematic and geographical priority areas", to "a more and better qualified workforce [...] increased knowledge [...] evidence-based policy and decision-making and [...] enhanced gender equality", suggesting a wide-ranging and almost all-encompassing scope. The same terms again appear in its procedural conduits with an emphasis on "sustainable environmental, social, and economic development" as NORHED's ultimate and final outcome. While the scope of definition is broad, there is clarity surrounding one aspect that comes across in these official documents: sustainable development is a goal for NORHED, even perhaps a central goal, but it is not a part of the process.

Looking at where the above document analysis places NORHED vis-à-vis the broader debate about sustainable development, although the statements do fluctuate along the spectrum of interpretations, the organization appears strongly on the "building to last", outcome-oriented side of the debate, at times reaching an explicit articulation of this approach, as we saw in Figure 5. What remains to be seen is how the officers and agents of NORHED see their own work in terms of these same questions and, ultimately, where they see NORHED within the interpretative spectrum of sustainable development's conceptual vocabulary.

4.2.2. Interview Data: Presentation of Findings

In an endeavor to unpack the core of our study, that is, NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development, we needed to inform our qualitative analysis of the

existing published documents in the previous section with an interviewing of NORHED officers and collaborating academics. The interview data which were ultimately used included, as aforementioned in Chapter 3 on methodology, three one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with NORHED officers, a focus group interview with three NORHED officers, and two follow-up interviews with academics who have previously collaborated with NORHED. Our objective in this section was to answer our second research question: B) *How does the NORHED's staff and collaborating academics interpret and articulate sustainable development?*

In order to structure our findings, the organizing principle was research-question specific, following, reflectively, the steps of the interview guide (see Appendix I). In light of the received answers, this study sought to bring about the entire spectrum of the interpretations and articulations of sustainable development. Following a long line of scholarship which points to the alternating use of the two terms in bibliography, (Caradonna 2014; Jacques 2015 with rich bibliography demonstrating the alternating use), and the fact that orality allows for a common use of the term sustainability due to economy of communication (economy of communication mandates that it is easier using one word than two, see Fitch and Sanders 1994), the officers in this oral setting primarily responded with the term sustainability in reference to sustainable development. However, the two terms in this oral setting are to be understood as a verbal shorthand for sustainable development.

In terms of how officers interpreted sustainable development, all of NORHED's participants which were, in their vast majority, holders of doctoral titles and with notable publication records, were very quick to acknowledge the difficulty of its interpretation:

> "Sustainability is a difficult concept for us technicians and even for philosophers. It is like a mathematical function with different variables and dimensions. Sometimes we need to disaggregate it in order to understand our own contributions."

In place of the broadly defined, standardized uses of sustainability found in the documents analyzed in the previous section, here we find NORHED's agents acknowledging the concept's complexity, even in its basic definition. It is conceived as a mathematical function, but one that has too many variables and dimensions to lend itself to easy interpretation. This metaphor suggests both a goal-oriented approach, in the sense that a mathematical function produce an end-result, but also suggests an approach that is process-oriented, in the sense that the officers

need "to understand [their] own contributions" to the process, that is, as participants in the process rather than just looking at the end result.

This indeterminacy associated with sustainable development can be found in the responses of other officers, as well, where the rhetorical switching of perspectives is subtle and perhaps even unconscious to the officers themselves:

> "Sustainability seems to depend on what you are trying to look at. I think that the core idea is that the results will carry forward into the future. Or else we imagine that we would have to fund this project for a very long time and that is not really what they have been set up to. We try to start some sort of spark that may continue to give results into the future."

As with the previous officer's answer, there is uncertainty about how to interpret sustainable development ("Sustainability seems to depend on what you are trying to look at"). However, the officer in articulating the rest of her response subtly switches between an outcome-oriented and process-oriented approach: saying that "results will carry into the future" is different from saying that they are looking "to start some sort of spark that may continue to give results into the future." On the one hand, you have an urgency for an outcome-oriented, measurable praxis with lasting results achieved by NORHED. On the other hand, you have NORHED trying to set a spark that will continue to grow and give more and more results even after they have left (as suggested by the admission that they are not "set up" to supply funding in perpetuity). We can see the officer working through the two sides of the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development as she thinks out loud, with her remark faltering between causal interpretative and prospective thinking, communicating a fluctuation between outcome-driven and process-driven approaches to sustainable development.

The difficulty that officers have in interpreting NORHED's approach to sustainable development is put into further relief by the officers' own skepticism towards the concept despite its significant position in NORHED's declared mission as seen in the document analysis above. An informant put it this way:

> "Sustainability is at the core of the projects. But it is a buzzword. It means to test a project to what extent is a project going to continue after the lifetime of this project. Could we go back to the South in 10 years and find the MA programmes running, the PhD programmes running, the quality of learning to continue? We have to test if something it is going to be alive beyond the funding period. So you bring it back to capacity development. We want to see the institutions to develop the programmes and to be able to sustain the quality of teaching and create an enabling environment for their staff. Even seeing it scaled up."

This informant, in line with several of his colleagues, approaches this question of sustainable development with skepticism, as a trend that is fueled more by rhetorical mannerisms than by actionable and transformative ideas. The thought that underpins this remark is, first and foremost, a striking incongruity, namely, that sustainable development is both at the "core" of NORHED's projects but is simultaneously an empty signifier ("a buzzword"). What we see here, however, is a much more rich understanding of sustainable development than we saw in NORHED's documents, one that looks not just at NORHED's results (results that are "built to last"), but at how to help higher education institutions to continually develop into the future, namely, as "an enabling environment", "even seeing it scaled up". Here again, it is possible to detect an officer looking at results (something you can "test" and measure and "sustain the quality of teaching") but also an understanding of sustainability as a process without an end goal, that is, as a continual development. This viewpoint of enabling and energizing is one that focuses on "the ability to grow beyond the allotted funding period and by themselves".

The understanding of sustainable development as something that continues to develop long after NORHED leaves is a concept expressed by several officers:

> "NORHED contributes to institutional sustainability by preparing staff with PhD and Masters who can lead to better research results and better teaching and supervision for future students. Universities become sustainable if they continue doing research that is relevant for society and by preparing people that are needed in the labor market. So there are many dimensions in sustainability, and not all are addressed by NORHED, but we can certainly say that NORHED contributes to certain dimensions of sustainability in our collaboration with higher education institutions in the South."

The emphasis on not just teaching individuals and helping them earn degrees but on the work of those individuals going forward suggests a desire to give institutions their own ability to sustain development, and even more importantly leading research that is "relevant for society" in the future, something that cannot be foreseen or even measured at the current moment. Even while once again acknowledging that "there are many dimensions in sustainability", the officers of NORHED provide a scope that suggests something in contrast with the "built to last" approach found in much of the organization's official documentation analyzed above.

Another NORHED officer constructs a similar understanding of sustainable development that looks beyond just the direct effects of NORHED's actions.

> "Sustainability, in practice, means that the programs are attractive, are able to recruit students, and that people NORHED has invested in continue to be there [at the universities] or in other positions. It also includes continuous collaboration with the private sector and the public sector in terms of creating internships for students where the students can later be employed. The world changes so fast. To ensure that the education continues to be relevant in 10 years' time, the programmes should be constantly updated."

The word "also" in the second sentence is key. On the one hand, sustainable development involves making sure that the "people NORHED has invested in continue to be there." On the other hand, sustainable development goes beyond the individual or even the individual higher education institution to look at "continuous collaboration with the private sector and the public sector". As the officer points out, "the world changes so fast", and there is a real understanding that sustainable development is not something that is just built, but that is "constantly updated" well after NORHED has left.

Yet, even while officers speak to a process-oriented, iterative interpretation of sustainable development, the procedures of NORHED's efforts lean in the other direction.

> "What we usually do, if a programme lasts 5 years, we do a midterm evaluation, we are testing how the program is going, but there are some factors we don't take into consideration, but we should use towards adjusting the projects. But at the end of 5 years we do not check for impact. Has this programme managed to change the behaviors of people? If it is for instance the improvement of staff, how can we measure that? An outcome is an outcome, but how has it changed the ecosystem of quality in this department?"

In spite of the otherwise many administrative, operational, and organizational positive effects of NORHED's efforts, it would appear that the outcome-oriented sustainable development discussed and promoted in a flagship document such as NORHED's mission statement (Norad 2015a) analyzed above does not account for certain essential "factors" that look beyond the desired outcome. This officer realizes the need for "adjusting projects", yet seems skeptical of NORHED's ability to do so. "An outcome is an outcome" is not enough to create change in a higher education ecosystem of quality. In other words, although NORHED's documentation promotes sustainable development as an outcome of a long process, an outcome-oriented sustainable development might not address all the needs of an institution of higher education in low- and middle-income countries.

Among the NORHED officers, we have seen similar opinions voiced regarding what is the most appropriate interpretation of sustainable development in the undertaken projects. Officers do discuss sustainable development in the language of outcome-oriented approach found in the

organization's documentation. At the same time, however, they also balance this with and often even emphasize a process-oriented sustainable development, namely, one that is not simply "built to last", but which is adaptive, iterative, and ultimately requires constant updating.

This view is brought into focus further by an academic member who has collaborated with NORHED, who offers an interpretation of the sustainable development that stresses even more the importance of a process-oriented approach to the concept. According to this perspective, sustainable development is a challenge of greater scale that people tend to realize:

> "Sustainability has come up like a hype. I don't think people really know what it takes to build sustainable orientations. Our society is in a big transition, but it remains to be seen how these decisions are sustainable in the future. Our education was made for the industrial age: same disciplines, assessment system, entering the job market. Now this has changed. The education system faces challenges with that transition. It goes for Norway and Tanzania alike. It is difficult to understand how we can make young people qualify for the country they are a part of. Technology is an important force in this discussion. But the South, like the North, sometimes is stuck in a certain kind of way."

Interpreting and effecting sustainable development is about adapting but also about acknowledging that what we think will be sustainable in the present might not be in the future, given that educational paradigms shift at all levels of society. A completely goal-oriented interpretation of sustainable development cannot anticipate such shifts because it sees sustainable development as the end point and not as an integral part in the very process of development. Constructing something that is built to last locks both NORHED and the institutions it supports in a specific framework. As the officers have suggested throughout this section, working with such a framework might even prove to be detrimental to sustainable development itself. And if we think even more carefully, the path towards attaining the top step of Figure 5, sustainable development, leaves more questions than it gives answers, pushing us to revisit the assumptions that underpin NORHED's interpretation (or rather interpretations) of sustainable development in the Discussion below in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Final Discussion and Conclusions

Sustainable development licenses such a variety of interpretations that the prospect of a settling discussion is inviting. Chapter 4 looked at the ways in which NORHED attempts to *A) interpret and articulate sustainable development in its official documentation* and *B) interpret and articulate sustainable development with officers and collaborating academics*. As proposed in our analytical framework, this investigation ultimately surfaced two competing realities that are indicative of the larger debate on how to develop higher education institutions under financial scarcity. On the one hand, we have the interpretation of sustainable development as a broadly defined set of prescribed, achievable outcomes. On the other hand, we have the interpretation of sustainable development as a concept that invites an iterative and adaptive process. As the theoretical debate on Chapter 2 made manifest, the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development should allow an organization to put these two interpretations into balance. In answering our third research question -- *C) In what ways does NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development promote or hinder its mission of sustainable development?* -- we can now evaluate to what degree NORHED attempts to achieve such a balance.

To put this discussion into context, let us revisit the broader debate on how to develop higher education environments under financial scarcity, as well as how the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development could be used to advance this debate. As we saw, the debate on how to advance higher education environments under financial scarcity is currently divided into two sides, namely, the rational choice approach and the capabilitarian approach, with each side promoting a rather different rationale regarding the heuristic dichotomy between outcome-based causality and process-based indeterminacy. The first approach, as we have seen first in Chapter 1 and then, in detail, in Chapter 2, adheres to the rational calculus of cost-benefit analysis. For this school of thought, humans and social environments ascribe to the axioms of the neoclassical model of human behavior, namely, instrumental rationality, ordinal preferences, and, in the final analysis, the pursuit of utility maximization. The full logical consequence of this intellectual path entails augmenting the salience of measurability and accountability in every aspect of higher education (Espeland and Sauder 2016; Tuchman 2009, 2017). It invites strategies that stem directly from the artillery of the rational choice perspective, namely, concentrated efforts towards what Gaye Tuchman (2009: 22) calls the three E's: "economy, efficiency, effectiveness". This

outlook prescribes a vision of a higher education system in which activities of development to be viewed as a controllable circuit of inputs, processes, and outputs, with the synergies of all these three elements eventually leading to a legitimizing impact on the education sector (see Espeland and Sauder 2007; Espeland and Sauder 2016; Tuchman 2009, 2017; Rabovsky 2012).

The second approach of this debate, that of capabilitarianism, captures the essence of human life and human striving to the quality of higher education in effects that are not reducible to the measures of GDP, economic data, and metrics (Alexander 2016; Adriansen et al. 2017; Breidlid 2013; Halvorsen and Nossum 2017; Nussbaum 2011; Sen 1977, 1984, 1995, 1999; Varoufakis 1991, 2014). Prosperity and quality of education, in that paradigm, is better approached by understanding how humans reach flourishing and a meaningful, empowered life, where they can seek to become who they want to be by defining their choices and their opportunities themselves, not due to preordained metrics.[40] This theoretical approach understands the development of higher education environments as a process of expanding freedoms and capabilities so as to increase the skills and opportunities for a person to live according to their own priorities. In other words, economic growth and other salient metrics in these environments is just the means to the end of attaining individual and collective freedoms (Nussbaum 2011; Sen 1977, 1984, 1995, 1999). This contribution from the capabilitarian perspective has changed our concept of the divide between developing and developed countries, since "in the attempt to realize our potential, we are all developing".[41] And, in that respect, the debate on capabilitarianism in higher education endorses a probabilistic and explorative understanding in the connection between processes and outcomes of development.

To resolve the established tension between rational choice theory and capabilitarianism, the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development has recently emerged as a means to provide common ground between the two perspectives. Since it inherently both develops something sustainable and sustains development, the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development can put these two approaches in balance with each other, allowing them to act in a complementary

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[40] See Sen 1977: 344: "We need to accommodate commitment as part of behavior [...] Behavior should not also be dichotomized between egoism and universalized moral systems (e.g. utilitarianism), but intermediate groups such as class and community provide the focus of many actions requiring commitment."

[41] See Nussbaum 2011: 28. For a more comprehensive discussion on this topic see also Kuklys 2005.

rather than an antagonistic fashion. This is an "imperfect process" (see Jacques 2015:19), in that achieving such a precarious balance is challenging, yet the very exercise towards attaining sustainable development is conducive to greater prospects and functionalities for prosperity than its downright dismissal.[42]

In order to parse whether NORHED uses the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development to balance these two sides of the higher education debate, we used heuristic tools that have been associated with cognitive psychology and organizational studies, namely, the process versus outcome heuristic (Kahneman 2003, 2011; Pham and Taylor 1999). My analytical framework thus sought to scaffold my assessment of where NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development falls along the interpretative spectrum between process-oriented and outcome-oriented (Bosselman 2001; Kim and Bosselmann 2015; Schneidewind 2013). In light of this brief recapitulation, we can more accurately address the final research question, namely, to evaluate whether NORHED brings the two approaches into balance.

5.1 Trade-offs in Interpreting Sustainable Development

Before answering our third and final research question, however, let us return briefly to summarize the evidence. In answering our first two research questions vis-à-vis our documentary and interview data, respectively, we have been able to demonstrate that NORHED did in fact interpret and articulate sustainable development across both sides of the interpretative spectrum. As reflected in our documentary evidence, and particularly in its flagship documents (mission statements and their included operationalization conduits), NORHED principally construes sustainable development as the end-result on a timeline, as an ulterior objective which follows a predictable, rational chain of causality. We can see this in statements such as the following:

> "In the long run [NORHED] also contributes to evidence-based policies and decisions that enhance sustainable economic, social and environmental development." (Norad 2015a: 1)

> "[NORHED] promot[es] sustainable development of society and commerce and industry, within Norway's thematic and geographical priority areas, among others" (Norad and SiU 2011: 1)

[42] See most exemplarily Jacques 2015:19.

> "NORHED's longer term objective is to sustainably contribute to a) a more and better qualified workforce, b) increased knowledge, c) evidence-based policy and decision-making and d) enhanced gender equality." (Norad 2014b: x, repeated in Norad 2014b: 3)

As these statements clearly evidence, sustainable development features as a non-intrinsic attribute that is divorced from the process of development; rather, it is enclaved only as the final step to this process of activities and modalities of work. This is brought out most explicitly in Figure 5, in which sustainable development is presented exclusively as an outcome 30 years in the future. For the documents, then, the entire understanding of sustainable development follows the rigors of a rational, rule-bound model, where emphasis is put on control, closure, and predictability. The documentary evidence thus seems to simplify and reduce the realities that underpin the pursuit of sustainable development in higher education environments under financial scarcity.

The second side of the interpretative spectrum comes across clearly in the interviews performed, where the NORHED officers deferred from interpreting sustainable development outright, choosing instead to present it as a complex "concept" that seemed much less certain than the one that the documents had suggested. Sustainable development "is a difficult concept for us technicians and even for philosophers", it "is a buzzword", it "seems to depend on what you are trying to look at", it has "many dimensions", and, finally, it something that one informant does not "think people really know what it takes to build". A cause and effect relationship seemed insufficient to them in terms of NORHED effectively changing the "ecosystem of quality" in a higher education environment, which is always shifting and has many more factors than could be accounted for and results that could predicted. In this context, sustainable development was an ever-moving target that required not just funding or planning but an approach that could be adapted even after NORHED and its support structure had departed an institution. The world does indeed change so fast (to paraphrase one officer), and projects need to be constantly updated, and "even [be] scaled up" to truly develop sustainably. Their initial thoughts often veered towards the outcome-oriented sort of sustainable development found in the documentary evidence. However, as they thought out loud through the issues, the officers generally looked more towards an adaptive, process-oriented approach to sustainable development -- for example, going from "results [that] will carry forward into the future" to "start[ing] some sort of spark that may continue to give results into the future."

As we have seen, then, the interpretations and articulations presented in the two kinds of data were on a spectrum of interpretations of sustainable development. There are two components to fully addressing our third and final question: *C) In what ways does NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development promote or hinder its mission of sustainable development?* First, we will discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each interpretation and then assess whether NORHED uses the conceptual vocabulary effectively to achieve an equitable balance between the formerly competing perspectives of outcome-oriented rational choice and process-oriented capabilitarianism.

As much scholarship makes manifest (Christensen and Gornitzka 2017; Giusepponi and Tavoletti 2018; Morphew and Hartley 2006), it is not surprising that flagship documents with mission statements would promote an outcome-oriented approach to sustainable development. Governmental organizations related to higher education, like most other organizations, need to have clear definitions and clear goals if they are to be successful and achieve legitimacy in their intended sector. In other words, outcomes and results afford prestige and strategic advantages in a given organization, since that would communicate a strong sense of control and a sense of accountability (see exemplarily Elster 1989; Hollis 2011; Stensaker and Harvey 2011; Tuchman 2009; Varoufakis 2014). Any perceived inability to define sustainable development or see it is as a result of specific tasks within an organization's very mission would seem to damage the organization's reputation, making it consequently more difficult for it to communicate and achieve its goals. Therefore, what NORHED might lose in an approach that looks only to reliable outcomes, thereby preventing the adaptive approach necessary for genuine sustainable development, it gains in its ability to be an organization that is respected, accountable, and able to continue its efforts to effectuate systemic change.

On the other hand, once you have stopped questioning sustainable development you are no longer thinking sustainably. This is what the officers and collaborating academics implicitly seem to recognize. The indeterminacy and critical approach that the NORHED officers displayed regarding the prospects of sustainable development does not present, at first sight, a persuasive case for the abilities to achieve sustainable development. However, their process-oriented approach is, ultimately, much more nuanced and in fact sustainable, that is, iterative and adaptive. As much behavioral science research has empirically showcased (Festinger 2009; Kahneman 2000, 2003, 2011; Kahneman and Tversky 1984; Pham and Taylor et al. 1999;

Tversky and Kahneman 1981), after all, a process-oriented approach to action is an exercise in painful cognitive dissonance between expectations and realities. As discussed, a strict and narrow interpretation of sustainable development can actually limit one's ability to think sustainably and eventually achieve sustainable development. In that sense, the officers and practitioners display a healthy and positive attitude towards the issue, aligning with what Hollis (2011) has called "The Cunning of Reason", namely, our sapient ability to renegotiate the limits of our reasoning (see Thaler 2000, with extensive bibliography).[43]

NORHED and its officers are both working toward sustainable development, of course. However, words do matter. As discussed in Chapter 2, the different rhetorical approaches do have real effects. In their seminal discussion of this topic between focusing on outcomes or processes, Pham and Taylor (1999: 252) argue that "by making the goal salient, outcome simulation may lead people to identify their actions at a high level, whereas process simulation, which focuses on the individual steps to reach the goal, may lead people to identify their actions at lower levels. Lower level action is thought to facilitate performance on complex and difficult tasks". In simpler terms, then, the very approach towards a complex goal, such as that of sustainable development, can bear significant consequences regarding its real-life implementation, and condition or impede the very foundations of enactment.

We can see this clearly in NORHED's case. On the one hand, the organization's official orientation for meeting goals and end results limits the officer's ability to pursue a truly sustainable (*qua* "always moving target") development. On the other hand, the fact that the officers display skepticism towards the mission of sustainable development does not present

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[43] See Hollis 2011: 137-138: "Such rules are hugely important to the conduct of social business. Indeed, social life would soon collapse without them and, since they are a matter of convention at least as much as of facilitating best solutions, a visiting foreigner needs to be humble about discovering what they in fact are. The presumption behind them is either that we need to learn how best to regulate our activities or that, faced with several workable conventions, we simply need to agree on one. It hardly needs saying, however, that it makes a difference which we pick. Latent consequences can be dramatic, as with the rules regulating farm subsidies. *Social life is not lived in self-contained arenas and the rules of one aspect, for instance of religious observance, can produce large effects on others, for instance education or industry. The longer the chain, the less likely it is that the effects were intended* (underlining mine)." See also Thaler 2000: 140 "Building models of rational, unemotional agents is easier than building models of quasi-rational emotional humans. Nonetheless, each generation of scientists builds on the work of the previous generation. Theorems too hard to prove 20 years ago are found in graduate student problem sets today. As economists become more sophisticated, their ability to incorporate the findings of other disciplines such as psychology improves."

NORHED as making a strong case for achieving their goals. This is a real trade-off. Ultimately, the choice to take one approach to interpret and articulate sustainable development over the other is not without effects, and in fact the dissonance between the two can be damaging, especially when it is a concept that constantly behooves lip service.

We have thus shown how NORHED fails to balance their interpretation of sustainable development, going too far to both extremes of the spectrum instead of using both sides to complement and reinforce each other. The challenge to achieve this balance is not a simple one, of course. If an organization wants to be to be sustainable, it has to be constantly adapting and defying the aspect of predictability and outcome-based thought; in fact, it has to focus on the process and the quality that the process must acquire, through deliberation and repetitive trial and error. As some scholars of behavioral science have described this, a process that aspires to quality has "the foreign language effect" (Costa et al. 2014; Hayakawa et al. 2016; Keysar et al. 2012; Sunstein 2019): it is slow, careful, deliberative, repetitive, cognitively taxing, and defies real closure.[44] And if we think about it, this is true of any language, for even native speakers never really "master" a language, and it is always a work in progress (see e.g. Maegaard et al. 2013). On the other hand, in order to attain a sense of development but also gain legitimacy and accountability, an organization, and especially one based on technologies of knowledge, needs to grow and attain results, which would inspire further confidence and growth (Espeland and Sauder 2016; Tuchman 2009). These results, and the sense of accountability that they convey,

[44] All these contributions to the "foreign language effect" certainly flow back to Tversky and Kahneman 1981 regarding the framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. Unbeknownst to the psychological literature, however, Wittgenstein 1961 (Investigation 5.6.) anticipates the foreign language effect with the "the limits of my language mean the limits of my world". Same goes for Borges (1990), who proclaimed that close reading itself is thinking with a different brain: "lesen ist denken mit fremdem Gehirn". However, I would like to add here that a critic could see that the foreign language effect has also its limitations and deconstruct it: the mind can take only a certain level of uncertainty before it ceases to operate effectively. Remember Babel's tower and Derrida's (1985: 209-210) interpretation here: "La «tour de Babel» ne figure pas seulement la multiplicité irréductible des langues, elle exhibe un inachèvement, l'impossibilité de compléter, de totaliser, de saturer, d'achever quelque chose qui serait de l'ordre de l'édification, de la construction architecturale, du système et de l'architectonique. Ce que la multiplicité des idiomes vient limiter, ce n'est pas seulement une traduction «vraie», une entr'expression transparente et adéquate, c'est aussi un ordre structural, une cohérence du constructum. Il y a là (traduisons) comme une limite interne à la formalisation, une incomplétude de la constructure." I reject the premises of deconstruction writ large in its extreme logical consequences, but I think that there is something irreducible on going from language to language, which is forever lost in translation.

can foster a sense of trust which can empower an organization. However, these results occur, perhaps to some paradoxically, only if we also focus on the process (Pham and Taylor 1999).

The challenge is not simple. However, it is also not insurmountable. An organization needs to work conscientiously to close the gap between the two rhetorical approaches. This does not mean that either side is wrong in the interpretation of how to achieve sustainable development. On the contrary, it is the delicate balancing between the two seemingly contradictory approaches inherent in the concept that will ultimately deliver the envisioned results and enrich the higher education prospects of its dependent higher education environments. It could enable all internal stakeholders to focus both on processes and outcomes and, therefore, focus more on sustainable development as an iterative exercise in painstaking cognitive dissonance rather solely being an exercise in delivering prescribed results that fit a static form.

5.2 Conclusions

With this discussion in mind, let us return now to our research questions:

A) *How does NORHED interpret and articulate sustainable development in its official documentation?*

In the official documentation, NORHED interprets and articulates the concept very broadly, using general signifiers that point towards an outcome-oriented approach, with visual graphics (see Figure 5) that stress this even more.

B) *How does the NORHED's staff and collaborating academics interpret and articulate sustainable development?*

Second, in the interviews conducted, NORHED's officers and collaborating academics stress the term's complexity and even indefinability, requiring a process-oriented approach to unpack and to constantly update it.

C) *In what ways does NORHED's interpretation and articulation of sustainable development promote or hinder its mission of sustainable development?*

As we have seen in answering research questions A) and B), NORHED interprets and articulates sustainable development using the full breadth of its conceptual vocabulary. However, it seems to have gone too far in each of the extremes of the spectrum rather than trying to strike a more

equitable balance. Without this balance, each of the approaches comes with trade-offs. Defining sustainable development with an outcome-oriented approach might produce confidence and garner legitimacy for an organization like NORHED because it presents stable goals and suggests being able to meet them, but it comes at the price of limiting its effectiveness to achieve sustainable development. Defining sustainable development with a process-oriented approach, on the other hand, would allow NORHED to be flexible, adapt, and ultimately think sustainably in a way that leads to genuine sustainable development, but the skepticism towards stated outcomes might also jeopardize its legitimacy.

As the answers to the research questions demonstrate, the answer to this fundamental question depends too much on the context. And that is a real issue. NORHED interprets and articulates the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development in higher education vis-à-vis a rhetorical exercise in satisfying competing audiences and priorities. This might not be unexpected given the ways in which higher education organizations operate in general, and several other organizations might display similar dissonances, but the stark differences here in that the rhetorical choices might also limit the organization's ability to achieve sustainable development and promote its noble mission.

Chapter 6: Recommendations and Further Research

6.1 Recommendations for NORHED

While the benefits of sustainable development are clear, as discussed in Chapter 2, the adoption of the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development has been shown in our case study to generate significant dissonance. The conclusions that we arrived at in Chapter 5.2 provide some guidelines that might aid higher education organizations, including international development agencies like NORHED, in determining how best to employ this conceptual vocabulary going forward.

The usefulness of employing "sustainable development" is primarily related to the way that it balances an outcome-oriented and process-oriented approach, as outlined in Chapter 2.2. The data we examined in Chapter 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 does use both approaches along the interpretative spectrum of sustainable development, but it falters in alternative directions and, more importantly, does not attempt to balance them. NORHED's official documentation is primarily outcome-oriented, which does not easily allow space for the iterative, adaptive process that sustainable development requires. And this chasm is made even more evident by the way in which the officers and collaborating academics focus much more on the process-oriented approach and display criticism toward the very goals that are at the integral to NORHED's mission as portrayed in the official documents. This incongruity, as mentioned in the conclusions in Chapter 5.2, seems to negate the benefits that can be reaped by employing the rich conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development.

In light of our close analysis of the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development, we are bestowed with the tools not only to see this gap but also the ability to recommend three ways to ameliorate NORHED's position.

[1] We would recommend that NORHED tries to take a more balanced approach in terms of its documentation, and namely one that incorporates a more process-oriented interpretation of sustainable development's conceptual vocabulary. In this vein, NORHED should endeavor to design visual illustrations that position sustainable development not only as an ultimate goal far in the future (see Figure 5), but as an indispensable part of a continuing process. Sustainable

development, in other words, should be an integral part of every step of the development process, which cannot be dissociated from outcomes.

[2] We would also recommend that the official documentation be constantly updated with the insights gained by NORHED's officers as they work through the process of thinking sustainably vis-à-vis their real-life projects. Sustainable development is not a goal or a process but both. And this needs to be reflected in NORHED's official stance if they are to continue their noble mission and help higher education institutions in the South develop sustainably.

[3] Finally, we would recommend that NORHED acknowledges more explicitly the difficulties of interpreting sustainable development as is voiced both by the scholarly community at large and by each of its officers. An integral part of what makes sustainable development useful as a conceptual vocabulary is the painstaking process of continually reflecting on its processes and assumptions while, simultaneously, delivering results. Consequently, removing a reflective iteration from the equation of sustainable development ultimately limits an organization's ability to achieve its sustainable development goals. To be sure, the introspective task of sustainable development is one difficult task. And, to compound the problem, an accountable implementation of sustainable development is even harder work. However, if an iterative process is combined with an explicit account of the challenges, both practical and conceptual, that ensue an accountable implementation, NORHED can take up a unique and enduring role in rendering higher education in vulnerable parts of the world sustainable.

Ultimately, by using these three recommendations, and especially the last one, NORHED could be a leader in shaping and promoting a unique role for interpreting and articulating sustainable development in higher education.

6.2. Avenues for Further Research

The issue of sustainable development in higher education, with special regard to developing higher education environments which face financial scarcity is byzantine. Tantalizingly, the amount of results that confront a researcher searching for "sustainable development AND higher

education" is staggering,[45] and accruing with incredible velocity. Nonetheless, based on a database and manual survey of the latest bibliographical landscape on the issue, [46] we can recommend two research paths of inquiry on the issue as most salient: A) Education for Sustainable Development and B) Behavioral Science.

The first research avenue is identified as education for sustainable development (ESD).[47] This host of research endeavors focuses on finding ideas and actionable practices for making the views of sustainable development salient, more established, and eventually applied in higher education environments. As Barth (2015) comprehensively summarizes the issue, the project of implementing sustainability in higher education is, at its core, a furthering of the transition to Mode-2 research, namely, the transition of academic research and teaching to primary engagement with topics and not with disciplines. It involves three main levels, namely, a) research on the theoretical and practical sustainability issues themselves, b) the design of teaching and learning activities that can educate the present and future decision makers, and c) the organizational (management and administration) change itself as a self-reflective praxis of educational engagement and outreach.[48]

According to this emergent research avenue, in fact, the future of developing higher education environments in a sustainable fashion requires further research into three main strategies of ESD:

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[45] Indicatively, a perfunctory search on ProQuest (April 2019) with the terms sustainable development AND higher education, using Boolean truncators and filtering only for peer review returns 154,800 results.

[46] For our database searches, we have primarily used three databases: ProQuest, ERIC (Ovid), and SCOPUS and cross-referenced with WorldCat. This is not a bibliometric study. However, all works cited henceforth, and particularly the ones in Behavioral Science, are the ones that are the most frequently cited (and with the highest h-indices) in the bibliographic landscape of human and academic development the last two decades (see e.g. Kahneman 2011; Thaler and Sunstein 2008, Sunstein 1996, 2008, 2011).

[47] As Higgins and Thomas 2016: 103-104 recognize, citing also Sterling and Thomas 2006, the fight for nomenclature around the issue of terminology and associated meanings of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is not unequivocal or settled, (as they say "we recognize the important philosophical differences that inflect choices of terminology") since many studies use other terminologies for curriculum and higher education academic change and sustainability.

[48] Barth 2015:46 "These [three levels] are (1) research on sustainability issues, (2) learning and teaching activities to educate future decision makers, and (3) organizational change as self-reflexive praxis, embracing engagement processes and educational parameters."

a) interdisciplinary collaboration for new curricula and synergies of knowledge, [49] b) constructive alignment of curricula, [50] and c) sustainability pedagogies. [51] To be sure, as de la Harpe and Thomas (2009), as well as Barth (2015), have exemplarily shown, education for sustainable development meets some serious resistance due to factors such as top-down directives of change, rewarding of independent work instead of collaboration, mindsets of competition, and search for fast-track success due to work overload. What is more, education for sustainable development is still in inchoate stages regarding the creation of a synthetic agenda that could drive the development of university environments to balance between both the outcomes and processes of sustainable development. However, more research on how enhanced, self-reflective practices for the creation of consensual and equitable approaches to internalizing sustainable development is definitely within this research horizon.

The second, and even less explored avenue for researching pathways towards sustainable development stems from an empirical field referred to as behavioral science. This field of inquiry, broadly subsumed as the study of human judgment under conditions of scarcity (Keren and Wu 2015, with extensive bibliography),[52] is prominently outlined in the latest World Bank's Flagship Report (2015), entitled *Mind, Behavior, and Society.* According to this report, all the

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[49] See the studies by Arnold and Civian 1997; Cullingford and Blewitt 2004; Higgins and Thomas 2016; Lattuca et al. 2004. Simsek and Louis 1994 consider the university as largely an "organized anarchy" and conclude that curricular change is possible, but would take over ten years. Kezar 2012 considers this kind of university change to take 10-15 years. Higgins and Thomas 2016:103 conclude that "transformational curriculum change requires time and effort, two resources that are in high demand within the sector. For the sustainability agenda it may be particularly frustrating to accept that change takes a lot of time, given the sense of urgency change agents may feel in response to crises such as climate change and mass extinctions… Highlighting existing links between change agendas and external trends, specifically economic and/or political drivers, may help speed up the change agenda".

[50] Christie and Miller 2018: 396 summarize the different tools of aligning knowledge for sustainable development as follows: "Critical and holistic thinking, place-based education, role plays, stimulus activities, critical reading and writing, reflective accounts, group discussions and debates, field work, problem-based learning and cases studies are therefore often advocated for teaching ESD as they align with the epistemologies, ideologies, and pedagogies that support postpositivist approaches to education."

[51] The term sustainable pedagogies is adopted by Sterling 2012; Wolbring and Burke 2013; Evans 2018 (with much bibliography) and it entails factors such as top-down and bottom-up learning approaches, peer-review teaching, informal learning, social learning, digital technology employment, problem-based learning, formative and summative assessment, metacognitive literacy.

[52] On this topic see also the study of Mullainathan and Shafir 2013. Also, the antecedent landmark study of Shah et al. 2012 is a key contribution to the scientific debate about the effects of financial scarcity on the way we develop and decide.

efforts of human and academic development by all international development agencies should now to be steered towards more behavioral and empirically evidenced paradigms of development. This behavioral path of research starts by challenging our rationality and our logical ability towards reaching sound judgements, deeming human behavior, in Ariely's (2008) words, as "predictably irrational".[53] In fact, after the publication of several landmark studies on the human brain and cognition, this behavioral approach has contributed very convincing evidence that our mind it is hard-wired to seek shortcuts and automatic responses in order to achieve cognitive ease and avoid overload.[54] Following this large body of empirical microfoundations (Mani et al. 2013; World Bank 2015: 6, 29), [55] this line of research posits that the attention and effort for the development of public institutions, such as universities, should be steered towards a better understanding of the mistakes and errors within our observed descriptive behaviors, not our positive intentions, goals, or plans.

This host of behavioral science studies is applied, and it has added a significant number of new policy instruments and decision-making tools for developing our ways of deliberating and deciding. These decision-making tools are divided into two categories. The first category is about small and practical changes in existing patterns of behavior. This line of such decision-making tools, which are either inexpensive or free, include small interventions such as changing the timing of a process, labelling something differently, simplifying the steps for a service, offering reminders, and have been identified as keys towards steering any envisioned

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[53] See also the landmark studies of Banaji and Greenwald 2013; Kahneman 2011; and most recently Keren and Wu 2015, with extensive bibliography.

[54] The landmark experimental approach to the limits attention and effort started first with Davidson et al. 1957 (a philosopher, a mathematician, and a psychologist sat down to understand how to assess utility from a methodological and experimental point of view, designing a few short experiments), and then mainly with Kahneman 1973, who studied vision, and particularly, the way the pupil of the eye ("the window to the soul", 1973:5) dilates according to the amount of effort or attention the subject pays to something. From the very study of the finiteness of human cognition and sight boomed the entire field of judgement and decision-making. For a recent overview of the debate and an articulation of the experimental basis see Dhami 2016; Zull 2011. For a recent experimental outline of the practical policy tools from focusing on actions rather than actions see iNudgeyou 2014. For potential moorings towards a more behavioral approach (with cognitive foundations) on education see Zull 2011 and the philosophical discussion of Davidson 2008.

[55] World Bank 2015: 6. "It builds on a large body of empirical evidence—microlevel evidence from across the behavioral and social sciences." World Bank 2015: 29 "Confronted with the mounting empirical evidence on large and costly errors that people often make in critical choices."

development practices to the direction of becoming more internalized, and eventually more successful (see e.g. Basu 2010; Jackson 2017; Moore 2015; Nagatsu 2015; Levy and Fukuyama 2010; Sumner and Glennie 2015; Thaler and Sunstein 2008). The ultimate purpose of these practical tools is, in a word, simplification.[56] However, the tools of behavioral science for development do not stop with simplification. Rather, this line of research has also offered tools and new research results for understanding, cognizing, and incrementally overcoming our biases and blindspots in our decisions, when things persistently defy simplification. Further case in point, as perhaps the most decisive study in collecting debiasing techniques (Soll et al. 2015; in part reflected also on World Bank 2015: 32) has made manifest, existing techniques in debiasing under complexity abound: tempering optimism,[57] harnessing the wisdom of crowds, splitting questions in parts, modifying choice environments with choice architecture by promoting the agreed optimal goal, increasing social norms of accountability, activating a latent social norm, reducing the salience of a stigmatized identity, encouraging future-focused thinking, and crafting pre-commitment devises are some of the most dominant techniques in the new artillery of enhancing development decisions through behavioral science. And, in that respect, behavioral science makes manifest new ways for developing our actions and our way of thinking in order to account more for the long-term,[58] as "an iterative process of discovery" (World Bank 2015: 18) which parses and draws attention to the steps of an observed process, while also delivering tangible outcomes. [59]

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[56] The technical term is "reduction of cognitive load in existing decision-making settings", see Plass et al. 2010. For the notion of simplicity as a guiding tool for better development see Sunstein 2013, 2015 (with extensive bibliographies).

[57] On this issue of optimism, perhaps the most acclaimed bias towards decision-making under conditions of financial scarcity see Sharot 2012. The classical study of Simon 1983 is also an important contribution in that direction.

[58] To remind ourselves of Thaler and Shefrin (1981: 392), a "farsighted planner" and a "myopic doer" inhere in all of us, but in deep conflict.

[59] World Bank 2015: 18 "Moreover, similar challenges can have different underlying causes; solutions to a challenge in one context may not work in another. *As a result, development practice requires an iterative process of discovery and learning* (underlining ours). Multiple psychological and social factors can affect whether a policy succeeds; while some of these may be known before implementation, some will not be. This means that an iterative process of learning is needed, which in turn implies spreading resources (time, money, and expertise) over several cycles of design, implementation, and evaluation."

This new line of research on development, and the effectiveness of its tools, has a very strong evidentiary backbone.[60] However, this body of evidence, and the experimental results that underpin it, are as of yet not connected with the vocabulary of sustainable development in general, or higher education development in particular. The World Bank (2015), in fact, never makes the connection between the new, empirical, and sophisticated tools of development and the conceptual vocabulary of sustainable development. This is a missed research opportunity to which scholars will, hopefully, contribute in the near future, in order to render environments of public interest, such as those of higher education, more deliberative, reflexive, and, ultimately, sustainable.

[60] The most comprehensive bibliographies on this issue come from three sources: Dhami 2016; Keren and Wu 2015; and World Bank 2015. Dhami 2016 includes about 200 pages listing experimental results in applied decision-making settings towards development. Sunstein 2017 offers a rich bird's eye view on the new advances of the debate on human development. Interesting affinities with this research programme are shown in Neumann 1991, 2012. However, more research on this topic is forthcoming.

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Appendix I: Interview Guide

Introduction

- Can you briefly introduce yourself?
- How would you describe your involvement in the formation of NORHED's initiative?
- In which development processes have you participated thus far?

Concept, Content, and Intent of NORHED

- What would you consider, in your opinion, the origins of the idea of capacity development in Higher Education institutions?
- How has NORHED, formally and informally, defined development thus far?
- How flexible do you consider the formal structures surrounding development at Norhed?
- What type of difficulties have you faced during the implementation of the ideas surrounding development?
- Have you considered any alternative approaches?

Cooperation/Agency

- What would you identify as the key protocols followed during the process of development?
- Which were your closest partners in this process?

Sustainable Development

- Which factors have the greatest influence on the achievement or failure of project objectives?
- How do you consider sustainable development as a factor in the operational agenda?
- What are the available instruments for assessing risks and impact?
- Are there any unintended consequences of the initiative at the national and international levels?

Future Direction

- What are your reflections on implementation of development protocols thus far?
- What would you consider as best strategies for NORHED to deliver its development goals in the future?
- Anything you would like to add?

Appendix II: Request Invitation Letter for NORHED

Gmail

Zacharias Andreadakis <zachandreadakis@gmail.com>

Request for Interviewing the Section for Research, Innovation, and Higher Education
7 messages

Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu> Sun, Dec 17, 2017 at 6:59 PM
To: [redacted]norad.no, [redacted]@norad.no

Dear [redacted] (if I may),

Good afternoon. My name is Zacharias Andreadakis and I am currently writing my Master thesis on sustainable capacity development in Higher Education at UiO. I will start the field work for the dissertation in January 2018, and I am interested in using the NORHED programme as a case study for my thesis.

Following advice from my advisor, Prof. [redacted], and having discussed my thesis proposal with [redacted], I decided to take the liberty to contact you and your Section in order to inquire whether I could interview the case officers at your Section for Research, Innovation, and Higher Education of Norad. My research design will include interviews with case officers to look at their experience with NORHED as a capacity development programme. I will base my study on a perspective largely from the Norwegian side of the capacity strengthening, and particularly from the donor perspective.

Attached is an abbreviated outline of my proposal and, for research transparency purposes, my UiO transcript. I am readily available for any questions or clarifications.

I hope your Section would be interested in participating in my study, and I do hope that the results could also be useful for the NORHED programme.

Thank you very much for reading, and I hope to hear back from you.

Yours truly,
Zacharias E. Andreadakis [redacted]

[redacted]

2 attachments

NORHED Project Proposal.docx
141K

UiO Vitnemål 2017.pdf
40K

From: zachandreadaki @gmail com [mailto zachandreadaki @gmail com] **On Behalf Of** Zacharias Andreadakis
Sent: søndag 17. desember 2017 19:00
To: [redacted] @norad no ; [redacted] @norad no
Subject: Request for Interviewing the Section for Research, Innovation, and Higher Education

[Quoted text hidden]

Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu> Mon, Dec 18, 2017 at 4:12 PM
To [redacted] @norad no
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@norad.no>, [redacted] <[redacted]@norad.no>

Dear [redacted]

Thank you very much for your prompt re pon e.

Kind regards,
Zacharias

[redacted]

[Quoted text hidden]

[redacted] <[redacted]@norad.no> Thu, Dec 21, 2017 at 5:01 PM
To: Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu>

Dear Zacharias

Thank you for your e-mail and interest in the NORHED programme. We will be happy to participate in your study.

I suggest that we start by discussing the scope on the phone, and then agree on the way forward.

I am available Friday 22 December, and then back in office 4 January where I will be available after 14 00 both 4th and 5th of January Let me know if one of these days would suit you.

Appendix III: Anonymous Quote Confirmations

Gmail

Zacharias Andreadakis <zachandreadakis@gmail.com>

Quote confirmation
3 messages

Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu> Fri, Dec 7, 2018 at 5:30 PM
To: [redacted]@iped.uio.no>

Dear [redacted] (if I may),

Greetings!
This is Zacharias, from IPED. Quite a bit of time went by, but I hope you still remember me.
After some delays (ars longa sed vita breuis), I am finally close to submitting my thesis on Norhed.
Despite a lot of interview material, I ended up using only a few quotes from my notes.
From our highly engaging conversation, one quote stood out to me really profoundly, so it has tentatively found its way on my thesis:

"Sustainability has come up like a hype. I don't think people really know what it takes to build sustainable orientations. Our society are in big transition, but it remains to be seen how these decisions are sustainable in the future. Our education was made for the industrial age: same disciplines, assessment system, entering the job market. Now this has changed. The education system faces challenges with that. It goes for Norway and Tanzania alike. It is difficult to understand how we can make young people qualify for the country they are a part of. Technology is an important force in this discussion. But the South, like the North, sometimes is stuck in a certain kind of way."

It is on page 109 (see attached). I was hoping whether you could confirm it. My word is my bond, so I would be also very happy to modify accordingly or remove it, if you don't think it is representative of the spirit of our conversation. For reasons of full disclosure and transparency, attached is also a full draft of my thesis.

Yours truly,
Zacharias

[redacted]

Thesis Draft_Full (1).pdf
6096K

[redacted]@iped.uio.no> Tue, Dec 11, 2018 at 10:03 AM
To: Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu>

Dear Zacharias,

Sounds like something I could have said! Yes you can use this quote as it is.

Good luck!

Best
[redacted]
[Quoted text hidden]

Gmail Zacharias Andreadakis <zachandreadakis@gmail.com>

Anonymous Quote Affirmation

3 messages

Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu> Fri, Nov 9, 2018 at 10:33 AM
To: [redacted]@norad.no>

Dear [redacted],

Good morning!!

I hope this email finds you well. It has been a long time since we last spoke, so I sincerely hope all is well. I have finished drafting my thesis. And I wrote it with a smile on my face. It was so nice getting to speak with both academics and officers and, in sum, I have only good things to say about NORHED.

Below I attach two quotes from our conversation, which I hope you could affirm. They are completely anonymized and without any personal or sensitive information. I found them highly useful towards structuring my thoughts and I hope you would agree that I use them. To repeat myself, the quotes are completely anonymous and rather uncontroversial. I know that you must be quite busy, but as my deadline for submitting is approaching soon, I hope you could take a look at this, hopefully within a week.

But if you don't have time for it, I will entirely understand. I just know how busy life in Norad is these days. I will have to assume that you don't disagree with them. They are rather uncontroversial quotes and I believe they do justice to the strategic intentions and the success of the program thus far. For full transparency purposes, I also attach a full draft of my thesis (written as a book manuscript), so that you could see them in context if you want to. I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you very much for your time and effort so far, [redacted]. Good will is not a given and you have went the extra mile towards helping me: I highly appreciate that. :)

Kind regards,
Zacharias

[redacted]

2 attachments

Thesis Draft_Full (1).pdf
6096K

Norhed_Anonymous Informant 1.docx
18K

[redacted]@norad.no> Fri, Nov 9, 2018 at 11:01 AM
To: Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu>

Dear Zacharias,

Greetings, it has been a long time indeed. Congratulations on finally putting this arduous task to bed. The quote seem to underscore my thoughts as communicated in the interview and can be used in your thesis. This will surely be a useful resource for us in the NORHED team. I hope to get a signed printed copy after all is finalised.

All the best,

[redacted].

[Quoted text hidden]

Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu> Fri, Nov 9, 2018 at 11:12 AM
To: [redacted]@norad.no>

Haha, most definitely [redacted]!!
You are the best, thank you so much. I look forward to speaking to you soon, hopefully in person this time.

All my best,
Zacharias

[redacted]

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

Gmail Zacharias Andreadakis <zachandreadakis@gmail.com>

Anomymous Quote Affirmation

[redacted]@norad.no> Fri, Nov 9, 2018 at 11:16 AM
To: Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu>

Dear Zacharias,

I have taken a look at the quote and also the context where it appears in your thesis. I do not agree with the statement "Other expressed opinions from officers were much more signaled to market-driven outcomes, and focused primarily on economic aspects of growth". My quote was meant to focus on **the relevance of the education and employability of graduate students**. I would appreciate if this is reflected in your thesis as I did not mention market-driven forces or economic growth. I have made some small adjustments to the quote to make it clearer (attached).

All the best wishes,

[redacted]

[Quoted text hidden]

Norhed_Anonymous Informant 3.docx
18K

Gmail

Zacharias Andreadakis <zachandreadakis@gmail.com>

Anomymous Quote Affirmation

[redacted]@norad.no> Thu, Nov 29, 2018 at 10:38 AM
To: Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu>

Dear Zacharias

Quote 2 in a new writing.

"Sustainability is a difficult concept for us technicians and even for philosophers. It is like a mathematical function with different variables and dimensions. Sometimes we need to disaggregate it in order to understand our own contributions. NORHED contributes to institutional sustainability by preparing staff with PhD and Masters who can lead to better research results and better teaching and supervision for future students. Universities become sustainable if they continue doing research that is relevant for society and by preparing people that is needed in the labor market". So there are many dimensions in sustainability, and not all are addressed by NORHED, but we can certainly say that NORHED contributes to certain dimensions of sustainability in our collaboration with Higher education institutions in the South."

Good luck.

[Quoted text hidden]

Gmail Zacharias Andreadakis <zachandreadakis@gmail.com>

Anomymous Quote Affirmation

[redacted]@norad.no> Wed, Nov 28, 2018 at 3:13 PM
To: Zacharias Andreadakis <andreaza@umich.edu>

Dear Zacharias

Sorry for not replying before. I has been studying and travelling.

Attached my suggestions.

Kind regards,

[redacted].

[Quoted text hidden]

Quotes_ Anonymous Informant 2, from [redacted] docx
15K