



Business Leaders' Perception of Public Role in Network Cooperation: Triple Helix or Laissez-faire?

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Project: Regional Challenges and possibilities - Innovation and value creation in business networks

- The paper will be a delivery from the project RECIN, funded by The Research Council of Norway ([Programme for Regional R&D and Innovation](#)).
- RECIN shall contribute by investigating and generating knowledge about how interactions with different types of networks contribute to knowledge generation, innovation and value creation for the firms.
- Furthermore, the aim is to investigate and increase the knowledge about how publicly funded network construction programmes can stimulate and facilitate network based innovation.



Introduction

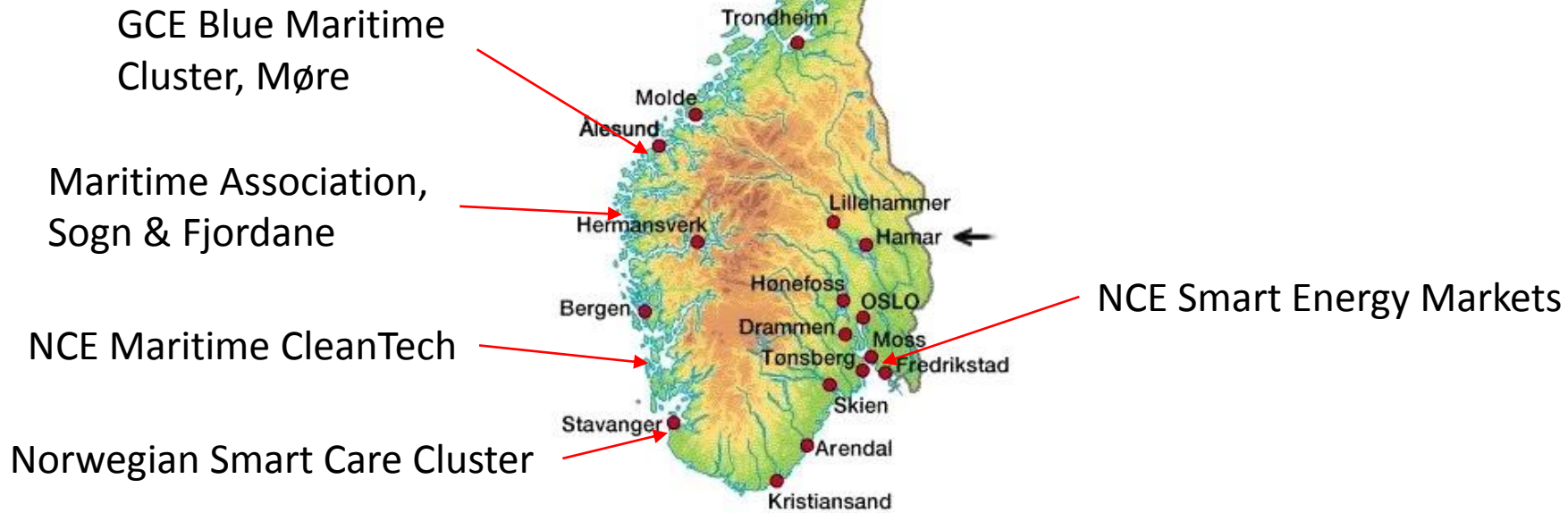
- The triple helix model (TH) for cooperation is an argument for public initiatives in business networks.
- To stimulate businesses to innovate, the Norwegian Government has initiated several measures to build up business networks, e.g. the Arena program, National Centers of Expertise (NCE), and Global Centers of Expertise (GCE).
- Our hypothesis is that private sector actors do not necessarily value these public endeavors. To improve the initiatives, stakeholders need a deeper understanding of how they are perceived.



Research questions

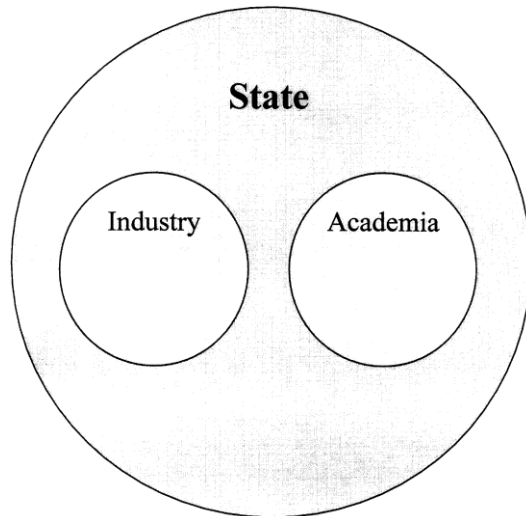
- General topic: Public role in business network building
- Questions:
 1. In what degree do business leaders specifically mention the public role when explaining reasons for joining business networks?
 2. How do business leaders perceive the regional public role in network building?

OUR CASES

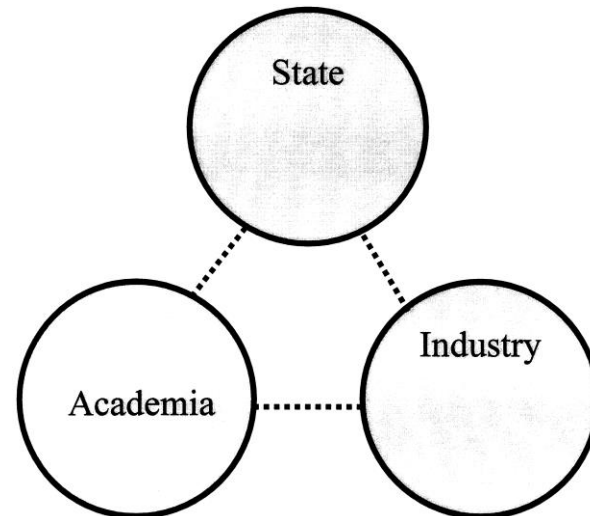


Three models for relations between Academia-Industry-Government

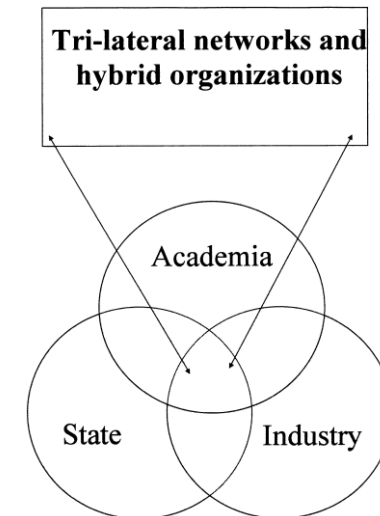
A “statist” model of university–industry–government relations



A “laissez-faire” model of university–industry–government relations



A “balanced” model of university–industry–government relations (Triple Helix)



Models and government role

Model	Government role	Possible problems
Statist	Dominating	Lock-ins/ path dependency Sub-optimal solutions
Laissez-faire	At a minimum; regulator and customer	Greater differences between regions
TH	Active role (e.g. in innovation and entrepreneurship)	Mixture of roles – do businesses understand public role?

Functions of business networks

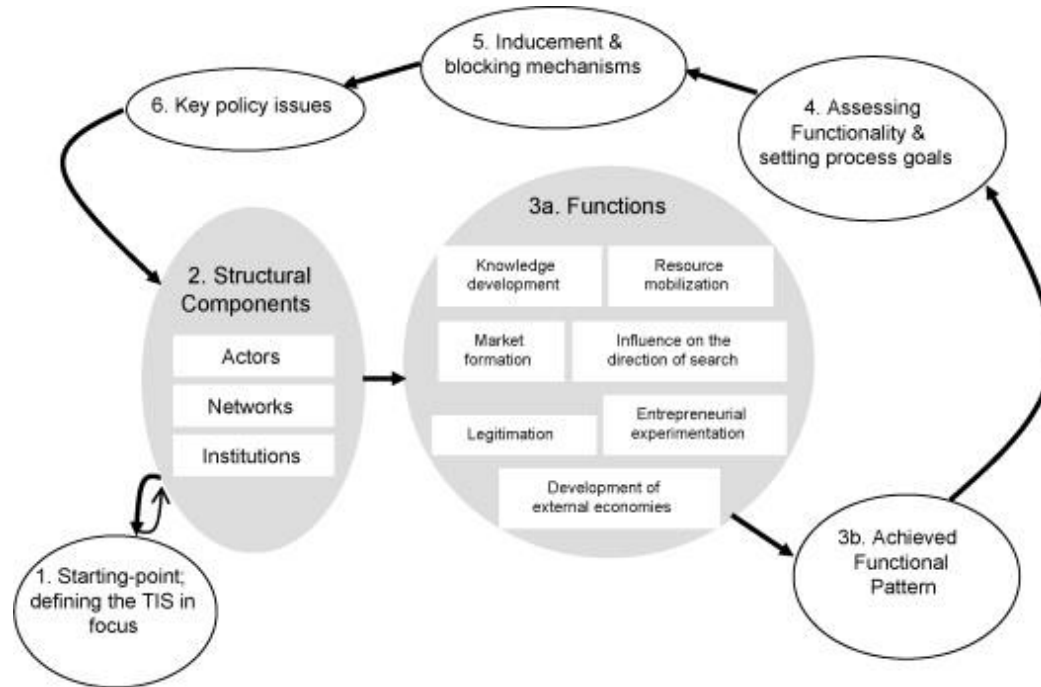


Fig. 1. The scheme of analysis (adapted from Oltander and Perez Vico, 2005).

Ranga & Etzkowitz (2013):
 «... the main function of a Triple Helix system ... is that of generating, diffusing and utilizing knowledge and innovation.»

Interviews and data processing

	Maritime Association, Sogn & Fjordane	GCE Blue Maritime Cluster, Møre	NCE Maritime CleanTech	NCE Smart Energy Markets	Norwegian Smart Care Cluster
Companies	9	5	9	5	6
Network management	2	1	2	1	3
County municipality	1	1	1	2	1
Other public actors at regional level (IN, NRC)	1	2	1	5	3
Partner responsible for interview, transcribing/ taking notes and coding	Vestlandsforskning, Sogn & Fjordane University College	Møreforskning	Polytec	Østfoldforskning, Østfold University College	BI Norwegian Business School Stavanger, Polytec
Data processing	All interviews except 1 were transcribed from recordings. Notes from 1 due to recording failure. Coding/ sorting according to table 1.	8 of 9 interviews recorded. Separate notes from two interviewers. Coding/ sorting according to table 1.	All interviews transcribed from recordings. Coding/ sorting according to table 1.	4 of 13 interviews recorded. Notes. Coding/ sorting according to table 1.	2 of 13 interviews recorded. Notes. Coding/ sorting according to table 1.



Coding/sorting of data from interview transcriptions/notes

	Maritime Association, Sogn & Fjordane	GCE Blue Maritime Cluster, Møre	NCE Maritim CleanTech	NCE Smart Energy Markets	Norwegian Smart Care Cluster (Arena-status)
Public roles mentioned as reasons for joining the network					
View on regional government's role in innovation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• County Municipality• Innovation Norway					



Results Q1: Most common reasons for businesses to join networks

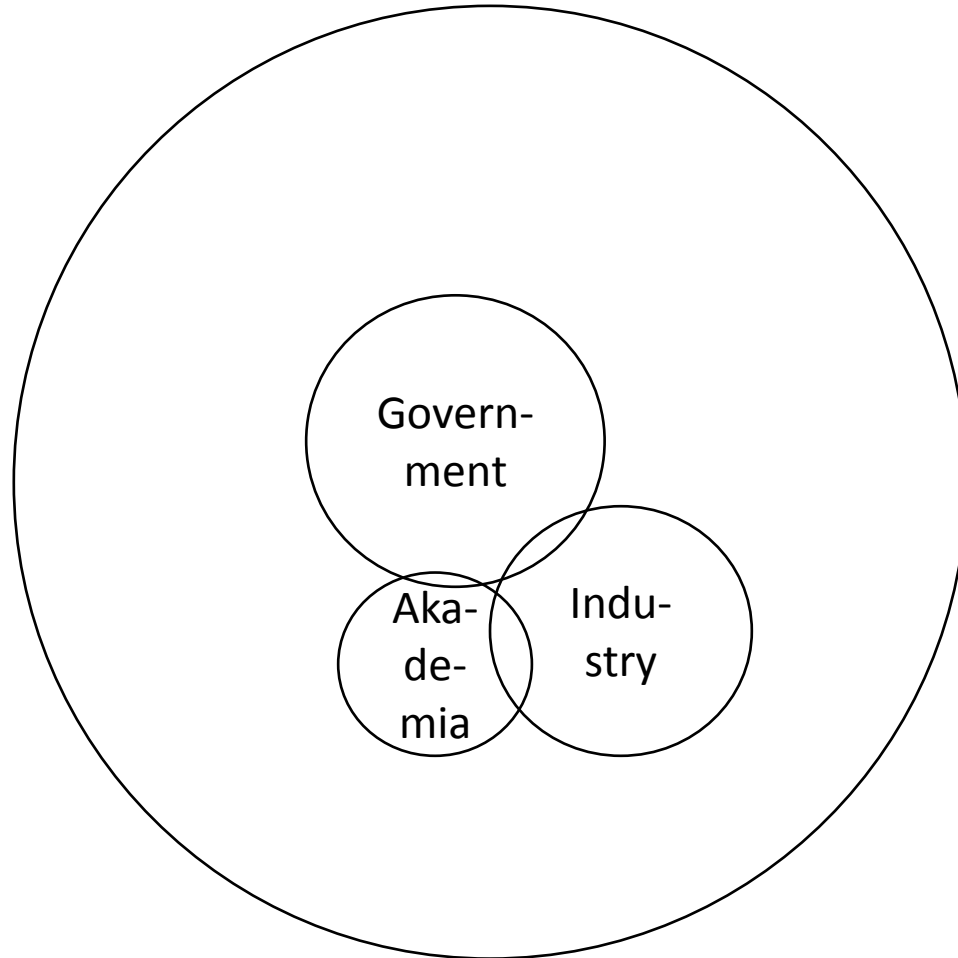
- Meeting place, “connecting people”
 - Arena for meeting important stakeholders, including representatives of the public sector (County M., IN, NRC)
 - Motives for meeting public sector: Money and lobbying
 - Other motives: Money, knowledge/information, relations (investors, lenders, customers, suppliers, etc.)
- Reputation/ legitimacy building
 - Reputation for region, industry and company as part of “something bigger”
 - Making value creation and workplaces visible
 - Membership has value in itself
- Innovation
 - Participation in projects (pilots, developing new products) important
 - No particular public role mentioned
- Public roles: Funding, regulating, (part of) organizing networks, participating (in network meetings)



Results Q2: Business leaders' view on public roles

- Common findings in all the networks
 - Private actors in the value chain are in the driver's seat in pushing for innovation
 - Large companies are key members and need to participate
- The public sector at the national level was mainly considered an important party
 - As customer
 - In funding of projects
 - As regulator
- The public at the regional level and funding agencies are in varying extent considered important
 - In funding of projects and as network facilitator
- Academia is in most networks not considered a crucial success factor for innovation

Government role still like laissez-faire?



Conclusion

- The results show that there are a variety of reasons for joining networks. We find some common factors like legitimacy building and mobilization of social and cultural capital. Public role in this: Perceived to be small.
- The networks with national public financing are expected to be triple helix networks, but we still see strong element of laissez-faire. The current dialogue is inadequate?