

The role of formal and informal networks for university-industry interactions



AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK

Gerwin Evers - Innovation Knowledge and Economic dynamics (IKE) group - Aalborg University - evers@business.aau.dk

General theme

The PhD project is aimed at studying the role of formal and informal networks for university-industry interactions and how that affects the firm-side success of these collaborations. The literature has provided a wide overview about the different forms of interaction, but a clear insight in especially the dynamics of informal interactions is missing. The reason for this is the lacking availability of data providing insight in the informal collaborations. One of the strategies to get a grip on the dynamics, is to use register data as indication for the potential existence of social ties between university and industry by assuming that students develop some social ties to the teaching staff at their university. The other method which is planned to be explored in the future, combines a database of formal collaborations with a survey covering the informal aspects of the interaction. Finally, assessing the success of a university collaboration involves some complications, since the literature indicates that quantitative evidence for firm performance effects is missing. Therefore, this study explores alternative measures that can provide insight in the firm-side incentives to get involved in university-industry collaborations.

Training

- **RUNIN training weeks in Lincoln, Aalborg, Barcelona and Enschede**
- **Internal courses**

Followed several courses at Aalborg University focused on teaching skills and the problem-based learning method. Also participated in general PhD courses about i.a. publishing during my secondment at the Lincoln International Business School

- **International Economic Geography PhD course in Utrecht**

Output

- **Paper 1: The impact of university establishment in peripheral regions on the local labour market for graduates**

Recent university establishments in peripheral regions have introduced a fast growing supplier of graduates to the thin graduate labour markets that characterizes these regions. In order to get insight in whether a region is able to absorb these graduates and thereby benefit from the university, this paper explores the wage and mobility development of the graduates of Aalborg University over time. The Danish register data indicates that the labour market around Aalborg has shown a sufficient absorbance of graduates, outpacing the other urbanized labour market in the relative growth of the share of graduates in the workforce.

This paper is in a final stage and is submitted to the Regional Studies Regional Science journal for the RUNIN special issue

- **Paper 2: The hiring dynamics following a university industry-collaboration**

The literature points at several reasons why firms should increase their hiring of university graduates when collaborating with a university. Hiring university graduates can help them overcome the absorptive capacity barrier, and hiring graduates specifically from their collaboration partner can both assist them in acquiring the tacit knowledge of the university and getting access to existing university social capital of the graduates that can provide the foundation for long-term university-industry collaborations.

Although the literature assumes the existence of these dynamics at several instances, empirical quantitative evidence is lacking. Danish register data is used to provide this empirical evidence. Currently this paper is work in progress, and a full version will be presented in the RIP2018 conference.

- **Book chapter: Co-creation of Localised Capabilities between Universities and Nascent Industries**

This case study zooms in at the role of Aalborg University in the development of the ICT and medical sector in the North Denmark region. It is argued that co-evolution processes between the university and the regional industry-base have played a major role in the development of these sectors.

This book chapter will be part of the RUNIN book which gives an overview of the role of the partner universities play in their respective regions.

Dissemination and teaching

- **Conference presentations**

RIP 2017 (Book Chapter), DRUID Academy and GEO-INNO2018 (paper 1)

- **Seminar presentations**

Presentation of paper 1 at Lincoln International Business School

- **Youtube video**

Video summarizing the content of my PhD project for a non-academic audience.

- **Think tank at University of Twente**

Hosting, participating in, and reporting about a think tank discussion on the public engagement strategies of the University of Twente

- **Policy brief Twente Board**

Advisory document for the board of stakeholders of the Twente region focused on the challenges for higher education in the region

- **Master student supervision and examination**

Supervision and oral examination of students in teaching programs related to the IKE research group

Plans for the coming months

- **Secondment in Stavanger**

The aim of the secondment at the University of Stavanger is to participate in the local research environment by presenting work and receiving feedback

- **Write and present full version of paper 2**

Paper will be presented at RIP2018 in Bergen and at the second session of the International Economic Geography PhD course

- **Write new individual paper**

Paper aimed at studying both the formal and informal interaction, most likely by combining a formal collaboration database with a survey on the informal aspects of these collaborations

- **Explore possibilities of work package collaborations**

During previous work package meetings the idea of a joint publications on PhDs and networks were discussed and steps need to be taken to realize this

- **Copenhagen RUNIN training week**

Acknowledgement



This PhD project is part of the RUNIN project which has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 722295