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The room of silence: a vulnerability in academia

An anthropological research of the Lecturer-Student relationship and the co-production of knowledge at NTNU Dragvoll

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Abstract

This thesis is based on a six-months long fieldwork at Dragvoll, a campus of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim. I explore how, the institution's own vision of «knowledge for a better world» operationalized through their values of *critical*, *creative*, *constructive,* and *respectful* development of knowledge, emerges in the lecturer's and student's everyday life at the university.

Based on the *Lecturer - Student* relationship at NTNU Dragvoll and their experiences with interaction, communication, and engagement within the lecturing room, in the developing process of knowledge and the self. I explore stories and experiences of what it means to be a *lecturer* and a *student* in contemporary higher education, which can be characterized by objectification, measurement, and standardization as social practice - at the intersection between individual action and structural conditions (Giddens 1984).

Through the lecturer's and student's point of view - I want to take the reader into *the room of silence* - as a social constructed space - and its symbolic values.

Through an analysis of the actor's subjectification of *types* and the dynamics and shift between them, I will portray a cultivational processes as a result of structuration (Giddens 1984), that breaks out in interaction with changes in the organization and its forms of management. To present an understanding of a development of higher education at NTNU, that portrays a disruption to the organization's own values.

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven er basert på et seks måneder langt feltarbeid ved Dragvoll, en campus ved Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet (NTNU) i Trondheim. Hvor jeg utforsker hvordan institusjonens egen visjon om «kunnskap for en bedre verden» operasjonalisert gjennom deres verdier om kritisk, kreativ, konstruktiv og respektfull kunnskapsutvikling kan sees gjennom foreleser- og studenthverdagen ved universitetet. Basert på organisasjonens egen visjon.

Basert på foreleser-student-relasjonen ved NTNU Dragvoll og deres erfaringer med samhandling, kommunikasjon og engasjement i forelesningsrommet, i utviklingsprosessen av kunnskap og selvet. Utforsker jeg historier og erfaringer om hva det vil si å være foreleser og student i moderne høyere utdanning, som kan karakteriseres ved objektivering, måling og standardisering som sosial praksis – i skjæringspunktet mellom individuell handling og strukturelle forhold (Giddens 1984). Gjennom foreleseren og studentens ståsted – ønsker jeg å ta leseren med inn i stillhetens rom – som et sosialt konstruert rom – og dets symbolverdier. Gjennom en analyse av aktørens subjektivering av typer og dynamikken og skifte mellom dem, vil jeg skildre en kultiveringsprosess som følge av strukturering (Giddens 1984). Som bryter ut i samspill med endringer i organisasjonen og dens ledelsesformer. Å presentere en forståelse av en utvikling av høyere utdanning ved NTNU, som skildrer en forstyrrelse av organisasjonens egne verdier.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I must thank my family for all the good help and support over the past years. With an extra shout out to the man of the ages, who has held the fort with our dear little ones while I've been in this bubble. Without you this would not have been possible! Where my two little boys, who perhaps one day in the future, will apply to university to develop themselves as individuals, in a time where the human being is no longer at the centre, has been my greatest source of inspiration for this project.

Having said that, this project would never have seen the light of day without the good support and commitment from Lorenzo Cañas Bottos, my supervisor for this project, someone to look up to during my time as a student, and a mentor in the overwhelming encounter with social anthropology. Thank you for good, descriptive, and constructive feedback and guidance along the way, and for bringing me down to earth, when my thoughts fly away. But most of all, thank you for being a "Chalk Goblin" - requiring us students to put in the work. Challenging us to reflect and think differently about things. It is in your lectures that I have undoubtedly learned and developed the most. Where I, as a student, have been given the opportunity to be creative within reason, and explore the subject and all its falsettos. To find my interest and to develop an identity towards becoming an anthropologist, that for me furthers an independence and sense of mastery in the subject. Thank you for teaching me, that it is in the hardest times, in the greatest confusion that we learn the most. And for your willingness to assist, when I needed a discussion on the journey to make understanding out of the incomprehensible. For me, it's lecturers like you, that contribute to a development of knowledge and students. I really appreciate all the help and support you have given, and for all the patience you've shown, I know I can be a handful. (For all the possible administrative manager reading this) - this guy deserves a raise.

Last, but not least. I must give a warm hug and a thousand thanks to my partners in crime: WE DID IT! Thank you for all the ups and downs, tears, and good laughs. Especially to the fierce ferret and the donkey at my side - you know who you are - I wouldn't have crossed this finish line with anyone but you guys - HYL!

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List of Abbreviations

NPM	New Public management
NTNU	The Norwegian University of Science and Technology
KPI	Key Performance indicators
DIKU	Directorate for internationalization and quality development in higher education
HF	Faculty of humanities
SU	Faculty of social and educational science
NSD	Norwegian centre for research data
BA	Bachelor
MA	Master
NLHT	Norwegian teacher training college
AVH	University of general science
NTH	Norwegian technical university
VM	Science museum
DMF	Faculty of medicine

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1   Introduction

Knowledge for a better world

Arguing that knowledge gives people opportunities, and influence as a foundation for making good choices. That knowledge inspires and challenges society, and that it changes ways of thinking, and how the world is perceived. The Norwegian university of Science and Technology (NTNU) through their vision of «Knowledge for a better world» states… *"Knowledge inspires and challenges. It changes attitudes, mindsets, and how we perceive the world around us. Informed debate strengthens our democracy. NTNU's activities should benefit society as a whole and society can trust that our findings comply with best scientific practice"* (NTNU strategies, 2023).

Stated in black and white at NTNUs official webpage (NTNU strategies, 2023), the organization argues for an academic culture that is rooted in four words: Creativity, Critical, Constructive and Respectful. Through the frame worked design, the organizations aspiration is to take on challenging questions and seek innovative solutions represented by an open-minded and independent voice. Valuing and encourage innovation among students and staff, as well as innovative teaching, research, and artistic activities. Specifying that the *hallmarks of their academic culture are debate and critical reflection.* Taking a social responsibility to influence, advise and develop each other and their environment through dialogue and dissemination of knowledge. Where NTNU places emphasis on co-determination and active involvement by students and employees. Facilitating personal growth and professional development (NTNU social mission, 2023).

Through the room of silence as represented in the title, I will illuminate the consequences of new public management and the tightened framework the university is governed by. Exploring what it means to be a lecturer and student in contemporary higher education in the developing process of knowledge and self from within the lecturing room. Where NTNUs own vision of «knowledge for a better world» is to be operationalized through their values of *critical*, *creative*, *constructive,* and *respectful.*

Arguing that, *the room of silence* is a constructed space, where individuality is gone, and creativity is lost, the issue I am raising is whether NTNU as an educational organization can

live up to the academic culture they describe. Questioning the organization, I ask: Have education, teaching, development, and communication just disappeared as concepts within the shadows of structures and innovation – as something forgotten?

Building a bridge between individual action and structural conditions that show up in practice at the university using Anthony Giddens (1984) theory on *structuration*. The thesis will highlight how measurements and target management affect the development of knowledge, and the students' learning behaviours, that takes place in the lecture room. Where my empirical findings display a vulnerability in academia –setting their vision to trial.

As *the room of silence* from an emic perspective portrays a development of education where the lecturing room no longer function as a developmental arena, rather it has acquired a new meaning - a purpose - as a means of value ruled by `the proper` [Credentialism] (Certeau 1988). The connection between Michel De Certeau (1988) use of `the proper' and credentialism is made in the academic and formal qualification systems internal control of the students learning behaviours. Where empirical findings push education as a concept towards something productive rather than developmental.

Context

The Norwegian university of science and technology, in line with several universities and colleges, functions as one of the state's largest institutions. With its responsibility for safeguarding higher education, international research, innovations, and the development of new ideas (Tjora 2019, 15). As a knowledge communicator of the highest rank (NTNU, strategy 2023).

Being a strong profile within science and technology, NTNU argues that their «social mission» is intended to cover both the expectations society has for them as well as their own. To create values considering economic, cultural, and social dimensions that contribute to Norway's development. Where they act as a resolver within complex issues, and an agenda setter for change processes and sustainable development. The organization also argues for a more general mission, participating in a knowledge-based social debate where the knowledge is useful for society. And where they, as an educational institution, are responsible for educating outstanding candidates and conducting research, development and dissemination of knowledge and management of expertise relating to nature, people, society, and technology (NTNU vision 2023).

The promise to society, of knowledge for a better world, draws resourceful forces from the roof of the institution, where the societal mission is primarily an expectation, which is further developed in the university's strategic plans (Sørensen 2019, 462). Forces that over the past ten to twenty years have influenced changes related to goal management, based on study and publication credits - so-called counting edges (Tjora 2019, 15), professionalization of management and administration (Ese 2019). Naturally increasing the expectations of the university over the past decades (Sørensen 2019, 460). Reflected in the letter of award for the Directorate of internationalization and quality development in higher education (DIKU) in 2019 (The Directorate for Internationalization and Quality Development in Higher Education, 2018).

> The government has great ambitions for Norway as a nation of knowledge. Knowledge is the key to give everyone an equal opportunity to create a good life for themselves, and to meet the challenges our society faces in the years to come. The Ministry of Education has set the following vision: knowledge and competence for a sustainable Norway.

> The government has high ambitions for Norwegian research and higher education. By betting on knowledge, we must prepare for the future, create new, green, and profitable jobs and a better and more efficient public sector. Therefore, good access to education centrally.

> High quality in education and research is important for a well-functioning working and business environment and for a continued stable development of the Norwegian welfare society. Norway must have world-leading professional environments that help produce knowledge that can benefit people a better and richer life (The Directorate for Internationalization and Quality Development in Higher Education, 2018).

Tjora (2019, 15) argues that this target management has entered the sector as part of an ideology within the public sector, so-called *New Public Management* (NPM). Where the institution's preparation of strategies and development conversations with the knowledge department clarify both a greater top management and an idea of the institution as suppliers of politically prioritized education and research topics (Tjora 2019, 18).

Knut H. Sørensen (2019) describes the social mission as an innovation Utopia (466-474), interpreted and developed, to satisfy the National Audit Office and the Ministry of Knowledge (466) on paper. Through broadly formulated goals, without instructions on how these goals are to be achieved, typical of utopias. Presenting a performative illustration to the public, that

contributes to Norwegian politicians maintaining their grants to universities and colleges, which is commendable and important (Sørensen 2019, 466). Internally, the innovation utopia represents a management mentality with a diffuse intensification pressure with unclear effect. As the societal mission of the university, formulation by the Ministry of Knowledge, contains no reflection on ambiguous gains (466). Which coincides with what I interpret as Sørensen's visit to a *dream factory*.

In practice, the *innovation utopia* (Sørensen 2019) that is driven by DIKU contributes to erode the university's central role in the work of integrating research and higher education as a basis for innovation in society (Sørensen 2019, 474). Sørensen describes:

> The university is characterized by inference between neoliberal thinking and collegial forms of organization, between a utopian target management and audit regime and a practice among academic staff where self-organization and scientific assessments play a major role. This interference is little studied and poorly understood. The reform initiatives are based to a small extent on how Norwegian universities function (Sørensen 2019, 475).

> There has been more bureaucracy, more rules and significantly more reporting on conditions that are often difficult to measure and easy to measure incorrectly. Streamlining measures have reduced the local access to administrative and practical support, the working day has intensified, and the requirements for teaching and research have increased. At the same time, there will be fewer cups of coffee in the canteen, with conversations about questions that can contribute to professional development, both within and between disciplines (Sørensen 2019, 466-467) In this sense, there is a gap between the understanding of reality of the Ministry of Education and the top management at the university on the one hand, and ordinary academic staff on the other. A crack that gets little attention. (Sørensen 2019, 476)

Because, behind the veils of the dream factory`s all sorts of falsettos - there rests a practice - a reality - that reflects ambiguities. The way I interpret Sørensen and Tjora (2019) there is a lack of focus on what it means to be an actor within the walls of the dream factory, characterized by objectification, standardization and counting edge systems (Larsen & Røyrvik 2018).
As there in all this innovation talk, are some deviations in relation to actual practice that no one talks about. Hidden underneath the black and white, for the dream factory to appear in all its

exclusivity, a gap between the top management's understanding of reality and of those who work at floor. Disturbances that in their stories validate the institution as nothing more than a dream factory.

I will explore these gaps, where my project as a contribution will be the missing chapter of the Universitetskamp (Tjora 2019 et al.), namely through the perspective of the *lecturer-student* relationship.

By exploring lecturers' and students' lived experiences at the university, and how education is perceived, the thesis wishes to contribute knowledge within anthropology of *social organization*, specifically aimed at *knowledge production*.

Clarification of terms

With "Creative Knowledge"[Kreativ kunnskaping] as a term, I refer to the old policy of the university as an academic culture that is (or have been) more knowledge -and- reflection orientated (Tjora 2019, 22). The meaning of the term historically returns to the natural and philosophical field, where education has changed from being about knowledge, science, and the formation of the individual. Towards a more technical production of knowledge. As Tim Ingold (2000) argues:

> *The shift from the classical concept of technē to the modern concept of technology has brought about a profound change in the way we think about the relation between human beings and their activity. In its original, Aristotelian conception, technē meant 'a general ability to make things intelligently' (Bruzina 1982: 167), an ability that depends upon the craftsman's or artisan's capacity to envision particular forms, and to bring his manual skills and perceptual acuity into the service of their implementation. But with the adoption of a mechanistic view of nature, the activity of making began to take on a quite different aspect.* (Ingold 2000, 295)

Which will later prove to be relevant in the distinction between The Chalk Goblin and the PowerPoint lecturer - that as emic perspectives points to a process of change in the development of education. Separating *knowledge* into two poles: the creative (old policy) and the productional (new policy), through my empirical findings. Where Max Weber's use of bureaucratic rationalization as a force regarding tradition, that revolutionizes within *technical*

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means considering the concept of charisma (Weber 1968, 1116) will be used as a glue between the two.

Seen in this way, creative knowledge is linked to individuality and charisma - where development, reflection, digression, and critical thinking are central – and demanded by the «social mission». Here, it is individuals who handle the development of knowledge - not the administrative body with capitalist agency, played out through the role of the office holders. In this sense, creative knowledge, in line with Weber's (1968) use of charisma (1112), is about the process of development, managed by the person of science, a lecturer and his students. And not through the logics of value and use.

«Strategy Education» is a term, defined by me. That allows me to summarize and analyse empirical data concerning the students' choices of action, and how they adapt and respond to the system. The term therefore refers to traces of target management, *NPM,* carried out by the perceived reality of NTNU, and the ministry department of knowledge driven by an innovation utopia (Sørensen 2019). But also includes the perceived reality of the student and employees at floor, as a product of great forces. Creating a space to analyse the consequences in day-to-day life at the university. Where I will strengthen the term, with Michel De Certeau (1988) use of *strategy* and *tactic*.

2 Method

This thesis is based on first hand ethnographic fieldwork undertaken during mars - September 2022 at the Dragvoll campus of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.
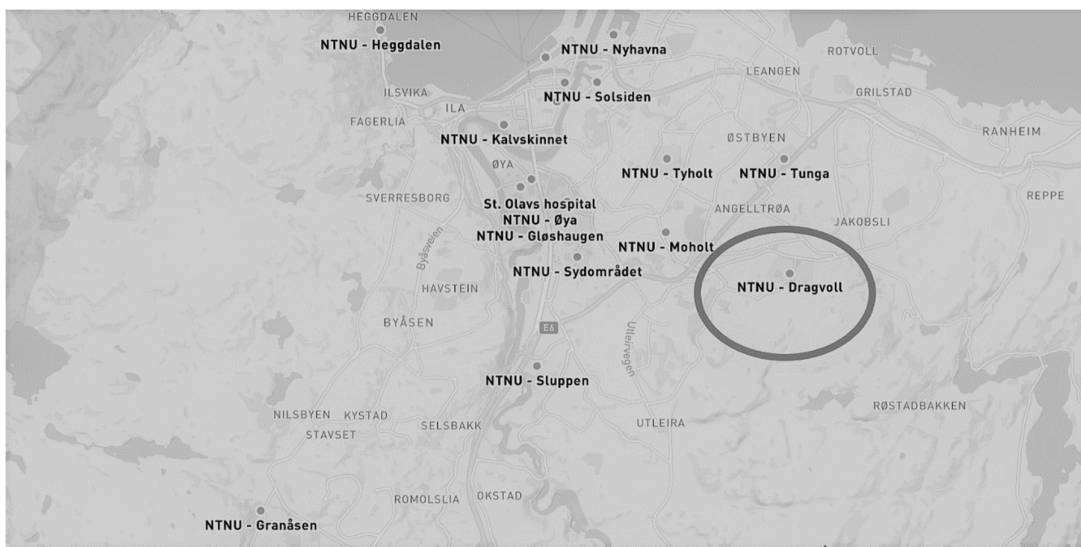
Figure 1 Map of location, collected from google maps February 2023

Housing the Faculty of Humanities (HF) and the Faculty of Social Sciences (SU) with its total of 14 institutes (NTNU 2023), I did fieldwork within both faculties, across 6 departments that my research participants were associated with. Focusing on how strategic governance -the innovation utopia as Sørensen (2019) calls it- affects student-lecturer interaction.

Entering the field

Entering the field as an enrolled student at NTNU, my familiarity with the institution made it impossible for me to perceive Dragvoll as a foreign place. However, I was clear on the fact, from the beginning, that I would not do fieldwork withing my own department. Which made me seek out foreign institutes, where the setting was still unfamiliar. Where the fieldwork took a starting point in meeting people, I had no relationship with before.

Sarah Pink et al. (2012) notes that emplaced, embodied, and active participation can accommodate some of the characteristics of classic methodological approaches in anthropology. If one in the role of ethnographer learns how to interpret one's own embodied experiences through the cultural logic and discourses of others, one can gain better insight into the other's understanding of reality. (Pink et al. 2012). Learning how to use my own experience

in the field as an advantage, rather than dis-advantage. To balance the role as an ethnographer and student. I therefore used several hours during my first weeks on campus viewing it as an object, locating myself in unfamiliar places to make observations of the various places, human movements, and materialistic remarks both familiar and unfamiliar to my previous experiences, that could be used to further observations.

One of the advantages of my experiences as a student was knowing that the university's teaching design is built on semesters periods, that makes the lecturer-student relationship that I wanted to focus on a "seasonal phenomenon". Where different interactions exist during different parts of the year, considering the cycle of the new semester - active lectures - exam periods - and end of semester. As my fieldwork started in mid-March a month before the lecturers began to subside entering an exam period, and was to end in September, a month after the new semester were to begin with active lectures. I had made up a strategy for how to proceed in the field on advance during my project design. I began to look up the timetable of NTNU to find as many casual lectures as I could to attend before the semester ended. I made my own timetable based on the bookings, for which lectures I could attend that did not clash with each other – that was not within my own department.

I in the period of march-May I intended to make participatory observation of the lecturer-student relationship and how they interact in the lecture room, with an interest on how knowledge is developed and exchanged. Since interactional data, was a huge part of the focus of my project, I entered the lectures planning to do wide-focused descriptive observations (Spradley 1980, 34) of the activities, physical characteristics of the social situation and how they communicated. Considering that the methodological approach gives access to documenting individual actions (Bourgois 2002, 16) in time detail.

During the first month I took part in twelve casual lectures. Where at this point, I began to lose heart as all the lectures played out as one of the same. I was not prepared for the extent to which I would use my days to just listen to a lecturer talk about specific subjects, and observing the students, observing the lecturer, while I was taking notes of how they were only taking notes, day after day. Where I gradually went from observing, to participating in silence – the students silence - while I dazzled with the surroundings from where I sat, filling up page after page of field notes (Bernard 2006) with everything from characteristic features of those around me to the slightest cough in the room.

Eventually I became more and more worried about how little I could write about a mutual interaction and verbal communication. It was not until all my notes started to be a copy of the other – where they eventually took the form of more analytical notes (Bernard 2006, 11) that I became aware of how prominent silence as a phenomenon itself was. Questioning what lies in the background of it. Why do the students not get involved in their own learning?

Ana Dragojlovic and Annemarie Samuels (2021) argues that…*" silence is not merely an absence of communication, rather it can harbour a range of affects, meanings, and unspoken stories..."* (Dragojlovic & Samuels 2021, 417) that to the ethnographer can be meaningful. Where the discovery of meanings as Roy Frank Ellen (1984) argues through the way Wittgenstein so persuasively taught is…*" not in the lexicon but in use. In our arch for meaning, then, we are not so much concerned with matters of fact see or with some objective representation of reality, but with the more elusive Topics of the perception, cognition, and expression of reality…"* (Ellen 1984, 227).

As I understand her notion, to interpret a culture one cannot simply observe the lecture room and track the silence as an objective representation, rather one must see it in connection with the actors' own way of expressing, perceiving, and experiencing the lecture room and in the interaction with others. In other word its "web of significance" (Geertz, 1975). In tracing the silence then, looking for meanings and stories, exploring beneath the objective surface, I decided to contact lecturers and students to engage in their point of views, and to further my questions. Where my participant observations became a tool for the research that allowed me to explore new environments and address new questions – tracing the silence phenomenon.

Lecturers and students: Interview, Semi-structured interview, and informal conversations

In the first part of May I contacted the department heads where I wanted to do research. When I received a written consent, I went to the website of the various departments, where I e-mailed a total of 20 professors of all ages and genders. Attaching a description of my project, consent form, and request for interviews or informal conversations. Where I all of them responded positively, and six of the lecturers agreed to participate. Eventually, I gained access to their information and communication tool, blackboard, which I could use to organize myself in relation to times and social activities.

As the formalities were not in place until May, several of the informants had already finished their subjects for the semester, while the others were nearing the end. I therefore decided to use interview as a method, focusing on the lecture's own experiences of the lecturing room, and

how they perceive their relation to the students through hearing their stories. As Ellen (1984) argues interviews is*...” a mechanism through which we learn to talk, and thus to think and understand, within the idioms of those we study...”* (Ellen 1984, 227).

First, I conducted six semi-structured interviews (Bernard 2006). As I did not know how often I were to meet with them, and because two of the participants requested a list of questions beforehand because of the times set. Where the questions I had formulated were mainly based on the students' involvement during the lecture. Analysing my initial data, and my informant's expression of the silence, my research narrowed, and I decided to see if I could find any remaining casual lectures in the NTNU booking system, to follow up new questions that arose which focused my observations (Spradley 1980).

Entering four remaining lectures that I could find; I had a turning point in my fieldwork. As the lectures turned out to be exam lectures, that in comparison to the ones I previously participated in, differed. Where the differences, in the form of student actions, largely corresponded with the information I had received from the lecturers. Raising several new questions, that I decided to follow up by contacting students.

Since the semester was coming to an end, and we had just come out of a covid-19 pandemic, where some were still practicing hybrid lectures, there was little activities with students on campus. However, after I in a desperate attempt handed out flyers in all reading rooms and the library, as well as posting on social medias regarding my project. I managed to conduct three semi-structured interviews (Bernard 2006) with students in Café Sito on how they perceive lecturers and their own student engagement. I also had a position from before I entered the field, as a learning assistant, for first-year students who I closely followed while doing fieldwork. That provided the opportunity to follow the transformation into the university of students regularly over four months, listening in to their experiences and thoughts.

James Spradley argues that*..."Ethnographic fieldwork begins when you start asking questions"...* (Spradley 1980, 30). And it was not until I started talking to students, that the silence could begin to be interpreted, and my project progressed. As new observations and more analysis I narrowed my research further to make selective observations (Spradley 1980, 33). Taking the time to analyse my fieldnotes, of the lecturer and student's point of views and my observations in the silence I participated, I could finally begin to make some connections through what I interpreted. Arguing…*” that to interpret is to make a connection, and that context too involves making connections”* ... (Dilley 2000, 439).

During the next couple of months, I managed to conduct six more interviews with lecturers, rather this time, unstructured interviews, where the idea was to get the informants to open and express themselves on their own terms, and at their own pace (Bernard 2006, 211). Where the interviews began to develop into longer descriptive conversations about everyday life at the university, lectures, and the role of lecturer - seen and experienced from their perspective – where my role as an anthropologist, therefore, dealt with listening, recordings and taking descriptive notes (Bernard 2006).

Conversations and interviews that mostly took place in the lecturer's offices, since our meetings depended on the time, they had available, and their offices was most efficient. Although there has been occasionally visits to social places where the actors stay, such as Café Sito if they needed a coffee, where we had several informal conversations.

My Key informant, I met several times for informal conversations over coffee, meetings that often lasted for 3-4 hours as we talked with no structure or control, characterizing of informal interviewing (Bernard 2006, 2011). One of our conversations also ended in collecting a life story and narrative (Ellen 1984).

Since I had done thorough work on advance, introducing myself and my presence to the department heads, I also had the opportunity to participate in an annual internal staff meeting at department level, among lecturers, where I also made acquaintances. Although I did not consciously use a *snowball technique* (Clark and Schofield 2004, 533), if nothing else my introduction among the lecturers in this sense created a snowball effect - where those I interviewed assisted me in finding additional interviewees. Which gave abundant access to data and networks. Where actively participating around the lecturers and meeting activities, observing, and talking with the research participants, have led me to have the opportunity to gather information about the lecture room and the relationship between lecturer and student from one side of my issues - the lecturers' point of view.

Lecture breaks: an arena to make acquaintances.

In the period of August – September the semester started, and the normal course of lecturers finally began. Once my informant lecturers began their subjects, I introduced myself to the students following their subjects in the beginning of the lectures. Where I told them about my presence and the purpose of the project. Making it clear that I would only gather information that was at relevance for my issue at general, and if I saw it necessary to speak to individuals, I would contact them personally and ask for consent. Familiarizing myself to them, it became

easier to approach them for questions. I began to use the breaks as an arena to contact the student(s) directly, when I had made observations that required follow-up questions. So that they did not have the opportunity to ignore my e-mails.

This was a procedure that worked well, as it resulted in me participating to a greater extent among the students. Where eventually I had more meetings with individuals in cafés, interviews, and informal conversations. Where the student's expressions of how they perceive education, was the validation I needed to make the connections of my empirical findings. Analysing my fieldnotes, of the lectures and students point of views in relation to my participant observations throughout the field, the social situation of lecture-student relation within the lecture room was interpreted through silence. Becoming the foundation of the entire project.

Silence

Silence in the thesis appears in a threefold guise: First, as a methodological challenge, as it was difficult to do participant observation of communication and interaction between a relation participating in a silence, where the research demanded different levels and kinds of involvement (Ellen 1984, 218) with the individuals outside lectures to make sense of the room, development of knowledge and their interaction. Second, as the objective of the analysis, because of its prominence within the lecture I attended, that ended up in being the very puzzle I had to solve. That as a form of communication turned out to be a strategy (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021, 417) unfolding through the lecturers and student's stories. Where my research participants perceptions and experience of education, calls for the third, as a narrative device, that gave a *…" systematic acquaintance with all the complexities…"* (Thomas & Znaniecki 1920, 77) of what it means to be a lecturer and student in contemporary higher education. That communicated the very logic of the lecture-student relation that I wanted to explore.

Ethical implications

The issue in this project is linked to the location of the fieldwork. Where the relational aspect and the development of knowledge in practise within the institution are compared to the organisation's own vision, which made the specification of my fieldwork location central. As the location points out specific faculties and departments that exist within the institution, that could delimit people and groups who work there, I made some precautions considering ethical implications.

Even if the scope of the institution makes it demanding to identify data towards individuals, I chose to anonymize the faculties and departments I entered and to give the informants fictitious ages and names. To make sure that sensitive data of individuals is not identifiable in line with the Norwegian Centre for Research Data's ethical guidelines (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee 2019) to protect my informant's privacy, integrity, and autonomy.

I gave my participants sufficient information about the research field, the purpose of the research and what the results were to be used for. Which was mainly to collect data concerning interaction and co-presence between lecturer and student inside the lecturing room. In addition to ask department heads in advance, for consent to participate in lectures within their departments, attaching information about the project and my purpose. After I received verbal or written consent (The Norwegian centre for research data 2023) I Introduced myself in the lectures I attended, with a clear message to everyone who attended about my presence, what data I collected and my purpose for the project. Informing them that they are subject to research, where the material will be stored and used (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committee 2019) for research purposes.

The data I have collected during my observations within the lecturing room, have not been sensitive descriptions of individuals, but an overall act of interaction between people. Which allowed me to produce data without the consent of all participants. In need of following data, on a more personal level, I contacted the specific individuals and asked for consent on an ongoing basis. Considering the «voice» of the university throughout my master thesis is information collected from the organization's own public statements obtained through public reports and NTNUs website.

To safeguard privacy, a notification form about the project and a data handling plan were created and submitted to the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) in January 2022. Where permission for the processing of personal data was confirmed by NSD 16 February 2022.

Methodological challenges

Fieldwork period

In the period March - April, where I focused on the remaining lecturers before the end of the semester, a negative was that the lecturers were often casual, as I had not yet established a network. Making it challenging to seek out individuals for two reasons. One, because no one

knew that I was present, and therefore neither my purpose for being there, considering that I had to be more careful with the information I obtained, due to ethical implications and consents (The Norwegian centre for research data 2023). Two, was a question on how to navigate the structured setting. Because in effect of no one knowing I was there, I was concerned that a sudden question in plenary of a lecture directed to actors about their actions - would have been out of the contextual situation and probably embarrassing for everyone present including me. Forcing me to only observe while participating in a silence. The positives that came out of me being precent in casual lectures, are that I managed to participate in a couple of exam lectures to compared to regular lectures. And that I was able to gather a lot of ethnographic data of physical characteristics of the social situation, the activities of lecture-students in the silence, and how it felt to be a part of the lecturing scene.

During April-July it was challenging to recruit students to participate in my research project, as there was few on Campus. One can only speculate if it was because of the resent opening of the community after the outbreak of SARSCoV-2, known as COVID-19, where digital lectures were still practised. The ones I could find where mostly sitting in reading rooms, where I found it difficult to engage a conversation. I tried to publish several posts in social medias about my project with contact info. And made flyers that I handed out in the library, reading rooms and Fagland (a study room designed for group activities). In addition, I contacted relevant student societies of the institutes I followed about the project. Without it giving me any results in terms of social participation in activities, or regulars to talk to- or- follow around. On a positive side, the lack of students allowed me to focus on the structures of the university, taking photographs and noting observational remarks, making an ethnographic record (Spradley, 1980 33). And freed up time to analyse data Spradley (1980) and focus my research on recruiting lecturers, and to get formalities on place with institutes and lectures, before they went on holidays.

Social facts

Doing fieldwork among other researchers have been challenging at times, considering their continuous references to science, theorists, and books in their arguments. When it comes to commuting what are references (where I could just as well have used the books myself), and what are social facts in relation to the informant's own understanding of reality. Which I feel ultimately dealt with professors' habitability of thinking, which took me a while to balance. Where it was rarely about references in the proper sense of the word, rather their way of seeing the world.

Getting the professors to act as informants.

Doing fieldwork among other researchers has been a challenge. Although everyone I contacted was very eager to participate in the project, I continuously had to work to get them to provide information instead of guiding and getting involved professionally. At a time, I thought of naming my thesis «Sara and her 10 supervisors» as everyone where so eager to guide the project or guide me to someone who would be perfect to talk to, for this project in terms of helping me. Rather than to provide information of their practice. Which I could only guess had something to do with the perception of established roles. They saw me as a student, as someone they, as a professor, are used to guiding. Where the fact that I was the researcher, and they were informants was an adjustment process that took some time to balance out. I resolved this by asking very specific questions of their day-to-day life during our meetings in the beginning. Nevertheless, it is an exciting thing to reflect, why researchers don't allow themselves to be researched?

3   Constructing the Room of Silence

I could hear the door opening, and the students entered. The students began to fill the auditorium, with the sound of footsteps, chatter, and movement. While the lecturer sipped on a coffee while looking out into the room - waiting for the silence to subside, to begin the lecture. The students found seats to sit in and organized materials they would use during the lecture. Some students pulled up a notebook and pencil, finding a blank page leaving the pencil on top. Where the majority of those I could observe took computers out of their bags. The conversations were still flowing while the clock started to go into overtime, and the lecturer looked ready to begin. It took some time before the students looked towards the lecturer, who insinuated that it's time, and a calm began to settle.

As the hour went by, the lecturer continued to speak, while the students continuously took notes on their paper or computer. The continuous sound of keyboards being pressed created a symphony of its own in the room and could be felt as small vibrations from where I sat. As the silent interaction between them took place to a greater extent through body language, eye contact, facial expressions, and gestures. An obvious lack of verbal communication and interaction in the exchange of the lecturer's knowledge became visible. The more words that were expressed by the lecturer, the stronger the vibration from the keyboards texting in the room. But there was never a question, a thought or a reflection that followed. And little did I know that I would stay in this silence for the next six months.

During my fieldwork, I have participated in several lectures with a focus on lecture-student interaction and how they organize themselves around the development of knowledge. Observing the activities and the physical characteristics of the social situation. However, one can be said to be representative of all I experienced. As a lack of mutual verbal communication and interaction in the room, led to a one-sided pattern in my notes and observations. In this chapter I will show how silence became the objective of the analysis through my empirical findings. And how the room of silence is to be constructed through my informant's way of expressing themselves in relation to their environment (Giddens 1984), and how they take and create space (Certeau 1988).

My first meeting with lectures

I showed up 10 minutes early to get a good seat providing me with the best overview possible. As I was gathering my notebook and pencil trying to settle, the students began to pour in. The

groups of students clustered in the middle of the auditorium, while the students who showed up alone or came in late, fiddled their way through the very back of the hall, leaving the front rows of the auditorium empty.

One could hear continuous dialogues between the students at a distance, and when they began to fill up the seats around me, I could overhear chatter about what they had done since they last saw each other, like the weekend parties and what they had accomplished at the gym that day with a hangover. Others shared their opinions of the literature and topics they were now to be taught. And while some had not managed to read, since they overslept that morning, several from the group next to me seemed to find the specific topic interesting, as they were close to their own experiences of being young that were relatable. Some of the students around me were still on their phones, while others viewed their timetables, or responded to emails or Facebook. Even so, counting roughly 50 students present in a room designed for 300, I could overlook the majority opening word processing programs on their screens, waiting for something to happen.

Around 10:15, a male lecturer faced the students from the back of the Lecter, introducing himself by asking the students how their weekend was, and if they were prepared for the early Monday, but no one answered. The lecturer, who wore dishevelled jeans, a tossed hooded jacket and proper morning hair that stood up to all sides - appeared as a calm, youthful and laid-back type where he was literally leaning against the wall with his hands in his pocket, despite having a couple of extra grey hairs on his head than the students. Again, he tried to engage the students by talking about his daughter, and how she was so sick of school, asking if they could relate, but still, no one answered. After several failed attempts, the lecturer began to go through the agenda, and the sound of fast-moving keys began to vibrate in the otherwise silent room.

As time went by, I tried to keep an eye over the student's computer screens, to get an impression of what they were doing during the lecture. Besides two students who were on social media, the ones I could manage to zoom into, seemed to be writing down the words of the lecturer, occasionally looking towards him concentrating on what was being said.

The content of the lecture, which lasted under two hours, was largely based on the lecturer's experiences and personal interests around the lecture topic, which were focused around two public chronicles from a newspaper in relation to the student's syllabus. Referring to his own family several times as examples it was obvious that the reflected topic was something close to

the heart for the lecturer as well, as I experienced before the lecture with the group of students, where I overheard them discussing the topics with interest themselves.

Interesting here, is that despite their previous engagement, they did not seem to be wanting to engage in a conversation, as the lecture had begun. Except for occasional nods, maintenance of eye contact and an overall focus towards the lecturer, the interaction and communication between the lecturer and his students were completely absent. During the two hours I counted eight attempts from the lecturer to engage the students in the one-sided conversation, by asking questions that no one answered, seemingly refusing to give a response. Besides fast-moving keyboards vibrating in the room, and the sound of the lecturer's voice, the room was completely silent.

The next lecture I attended was like the first, largely characterized by silence, minimal interaction, and communication. The only thing that distinguished this lecturer from the other is that the lecturer seemed to be prepared for the absence of engagement, as he had prepared questions in a digital application called *Mentimeter*. This allowed the students to connect via a code and answer the questions in writing. After the first half of the lecture, where the lecturer at several attempts had tried to engage the students in a conversation regarding what was lectured, with no luck, he started the second half by summarizing his previous questions encouraging the students to answer them in the app. The lecturer said that he finds their opinions interesting as he was dealing with a youth at home and is genuinely interested in the well-being of the students and how they experience pressure in school.

And to my surprise, the students responded, as an answer after another popped up on the screen. Viewing the screen, one could see that they had followed what had been said during the time we had been there, being connected to some extent. The answers even Portrayed reflective thoughts, experiences to what was being lectured, from an individual point of view.

After the lecture, I contacted the founder behind a digital tool that is used in universities. Not to learn more about digitalization as a form of communication per se, but to further my interest in the silence, which was so prominent in the room, seeking answers on reasons for constructing the apps in the first place.

Logging into Zoom, I was met by an energetic person, clearly invested in the questions I had raised about the silence when contacting him.

Founder: I wanted to create this forum because many of the lecturers I had as a student earlier, were completely uninterested in creating discussions, and in any case using alternative tools. I was tired of sitting in a silent auditorium, having difficulties to discuss the science being lectured, without being the initiator. The seminars too, students at some point start to avoid it. They prioritize staying at home to read instead.

Me: Why do you think that is?

Founder: All the students know that if everyone raises their hand in a lecture, it will take the whole class, and they are not interested in it! They are concerned with getting the knowledge of the lecturer's hands, which appears important. And the lecturer probably knows that as soon as the students understand how the exam works, they are no longer concerned with asking deep questions. You know, there is not broad knowledge that gives results, but an understanding of what has been lectured - and they have all understood it. The students optimize for their own benefit, and they do so because of the form of the exam.

Tracing the silence, the founder's answer in this case exemplifies how the silence is not a sign of a lack of commitment, rather there are underlying factors such as a focus on exam and result the students organizes around, making active and conscious choices to what follows the student's perception of what they want to get out of lectures.

Dragojlovic and Samuels (2021) argues…*"to the ethnographer and historian, silence can be meaningful, multivocal, ambiguous and/or opaque. We can be affected by silence when listening to a narrative painfully shaped by untold histories…"* (Dragojlovic & Samuels 2021, 417). Where in its ability to be tangibly present or entirely unnoticed, a silence can harbour a affects, meanings, and unspoken stories. Present in the narratives and modes of life, that constitute people's imaginative possibilities and horizons of expectation. Or in contrast, silence can be strategic. Forcefully arguing that social silence is not merely the absence of communication Dragojlovic & Samuels (2021, 418) they show how it rather demands the ethnographer to raise more questions that invoke more possibilities, if one in its research considers silence as a presence on a continuum between articulation and non-articulation.

Becoming more curious about the silence as a phenomenon, within the social encounter between the actor(s), and if it had a pattern, I reached out to a couple of students.

Strategy education: Student system responses

After handing out flyers around the university in my quest to find students, I came in contact Nora and Jakob. Being enrolled in master programmes within two different fields. I asked if

they could share their experiences, and how they perceived the silence in the room. Nora and Jakob quickly emphasized that even if the communication is there to some extent, the silence is still a phenomenon, but what separates a new student from a more experienced one, Nora says, is that the master's students are not necessarily afraid to seek out the lecturer purely academically, however, it is not the good conversation they are after. They are concerned with their thesis, exams, and results.

I, Nora says, avoid asking questions because I do not like digressions. Abstract reflections make it difficult to keep track of what was relevant for the exam, in relation to the syllabus and what the lecturer thinks is important. I know several students she says, who most definitely could speak, but they avoid it because they know that their friend on the side, finds it difficult if the lecturer is too free in the method of teaching.

Jakob, on the other hand, describes that narrative with similarities to Nora, but in contrast he seems to be more comfortable scientifically, in the form of engaging and asking in-depth questions seeking the good conversation that often end in digressions, but shows how he downplays it, because he realized that he did not need broader knowledge to gain good exam results. On the contrary, he found that he got better results by sticking to what had been thematized in the lectures.

> "Nothing you can contribute too, or say in the lecture, has any influence on the grade you get later, *we invest in what we need*. When I started at the university, we were encouraged to be creative when it comes to exams, to think for ourselves, be critical and argumentative for our own thoughts, so I did. I got involved in the teaching, engaged in conversations evolving syllabus, theories, and perspectives as they were comprehensible to me. Following my interest and finding my own voice. And made sure to maintain critical and use argumentation along the way, and to my disappointment it ended in a C.
>
> The next exam I decided to only make use of what the lecturers had talked about in class and the given literature related to it. And you know what, I got an A. That's when I realized that what the lecturer thinks is important, is what is right. This has been true for all exams in recent times as well. So yes - I can ask in-depth questions and follow digressions in teaching so that I acquire broad knowledge. But that's not how the system works.
>
> If you ask me why grades are so important, I'd say *it's what we learn*. Firstly, there is competition here which no one talks about, we all know who the good students are, synonymous with good results, even if it is not talked about. And no one wants to be worse than the other - this creates an enormous pressure. Secondly, on all program pages at NTNU for the students to investigate while planning their course of study, there are average requirements to be guaranteed further degrees. And it is not advertised on these pages that the grades are often overlooked - that creates pressure too.

Third, previously, when I did my bachelor's, I signed up for a job course at the university library. And one of the first things the instructor said was never to take subjects based on interest, rather one must be smart about it and take subjects based on what will stand out on a CV in the future, providing a decent job. When accredited work courses at the university teach this kind of mentality to fresh students, the professors will get several students, who trudge through the year almost invisible in the auditorium".

- Jakob, MA student

Consistent with responses I kept on receiving from other conversations on later occasions, in and after, lectures. Where I confronted students with the question of silence and the lack of verbal communication:

"I don't avoid asking questions by getting involved in lectures because I'm shy or afraid of making a fool of myself. I avoid it because digressions stress me out, I don't like it. Because then it can become very confusing to highlight what was important for the exam, and what was irrelevant».

- Girl, Bachelor (BA)

"I don't stress about asking deep questions in lectures or participating. Because I've been a student here for a couple of years now and I have understood how to do a good exam. It's more important to get what the lecturer says. I'd rather ask lecturers at another arena if I'm wondering about something (laughs)"

- Boy, BA

These examples of students who are well established within higher education, show how the grading system affects the learning behaviours of the students, and how the grading system is mediated by the student's own interpretation. Communicated with the lecturer, through silence, as strategic means based on what a system communicates. Where the grading system rationalizes the students' choice as the `way to go'. As Dragojlovic and Samuels (2021) argued previously we see here how social silence a strategy could be.

Where their active choices to be silent, avoiding digressions and confusion, determined towards exams and results could be seen through what Erving Goffman (1992, 92) refers to as *instrumental demands*. In terms of how students act, in the form of silence, is grounded in their perceptions and experiences of what is expected of them. Where the university's grading system, as an instrumental requirement, is not a goal itself for the students, rather about duties they must strive for, to have the opportunity to progress in the system that maintains a given order.

In this sense, the silence in the form of a strategy, not only communicates a logic, but shows how the actor's strategies as an action, have a reflexive character. In the form that they are not passive consumers of what is lectured, on the contrary agents who use lectures, as means to serve their needs. Where being silent is rationalized through a beneficial order of what is at a capacity to optimize their own student accounts.

A logic which was to be validated through the next lectures I attended. As a comparison to previous lectures.

Exam preparation: A wave of questions

One Monday morning at 12:15 PM, I decided to attend another lecture I found in the open calendar at NTNU Dragvoll. As usual, I turned up well before the lecture started, to get settled, expecting the students to gradually enter the room as the time approached. Comparatively, to the previous lecturers, 30 students were already present, of which all besides five students had already prepared a writing program on their laptop, notebook, and pencils. Around five minutes before the lecture where to start, a man entered the auditorium, walked up to the lectern, and began to prepare for the lecture by launching a PowerPoint and connecting the microphone. The lecturer, wearing an embellished shirt, velvet trousers, glasses, and slicked back hair, stood quietly for a while observing the conversation in the room before he introduced himself while the chatter in the room continued. The lecturer began to reminisce about when he was a student many years ago, saying that he remembered how nerve-wracking the exam period was, while some students were still chatting. Suddenly, a student loudly told the others to be quiet, and the lecturer pointed to the introductory text at the launched PowerPoint; "Exam preparation" - and the silence descended in the room.

The lecturer began to speak, and some students started whispering among themselves laughing. I couldn't help but to think it had something to do with the lecturer's somewhat peculiar voice and low tone. I could hear the chuckling spreading out amongst the group, before a student raised his hand and confronted him with a blooper, as the year of the class written at the PowerPoint, which was dated back to the class of 2019, pointing out to the lecturer that we are now in 2022. The lecturer gently laughs, and acknowledges the mistake, but assures the students that he has looked it over beforehand, and that everything is according to their study plan. The lecturer continues by giving general information about the exam, how it is graded, how the students separate, what questions they will be asked and how to interpret assignments. The

keyboard sounds in the room went from vibrating, to creating small frictions of movements in the tabletops. All students were now silent, connected to the lecturer, writing every single word that came out in the room.

The interesting part here is that within a short time, a student raised his hand. He asked the lecturer what the sensors deciders from an exam, and after some reflection the lecturer answered …" *When we assess, we use a template, where the most important thing for a sensor is that you do not reproduce the academic material, but show that you can reflect independently on it, you must show maturity"* (student).

Another student raised his hand, to ask if the lecturer could describe a typical A exam, which is the highest grade to strive for. Whereby the lecturer replied as follows:

> To be a good student, and to get an A, is to show knowledge beyond ordinary understanding. I've never experienced a student getting an A in one subject, and an F in another. If you're a good student, you *are* a good student somehow. I also create the exam papers based on how I feel that the students have understood the material – so that it is within reason for everyone to achieve good results.
>
> - Lecturer

The lecturer kept talking, telling the students how they all had to climb a learning ladder, to become great. And after some moments of silence several students raised their hands to question the formalities of the assessment, like whether references are necessary and how to refer to sources in text, the limit of words, and possible consequences if not to obey those formalities. I spent the rest of the week attending the lectures I could find, that noted exam preparation. While the crowded institution became emptier for each day passing towards the end of the semester. Of the ones I could find, the formal structure was the same – focusing on requirements and formalities regarding the exam. Where the students to greater extent participated through questions about formal requirements and guidelines, in an alternating dialogue between the lecturer and the students in the room.

Viewing these examples comparatively to my previous experiences in lectures, the most distinct difference is the agenda and structure of the lectures. While the first lectures were "regular lectures" with a focus on science, exchange of knowledge in various subjects, and learning. The exam lectures had an overall focus on the exam and formalities, as an arena to require formal instructions, guidelines and expected performance of the students. All information that benefits the students towards an exam, that is confirmative of the behaviours to which the founder made

me aware. The distinct difference also seemed to influence the commitment the student had, set from the beginning. They arrived early, well prepared, and they even several times contributed with questions creating verbal interaction even though they were not scientifically based, even at one point they quality checked the content of what they were about to receive from the lecturer, as it had a blooper.

The «Strategy education» in the form of silence, in this case, points to Agency (performance of actions), where the collective silence in the room is rooted in mutual knowledge. Where the silence of the students, agency, is rooted in what Giddens (1984) calls *practical* and *discursive awareness* (p 41 - 45). By this he means that the students have a practical awareness of what they must do, as routine and institutionalized students. They are expected to take an exam, they must have a given number of credits for their degree, and they have a syllabus to read. Which means that they must follow the lectures. Their ability to verbally express this knowledge thus becomes discursive. Where their rationalized use of this knowledge is what makes the structure institutionalized and socially reproduced. Which constitutes the room of silence.

Here Giddens (1984) use of *duality of structures* becomes central. Where in his work he reflects how social structures do not exist independently of the actions that maintain them. Rather, as rational individuals, the actors also maintain social structures through human actions. In this sense, the form of the exam and the measurement structures enable a prerequisite for action, where the meaning-bearing is maintained by the actors themselves in a collective agreement among the students to act in the form of silence. A *duality* between structures and individuality (Giddens 1984) which I will now go more into in detail.

Grades and Credentialism

Reaching out by email I got to know a lecturer, named Sigurd, who had many years of experience as a lecturer at Dragvoll. With external connections to other Scandinavian universities, he seemed to be well acquainted with lecturing and dealing with students. When I asked him what it is like to lecture at the university today, and what kind of relationships he has with his students, his answer was confirmatory to the student's behaviours, and to which symbolic value is offered to them by the system… *"Working at the university today is more vulnerable than ever for a lecturer, when it comes to how we deal with our students. The university as an organization is no longer concerned with science, but rather through a reward system creating usable candidates based on a grading system"* (Sigurd).

When I asked him who he was referring to when he said, 'the university', Sigurd replied that by the university he was referring to the state, education, and bureaucrats with administrative tasks. That is, he said, the part of the university from which we do not learn anything. Which he further summarizes in the term `the credentialism' as a person.

> The university is not interested in students and lecturers discussing, reflecting, and talking together. The only point is to gather lessons, where the students do not learn, rather earn credits so that they can become an attractive candidate. This causes students to do the strangest things when under pressure. They start counting hours, milking lecturers for what they are worth and filing complaints where they can, if it serves them. In certain periods, the students run around animalistically like headless monkeys, collecting study credits. The students want everything that can help them to collect points, and good results, with the least possible effort.

> *Credentialism is not interested in this either*, that we should communicate, he said. If you look around the university, he says, you can see how the university facilitates credentials, you have bookshelves all around with "academic writing", "how to do the exam", and several courses and resources that prepare you as a candidate for employment just to mention a few. All this is just a facade, he said, a bluff, and a problem. If the students want something from their education, they cannot think like this.

> - Sigurd

Seeing that I had only talked to students who had been enrolled for some time, I wanted to make a comparison to 1ˢᵗ year students. And how they perceive being a student and respond to the system. Working as an assistant which gave me a place among new students, I had the opportunity to talk to the students regularly on what it's like to enter the university and how they transform over time.

When they started university, they were excited and curious about the new everyday life. They had many questions and thoughts about the subject, the lecture and what interested them. And the piles of self-selected and purchased books grew in the bag every time we met, with high ambitions to read them all, and to learn as much as possible about the topics they were supposed to cover, even outside the syllabus. Two students also asked what they should do if they wanted to enrol in subjects outside the programme at the same time, which they wanted to take to build on their skills. The vision was clear, they wanted the whole package. In the beginning everyone met punctually and in full, every single time.

But after a while, they began to communicate that they were overwhelmed by the amount of syllabus they had to read, feeling anxious not being able to keep up. The questions began to

change, from wanting to acquire as much as possible, to trying to find shortcuts. By shortcuts, I mean that they wanted to know what was most important, and which they should prioritize for each week. They began to exclude what seemed too difficult, and to prioritize what was more understandable that they could work with.

Just within the timeline of weeks I could see change in their patterns and how the vision changed. Because each time there were fewer who showed up on time, some did not show up at all. Becoming fixated on reading rather than participate, where attendance dropped within short time.

My conversation with the student gradually changed its vision from presence and learning towards what was acquired to be graduated, looking to strategize their choices on future possibilities. As they began to question the average requirements for a bachelor or a master program, what was expected of them to pass the exams, requesting tips and strategies to manage it all.

It didn't take long before the pattern changed again, and they became more exam focused. For each meeting, which was really supposed to deal with life as a student, and guidance, they spent more and more time talking about the exam. The questions covered what is important for the exam, how to interpret, what is the common thread, what they should write in an exam, how to do well and what an exam expects of them.

Interestingly, even when they encouraged a conversation about a topic or literature they struggled with, if I helped them, would the grape I gave grew to a watermelon, transforming our meetings into an expectation of me to give them essence and answers, instead of looking for it themselves. They started to ask for a conclusion directly, as it was difficult for them to understand, while at the same time saying that they had not managed to read it yet. As if *help* and *guidance* involved me just giving it to them. So that they could save time reading it. When I asked them why they did not ask the questions in lectures, creating a discussion, one of them said that she was afraid to miss out on something important in the lecturer, while another said that he need to maintain focused in lecturers on what was being said, as he sometimes found it difficult to follow to get the lecturer's point across, if someone spoke.

This example corresponds well with how Sigurd argues for how credentialism creates a mentality and expectation that the students are there to gain the knowledge, rather than developing it through communication and self-reflection. And how they are starting to milk

their resources optimizing for their own benefits as the founder said. But it also shows the early processes to where the silence begins, distancing themselves to the lecturer, to gain the importance of his words. Following Sigurd's notions, I looked around the main area on campus and found a lot of traces of credentialism as he said.
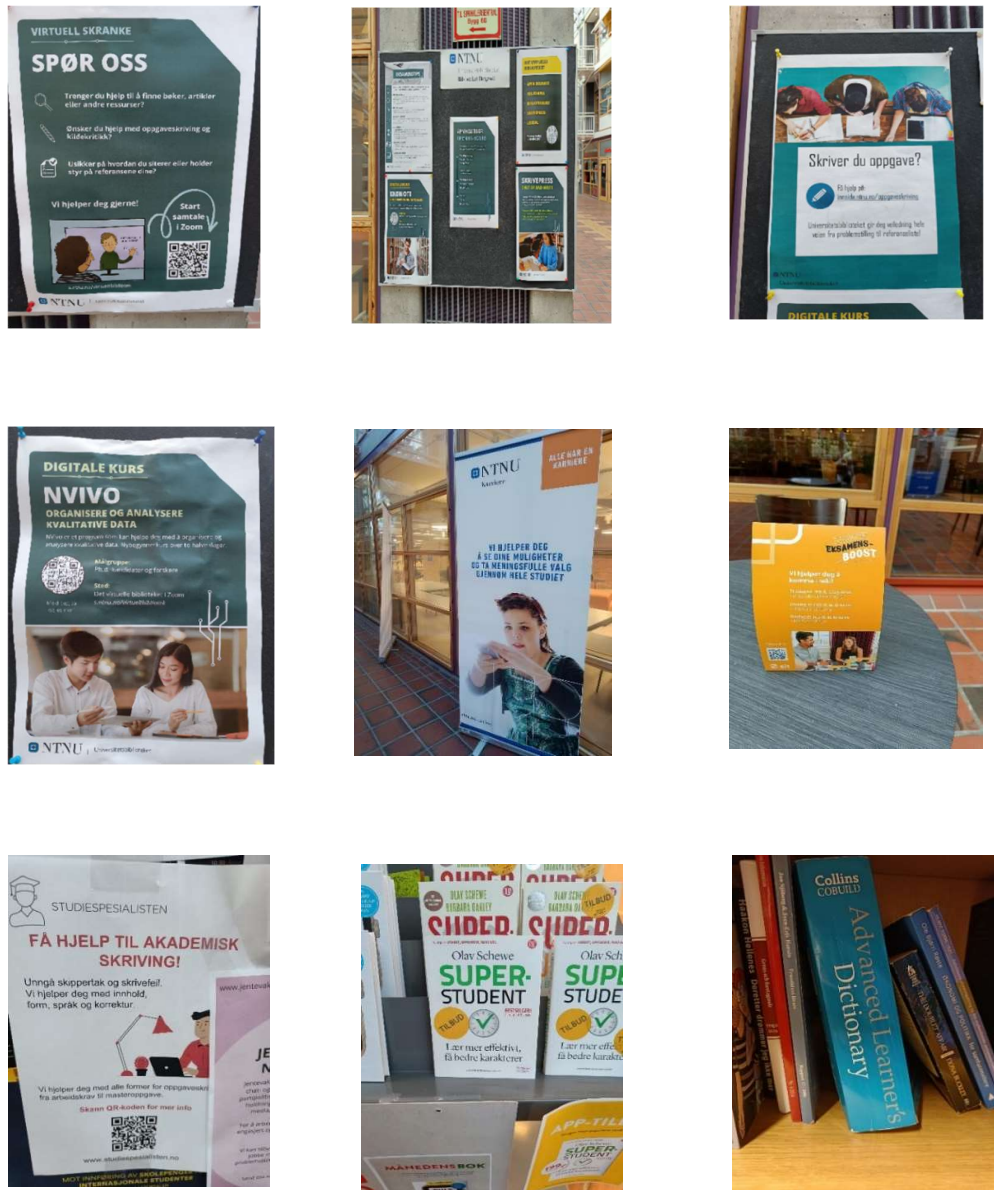
Figure 2 Traces of credentialism

Figure 3 Traces of credentialism

Credentialism refers to belief in or reliance on academic or other formal qualifications as the best measure of a person's intelligence or ability to do a particular job. By that it means an insistence and overemphasis on academic or educational qualifications like degrees and diplomas as evidence of an individual's qualification in hiring people for a job and for promotion (sociology dictionary 2023). Where in this sense all these traces of credentials functions as resources available for the students to become great candidates based on the acquirements of those in power at one hand, while it conveys a symbolic value of what is expected of them and what is important offered to them by the system.

Michael Tomlinson and Richard Watermayer (2022) argues that a central feature of credential inflation in mass systems has been the growing competition for scarce status goods and the reproduction of structural inequalities in accessing sought-after occupational outcomes.

In this sense, it can be said that the students' agency is rooted in what is symbolically communicated by credentialism. In this case, that writing properly academically, take smart notes, taking good choices – synonymous with strategic choices of subjects towards a carrier, communicates that *write to learn* are the steps students need to take to be a super-student and

to get good results. As the basic steps to get the degrees, that in its turn, issues a diploma that is reflecting of the students as a best candidate for a job, or not. In comparison, there is nothing communicated through credentialism about developing, acquiring knowledge, pursuing interests and creativity, reflection, or communication as ways to further develop yourself as a student and individual. On the contrary, everything is about "becoming a good student" or "achieving good results".

The duality of structures: constructing the room of silence

Using Carteaus work (1988) one could view credentialism, the form of examination and the measurement systems, as an `instructions for use' (30). Seeing how the students rationalizes the silence as an act of presence, through examination, credits, and results. The collective agreement to be silent amongst the students during lectures then, is a `way of operating`, that is regulated through those instructions. Instructed through the student's environment - calculated or manipulated by the management of the university, also referred to by Certeau as *strategy* (Certeau 1988, 35).

A strategy, he argues, is the calculation or manipulation of power relationships that becomes possible as a subject with will and power, in this sense the scientific institution, can be isolated. That postulates a place where objectives could be managed (Certeau 1988, 37). How I interpreted this, is the way credentialism, measurements systems and exam format as the university's laws and regulations occupy the university as place and affect the student's choices of action through manipulation.

However, in their collective agreement to be silent in the lecture rooms as a conscious act of presence, where they rationalize their own behaviours through the logic of the university, they seem to have found a way to manipulate what they have at hand - the lectures - to turn it to their advantages as *agents* (Giddens 1984) (see exam preparation) to achieve the end goal, instructed of the system. Where the silence becomes a means to optimize their own benefit. In this sense, using Certeau (1988, 34) work, one could argue of the student's manipulation of what they have at hand, as a form *tactics.* A tactic he argues is… *"a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus…"* (Certeau 1988, 37). That operates in isolated actions and take advantage of opportunities and depends on them.

Using the concepts of *strategies*, *tactics*, and *agency* – where the acts of the students is modified by its successive context. One could make use of Giddens (1984) work on *structuration theory*,

specifically the concept of *duality of structures*. Where measurement structures and the student's agency, build a bridge between structures and individuality. Where their choices of action to optimize their own profit of good results - is a good example of how not only the structures create meaning, but also how the actors reproduce the meaning in a reciprocal relation. He states…*" Structure as the medium and outcome of the conduct is recursively organizing; the structural properties of social systems do not exist outside of action but are chronically implicated in its production and reproduction"* (Giddens 1984, 374).

As I interpreted this, the lecture rooms are something in-between. Where the strategies of the university, that in its successive shapes introduce a certain play (Certeau 1988, 36) into a formal schema linked with a configuration of a rationality. And the student's as rationalized individuals, have in a way accepted the play as their own agency, as their calculated actions to be silent in the form of tactics (one of which is the art of `making do`) - have managed to take the lecturing room as a space, where they can go beyond all their limitations. Creating *the room of silence* as a temporal space, that is constructed through the mutual relation of individuals and structures.

The room of silence as a temporal space

According to Certeau (1988) ..." *stories carry out labour that transform places into spaces and vice versa organizing a play of changing relationships between spaces and places"* (Certeau 1988, 118). Contextualizing the silence through voices and structural conditions, the place of the lecture, in this sense transformed to a space. Where my research participants' perspectives are determined by their understanding of reality - of what it means to be a lecturer and a student instructed through credentialism.

In *The room of silence* then, as a temporal space, the students through their agency seem have found *ways to use* the constraining order of place and what it symbolizes. While `making do' they are re-using the space to which are (or was) about reflecting and developing knowledge (Tjora 2019) to optimize their own benefits resulting in a certain play of silence, as a calculated and rationalized action, agency (Giddens 1984). Where they are taking advantages of their opportunities, as we saw in the distinction between a lack of commitment in the first lectures and the wave of questions in the exam lectures.

As I interpret *instrumental requirements* (Goffman 1992, 92) (see strategy education) as an act out of a sense of duty, one could argue for how their action in this case is drawn out from an understanding of being a student within the established facade of the university. Close to

Certeau's (1988) theory on *spatiality*, where the spatiality of the lecture room is not just an abstract space. Rather it is a particular social place, designed to generate a particular type of social behaviours in a particular institutional context. That allows us to connect the room of silence with the educational institution.

As space is something that exists and is actuated through the movements and intersection of mobile elements (Certeau 1988, 117). In this sense space is an act of the presence that is modified by the transformations caused by the successive context. Where the perspective is determined by a phenomenology of existing in the world (Certeau 1988, 117-118). Viewing space as a practiced place in this sense, the lecturing room where the lecturer and students intersect at a given time, and through their performances has the potentiality for anarchic movement, will be recalled as a space. Transformed by the lecturers and students, not simply as a location where the meeting plays out, but as a *product,* where bodies are and can be connected.

The anarchic movement in this sense, would be my informant's stories and active choices of action, *tactics.* Where the students act both within the agency of personal needs, but also as consumers under the laws of formal structures ruled by the " proper" (Certeau 1988, 36), in this case *credentialism* and systems of measurements.

Therefore, from here on, I will refer to the lecturing room [auditoriums] as the *room* of silence. As a practiced temporal space where students, lecturers and structures intersect. Or according to Goffman (1992) as a time-and space entity, that acts as a «set the stage" for the specific performance of the lecturer and their students. That allows me to analyse the acts of the present while participating in silence, as modified by the transformations caused by the successive context (Certeau 1988, 117 -118). Where the student's collective agreement to be silent is a form of strategy (Dragojlovic and Samuels 2021) that is expressed through their stories. But also, a *Tactic* (Certeau 1988) portrayed through how they are `making do` with the resources they have at hand. That is being expressive of their view of education, and function as an emic perspective, to explain a development of education and how it is perceived.

4   The Lecturer and student relations

As we saw in previous chapter *credentialism* inflation in NTNUs mass systems has spread a growing competition for scarce status goods in accessing sought-after occupational outcomes (Tomlinson and Watermayer, 2022). Where the lectures and students express how the changes restrict the use of academic reflection and discussion within the lecturing room, through the way they construct the room of silence as a result of structuration (Giddens 1984).

In this chapter I will focus my observations (Spradley 2006) on how the relation of lecturers and students within the room of silence, is affected by the successive context of measurement systems (Larsen & Røyrvik 2018) and *credentialism*. Where I through a typology of *types* that is expressed by the actors, will explore a cultivational process (Røyrvik 2018) in the university, that points towards a change in the development of education.

Acknowledgements of the «Chalk Goblin»

One early morning, I had prepared myself for a meeting with an informant, making myself a cup of tea, sitting in front of the computer waiting for our digital meeting. Not knowing much about the person other that he was a middle-aged man, who had worked for over 40 years at the university both as a lecturer and researcher. I was excited to whom I were about to meet, and how the meeting would unfold. After a while, there was activity on the screen and a smiling, energetic and outgoing person met me on the other side of the screen; "Hi! Fritz here". And after five minutes of loose talk about my research project and who we are, Fritz quickly started talking about himself and his everyday life here at the university.

As course coordinator ("Emne ansvarlig" in Norwegian) for 300 students he had several responsibilities. He coordinates teaching, participating in exercises for 10-12 groups through seminars, where he also has responsibility for a total of 10 teaching assistants, in addition to being involved in external sections at the university as an active researcher. However, he seemed to be most concerned with teaching and who he was as a lecturer, consistently talking about his efforts to maintain a relation to his students when he lectures and within the university per se.

Fritz described himself as a social lecturer striving to connect with students, to create social relationships, and informal spaces where both he and the students can communicate science. He described himself as what he calls an 'open door' policy lecturer, which he believed signals an openness towards his students, but also colleagues. By that, he means that an open door is more

inviting for others to seek a conversation, than a closed door. He would spend several hours preparing himself for each lecture and how he could find the flow during lectures, arguing that involvement in lecturers is essential to him.

At some point, I choose to follow up on his involvement with a couple of questions about how he experiences his methods regarding student participation and communication.

> I can predict specifically who I will get questions from among my students as there are some regulars who raise their hands, so I do get some involvement from the students. And with the contact they make, I feel a kind of recognition and reciprocity, and it is quite satisfying with eye contact in the front row. It is also a form of communication that allows me to see whether they are following along or not. They have learned the role and accepted the game.

> Although, the front row students seem to be the one who wonders the most, because they are active, they are the ones who just repeat the syllabus and lectures. The commitment is just a quality assurance of their own ego, an assurance that they have understood it exactly as expected. And these are not the ones we want, even if the contact is satisfying!

> Those who are only there to collect A's and B's, acquire only the ability to retell lessons and using it within the context of what has been learned. They are not developed creatively, because they are too fixed, they become somewhat instrumental, a formal normed ideal student. They are of the type who do not meet unless something is mandatory, making their decisions in relation to how they spend their time and what they must earn. They are driven by competition, not individuality.

> I want the pounders, those who allow themselves a bad grade, who meet even if it is voluntary, and who really get involved when they first do, those students are what I recall as an *ideal student*. Because to me, they are the ones who are perhaps the most developed creatively and that is exciting. I too, you know, has previously been referred to as one of the *"chalk goblins»*, and met criticism for using the classic ideal approach of teaching, on the greenboard with chalk. Because now, the ideal lecturer uses more PowerPoint and videos to reflect through. But, after being a part of the study council, and hearing what the pounders prefer, I also feel a kind of recognition for being a *chalk Goblin* too.
> - Fritz

In this example, Fritz refers to four different aspects of the lecturer - student relationship worth noticing, according to how the actors interact and the dynamics of their relations. *"The chalk Goblin"* - the traditional lecturer who enjoys good conversations with the students with an added interest for knowledge development. The ideal *"PowerPoint lecturer"* - with a structured approach to knowledge development. The *"normed ideal student"* who engages only to do well

in the exam. And *"the pounders"* who, in their rare commitment, to Fritz, are the "*ideal"* and most developed students due to their reflections and creativity. Illustrated below:

"The chalk Goblin"	"The (ideal) PowerPoint lecturer	"The ideal normed students"	"The pounders"
Un-structured	Structured	Only good grades	Allows bad grades.
Greenboard	PowerPoint	Collecting credits	Follows interest.
Abstract	Concrete	Commitment as validation	Commitment as self-reflection
Free-Thinking	Monotonous	Avoids digressions.	Value digressions
Uses Digression	On accord	Exam focused.	Knowledge focused.
Values self-reflection	Don't initiate Conversations.	Re-producing	Exploring
Creative	On point	Mandatory activities	Mandatory/voluntary
		Driven by competition	Driven by individuality.

Figure 4 Typology of types

Through his categorization of *types,* Fritz recognizes the r*oom of silence, a*s a temporal space ruled by *Credentialism* [`the proper`] (Certeau 1988) through the *normed ideal students* as we can see in the chart above through their preferences. However, through the way he acknowledges the *Chalk Goblin* he releases himself from the realm of everyday routine in the room of silence and therefor opposes the external order. Setting his own limits, Fritz seeks to maintain a relation to his students, as he prepares for hours before lectures actively striving for engagement. As well as practising an open-door policy at his office hoping someone would come for a coffee chat, trying to create informal spaces, where both he and his students can communicate science. As discussions, reflections and creativity is what he perceives as ideal to develop knowledge – argued through his reflections of *the pounder.*

Recognizing the room of silence, using his office as an arena for a relation to take place, the development of knowledge in this sense is something that is happening outside of the room of silence. In a mutual relationship between the *chalk goblin* and *the pounder* (the ideal student), see illustration bellow:
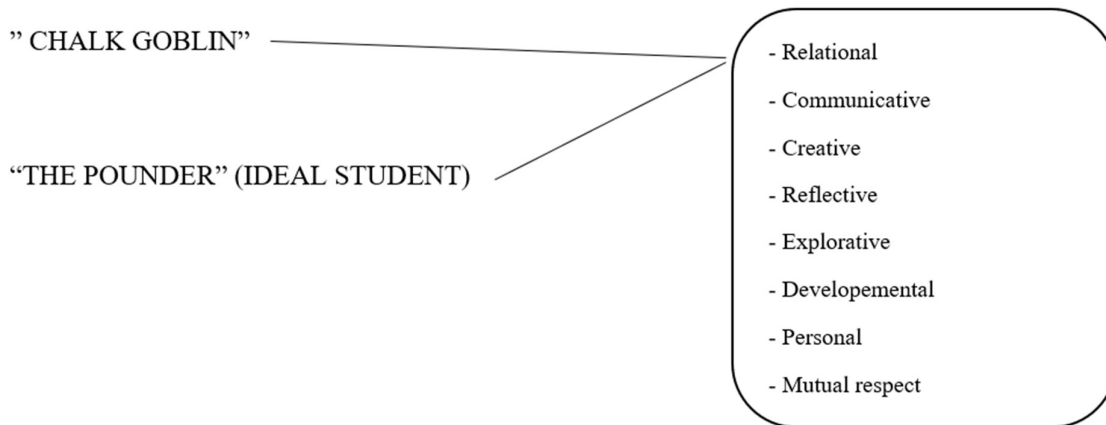
"CHALK GOBLIN"

"THE POUNDER" (IDEAL STUDENT)

- Relational
- Communicative
- Creative
- Reflective
- Explorative
- Developemental
- Personal
- Mutual respect

Figure 5 The alignment between the Chalk Goblin and the Pounder

This informal space, which Fritz try to create can be seen to be ruled by the charismatic self, a scientific person, in contempt of the room of silence and its rationalized order. In this sense the *Chalk Goblin* transform all values and seeks to break the traditional and rational norm of education, bearing similarities to how Thomas Dow (1978) summarizes Weber's (1968) use of *charismatic authority*.

"A charismatic authority is a specifically revolutionary force. In this sense, 'charisma is self-determined and sets its own limits. It 'rejects all external order and transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms. In its most potent forms, it overturns all notions of sanctity. Instead of respect for rational rule and tradition, it compels 'the surrender of the faithful to the extraordinary and unheard-of, to what is alien to all regulation and tradition and therefore is viewed as divine".

(Dow 1978, 83)

Considering how Fritz recognizes the room of silence and the rational economizing of the *normed ideal students but* opposes it because of his personal devotion to science - in the way he finds recognition for being a chalk goblin and tries to create an arena free from custom laws, attachment, and sense of duties of his occupational work life. Where his recognition of the room of silence, and the grading systems apparent power is what makes the release from the room of silence possible in the first place.

His reflections of the normed ideal students and their agency within the room of silence, acknowledges that the lecture rooms no longer are being used for conversations and reflections. Rather, as a means to gain. While simultaneously illuminating what has been lost, because of

the system, as he continuously strives for something relational knowing he is being opposed. Having a lack of feeling to contribute with something of value, something developing, in relation to his feelings about being criticized for being a chalk goblin.

Charismatic authority, Weber argues, ...*" is when an individual's claim to 'specific gifts of body and mind is acknowledged by others as a valid basis for their participation in an extra- ordinary program of action..."* (Weber 1968, 1111- 1114). In this sense, Fritz acknowledgement of being a Chalk Goblin, rest in the validation of the pounders, as a person who finds pride in how he works for science and not the system. Although blissfully aware that those are the exceptions, and not the preferred preferences of the students.

Kay, a student in his early twenties who, a year ago, enrolled in a BA program, did not know why he pursues higher education, rather he only ended up here because of his curiosity, and a continuous search for new experiences and knowledge. Which was characterizing of him as a person per se he said. As his drive to acquire knowledge often took him to places by chance. Since no one else in his family had a higher education, he also had no relation to academia from before or a thought about what he wanted to do with his degree other than to develop himself. And when I asked him how that was working out for him so far, and how he experiences the lectures as an arena to develop knowledge, he responded:

> I would say I try to create a form of connection, or at least tried, initiating to conversations that could help me make sense of what I read to acquire broader knowledge. But lately I have been less engaged because I don't get much of a response anyway, so I just stopped talking.
>
> To be honest, it doesn't seem like most of the lecturers are interested in having a conversation at all especially those who use PowerPoint. They don't even seem interested in their own field. There's something about their body language, it's so monotonous, I might as well re-use the PP at home instead. These are not professors for me, they are lecturers, in the true sense of the word. As they do not manage to provide the students with interest and engagement to further develop. For me, the good professors are those who still have traditional lectures on the chalkboard - because then I am more connected to what is happening in the room. It requires a different focus from me as a student.
>
> But even if I have a good professor, I will rather listen to them than have a discussion at this point, because I would say the university is reasonably status managed, with a "good" syndrome (his use of the student's self-praise), based on results and how to follow guidelines. And what the professor says, will probably become a universal truth for most students, just because the professor thinks it is so, IF the students find them to be a "good lecturer".
>
> It is more self-giving to be in a colloquium group and various engagements to be honest. As it is a slightly less rigid setting than around the lecturer, as a simpler approach to the subject. You know, it

is hard to prioritize. For an example, I bought a lot of books that I'd would like to read since I started, that looks cool, but they've just been gathering dust since I started, because I don't have time. I have taken on the task of writing a bachelor's degree soon, and that must be the focus now, because I want to do it as well as possible. But I'm a bit like that as a person I must say, I go into things with the best I can. After all, I want the opportunity to be able to take a master's in the long term, if I want to.
-Kay, second year student

Here we see how Kay recognized the *Chalk Goblin* as a good professor, recognizing his claim to a specific gift, an ability be creative and make the student develop reflecting through his digressions. In these lectures, he as a student needs to have a different focus to follow the lecture, there are usually professors who have the same interest as the students and who you look up to and want to have a connection with. This is consistent with the way Kay describes himself and his path into academia - which was a coincidence related to him as a curious boy who was constantly pursuing the acquisition of new knowledge. And the way he initially seemed to view good results as a process of acquiring as much knowledge as possible portrays similarities to the *pounder*, which the Chalk Goblins views as the *ideal student*. As a person who values the relation and would participate in the space Fritz tried to create.

However, unaware of his own words, his argument in the end exemplifies how he too, has begun to simplify his information channel, preferring short versions and simpler conversations, to prioritize, and focus on performance and results shifting his agency. Here, the way he describes his current preferences and where he benefits, is pointing to a shift from being a pounder to a *normed ideal student*, as he wants to achieve good results, gradually distance himself from the *Chalk Goblin,* see illustration below.

THE POUNDER $\Longrightarrow$ THE CHALK GOBLIN $\Longrightarrow$

Values as an ideal to develop scientifically.

Declines as a lecturer in the room of silence as non-ideal to results.

Figure 6 The decline of the chalk Goblin

Here we see an alignment between the *Chalk Goblin* and *the pounder* – and between the other two ideals and the expense of misalignment. Here we see how Kay validates the chalk Goblin, as a lecturer of value due to his charismatic self and how he contributes. But how he at the same time declines the attempts of the chalk goblin to engage within the room of silence, as his narrative is about to change in effect of *credentialism* and what the room of silence construct. By that I refer to the way he describes that he does not want to engage anymore as he starting to see that it is the exam, he must put his efforts into.

Following up on his notions, and how he speaks of the lecturer as a universal truth, to try and connect how the lecturer and exam is related. I contacted Nora, who has a slightly longer time at the university, currently working on her Master's.

> When 100% of our assessment is that grade, and you know that you must have a B to be guaranteed to climb further in the system, obviously, the students are stimulated to focus on exactly that. It's a shame, because drive and motivation only come when you can apply the knowledge to new problems. And when you sit for a master's degree and are still reluctant to take the floor because you are afraid of being 'wrong', that says something. How do you learn to apply it to new problems when you don't have the time or an arena for it, nor the self-confidence. But that's probably what happens when you've never practiced it either because you've prioritized something else.
> - Nora.

Nora, who in previous chapter explained that she avoids asking questions because she does not like digressions, further elaborated that, what is decisive for the extent to which the students manage to keep up academically in the exam, depends on the lecturers, and their methods in teaching:

> If the lecturer is too outspoken and abstract, filling the greenboard with nothing of sense, then all of us will for sure avoid talking to him, and unfortunately there are so many of these bad lecturers, who are not prepared. I hate it when the lecturer doesn't use PowerPoint, and are being unclear about what he's lecturing, because it makes it so difficult to follow. If I don't feel like I'm learning anything, I might as well try to figure it out myself and use the time more wisely. If I as a student attend these lectures at all, I will have more than enough to think about struggling to hang along and take notes, I could not even think of asking a question or something.
> I think it should be a standard with PowerPoint and good preparation, so that it is transparent what will be lectured, and so that we as students know what we are going to learn from it.
> - Nora, MA student

This example is a concrete example of the duality of structures (Giddens 1984). Through the explanations of why Nora acknowledges the chalk goblin as a bad lecturer and the demands she makes to the university about the PowerPoint professor and good presentations as a standard. So that they can learn more easily. Where her values stated are a replicate of what credentialism communicates (see grades and credentialism), where she in this case tries to facilitate the best possible starting point for good and smart notes.

Nora in comparison to Jakob, recognizes the chalk goblin as a bad professor. The one who is too abstract and preoccupied with digressions. In these lectures it is difficult to get a clear picture of what is important to gather towards an exam. Consistent to Fritz's recognition of being a Chalk goblin, in relation to the way she as a student criticizes them as unstructured lecturers who don't use PowerPoint, because it becomes too difficult to follow the importance.

In this sense, what Nora considers a good lecturer is the *PowerPoint lecturer*. Which coincides with Nora's agency, to climb further in the system, that requires good results on exams. What separates Nora from Jakob, is that she has consciously embraced by *credentialism*. She has accepted the game, as Fritz said as a *normed ideal* student. Who consciously is there to collect A`s and B`s. For Nora, if pursuing digressions [develop knowledge], it would not even take place in the creative space Fritz is trying to create. It would take place in an unsure time in the future. For Nora, the room of silence *is* higher education. See illustration.
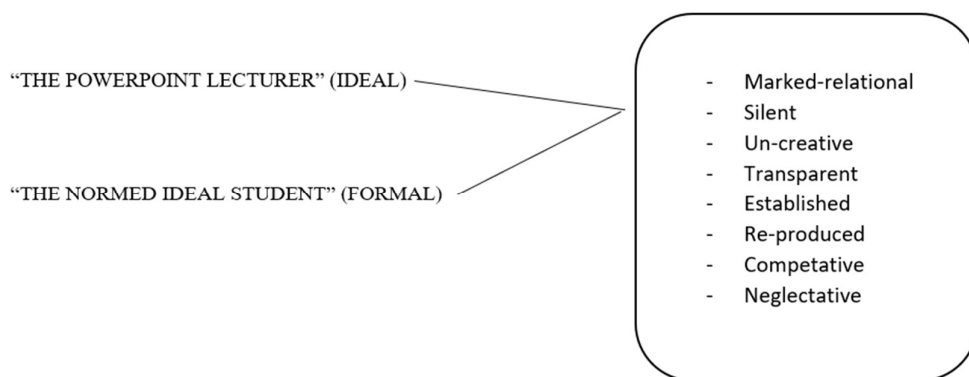
Figure 7 The alignment between the PowerPoint lecturer and the Normed ideal student

Nora and Jakob`s examples in this sense are validating for how Frits describes his relationship with the students, and how students act, in the way they acknowledge the *chalk goblin*. And it is through these examples that we see how S & C are linked, where the collective agreement to be silent is based on optimizing for one's own benefit in the form of grades and credit. As an

emic example of how the development of knowledge is perceived and experienced at NTNU from the perspectives of the lecturer and students through their preferences and mutual expectations of each other.

What is interesting in the examples of Kay and Nora is how they portray space and themselves. Both express a desire to- and - be able to - pursue interest, creativity, and knowledge as a student. At the same time as they reject the lecture room itself, as an arena for creative and self-reflexive knowledge development. And this is where *the room of silence* becomes central: as the temporary space where lecturer-student connect. In terms of how it is no longer a development arena rooted in creative knowledge and reflection. Rather fulfilled with a new meaning - a purpose – as a means of value ruled by `the proper` [Credentialism] (Certeau, 1988). As Sigurd argues:

> The university [credentialism's] leaves little room for a 'university', as a space, for the students to develop to find out who they are, and where science is more prominent. So, as they are consumed by the university, which I believe is credentialism, says Sigurd, and then at some point the education begins to choose the student. In a place between habitat and habitus - in relation to which life the student wants to live. And so, they begin to move helplessly around the university.
>
> - Sigurd

Although the students, in their personal quest to develop their knowledge, see potential in the chalk Goblin (reserved for another arena), they consciously reject him, as a lecturer in the room of silence, as someone who could potentially threaten their results. In this case, Karl Marx (1988) use of *alienation* is particularly relevant. Marx refers to this as a form of alienation where the students (workers) are alienated from their creative and developing being. Where the effort they put in becomes only a means to fulfil a goal. In this sense, education loses its meaning as a fundamentally creative and developmental activity and becomes a facilitator for credentials. As we see where students rejects and distance themselves from the chalk Goblin, to create good results. In other words, education has become a commodity fetishism (Marx 2021), a product that can be sold and distributed.

Credentialism then, as the virtue of the measurements and standardized mechanism, does not only work to change the students' learning behaviours and type. According to how they subjectivize the lecturers based on their agency. In this sense, the students have turned the lecturer into a tangible thing, a commodity, where their alienation from the Chalk Goblin legitimizes the PowerPoint professor's qualities as a work product (Marx 2021, 87). Where the

relationship between lecturer and student becomes a relationship that exists outside of themselves.

In this case *credentialism* exercises a form of internal control (Røyrvik 2018, 36), which could be understood as a social and psychological influence on the students. Where students act through a sense of duty and goal achievement, ahead of their own interest or identification with academia and knowledge. That could be seen as an un-critical loyalty towards the system, that the new liberal management seek Røyrvik (2018, 37) argues. The problem with this un-critical loyalty then, one could argue, is that behaviour's withing *the room of silence* portrays a development of education unintended – if one were to follow NTNUs vision and the statements of the social mission (NTNU).

The vision and statements of «the social mission» advertises education as an aim to equip the students with skills and knowledge, so that they can contribute to society and the labour market with innovative thinking and creativity, as the ideal product. Where the qualification framework aims to clarify and capture the student's abilities, skills, and benefits (Stalheim 2022) that the innovation utopia (Sørensen 2019) through target management and measurements seeks. In this case, the student's alienation of creative self – and the other - portrays a rupture where there should not be one. As these examples show the students to not just alienated from the creative and reflective self, but from the ideal product itself. Since what the students `contributes to create' is not through their development, creativity, and potential, but someone else's. As they are only preoccupied with assessments and grades using already written words. See illustration.
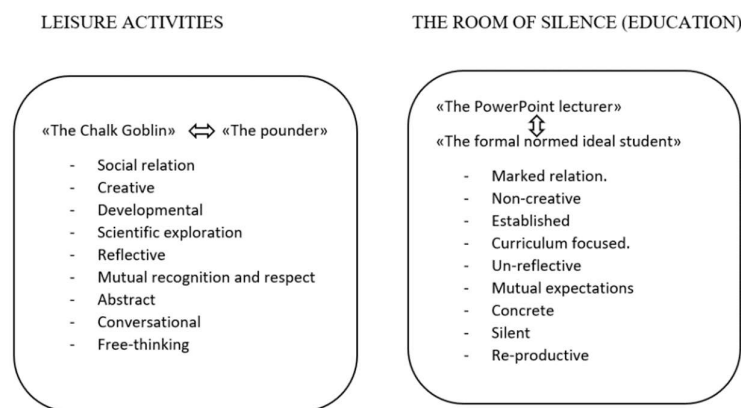
LEISURE ACTIVITIES   THE ROOM OF SILENCE (EDUCATION)

«The Chalk Goblin» ⟺ «The pounder»   «The PowerPoint lecturer»
                                          ⇕
- Social relation   «The formal normed ideal student»
- Creative
- Developmental   - Marked relation.
- Scientific exploration   - Non-creative
- Reflective   - Established
- Mutual recognition and respect   - Curriculum focused.
- Abstract   - Un-reflective
- Conversational   - Mutual expectations
- Free-thinking   - Concrete
                                          - Silent
                                          - Re-productive

Figure 8 Contrast between creative space and the room of silence

For Nora, the auditorium has become a reproductive space, where the sole purpose is to receive what she needs to complete. Where the development of broad knowledge, and self-reflection, is reserved for other arenas. We also see some tendencies for Kay to separate the room, in the

way he reserves the development of broad knowledge through seeking out the professors outside the lecture. And how he is in the process of being embraced by the system – drifting between types - as he has given up asking questions in lecture in the absence of a response. But unlike Nora, Kay sees a value in the creative space that the *chalk goblins* create still – in leisure time. Where this transformation from being a pounder to being in the process of becoming a normed ideal student says something about the power of the system (credentialism) as an internal control.

Nora's descriptions show how the students respond to creative knowledge [digressions], which is to a large extent what a lecturer puts into the process of acquiring breadth and understanding through reflection and engagement, by avoiding it. Because they need and expect a clear text on what they are going to learn. Here day-to-day life is largely influenced by what the system encourages - good grades, exams, and results. Kay, on the other hand, seemed to be more comfortable scientifically, in the form of engaging and asking in-depth questions that often ended in digressions. But he also made a conscious choice not to be active and committed in lecturers like Nora.

The acknowledgement of the chalk Goblin, in this sense, *breaks the silence* through the way the students reject him as a lecturer, and avoids committing to the lecturer. Because it shows how the students respond to education through a logic. Where their human actions and their acting selves, in relation to others, are affected by their relationship with NTNU as an educational institution, in a duality between action and structure (Giddens 1984). This is how structures affect individuals, as we see, in terms of how NTNU manages to transform the pounder into the normalized ideal student they want.

A productivism structure.

Tjora (2019, 22) argues that The Norwegian University, that although in terms of content, it has been characterized by stability over the past twenty years, has changed in relation to goal management based on study and publication points. A management by objectives that has entered educational institutions as part of an ideology within the public sector, so-called New Public Management. Providing a productivism structure that puts considerable pressure on students and staff, displacing a knowledge-and-reflection-oriented academic culture (Tjora 2019, 22).

Emil Røyrvik (2018) also acknowledge how goals and performance management have penetrated organizational life at all levels, where in his analysis he describes goal management

as regimes, a consequence of new management (neo management) and post-bureaucratic control that seeks to manage through the actors' subjectivity, everyday life, values, and personal relationships. Arguing that a central part of the spread of the quantification mindset in the form of goals and performance management, not only pressure, but encourages or imposes both managers and employees to achieve goals set by management. Where he refers to so-called key performance indicators (KPI) through which the goals are specified and detailed (Røyrvik 2018, 27).

Credentialism could be seen as a KPI within the university. That is specifying how to be an ideal student and achieve their goals through writings, exams, how to think as a student, results, and credits. Narrowing the students to reaching a target, at the expense of substantial conditions. Or in other words, connecting with their lecturers – engaging in meaningful reflective conversations. The point to Røyrvik`s (2018, 27) use of KPI, is that the actors begin to change their behaviours and work practices, to manage these goals, and that the target focus - displaces or disregards - academic professional and ethical judgement. That we have now seen in the transformational processes drifting between *types*.

As I perceive Røyrvik, through my empirical examples, one can see how *credentialism* (indicator) affects the students *learning behaviour's* (the silence). But also, through the distinction between `the pounder' and `the normed ideal student' how it affects *learning types*, as a cultivational process (Røyrvik 2018, 28).

The cultivational process here, is best shown in the way Kay, describes himself in his arrival at the university as a creative innovator (the pounder), seeking out professors and instantiating conversations where he could acquire new knowledge. Like how I first got to know the group of first-year students who wanted to acquire as much knowledge as possible, buying books and enrolling into free subject of interest outside of their mandatory course of study. And how they gradually changed their point of views, becoming more over obsessed with the exam. Starting to get less involved, in the search for good grades. While Nora, on the other hand, has become so aware of the process, that she argued for it specifically, acting as a self-claimed normed ideal student who has recognized the system, credentialism as an indicator, and accepted the role of student.

Through recognition of the Chalk Goblin, as a bad lecturer - the students describe how they avoid these lecturers, because of the digressions, by not showing up or complaining. As Fritz pointed out in relation to the criticism he faced. The market logic here is best shown through

Røyrvik (2018, 40) references to the terminology of Albert O. Hirschman (1970) and concept of "exit" tactic and "voice" tactic. Exit refers to a tactic associated with market logic, where buyers who are dissatisfied can simply cancel the transaction and leave (Hirschman 1970, 22-28). Like how the students alienate themselves (Marx 2021) from the lecturer if they are dissatisfied and don't see the lecture as beneficial. While *voice* refers to an effort to engage in and try to change an unsatisfactory situation (Røyrvik 2018, 40) in the form of expressing a complaint. A tactic that Sigurd, who I introduced in previous chapter, recognized.

When I first talked to Sigurd, he told me that working at the university today is more vulnerable than ever for a lecturer, when it comes to how we deal with our students as the university as an organization is no longer concerned with science, because they are so concerned with their grades and student credits. When I asked if he could give me an example, he said:

> It seems like the students feel they are in a foreign place, where lecturers are their enemies. Which consistently creates a greater distance between lecturer and student.
>
> I have been complained of many times. I have even been reported at one point because the students thought I was behaving inappropriately, just because I tried to shook hands with them before lecture, which for me creates something relational. Furthermore, I almost took it for granted that the institute would have MY back, but I was opposed. I have several times been attacked on a personal level for who I am as an individual if I do not meet the student's expectations. Therefore, as a teacher, I also become cautious, vulnerable, as I never know what is coming or can cause harm - as such complaints can create issues that threaten my job and position.
>
> - Sigurd

Those complaints, Sigurd argued, is being expressed if the lecturer does not meet the student's expectations. The students will complaint to optimize their own benefit. As Olsen (2020) argues…" *it has become the antics of many students to make the lecture in the auditorium a "profitable" experience, where they sit there "to learn"* (4) and not to create relationships. On that note, based on Marx (2021) theory where something exchanged in the relationship of trade is a *commodity*, meaning anything that is necessary, useful, or pleasant in life (Engels &Marx 2015, 22) - the students seem to view the lecturer as a commodity. Where the ideal *PowerPoint lecturer* with the ability to maintain the room of silences through structured presentations, is assigned a *use value*, expressed in the commodity exchange with the chalk Goblin. Based on the student's agency (goal). Whereby the lecturers too, seem to acknowledge them self as a product that could be distributed and sold.

Going into my conversation with Sigurd, he described himself as someone who really wants commitment and a scientific relation to the students, where he previously used to shake hands with those who were most accessible to him at the start of a lecture to create a connection before the lecture started. Sigurd said that it was also not unusual for him to occasionally contact committed students to hear if anyone wanted to write a contribution in books and articles he was going to publish, or to have a coffee and discuss mutual interest, to be inspired. But, he said, that is now the past. Now we find ourselves in a time where we are not supposed to say anything to each other. For Sigurd he sensed a threat to his own position when students start to complain, using their voice tactics, as Sigurd, earlier referred to on how credentialism…*" causes students to do the strangest things when under pressure. They start counting hours, milking lecturers for what they are worth and filing complaints where they can, if it serves them"*.

A threat I sometime later would learn that several lectures sensed, but through different reasonings.

I sat by myself in the "sandbox" after closing time to make some observations of the room. The room, which is divided in two and accommodates 80 - 100 people, is one of the more modern and digital teaching rooms at NTNU Dragvoll. The room had good light conditions, a low ceiling that provides a pleasant atmosphere and fresh colours on the walls in comparison to the auditoriums I were mostly following.

While I laughed a little for myself, over the "social" sections in between the somewhat more traditional classroom, imagined lecturers and students sitting there together singing Kumbaya like the most unlikely thing in the world – a door suddenly opened behind me, and a man and woman entered the room.

They walked over to the lectern, where the man showed the female the connection options and how the room worked. The man turned to me and asked if I was going to have classes there, and if they were disturbing. I responded that I am currently in fieldwork, where I am researching the student-lecturer relationship and am only there to observe the room. He suddenly became very engaged, and we talked further about attendance and the commitment of the students. The man began to speak freely about what he is like as a lecturer, and his experiences, continuously throwing the ball for validation from the woman:

The man: Yes, I'm not a typical traditional lecturer, I want a relationship with my students. But I'm careful about being too casual too, because then I give away my authority in a way, and risk not being taken seriously. As for me, it will be the same as throwing my research under the table if I lose that authority as well. My students have a certain expectation of me as a lecturer and how I should be, if I behave differently the students will be unsure of me, and then also the legitimacy of everything I say further will be questioned. From experience, I think they find it problematic because, if it's not the syllabus, it doesn't seem like the students think it's important. Although I know that there is a lot to learn from being freer about various topics in lectures.

The woman: Yes, I was a student myself not so long ago, and I have to say I prioritized, there was so much I had to do to read, that I often opted out of both seminars and lectures because I needed to be by myself to work independently and not be distracted.

Here, like Sigurd, the lecturer expresses a fear of his position. Not just as a lecturer, but for his credibility as a researcher. Worrying about his academic credibility, and thus how the students participate in- and compete with - the professor's position in academia. A fear that forces the lecturer to control his appearance and performance, so as not to lose face and legitimacy as a researcher. As Goffman (1992, 173) would refer to as impression control in relation to the impression he wants to give of himself, as a legitimate and serious researcher. Because if the students see that one foot on the table is sitting a little loose, 40% of the market value will be forfeited. Where the colleague confirms, as a recent graduate herself, that if the table does not come complete, then there is no point even look at it. Where he is then at risk of being replaced by someone else and losing his credibility.

It is reasonable to think that it is mainly for two reasons: the increased responsibility on employees to activate and support teaching so that students can pass their exams - which in turn increases production (Tjora 2019). And the increased bureaucratization in the sector where the employees are exposed to a stricter control regime through measurable reports of their activity, in publications and credits produced and research funding obtained from external contributors (Tjora 2019, 22-23)

An example of this, is a conversation I had with another professor early in the fieldwork, as a comparison to the Chalk Goblin.

Jay, a self-proclaimed PowerPoint lecturer is a subject manager for a large class of around 300 students with previous experience from various universities both domestically and

internationally such as Canada and the USA throughout his career, appeared as a richly experienced lecturer throughout our conversation, not unfamiliar with the system.

He started our conversation by describing his lectures, and the student engagement, where he quickly acknowledged the room of silence. Interesting here, is the way he acknowledged his relationship with the students:

> As a lecturer, I am an authority figure, someone who knows the material better than the students, legitimized by the title I have as a researcher. Which I believe establishes a dynamic in the room, which creates a distance between me and them. A student is a person who is supposed to be there to learn something, for which I have an educational responsibility, seen as a classic idea.
>
> In other words, as a lecturer, I have *expertise*, which gives me authority in society in general. A student has another function, they are in a situation where they must try to be in such an expertise - i.e., pretend to be an expert function. Where they will play with the information they receive, by *playing experts*. By expert I mean that you not only know a lot, but you are able to use it.
> - Jay

Which shows the lecturer's sense of responsibility in relation to the control regime they are under and how they activate and support the students so that they pass exams.

After some silence, I asked him if he could say something about how it affects the relational aspect between him as a lecturer and the students, and if he could elaborate on his experiences related to interaction and communication, to which he responded:

> I think commitment also depends on what you want to accomplish. From experience, I feel that the mentality between the students is a bit like "why should you talk about things together", which you should not have in the exam, for example. If they are to get involved, then we must do an effort to activate them. It is probably about the setting, and that they are in the auditorium to get something, rather than to chat.
>
> So, if an informal conversation were to arise, it would probably happen in a seminar or something, and of course it gets better the higher the level the students get and the more you interact with them. Personally, I like it to be this way because it becomes easier to control what is possibly said by the students. If a student had come up to me outside of a lecture and asked if we should have a coffee, I would have said yes, but in lectures, digressions can be good but also unfortunate.
>
> By that I mean that criticism and reflection are good, but under controlled conditions. Because even if there is not necessarily a definitive answer to what is conveyed by me, it is knowledge that must be known

- for and be able to work from. The students must play experts for a period before they can use the ideas to accomplish something, and take the step into a professional environment, and sometimes they play a little too much. Therefore, I must set limits for the debate, sticking to my PowerPoint presentation, which means that I may come across as uninterested in commitment, to have a fruitful dialogue.

For example, I once had a student in economics that I worked with in the past, who thought he knew a lot. He tended to argue on what I said in lecture believing that he had finished the game and knew what he was talking about, but he didn't. What is unfortunate then is that this student talks in front of, and with, other students and passes on incorrect information - which quickly spreads. Therefore, I exercise resistance as a lecturer, before I allow the students to contribute. Another unfortunate angle is whether the digression sow's uncertainty among the students, away from what was important. Because uncertainty can breed more uncertainty, and if they don't know, they start pretending that they do. I need them to understand these principles before they apply the knowledge further. And therefore, I believe that an authoritarian posture is also reassuring for the students."
- Jay

But this is the exception, says Jay, it's not that often students are challenged to digressions anyway. They mostly ask about practical things if they first get in touch by email, such as sources, exams etc.

Here we see an example of how the PowerPoint lecturer recognizes the students as someone who can threaten the professor's position in academia, in relation to the credibility of his words as an academic about the student's creating uncertainties and passing on something that is not true (perceived error). As a direct contrast, the PowerPoint lecturer seems to have accepted himself as a product, where, in comparison to the chalk goblin who wants digressions and creative knowledge, he uses his position to control digressions. In the form of being selective about which students get to speak, based on the expert function, because it is in competition with his own notion of "truth". In comparison to the Chalk Goblin who values the digressions and seek creativity and self-reflection. The ideal PowerPoint lecturer acknowledge the students as a treat, a competition for resources, threatening their positions.

Through these three lecturer's examples we see how the lecturers maintain the room of silence, through alienating (Marx 1988) them self from the students. In this sense, lecturer-student becomes alienated from each other. On the notion on how Marx (1988) describes alienation from *each other* as of a hanging threat of being replaced by the unemployed. Where they instead of being interactive - feel forced create distances. In this sense, it is not only lecturers and students who become alienated from each other, but also the potential relationship as co-developers of creative knowledge (Academic citizenship) alienates too.

Through their acknowledgement of the other and their mutual expectations, the lecturer – students act as a relationship of production and exchange, that exist amongst things (credits and results), and not as a relationship that exist among people, as Marx (2021) term as *commodity fetishism.* Seen in this way, *the room of silence*, not only becomes a trade market.

Where they are not passive consumers of knowledge within the system, but conscious actors that uses tactics so that they can go beyond all their limitations (Certeau 1988). Through a will to optimize their own advantages, despite the lecturer's intention or desires. Where the power exercised through the actor's actions must be understood in relation to the duality of the structure. Considering that access to, and the distribution of, such power resources is governed by social structures (Giddens 1984, 14-16). The student as an agent, and their use of power her, reveal itself in their actions capability to make a difference to a pre-existing situation.

By that I mean how the lecture hall in its academic culture, which is (or has been) knowledge- and reflection-oriented, has acquired a more productional structure (Tjora 2019. 22). Structures that are being reproduced by the student's choices of action, agency, affected by the symbolic value offered to them by the system. See illustration.
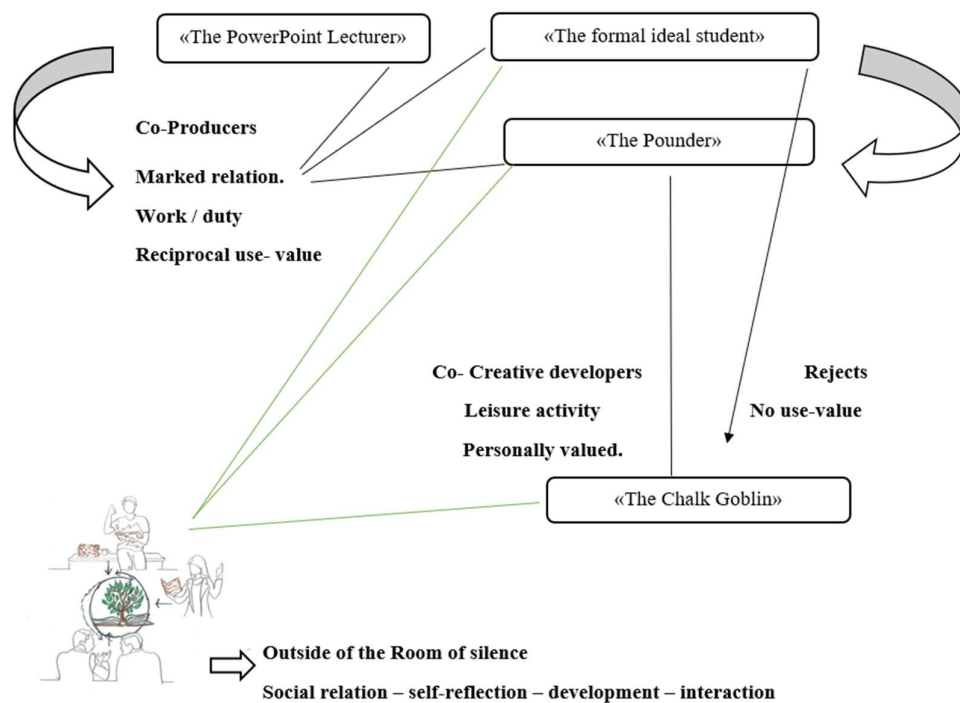

Figure 9 The social situation in the room of silence

5 From Creative knowledge to technical knowledge Production

In previous chapter I viewed how measurement systems, objectivation and a standardisation (Larsen & Røyrvik 2019) of the social practice of NTNU, that has entered the institution as a part of an ideology within the public sector (Tjora 2019, 15) so- called NPM, seem to have changed the perceptions of the developing process of knowledge and self. By exploring a development of education, where getting a degree is grounded in a marked logic (Marx 2021).

In this chapter I will build further on the market logic and development of education through exploring the different combinations of *types,* and the dynamics and shifts between them as a result of structuration (Giddens 1984). That points to a shift in the development of education from creative knowledge to a technical knowledge production.

The creative university: The Chalk Goblin and the Pounder

Even if the institution's counting edges (Larsen & Røyrvik 2018) restrict the student's engagement and participation of reflexive and critical characteristics in *the room of silence* grounded in a market logic (Marx 2015), where knowledge is something to be acquired and not to developed. Tjora (2019) claims that the lecturer's professional identity can counteract some of the effect of this, as the professor's day-to-day life is partially governed by the institution, arguing*…" while the institution can undergo major formal changes in a short time, cultural and practical changes will be slower, and elements of what we often associate with a so-called Humboldt model can be maintained…"* (Tjora 2019, 23).

The Humboldtian university builds on the thought that government officials are only to contribute to economic resources and organizational means, and not to involve in the intellectual scientific work (Tjora 2019, 23). In the twenty first century the academic principles of the Humboldtian university program, were characterized by a set of concepts: the combination of research and teaching *[Wissenchaft]* that deals with as a systematic pursuit of knowledge and learning: academic freedom: a belief in education rather than training (Östling 2018, 9: 38-41). Visualized through the concept of *Bildung,* Humboldt illustrated a subjective of the individual as concerned with the highest and most harmonious development of natural human abilities, where all individuals as a universal quality potentially possesses creativity (Östling 2018, 38).

In a Humboldtian fashion the realization of individuals inner potential is through the active verbal movements between self and the surrounding academic culture (Östling 2018, 38-41) where teaching is characterized as active dialogic creations that include both students and

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lecturer. Strategies and statistics of governmental officials was not an essential to determine the student's capabilities, in this sense grades and credentials. Rather it was the intellectual vitality and thoughts of humanity that determined their capacities. Assessing if they were allowed to serve the state or not (Östling 2018, 39).

> *Humboldt maintains that the university should be a place where science and scholarship in their most profound, extensive, and pure sense have their abode. He emphasises that 'since these institutions can only fulfil their purpose when each of them bears continuously in mind the idea of pure science and scholarship, their dominant principles must be freedom and seclusion.*

 (Östling 2018, 40).

Although it is debated whether Humboldt University is more ideal than practical, and should therefore be viewed with a critical eye (Tjora 2019, 23), the purpose of the theory in this context is to use the model more as a relevant ideal type to discuss the university's role in society in relation to development and knowledge as valuable in itself, as a form of education in its emphasis on reflection as Tjora (2019, 23) argues.

In that sense, the alignment between the *Chalk Goblin* and the *Pounder* is bearing elements to the Humboldtian model. Through the way they are allowing for «pedagogic charisma». Where the power of the charisma is portrayed through their belief of revelations within the scientific world and upon the conviction that science is important and valuable (Weber 1968, 1116). Considering to how the *chalk goblin* sees engagement and critical reflections as essentials for the development of knowledge and to be creatively developed.

The old policy could be seen in the informal space that the *Chalk Goblin* and *the pounder* through their alignment wishes to create, through a *subjective value*. Where self-reflection, digression and mutual communication is to take place, and knowledge is view as something to continuously discover. Where the relevance of the Humboldt model appears through how he characterizes development of self, creativity, and knowledge as something to be realized through active verbal movements between self and the surrounding academic culture (Östling 2018, 38-41). A place Fritz reminisced back to during one of our conversations:

> In the 80s, students and lecturers used to meet at "Låven" (The philosophic building of the university) during their lunch breaks, where we discussed socially relevant topics over a coffee across disciplines and social statuses, which created far more informal settings. A party, beer and organized work clubs were not abnormal either. I must smile a little when I look back because the dynamics were completely different.
> – Fritz (The chalk Goblin)

On the notion that development of creative knowledge and self-realization is something that is realized through dialogic creations that include both students and lecturer. One could see the similarities of elements between the old policy and the alignment of the *Chalk Goblin* and the *pounder* through Weber's (1968) use of *charismatic beliefs,* specifically on revelations.

As we saw in previous chapter the *Chalk Goblin* sees the *pounders* as the ideal students to have in his lectures. Where he argued that he preferred them, because they are the ones who engages independently of formalities. Even though their verbal engagement was rare, when they first did, he argued, they were reflecting and searching, pursuing knowledge and the arts as a way of constant self and societal improvement as Jacob argued, that could be seen as revelations. This is to Fritz what made him the most creatively developed and an essential alignment to function at his best as a lecturer, in order to revolutionize men from "within" where his charismatic authority manifests its revolutionary power at best (Weber 1968, 1117).

The "within" in this case as I interpreted Weber's notion, is not merely through the students subjective feeling or experiences, but through the significant grasp they put in on the demands of the work (engaging). Take Jacob for an example, characterized as a *pounder,* and how he described his quest to acquire new knowledge and develop himself as a creative and independent individual, through pursuing academia - seeking a change in his way of life. Here the charisma of the *Chalk Goblin,* if it has any effect at all, revolutionizes Jacob from "within" through the way he manages to change the pounders attitude, *metanoia* (Weber 1968, 1117), through scientific conversations and engagement, if, in its alignment the *pounder* puts in the work, in this case, engages in a mutual exchange of knowledge through verbal engagement. Where the "revolutionizes" lies in the revelations gained. A value sphere of development, see illustration:
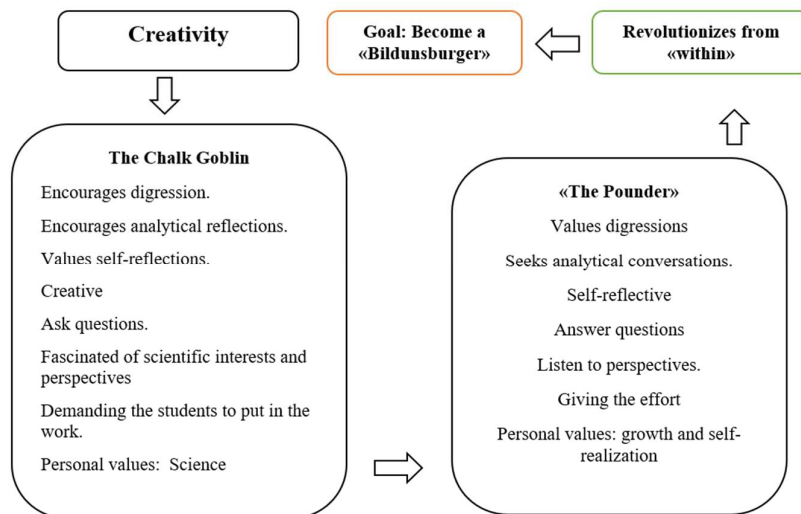

Figure 10 The creative university

A logic which seems to answer NTNU own values serving the «social mission» of knowledge for a better world, see illustration marks:

Values

Creative

Academic freedom is the basis for our activities. We take on challenging questions and tasks, and seek innovative solutions through interdisciplinary collaboration. NTNU supports the development of disciplines, people and cultures. We value and encourage innovation among students and staff as well as innovative teaching, research and artistic activities.

Critical

Our activities build on fundamental democratic values and we represent an unprejudiced and independent voice. The hallmarks of our academic culture are debate, critical reflection, fact-based knowledge, impartiality and ethical integrity. We challenge conventional ideas and solutions.

Constructive

We engage in an open and solution-oriented dialogue with society and emphasize both external and internal collaboration. We take social responsibility and we influence, advice and develop each other and our environment through dialogue and dissemination of knowledge. NTNU places emphasis on co-determination and active involvement by students and employees.

Respectful

Every employee and student has a responsibility to contribute to a work and study environment characterized by respect and consideration. We facilitate personal growth and professional development. We contribute to diversity and equal opportunity in society and in our own activities. We promote equality and tolerance. At NTNU, we show respect for varying attitudes and opinions.

Figure 11 NTNU Values, collected from NTNU.no, April 2023

where presented in this way, in comparison the own words of values stated by NTNU as an educational organization, the *Chalk Goblin* and the *Pounder* seem to act according to what is expected of them. However, as we saw previously this logic is the exception rather than the norm. As *the room of silence* and actions within, portrays a change in education putting these values to trial. A process of change I will now analyse through a life story (Ellen 1984) that I collected through my key informant, Halvor.

The downfall of the Chalk Goblin and the pounder

It was a Tuesday morning at Café Sito, that I met Halvor. A native city boy from Trøndelag, aged 80, who has spent a large part of his career as a professor before becoming emeritus. Little did I know that the conversation would flow so easily, and the time would disappear to such an extent that we didn't know what time it was until the cafe was announced closed four hours later. A lukewarm cup of coffee was still on the table, and my notebook was much emptier than it should have been. Meeting Halvor was a journey, a journey into history and through an exciting life lived with several experiences and reflections. Halvor is of such a character that one sits with the feeling that one wishes one had met him earlier, a character with whom time disappears, in good conversations and laughs. He appeared as a wise and reflective man when it comes to many things, with both care and recognition for those around him in the way he talks about human life and community.

Although Trondheim has always been his base, during his career he has had several short or longer stays in Italy, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, the USA, England, and the Netherlands.

From where he has brought with him a great interest in languages and rich experiences that he often chuckles back to when he reminisces. But even though he appears as a city boy curious about languages, cultures, life, and community, he seems to be grateful to have also gained rich experiences from life in the mountain villages where his family originates, to be closely connected to the natural that he fully enjoys when the occasion presents itself with an extra fondness for Trollheimen.

In 1961 he graduated from the science school and gymnasium, where he described himself as a bored youth who dropped out of school at one point in search of what he wanted to become. At that time, he would rather be tortured than study more. But from 1961 - 1964, he got a two-year teacher's training, and some teaching work, where he realized that he liked teaching. But after having been in sanitation in the military, he also wanted to study nursing, which he did from 1995 - 1966.

The "Teacher" seemed to be a key in his family, as both his grandmother, his grandmother's sister and his grandfather's aunt were teachers, and their mother and aunt again. Nevertheless, Halvor describes that it was never in the cards for him to become a teacher or lecturer, even though his family believed that he should pursue academia. The positioning as a lecturer was only by a coincidence, when a friend of his pointed to a position advertised, which he applied for and got.

Following this, from 1970 - 2012, he took many jobs related to learning as a general teacher, university studies and research fellow in Trondheim. At the same time, he has carried out network building in various countries and temporary work within his department before taking up a permanent position here at the university. And the joy he got from being around students, being able to guide and develop other individuals and make thoughts out of science, resulted in a lifelong career as a professor. I asked him if he could tell me what Knowledge and education as a concept means to him. He answered:

> I never used to have any problems finding students to talk to. During the breaks we had good communication, and after the lectures I could sit for hours talking to my students. *That* was a time when the professors and students played their roles as they should. There was always someone who kept eye contact, and then I could keep quiet too, and they still looked me in the eyes, waiting for what would come out of my mouth next. The mental space we were in together then, was fantastic, because it's where the development happened, and the questions arose.

Lecturer and students don't play their roles anymore according to what the university used to be about, knowledge. What has happened with the development of the university now from when I began as a lecturer, is that an enormous number of roles have developed, due to the increased bureaucratisation. I think it is quite significant that in the nineties the university became Norway's University of Science and Technology. Because knowledge is creative, and if we turn everything into technique, right, then we are doing what I understand from a German expression which is: if you follow in the footsteps of others, you will not get anywhere but there the others went!

The bureaucracy is in the process of destroying science and that is because, in its essence, the bureaucracy is not creative! It just fixes something that's already there. Everything is so institutionalised now. We don't go around as persons anymore, we go around in roles, each one of us, looking to meet the expectations of the institution who answer to the institution. That for me is the same as we think in our positions, and not in what we do at all. That puts a distance between the Lecturer and the students where they don't communicate because they only do what is expected of them today. This is because one orients oneself by the role, rather than the person. There is no longer any sanctuary for the individual, because even the roles have become a structure. The students think in terms of processes and not in terms of product.

You know students are only seen as a student stream, where the goal is to get everyone through in the allotted time, rather than to develop/use the ability to reflect on what they have studied.

-Halvor, emeritus

In the first paragraph of this quote, Halvor specifically refers to a university that resonates with the Humboldtian model. Where he described how the students and lecturers played their roles according to a development of knowledge. A dynamic that seems close to Humboldt's emphasis in his description of what a lecture should be - characterized by active dialogic creations that include both students and lecturer (Östling 2018, 38-41). This is also close to Fritz journey back in time to the 80`s where he described an academic culture that inherited both lecturers and students in a community. Looking at the history of the university (NTNU history, 2023) this was a time where the university changed its name from "Norges lærerhøgskole" (NLHT) to "Den allmennvitenskapelige høgskolen" (general university of science) (AVH) which accordingly to its name is about science.

In the second paragraph he points directly to the technical shift and development of the university practice. Where he experienced over time how the roles changed into institutionalised roles accordingly with the increased bureaucratization. Becoming a technical university dominated by *managerialism* (Røyrvik 2018) and structures of effectivisation designed to improve individual and organizational performance through measurement systems (Tjora 2019). Mentioning the 90`s as the timeline of the shift, I looked at the history of the university, and as he said, in 1996 the university was established as "Norges teknisk-

naturvitenskapelige universitet" (NTNU). As a result of a merger of the Norwegian Technical University (NTH), the University of general Sciences (AVH), the Science Museum (VM), the Faculty of Medicine (DMF), the Academy of Fine Arts in Trondheim and the Conservatory of Music (NTNU History, 2023). As a concrete timeline of the technical shift that gradually where to enter the sector in a practical sense.

Validating the technical university shift, Halvor in the last paragraph exemplifies the consequences, where he argues of how the increased productivist structure seem to have displaced creativity. Similar to (Tjora 2019) argumentation on how a production-oriented structure have displaced a knowledge-and reflection orientated academical culture (Tjora 2019, 22). Referring concretely to a transformation process that Halvor describes as `from being creative individuals -to- institutionalized roles that think in terms of processes`. Consequences of a transformational process that I will analyse further from the student's point of view.

«Thinking in terms of processes»: the *normed ideal student.*

Throughout my time in fieldwork, and all conversations I have had with students, I have still not experienced one not mentioning the exam and results. Although several have said that in the future they want to focus more on broad knowledge, the exam seems to be everything they live and breathe as a student. When it comes to the ways in which they organize themselves, in terms of thinking in process (results and future possibilities), one can see their agency (Giddens 1984) from the point of view of the grading system, learning behaviours in the lecturing room, and in relation to the digital versus presential lecture.

Grading system

NTNU operates with a Norwegian grading system that consists of two grading scales: a scale with the grades passes and fail and a graded letter grade scale from A to E for pass and F for fail (NTNU grading scale 2023).

Symbol	Description	General, qualitative description of valuation criteria
A	Excellent	An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a high degree of independent thinking.
B	Very good	A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking.
C	Good	A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas.
D	Satisfactory	A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.
E	Sufficient	A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.
F	Fail	A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking.

Figure 12 NTNU Grading scale, collected from NTNU.no. 20.mai 2023

As we have seen previously, students prefer the PowerPoint lecturer as the ideal, because of the structured form of presentation that optimizes their benefit. The reason why they see benefits in the structured form, is because they have experienced that 'thinking freely' has previously produced poor results. Rather, to be given a systematic description of the subject's content (obtained by the lecturer and syllabus) is the students' perception of what gives good results (see constructing the room of silence). Here we see a connection between the grade A and the ideal PowerPoint lecturer, according to how they see the method of approach as the provider of status goods. For the students, being lectured, in the true sense of the word seem to be their perception of *learning* (knowledge is something one gets).

> *"If the lecturer is not smart and tidy, with a structured PowerPoint the first lecture of the semester, I will not attend any more. Because I don't have time to find out what it was the lecturer wanted to convey as important."*
> -Male student, last year of BA studies

> *"I hate it when the lecturer doesn't use PowerPoint or is clear about what he's teaching, because it makes it so difficult. If I don't feel like I'm learning anything, then I might as well try to find out myself and use time more wisely».*
> -Female student, First year studies.

The technicality here is best shown in the students form of a market logic according to how they express consumer satisfaction (Røyrvik 2018). Viewing the PowerPoint lecturer as a commodity (Marx 2021) where the exchange of knowledge in the relationship of trade is assigned a use-value (Engels & Marx 2015, 22). Where the students express that if they are not satisfied with the commodity (potentially at risk of poor results) they have found a way to complain in the examination system, which gives them some rights.

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«I always send in a request for justification, regardless of the result I get. Because that's the only way I'm approached as a person. I get the opportunity to get feedback so I know how I can develop. It's also quite nice. »

-Male student, BA studies

«I always ask for reasons for my grade, because nowhere else do you get individual feedback from a professional. And it's always good to hear that you understand something difficult, or if you don't. The feedback is also so nice, I feel seen. Or I did, until I spoke to a friend who had received the same message. Then I didn't feel so special anymore. Stupid that they just take a copy paste».

-Female student, MA studies

"It's great to have a good exam, but I don't stress. What's the worst that can happen if you stumble here and there. Nevertheless, a friend made me aware that if you just complain, it is a high chance that you will get a better grade, and that it is rarely lowered. So, in the best case, you make a profit from it, or it remains as it was, and then it doesn't amount to anything. If I'm not completely satisfied with what I delivered, I give it a try".

-Female student, first year.

"A lot of us always ask for or file a complaint about our grade. Because often we are so lucky that it is lifted a notch. Or it pretty much stays where it is. So, it doesn't hurt to try, the risk is worth it».

-Male student, second year.

This is an example of how Halvor means the institutionalisation have turned everything into a technique – where one think through their positions (roles) and not as persons. This is the shift: A person (students enrolling into the university) initially think in terms of product, an individual who pursues knowledge and the arts as ways of self and social improvement [a Bildunsburger]. Becoming aware of *credentialism* and what is expected to become a good student – grading system and measurements. The students transform into normed ideal students to achieve these goals, according to how their decisions, actions and preferences is all of future results and possibilities - by thinking in terms of processes. In sum education has become a technicality.

Digital versus presential lectures

This learning behaviours has also proved central during and after the covid-19 pandemic, where digital and hybrid lecture solutions were practiced at the university. Where the student saw that they could get the PowerPoint lecturer in digital format, i.e., the structure of a power point.

Which freed them from physical lectures altogether - when they saw the profit in digital recordings.

> *"If given the opportunity, 10 times out of ten, I would choose digital recordings, because it can be played back faster, so that I have more time to practice for the exam".*
> Male student, BA studies

> *"The so-called black screens are really nice, because then I can do tasks, read, talk on the phone, resonate emails on what I did not understand to the lecturer as we go and do whatever I want at the same time".*
> -Female student, BA studies
> *"If I am just going to be there to take notes, i.e., reproduce what I'm being told, then it doesn't matter if I disappear in the crowd of an auditorium or behind a black screen, or at home. I get the same content. The reason I choose at home or digital is strictly because I the info in a shorter time which, which frees up some time to read. Because with digital recordings, I can fast track the lecture so that it lasts an hour instead of two, and you can mute and do other things at the same time."*

> *-Female, MA studies*

> *"If it's not physical mandatory, I won't meet, I don't have time for that".*
> -Male student, Second year

Which largely emphasizes the transactional mentality of acquiring knowledge. Here the students validate both that they re-produce what they are being lectured through notes, and that knowledge is something expected to get. As they talk about it as an efficient transaction – and they are here for it. Since the streamlining means that their study day becomes more productive in relation to the work, they are subject to. Where they can spend time reading the required syllabus, while also getting the information they need. Accordingly, to what *credentialism* as an indicator (Røyrvik 2018) communicates on what it means to be a student. Where they do not have to spend time engaging themselves in communication with others but write.

The point here lies in how empty the concept of development of knowledge becomes - when one sees the extent to which education has become a technicality, something to get with the least possible effort. Considering how the counting-edges (Larsen & Røyrvik, 2018) of the university and the exam system affects the student's learning behaviours and lecture-student relation.

Oriented towards becoming and achieving.

With the focus on exams, reading, profit and needs, the previous examples portray the lack of the individuality that Halvor was concerned about. Because they do not seem to orient themselves towards developing processes of self, rather on *becoming* and *achieving*. That is what Halvor refers to as `the structured role`. By that he meant that the students have become so instrumental and fixed. When talking about it he often referred to the institutionalization as a game of chess:

> Everything at the university must be technically processed now. To an extent that that we engage in "chip moving" as I call it. The board is set up by the institution and the students just finish playing it.
>
> When I see other people playing chess, I feel like pushing the pieces away (laughs) because it's such a pattern, isn't it, with fixed pieces. And that is what the university is trying to do, those who decide and have power try to turn reality into a chessboard. Instead of seeing that there are processes in the development of science. This is what it's like to be a student. To follow a pattern.
>
> But being a student shouldn't be about getting a hold of the pieces, and you're done, sort of. After all, they must be developed in a process, to become a researcher for some. No, now everything is just pieces, take theory and method for example: I am very interested in that. There we have already divided up research as I call it and removed the whole. Then we get a kind of prioritization, where some believe that method is important, and others believe that it is theory that is relevant. Believing that the rest of being a researcher will just come sailing on a whim.
>
> It is so technical now, that in field students almost looks for it, what is method and what is theory, in a sense that they forget to participate. Forget about research then…
>
> -Halvor, emeritus

By a structured role Halvor refers to the expectations that is placed on the individual, determined within the institution. Where student's think in terms of processes [future goals] and not in terms of product [self-realization and development] is a form of `actional structure` that the students gain in addition to being a structured role Halvor argues. That can be seen as a consequence of the credential inflation within the mass system, *credentialism,* considering how, in its fashion, the system increases a growing competition for scarce status goods, accessing sought-after occupational outcomes (Tomlinson and Watermayer 2022). That the students begin to orientate them self around seeking the educational qualifications to get a degree and diploma and how that creates actional structures.

Halvor furthered:

Social science has become an education - and the students have become learning students - and the lecturer has become a teacher. This is an act that comes at some expense, as we no longer develop ourselves to reflect on social problems, we will learn them now. And that is a problem because knowledge is not in a book, knowledge is in the brain. Now, when I have guest lecturers, the students just give blank thousand meter-stares in front of you, instead of meeting your eyes, the dynamics in the room have changed.

-Halvor, emeritus

In the way he expresses how social science has become an education where the students have become learning students, and the lecturer have become a teacher - by which he means that it is no longer based on mutual exchange of knowledge, but rather on acquiring what is needed. He validates and recognizes the alignment between *PowerPoint* lecturer and the *normalized ideal student*s. Where in this case his experiences of the blank thousand-meter stares, seem to be his interpretation of the student's collective agreement to be silent. Recognizing their agency while arguing that the students in precent time are there to learn and not to develop. Which in turn confirms *the room of silence*, as a room constructed through technical means.

The technical university: The PowerPoint Lecturer and the Normed ideal student

Although good conversations, creativity and development of individuals and knowledge probably still take place on a smaller scale at the university – through the *Chalk Goblins* ability to counteract some of the effects of the changes in higher education by the informal spaces he tries to create, and because of his creative charisma (Weber 1986). The empirical examples portrayed throughout this thesis points to cultural and practical changes, where the elements of the Humboldtian model is rare to find. Changes one could see as a consequence of new policy of the university, that entered the sector through a so-called NPM that rationalizes within technical means.

Dominated by neoliberal audit technologies (Bainbridge 2020) or more general *managerialism* (Tjora 2019, 22). The power of management rest upon a belief, that measurement systems that evaluates work processes and tasks (Tjora 2019) is effective structures that improve individual and organizational performance. As the initial thought process of *credentialism,* grading scales, formal qualifications, student credits and so on. However, a consequence of this, as portrayed throughout the thesis, is that the productional structures manages not *…" only to change material and social orders, but through them, the people., By changing the conditions of the*

once creative space for adaptations, through a rational determination of means and ends…" (Weber 1968, 1116).

A transformation we have seen in relation to how the students are affected by the system in the form that they go through a cultivational process (Røyrvik 2018) as seen in the distinction between the *pounders* and *normed ideal student*, where they gradually get a `other oriented` personality type (Røyrvik 2018, 28) seeing through *credentialism,* that changes the students learning behaviours towards an agency (Giddens 1984). Where the power of their use and learning behaviour's (actions) have managed to make a difference to a pre-existing situation (Giddens 1984, 14) by constructing the room of silence. Where the function of the lecturer no longer is to develop individuals, knowledge, and self. Rather to teach, as a technical means to serve the learning student's needs – where learning is seen as to make good exam to get their credentials. As examples of how the educational institution proceeds in a way through its structures, that it in its fashion has the capability to lead the broad student masses to merely accept or adapt themselves to the external, technical resultants which are of practical significance for their interests – they learn the techniques of the law (Weber 1968, 1117).

This is the normalized practise expressed through the alignment between the *PowerPoint lecturer* and the *normalized ideal students.* Where the process of education revolutionizes with technical means from "without" (Weber 1968, 1116).

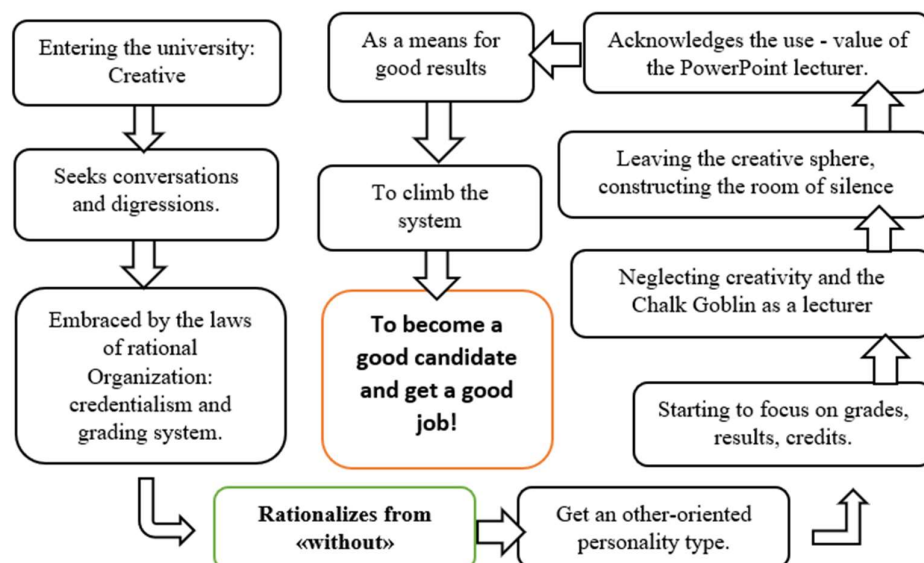A value sphere of technical means, see illustration:

Figure 13 The technical university

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This is the transformative process from the pounder to becoming the normalized ideal student created by the technical university. And where the Chalk Goblin transform into a formal PowerPoint lecturer at a means of the student quest – to receive knowledge.

A process that could be seen through Tim Ingold (2000) distinction between *technical* and *mechanical* when it comes to perception of environment. Portraying a shift from "creative knowledge" to a modern mechanical knowledge of production – a distinction between the old policy of the university as a developmental institution with an academic culture of self-reflection and creativity (Tjora 2019) -and- the new policy of the university as a standardised, objectified, and measurable social practice of production (Larsen & Røyrvik 2018).

While the Chalk Goblin can be linked to Tim Ingold (2000) concept of a *"Artisan"* who does the work based on creativity and thought through his techniques. The PowerPoint lecturer in in turn becomes an *operator*, that follow the floor plans - as part of the machine (NTNU), where in his activities he is guided by formal and explicit (students) rules of procedure. ...*"Where these rules, grounded in the general principles of mechanics, furnish the logos of techne, the rationalization of the process of production that was lacking from the craftsman's art..."* (Ingold 2000,295).

However, it is very important to emphasize that the `from without' perspective is only a way of showing the roots to how the room of silence began to emerge, from a completely objective perspective. Since the technicalities which is maintained in an alignment between the PowerPoint lecturer and the normalized students, must be seen in the light of structures as both medium and result of the business it continuously organizes. As structural characteristics of social systems do not exist independently of action, but are chronically involved in its production and reproduction (Giddens 1984, 374)

What I mean by that, is the university alone cannot be seen as an external compelling reality beyond the action and knowledge of the actor. Rather, the way the technical university is rationalized within the room of silence, can be seen in the *duality of structures* (Giddens 1984). Enrolling to the university the students soon gain a practical awareness of the measurement system and importance of grades that enables as a prerequisite for action.

By *Practical awareness* Giddens (1984, 41-45) refers to the knowledge students draw upon in the constitution of the room of silence. In effect, the students beginning to portray an adaptability and flexibility to the system learning how to use it for their own benefit, *agency*. Learning how to use the system, and how their verbally express their actions the students prove

to have acquired a *discursive awareness* that Giddens (1984, 41-45) refers to as involving knowledge which actors are able to express on the level of discourse (p 41-45). This is where structures and individuals are becoming a duality - in other words moments of the same whole (Giddens 1984).
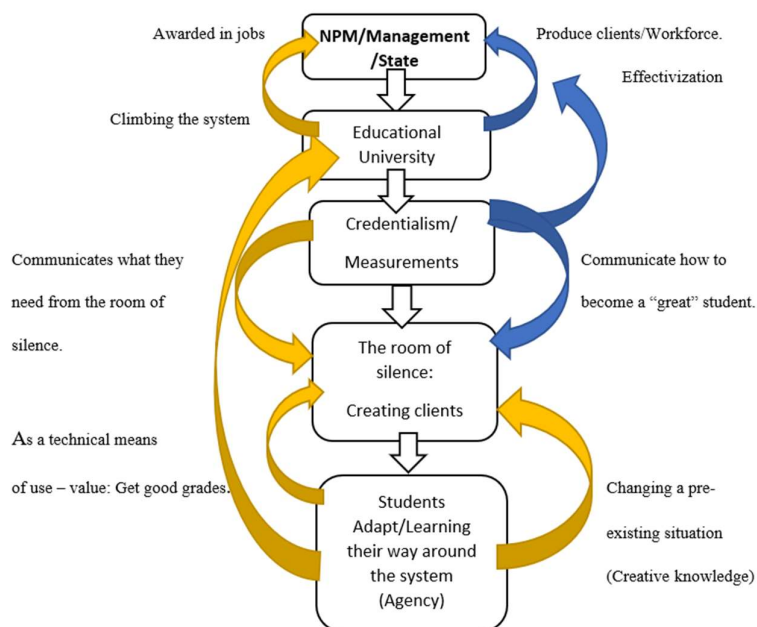
See illustration:

Figure 14 A duality of structures

Here one sees an illustration of structuring (Giddens 1984) and how structures are…*" both medium and result of the activity it continuously organizes. Structural characteristics of social systems do not exist independently of action but are chronically involved in its production and reproduction…"* (Giddens 1984, 374). On the right we see the university structure, that exists to streamline and improve the performance of the university through its counting edge systems (Larsen & Røyrvik 2018). Where the qualification framework's function is to capture the skills of the students and set the contemporary lead on what the content of education should emphasize (Stalheim 2022, 64). An assembly line ideology that can be said to come as a consequence of an increased focus on innovation in higher education to create workforce (National organization for quality in education (NOKUT) 2020) and to meet the challenges of the future (NTNU, social mission, 2023) (Stalheim 2022).

On the left hand we see the students – and their adaptability to the system, seeing what is expected of them and learn the techniques of the law (Weber 1968, 1117). Where they through their agency (Giddens 1984) climbs the system, meeting the requirements to in the future

become a potential client of the state (the workforce they seek). A technical development that creates a vulnerability in academia: because the developing and interacting space: the educational space: seems to have been forgotten.

An unfortunate point of intersection between framework management - interpersonal relation -and - science.

Considering my empirical findings, I decided to contact someone the administration at faculty level, to hear their perspective on education today. Where I received a quick response, and within a few hours I found myself sitting in the office of one of the administrators at NTNU. The person explained:

> We have a problem, because we are facing an unfortunate point of intersection between framework management and interpersonal relationships and science- which creates a vulnerability in academia, where the room for action seems to be lost and charisma doesn't seem to matter.

> Because the institution is so concerned with, and based on, frameworks. We are so governed by it - and the demand for delivery is greater than ever. And this applies to society in general, even kids don't play for fun anymore, they respond to measurements and strive for perfectionism and wins.

> Now I'm sitting here talking to you as one of the bureaucrats, ironically enough. But I find comfort in the fact that a colleague previously told me that I am a pragmatic bureaucrat to the core with a tone set to it - but for me it was one of the best compliments I have ever received. Because yes, I sit in an office, but I am also able to see what is happening on the floor at the university.

> Your paper is a very important contribution, because no one has addressed this before, and it is high time that someone did. NTNU as an institution should reflect more on this because they have so much unrealized potential when it comes to education. What you do here is important, because NTNU must decide whether they want to be a production centre or whether they want to be a development centre. As there is much that contradicts the institution's four big words when it comes to the organization's values and vision, in the development I see today.

> The university are so framework-controlled, in a way that one of the consequences is that the great thinkers who stand out, will waive. An example of this, is the exam. When an examiner is evaluating through measurable scales from F-A through censorship guidelines, what happens if the students go slightly outside the common thread? Well, it becomes difficult to validate. And the probability is, that the student will get a worse result than what the person deserves. In such situations, it is the reflection itself that suffers. As students begins to avoid thinking freely, and

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> rather follow the system to through its measurable units, where they aspire to become the candidate the university longs for. In this sense, individuality disappears here too.

> The students are put through the paces right up to PhD level really, according to how you develop a project, what it must entail, etc by a supervisor. And suddenly they stand there one day, employed as an associate professor, and ask themselves, who is going to help me now? We have lost a part of reflection and independence, and it is increasing. I fear that this generation will face a challenge in working life. When it comes to having confidence in what they can contribute.

> -Administrative employee, Faculty level

These examples can be thought through Røyrviks (2018) notions on what it means to be social in the time of objective management under NPM and post-bureaucratic control. Going into the conversation, the administrative quickly validates the framework management of the university, and how it affects sociality and development of knowledge in the lecture room, which the person referred to as action space. Where charisma and creativity were described as by Fritz and Halvor, as things from the past.

Arguing that the university must decide whether it wants to be a development centre or a production centre, one can see how the person also approaches the technological structures that Halvor described. The administrator issued if the standardized learning outcome descriptions, have led to an instrumental approach to knowledge, which put sticks in the wheels of creativity and the possibilities for innovation (Stalheim 2022, 64) that do not live up to the institutions own vision. As we have seen from the student's examples, when this is transposed to the examination process, it leads students to eventually stop thinking freely and focus on develop anything at all other than results. In relation to an assembly line ideology that triumphs over the possibilities for innovation in higher education (Stalheim 2022) where in like the one referred to.

The decline of free thinking is what Halvor was occupied with considering the development of knowledge. As it was his perception that the student's perception was `that knowledge is in books`. However, as we saw in *strategy education*, it is not about where the knowledge is located as a universal truth. The students seem to be aware that acquiring knowledge is a development process. We see that in the alignment between the *Chalk Goblin* and the *pounder*. Rather, the students confirm that it is all about access to status goods, as we saw in the alignment of the *PowerPoint* lecturer and the normed *ideal student*. Confirmatory of the administrates

notion, that standardized learning outcome descriptions has, led to an instrumental approach to knowledge. Where they do not seek to develop, but to gain.

So, it is important to emphasize the difference in relation to *agency* (Giddens 1984). Considering that acquiring knowledge seems ideal for most people through a relation to a scientist and in dialogue with others. However, the priority lies in being able to get the essence in the simplest possible way, towards an exam. Being aware that their behaviours is not optimal in relation to development, but a necessity. In this sense, the blank thousand-meter stares are a conscious choice of action - and not a general perception of knowledge - as we saw in chapter three. Instead, this example, is the process, the concrete connection, that both the administrator and Halvor agree on a situation where individuality and interactional relations gets lost. Notions that imply several contrasts like develop vs gain, self-work vs accumulation, incommensurability vs commensurability, development of subject vs appropriation of knowledge objects by the subject and skill vs knowledge. Where the latter is all potentially subjects to accounting in the commodity logic (Marx 2021) within *the room of silence* orchestrated by the qualification framework (Stalheim 2022) whereas the former is to be thought through the Humboldtian model and what the academic culture is or used to be knowledge and reflection orientated (Tjora 2019).

Where the commodity logic that could be thought through the way Røyrvik (2018) refers to Tian Sørhaug's (2004) concept of "management mentality" and how in its strategy it possesses a control function in the human psyche. Where the management mentalism establishes a community through `make its men` *to want and to want* (Røyrvik 2018, 43) in relation to the `other-oriented' personality type I previous referred to. Which is not the point here in itself.

The point lies in the ripple effects of it - in relation to how NPM and the management mentality gives rise to new forms of *subjectivity,* that we saw in chapter four, but also *sociality,* as a student-lecture relation. As the administrative employee's notions, seem to confirm a problem that the lecturers feel first-hand in everyday life, namely how the framework management has changed the dynamic of the lecturer-student relation. Where the room of action is lost, as the *credentialism* and exams have embodied the students acts, constructing *a room of silence*.

Where charisma do not seem to matter anymore as the instrumentalization of education seems to have removed the student needs to associate with lecturers, as an educational relationship of means, altogether. By that I mean that there is not an absence of a relationship, but a redefinition of what it means to be a lecturer and student and as a relation. As knowledge no longer seem to

emerge from a relationship but alienate from it (Marx 1988). Re-producing *in the room of silence* repeating the content in the exam, in exchange for a grade.

A dynamic of change that the lectures feel first hand every day.

"How can I be a lecturer, when students don't even show up at campus anymore?"
During my field work, I was able to participate in an internal staff meeting at one department, with 9 lecturing professors from various subjects and degrees, from year study to bachelor's who were present. Where the agenda was to talk about the past year, and the challenges they have had with presence among the students, commitment, and digital lectures.

They started the meeting by talking about each other's experiences regarding a big drop in physical attendance at lectures and seminars. The meeting moderator began by saying that he wanted concrete experiences from those present, and thoughts on what they can do to improve commitment and physical attendance. And that he recently received feedback from the reference group, who believed that there was too much choice, and uncertainty about what is mandatory and what is not. And whether they should create more compulsory activities so that the students have something to relate to.

> **Professor 1:** Attendance was a problem before the pandemic as well, but now I'm simply worried, because the students don't show up. I have been practicing hybrids for a while now, and fear that this choice will reduce the attendance, because they can get it digitally.

> **Professor 2:** Yes, I must agree. But I've noticed something interesting about it too. Attendance is worse than ever, they don't attend anything, but what they hand in from assignments and exams is better than ever. It's like top nodge. I felt like I did a lousy teaching job all the way through and if I hadn't seen these results, I would have thought it was the worst subject I've ever had. But the students must have had a different experience, because they delivered so well.

> **Professor 3:** I experience the opposite. I have a course with 70 students, and an average of 10 turn up. And another subject I have with 300 students, on average 20 people turn up. I have a feeling that it has been a difficult year, with poor attendance both digitally and physically. Last year they delivered good results in a portfolio submission, but this year it is the complete opposite. I don't see any good results, on the contrary, I question whether the students have gained anything at all. I must admit that I feel it in my motivation. I am afraid that I have lost the ability to connect with my students, but at the same time I hear other lecturers share similar experiences, and that several students want a postponement. So, it can't be me personally. Perhaps we simply must make more of the activities mandatory.

Professor 4: I don't know if more mandatory activities help, the problem is all those who take it as free subjects. They are not interested in getting involved, just passing for their credits. I'm also not so sure that the administration wants us to push the students too hard, in terms of compulsory attendance, because that could result in greater dropouts which have financial consequences.

Professor 5: Another angle is to make it clear to the students that attendance is important to do a good exam. And it is allowed to subtly make it an advantage to come to classes, at least I don't think there are any legal problems with that. For me it's a downer when the students don't show up, I need them to be there to function as a good lecturer. So, I use tricks to keep them there.

Professor 1: Just being present is not enough to learn, we must make them see a benefit from being here. So that we get enough people in the room that it's an environment for good discussion. If only 5 students turn up, I might as well take them to the office for a chat instead.

Professor 3: Over the course of my career, I have become good at creating strategies to get the students engaged, and they have worked every time. But this year, nothing has worked to my great frustration. The students have delivered so badly that I wonder if they have learned anything at all, and I have been so desperate that at several points I have played stand up shows from Netflix in lectures to arouse their interest, and tried to convert the show to academic relevance, without success. I have never felt so unsuccessful before.

Professor 1: Well, you can always do a lecture with a twist, literally. A colleague of mine at another university said the other day that he has started bringing Twist chocolates to his lectures, which he throws out to the students who respond and engage. As a reward. (Laughs)

Professor 2: That's just ridiculous! What exactly are we doing here, then! If I may ask... In any case, it has nothing to do with science.

Professor 6: I'm up for a little freedom of choice if the results are there. Then we lecturers just must endure being bored. If they learn, the study program works.

Professor 2: No! I completely disagree with that. For me, who started here because I'm passionate about lecturing, and the development I'm part of through creating good dialogues and connections with my students, my motivation will die out completely with so few students. I need to feel good about myself as a teacher and the cost of coming to work. If I'm just going to accept that only 5-10 students out of 300 show up, that means that I must accept that my job is transformed into a more open university where my presence will soon no longer be necessary. I'd rather quit than let it happen, I mean that.

Professor 7: I agree. I am also completely dependent on the fact that I feel a presence with the students, to thrive and be a good lecturer. But during the pandemic I tried to create a safe place for the students, to improve engagement and attendance, by lighting the fireplace, laying out skins and using my therapy dog. I set a mood (laughs), and the students got involved, showing up feeling confident in participating. I have never received so many emails and requests before. So, it doesn't work to be too connected either. Because then I didn't have time for everything else, I had to do. Eventually I had to take it to another extreme, and break that bond, to tell students that they are responsible for their own learning.

Moderator: «learning» pushes some buttons with us, as our responsibility is to create an atmosphere where people feel safe to speak. And that we can't do it in an auditorium or digitally, which creates a bit of frustration.

Professor 8: Yes, attendance has been poorer for me too. But the way they study in my subject has a completely different dynamic to theirs, it seems as if I know everyone by name and the commitment is good. But I agree that too much freedom is not good either for them or for us. I rather try to focus on fun inclusive things at the start, to have social events, not just through the line association. And seek out places with alternative tasks outside the lecture, which have created a proper classroom feeling. And they are involved in everything. But it is obviously a lot of work. Making their time worth coming puts a lot of pressure on us.

Professor 9: Honestly, some subjects are so convenient for the students that I don't see the potential for it to be better than it is. After all, the education is designed so that even those with the most difficult starting point should be able to complete it. There must be limits to what we as lecturers must do, because the nicer we are, the nicer we must continue to be - it's always up to us. And we have enough problems to deal with as it is, problems with students, conflicts with colleagues or administration, problems with formalities. There is always some problem on the site. And we should clarify the feelings around this, ventilate, because how does it really feel to be a lecturer without students showing up or getting involved? If the few who come sit completely dull in the face, it hardly matters whether they are there or not.

Professor 2: Yes, but there is also a problem here between kind and strict lecturer. If you are kind, you will get more emails and requests, and if you are strict, more students will withdraw. But we can't go on like this - a lecturer needs students and vice versa.

Moderator: I don't think we can reach an agreement here today, it's too complex, and an individual case. And time has passed us by.

Here we see several similarities to the values of the Chalk Goblin. Considering how they talk about being a lecturer. Where they seek engagement, commitment, and dialogue from the

students. As something they need to function as a lecturer at their best. However, the thread of the meeting was how this contact only becomes more demanding to achieve. As students neither seem to be interested in getting involved, nor in participating at all. Behaviours one could recognize through the *normed ideal students* and their agency (Giddens 1984) within technical means.

Desperately trying to facilitate how to get an engagement, or a good lecture at all. The lecturers reflects both how the relationship has changed, and how the traditional lecture room have changed, in the way the acknowledges *the room of silence* and how the students seem to have detach themselves from the lecturer to a greater extent.

This is where management mentality (Røyrvik 2018) comes in, where in its ripple effects it creates new forms of subjectivity and sociality. In relation to the fact that the lecturer-student relationship seems to have changed form and meaning in the technological shift. As a result of how the students have alienated (Marx 1988) themselves from the development of knowledge, where the lecturer as a technical means only function is to provide the goods, the lecturers ability to accommodate the students' needs is the only thing, that the students see as valuable (Marx 2021) and not the developing self. That changes the dynamics of the lecture-student relationship. As the function of the relation has changed as a result of the measurement management, where the room of silence has been constructed as a substitute - the new normal.

A temporal space where the students get to harvest their resources through the lecturers' skills - on the way to obtaining their own degree. Where the lecturer's function is not to develop students, but to provide access to, objectifiable and quantifiable knowledge, which can later be validated in the exam, and towards a degree and the future goal: obtaining a job.

Where the change in dynamics can be thought through Røyrvik's (2018, 47) description of Pierre Bourdieu's (1998) claim that neoliberalism, in essence, is a program for the methodical destruction of the collective. In relation to how the measurement system aims to question all collective structures that can act as resistance in the logic of the free market (Røyrvik 2018, 47).

In that sense *the room of silence* as the new normal, could be seen to have become what Olsen (2020) refers to, an *effective ritual* that the lecturers and students collaborate to keep alive. Where the students through the study manual (the Bible) and the syllabus (the Gospels) are transformed into the graduates that the organization wants. Where the ritual lecture arrangement acts as the mastery over content under credentials (1st university), affecting

student's actions in form of silence and preferences, towards a mentality whereby the *Chalk Goblin* with a more complected lecturing format is viewed as an attack on the entire ritual (Olsen 2020, 4). A technical space, where symbolic values have dissolved, and all that matters is the apparently neutral monetary value. Which destroys old, and constructs new forms of sociality (Røyrvik, 2018, 46). Shaped through the commodification and fetishization of things and relationships (Marx 2021:1988).

The room of silence: a vulnerability in academia

NTNU states that knowledge … *"inspires and challenges. It changes attitudes, mindsets, and how we perceive the world around us* (NTNU, social mission, 2023).

With an aim to observe the lecturer's and student's relationship and their experiences with interaction, communication, and engagement within the lecturing room. I was not prepared for the extent to which that statement would be turned on its head. As my empirical findings in one way or another argue something like: "Exams and credentials inspires and challenges. It changes attitudes, mindsets and how we perceive education through what is around us".

Entering the lecturing room, I was met by a silence. An inconvenience at the time, as it characterized the lectures in a way that it prevented me from producing data. However, in conversations with the research participants, the silence as a phenomenon turned out to be filled with symbolic meanings that emerged through the students' own expressions of actions, focus and strategies. That turned out to be the very puzzle I had to solve. The silence, in this sense, was an accidental positive discovery, in the search for something else. It was my serendipity (Fine & Deegan 1996) (Fabietti 2012).

By tracing the silence (Dragojlovic & Samuels 2021, 417) through exploring my informant's stories and experiences of what it means to be a *lecturer* and a *student* in contemporary higher education. *The room of silence* was to be constructed, characterized by objectification, measurement, and standardization as social practice (Larsen & Røyrvik 2018). In comparison to NTNU's own vision of «Knowledge for a better world» operationalized through their values of *critical*, *creative*, *constructive,* and *respectful* development of knowledge (NTNU, vision, 2023). My empirical findings point to an understanding of a development of higher education at NTNU, that portrays a disruption to the organization's own values. As the *room of silence* portrayed a developmental shift, from creative knowledge to technical knowledge of production.

As the silence portrayed an *agency* (Giddens 1984) - a search for status good. In an intersection between individual action and structural conditions (Giddens 1984) education seem to have become a technical means that emerged in a market logic (Marx 2021), where as a consequence of the changes in the organization and its forms of management (Røyrvik 2018) Student's alienates (Marx & Engels 1988) themselves from knowledge and developing self. That changes the dynamics of the lecture-student relation in its form of sociality (Røyrvik 2018). In a way

that the lecturer's function is not longer to develop students, but to provide access to, objectifiable and quantifiable knowledge, which can later be validated in the exam, and towards a degree and the future goal: obtaining a job.

This creates a vulnerability in academia: because empirical findings indicate that the lecturing room as a means of   developing process of knowledge and the self, have been lost. As the freedom of thought, and willingness to engage in own learning, has been conquered, by the reason of dominion – *credentialism*.

Conclusion

My empirical findings show that a qualification framework (Stalheim 2022) that follows from an innovation utopia (Sørensen 2019) largely affects the students, in the form of an exam focus and a seeking quest for good results. Using *the room of silence* and their relationship with the lecturer as a means to achieve this, my informants express a commodification of education (Marx 2015) alienated (Marx & Engels 1988) from words such as creative, self-reflection, critical and respect. Pushing education as a concept towards something productional rather than developmental, the concept of what it means to be a lecturer and a student in modern contemporary higher education, seem to be a technical thing. Raising the issue of whether NTNU as an educational organization can live up to the academic culture they describe, I questioned: Have education, teaching, development, and communication just disappeared as concepts within the shadows of structures and innovation – as something forgotten? My answer to this would be, yes.

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