

Travel report Sten A Olsson Foundation Scholarship 2020

First of all, I want to take the opportunity and thank the foundation for granting me the scholarship. I am very grateful for this unique opportunity.

In the beginning of March 2020, I flew to California, USA for three weeks to collect qualitative data for my master thesis. My master thesis is about university-industry collaboration and its effects on innovative thinking among students. This topic is very relevant to investigate. On the one hand, one can observe the industry's need to innovate in order to stay competitive and their increasing interest in external sources of innovation to do so. On the other hand, there are students that feel that they do not collaborate with companies enough and lack practical experience. Research about this topic the understanding of the value that the involvement of students in UIC could create and how the innovative capacity of students could complement co-innovation processes in the future. To get a more universal overview of university-industry collaboration, interviews were not only conducted in Sweden, but also in California, which is known for its innovative companies and universities. The scholarship allowed me to conduct interviews at the University of California, Irvine (UCI) and in San Francisco to get a deeper understanding of how university and industry work together in California and investigate if that has an influence of the innovative thinking of students. The University of Irvine, California is not only located at the very center of Orange County's technological hub, but they also have some interesting approaches to facilitate university-industry collaboration. For example, they have a Research Park and an Applied Innovation program. The University of Irvine, California is known for fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit and I was curious to investigate if all this influences the students' innovative thinking.

I got the opportunity to talk to two very interesting people in San Francisco. Bill O'Connor has his own innovation agency and has worked with several large companies in Silicon Valley and has close ties to Stanford University and Berkeley. Furthermore, I talked to Kyle Seyler, who works for Autodesk in the Bay Area. After that, I went to Irvine to collect data at the University of California, Irvine. I had the possibility to talk to several representatives of the initiative UCI Beall Applied Innovation, which offers different programs to connect their students with Orange County's business community and encourage and support them to found their own start up. The interviews were very interesting, and I was able to collect valuable data about how university-industry collaboration works in California and what effect it

has on students' innovative thinking. Furthermore, it became clear that it differs to the collaboration in Sweden.

Unfortunately, after I arrived the COVID 19 situation in the USA deteriorated and it was difficult to get access to interview partners. Luckily, I was already able to set up some interviews before I went to the USA and I was able to conduct the interviews virtually. I still got very interesting insights, but it was not possible to visit the UCI campus and the facilities dedicated to bringing students and industry together, because the UCI campus was closed. In the end, I had to end my trip earlier than planned due to flight cancellations. Nevertheless, my time in California was a great experience and very valuable for my master thesis.

The best part of going to California was to experience this a culture of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. Especially, the interview with Bill O'Connor was very impressive, because he is known around the world for his lectures about the "innovation genome" and he has worked with companies like Google and Apple before. I was very honored that the scholarship allowed me to connect with him. In addition, the scholarship has made it possible for me to get a broader understanding of university-industry collaboration across counties and to get to know the famous California innovation culture.

