

4. Interdependence, knowledge and cooperation in cross-border cooperation in the North

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on two scholarly discussions defining the organizational theory of the scholarly community, which are the projectification of society and open innovation in publicly funded programmes (West et al., 2006; Perkmann & Walsh, 2007; Chesbrough, 2019; Mu & Wang, 2022). Discussion on the projectification of society emphasizes effects with positive implications for knowledge production and innovativeness. However, the ad-hoc character of project organizations is seen to limit the formation of connections in different fields (Henning & Wald, 2019).

Projectification and open innovations are examined in this chapter from a regional development perspective, and projectification is the starting point for the formation of the organization and its functions. In a case presented in this chapter, the financial instruments of regional development determine the basis for the implementation of innovations, and projectification is a way to support regional development in society. In regional development, the aim is to support the positive development of a certain region with various measures, taking into account processes such as a process transaction and the appropriation of knowledge (Audrechts & Belitski, 2023).

The funding authorities of regional development and the European Union's cross-border cooperation programme Interreg Nord are no exception, accepting project plans, supporting regional development, considering and weighing the mutual weight and importance of the applications, and finally choosing the projects they want to finance in their best opinion. The interest of public funding programmes is to examine the effectiveness of the projects, not so much the way in which the projects are organized. Funding programmes based on the European Union's soft methods do not lead to a certain way of organization

or a perception of efficiency, but rather to the construction of open innovation-producing cooperation and wider ecosystems. Of course, national practices lead to standardized ways of building publicly funded projects, and for example, in the data of this chapter, Norwegian projects are widely followed ('The Norwegian State Project Model'). The task of such a model is to secure the transparency of results and innovations, and it can show the importance of projects in a wider societal impact (Ingason et al., 2022; Hutter et al., 2017).

The data consist of the rejected abstracts of project applications. This is a uniform data and their content describes the projects in a comparable mode. This is sufficient and comprehensive data for the purposes of this chapter.

Next, we will examine the conceptual framework of the chapter with the concepts of open innovation and projectification. After this, we will describe the Interreg Nord programme and related research data, analyse the data, and make contributions to scholarly discussion.

ASPECTS OF PROJECTS

Regional development policy supports positive development of a certain area and examines the economic, social, and societal differences of the regions, enhancing political stability, economic development, poverty reduction, and social differentiation (Diakoniuk & Chihaiia, 2021). In addition, it supports actions that create new resources and opportunities for regions and aims to create fertile conditions for local and regional actors in order to work to develop their own future (Sotarauta & Beer, 2020).

The Interreg Nord requires the identification of different temporal priorities for regional development and observes regional development as economic and social development in the region. The first driving force of regional economic development has been technological product and process innovations, which have brought new companies with jobs, markets, capital, and technologies to the regions. Municipalities and local authorities have created the conditions for companies to move to their area. The vitality of companies has crucially depended on their ability to develop their products so that they succeed in the market. This period has been dominant since the mid-1900s (Halal, 1986).

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact time, the second phase of development in the economy of the regions began at the latest in the 1980s. This period included a transition from technological innovations to service innovations, including public services. The dominance of service innovations is evident, and there are consequences of qualitative change also in industrial production. This trend has changed the supply-based earning logic to demand-based earning. Producers' understanding of customers' needs is key knowledge affecting the system characteristics of standardization, specialization,

centralization, maximization, and compatibility (Masuda, 1990; Horovitz, 2004; see also Sotarauta et al., 2023).

In this chapter, symbiotic relationships between people, information networks, digitalization, and resource allocation are essential. Industry, as well as private and public services based on open innovation, indicates independent and spontaneous development and a reduction in the need for centralized governance, control, regulation, and development. Also, the border fences between regions, which used to be important, will lose their meaning, and the regions have the possibility to become borderless. In some cases, traditional hierarchical concentrations of power are losing their meaning. The process has already begun, although it is difficult to identify exactly yet (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

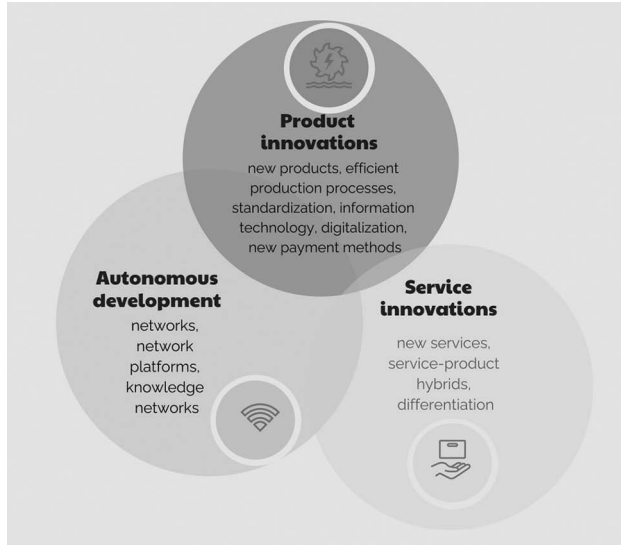
Innovations shape society in at least two ways. The first of these concerns specific innovations, such as cars, telephones, computers, wind power, batteries, etc. They focus on the organizations that develop them. They are also of interest to the public authorities, whose task is to shape the soil for their promotion. This is exactly what many consider the core of the innovation problem. However, there is another view, possibly even more important than the product-based view of innovation, which can be called the transition process. It is a process that moves society from product innovations to service innovations and from service innovations to autonomous development (Schaeffer & Sovie, 2019, p. 29).

Many entities spontaneously have a feature to shape the transition process. It is all about challenging established views, questioning, and suggesting alternative perceptions of reality. Applying for project funding illustrates this multifaceted and difficult-to-conceptualize process.

Many actors apply for project funding independently or in dialogue within consortiums. In a project-funding organization, many individual actors are involved in deciding whether to accept or reject applications. Once project funding has been granted and the project is launched, new actors will enter the picture. Similarly, often some rejected applicants will continue to develop their ideas in order to get a second chance.

When the transition process described above is analysed, it is discovered that it follows the logic of open innovation. It draws in everyone who is willing and allows them to act the way they want. Each actor has goals, which they promote and which, upon closer examination, may conflict with other partners' goals. However, in the transition process, these tensions should not be used to choose the better resistances, but to give everyone time to demonstrate their needs. Figure 4.1 illustrates this process.

The boundaries between private and public organizations will be lowered as actors form networks with strong international competition. Autonomous development is unpredictable in its effects and alters, for example, the functions and regulatory responsibilities of public authorities. Regional development



Source: Designed by authors and influenced by Schaeffer and Sovie (2019).

Figure 4.1 Product innovations, service innovations, and autonomous development

becomes limitless, and all this impacts on human intellectual and mental development.

Based on the above, barriers to innovation begin to be clearer, and that innovation is opened to those who are willing. Open innovation restores customer experiences, iterative development processes, design, and data analytics to the discourse. In addition to these, open innovation requires faster decision-making and lower organizational hierarchies.

Regarding applications for project funding, and in particular rejected applications, it might be useful to analyse them from the perspective of the extent to which they contribute to the transition processes and to identify what kind of processes have led to rejection, and how the applications take into account the dynamics of open innovation.

Innovations, like societal development in general, are increasingly supported through projects. Indeed, the ‘projectification’ of society is one of the phenomena of the twenty-first century (Jensen et al., 2016; Kuokkanen et al., 2022). In today’s societies, the importance of diverse, temporary activities has increased, and the related forms of organization, such as projects and programmes, have correspondingly grown. The trend has reached many sectors and regions, such

as companies, associations, and public organizations (Godenhjelm et al., 2015; Jensen et al., 2016; Kuura, 2011) and the activities they carry out, involving, for instance, regional development.

A project is a specific, temporary task with a certain uniqueness, in contrast to a recurring, continuous, or cyclical task or set of operations (Maylor et al., 2006; see also Nesheim, 2019). It is a temporal organization where the actors form a functional entity during the project period. In a project, it is essential to focus on the future, and the project can be seen as a ‘throw towards the future’ (Jensen et al., 2016).

The projectification was initially identified and defined at the organizational level by Christopher Midler (1995). Later, the observation was extended ‘upwards’ to the social level and ‘downwards’ to the personal level (Kuura, 2011).

BOX 4.1 LEVELS OF PROJECTIFICATION

Societal projectification is a change in governance structures in order to increase the primacy of the processes of projects in society as a whole.

Organizational projectification is a change in organizational and governance structures in order to increase the primacy of the processes of projects in a central organization and its supply networks.

Personal projectification is a change in a person’s work relations and/or private life in order to increase the primacy of participation in projects.

Source: Maylor et al. (2006); Kuura (2011).

Societal projectification forms a large entity, of which organizational projectification is a part, and the cross-cutting theme is personal projectification (Kuura, 2011). Societal projectification can be seen as the projectification of governance and policy, organizational projectification as the projectification of organizational governance structure, financing, and innovation, and personal projectification as the projectification of time, space, occupations, and understanding about project-like work (Jacobsen, 2022).

As part of societal projectification, temporal projects are used in implementing various public policies affecting society, such as environmental or regional policy. Several factors are behind this, including the influence of the EU on regional policy in particular (Büttner, 2019; Kuokkanen et al., 2022; Sotarauta & Beer, 2020). EU policies are implemented on a project basis and, since the 1980s, project funding has become an important instrument for transferring EU regional policy and regional development policies to the regions. Projects

must align with the objectives and practices of EU programmes (Büttner, 2019).

However, the projects as a form of activity have also brought up the views of local actors on what kind of issues should be supported by project funding. This is reflected, among other things, in the fact that projects are planned and implemented by regional and local public, private, and third-sector organizations such as companies, associations, research institutions and private researchers, educational organizations and regional development actors (Büttner, 2019). For example, in EU projects, the ‘empowerment’ of various stakeholders and the local residents is one of the stated objectives of the projects (Kuokkanen et al., 2022; see also Kuokkanen, 2016). This place-based regional development, which is based on local views, needs, and resources (Barca, 2009), has been seen as mainstream in the EU’s cohesion policy today (Eskelinen, 2016), which also includes EU cross-border cooperation. Here, the implementation of regional development on a project basis is one instrument, but within the framework of the programmes’ objectives and operating models.

One way to support regional development based on societal projectification is to support organizational projectification. The aim of organizational projectification is to implement projects related to organizational structure, funding, innovation, organizational management, and other organizational activities (Jacobsen, 2022; Kuura, 2011) in order to support the positive development of the region. In this case, projects aiming at organizational changes aim to develop not only the organization and the issues affecting its operations but also the surrounding society.

THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME INTERREG NORD AND ITS PROJECTS AS A MECHANISM FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The notations of regional development are socially determined by specific interests and social groups at a particular place and time, as well are the tools for supporting it. Institutions play a significant role in this, and they are involved in defining and supporting regional development in various ways, such as diagnosing local development conditions and issues, leading actors in the selection of development priorities, formulating development strategies appropriate to local and regional conditions, producing, combining, and matching resources and investments, and evaluating the impact of interventions (Pike et al., 2014; 2017).

One of the institutions which seeks to influence regional development is the European Union. In its cohesion policy based on regional development (Piattoni & Polverari, 2016), the toolbox includes inter alia cross-border cooperation, Interreg A, which supports cooperation between regions in at least

two different Member States located directly at the border or adjacent to it. In cross-border cooperation, efforts are made to address differences in development between regions by seeking and exploiting the development potential that is currently hidden and by enhancing cooperation processes (European Commission, n.d.). EU cross-border cooperation also aims to strengthen cohesion between regions and support the development of the EU as a whole, reducing the delimiting impact of national borders, which can be an obstacle to the optimal use of resources for regional development. Indeed, the general principle of EU border cooperation is that state borders should not be an obstacle to the balanced development of Europe (Piipponen, 2003). Regional development in the EU is implemented through multi-annual programmes, consisting of thematically coordinated development projects (Mäkinen, 1999).

In Finland, Sweden, and Norway, cross-border interaction and cooperation have always been active, and when Finland and Sweden joined the EU in 1995, the membership enabled a new kind of instrument for cross-border cooperation, along with regional development based on it. During the last completed programming period, the fifth (2014–2020), and the fourth programming period before that (2007–2013), one of the EU cross-border cooperation programmes in the northern parts of Finland, Sweden, and Norway was Interreg Nord, which had already been running during the third programming period (2000–2006), but with a partly different programming area, including regions also in Russia.

The study examines the fifth programming period (2014–2020) of the Interreg Nord programme, which consisted of two sub-areas, Nord and Sápmi, with a large programming region covering approximately the northern half of these countries (Borderless Opportunities, n.d.). There are Arctic features in the region, reflecting, for instance, on climate and environmental characteristics. It is mostly a sparsely populated region with a few larger cities, and there is also the home region of the Sápmi people, the only indigenous people in the EU.

During the fifth period, the programme sought to support the development of the region by strengthening the competitiveness and attractiveness of the programme area by supporting research, technological development, and innovation, improving the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, and promoting the protection of the environment and the sustainable use of resources, as well as employment and labour mobility. The total budget of the programme for the period was EUR 111.94 million, including EU and national counterpart funding (County Administrative Board of Norrbotten & County Administrative Board of Västerbotten, 2022).

In Interreg Nord, 118 projects were funded under the programme during the fifth programming period (Interreg Nord). In addition, 68 of the project applications were withdrawn during the application process, and 103 applications

received a negative funding decision. Some rejected applications were edited and resubmitted by the applicants, perhaps several times, and, in subsequent rounds, they may have received funding.

The primary research material for this study includes abstracts of project applications that did not receive funding from the Interreg Nord during the fifth programming period. However, the abstracts of rejected funding applications that were later accepted under the same project name during the programming period have been excluded, as well as earlier versions of rejected proposals under the same name. In the research data, there were 84 abstracts.

The key actor for the Interreg funding is the paying authority's role. It is responsible for implementing the programme built into policies based on EU regulation and national legislation, as well as making decisions on project funding. The regulation emphasizes the cooperative role of the paying authority, both in the regions implementing the programme and between the countries. It is an operating model based on the European Union's governance and decision-making that safeguards national interests. Operational programmes and their implementation can thus be interpreted as the coordination of European cooperation structures and the national management systems, in which national decision-making and programme emphases are limited to the allocation of the European Commission's control funding (Büttner, 2019).

In the case of Interreg Nord, the funding authority is the County Administrative Board of Norrbotten, and in the case of Norwegian Interreg support, it is Troms And Finnmark County Municipality. In Finland, the actor is the Regional Council of Lapland, which, however, does not manage the policies in its role as the paying authority. The system is more rational in nature than hierarchical, and actors from funding applicants to the European Commission have ways to ensure autonomy in different roles. The regional funding instruments are connected to the European Union's programmes, though not unequivocally connected to European policies. The system is built on ensuring procedural rationality in relation to the funding process itself, and applicants can, for example, realize their objectives by attaching them to the themes and treatment of the policies (Schwarz et al., 2022).

The applications that have just been rejected may indicate the themes on which regional development will be built and approved, respectively, and in which themes regional development will be carried out. In the recently rejected applications, the 'different types of diversity' are more clearly visible in that the funding authority's guidance has not modified the application or the consortium implementing it (Banal-Estañol et al., 2019).

The Interreg Nord governance structure can be viewed through the concepts in the framework of this chapter as an interpretation of funding decisions promoting either product innovation, service innovation, or autonomous development. This breakdown highlights intrinsic and external factors in project

applications, making it possible to verify the implementation of policies on the applications and the self-interest of the applicants in the implementation of regional development.

PROJECT DOMINANCES AND INTERESTS

The analysis of data contains the definition of service innovations, which may target, for example, the formation of collaborative platforms. This is the way the paying authority has the opportunity to influence the composition of the formed consortia. It is also possible to guide the formation of operating conditions through the construction of markets or through the constructive projects of new technology, such as the introduction of artificial intelligence or the related ecosystems. The more complex the formed consortia are and the more they differ from the practices of project-funding applicants, the more difficult it is to create a conducive strategy, such as corporate co-working spaces or abductive research strategies for a service-oriented approach to innovation ecosystems (Aumüller-Wagner & Baka, 2023).

Projects supporting autonomous development may focus on, for example, strengthening the capacity of project promoters or the position of applicants in their operating environment. In the applications, these were represented by strengthening the position of small businesses in growing markets, strengthening multiculturalism, and developing new operating models across the fields of industry or public sectors. These allow applicants to renew their understanding of the operating environment or redefine their role in the current regional development operating environment (Johnson et al., 2022).

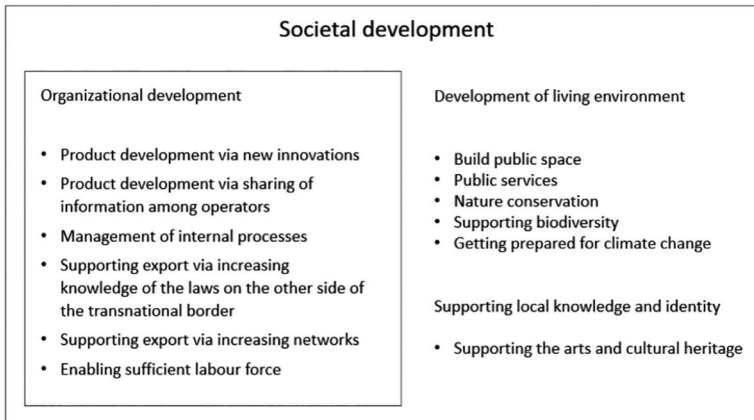
On the basis of the above, two of the dominant product innovations and service innovations emphasize the importance of paying attention to authorities' guidance, while autonomous development emphasizes the interest of the applicant. For projects, this means the essential role of the financial authority in developing publicly funded product and service innovations. In regional development programmes, the autonomous development of applicants is not the primary goal, but it is recognized because applicants have the initiative in determining the themes and content of projects applied in the policy area. In principle, it can be assumed that the funding authority as an applicant will reduce the autonomy of the applicant groups attached to the system. However, this does not mean that policy objectives cannot be realized in an expert organization operating as a paying authority.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT BASED ON PROJECTS

As mentioned above, projects play an essential role in supporting regional development, and projectification is an important part of the development. Themes based on societal projectification and, as part of it, organizational projectification (Kuura, 2011) were evident also in the research data. On the contrary, there were no themes among the rejected applications related to personal projectification (Kuura, 2011), so it was excluded from the analysis.

The unfunded projects sought to support the development of the region in several ways by developing the organizations and their operating conditions, as well as the society of the region in general (Figure 4.2). Most of the unfunded applications focused on product development. The development of new innovations, but also new ways to use existing products, was sought, especially by means of technological research. This was targeted especially towards the needs of businesses. In addition, ways for better management of the environmental impacts of production were examined.

The products being developed were often ones that could be utilized locally, for example, in the social and health sector. That way, they aimed to support not only product development in organizations but also the development of the



Source: Author's own.

Figure 4.2 Themes of regional development in the unfunded project applications of the Interreg Nord programme during 2014–2020

local living environment. Some developed products were based on endogenous resources and conditions such as natural resources and climatic conditions, being in that sense place-based. In addition, some product development was targeted at industries existing in the region, or in industries that do not exist in the region but are desired there. In product development, attention was paid not only to the development of a particular product, but also to the sharing of development-related information between organizations and actors outside of organizations in order to combine development resources. Here, regional development is carried out according to the principles of open innovation, which were described above.

Networking was also supported in the promotion of export opportunities and to increase knowledge of legislation and regulations in neighbouring countries, in order to improve in taking the differences into account in product development. In addition, the aim was to support access to labour for the business sector by promoting the cross-border labour market.

In addition to developing organizations and their operations, the development of society in general was supported. As part of the development of the living environment, the aim was to develop the built environment as well as the availability of public services and sharing resources across borders in public services. There was also a desire to develop the local living environment by supporting environmental development, nature conservation and biodiversity, and the possibility for local residents to get prepared for climate change. In addition, support for art and cultural heritage in the area, as well as the related increase in knowledge and competence, were among the themes in the rejected project applications supporting local expertise and the joint identity of the area by means of communication, local heritage expertise, art, and cultural heritage support.

GETTING TOGETHER IN THE NORDIC COUNTRIES

In this chapter we have examined what kind of regional development tool the European Union's cross-border cooperation programme Interreg Nord has been in its last programming period (2014–2020), and what kind of regional development themes the projects preferred to propose when examining the unfunded project proposals.

The projects are, in principle, autonomous, representing the interests of the applicants and the consortia they form. They excel at the transition stage from the perspective of open innovation, where the formation of consortia has guided applicants to detach themselves from product and service concepts and to look at their operations from a broader consortium perspective. It can be said that this is a wise direction for paying authorities, which is of real importance for the renewal of regional service structures and the economy. For example,

if projects do not have enough partners, the paying authority can guide the development of broader consortia and approve funding in subsequent rounds. The paying authority certainly limits applicants' autonomous intervention in regional development but, at the same time, forms elements that emphasize the effectiveness of open innovation in the application process.

During the fifth programming period, unfunded Interreg Nord project applications highlighted the projectification of organizations, where the aim was to support regional development by supporting business activities and operating conditions through diverse projects. As a method in regional development, this may be justified, as companies provide jobs for the residents of the area and bring vitality to the area in many ways. In addition, the development of business life as project-like, temporal activities can enable companies to react to the changing operating environment quickly, and in a targeted manner if necessary.

In addition, regional development via societal projectification was also emphasized in the abstracts of rejected project applications related to the living conditions of local residents and their own history and culture. These kinds of projects can support residents living in the area now and in the future, as environmental conditions change. Additionally, for projects related to this theme, support for regional development as temporal projects may facilitate a rapid response to changes in the living environment. However, at the same time, it is worth asking whether temporal projects can meet the development needs of the region on a long-term basis, if necessary? Such a need would be, for example, climate change mitigation.

Among the rejected project application abstracts, there were no themes related to personalized projectification, and this may indicate that project planners have not submitted applications related to it. Interreg programmes are tools for regional development, and issues relevant to personalized projectification, such as projectified space, relations, and professions (Jacobsen, 2022) do not have such a distinct connection to the development of regions as societal and organizational projectification does. On the contrary, in cross-border cooperation, there might be, for example, national and cultural differences related to issues that are relevant to personal projectification. Having projects related, for example, to how to cope with these differences might have a positive impact also on regional development. However, during the programming period, personalized projectification may already exist among accepted Interreg Nord project applications, or there might be a more suitable financing tool for it.

Rejected projects included autonomous development projects as described in the framework of this chapter. This is because the networks do not meet the requirements of the application in terms of coverage of the funding call or because their added value may remain unclear. In cases where the function

of the network underlying the application is unclear, or if they do not produce added value, their success in project financing seems weak.

Examining the rejected project applications sheds light, from its part, on local prospects about what kind of activities local actors saw as relevant in decreasing the effects of border obstacles in the framework of the Interreg Nord programme. There are important cross-border activities included in the rejected applications, and the applications have been rejected for various reasons. The knowledge produced by the rejected projects would, when realized, bring new and relevant insights, which would enhance governments and industry's ability to develop innovations, cross-border cooperation, and the regional economy and employment more effectively.

When the funding authority rejects regional development applications, the consequence is a loss of several opportunities. A particular problem is the slowing down of innovations in the regional economy, in which case their novelty value remains unutilized and the creation of jobs slows down. The data for this chapter indicated that original ideas in proposals are fragmented with new application rounds towards the administrative and programmatic goals of the funding instrument. This increases applicants' chances of getting funding, but the absorptive capacity is realized as being weaker than the original idea (Müller et al., 2020).

EU cross-border cooperation aims to bridge disparities in development between regions and strengthen territorial cohesion. Within it, regional development policies are made in accordance with the principles of multi-level management so that the power to choose the directions of regional development is decentralized between entities, but remains within the framework of the programme (Tulppo & Grandi, 2024). Northern parts of Finland, Sweden, and Norway have resources to join, and they are used to cross-border interaction and cooperation, despite some border obstacles such as language differences. The Interreg programme offers a joint, familiar structure on every side of national borders for regional development in order to meet the joint development needs with shared resources.

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