

SERVICE TRANSFER FROM AN INTERMEDIARY ORGANISATION FROM THE USA TO THE NORDIC CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract:

Innovation ecosystems are considered vital worldwide, and several organisations have been established to catalyse regional innovation and growth. In 1985, the intermediary organisation CONNECT was founded in San Diego, California, USA. This organisation has been very successful in supporting local innovation, and many regions have tried to replicate its success. CONNECT's activities in San Diego have consistently generated strong results. However, there is little knowledge about the transferability of CONNECT to other international business contexts. Our case study bridges this gap by analysing the service transfer processes in the CONNECT network in two international contexts, Sweden and Norway. The study is based on experiences of service transfers in the Scandinavian context, CONNECT in Sweden and CONNECT in Norway. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews. The transfer of CONNECT services, including the services implemented in the case countries, is analysed and the lessons learnt are discussed.

Keywords: cross-border service transfer, intermediary organisation, business growth, CONNECT, Sweden, Norway, California

1. INTRODUCTION

Although research has acknowledged the importance of different types of networks for innovation, the concept of the business ecosystem is relatively new (Majava, Isoherranen & Kess, 2013). The role of regional innovation platforms can be considered a breeding ground for the emerging and growing business ecosystems in future innovations. This objective of this paper is to clarify the mechanisms of cross-border service transfer within the transnational networks of innovation that aims to support business growth and development in national/regional business environments or business ecosystems.

This study focuses on the CONNECT transnational innovation network. CONNECT was founded in 1985 and was originally a part of the University of California San Diego (Walshok, Shapiro & Owens, 2013). At that time, traditional industries were in decline and regional leaders were seeking economic renewal. Walshok & Shragge (2014) provided an extensive analysis of the establishment and early years of CONNECT. In the early 1980s, San Diego experienced a decline in its military sector, and traditional business development strategies no longer seemed effective. Thus, a formal support mechanism for start-ups was needed, and the University of California San Diego (UCSD) program in technology and entrepreneurship, later UCSD CONNECT, was established. It targeted establishing contacts, social networks, and services to support new businesses.

In their literature-based classification of transnational networks of innovation, Walshok, Shapiro & Owens (2014) defined CONNECT as a technology sector network. The key characteristics of organising this type of network are business motivation and self-organisation. Financed by membership fees, the network's purpose is market growth and improved profitability for the business community. The main metrics include the number of start-ups created and the increase in the number of business transactions. These key characteristics are distinct compared to identity-based social networks, government-led networks and civic and philanthropic networks. Self-organising networks, such as CONNECT, tend to be driven by local stakeholders, civic boosters, economic developers, and local businesses that have an interest in growing globally traded sectors to create regional wealth, jobs, and prosperity (Walshok et al., 2014).

Currently, the CONNECT organisation is primarily funded by industry, professional service providers, research institutions, and venture capital (VC) firms. Today, more than 600 life science companies operate in San Diego, and the organisation continues to catalyse the creation of innovative technology and products by linking innovators, investors, and entrepreneurs with the resources they require. To date, the organisation has assisted the development of more than 3,000 companies. Through global activities, CONNECT's concepts have been licensed in several continents and more than 20 countries. In this study, CONNECT refers to CONNECT in San Diego, whereas global CONNECT refers to international activities.

The Springboard mentoring program for start-ups can be considered CONNECT's key service (Majava, Leviakangas, Kinnunen, Kess & Foit, 2016). Springboard provides a learning process that involves many phases: application and pre-screening, an intake panel, a marketing panel, a finance panel, a dry-run panel, and a final panel. In the period from 2005 to 2013, over 370 companies were assisted by the Springboard program or were winners in the CONNECT capital competition. Moreover, in 2013, 100 CONNECT companies raised approximately 150 million dollars in funding (CONNECT, 2014a). In addition to Springboard, CONNECT offers many other valuable programs, such as Entrepreneurs-in-Residence and Most Innovative Product (CONNECT 2014b).

In San Diego, CONNECT activities have consistently generated strong results at the local level. However, little knowledge exists about the transferability of CONNECT to international business contexts. Therefore, this study analyses the results of the CONNECT transfer activities from the Swedish and Norwegian perspectives and compares the current service portfolio of CONNECT with the services of Nordic CONNECT organisations. The study also analyses the extent to which the services developed by CONNECT have been implemented in the Nordic context. The research aim and problem are expressed in the following research questions:

RQ1. What is the CONNECT service portfolio in the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems and what is the relation of this portfolio to the key services of the CONNECT in San Diego?

RQ2. Which services were transferred to and from the global CONNECT network in Scandinavian

business ecosystems and how were they transferred?

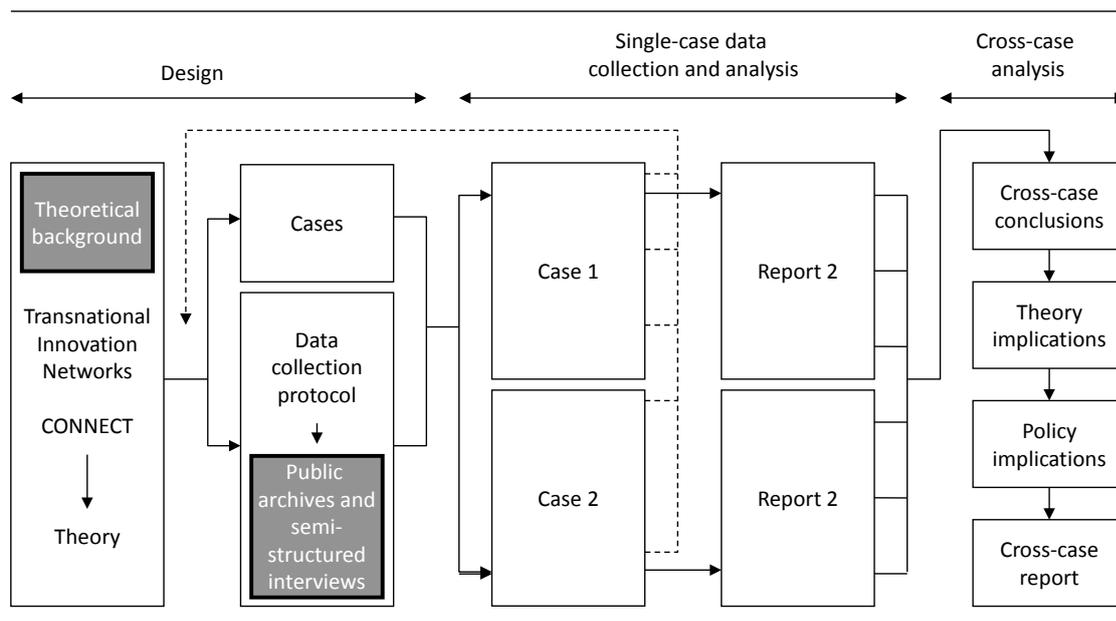
RQ3. Which services were developed in the local business ecosystems and how were they developed?

2. METHODOLOGY

This retrospective multiple case study uses a holistic research strategy (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007; Yin, 1989). According to Yin (1989, p. 23), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that: investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used”.

The research process of this study is presented in Picture 1:

Picture 1: Research process of this study



Source: modified from Yin, 1989.

Two national members of the CONNECT transnational network were analysed as cases using data collected from public archives and semi-structured interviews that were conducted during 2015. The informants were the CEOs of CONNECT networks. This case study follows Yin (1989). Each case was first analysed as a separate entity, and both were reported. Finally, a cross-case analysis was conducted.

Sweden was an early adopter of the CONNECT model and its services outside the USA. It was the first of the Nordic countries and the Baltic Sea region to adopt the model. Established in 1998, the Swedish CONNECT (hereafter CONNECT Sverige) is considered as an early adopter in this study, whereas the Norwegian CONNECT (hereafter CONNECT Norge), which was established in 2001, is considered a quick follower.

The data were collected in 2015 from semi-structured, in-depth interviews and public archives. The key persons in both networks, including the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige & the CEO of CONNECT Norr and the CEO of CONNECT Norge were interviewed. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. This study is part of research projects funded by The Council of the Oulu Region and TEKES, the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation.

3. CONNECT SERVICE TRANSFER IN NORDIC CONTEXT

3.1. Service transfer in CONNECT Sverige

CONNECT Sverige is a member of the international CONNECT network. CONNECT Sverige is a non-profit organisation that matches entrepreneurs with competencies and capital provided by trade and industry. It brings together companies and resources to build success in the Swedish economy. CONNECT's ambition is to stimulate the development of established-growth companies by bringing together entrepreneurs with the necessary technical, business development, and financial resources. The organisation seeks to facilitate the achievement of concrete and long-term results. CONNECT is used by entrepreneurs, partners, investors, and experts. The entrepreneur is provided with a relevant, objective, and professional trade and industry network. Partners are given the opportunity to contribute to regional growth, investors are able to engage with interesting companies and expand their networks, and experts are able to build their knowledge (Laufer, Svensson, Wennberg & Berglund, 2014).

Both Scandinavian CONNECTs analysed in this study followed a similar formula in becoming CONNECT members. A strong interest in the CONNECT model has existed at the national level, in addition to the space and time required to generate regional commitment through the bottom-up approach.

In Sweden, the central role was played by representatives of Riskkapitalföreningen (The Risk Capital Association) and Kungl. In 1996, representatives of these organisations visited San Diego, which sparked the interest in CONNECT's operation. A national survey was conducted to assess the potential need for a Swedish CONNECT. In January 1997, the survey results were presented and shortly thereafter the decision was made to start CONNECT in Sweden. Consequently, CONNECT Sverige was established in 1998.

CONNECT Sverige's first regional networks were CONNECT Western and CONNECT Skåne. These were subsequently followed by CONNECT Eastern Sweden, CONNECT Uppsala and CONNECT Northern Sweden. The first CONNECT service, Springboard, was implemented regionally in the Swedish ecosystem. The Swedish successes soon inspired neighbouring countries. Eventually, CONNECT was also formed in Norway, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia. CONNECT Sverige originated in the bottom-up logic developed in regional CONNECT organisations.

Local organisations were organised independently from the beginning, which might seem contradictory to the high-level commitment included in the decision process. However, since it was clear that a high level of commitment existed for implementing the CONNECT model in Swedish ecosystem, it generated space for regional CONNECTs to develop from the bottom up.

The idea of CONNECT Sverige has remained the same from the beginning, that is, to create a meeting place where entrepreneurs are brought together with competencies and capital. CONNECT also provides innovators and entrepreneurs with professional coaching. The operation is built on the voluntary contributions of individuals, businesses, and organisations. Experienced people from trade and industry, universities, and colleges participate and contribute their competencies.

CONNECT Sverige employs 35 persons, which makes it the largest CONNECT organisation in the Nordic countries and in the Baltic Sea region. It is an independent, mostly privately owned non-profit association. It is driven by the private sector and is a significant player in the Swedish business ecosystem. Today, CONNECT Sverige has six regional associations: Western Sweden, Skåne, Northern Sweden, Eastern Sweden, Uppsala, and South-Eastern Sweden. All regional networks are non-profit associations that are financed through partners and members. Each network has a board and managing director that run the regional operation.

CONNECT Sverige's key services

Connect Språngbrädan (Springboard) is a service licenced by CONNECT and the flagship service provided by CONNECT Sverige. The Springboard program is a unique and well-tested process that aims to increase the growth of companies. Springboard offers free access to a tailored panel of experts. The panel members have long-term experience in trade and industry, including the sources of growth capital, business and patent attorneys, market and management consultants, as well as leaders of successful entrepreneurial companies. Participants receive training in presenting a

business plan, and they are assisted in putting together offers in order to communicate effectively with market actors and financiers.

CONNECT FöretagsAcceleratorn® (Business Accelerator) is a business development process that is used jointly to work on strategic issues to optimise long-term results. The target is a well thought-out growth strategy that equips customer companies to meet growth challenges. The FöretagsAcceleratorn is a program for small- and medium-sized companies, which is designed for entrepreneurs with strong ambition and the ability to grow. The program provides entrepreneurs with new insights, knowledge, and a tailored network to enhance their development toward profitable growth. Unlike Språngbrädan, the Business Accelerator service was developed in Sweden and is owned by CONNECT Sverige.

CONNECT Sverige offers growth funding network services through CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (Business Angel Network), which matches growth companies with capital, competencies, and contacts. The network of 400 investors is spread across Sweden, and there is a strong desire to develop companies and their economic gain. CONNECT Sverige works actively to develop an investor network, which is found regionally, nationally and internationally. It provides Swedish growth companies with unique opportunities for financing, even from other countries. CONNECT is also active in the European Business Angel Network (EBAN).

The CONNECT Partner (Partner Services) provides services for the development of the partner network. A basic assumption of the service is that an engaged entrepreneurship provides Sweden with the conditions for growth. Being a CONNECT Partner means contributing to the development of Sweden's growth companies, trade, and industry. CONNECT offers the partners an opportunity to be associated actively for the development of companies and the creation of new jobs. CONNECT offers partners an arena where trade and industry, entrepreneurship, growth capital, and research meet. The arena is non-profit and aims to mould public opinion both nationally and internationally.

CONNECT's Mötesplatser generator (Generator of Events and Meetings) provides a test bed for new types of events and meetings across the country. In order to keep the networks up to date on the current issues surrounding entrepreneurship and the ways of doing business, various meeting places are organised with CONNECT Sverige's partners that have cutting-edge competencies in diverse areas.

CONNECT Sverige and service transfer

The global CONNECT network plays an important role in the Swedish context. The collaboration has been the most active with CONNECT San Diego, CONNECT Norway, CONNECT Denmark, CONNECT Estonia, CONNECT Latvia, and CONNECT UK. In Europe, the collaboration has focused on the CONNECT organisations in the Nordic countries and in the Baltic Sea region. The collaboration with CONNECT organisations in UK has been less intensive. Moreover, CONNECT Sverige has active collaborations with the Munich Network of Entrepreneurship and Innovation. This network was not "inspired by" CONNECT but is strongly linked to the global activities of CONNECT. Collaborations with other CONNECT members in USA, South America, the Middle East, and Asia have been limited to informal meetings in the Global CONNECT Summit.

Table 1: Service transfer from global CONNECT network to CONNECT Sverige

Service	Characteristics of the service transfer or development
S1. CONNECT Språngbrädan® (Springboard)	The first and foremost service implemented in Sweden. The CONNECT Springboard was licenced by California, and the original concept has not changed much. No major challenges existed in implementing the Springboard service in Sweden. The Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige stated: <i>"We have the culture of assisting each other; we want the area, the local area to grow, so we like to assist."</i> The biggest challenge has been the logic of financing the Springboard service, which is free of charge to companies in Sweden. The second notable challenge has been finding companies with right profile and characteristics in Northern Sweden's sparsely populated regions.
S2. CONNECT	The service was developed in Sweden and is owned by CONNECT

FöretagsAcceleratorn® (Business Accelerator)	Sverige. It was first developed by CONNECT West in Gothenburg and then implemented in other CONNECT organisations in Sweden and other countries.
S3. CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (Business Angel Network)	The service was developed by CONNECT Sverige for the Swedish market to meet a true market need. The Springboard companies requested this type of service, and CONNECT started to develop the service. CONNECT Sverige works actively to develop an investor network, which is found regionally, nationally and internationally. It provides Swedish growth companies with unique opportunities to financing. CONNECT is active in the development of European Business Angel Network (EBAN).
S4. CONNECT Partner (Partner Services)	The service can be considered a support service, and it has been run since CONNECT Sverige was established. Its development and implementation have taken place in Sweden. However, its original role model is CONNECT in San Diego, and the Springboard service would not be fully functional without these support services.
S5. CONNECT Mötesplatser (Generator of Events and Meetings)	The service can be considered a support service, and it has been run since CONNECT Sverige's establishment. The development and implementation have taken place in Sweden. However, its original role model is CONNECT in San Diego, and the Springboard service would not be fully functional without these support services.

First, regarding the service transfer from Sweden to other contexts, CONNECT Sverige has had an indirect but significant role in the licensing and transfer of Springboard services in Denmark, Norway, Estonia, and Latvia. Moreover, CONNECT Sverige has opened discussions with Finland and Russia. The licencing was carried out in each country directly by CONNECT in San Diego, which owns the trademark. Second, CONNECT Sverige's Business Accelerator service became a role model for the Business Accelerator service in Norway. Third, European Business Angel Network EBAN was first established in Sweden and later in Norway. Sweden had a major role in implementing this service and in providing a model for CONNECT Norge. Sweden collaborates actively with EBAN, as well as in the joint development of the Nordic Business Angel Network.

3.2. Service transfer in CONNECT Norge

Norway was a quick follower of CONNECT Sverige. In Norway, two CONNECT founders with a strong position in the national networks visited San Diego. They had already seen CONNECT in Sweden, Denmark, and San Diego. They took some company representatives with them the trip to San Diego. During the benchmarking process, an agreement was made with CONNECT to start activities in Norway.

CONNECT Norge was established as a foundation. Stiftelsen CONNECT Norge was established in 2001 with the first task of creating operational member-based networks in all Norwegian regions. The 14 founding organisations included the biggest universities, national business agencies, and associations. Each invested small seed funding, and they started a project to build regional networks. The regional offices were established in the period from 2001 to 2003. Since then, CONNECT Norge has built active and independent regional networks that work under the same umbrella to generate value for their regions and the national business ecosystem.

CONNECT Norge helps entrepreneurs who have unique business ideas that are scalable. The CEO of CONNECT Norge summarised its role in Norway as follows: "The purpose of all is taken from CONNECT as a non-profit entity to work together to try to build an arena to match both competence and capital equity with investors or entrepreneurs."

Today, CONNECT Norge has 18 employees, and it is present in all Norwegian counties. The organisation provides free assistance to entrepreneurs with certain technological and marketing potential. This is made possible through the support provided by members and sponsors. National cooperative partners are SIVA (industry development and innovation), Statoil Technology Invest (commercialising oil and gas technologies), Schibsted Growth (investing in exceptional digital companies), and Innovation Norway (assisting with start-up, company development, and internationalisation). The CONNECT network consists of five independent regional organisations: CONNECT Northern Norway (Nordland, Troms, and Finnmark), CONNECT Southern Norway (Aust-

Agder and Vest-Agder), CONNECT Trøndelag (Sør-Trøndelag and Nord-Trøndelag), CONNECT Western Norway (Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane and Møre og Romsdal) and CONNECT Eastern Norway (Østfold, Vestfold, Akershus, Oslo, Buskerud, Telemark, Oppland, and Hedmark).

CONNECT Norge's key services

CONNECT Springbrett® (Springboard) is CONNECT Norge's main product, and most of its other services are based on it. Springboard is a meeting arena where entrepreneurs receive feedback from an interdisciplinary panel. Thus, they are able to develop their business strategy, improve their business plan, and prepare the company for the meeting with investors and strategic partners. The panel is adjusted to suit the company's needs and consists of resource persons, such as lawyers, patent experts, investors, and people with knowledge about relevant markets.

CONNECT BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator) is a business development process that was developed for business to work jointly on the strategic issues necessary to optimise long-term results. The target is a well thought-out growth strategy that equips customer companies to meet growth challenges. The Business Accelerator program was developed to help small and medium-sized companies and entrepreneurs with strong ambition and the ability to grow. The goal is to add to the entrepreneur's strength by providing newly gained insights, knowledge, and a tailored network to enhance the continued development toward profitable growth.

CONNECT Tilvekstkapiital (Business Angel Network) is an important part of the service portfolio. CONNECT Norge works actively to develop a regional, national, and international investor network. It provides growth companies with unique opportunities for financing, even from other countries. The Norwegian CONNECT Business Angel Network takes advantage of Gust, which is the technical platform for Business Angel networks. Gust is a Software as a Service (SaaS) funding platform that provides all the tools entrepreneurs need to manage their start-up funding process from pitch to exit. Gust offers the same platform to Angel investors and Angel investor groups.

CONNECT Partnerforum® is a forum for oil and gas industries organised by agents from selected industries. In Norway, CONNECT Partnerforum has been organised annually for the oil and gas industry for several years. Many of the companies that have been presented have gained valuable contacts in the industry. These include potential suppliers, retailers, strategic partners, and investors.

In the CONNECT Investorforum® (regional and national investor forums), growth companies that have been through the Springboard program give presentations to investors and other relevant partners at the national and regional levels. These events provide meeting places for entrepreneurs and investors. The presentation of companies to investor environments is one of the services CONNECT provides for companies all over the country. Most of the member organisations organise regional investor forums. Some organise regional CONNECT investor forums regionally; others organise investor lunches or breakfasts.

CONNECT Norge offers two types of mentor programs as part of their services in collaboration with public sector. The Research Council owns the FORNY2020 program, which aims to increase value creation by obtaining research results from publicly funded research institutions and implementing them in the market. Innovation Norway CONNECT offers another mentor service by connecting general managers with experienced people in the industry and finding a suitable mentor for the company. Entrepreneurs with ambitions of long-term growth beyond the local market as well as entrepreneurs in the development phase or market introduction are in the target group.

CONNECT Pitch (training for pitching) is a service for start-ups. This service was established in the beginning, but it was formalised only recently. CONNECT Pitch trains entrepreneurs to make short business pitches to different interest groups (investors, industry, customers, etc.).

CONNECT Norge and service transfer

The global CONNECT network plays an important role in Norway. CONNECT Norge's CEO highlighted the importance of international collaboration. The collaboration has been most active with CONNECT in San Diego, CONNECT Sweden, CONNECT Denmark, CONNECT Estonia, CONNECT Latvia, and CONNECT UK. In Europe, the collaboration has focused on the CONNECT organisations

in the Nordic Countries and in the Baltic Sea region. In the UK, CONNECT Norge has collaborated recently with NISPCONNECT (<http://nispconnect.org/>). Moreover, CONNECT Norge and CONNECT Sverige have collaborated actively with the Munich Network of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, which was not “inspired by” CONNECT but is strongly linked to global CONNECT activities.

Table 2: Service transfer from the global CONNECT network to CONNECT Norge

Service	Characteristics of the service transfer and/or development
N1. CONNECT Springbrett® (Licenced version of Springboard)	The service was transferred from San Diego to Norway without any major adjustments. However, the small size of the local communities led to the network-based model where the local, regional, and national CONNECT services work together as a network. The CEO of CONNECT Norge stated, “...the network works in a good way. I can take a company to Bergen, I can take a company to Stockholm, and they could find the right people there.”
N2. CONNECT BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator)	The service was developed in Sweden and transferred to Norway. The service is more or less the same in both countries. The minor adjustments include translation as well as cultural and regional adjustments, especially in the northern Norway.
N3. CONNECT Tilvekstkapital (Business Angel Network)	The service is not clearly developed in one context. Both CONNECT Norway and Sweden have this version. The idea of connecting the Angels with start-ups is not new in CONNECT. However, the idea of building a bigger multilateral market in a structured Nordic way originated in CONNECT Norge. It is currently being developed further in the Scandinavian-Baltic context.
N4. CONNECT Partnerforum® (Forum for Oil and Gas Industries)	The service was developed in Norway using the principles of the Springboard model. This service has a strong link to the Norwegian oil and gas industry and specific characteristics of the Norwegian economy.
N5. CONNECT Investorforum® (Regional and National Investorforums)	The service was developed in Norway, but it was strongly inspired by CONNECT in San Diego and the Springboard model. CONNECT Norge has developed investor forums on regional level and national levels as meeting places for entrepreneurs and investors.
N6. CONNECT Mentor Programs (Mentor Programs)	The service was developed in Norway in co-operation with public service providers. However, the roots are in the CONNECT Springboard model. The services started with a request from Innovation Norway, which was piloting the mentor service. CONNECT joined because it already had formed a network of experienced business people with the right competences and strong networks ready to serve as mentors.

First, regarding the service transfer from Norway to other contexts, CONNECT Norge has had a significantly supportive role in the licensing and transfer of Springboard services in the Baltic Sea region although the licencing was carried out in each country directly by CONNECT in San Diego. Second, The Business Angel Network was first established In Sweden and then later in Norway. The CEO of CONNECT Norge stated, “If a new CONNECT appears somewhere, it's good for everybody.” Currently, CONNECT Norge plays a key role in building the Nordic Business Angel Network. Its aim is to develop a joint market that has enough critical mass to be competitive globally. Third, CONNECT Norge has been active in developing a structured model for the Business Angel Network. The idea of building a bigger multilateral market in a structured Nordic way originated in Norway. It is currently being developed further in the Scandinavian-Baltic context.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

CONNECT San Diego has been very successful in supporting innovation in Southern California. Many regions have tried to replicate CONNECT’s success, which has led to the development of transnational CONNECT innovation networks. This study aims to bridge the gap in the knowledge about the transferability of the intermediary services of CONNECT to other international business contexts. A case study research strategy was applied to clarify the CONNECT service transfer activities implemented in Nordic countries.

The research questions were answered in two phases in Section 3. The first research question was answered mainly in sections that include detailed descriptions of the key services. The second research question was answered in sections that describe the service transfer. The analysis conducted in this study showed that CONNECT, as a transnational network of innovation has a relatively loose structure. It encourages independent service development in different business ecosystems around the world under a joint umbrella. The flagship service, Springboard, was licenced to both Scandinavian networks examined in this case study. However, since licensing the Springboard model, both networks have developed their own portfolio of services “inspired by CONNECT” but developed independently for Scandinavian contexts. Many services have been developed in CONNECT in San Diego since the Springboard model was licenced to Sweden and Norway. However, these recent services have not been directly transferred to the Scandinavian context. Since licensing the Springboard model, the Scandinavian CONNECTs have co-developed many of their services in local collaboration, which has led to many similarities between the Scandinavian service portfolios. However, many important elements of the more recent services of CONNECT can be found in the service portfolios of both CONNECT Sweden and CONNECT Norway. The implementation of these elements has occurred mainly in Scandinavian-Baltic collaboration, which is clearly visible in the similarities of their service portfolios.

The transfer of the applicable elements was made possible by active communication with CONNECT in San Diego and relatively frequent visits to this city. Global CONNECT Summits, which are typically organised annually, form an important forum for the exchange of the experiences of different CONNECT organisations around the world. These services are being developed simultaneously in different parts of the world, and the service portfolios of national and regional networks under the umbrella of the global brand are based on the original Springboard model.

The construct validity of the study was based on a sound research plan, multiple sources of evidence, the synergy of the quantitative and qualitative data, and a clear chain of evidence. The generalisation of the results to a theory is possible. However, the findings of the study cannot be directly generalised to other countries or business contexts, and they depend on the time of the data collection. Reproducing the same case study in the same environment in a later period would affect the findings. However, case-study protocols were followed, and a database was established, which would allow for further testing of the findings.

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