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Healing the scars of history: projects, skills and field strategies in institutional entrepreneurship

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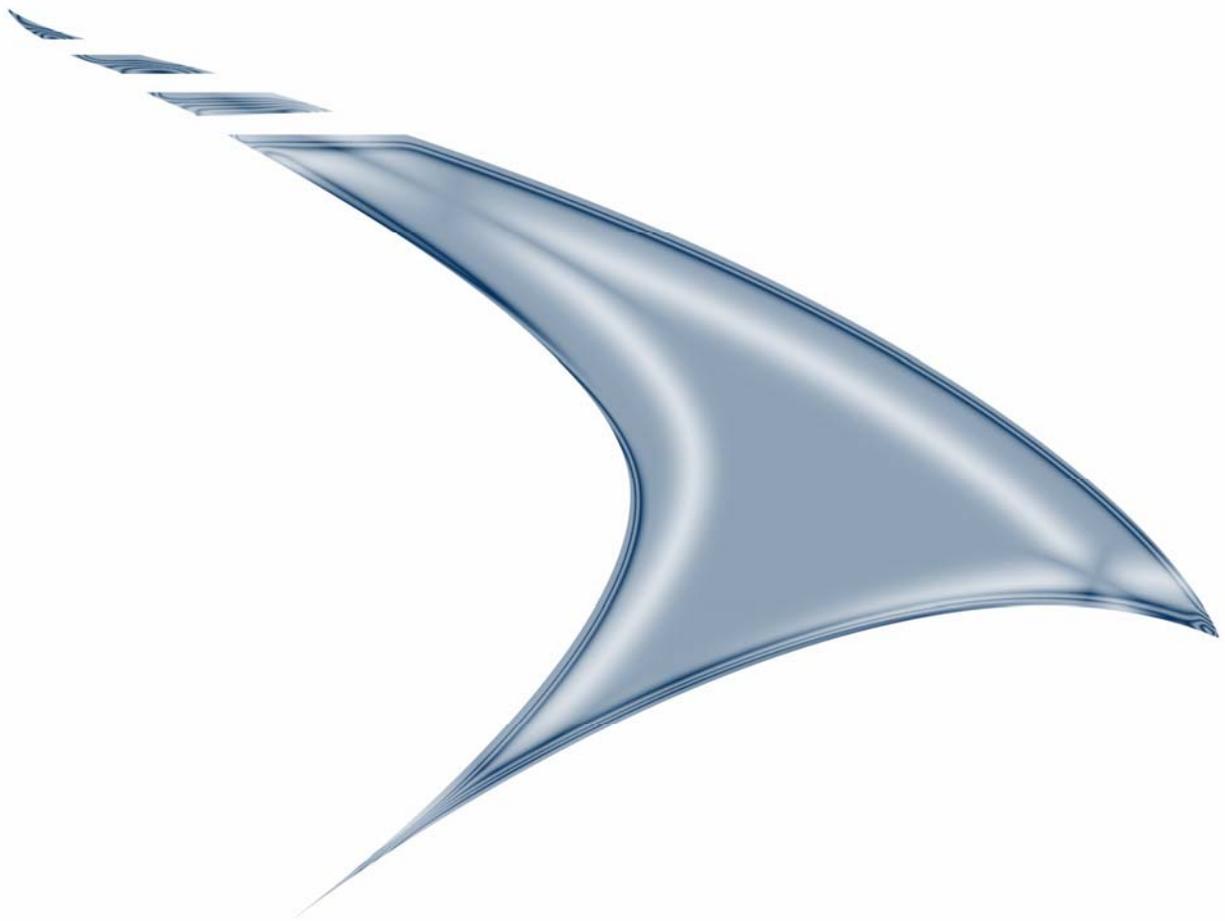
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***‘Healing the scars of history’: Projects,
skills and field strategies in institutional
entrepreneurship***



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‘Healing the scars of history’: Projects, skills and field strategies in institutional entrepreneurship

ABSTRACT

The article explores three dimensions of institutional entrepreneurship: the type of activity pursued by institutional entrepreneurs, their skills and their field strategies. Evidence is presented on the emergence of the ‘Euroregion’, an organizing template used by local authorities situated close to European borders for co-ordinating policies across borders. We trace the emergence and diffusion of the Euroregion template between 1950 and 2005 as the outcome of a process of institutional entrepreneurship. Based on the notion of projective agency, we identify three distinct types of projects institutional entrepreneurs are engaged in: interactional, technical and cultural projects. We also find that they deploy three types of skills relating to these project dimensions, i.e. political, analytical and cultural skills. Our evidence suggests a time pattern governing the process of institutional entrepreneurship, involving an initial focus on interactional projects, a subsequent focus on technical projects and a predominance of cultural projects in the latter (diffusion) stage. Furthermore, we find that institutional entrepreneurs are able to identify and pursue opportunities by switching their institution-building projects between different fields. Our analysis thus offers new insights into the multi-dimensional and time-bound nature of institutional entrepreneurship.

PREAMBLE

In the 1950s, a group of local authorities from both sides of the Dutch and German border decided to collaborate on a number of issues to improve their economic situation. Initially they campaigned on issues of local concern such as transport links. Over time, their collaboration was formalized and a permanent organization emerged. Their model was subsequently taken up by other authorities, and by 2005 there were more than seventy 'Euroregions' across Europe (figure 1).

Today, a Euroregion is an institutionalized organizing template for co-operation among contiguous local or regional authorities from neighbouring European countries. Euroregions co-ordinate local policies with border-crossing implications, from labour markets to spatial planning and transport. In the words of their propagators, Euroregions 'heal the scars of history' created by nation state borders dividing the European people.¹ How did this new type of organization diffuse? What does it tell us about institutional entrepreneurship? What might be the lessons for others seeking to diffuse an institutional innovation like the Euroregion?

INTRODUCTION

An organizing template like the Euroregion diffuses when it becomes a legitimate way of organizing within a particular industry or field (Aldrich and Fiol 1994). Recent work has examined the agency that drives the institutionalization

¹ Phrase attributed to Alfred Mozer, a European Commission director in the 1970s, and participant in the EUREGIO project.

of organizing templates (Suddaby and Greenwood 2005). One of the most interesting suggestions emerging from this literature is that institutions are produced by institutional entrepreneurs (Maguire et al. 2004; Rao 1998). However, there remains significant uncertainty about what institutional entrepreneurs actually do. Some authors focus on the work of institutional entrepreneurs as political brokers of coalitions (Garud et al. 2002), others see them as problem solvers who adjust institutional frameworks to achieve better performance (Crouch 2005), while still others focus on the creation of novel meaning and cultural framings of new institutions (Rao 1998).

In this paper, we aim to develop a synthetic view of institutional entrepreneurship by building on the concept of 'projective agency' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). Institutional entrepreneurs pursue future-oriented *projects* aimed at changing existing institutions. A project gives content and direction to the activities of those who drive institutional change. Importantly, the notion of projective agency allows us to consider various dimensions of what institutional entrepreneurs do, including brokering social interactions, elaborating models of institutional forms and creating cultural constructs.

Studying the inception and diffusion of the Euroregion model, we find that institutional entrepreneurs engage in each of these types of activities at different stages of institutional development. To this purpose, they deploy different sets of skills. Furthermore, they engage in 'field switching' to locate their projects in fields that are fluid, open to problem solutions and offer resources. One of the implications is that institutional entrepreneurship is not limited to critical junctures or crises but can stretch far into the diffusion stages of institutional

emergence. By tracing the process involved in establishing the Euroregion model, we challenge the neat line typically drawn between institutional stability and institutional change.

We first review existing research on institutional entrepreneurship, showing that there is little clarity about what exactly institutional entrepreneurs do. We query the literature as what types of projects institutional entrepreneurs pursue, the skills they deploy and their strategic engagement with their field environment. We then turn to our case study with these analytical dimensions in mind and focus on the time dimension of the process of institutional entrepreneurship. We conclude by outlining the implications for the institutional entrepreneurs' strategies, skills and modes of engagement with organizational fields.

[Insert Figure 1 about here](#)

INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AS PROJECTIVE AGENCY

Institutions are taken-for-granted 'cultured-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that ... provide stability and meaning to social life' (Scott, 2001: 48). The study of institutions has largely focused on how institutions exert ordering and stabilizing influence on social processes (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). A more recent body of work has explored how institutions change (Zucker 1977; DiMaggio 1988; Leblecici 1991; Ingram 1998; Colomy 1998; Dorado 2005). This has led to a reconsideration of the relationship between institutions and social agency and, in particular, of the role of specific agents in institutional

change. While some propose evolutionary or structurationist mechanisms of institutional change (Barley and Tolbert 1997; Seo and Creed 2002), others emphasize situational strategies pursued by rationally calculating agents (Blom-Hansen 1997). In this study, we focus on an intermediate concept, institutional entrepreneurship, that takes into account the strategic intent underlying institutional change without reducing it to a game situation between utility-maximizing actors.

'Institutional entrepreneurship' addresses the agency logic involved in institutional change (Eisenstadt 1980; DiMaggio 1988; Fligstein 1997; Rao 1998; Garud et al.; 2002; Dorado 2005). Institutional entrepreneurs are agents who intentionally and purposefully work towards changing existing or creating novel institutions. They act upon change opportunities like economic entrepreneurs react towards business opportunities (Crouch 2005; Beckert 1999). The concept has been used to explain how 'institutionalization is a product of the political efforts of actors to accomplish their ends ...' (DiMaggio 1988: 13).

The forward-looking nature of this entrepreneurial agency is aptly captured by Dorado (2005) as 'projective' agency. The concept is derived from Emirbayer and Mische's (1998) theory of agency that distinguishes between agency oriented to the past (iterative logic), the present (practical-evaluative logic) and the future (projective logic). Projectivity means 'the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action may be creatively reconfigured in relation to actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future' (ibid: 971). Entrepreneurs are by definition

actors oriented towards the future, and the projects they undertake provide the 'content' for change processes (Colomy 1998). They do this by 'address[ing] a vital problem or societal need' and propose a 'remedy', specifying the functions and goals to be fulfilled by the proposed alteration (Colomy 1998: 272).

In the following, we expand on these considerations by querying the extant literature on three central aspects of projective agency: (a) what exactly institutional entrepreneurs do; (b) what skills they deploy; and (c) the role of the field in which they operate.

Recent scholarship has addressed the issue of 'institutional work' (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006), but the literature remains divided as to exactly what projects institutional entrepreneurs are engaged in. Among the different emphases, we can distinguish three main types. The first is an *interactional* project. This means institutional entrepreneurs focus on enlisting other actors into their strategy of institutional change. They engage in coalition-building, bargaining and incentivizing other actors to gather support for their project, thereby mobilizing and leveraging resources for their operations (DiMaggio 1998, Dorado 2005). The emphasis on the interactional dimension is exemplified by Garud et al.'s (2002) study of technical standard building that highlights the precarious balance between the interests of the institutional entrepreneur and the interests of the standard setting collective.

The second type is a *technical* project. Institutions have instrumental-adaptive aspects in the sense that they contribute to solving certain problems, or have specific effects on wider social processes and actors (Friedland and Alford 1991). Institutional entrepreneurs creatively conceptualize the functions and

effects of prospective institutions. They engage in ‘theorization’ (Strang and Meyer 1993, Greenwood et al. 2002) by identifying ‘abstract categories and the formulation of patterned relationships such as chains of cause and effect’ (Strang and Meyer 1993: 492). This involves specifying the failures that the proposed institution will help to resolve and justifying the new model on this basis (Tolbert and Zucker 1996). Crouch’s characterization of institutional entrepreneurs as agents aiming at changing, adapting and re-combining the governance of institutions to solve problems is an example of this technical dimension (Crouch 2005).

The third kind of project is a *cultural* one. Institutional entrepreneurs develop frameworks that picture the issues an institution confronts in a way that appeals to wider constituencies. To do this, institutional entrepreneurs shape the *cultural framing* of specific issues (Rao 1998, Lounsbury et al 2003). Frames are cultural schema that justify an organizing template, and define the ‘grievances and interests of aggrieved constituencies, diagnose causes, assign blame, provide solutions, and enable collective attribution...’ (Rao 1998: 917). Framing creates links between institutions and deeply embedded popular discourses (Creed et al 2002, Lounsbury et al 2003). Rao’s (1998) case study of consumer watchdog organizations illustrates how the shaping of such frames can be a defining characteristic of institutional entrepreneurs’ actions. Similarly, Munir and Phillips (2005) assert that institutional entrepreneurship consists largely in the production of texts aimed at generating new concepts, objects and subject positions, as shown with the mass adoption of Kodak film cameras.

If institutional entrepreneurs engage in different kinds of projects, different kinds

of skills might be required. Fligstein (1997) identifies social skills as an essential characteristic of institutional entrepreneurs. He defines social skills as the ability to induce co-operation in others. This involves the use of diverse tactics, including the exertion of authority, agenda setting, framing, bricolage, bargaining and brokering. While some of these tactics deploy symbolic and discursive work, others appeal to rational utility considerations while yet others consist in brokering connections between actors. Fligstein offers a meta-concept of social skill from which several types of skills can be derived. For instance, in their study of technical standards, Garud et al. (2002) point to the importance of political skills for the maintenance of an institution, such as skills in networking, bargaining and interest mediation. Furthermore, as suggested by the economic literature on entrepreneurship, institutional entrepreneurs need to be able to perceive opportunities and imagine the workings and effects of counterfactual institutions (Shane and Venkataraman 2000). They take a reflective stance towards established practices and envision alternative modes of achieving their goals (Beckert 1999). This involves the use of analytical skills such as developing abstract models of an institution (Strang and Meyer, 1993). Moreover, institutional entrepreneurs require the skills to enlist wider audiences and constituencies into their strategies via framing and creating common identities (Ansell 1997). Generally speaking, skills are embodied in individuals but they can be collectively represented within specific organizations, departments, professions or communities of practice. For instance, we would expect that technocrats or analysts would have particularly reflective skills, while various symbolic managers such as public relations experts or politicians

would excel in cultural skills (Campbell 2004).

Finally, institutional entrepreneurship is shaped and constrained by its field context. Fields are sets of organizations that 'constitute an area of institutional life; key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products' (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 148-149). The degree of institutionalization of a field has been highlighted as a factor determining and delimiting institutional entrepreneurship (Fligstein 1996; Hensmans 2003; Maguire et al 2004). A field is highly institutionalized if it has a stable set of rules, norms and cognitive schemas that define usual and acceptable ways of operating. Such mature fields are often characterized by the presence of field-dominating organizations and a dominant set of templates (Greenwood et al. 2002). They offer fewer opportunities for change efforts than new, declining or crisis-ridden fields (Fligstein, 1996). Thus, both new and declining fields are likely to be populated by a number of competing 'challengers' who seek to undermine existing institutional orders and replace them with new orders (Hensmans 2003). In this situation, competing templates will proliferate (Seo and Creed 2002). Others have argued that institutional entrepreneurs are most likely to be successful when they are located at the intersection between different fields (Campbell, 2004). In these cases, institutional entrepreneurs may act as 'bricoleurs' by creatively bringing together various elements from two or more fields to create new institutions. This raises the question to what degree institutional entrepreneurs are effectively shaped and constrained by specific fields, and whether it is possible for institutional entrepreneurs to actually create opportunities for their change

projects.

As our discussion suggests, there are several unanswered questions in relation to the aspects of projective agency mentioned. Firstly, what is the relationship between the different types of projects that institutional entrepreneurs engaged in? Will the entrepreneurs actively pursue all project types simultaneously, or will they focus on specific types of activity at certain stages of institution-building? Secondly, while existing accounts provide us with some idea of the skills institutional entrepreneurs may need, it is unclear whether each of these skills are needed by all institutional entrepreneurs, at all points in time or only for specific types of projects, points in time or situations. Thirdly, how do institutional entrepreneurs relate to 'their' field? Does institutional entrepreneurship only flare up in young or declining fields? Alternatively, do they have degrees of freedom as to how they relate to fields? In the remainder of this paper, we empirically explore the aspects of institutional entrepreneurship raised in our theoretical discussion through the case of the Euroregions.

SITE AND METHOD

Site selection

In order to examine the dynamics of institutional entrepreneurship, we investigate the spread of one particular institution – the Euroregion. A Euroregion is an organizing template (Greenwood and Hinings 1996) for coordinating policies among contiguous local or regional authorities across national borders in Europe. Such organizations have also been referred to as

'cross-border regions' (Perkmann 2003). They typically focus on developing common regional infrastructure such as roads and bicycle paths, facilitating cultural events, promoting economic activity and lobbying central government. Also referred to as organizational forms (Rao et al.2000), the study of organizing templates is a major concern to organization theory as new templates can spur organizational change processes across fields. Widely practiced templates are institutions in the sense that they constitute entrenched and legitimate models for organizing specific activities (Rao 1998).

As our objective was to study the institutional entrepreneur driving the diffusion of the Euroregion template, at the outset we searched for the key actors behind this process. Information derived from interviews, accounts of the history of cross-border regions and the policy documentation led us to identify the EUREGIO, the oldest among these organizations, as the nodal point for institutional entrepreneurship in this instance. This choice was reinforced by the fact that EUREGIO was the driving force behind the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), an interest organization that played a substantial part in propagating the Euroregion model. Organizationally, the EUREGIO and the AEBR were closely aligned, sharing headquarters and some of the personnel. Accordingly, the unit of analysis for our investigation is the EUREGIO/AEBR twin organization which we treat as a collective institutional entrepreneur. While some authors prefer to view institutional entrepreneurs as individuals (Fligstein 1997; Maguire et al 2004), others focus on the organizational level of analysis (Greenwood et al 2002; Munir and Phillips 2005; Zucker and Darby 1997). We choose to conceptualize the nodal organization as entrepreneurially acting

agent within the context of the wider field. Entrepreneurially minded single individuals or small groups will usually act from within an organization, providing resources and skills they might not possess personally. Therefore we can characterize the behaviour of an organization as entrepreneurial if its activities are aimed at challenging and changing existing routines and models or creating new models within and across fields.

Data collection

The analysis is based on two sets of data. A first set consists of twenty semi-structured interviews with individuals involved in the EUREGIO, the AEBR and EU regional policy. We interviewed three types of individuals, maintaining a balanced distribution of Dutch and German representatives. First, we spoke to officials from the EUREGIO and AEBR to learn about the inner workings of these organizations and their history. Some of the individuals had been involved for up to three decades and were therefore able to provide a great deal of historic detail. Secondly, officials from member municipalities were interviewed to learn about the operation of the EUREGIO as local broker. Thirdly, we asked officials representing the EU and the German and Dutch central governments about the ways in which the EUREGIO and the AEBR performed field-wide activities. Interviews lasted 1.5 hours on average and were taped and transcribed. References to interviews are indicated by codes as listed in the appendix.

An equally important body of evidence was provided by printed and electronic documentation, i.e. strategy and planning documents, policy evaluations, reports, public communication materials and meeting minutes produced by the

EUREGIO, its member authorities, the European Commission, the AEBR, the ILS research institute in North Rhine Westphalia, and other organizations. Some of these documents date back to the 1960s and 1970s and provide useful insights into the organizational dynamics and strategies at different points in time. In addition, we draw on historic accounts provided by Schack (1998), Goinga (1995) and Heineberg and Temnitz (1998).

Data analysis

The purpose of this study was to inductively generate insights into the process of institutional entrepreneurship from the collected data. Our main analytical interest was in exploring what happened at varying points in time during the history of the EUREGIO and its associated lobbying organization, the AEBR. To this purpose, we first chronicled their history. From the resulting narrative account we synthesized a chronological list of events and achievements judged important by the participants within their written and oral accounts.

Subsequently, we addressed the research questions by querying the collected data with respect to the different concepts derived from the theoretical discussion (Yin 2003). Firstly, we classified activities according to our framework to identify what the actors actually *did* at various points in time. We used the nature of outcomes achieved at certain junctures of the EUREGIO history as a criterion for judging the type of project the actors had been engaged in. For instance, if an outcome was the establishment of an association involving previously unconnected actors, we reasoned that the type of activity involved was interactional in nature.

Secondly, we extracted the type of skills involved in what the EUREGIO was doing at different points in time. One way of operationalizing this was by identifying the type

of external organizations the EUREGIO was interacting or collaborating with to engage in specific activities. For instance, if this was a research institute we reasoned that this was because the EUREGIO required analytical or technical skills.

Thirdly, we explored the context within which the EUREGIO was operating at different points in time. To this purpose, we explored the field-related activities of the EUREGIO. We had indications that the EUREGIO was active in several fields that were only partly overlapping. Interactions with certain field-wide actors, in this case mostly policymaking agencies, provided us with signposts as to what field the EUREGIO was addressing. For instance, if the majority of interactions with field-wide agencies was with central government, we concluded that the field of intergovernmental relationships was the chief focus of the EUREGIO influencing strategies at that point in time. Which field was addressed was also indicated by the locus of institutional change achieved by the EUREGIO activities.

THE CASE STUDY

Early period: networking and organization-building (1950-1970)

After 1945, many border areas in Europe faced significant development problems as they lacked infrastructures and market access opportunities due to the barrier effect exerted by borders. The German-Dutch border area was no exception to this (Goinga 1995: 20). To address these economic problems, small regional alliances of local authorities formed, one on the German side – part of the state of North-Rhine Westphalia – and two on the Dutch side. At first informal and later formalized, these inter-municipal bodies addressed pressing issues such as the restructuring in the textile sector and the improvement of

infrastructures such as motorways (Malchus 1972). By pooling the weight of dozens of municipalities and districts, it was hoped to secure a better resource flow from higher-tier government.

Such issue-focused co-operation slowly congealed into an organization, the EUREGIO, as a series of permanent bodies were established. A board (the 'Working Group') was established in 1966, a bi-national commission for cultural cross-border initiatives in 1970, followed by secretariats, initially separately on each side of the border.

The EUREGIO also started to engage with other similar co-operation experiments. Contacts among a handful of early initiatives resulted in the emergence of an informal trans-European movement. Its main 'target' was the Council of Europe (CoE), a supranational European body unrelated to the EU that was leading efforts to create an integrated Europe (Robertson 1961). The CoE has a transnational parliamentary assembly that provided a suitable supranational arena for local authority interests.

Intermediate period: elaborating the model (1970-1985)

To substantiate the EUREGIO model, its leaders enlisted the help of spatial planners. A 1970 report focused on socio-cultural co-operation and defines a number of objectives for the EUREGIO (Appendix 1). In 1971, a 'structural analysis' was carried out with funding from the European Commission and German and Dutch ministries. The study proposed a bundle of objectives and guidelines for an integrated cross-border programme (Malchus 1972). It concluded that the Euroregion model should form part of a future EU regional policy, and that this required the further development of the existing local cross-

border institutions.

While working on the model, the EUREGIO became increasingly consolidated and formalized as an organization, partly by following the recommendations laid out in the social scientific conceptual work. In the mid-seventies, a formal statute was agreed, and in 1978 the EUREGIO Council was established as the first cross-border regional parliamentary assembly in Europe. In 1985, the separate administrative offices were merged into a single secretariat funded by fees raised from member municipalities.

Efforts had continued on the international level. In 1971, the trans-European network now comprising nine border regions and cross-border bodies was formalized as the 'Association of European Border Regions' (AEBR). Alfred Mozer, a leading EUREGIO figure, became its first president. Via the AEBR, the EUREGIO actors had decisive impact on the further substantiation of the cross-border region model, subsequently baptized 'Euroregion'. It approached the CoE to sponsor two 'border region' conferences, held in 1972 and 1975. For each event, a report recommending further courses of action was prepared by Viktor Frhr v. Malchus, a spatial planner at the ILS-Institute in North Rhine-Westphalia and advisor to the EUREGIO (Malchus 1972; 1975).

The mobilization of scientific expertise continued to be an important part of the AEBR's activities. Many of the conceptual elements of Euroregions were later integrated in manuals handed out to border authorities all over Europe interested in initiating such co-operation. An important outcome of the AEBR's work was the CoE's approval of a European-wide inter-governmental treaty on trans-border co-operation in 1980. Although it turned out to be rather toothless,

this so-called Madrid Convention internalized many of the components of Euroregions elaborated by the AEBR and de facto already practiced in lead cases such as the EUREGIO.

Late period: diffusion (1985 - 2005)

By 1985, the EUREGIO had established itself as an organization with a unified secretariat, stable resource stream and organizational model adept at fulfilling its role as cross-border development agency. It had achieved respectability within the local environment and became a natural part of the day-to-day activities in local public administration (i9, i12). The EUREGIO had also inserted itself as a key player in its transnational field at the interstices of EU regional policy and CoE inter-state legal co-ordination.

As the relevance of the EU had increased from 1975 onwards while the influence of the CoE waned, the AEBR began to focus their field-wide activities more strongly on the EU. A major milestone was reached when the European Commission provided funding to the EUREGIO to 'pilot' a bundle of cross-border measures in 1988-90 (EUREGIO nd: 11). In 1990, the European Commission launched a major programme, 'Interreg', based on the pilot project and designed to support Euroregions as a constituent part of EU regional policy. As a result, more and more Euroregions began to appear across Europe (Figure 1), modelled after the EUREGIO. The AEBR, technically supported by the EUREGIO secretariat, had been closely involved in the design of Interreg and its pilot predecessors (i16; European Commission 1999). Alongside this, the ABER established an 'observatory' called 'Linkage Assistance and Cooperation for European Border Regions' (LACE), funded by the EU

commission. LACE was designed to provide consulting to local authorities new to the Euroregion model. In practice, this involved identifying good practice models and transferring them to less advanced areas. A 'scientific committee' was formalized as a 'think tank' in cross-border co-operation matters, and periodical publications were launched. So-called 'antennae' were established in various areas across Europe as organizational relay stations between the AEBR and the local actors in the European border areas.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Changing Projective Agency

Our first research question was whether we could identify different dimensions of projective agency involved with institutional entrepreneurship. To this purpose, we used the tentative categories derived from the literature, i.e. interactional, technical and cultural projects. We then classified events and outcomes (table 1) according to the dominant nature of underpinning activity. We found all these types of activity are in fact present. More importantly, there appears to be a certain temporal order to the type of project work conducted which we discuss in more detail below (see Table 2).

[Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here](#)

During a first stage, the major accent was on establishing *collective action* around a common set of interests. This interest-driven collaboration was not in the first place aimed at constructing a novel institution. Rather, the objective was to mobilize resources from external agencies by using an existing

institutional form for inter-local co-operation (the municipal association) initially for each side of the border separately, resulting in a positive-sum game for the local participants. This was achieved through establishing inter-organizational collaboration to solve a problem – an activity also known as ‘convening’ (Dorado 2005, Lawrence et al. 2002). The participants realized that a *cross-border* coalition would improve the potential lobbying impact on their central government agencies and emerging European-level agencies. Hence, a loosely connected cross-border network was formed and some of the externally obtained resources were used to establish a ‘crystallizing organization’ (Rao 1998) – the equivalent of a Social Movement Organization (Zald and Ash 1966). Subsequently, the focus shifted towards the technical project. At this point, the Euroregion was only one template among others available across Europe for cross border co-operation. These included inter-governmental commissions and larger groupings known as ‘Working Communities’ (Perkmann 1999). In contrast to these, the EUREGIO model allowed *local* authorities to participate in the management of border spaces (Malchus 1972: 50). This represented a challenge as no legal framework for international inter-municipal co-operation existed; many early Euroregions relied in fact on informal co-operation arrangements reinforced by private-law agreements.

The EUREGIO therefore focused on constructing a robust model for a Euroregion. This involved work on the organizational set-up, including the questions as to what legal framework should be adopted, how strategizing should be conducted and how resource could be accessed. It also meant engineering the Euroregion’s fit with its local and supra-local contexts. Finally, it

involved charting the expected impact of a Euroregion vis-à-vis institutional alternatives. Notably, this included better management of public funds dedicated to economic policies in borders areas and the creation of integrated cross-border economic spaces as growth hubs (i2). These elements were inscribed in a series of action programmes and development concepts commissioned by the EUREGIO. The Euroregion model gained legitimacy among the technocratic communities because it presented itself as logically coherent and feasible model that was superior to its alternatives (Malchus 1972).

The final stage added a cultural dimension to the activities of the EUREGIO. Primarily through its AEBR international branch, the EUREGIO scaled up its efforts to promote the model on a large scale. This involved several types of activities. Firstly, the EUREGIO representatives lobbied the European Commission to launch a policy programme (Interreg) designed to support cross-border regions across Europe. As successive versions of Interreg were launched after 1990, the model for organizing cross-border regions recommended within the programme became increasingly similar to the one pioneered by the EUREGIO (i17). The AEBR also targeted politicians in the European Parliament where the general case for funding such an EU-wide programme had to be made. To this purpose, the rationale for supporting cross-border regions had to be placed within the wider context of the European integration process. These activities of the AEBR were so successful that border regions were explicitly mentioned in the text of the European Constitutional Treaty in 2004.

A second line of activity consisted in popularizing the Euroregion concept among local politicians and civil servants across Europe. This was achieved via the newly established 'Observatory' and its branches at various locations in Europe and speaking and consulting engagements by EUREGIO and AEBR representatives. An AEBR report states that between 1990 and 1994 eighty workshops were held involving 6,750 participants, and sixty reports were published with a total circulation of 60,000.

These activities contained strong cultural elements in the sense that overarching rationales for supporting and establishing cross-border regions were presented, and a large number of actors had to be enlisted in this project of institutional diffusion. At a conference in Strasbourg on the inter-cultural aspects of cross-border co-operation organized by the AEBR Observatory in 1998 most speakers discussed the role of Euroregions in the wider context of a borderless Europe. This illustrates how the Euroregion was framed as an important element of deepening European Integration. The benefits of the process were represented as going far beyond its technical superiority as a cross-border agency for implementing structural policies in border areas. Euroregions were seen as contributing to 'heal the scars of history [i.e. borders]', reduce the risk of armed conflicts (i6) and accomplish 'a first step towards the unification of European states' (Partl 1986: 90). By framing Euroregions in this way, and infusing the technical model with broader values, the promoters of the Euroregion were able to target a political constituency that went beyond the small number of technocrats and social scientists interested in it as a matter of professional curiosity.

Our evidence suggests several dimensions of projective agency underpinning institutional entrepreneurship: interactional, technical and cultural. Moreover, we note that different agency dimensions appear to be more prominent at different points in time. While in the first stage activities were predominantly interactional, in a second moment more emphasis was placed on technical activity, followed by an emphasis on cultural activities in the diffusion phase.

Changing Skills

Alongside changes in the type of projective agency, we noted significant changes in the skills deployed over time. The ability to induce co-operation among a dispersed set of actors was required during the *interactional* stage. At this stage, the actors were keen to demonstrate that co-operation was a positive-sum game and hence served the combined interests. This skill which we refer to as political skill (cf. Garud et al. 2002) facilitated co-operation via networking and brokering – as opposed to providing new frames of meaning. On the one hand, political skills were deployed to create a platform of interest representation on the local level. On the other, they were used to establish links with central government and European agencies to mobilize resources for the local coalition.

When the focus of institutional entrepreneurship shifted to developing a technical framework, *analytical skills* were deployed to build models of an institution and describe the various antecedents and effects of that institution. Such skills are typically embodied in technocratic scientific knowledge and professional communities (Strang and Meyer 1993; Greenwood et al 2002). In our case, these skills were acquired by establishing links with spatial planners

at organizations as the Institute of Spatial and Urban Planning in Dortmund and technical staff at supranational organizations such as the CoE (Council of Europe) and the EU (European Union). This allowed the EUREGIO to draw on a wealth of technocratic knowledge and formally model the institution. For instance, a report by the spatial planner, Malchus (1972: 131), criticized inter-governmental treaties and commissions for cross-border initiatives for inhibiting local border region development, and called for the creation of new organizational forms for such local initiatives: ' ... the tighter and more sophisticated the organizational form, the more effective cross-border co-operation can be'. By making use of these analytical skills, the actors equipped the EUREGIO with a durable technocratic model that could be implemented in a range of situations.

During the final stage, the accent shifted to *cultural skills*. This involved framing the institution in a way that appealed to a wider audience of potential supporters and adopters. The proponents distilled the technical detail of the model into popular concepts and placed it within the context of wider values and discourses. Instrumental to this process was the enlisting of Members of the European Parliament able to place Euroregion model within the general project of European integration. In addition, the mobilization of cultural skills also involved educating the audience via teaching and consultancy activities (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). The AEBR used its Observatory to turn the Euroregion model into a know-how package that could be readily disseminated to interested parties across Europe.

Our findings extend the work of Fligstein (1997) and Garud et al (2002) who

have attempted to identify the specific skills required during a process of institutional entrepreneurship. While we find that institutional entrepreneurship in fact requires a range of skills, the kinds of skills required at different stages may be subject to change. This suggests for instance that an institutional entrepreneur who has been successful at brokering interorganizational collaboration at an early stage may prove less successful when analytical skills are required later.

Changing Fields

A final finding of our study was that the institutional entrepreneur sought to position the Euroregion in different fields during the period studied. The arenas opened up through the rise of supranational bodies such as the CoE and the EU can be regarded as organizational fields that attract a range of regional, national and trans-national actors to their agendas and generate new norms and values around the issue of European integration (Radaelli 2000). During the first stage, the EUREGIO project related to field of German and Dutch inter-governmental relationships. Activities such as lobbying for new transport links were largely targeted at national bodies. This field was in considerable flux after 1945 as Germany and the Netherlands sought to rebuild mechanisms of bi-lateral co-operation. For the EUREGIO this provided an opportunity to advocate their approach of to cross-border co-operation. During the second stage, the Euroregion promoters switched their efforts to the newly emerging field of European integration led by the CoE. Finally, in the 1970s the AEBR switched from the stagnating CoE to the increasingly important EU. While the CoE had promoted European integration with predominantly legal means, the EU

controlled larger amounts of financial resources that were re-distributed to policy addressees. This provided the EUREGIO-AEBR with an opportunity to position itself as such an addressee, allowing it to access new resource streams and embed their model into EU policy frameworks.

To sustain their entrepreneurial efforts, the promoters of the Euroregion sought out new or expanding fields, in line with the literature. We note, however, that this was done repeatedly. The entrepreneurs sought to create opportunities by *field switching*. By this we mean the strategic attempt to relocate an institutional project from one into another field. The maturity of the field was indeed an important factor in this. The champions of the Euroregion were attracted by newly emerging fields offering considerable opportunity for innovation. When cross-border co-operation policy was relatively new at the nation state level after 1945, their efforts focused here. This changed when the CoE emerged as the centre of a major supranational integrationist movement. Finally, when the EU launched its regional policy in addition to its original free-trade agenda, the positioning of the Euroregion was changed once more. By continuing to shift the Euroregion into relatively underdeveloped fields, its champions ensured it would insert itself into the agenda of field-dominating organizations.

Field switching also appeared to be dependent on whether shared patterns of problematization existed between the promoters and the targeted field. 'Problematization' involves the creation of the perception of an issue as a pressing concern (Callon 1986). Shared pattern of problematization arise when groups agree that a certain issue is a problem and construct a shared language with which to describe the newly found problem. In the present case, during the

early stage, national attention was sought by pointing to the problems of economic development in border regions. Subsequently, the CoE was addressed by arguing that legal entities for cross-border co-operation could provide a useful building stone for furthering the body's integrationist agenda. Eventually, the model was suggested to the EU as a way to infuse its regional policy agenda with integration-friendly programmes. Each instance of problematization allowed the EUREGIO to offer the Euroregion as a ready-made solution to existing problems.

Finally, field switching was driven by the availability of resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977). In the present case, we found that the promoters of Euroregions would tend to 'follow the grants'. It was the availability of state and national funding that initially led them to lobby these policy makers for support. When the EU began to fund cross-border projects, the promoters of the Euroregion re-oriented their efforts away from the resource-poor CoE.

Drawing together these reflections together, we suggest that field characteristics places limits on whether actors can engage in institutional entrepreneurship. In particular, we noticed that emerging fields (Maguire et al. 2004) provided significant opportunities for change projects. However, we also noticed that the institutional entrepreneurs are to some extent able to create opportunities by choosing the field they address. By 'field switching', the promoters of the Euroregion were able to transform the opportunities and constraints they faced. By selecting emerging fields and adapting the type of solutions they could offer other field participants, the institutional entrepreneurs were able to develop their model and secure a continuous flow of resources.

CONCLUSIONS

This study yields three novel findings on the process of institutional entrepreneurship. First, institutional entrepreneurs engage in different projects at different stages of the change process. Building on existing work on institutional entrepreneurship, we identified three types of projects: interactional, technical and cultural projects. Interactional projects create a collective action platform from which resources are drawn and the institutional entrepreneur develops a capacity to act. Technical projects involve developing a systematic model of the institution and its impacts. Cultural projects focus on the systems of meaning and values associated with an institution. In the present case, initially the interactional dimension was vital while at later stages technical and cultural projects were added to the activity portfolio of the institutional entrepreneur. Thus, rather than a stable set of characteristics or tasks (cf. DiMaggio 1988; Dorado 2005), institutional entrepreneurship appears to vary significantly over time.

Secondly, different skills were deployed by the institutional entrepreneur at different process stages. Political skills were used during the initial interactional stage when the accent was on inter-organizational collaboration. These were joined by analytical skills in a second stage when theorizing and envisioning were most important. In the third stage, cultural skills became prevalent as the accent shifted towards the general propagation of the Euroregion model. Rather than a single set of skills (cf. Fligstein, 1997), institutional entrepreneurship therefore requires varied sets of skills with different emphases over time.

Thirdly, the institutional entrepreneurs engaged in field switching to create opportunities for advancing their project. We noted that promoters of the Euroregion model positioned their project in relatively young fields that shared patterns of problematization with the proposed project and offered resources. This meant that the entrepreneurs were not entirely constrained by the characteristics of 'their' field (cf. Fligstein 1996; Hensmans 2003), but were able to seek out opportunities by actively enlisting themselves into new and dynamic fields.

The most striking common theme in these findings is that different emphases on project types and skills prevailed at different points in time. We should note that this temporal movement does not involve a strict succession from one project dimension to another. Rather, we postulate a layering process where project types and skills are successively added to the existing ones over time. However, this layered stage model might not apply to all instances of institutional entrepreneurship. Further research is needed to specify the conditions under which different project types and skills are deployed and vary over time. Notably, our model might hold only for institutional innovations launched by 'outsider' entrepreneurs rather than field-dominating incumbents (e.g. Suddaby and Greenwood 2005). When changes are driven by central actors such as professional associations, there might be less initial emphasis on the interactional dimension as the main challenge for the entrepreneur is to deinstitutionalize entrenched practices via theorizing (Greenwood et al 2002). Furthermore, as the focal organization might only be one among several competitors (Colomy 1998), further research needs to uncover the conditions

under which one model succeeds and others fail to anchor themselves within the field. Possible factors here include the relative importance of the three project dimensions we identified, i.e. the network centrality of an organization, the technical superiority of project and integration of the project within field-wide values and norms.

Our study has some implications for how institutional entrepreneurship is enacted. First, if we recognise that institutional entrepreneurship has a temporal dynamic, there is no single set of activities institutional entrepreneurs should engage in at all times. Rather, efforts to change institutions need to be multi-dimensional in scope, and include interactional, technical and cultural projects. Moreover, while it is far from certain that we always observe a succession of stages as in the present study, attending to the timing of projects seems important. Secondly, institutional entrepreneurs should possess a portfolio of skills or be able to enrol groups with these skills into their change projects. Finally, if institutional entrepreneurs are able to engage in field switching, then they should strategically and periodically assess the field in which they are acting or wish to act. They might consider how entrenched institutions are within a field, whether there is a match between the solutions they offer and the problems in the target field, and what level of resources are available in a target field. This may enable them to position their project in fields where opportunities for change abound although they may also be prepared to accept modifications to their project in return.

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APPENDIX 1: OBJECTIVES PROPOSED BY THE 1970 EUREGIO CONCEPT

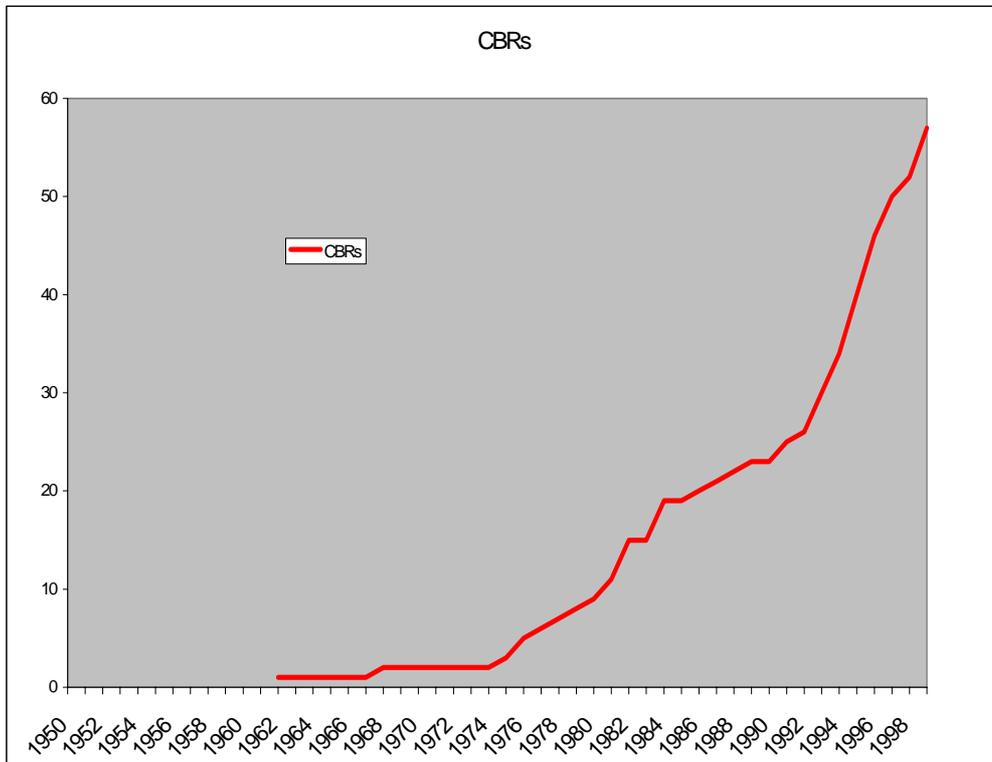
- Build the EUREGIO as a functional unit in all spheres of life
- Create spatial awareness of the population within the context of the process of European integration by positioning the EUREGIO as a pioneer
- Development of a complementary infrastructure (vs. inter-regional competition)
- Exploit the EUREGIO's position as a link between large Dutch and German agglomerations
- Malchus (1972: 110-111).

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW CODES

- i1 Provincie Overijssel, Zwolle (NL)
- i2 Landkreis Grafschaft Bentheim, Nordhorn (DE)
- i3 Ministerie van Economische Zaken, Regio Oost, Arnhem (NL)
- i4 Bezirksregierung Weser-Ems, Oldenburg (DE)

- i5 EUREGIO, Gronau (DE) (group interview).
- i6 Bezirksregierung, Abteilung Regionalplanung und Wirtschaft, Münster (DE)
- i7 Beleidsmedewerker Economische Zaken en Grensoverschrijdende Samenwerking, Regio Acherhoek (NL)
- i8 EUREGIO, Gronau (DE)
- i9 Landkreis Steinfurt, Steinfurt (DE)
- i10 Investitionsbank Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (DE)
- i11 Ministerium für Wirtschaft und Mittelstand, Technologie and Verkehr des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (DE)
- i12 Kreis Borken, Stabstelle, Bocholt (DE)
- i13 European Commission, DG16, INTERREG II/c (spatial planning), Brussels (BE)
- i14 European Commission, DG16, INTERREG II, Brussels
- i15 European Commission, DG12, Brussels
- i16 European Commission, DG16, Brussels
- i17 European Commission, DG16, Brussels
- i18 LACE-TAP office, Brussels
- i19 European Commission, DG1, Brussels
- i20 European Commission, DG16, Brussels

Figure 1: Cross-border regions in Europe



Cumulative number of initiatives (source: Perkmann 2003, modified).

Table 2: Dimensions of institutional entrepreneurship

<i>Project</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Interactional	Networking, Resource mobilization/ organization building	Political skills	Actor formation
Technical	Studying, analyzing, designing	Analytical skills	Organizing template

Cultural	Framing, propagating, advising, teaching	Cultural skills	Diffusion
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Table 1: Events and project dimensions

Year	Events/Outcomes	Project dimension		
		Interactional	Technical	Cultural
1954	Community of Interests Rhein-Ems (DE) established among German municipalities, first usage of 'EUREGIO' as a name	◆		
1958	Dutch and German municipalities decide to formally pursue cross-border co-operation	◆		
1960	Belangengemeenschap-Twente-Oost Gelderland (NL) established as municipal association	◆		
1961	Foundation "Streekbelangen Oost Gelderland" (NL) established as municipal association	◆		
1962	Formal municipal association Rhein-Ems succeeds Community of Interest Rhein-Ems (DE)	◆		
1965	First cross-border trade show; EUREGIO 'Working Group' established as permanent executive body	◆		
1970	Commission established for co-ordinating co-operation in cultural matters	◆		
	Study on options for socio-cultural co-operation, funded by German and Dutch governments		◆	
1971	Full-time functionaries appointed to lead secretariats of the three member municipal associations	◆		
	Association of European Border Regions founded during a ceremony in the EUREGIO	◆		

	Publication of first cross-border economic policy action program for the EUREGIOe, funded by central governments and EU		◆	
1972	AEBR organizes First European Conference of Border Regions in Strasbourg	◆		
1975	EUREGIO Statute ratified by its members			◆
1975	AEBR organizes Second European Conference of Border Regions in Innsbruck	◆		
	AEBR Scientific Committee established, headed by spatial planner close to EUREGIO; AEBR participates in the drawing up of a Council of Europe convention		◆	
1977	Dutch EUREGIO secretariats merged	◆		
1978	Local parliamentary assembly established (EUREGIO Council)			◆
1984	AEBR organizes 3rd European Conference of Border Regions (in EUREGIO)	◆		
1985	Dutch and German EUREGIO secretariats merged to single agency	◆		
	EUREGIO Steering committee established with participation of EU and DE/NL government agencies' to elaborate 20-year economic development strategy		◆	
1987	Cross-border 'action programme' for EUREGIO presented		◆	
1989	EUREGIO obtains funding from EU for cross-border co-operation pilot programme	◆		
1990	AEBR establishes 'Observatory for cross-border co-operation in Europe' (supported by EU)			◆
1991	EUREGIO obtains EU Interreg funds	◆		
	AEBR starts annual series of workshops across Europe attended by large number of local authority representatives			◆
1993	'EUREGIO Forum' established, with geographically extended membership, almost doubling its size	◆		

1996	AEBR Observatory re-launched; consulting activities for roll-out of cross-border regions in Eastern Europe			◆
1998	EUREGIO head nominated full-time head of AEBR			◆
	AEBR elaborates working documents on behalf of EU Commission for follow-up version of Interreg programme		◆	
2004	Border regions included in the European Constitutional Treaty, as a result of lobbying activity by AEBR			◆

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