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

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Abstract

We explore what institutional entrepreneurs do to propagate new organizational forms. Our findings are derived from a longitudinal study of the 'Euroregion', an organizational form used by local authorities situated close to European borders for co-ordinating policies across borders. We find that the institutional entrepreneurs behind the Euroregion engaged in several types of institution-building projects, with a changing focus over time. While the initial emphasis was on interactional projects, this was followed by a focus on technical projects and finally cultural projects. The skills the institutional entrepreneurs deployed changed accordingly. While in a first phase predominantly political skills were used, later analytical skills and finally cultural skills were added. Furthermore, the institutional entrepreneurs propagated the organizational form by switching their institution-building projects between different fields. We interpret these findings by outlining a process theory of institutional entrepreneurship that conceptualises the institutional entrepreneur in light of its development as an innovating organization.

Keywords: Institutional Entrepreneurship; Skills; Fields; Organizational Form; Cross-border region

Introduction

The question of how organizational forms emerge and spread is a central in organizational theory (Stinchcombe 1965). An organizational form is a composite of goals of the organization, its authority relations, the technology it uses, and the markets it seeks to serve (Scott 1999). We know that new organizational forms diffuse when they become accepted as legitimate ways of organizing within a particular field (Aldrich and Fiol 1994). Recent work has suggested that this occurs due to the work of institutional entrepreneurs (Rao, Morrill and Zald 2000; Greenwood and Suddaby 2006). A number of recent studies have examined the characteristics of institutional entrepreneurship (Garud, Jain and Kumaraswamy 2002; Rao 1998; Greenwood and Suddaby 2006; Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence 2004).

However, there is a significant degree of uncertainty about what exactly institutional entrepreneurs do when they propagate new organizational forms. Do they predominantly engage in political activity (Stinchcombe 1965), 'theorization' to justify a new organizational form (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings 2002), or 'framing' to appeal to broader discourses (Rao 1998)? This lack of clarity is matched by uncertainty about the skills required by institutional entrepreneurs even though recent work has emphasised that institutional work is generally carried out by competent actors (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). Finally, institutional entrepreneurs act in various field conditions, ranging from emerging fields (Maguire et al 2004) to mature fields (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006). These studies have examined how field contexts shape and enable the activities of institutional entrepreneurs yet they have put less emphasis on the way the entrepreneurs manipulate their field contexts and positions as part of their actions.

In this article, we present the results of a study to shed more light on these aspects of institutional entrepreneurship. The case we explore allows us to analyse what institutional entrepreneurs do to create and propagate a new organizational form, the skills they deploy, and how they relate to

their field contexts during their efforts. We study the inception and diffusion of an organizational form called the 'Euroregion'. Euroregions are used by European local authorities situated near national borders for co-ordinating policies with their counterparts across the border. Tracing this organizational form over a period of fifty years allows us to examine activities, skills and field contexts at various points in time, and hence emphasize the process dimension of institutional entrepreneurship. Our analysis suggests institutional entrepreneurship is not limited to critical junctures or crises but can stretch far into the diffusion stages of institutional emergence.

We begin by reviewing existing research on institutional entrepreneurship. We show that there is little clarity about what exactly institutional entrepreneurs do, the skills they deploy and how they engage with their field. We then introduce the case of the Euroregion and trace the process by which it became an established institution. We subsequently present our findings and conclude by outlining the implications for how we theorize institutional entrepreneurship as a time-based process.

Institutional Entrepreneurship

As imprints of basic structural features that remain relatively constant over time (Stinchcombe 1965), organizational forms are a particular kind of institution. Institutions are taken-for-granted 'cultured-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that … provide stability and meaning to social life' (Scott, 1999: 48). The study of institutions has largely focused on how institutions exert 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, Salanick, Copy and King 1991). This has led to an increasing attention to specific actors in institutional change, called institutional entrepreneurs (Eisenstadt 1980; DiMaggio 1988; Colomy 1998; Rao 1998; Garud et al.; 2002; Dorado 2005). Institutional entrepreneurs are actors who work towards changing or creating institutions by engaging in forward-looking 'projective agency' (Dorado,

2005). This involves 'the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action' (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998: 971), providing the 'content' for change processes (Colomy 1998). By doing this, they propose a 'remedy' to vital problems or societal needs (Colomy 1998).

Recent scholarship has sought to explore in more detail the actual activities involved in institutional entrepreneurship (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006). Yet the broader literature on institutional entrepreneurship remains divided as to exactly what projects institutional entrepreneurs are engaged in. According to some authors, institutional entrepreneurs specialize in *interactional* projects. 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). This emphasis is exemplified by Leiblebici et al's (1991) study of the creation of the modern radio station in the US. They find this organizational form gained acceptance by institutional entrepreneurs using political tactics such as building new networks of co-operation and association. A second view highlights *technical* projects in which institutional entrepreneurs engage in 'theorization' by identifying 'abstract categories and the formulation of patterned relationships such as chains of cause and effect' (Strang and Meyer 1993: 492). Processes of theorization were found to be central in the transformation of Canadian accounting firms towards multi-professional firms (Greenwood et al 2002). This change was precipitated by a professional association identifying pressing problems, offering abstracted solutions, and providing moral justifications.

Finally, *cultural* projects involve institutional entrepreneurs framing institutions in ways that appeal to wider audiences (Rao 1998, Creed, Scully and Austin 2002; Lounsbury, Ventresca and Hirsch 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). The power of framing is exemplified in Rao's (1998) case study on the diffusion of consumer watchdog organizations. Institutional entrepreneurs were able to propagate this novel organizational form by appealing to popular discourses such as efficiency, scientific analysis, rationality, and impartiality.

If institutional entrepreneurs engage in different kinds of projects, then different kinds of skills might be required. Fligstein (1997) identifies 'social skills', defined as the 'ability to induce co-operation in others', as an essential characteristic of institutional entrepreneurs. This involves the use of various tactics, including the exertion of authority, agenda setting, framing, bricolage, bargaining and brokering. While some of these tactics deploy symbolic and discursive work, others consist in brokering connections between actors while yet others refer to the re-ordering of cognitive templates.

Against this all-encompassing notion of social skill, recent research has proposed more fine-grained accounts of the skills used by institutional entrepreneurs. 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. Others have suggested that institutional entrepreneurs are able to reflect on 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). Finally, institutional entrepreneurs are also seen to require *cultural* skills, allowing them to frame issues by referencing broader values, building into specific normative attitudes and creating common identities (Ansell 1997). Skills are typically embodied in individuals but can be collectively represented within specific organizations, professions or communities of practice. For instance, technocrats or analysts would have analytical skills, while various symbolic managers such as public relations experts or politicians would excel in cultural skills (Campbell 2004).

Finally, projects of institutional entrepreneurship are shaped and constrained by their 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 shaping institutional entrepreneurship (Fligstein 1996; Hensmans 2003). A field is highly institutionalized if it has a stable set of rules, norms and cognitive schemas that define accepted ways of operating. Such mature fields are often characterized by the presence of field-dominating organizations and a dominant organizational form (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 competing 'challengers' advocating different organizational forms (Hensmans 2003; Rao et al 2000; Seo and Creed 2002). Perhaps reflecting favourable conditions, many empirical studies of institutional entrepreneurship have in fact focused on emerging fields (Maguire et al 2004; Lawrence and Phillips 2004). Yet, in other cases, institutional entrepreneurs have successfully acted from within mature settings (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006). This could indicate the existence of differing strategies of institutional entrepreneurship that have so far remained unexplored.

While the literature has made considerable progress to understand institutional entrepreneurship, we aim to address several open questions in our case study. As we have argued, there is ambiguity as to what types of projects institutional entrepreneurs engage in. Our first research question therefore asks what projects the institutional entrepreneur pursued in their efforts to propagate a new organizational form. The second question we explore addresses the issue of skills: Which skills did the institutional entrepreneur deploy when it attempted to propagate a new organizational form? Finally, in view of the uncertainty about the role of the field environment,

our third question is: How did field maturity shape the way institutional entrepreneurship was conducted?

Site and Method

Site selection

To examine the dynamics of institutional entrepreneurship, we investigated the emergence and diffusion of new organizational form – the Euroregion. A Euroregion is characterized by the following features. Its goal is to co-ordinate policies among contiguous local or regional authorities across national borders in Europe. It typically focuses on developing common regional infrastructures, providing municipal services, promoting economic activity, and lobbying central government. It is governed via semi-formal relationships among the member municipalities, using a mixture of consensual network relationships and European Union (EU) regulations to co-ordinate decision-making. Its 'technology' is a unique adaptation of national and EU-wide public administrative regulations and private law contracts. Its 'market' is constituted by the local authorities and their populations in the areas which make up the border region.

A case study approach suited our goal to contribute to theory development via analytical generalization (Yin 2003). At the outset we searched for the key actors behind the institutionalization of the Euroregion. Information derived from interviews, historic accounts and policy documentation led us to identify the EUREGIO as the central institutional entrepreneur, for several reasons. First, it was the first Euroregion and hence served as a 'pilot project' for this organizational form. Second, the EUREGIO served as an important reference point for other Euroregions (i23). It lead most of the initiatives aimed at propagating the new organizational form – for instance the Committee on Local Authorities at the Council of Europe in the 1960s. Finally, the 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 employees. Accordingly, the unit of analysis for our investigation is the EUREGIO/AEBR twin organization which we treat as institutional entrepreneur. We chose to focus on organizations, and not individuals, because we were specifically interested in exploring how organizations who 'inhabit' a novel institutional template work towards diffusing this template towards wider audiences. We acknowledge that at the early stages of the process the EUREGIO was still emerging as an organization. Yet we believe this does not invalidate our results as we view this organization-building process as a necessary phase for generating an institutional innovation for which the organization claimed ownership and pursued diffusion.

Data collection

The analysis is based on two sets of data. A first set consists of 23 semi-structured interviews with Dutch and German individuals involved in the EUREGIO, the AEBR and EU regional policy. Some interviewees had worked in this context for up to three decades and were therefore able to provide a great deal of historic detail. First, we spoke to officials from the EUREGIO and AEBR to learn about the inner workings of these organizations and their history. Secondly, we interviewed officials from member municipalities 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 EUREGIO/AEBR's field-wide activities. Interviews lasted 1.5 hours on average and were taped and transcribed. They are referenced by codes (i1, i2, …) as listed in the appendix.

An equally important body of evidence was provided by archival material including strategy and planning documents, 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 documents date back to the

1960s and 1970s and provided insights into the organizational dynamics and strategies at different points in time. We also consulted historic accounts provided by Schack (1998) and Goinga (1995).

Data analysis

We began by generating a narrative account of the emergence and evolution of the EUREGIO and its associated lobbying organization, the AEBR. This enabled us to synthesize a chronological list of key events judged important by the participants within their written and oral accounts. We only considered events that could be attributed to EUREGIO activities, and excluded exogenously caused events. We could therefore use these events as a proxy to infer preceding activities pursued by the EUREGIO and its associates.

We then analysed all events and coded them with specific items associated with the categories of project, skill and field (see Table 1). Because we were aware that none of the data could be reduced exclusively to one item (e.g. a purely 'interactional' project), we chose to determine the aspects that appeared most pronounced in informing an event. By using our categories as analytical representations, we attempted to make sense of complex empirical data (Rich, 1992). To improve internal validity, each of us coded the events independently. For differently interpreted items, we went back to the data and intersubjectively negotiated the coding.

Table 1 About Here

We coded projects according to what the actors actually had to *do* to cause an event in question. To this purpose, we used the EUREGIO outcomes at certain junctures as a proxy for the type of project the actors had engaged in. If an event was the establishment of an association involving previously unconnected actors, we reasoned that the type of project involved was interactional in nature. If an event was the publication of a study, we assumed that the underlying activities had

been technical projects. Events that were outcomes from attempts to associate Euroregions with broader sets of values were coded as cultural projects.

We extracted the type of skills involved in what the EUREGIO was doing at different points in time. As we had no direct information on the actual skills present within the organization, we inferred the skills from the professional background of those individuals primarily responsible for achieving certain outcomes. This included individuals within the EUREGIO organization as well as external assistance enlisted by the EUREGIO. For instance, if a research institute was commissioned we reasoned that this was because the EUREGIO required analytical skills. If the individuals involved were primarily senior civil servants, this meant political skills were deployed. Finally, the use of 'framers' (Campbell 2004) such as lobbyists and media experts indicated cultural skills.

As we had indications that the EUREGIO was active in several fields, we explored its field context at different points by first determining whether an event had a field-wide impact or whether it was of merely local relevance. For all field-wide events we then determined which field was most relevant for informing an event. To identify and differentiate fields, we adapted the above definition of fields to this specific public sector case. A policy field can accordingly be defined as a set of dominant policy-makers, policy addressees and constituencies, as well as public and private organizations engaging in advisory, technical and advocacy activities. Using this definition to identify fields, we were able to code events according to which fields were mainly affected.

To establish regularities over times, we used a simple periodization technique. We divided our time line of events into five-year periods to identify concentrations of specific event attributes at specific periods. For instance, to decide which projects were relevant for the institutional entrepreneurs at specific points in time, we counted the number of times a specific project type

appeared within each five-year sub-period. Without taking the results for granted in a pseudo-objectivist manner that would be inappropriate for this type of data, we used this as a heuristic for understanding time-based regularities.

Case study background

After 1945, many border areas in Europe faced significant development problems as they lacked infrastructures and market access opportunities due to the barrier effects exerted by borders. The Dutch-German border area was no exception to this (Goinga 1995: 20). To address these economic problems, small regional alliances of local authorities formed, two on the Dutch side and one on the German side. At first informal and later formalized, these inter-municipal associations addressed issues such as the restructuring in the textile sector, the improvement of transport infrastructures and the solicitation of resources from central government (Malchus 1972). From the 1950s onwards, cross-border contacts among the associations intensified as they decided to collaborate on specific issues regardless of their national affiliation. This occurred despite the fact that there was no existing legal or administrative template to pursue such cross-border work.

Such issue-focused cross-border co-operation slowly congealed into an organization, the EUREGIO. A board (the 'Working Group') was established in 1966, a 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 across Europe. The main 'target' of this informal transnational interest group was the Council of Europe (CoE), a supranational European body unrelated to the EU that was leading efforts to create an integrated Europe. The CoE had a transnational parliamentary assembly that provided an arena for local authority interests.

A series of studies and reports were carried out to substantiate the EUREGIO model. While a 1970 report focused on socio-cultural co-operation, in 1971 an economic 'structural analysis' was carried out with funding from the European Commission and German and Dutch ministries. The study proposed a bundle of measures 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 model.

While pursuing this policy strategy work, the EUREGIO became increasingly consolidated as an organization. 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 administrative offices were merged into a single secretariat. 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).

Efforts had continued on the international level. In 1971, the trans-European interest group then comprising nine members was formalized as the 'Association of European Border Regions' (AEBR). A leading EUREGIO figure became its first president. Via the AEBR, the EUREGIO 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 a renowned North Rhine-Westphalia spatial planner 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. With AEBR support, in 1980 the CoE approved an international treaty on trans-border co-operation.

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

As the relevance of the EU had increased from 1975 onwards, the AEBR began to focus its efforts more strongly on the EU. In 1988, the European Commission provided funding to the EUREGIO to 'pilot' a bundle of cross-border measures. Based on this pilot project, in 1990 the EU launched a major programme, 'Interreg', designed to support Euroregions as 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 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. 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. The EUREGIO/AEBR actors had succeeded in popularising the use of the 'Euroregion' organizational form among countless local and regional authorities across Europe.

Figure 1 About Here

Analysis and findings

Projects

Our first research question was what projects institutional entrepreneurs pursue to generate and propagate a new organizational form. Applying our coding scheme to the data, we found that the EUREGIO actors engaged in a variety of projects.

A first type of projects consisted of *interactional* projects which were aimed at bringing actors together who were not previously connected. For instance, this included the establishment of *networks* among a number of municipalities in the early period of the EUREGIO. The resulting collective action platforms pursued common interests such as promoting economic development and lobbying for better transport links. Their main objective was to mobilize resources from external agencies such as national governments. For instance, the coalition influenced a national motorway project so that it would connect the EUREGIO area with the wider transport network (i6). Further interactional projects included efforts to manage the collective action platform by increasing its organizational capacity. This became a 'crystallizing organization' (Rao 1998) representing the interests of the network of members. Negotiations were held as to how the organization was to be funded, resulting in the introduction of a membership fee, voluntarily agreed by the members of the participating network.

These interactional projects were significant because they challenged existing institutionalized routines. While establishing collective action among municipalities *within* national contexts was common practice, c*ross-border* linkages were new. This was indicated by the fact that they had to resort to 'unorthodox' methods. One interviewee stated: 'The German partners accounted for public expenses on Dutch territory which not strictly speaking legal … Yet they all felt they were acting in the common interest and hence nobody contested this practice' (i6). The participants realized that forming a cross-border coalition (and hence going beyond existing practice) would improve their advocacy impact on central government and European agencies.

Separately, the EUREGIO also pursued technical projects aimed at conceptualising the way it operated as an organization. The EUREGIO sought to differentiate itself from another model for organising cross-border co-operation propagated across Europe. In contrast to these 'Working Communities' (Perkmann 1999), the EUREGIO model allowed municipalities, as opposed to larger regional authorities, to participate in border space management (Malchus 1972: 50). As no

legal framework for such international 'grass-roots' co-operation existed, the EUREGIO focused on constructing a robust model. It addressed the questions as to what legal framework should be adopted, how strategizing should be conducted and how resources 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 alternative organizational forms. In the words of one early participant, this had to include 'a better way of managing public funds spent for developing borders areas and creating integrated cross-border economic spaces as growth hubs' (i2). These elements were generated in a series of studies and action programmes published by the EUREGIO in 1970, 1971 and 1987.

The evidence suggests that the EUREGIO also engaged in cultural projects by linking the novel 'cross-border region' entity to wider values and norms. Firstly, the EUREGIO and its AEBR international branch lobbied the European Commission to launch an EU-wide policy programme (Interreg) designed to support cross-border regions. They argued that cross-border regions were coherent with the overall values and objectives of EU regional policies. The success of this strategy was indicated by the fact that within successive versions of Interreg, the model for organizing cross-border regions recommended within the programme became increasingly similar to the one pioneered by the EUREGIO (i17). To support this policy change, the AEBR presented its case to politicians in the European Parliament by framing the Euroregion within the wider discourse of European integration: Euroregions were presented as constituting European integration on a 'small scale' and building a Europe 'from below' (Goinga 1995). These activities of the AEBR were so successful that border regions were explicitly mentioned in the text of the European Constitutional Treaty in 2004.

The EUREGIO also sought to popularize the Euroregion among local politicians and civil servants. An 'observatory' with branches at various European locations was established. EUREGIO and AEBR representatives sought out speaking and consulting engagements across

Europe. 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. In many of these activities, Euroregions were framed as an important element of deepening European Integration. Its benefits 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 'healing the scars of history [i.e. borders]', 'reducing the risk of armed conflicts' (i6) and accomplishing 'a first step towards the unification of European states' (Partl 1986: 90). By framing Euroregions in this way, the EUREGIO infused a technical model with the broader values of European integration.

Our findings demonstrate the multiplicity of the projects pursued by the EUREGIO actors. In addition, we also found time-related regularities. Applying our periodization technique to the type of projects pursued at specific points in time, we found that in the first ten years (1954-1964) predominantly interactional projects were pursued (Figure 2). By contrast, for each of the three five-year periods from 1965 onwards, at least half of the key events were the result of predominantly technical projects while the other half remained predominantly interactional. Finally, while interactional and technical projects continued to be present in varying degrees, from 1990 onwards we note a stronger presence of predominantly cultural projects.

Figure 2 About Here

We conclude that the efforts to propagate a new organizational form involved several types of projective agency. We found evidence that the EUREGIO engaged in interactional, technical as well as cultural projects. Moreover, we note that different types of projects appear to be prominent at different points in time. Initially the focus was on interactional projects such as building networks and coalitions. Then the EUREGIO focused on technical projects such as

building a formal model of the Euroregion organizational form while later the focus was on cultural projects such as framing the organizational form within wider popular discourses on European integration.

Skills

Alongside the types of projects, we explored the skills deployed in this episode of institutional entrepreneurship. We used the background of individuals driving specific projects to identify skills used at varying points in time. In the period dominated by interactional projects, the main protagonists were senior civil servants at key municipalities. As one of our interviewees noted: 'It was civil servants who started cross-border co-operation; the politicians only joined them later … ' (i5). These early initiators contested existing administrative templates (purely national municipal associations) and convinced others that this was in the common interest. The underpinning skills are political skills in that they involved the ability to form networks, broker interests and mobilize resources (Garud et al, 2002). Even though the main actors were senior civil servants, who subsequently enlisted their politician superiors, they acted *politically* in the sense that they went beyond what administrative routines prescribed.

The institutional entrepreneurs also relied on the skill sets of social scientists and policy specialists, i.e. skills typically embodied in specific professional communities (Strang and Meyer 1993). These skills were acquired by establishing links with spatial planners at ILS, a spatial planning research institute in Dortmund, Germany, and technical staff at the CoE and the EU. They assisted the EUREGIO in formally modelling and theorizing the institution. For instance, a report by the spatial planner, Malchus (1972: 131), criticized inter-governmental commissions for actually inhibiting local border region development, and called for the creation of a 'new organizational form' to inform local initiatives.

Finally, the EUREGIO also relied on *cultural* skills for framing the institution in a way that appealed to a wider audience of potential supporters and adopters (Ansell 1997). This is demonstrated by the fact that it began to enlist 'framers' (Campbell 2004). For instance, in 1990s, the newly established LACE unit in Brussels relied on people with a background in lobbying and press communications (i18). External consultants were employed to translate the EUREGIO's material into a manual of cross-border communication (i8).

Analysing the temporal succession of skills deployed by the EUREGIO, we note an increasing complexity of skill sets used over time. While in an early stage, the skills underlying key events were predominantly political, later the EUREGIO increasingly enlisted analytical and cultural skills. Dividing the event history into ten five-year periods, the EUREGIO began using technical skills only significantly from the fourth period onwards, while significant cultural skills were being deployed from period seven onwards.

In sum, we found that the institutional entrepreneurs deployed a variety of skills which can be synthesized into three categories: political, analytical and cultural. Moreover, we detected a temporal regularity analogue to our finding on projects: while initially the emphasis was on political skills, later technical and subsequently cultural skills were increasingly prominent.

Fields

Our coding revealed three field contexts in which the actors operated: the field of intergovernmental relationships (i.e. between Germany and the Netherlands), the field dominated by the CoE, and the field dominated by the EU. These are distinct policy fields with different dominant policy makers and policy addressees, but also diverse regulatory environments, resource logics and administration cultures. The EU and CoE were both European-wide policy fields yet they constituted the focus of distinct European integration 'industries' – the CoE favouring politico-legal integration, the EU economic integration. Our analysis of key events shows (Table

1) that there is brief focus on German-Dutch intergovernmental relationships in the early seventies, followed by increasing attempts to work with the CoE. Finally, from the mid-eighties onwards the EUREGIO almost exclusively focused on the EU. In the following, we provide an interpretation of these patterns.

Initially, widening its focus from local experiments, the EUREGIO positioned itself in the context of German-Dutch inter-governmental relationships. It attempted to play a stronger role in a field of inter-state co-ordination that was dominated by so-called 'inter-governmental commissions'. These bodies had little contact with local actors yet were responsible for managing border spaces. For instance, the EUREGIO managed to carve out a role for itself in the area of cross-border spatial planning (i6).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the CoE was an important player engaged in driving European integration, and the EUREGIO was seeking to add cross-border co-operation to its agenda. It lobbied specific CoE commissions dealing with local matters, and was later involved in drafting the 'Madrid Convention' among European nations aimed at formally instituting cross-border regions. Yet, the convention remained rather toothless, as a EUREGIO functionary confirmed: 'The convention was a tragedy. It damaged our relationship with the CoE and we decided to move on with our agenda …' (i5).

In the meantime, the EU had risen as a well-funded competitor to the CoE's integration project. The EU launched 'regional policies' addressed at marginalized territories, and the EUREGIO actors re-oriented their field-wide efforts. They took advantage of several grants to carry out studies in the 1970s and 1980s and over time re-aligned their model to fit the EU's requirements for receiving policy support. Simultaneously, the EU asked the EUREGIO to assist in drafting specific policies to support cross-border policies, as documented by a series of policy strategy papers co-authored by AEBR and EU.

These patterns reinforce the view that emerging fields offer considerable scope for institutional entrepreneurship (Lawrence, 1999), particularly for smaller marginal players (Fligstein 1996; Hensmans 2003; Maguire et al 2004). We note, however, that the promoters of the Euro-region repeatedly and systematically sought out new and expanding fields. Once a field showed signs of maturity or relative decline, the champions of the Euroregion 'moved' to newly emerging fields offering new opportunities. 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 address relatively underdeveloped fields, its champions ensured their organizational form would insert itself into the agenda of field-dominating organizations.

Summarising, our findings suggest that the maturity of a field placed limits on institutional entrepreneurship while emerging fields provided significant opportunities for the EUREGIO to pursue its change projects. Our case shows that institutional entrepreneurs can repeatedly capture such opportunities via *field switching*. The promoters of the Euroregion exploited opportunities arising in various fields. 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.

Discussion

Our findings provide new insights into how institutional entrepreneurs create and propagate new organizational forms. Firstly, we clarify what type of projects institutional entrepreneurs undertake. While some authors see institutional entrepreneurs as political actors pursing interactional projects (DiMaggio 1998), others emphasize technical projects such as theorization

(Greenwood et al 2002) while yet others regard them mainly as 'framers' engaging in cultural projects (Rao 1998; Creed et al 2002; Lounsbury et al 2003). By showing that institutional entrepreneurship is a multi-dimensional activity involving each of these three forms of projective agency, we provide empirical support for recent accounts pointing to the diversity of 'institutional work' (Lawrence and Suddaby 2006).

Secondly, we examined the skills used by institutional entrepreneurs. Existing literature has identified a range of such skills, including political skills (Garud et al 2002), analytical skills (Beckert 1999), and cultural skills (Ansell 1997). As opposed to singling out specific types of skill as a key trait of institutional entrepreneurs (Fligstein 1997), our analysis suggests that they are in fact multi-skilled. Finally, we generated new insights into how institutional entrepreneurs engage with their field environments. Existing studies suggest the maturity of an organizational field as a vital determinant for institutional entrepreneurship. It is claimed that institutional entrepreneurs are either dominating actors transforming 'their' mature field (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006), or marginal actors seeking to influence developments in newly emerging or crisis-ridden fields (Fligstein 1996; Hensmans 2003; Maguire et al 2004). Our analysis suggests that institutional entrepreneurs can be more opportunistic in their attempts to draw capital from the institutional innovations they pioneered. As fields matured and opportunities for influence decreased, the EUREGIO actors sought out other relatively young fields. This suggests that while institutional entrepreneurs may be constrained by the maturity of a field, they may seek to loosen these constraints by seeking to position their projects repeatedly in new fields.

Our findings have wider implications for how we theorize institutional entrepreneurship. While existing work has explored the conditions under which institutional entrepreneurship occurs, as well as its impacts on institutions, our knowledge of how it unfolds as a *process* is incomplete. Existing process accounts typically capture what happens to institutions over time, and not the agency dimension underlying those processes. For instance, extending Tolbert and Zucker's

model (1996), Greenwood and Hinings (2006) argue that institutionalization involves the stages of precipitating jolts, de-institutionalization, pre-institutionalization, theorization, diffusion and institutionalization. For them, institutional entrepreneurship occurs primarily during the de-institutionalization stage. This is consistent with our findings on the early years of the EUREGIO. Yet institutional entrepreneurship was also an important part of the later technical elaboration of the Euroregion ('theorization'), and its cultural propagation ('diffusion'). This suggests it occurs in a number of different moments throughout the institutionalization process.

Importantly, we found that the nature of institutional entrepreneurship changes in a particular order as institutionalization proceeds. An initial emphasis on interactional projects was followed by an increasing importance of technical and later cultural projects. Institutional entrepreneurship can therefore be conceptualized as a multidimensional process where project types and skills are successively added to the existing ones over time (Table 2).

Table 2 About Here

To explain why institutional entrepreneurship unfolds over time in this particular way, we propose a process model that views the institutional entrepreneur as a developing organisation. The first stage involves an organization-building process, driven by a network of actors pursuing interests that are not served by using existing institutional forms. They are hence likely to breach certain norms and choose novel and unorthodox methods to pursue their goals via 'mindful deviation' (Garud and Karnøe 2001). Establishing an organization in this way requires networking and the mobilization of resources (Aldrich 1979), reflecting our interactional project dimension.

If the local experiment proves successful, the institutional entrepreneur has generated a relatively unique organizational 'template' that can potentially be deployed to solve certain problems

elsewhere. The awareness of the potential value of this template might lead the entrepreneur to invest in its further development via conceptual substantiation and formalization. The result is that it embarks on technical projects, enabled through the acquisition or sourcing of analytical skills.

In a further stage, the institutional entrepreneur broadens its field-wide activities by promoting the diffusion of the proposed model and actively driving isomorphic adoption by other organizations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). This involves presenting the organization as a prototype for further replication (Colomy 1998), addressing potential adopters and emphasising adoption benefits not unlike a social movement organization (Zald and Ash 1966). In addition, it seeks to influence field-dominating agencies and organizations and improve resource-flows towards the novel category of organizations. This corresponds to our cultural project dimension, enabled by the development or sourcing of cultural skills.

In such a scenario, field-switching strategies can be explained as the organization's attempt to further the impact of its main asset, i.e. the institutional innovation it developed. If it perceives opportunities in other fields, it will attempt to extend or transfer its institutional innovation into that field. Demand for an institutional solution might for instance be indicated by the fact that a new organizational template can help address issues problematized by actors in other fields (Callon 1986).

Conclusion

This study helps us paint a more consistent picture of the emergence and spread of new organizational forms. We found that this involved a multi-dimensional process of institutional entrepreneurship, involving political, technical and cultural projects. Furthermore, each of these projects required significantly different skills. Finally, we found that institutional entrepreneurs seek to deploy new organizational forms not just in their 'home fields' but are able to switch into

newly emerging fields to take advantage of institution-building opportunities. Our analysis also suggests time-based regularities, involving an initial focus on interactional projects which are later complemented by an increased focus on technical and cultural projects, each matched by different skill requirements. From this we derived the outline of a process theory of institutional entrepreneurship that explains this sequentiality by conceptualising the institutional entrepreneur as a developing organization seeking to diffuse an innovation it pioneered.

While this paper makes some contributions, we would like to acknowledge some limitations of our study and highlight fruitful areas of further research. Firstly, our account might be limited to the emergence of new organizational forms. Institutional entrepreneurs seeking to change other kinds of institutions might mobilize very different projects and skills. Promoters of technical standards might first perfect a technology by mobilising their analytical skills before they seek to bring people together around that technology using their political skills (Garud et al, 2002). It would therefore be interesting to consider whether institutional entrepreneurs seeking to change other kinds of institutions deploy projects and skills in the same sequence. Either way, further research could also address the conditions that enable the institutional entrepreneur to change their emphasis from one type of project towards another one, and to acquire the necessary skills.

A second limitation is that we focused on a case where the institutional innovators who pioneered a new institution were identical with the institutional entrepreneurs who propagated it. In other instances, institutional entrepreneurs might appropriate innovations from other actors, and then pursue institutionalization (eg. Greenwood and Suddaby, 2006). This means while political and technical projects would be carried out by others, the institutional entrepreneur would largely focus on the cultural project of propagating the institutional innovation. The question therefore is how different projects are divided between institutional innovators and institutional entrepreneurs, and whether 'distributed' institutional entrepreneurship is possible, with some actors specializing in undertaking certain projects and mobilizing certain skills.

A third limitation of our case is that we focused on an 'outsider' rather than a field-dominating incumbent. When changes are driven by central actors, there might be less initial emphasis on the interactional dimension and more emphasis on the technical dimension. This is because the main challenge for an incumbent entrepreneur is to deinstitutionalize entrenched practices via theorizing (Greenwood et al 2002). In other situations, the institutional entrepreneur might be working against competitors (Colomy 1998) and have to gain widespread acceptance of their model through cultural projects before they seek to technically formalize the model. Thus, the question is how the field position of institutional entrepreneurs contributes to inform what projects and skills they mobilize and their sequential order.

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Appendix: Interview codes

i1   Provincie Overijssel, Zwolle (NL)

i2   Landkreis Grafschaft Bentheim, Nordhorn (DE)

i3   Ministerie van Economische Zaken, Regio Oost, Arnhem (NL)

i4   Bezirkregierung Weser-Ems, Oldenburg (DE)

i5   EUREGIO/AEBR, Gronau (DE)

i6   Bezirksregierung, Münster (DE)

i7   Regio Acherhoek (NL)

i8   EUREGIO, Gronau (DE)

i9   Landkreis Steinfurt, Steinfurt (DE)

i10 Investitionsbank Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (DE)

i11 Ministry of Economics, North Rhine-Westphalia, Düsseldorf (DE)

i12 Kreis Borken, Bocholt (DE)

i13 European Commission, DG16, INTERREG II/c, 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

i21 ILS Spatial Planning Institute, Dortmund (DE)

i22 EUREGIO, Gronau (DE)

i23 Euroregion Viadrina, Frankfurt/Oder (DE)

Table 1: Coding of key events

Year	Events/Outcomes	Project		Skill		Field
1954	Community of Interests Rhein-Ems (DE) established among German municipalities, first usage of 'EUREGIO' as a name	I		P		Local
1958	Dutch and German municipalities decide to formally pursue cross-border co-operation	I		P		Local
1960	Belangengemeenschap-Twente-Oost Gelderland (NL) established as municipal association	I		P		Local
1961	Foundation Streekbelangen Oost Gelderland" (NL) established as municipal association	I		P		Local
1962	Formal municipal association Rhein-Ems succeeds Community of Interest Rhein-Ems (DE)	I		P		Local
1965	First cross-border trade show; EUREGIO 'Working Group' established as permanent executive body	I		P		Local
1966	Committee on Local Authorities: first draft for international convention on cross-border co-operation	T		A		CoE
1970	Commission established for co-ordinating co-operation in cultural matters (with funding from central governments)	I		P		Inter-Gov
	Study on socio-cultural co-operation, funded by German and Dutch governments	T		A		Inter-Gov
1971	Full-time functionaries appointed to lead secretariats of the three member municipal associations	I		P		Local
	Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) founded during a ceremony in the EUREGIO	I		P		CoE
	Publication of first cross-border economic	T		A		Inter-Gov

	policy action programme for the EUREGIO, funded by central governments						
1972	AEBR organizes First European Conference of Border Regions in Strasbourg	T		A			CoE
1975	EUREGIO Statute ratified by its members	C		C			Local
1975	AEBR organizes Second European Conference of Border Regions in Innsbruck	T		A			CoE
	AEBR Scientific Committee established, headed by spatial planner close to EUREGIO	T		A			Local
	AEBR participates in drawing up of a Council of Europe convention	T		A			CoE
1977	Dutch EUREGIO secretariats merged	I		P			
1978	Local parliamentary assembly established (EUREGIO Council)	I		P			Local
1980	Launch of Council of Europe Convention on cross-border co-operation	T		A			CoE
1981	Establishment of 'Liaison Office' in the CoE Secretary General's office under participation of AEBR	I		P			CoE
1984	AEBR organizes 3rd European Conference of Border Regions (at EUREGIO location)	T		A			ECo
1985	Dutch and German EUREGIO secretariats merged to single agency	I		P			Local
	EUREGIO Steering committee established with participation of EU and DE/NL government agencies' to elaborate 20-year economic development strategy	T		A			Inter-Gov, EU
1987	Cross-border 'action programme' for EUREGIO presented	T		A			Local
1989	EUREGIO obtains funding from EU for cross-border co-operation pilot programme	I		P			EU
1990	AEBR establishes 'Observatory for Cross-border Co-operation in Europe' (supported by	C		C			EU

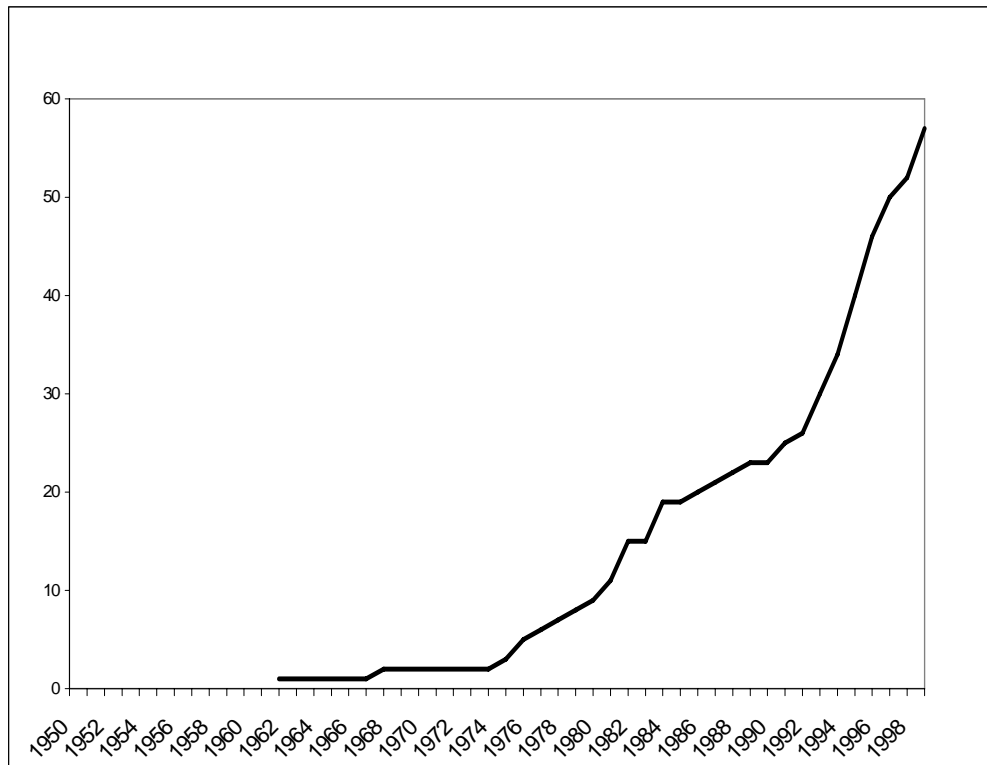|				
	EU)			
1991	EUREGIO obtains EU Interreg funds	I	P	EU
	AEBR starts annual series of workshops across Europe attended by large number of local authority representatives	C	C	EU
1993	'EUREGIO Forum' established, with geographically extended membership, almost doubling its size	I	P	EU
1996	AEBR Observatory re-launched; consulting activities for roll-out of cross-border regions in Eastern Europe	C	C	EU
1998	EUREGIO head nominated full-time head of AEBR	C	C	Local
	AEBR elaborates working documents on behalf of EU Commission for follow-up version of Interreg programme	T	A	EU
2004	Border regions included in the European Constitutional Treaty, as a result of lobbying activity by AEBR	C	C	EU

Abbreviations: I: interactional, T: technical, C: cultural, P: political, A: analytical

AEBR: Association of European Border Regions; CoE: Council of Europe; EU: European Union

Table 2: Projects and skills in institutional entrepreneurship

Project	Activities	Skills	Outcome
Interactional	Networking, Resource mobilization Organization building	Political	Innovative organisational form
Technical	Studying Analyzing Designing	Analytical	Theorization of organizational form
Cultural	Framing Propagating Advising Teaching	Cultural	Diffusion of organizational form

Figure 1: Cross-border regions in Europe

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

Figure 2: Projects types within different five-year periods