The Determinants of Transnational Cooperation Within the Framework of the Interreg Programme

Master thesis 2016 – Some of the major results in a nutshell

Christoph Petry

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European cohesion under pressure?

“*We need more Union in our Europe.*”

Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, in his speech on the State of the Union, 2015.
What makes INTERREG so interesting

Partners from **multiple levels** of governance...

cooperate **across borders** in project teams

... and get **money from the EU** for that.

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**Partnerships:**
Joint actions and policy exchanges between actors to address common challenges.
Main research question

What determines the partnership of European transnational cooperation projects within the framework of the Interreg programme?
Two cases of analysis: North Sea and Baltic Sea Region

A

- 7 countries
- Homogenous
- co-financing: 50%

B

- 11 countries
- Heterogeneous
- co-financing: 75% (West)
  85% (East)
A mixed methods analysis

1. Network analysis
   - 2007-2013 period
   - 2014-2020 period (first call)
   - 3108 project partners in 215 projects

2. Expert interviews
   - 11 experts interviewed (anonymized)
   - North Sea and Baltic Sea Region
   - Two types of interview partners
Focus on three explanatory dimensions

- Administrative dimension
- Social dimension
- Value dimension
North Sea Region – Network analysis

Interreg North Sea Region: 2007-2013

Interreg North Sea Region: 2014-2020 (first call)
Baltic Sea Region – Network analysis

Interreg Baltic Sea Region: 2007-2013

Interreg Baltic Sea Region: 2014-2020 (first call)
Important factors with respect to the administrative dimension

Application procedure
To what extend is it perceived as complex and time consuming.

Expertise
Involvement of external consultants.

Alternatives
Other funding instruments that might be available.

But: These factors themselves do not sufficiently explain determinants of transnational cooperation.
Important factors with respect to the social dimension

**Mutual trust**
For instance through pre-existing connections.

**Type of project issue**
There has to be a “real problem”.

**Individual competences**
Such as openness towards partners from foreign countries.
Important factors with respect to the value dimension

Co-financing: for universities of primary interest
Informal connections: highlighted by others

Project partners and lead partners

‘Soft values’ (informal networks, learning outcomes)
‘Hard values’ (investments, ERDF co-financing)

Distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ values (Dühr & Nadin, 2007)
Important factors with respect to the value dimension

- **North Sea Region:** Hard values seem to be less important
- **Baltic Sea Region:** Hard values seem to be more important

Distinction between ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ values (*Dühr & Nadin, 2007*)

Policy advisors

‘Soft values’ (informal networks, learning outcomes)

‘Hard values’ (investments, ERDF co-financing)
Discussion of three determinants for transnational cooperation within INTERREG

- **Administrative dimension**: Administrative capabilities of lead and project partners.

- **Social dimension**: Mutual trust and experience in working together.

- **Value dimension**: Depends on the individual actor and cooperation programme.
Conclusion

“Interreg is a bit like Erasmus – for organizations.”

Quote from an Interviewed expert
Thank you for your attention!

christoph.petry@posteo.de

https://www.linkedin.com/in/christoph-petry-b398b511b/

References:
- Cf. master thesis Christoph Petry (2016).
- Pictures retrieved from Pixabay, Wikipedia, Interreg BSR and NSR.