

Foreword

Networks have always been used in any context. Politicians and careerists build their personal networks of power, students cultivate their Facebook network, and entrepreneurs build networks to find investors and customers as well as employees. In the last 20 years, formally structured and administered networks, cluster organizations, and the like have been established for many contexts. Regional developers and network administrators are proud of having the largest number of registered network participants and clicks on their internet platform. However, what ultimately counts are the real business contacts that lead to additional sales, sustainable supplier-relationships, or to innovation projects leading to sustainable competitive advantages for companies and regions. This still occurs through ad-hoc networks, i.e. networks that are informal and arise ad-hoc.

Thomas Bentivegna focuses in his Master Thesis on these ad-hoc networks, which are poorly represented in existing network and innovation literature. His work capitalizes on a collection of in-depth interviews conducted by a project team of the KARIM project, which is an INTERREG IV B project for the region of North West Europe run by the European Community. KARIM stands for Knowledge Acceleration Responsible Innovation Metanetwork. One of the actions taken in the project is to visualize ad-hoc innovation networks in an interactive tool allowing regional developers and SME managers to identify new approaches in running innovation projects and to learn from other companies and innovation support agencies in different regions. In his work, Mr. Bentivegna develops a methodology to cluster the qualitative interview data to finally identify seven types of ad-hoc innovation networks.

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