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Analysis of service transfer within the CONNECT transnational innovation network
Case Nordic countries

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Analysis of service transfer within the CONNECT transnational innovation network: Case Nordic countries
The CONNECT service transfer analysis reported here is part of BECSI (Business ecosystems and platforms for innovations) project. The aim of the project is to enhance Finnish innovation systems and innovation policy by analysing world-class innovation environments and ecosystem cases from different levels: Smart cities as innovation platforms, Health and Life Science ecosystems and emerging small business ecosystems. BECSI project is granted by TEKES – the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation through 2013 innovation research thematic call “Ecosystems, spillovers and new policy approaches”.

This report is part of BECSI project’s Work Package 4 (WP4) Health & Life Sciences Ecosystem Cases task 4.1: San Diego health and life sciences ecosystem study. The purpose of the WP4 is to study theme-specific “local-global” ecosystems that engage both public and private actors in a wide Public-Private Partnership (PPP)-network and to analyse their growth drivers’ transferability into Finnish context. The research activities included screening case studies, transferability analyses, road-mapping and research exchange.

CONNECT was founded in 1985 in San Diego, USA. The organisation has been very successful in catalysing new innovations in the region. However, there is insufficient knowledge about the transferability of the CONNECT to other business contexts at the international level. To fill this gap, this study first describes the service portfolio of CONNECT in San Diego and global CONNECT activities. Then, the study analyses the results of the CONNECT transfer activities at the Nordic level from Swedish and Norwegian perspectives. By doing so, it is possible to compare the current service portfolio of CONNECT with the service portfolios of the currently active Nordic CONNECT organisations. This is also a good way to see to which extent services developed by CONNECT have been implemented in the Nordic context and to what extent. As Sweden and Norway are both culturally and geographically close to Finland, it is, to certain extent, possible to reflect the transferability potential of CONNECT to Finland through the experiences in these countries.

The results of this study show that Springboard is the only service that has been licensed from San Diego to Sweden and Norway. Other services have mainly been developed by local CONNECT organisations. Despite collaboration between different entities, CONNECT can be considered a relatively loose international network. Tighter collaboration would require dedicated leadership and sufficient funding. Finally, geographical distances and cultural differences can also be considered barriers for international collaboration.

Keywords: CONNECT, innovation, services, network, transferability, business ecosystem
# Table of contents

Abstract

Table of contents

1 Introduction

1.1 CONNECT in San Diego

1.1.1 CONNECT service portfolio

1.1.2 Introduction to CONNECT flagship service: The Springboard

1.2 CONNECT – a self-organised transnational network of innovation

2 Method

3 CONNECT in Nordic countries

3.1 CONNECT in Sweden

3.1.1 Background

3.1.2 CONNECT Sverige today

3.1.3 Service portfolio

3.1.4 The future of CONNECT Sverige

3.2 CONNECT in Norway

3.2.1 Background

3.2.2 CONNECT Norge today

3.2.3 Service portfolio

3.2.4 The future of CONNECT Norge

4 CONNECT service transfer

4.1 Sweden

4.1.1 The role of global CONNECT network in Swedish context

4.1.2 Service transfer to and development in Sweden

4.1.3 Service transfer from Sweden to other contexts

4.1.4 Swedish suggestions for CONNECT service transfer to Finland

4.2 Norway

4.2.1 The role of global CONNECT network in Norwegian context

4.2.2 Service transfer to and development in Norway

4.2.3 Service transfer from Norway to other contexts

4.2.4 Norwegian suggestions for CONNECT service transfer to Finland

5 Discussion

5.1 Answers to the research questions

5.2 Concluding remarks

Appendix

References
1 Introduction

The CONNECT service transfer analysis presented in this report is part of BECSI (Business ecosystems and platforms for innovations) project. The aim of the project is to enhance Finnish innovation systems and innovation policy by analysing world-class innovation environments and ecosystem cases from different levels: Smart cities as innovation platforms, Health and Life Sciences ecosystems and emerging small business ecosystems. BECSI project is granted by TEKES – the Finnish Funding Agency for Innovation through 2013 innovation research thematic call “Ecosystems, spillovers and new policy approaches”\(^1\).

Business growth models have received academic interest over many decades (Muhos et al. 2010). The importance of external stakeholders and different type of networks for innovation has also been acknowledged; yet, business ecosystem concept is relatively new in academic research (Majava et al. 2013; Majava et al. 2015). The BECSI project considers the role of regional and urban innovation platforms as a breeding ground for emerging and growing business ecosystems around future innovations and real economic activity. The project is focused on two levels including the city level and the business ecosystem level. This report is focused on the business ecosystem level. At the ecosystem level the project seeks to clarify how to nurture existing and emerging business ecosystems and how to transform ecosystems to prevent loss of intellectual and tangible assets. It is important to understand how existing (public) platforms can be more effectively used as a source of new growth, how to scale domestic innovations to an international level both technically and commercially, to identify the key catalysts of growth in the world-class health and life sciences ecosystems and how to transfer those to Finnish context, and understand the micro- and local level success mechanisms and their potential to transform national policies. A lot of potential for new knowledge exists in this research field.

This report is part of BECSI project’s Work Package 4 (WP4) Health & Life Sciences Ecosystem Cases task 4.1: “San Diego health and life sciences ecosystem study.” The purpose of the WP4 is to study theme-specific “local-global” ecosystems that engage both public and private actors in a wide Public-Private Partnership (PPP)-network and to analyse their growth drivers’ transferability into Finnish context. The research activities included screening case studies, transferability analyses, road-mapping, and research exchange.

This report focuses on CONNECT network. The CONNECT was founded in 1985 and was originally a part of the University of California (UC) San Diego. At that time, the traditional industries in the region were declining and region leaders were seeking

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\(^1\) www.becsi.fi
economic renewal. Currently the organisation is primarily funded by industry, professional service providers, research institutions and venture capital (VC) firms. Today more than 600 Life Science Companies operate in San Diego, and the regional CONNECT program still catalyses the creation of innovative technology and life sciences products by linking innovators, investors and entrepreneurs with the resources they need. To date, the organisation has assisted the formation and development of more than 3,000 companies. CONNECT concepts have been licensed to multiple continents and countries at the international level through global activities. To date, CONNECT has been active in more than 20 countries. In this report, CONNECT refers to CONNECT in San Diego, whereas global CONNECT refers to international activities.

CONNECT activities in San Diego have inevitably generated strong results at the local level. However, not enough knowledge exists about the transferability of the CONNECT to other international business contexts. To fill this gap, this study first describes the service portfolio of CONNECT and its global activities. Second, this study analyses the results of the CONNECT transfer activities at the Nordic level from Swedish and Norwegian perspectives. By doing so, it is possible to compare the current service portfolio of CONNECT with the service portfolios of the currently active Nordic CONNECT organisations. This also enables to analyse which services developed by CONNECT have been implemented in the Nordic context and to what extent. As Sweden and Norway are both culturally and geographically close to Finland, this report enables to reflect the transferability potential of CONNECT to Finnish context. The research aim and problem described above can be condensed into the following research questions:

1. How did the Scandinavian business contexts became members of CONNECT’s transnational innovation network?
2. What is the role of CONNECT in the Scandinavian business contexts today?
3. What is the service portfolio offered under CONNECT umbrella in the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems and what is the relation of this portfolio to the key services of the original CONNECT in San Diego?
4. Which CONNECT services were transferred from the global CONNECT network to the Nordic business ecosystems and how? Which services were developed in the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems and how?
5. Which CONNECT services were transferred from the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems to the global network and how?

The first chapter of this report presents the background, motivation, research problem and research questions, and condensed description of CONNECT and global CONNECT services. The second chapter describes the research method. The third and the fourth chapters provide results and analysis of the two cases: CONNECT Sverige (Sweden) and CONNECT Norge (Norway). The fifth chapter, Discussion, answers to the research questions and provides implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

### 1.1 CONNECT in San Diego

According to (Laufer et al. 2014) the origins of CONNECT’s operations are found in San Diego, California, USA. Today, CONNECT has developed into a global and growing network. The foundation of CONNECT was laid in collaboration with research,
entrepreneurship, risk capital, service providers and large companies. It was essential to build bridges among these actors. This became the starting point for CONNECT.

CONNECT web site provides a condensed introduction of the organisation².

“CONNECT was founded by UC San Diego as an internal department when the City of San Diego was at a crossroads. Regional leaders were searching for a path to economic renewal and sustained growth; innovative high-tech and life sciences companies, such as Cubic Corporation, Linkabit (predecessor of Qualcomm), SAIC, and Hybritech, were in the early stages of development; and the Torrey Pines Mesa was a growing hotbed of research. Amidst this convergence of factors UC San Diego, in partnership with the San Diego Regional EDC and private sector businesses, recognized this as an opportunity to establish an organization to transform San Diego’s growing research capabilities into an economic driver to increase the prosperity of the region. Thus, in 1985-1986, CONNECT, one of the nation’s first start-up accelerators, was born.

In 2005, to better serve the vast and growing research community, CONNECT spun-out of UC San Diego to form a bifurcated organization - the CONNECT Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation, and the CONNECT Association, a 501(c)(6) trade organization. As a result, CONNECT has broadened its mandate to include public advocacy work on behalf of entrepreneurs and innovators through the Association.

Core to CONNECT’s growth and development is a culture of collaboration, fostered by CONNECT’s first director, Bill Otterson. Over the last thirty years CONNECT has assisted developing groups around specific innovation clusters and, as they become large and deep enough, spun them out as stand-alone organizations. CONNECT has assisted in fostering many organizations in San Diego over the years including BIOCOM, The San Diego Telecom Council (known today as EvoNexus/CommNexus), Athena San Diego, CleanTECH San Diego, The Wireless Life Sciences Alliance, and San Diego Sport Innovators (SDSI). CONNECT has also been recognized as a breakthrough organization by The New York Times, as well as Inc., Time, and Entrepreneur magazines.”

San Diego is historically known as a “navy town” with a large number of military installations and large defence contracting industry, as well as a popular vacation destination for tourists. The city does not have a significant history of strong commercial and industrial manufacturing, or agricultural sectors. Highly dependent on the federal government’s military installations and investments, it has been essentially a “small business” town for more than a century, creating local fortunes only recently. Building upon a research capacity that was linked to technology development during World War II, the region is now home to world-class technology clusters such as biotechnology and wireless communications. With a weak pre-existing industrial and civic establishment to accommodate, it grew its innovation system as a result of collective efforts of small business leaders. While socially inclusive and open in terms of information sharing, its culture has often been characterized as naïve and occasionally bordering on boosterism. (Walshok et al. 2013).

(Walshok & Shragge 2014) provide an extensive analysis of the establishment and early years of CONNECT. In the early 1980s, San Diego experienced the military sector decline, and traditional business development strategies seemed no longer effective. The

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² http://www.connect.org/about-connect
local economy was mainly based traditional real estate, defence, and tourism. The leaders in San Diego understood the need to extend the economy beyond traditional sectors. In addition, a gap between science and business existed. Despite strong basic research, interest in applications, technology transfer, and commercialisation was insufficient. Local business community had experience only in traditional industries. Furthermore, venture capital funds, equity bankers, and major financial institutions were lacking. The local business networks in technology industries were focused on government relations and procurement. Finally, professional and business services to support science-based innovation enterprises were missing.

To resolve the aforementioned issues, a formal support mechanism for start-ups was needed. University of California San Diego (UCSD) Program in technology and entrepreneurship was established. The program was soon renamed to UCSD CONNECT, and it targeted to develop contacts, social networks, and business services to support the new businesses. (Walshok & Shragge 2014)

(Walshok et al. 2014) defined CONNECT as Technology sector network in their literature-based classification of transnational networks of innovation. According to their analysis, the key characteristics of organising this type of network are business drive and self-organising. The purpose of such network is market growth and profitability improvement for the business community and it is financed by member dues and fees. The main metrics for such networks are the number of start-ups created and the increase of business transactions. These key characteristics make the distinction when compared to the Identity-based social networks, Government led networks and Civic and philanthropically enabled networks.

Self-organising networks, such as CONNECT, tend to be driven by local stakeholders, civic boosters, economic developers, as well as local businesses which have an interest in growing globally traded sectors in order to create wealth, jobs, and prosperity in a region (Walshok et al. 2014). The self-organising, primarily business-led networks have also, over the years, developed formal and informal linkages nationally and internationally to their counterparts. Within the USA, examples of self-organising networks include: The Council for Entrepreneurial Development in the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina; CONNECT, California; and Joint Venture Silicon Valley. Each of these represents locally-anchored, boundary-spanning networks of private sector firms, professional business providers, and investors, who come together for the sole purpose of promoting the growth of the regional innovation economy through science and technology start-ups. CONNECT is a great example of what these self-organising networks can achieve.

CONNECT can be considered very important for San Diego’s economy. CONNECT can be seen as an accelerator and catalyst of innovations, an organisation that connects scientists, entrepreneurs, and investors. Furthermore, it has evolved to become a lobbyist and promoter of San Diego businesses. The organisation also organises several education programs. In typical CONNECT events a lot of time is reserved for networking, which helps people to create and sustain connections.
1.1.1 CONNECT service portfolio

CONNECT’s key early services developed in the 1980’s included Meet the Entrepreneur and Meet the Researcher events, Financial forums, Springboards for Technology Startups, The Most Innovative New Products award, and various workshops that aimed to help scientists and business people share practices and insights in order to create beneficial relationships (Walshok & Shragge 2014). According to the informant 1 the key purpose of CONNECT is to be an accelerator in the South Californian business ecosystem:

“At this point we are an accelerator. We accelerate the commercialisation of technology and creation of skilled companies. That’s our role, I think the breath of the services that we provide, includes life sciences and technology companies where there are other networks that are basically supporting any software developers or software technology companies. There’s hardly anything that we couldn’t help.”

The ten key services that are offered by CONNECT today are described in the following table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key service</th>
<th>Condensed description of the service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Springboard</td>
<td>Springboard assists science and technology companies with marketing, financial, and strategic business advice. Since the establishment of the program in 1993, more than 3000 scientific and technological breakthroughs have been guided through the innovation process. Together, these companies have raised over $1.4 billion in capital. Spring-board is a free-of-charge program and accepts applications from technology and life sciences companies of all stages in the Southern California region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Springboard Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR)</td>
<td>CONNECT’s Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR) program provides one-on-one coaching by successful CEOs who have experience as a founder, raising capital, building a company through a growth phase and piloting an exit. CONNECT has a pool of highly-qualified individuals who volunteer their time to serve as Springboard EIRs and provide coaching and expert input to CONNECT’s Springboard Program, Most Innovative New Product Awards, Venture Roundtable and CONNECT’s Sport Innovator Capital Forum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Most Innovative New Product Awards (MIP)</td>
<td>CONNECT MIP is an annual tradition of honouring San Diego’s celebrities of innovation along with the new products launched within the last year. Companies can nominate their new product for the chance to compete for the exclusive title and honour of being named one of the most innovative new products in San Diego.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. CONNECT FrameWorks Workshops</td>
<td>The FrameWorks workshops are half-day professional development programs structured to provide an overview of business basics through CONNECT’s “Fundamentals”: a vocabulary, foundation and “framework” in which business leadership can be built around, and CONNECT ‘Advanced Workshops’: a focused and detailed look at specialised and industry specific topics customised to fit the needs of a start-up company.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Informant 1 was interviewed during autumn 2014 at the premises of CONNECT
4 http://connect.org/entrepreneurs/springboard/
5 http://connect.org/springboard-eirs/
6 http://connect.org/mipawards/
7 http://connect.org/frameworks-workshops/
5. **CONNECT Industry Roundtables**

CONNECT Roundtables are peer-to-peer executive development forums. Roundtables blend events, peer-to-peer interaction, benchmarking and other activities that promote information sharing and problem solving. Roundtables give members the opportunity to benchmark themselves and activities against a broad diversity of innovation companies. Roundtables are organised by functional job responsibilities in order to leverage shared experiences and solutions.” Currently, nine Roundtables exist. These include CEO, CTO/Software Architect, Finance, Founders, General Counsel, HR, Marketing & Sales, Operations, and Global Logistics.

6. **Frontiers in Science & Technology**

The Frontiers in Science & Technology program series aims to enhance the dialogue between the business community and San Diego’s leading scientists, engineers and researchers. These monthly conversations provide access to a number of cutting-edge research efforts underway within San Diego’s leading institutes and seeks to showcase industry-academic early research collaborations.

7. **Rock Stars of Innovation**

Rock Stars of Innovation Summit is an annual, day-long gathering which showcases cutting-edge discoveries and ground-breaking innovations originating from San Diego’s acclaimed research institutions, eminent corporations and leading start-ups. Now in its 7th year, the Summit serves as a forum that brings together forward-thinking leaders and science/technology-minded individuals interested in hearing about the latest breakthroughs in research and the next wave of disruptive technologies. Featuring a mix of keynotes, panel discussions and informal conversations, Rock Stars of Innovation is designed with ample opportunities for networking in a relaxing and welcoming setting. The format is tailored to foster early conversations among researchers, innovators, strategic partners, and capital providers to share ideas and develop potential partnerships.

8. **Public Policy Committee**

“For the past 25 years CONNECT has been a catalyst for innovation in the San Diego community. One of the most important responsibilities CONNECT has in maintaining the vibrancy of start-up activity locally is to ensure that the conditions for innovation remain robust. These conditions are directly affected by federal, state and local legislation. The responsibility of the CONNECT Public Policy Committee members is to review initiatives and legislation, discuss the impact on San Diego start-ups, and recommend policy positions.”

9. **Entrepreneurs for Young Innovators**

CONNECT’s Entrepreneurs for Young Innovators program is designed to inspire middle and high school students to pursue careers in life sciences and technology by introducing them to local entrepreneurs with exciting technology products.

10. **Innovation Report**

The CONNECT Innovation Report provides an overview of the strength and impact of the innovation economy by tracking the health of the San Diego innovation economy by comparing data year over year and quarter-to-quarter, providing a comparison across tech industry clusters of selected regions and monitoring the availability of various types of capital. This report helps policymakers and trade organisations plan and advocate effectively for San Diego’s innovation economy including availability of visas and workforce training for talent in high growth clusters, building an attractive environment for capital investment, allocation of grant funding, reform of the patent system, and zoning. The report also highlights San Diego as a world leader in innovation with world-class research, leadership and management talent.

8 [http://connect.org/sme-connect/](http://connect.org/sme-connect/)
1.1.2 Introduction to CONNECT flagship service: The Springboard

The Springboard mentoring program for start-ups can be considered as the key service of CONNECT. Springboard provides a learning process that involves many phases: application and pre-screening, intake panel, marketing panel, finance panel, dry-run panel, and final panel. According to CONNECT’s Springboard impact assessment report, 371 companies were assisted by Springboard program or were winners or CONNECT capital competition in years 2005-2013. In addition, 100 CONNECT companies raised approximately 150 million dollars in funding in 2013. (CONNECT 2014a).

In addition to Springboard, many other valuable programs have been offered through CONNECT. These programs include, for example, Entrepreneurs-in-residence and Most Innovative Product. The value that the CONNECT’s voluntary mentors provide for new start-ups is very high.

1.1.2.1 About CONNECT Springboard

The Springboard service is described in the following way:

“CONNECT’s flagship business acceleration program is designed to assist science and technology-based start-ups with strategic business advice, marketing, and financial guidance from mentors who have been there before. Each start-up is matched with a team of C-level executives who have deep experience in growing and scaling companies. This mentoring team coaches and guides their start-up through the Springboard program. At the culmination of the Springboard program, the start-ups participate in a final panel presentation that prepares the entrepreneur for an effective capital raising campaign. Successful finalists become CONNECT Portfolio Companies. From there, companies have access to CONNECT’s network of capital sources, customized to meet their particular needs. Once a company is accepted into Springboard, they are assigned an Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR) as their mentor. They work with their EIR, as well as C-level mentors in finance and marketing to complete a series of panels to prepare them for their final graduation panel, and ultimately to pitch for capital. Preparation panels are held at CONNECT’s office. Final graduation panels are held at a Springboard sponsor’s board room.” (CONNECT 2014b).

According to (CONNECT 2014a), springboard is a proven, structured, yet flexible, business accelerator program. The process lasts approximately three to six months allowing companies to fine-tune and steadily improve its business while running it. CONNECT Springboard can be divided into seven phases. The condensed descriptions of the stages are presented in the following table as presented at the CONNECT website:\(^\text{14}\):

\(^\text{14}\) http://www.connect.org/entrepreneur-experience
Table 2. The Springboard service as described at the CONNECT web portal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Condensed description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Application and pre-screening</td>
<td>Application to Springboard and the pre-screening of the applicants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Intake panel</td>
<td>Intake panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Marketing panel</td>
<td>Following an Intake Panel, the Marketing Panel focuses on how to take your product to market because a great product is one thing, but getting it sold is quite another. Our veteran marketing mentors represent a wealth of expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Finance panel</td>
<td>The Finance Panel really helps hammer out the details of your balance sheet, your growth plan and overall financial viability. Our mentors will help you create a solid balance sheet, P&amp;L and capital raise strategy to make sure your company is an attractive investment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Dry run / final panel</td>
<td>The Dry Run &amp; Final Panel are the culmination of Springboard mentoring process. With completion of your Final Pitch presentation you are now a Springboard graduate, eligible for participation in Demo Day and an esteemed member of our Alumni! Congratulations!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Demo day</td>
<td>Demo Day is the opportunity for Springboard graduates to debut publicly. Held biannually, Demo Day has a festival-like feel with opportunities to demonstrate your hard work and your final product to the San Diego innovation community at a private booth and on-stage.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the Informant 1 at the CONNECT, interviewed in 2014, the flagship service of CONNECT is Springboard. He describes the role of Springboard in the following way:

“Springboard is the overarching part, and that is mentoring scientists that come from the universities that mentor companies that are spinning out through the tech transfer offices, that work with first time entrepreneurs, which is probably 90% of what we do that work with experienced entrepreneurs that fast track through this process and works with global companies that like to bridge into the US.”

The Informant 2 at the CONNECT was interviewed early 2015 and was asked to describe the benefits of Springboard program for the companies:

“The benefit of Springboard is really the exposure. So you’re getting exposure to mentors throughout the program, and it has happened where an EIR mentor has invested in a company after, you know, during one of the panels. So that’s a possibility. It’s rare, but it is possible.

And then after graduating, we have what we call the capital competition. So we have a panel, where our most recent graduates of that quarter compete against each other and we choose the top ones as our portfolio companies. And those are the ones that we frequently engage in events, to show them off and expose them to investors. We can’t say that we really connect them to investors, but we give them as many opportunities as they can to be exposed to investors.

We certainly have a close relationship with TCA (Tech Coast Angels. We’ll send them our recent capital competition winners or interesting graduates and hopefully, you know, it’s in their hands after that, they wanna see them or not. ... TCA has life science and tech members, so it just depends what the company is. But they definitely have capabilities for both, so they’re a great resource. ...in San Diego, TCA is definitely the largest angel group. The angels is definitely the largest, 34%. (The others

15 Informant 2 was interviewed in winter 2015 at the CONNECT premises
are) not as significant as TCA. So they’re probably the largest organization. There’s Keiretsu Forum, which is in Los Angeles. Or actually, I think Orange County has a chapter as well. So we have a few people there that we know. But San Diego, it’s definitely TCA or just the private investors that usually are interested in the seed and series A funding.

...we do what we can to connect them to strategic partners. ...so we do introductions to large corporations who may be interested in partnering with them. And again, throughout springboard, it’s all about exposure, so that can happen naturally, ...if there’s an analyst from a certain company that takes interest in a company.

After graduating, we do large networking events where we have companies exhibit, so that’s another opportunity for exposure. A lot of investors and corporate executives attend these networking events, so they see the companies there. We do what we call deal network events, where we bring together angels and high net worth individuals for a small reception. And we have some portfolio companies pitch those, so that’s kind of a direct pitch-to-investors type of an event.”

1.1.2.2 CONNECT Springboard by numbers

According to Springboard Impact Assessment Report 2005 Through 2014 (CONNECT 2014) every six months CONNECT reaches out to those companies that have completed the Springboard program since 2005 and surveys them about their business milestones achieved to date. The company responses are aggregated. This chapter presents some of the key figures.

According to CONNECT (2014b) on average 150 companies enrol to the Springboard program annually. In 2014, 130 of companies applied to the program. Since 2005, 404 companies have completed it. The program has generated $1.5 billion for these companies in capital raised and/or in exit value. It is estimated that the Springboard program has created around 4000 jobs. Of the companies enrolled to Springboard 65% are still active in business and more than 60% have raised money through the program.

According to the report (CONNECT 2014b), of the capital raised through Springboard program 32% was raised by the life sciences cluster, 28% by the cleantech cluster, and 26% by the technology/digital media/IT/software/SAAS cluster. The rest of the capital raised is shared by wireless health, sports and active lifestyle, consumer products, defence/cyber/robotics clusters. Moreover, Springboard companies reported total aggregated revenues of almost $250M in 2014 – almost twice that reported in 2013 and six times the reported 2011 revenue figure of $40M. The average revenue per company has grown from $500K per company in 2011 to $2.8M in 2014.

1.2 CONNECT – a self-organised transnational network of innovation

CONNECT concepts have been licensed to multiple continents and countries at the international level through global CONNECT activities. To date, CONNECT has been licensed to more than 20 countries. This chapter focuses on the global level of CONNECT activities.

Links to global innovation networks become essential to the success of innovative regions and countries. Regional innovation networks become the nodes that link regions across borders to the various actors in the science and technology-based fields across different countries. These transnational linkages enable regular flows of knowledge and
experience in the R&D community, investment and entrepreneurial communities. Such
global connectivity amplifies the innovation of local communities significantly. (Wal-

As presented in the earlier chapter, CONNECT originally targeted to develop con-
tacts, social networks, and business services to support the new businesses (Walshok &
Shragge 2014). Later on it became evident that the CONNECT concept attracts interest
of other countries too. Global CONNECT was founded in 2003 as a sister program of
the regionally focused CONNECT in San Diego. In 2005, CONNECT became an inde-
pendent entity while Global CONNECT remained a part of UCSD16.

The relationship between CONNECT and Global CONNECT is an interesting exam-
ple of a transnational network. CONNECT was founded and grew prior to significant
federal or state interest in regionalism. It is almost entirely privately funded and volun-
teer driven, and it has been a sustainable platform for supporting start-up and growth
companies in diverse technology sectors for over 25 years. Its focus is facilitating tech-
nology start-ups and growing new science and technology clusters. Global CONNECT
is a technical assistance consultancy based within UC San Diego Extension which was
spun out of the community-based CONNECT. Global CONNECT focuses on partnering
with regions around the world seeking to build innovation capacity, accelerate tech-
ology commercialisation, and build global connections. (Walshok et al. 2014). Global
CONNECT facilitates an international “network of networks” comprised of regionally-
based innovation intermediary organisations that support the growth of high technology
companies. CONNECT was founded in 1985, and with its success, began attracting
interest from other regions around the United States and many regions around the world
have gone on to start their own CONNECT organisations by adapting the San Diego
CONNECT model to their regional context. (Walshok et al. 2014).

One of the key aspects of the CONNECT model is the efficiency with which it lever-
ages knowledge and resources within the community to assist high tech entrepre-
neurs. Community stakeholders representing many aspects of the regional innovation system
volunteer their time to share knowledge, wisdom, and professional contacts with those
who are launching a new business or are transitioning to another stage of development.
This is often done in a “wisdom of the crowd” approach where inventors and entrepre-
neurs work with mentor teams and receive feedback on their business strategy from a
variety of panels focused on different aspects of the company’s operations. The
CONNECT model also provides a platform for community stakeholders to get to know
each other’s capabilities and assets, thereby building critical trust-based relationships
prior to entering into a business endeavour or transaction. While the CONNECT organi-
sations outside of San Diego differ in their specific programs and operations, many
share the principles of collaboration and knowledge sharing. (Walshok et al. 2014).

The Global CONNECT network was built on these principles, tapping into infra-
structure put in place at the regional level to more efficiently assist companies looking
to enter international markets. The Global CONNECT network of regional networks
was built to allow a company from one region to find pre-qualified trusted partners in
another region through programs or referrals enabled by the various CONNECT organi-
sations. (Walshok et al. 2014).

In collaboration with the Global CONNECT, the original CONNECT in San Diego
has been involved in starting up many of the CONNECTs outside US. Informant 1 de-
scribes the role of CONNECT in the following way: We have helped create many of
CONNECT organisations [outside USA]17.

16 http://globalconnect.ucsd.edu/about/index.cfm
17 Informant 1 at the CONNECT
By the end of the year 2014, the Global CONNECT\textsuperscript{18} became an independent entity from the UCSD and today it continues as a vital part within the umbrella of CONNECT in San Diego. Today the CONNECT concept is a global phenomenon. The latest additions to the family are operations in New York, Bogotá and Saudi Arabia (CONNECT Sverige 2015). In the following table illustrates the international coverage of the global CONNECT network:

\textit{Table 3. The CONNECT network today at the global level}

\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{CONNECT in Europe} \\
CONNECT Denmark \\
CONNECT Estonia \\
CONNECT Latvia \\
CONNECT Norway \\
CONNECT Sweden \\
CONNECT UK \\
and * \\
\textbf{CONNECT in North America} \\
CONNECT in San Diego \\
CONNECT Midwest \\
CONNECT Northwest \\
CONNECT Northern New Mexico \\
CONNECT Davis etc. and * \\
\textbf{CONNECT in South America} \\
CONNECT Colombia and * \\
\textbf{CONNECT in Asia} \\
CONNECT Taiwan \\
CONNECT Goa and * \\
\textbf{CONNECT in Middle East} \\
CONNECT Jordan \\
CONNECT Saudi Arabia and * \\
* = ... and other organisations not inspired by CONNECT but reachable through global CONNECT.
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{18} In the later parts of this report we refer to global CONNECT activities. In this report, \textit{global CONNECT} activities refer to the global level of activities within the transnational CONNECT network, not the organisation entitled \textit{Global CONNECT}. 
2 Method

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

The research process of this study is presented in the following figure:

Figure 1. Research process of this study (modified from Yin 1989)

Two national members of CONNECT transnational network were analysed as cases using public archives and semi-structured interviews conducted during 2015. Both interviews were interviews of the CEO’s of CONNECT networks. The case study follows Yin (1989). Each case was first analysed as a separate entity. Then both were reported. Finally a cross-case analysis was provided.

Case CONNECT Sverige, established in 1998, can be considered as an early adopter in this study. Sweden was one of the early adopters of CONNECT model and services outside USA and the first one among the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea region. Case CONNECT Norge is considered in this study as a quick follower in the context of Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea region. Connect Norge was established in 2001.
3 CONNECT in Nordic countries

The nearest organisations inspired by CONNECT in San Diego from the Finnish perspective are the Swedish CONNECT Sverige and the Norwegian CONNECT Norge.

3.1 CONNECT in Sweden

CONNECT Sverige is a national level member of the international CONNECT network. According to its marketing materials, CONNECT Sverige brings together companies and resources to build success in the Swedish economy: “CONNECT’s ambition is to stimulate the development of established growth companies by bringing together entrepreneurs with the necessary technical, business developing and financial resources.”

CONNECT Sverige is part of the international CONNECT network. The purpose of this chapter is to dig deeper into CONNECT Sverige and to analyse what can be learned from experiences of CONNECT Sverige about its transferability to Nordic countries context.

CONNECT Sverige is a non-profit organisation that matches entrepreneurs with competencies and capital from trade and industry. It seeks to shorten their road to concrete and long-term results. CONNECT stimulates the development of growth companies and in doing aim at increasing the number of work opportunities in Sweden. CONNECT is first and foremost there for the entrepreneur and secondly for the partners, investors and experts. The entrepreneur is provided with a relevant, objective and professional network brought out of trade and industry. Partners are given the opportunity to make a contribution to the growth of the region, the investor will be able to come into contact with interesting companies and expand his or her network and the expert will be able to build knowledge. (Laufer et al. 2014).

According to CONNECT (2015) the principal operation of CONNECT Sverige is free of charge and is financed by its partners in trade and industry. The network of voluntary individuals consists of business owners and executives, accountants, lawyers, business angels, marketing professionals, banking sector stakeholders, consultants etc. Connect Sverige’s mission is:

“To act as a meeting place for entrepreneurs, researchers and investors. In this way knowledge, experience and contacts can be transferred among new and established businesses. (CONNECT 2015).”

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19 www.connectsverige.se
CONNECT Sverige has its origins in local organisations and it has developed bottom up. According to Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige and CEO of CONNECT Norr, Anders Gothefors, local organisations organised themselves very independently.

### 3.1.1 Background

In the spring of 1996 Swedish representatives from Riskkapitalföreningen (The Risk Capital Association) and Kungl. IngenjörsVetenskapsAkademien (IVA) (The Royal Civil Engineering Academy) visited San Diego. This sparked an interest in CONNECT’s operation. In Sweden, a survey was conducted to assess the possible need for a Swedish CONNECT. In January of 1997 results of the survey were presented and shortly thereafter a decision was made to start CONNECT in Sweden. (Laufer et al. 2014).

The CONNECT Sverige was established in 1998. It is one of the early adopters of CONNECT model and services outside USA. Sweden was the first one among the Nordic Countries and among the Baltic Sea region to implement and localise CONNECT model and activities. CONNECT’s first regional networks were formed in Sweden: CONNECT Western and CONNECT Skåne. These were subsequently followed by CONNECT Eastern Sweden, CONNECT Uppsala and CONNECT Northern. The Swedish successes soon inspired neighbouring countries. Eventually, CONNECT was also formed in Norway, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia. Some effort was also put to establish CONNECT in Southern Finland but without a big success during that time. According to the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige:

“...it all started with the rumour, that came from San Diego to Sweden that they had had some fantastic revolution to connect the experience and resources to start-ups and the companies for example within the defence industry sector, so to speak. The rumour said it was something new what was going on there. So, Kungliga Ingenjörsvetenskapsakademien IVA went there to see what is this CONNECT all about. During their visit they learned about how to start a voluntary, non-profit organisation, that consisted of CEOs and managers on different level, that were supposed to, assist small start-ups within the defence industry, to go and to find new markets, and all this should be done without getting paid. It must have been worked quite well in San Diego back then, because, IVA took the idea and the licence to Sweden, to work with the CONNECT’s Springboard™ activity. This licence, they, delivered to different part of Sweden.”

According to Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige, local organisations organised themselves very independently from the beginning:

“So they started CONNECT. Totally free, so to speak, in different areas of Sweden. It was not, managed in any way from Stockholm or from any regional centres. It was locally organised, locally decided, in all areas in Sweden. ...more or less all of us, in Sweden started, in the year 2000 or 1999. I think Skåne was the first back in 1999. It started from Öst, West and Norr. Uppsala and Kalmar came in a little bit later. But it was no one who went around to organise it or to start it. It just started locally everywhere. That’s why the organisation, still is very, what you say, spread out over the country. We have our own company, our own limited, and we decide totally what to do and not to do and how to do it, who to employ and everything. And we cooperate under joint brand name central services like Springboard™. But, we don’t have any, central organisation that tells us what to do or not to do.
One of them, ended up in North, which is my responsibility nowadays too and, we have Malmö and we have Göteborg and Stockholm and so on. ...when it comes to the northern part, we had a delegation and went there back in 1999. Consisted of, quite important, business people from the area, headed by Sundström who is very very very successful guy in Sweden. He was in the lead for this and emphasised that CONNECT should really be something great in Sweden. So he was the first chairman of CONNECT up here. From northern part of Sweden, people went to CONNECT in San Diego too, just to find out what it was all about, and they all were quite impressed of how it worked, so they said the same thing that regarding especially the Stockholm area, yeah, this is really something, we should start."

One also needs to consider how the role of CONNECT has changed since the establishment. At the beginning CONNECT model was new to the market:

“When we started, we were more or less the first of our kind. There were a couple of incubators but they were very small and they didn't really know what they should work with, and they were very very tied to the universities. CONNECT was new to the market. When we organised a meeting, or an event, we had several hundred of participants, because, there weren't that many events of that kind, during that time.”

However, during the past 10 years, the market has changed, competition has increased and service providers diversified. CONNECT has focused more on its core.

“During the last ten years there have popped up a lot of organisations that make the events for the business community or to reach smaller companies or early-stage companies. ...So, for me example, I don't do that many events as I did back in, ten years ago. I had competence forums. Now I only work with investor forums for example.”

Several services started by CONNECT Sverige have been more or less remained the same or sharpened, others have been added, and other ones have been shut down. Springboard is an example of the flagship or core services that has remained more or less the same through the years. As an example of the second type, CONNECT Sverige did not have the investor network at the beginning. Today, the investor network established by CONNECT Sverige is the only truly national network of investors in Sweden according to the Coordinator. Some services once offered that CONNECT Sverige has closed include e.g. business accelerator and board member search services. Those services were found to overlap with the services of other players. Today, there exist other organisations solely focused on providing these services today. There is a continuous flux in the market and the organisations need to be able continuously prove their mission.

3.1.2 CONNECT Sverige today

CONNECT has been present in Sweden for slightly more than 15 years. The idea remains the same - to create a meeting place where entrepreneurs are brought together with competencies and capital. CONNECT provides innovators and entrepreneurs with professional coaching. The operation is built on the voluntary contributions of private citizens, businesses and organisations alike. Experienced individuals from trade and industry, universities and colleges participate and contribute with their competencies.
CONNECT Sverige employs 35 persons in Sweden which makes it the largest CONNECT organisation in the Nordic countries and the Baltic Sea region. CONNECT can be characterised as an independent, mostly private owned, private sector driven non-profit association that has grown to a significant player in the Swedish business ecosystem. Today CONNECT Sverige has six regional associations: Western, Skåne, Northern, Eastern, Uppsala and South-Eastern. All regional CONNECT-networks are non-profit associations financed through partners and members. Each network has its own board and managing director who run the regional operation.

According to Laufer et al. (2014) CONNECT Sverige is an established actor of the Swedish innovation landscape with deeply rooted regional ties. The operation is run by regional associations financially backed by partners and is based on the voluntary contribution of businesses, private citizens and organisations. Within the fold of CONNECT Sverige, which also is a non-profit association, the regions conduct jointly run projects that benefit operation in Sweden.

On a yearly basis (based on statistic of year 2013), CONNECT Sverige organises 276 boards under its trademark services, 49 investment meetings, 170 business presentations for business angels, and 548 activities/events. Connect facilitated more than 81 Million SEK for growth companies during one year in 2013. CONNECT Sverige had in 2013 361 partners, 323 mentors and/or coaches and 17058 participants. During the same year CONNECT Sverige arranged 29 371 professional hours. (Laufer et al. 2014).

According to the Coordinator, the role or reason of existence of CONNECT Sverige in the national and local business ecosystems today is largely based on independence and private sector driven model that originates from the CONNECT in San Diego:

“One of the things that we, sort of stands out (compared to other actors in the Swedish market) is the fact that we are, our owners are more or less only from the private sector. For me, for example, in Norr, we have 128 members who own CONNECT Norr AB through a Non-Profit Association (Idell Föreningen). And out of those (members), 82 per cent come from the private sector.”

Being an independent actor is also a very important success factor for CONNECT Sverige according to the Coordinator:

“...we have to work with for example all the banks, we have to be able work with Swedbank, Danske Banken, Handelsbanken and all of them. ...Let’s say one partner, that would bring in lots of money and say that, ‘OK, we are a major partner with CONNECT all over Sweden. We don’t accept that you cooperate with another bank’. It would be totally impossible for us to have such a partnership with anyone. We have to work with all of them. That’s important. You know that we conduct Springboard™s or Investor Forums, we do those together with our partners so, maybe one week we are in SEB (Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken), localities, offices, next time we will be in Handelsbanken and so on.”

Two inseparable characteristics of CONNECT Sverige make the difference in comparison to the other organisations seeking to provide assistance to SMEs in Swedish context:

“First, all our colleagues including Almi, incubators or, other bigger organisations that work to assist SMEs like Almi in Sweden and, all incubators and stuff. They are financed totally by the state, government. And that’s the difference. Second, we are not the ones that give the advice to the companies. The employee of CONNECT
more or less don't give advice. It's our network from the business that gives the advice to the companies how to grow and so on. That's also a difference because incubators, they have employed, people that say, I am so good in business development that I can give lots of advices, to other small companies. And in CONNECT we say, OK, we have the experience, we know a lot about running a business, but the most experienced and the best ones that are there, it's the ones that really is in the business today. They can give the proper advices. That's also how we think. Third, Almi for example and most of the incubators as well, they have, possibility also to fund some, couple of the companies. On a smaller level of couple of millions but anyway, they can fund, them as well. CONNECT doesn't fund anything, we don't have the money to invest in companies of course.”

The fact that CONNECT has no direct public funding of any kind seems like a double-edged sword. It makes CONNECT more independent of the public guidance. However, it can also be seen as a source of unfair competitive advantage given to the organisations with continuous public funding.

“We don't have any (continuous) governmental funding at all. We are the only organisation that looks like us that lack (continuous) governmental funding totally. Chairman of CONNECT Sverige together with others work a lot to really really get into, let's say, department of industry in Stockholm to tell them about CONNECT and how important it is that we get some kind of national funding. But it's a tough job, I can tell you that. We are quite unknown compared to Almi or incubators with public funding. The public sector keeps a loud voice. Since they get a couple of million in funding, they have the resources to market themselves. I should say that that's the main problem when it comes to CONNECT in Sweden is that we are so unknown, so we don't get any (direct) public funding and we have to collect our funding by ourselves from all over the country.”

The above mentioned reflects some of the challenges of cooperation and competition in the public-private partnerships of the Swedish context.

### 3.1.3 Service portfolio

The service portfolio of CONNECT Sverige consists of five main services. Inside these core services, there are some variations including e.g. Springboard Focus which is basically a Springboard™ that is heavily focused on one topic.

#### 3.1.3.1 CONNECT Språngbrädan® (Springboard)

The Springboard™ (In Swedish: Connect Språngbrädan®) is a service product licenced from CONNECT. CONNECT Springboard™ can be characterised as flagship service provided of CONNECT Sverige. On a yearly basis 300 persons go through the service.

The Springboard™ is designed for supporting growth company in its early stages. A panel of engaged experts assist CEO of growth company in developing the company's
business strategy and in finalising business plan ahead of contacts with investors, partners, customers and other interested parties.\textsuperscript{20}

According to CONNECT Sverige\textsuperscript{21} the Springboard is a unique and well-tested process which, in a fast and carefully prepared manner, aims to increase the company's growth. Within the Springboard free of charge access to a tailored panel of experts will be offered. The panel has long-term experience in trade and industry including actors for growth capital, business- and patent attorneys, market- and management consultants as well as leaders from successful entrepreneurial companies. The CEO receives training how to present business plan and is assisted in putting together his/her offer to be able to communicate more effectively with market actors and financiers. According to Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige:

“What's special about the Springboard is that we connect the right kind of people, six to eight persons, to the company. The Springboard focuses on, funding, how should this company raise money. Springboard is not an investor itself, it's not a Tillväxtkapital (another service of CONNECT Sverige), where we gather lots of investors on one site to meet a couple of companies. This is one company, meeting both investors but also accountants and, business, consultants that can assist them, not with money but with guidance, to find the money.”

The focus of the Springboard™ service are the SMEs aiming at rapid growth. The Springboard is designed for growth companies in their early stages that meet the criteria of high growth potential, driven entrepreneur, complete business plan, strong desire for growth and high level of uniqueness. Each candidate company is interviewed to check that they meet the criteria and therefore can benefit from the service:

“Before they enter Springboard, they shall, all of them, be determined that they want to grow. We don't work with companies that say that, OK, I just wanna keep the business as it is. That's not, a good thing for Springboard. They should be, really in for growing.”

The Springboard™ process consists of the following four steps:

1. Business Plan, Mentor/Business Coach
2. Presentation Training
3. Springboard
4. Follow-up
5. (Growth Capital)

The first and the second step of the Springboard™ are focused on business planning with a mentor and/or business advisor and on coaching to present business idea and business plan to others:

“CONNECT work with a company for about two months, trying to (Step 1) develop the business plan, and especially (Step 2) how they present their business. These are the two major things that we focus on during about two months.

...together with the entrepreneur we go through what kind of resources does he or she need. And do we have those kind of resources in the CONNECT network, or

\textsuperscript{20} www.connectsverige.se
\textsuperscript{21} www.connectsverige.se
maybe in his or her (entrepreneur’s) network; the people that should be suited to assist the company. Or can you maybe find it in the CONNECT network in Stockholm or elsewhere. ...we discuss it through with the entrepreneur until we agree.

The members of the Springboard are contacted in person, told about the company, what's going on in the company, and what they are looking for. And we also decide one, single date and a place where we conduct a two-hour Springboard.

The third step is the Springboard (Kompetenspanel):

“And about ten days before the Springboard, we send out the business plan, to the six to eight people that will be in the Springboard. We call it Kompetenspanel, actually, in Sweden. So they have this opportunity to go through the company, read about it, and to contact the entrepreneur before the Springboard to ask some question if they are especially interested.

We need, usually, two hours, at a lunch, or two hours of a coffee for organising Springboard in one of our CONNECT partners facilities. The partners offer us the, space, coffee or lunch and stuff. To notify and thank the host, we always spare some time from the beginning to highlight their important effort for assisting the growing companies in the area.

The Springboard starts with short introductions of all the attendants and their backgrounds. Then it starts with a 15 minutes' presentation from the entrepreneur. During these 15 minutes, the panel is not allowed to raise any questions. 15 minutes, the entrepreneur will talk without any question being raised. After that, we go through, all the members of the panel, and give their views on how the presentation was, and what they think of the entrepreneur, as an entrepreneur. Does it, feel like he is a good entrepreneur or not. Each one of them shall give their opinion regarding this.

When that's done, the core of Springboard starts with discussions about the company. Most of the time the company put three headings forward, that they want to get answered, like, 'should I enter the German market', for example. Or it can be, 'is it possible to get private funding on this kind of company'. ...it can be whatever questions. The panel is of course focusing on those three questions, but they also have many questions regarding other areas related to the presentation and the business plan. And this discussion takes on for about, one and a half hour, almost.

The Springboard ends with advice from each one in the panel. This is how you should do it, this is how you shouldn't do it. And in that moment it often comes up that the network that this panel member can offer the company. 'I know, Asea’, for example, and they are interested in that area. ‘I can connect him with this guy at Asea and we can help you, getting into that company’. Lots of (that) stuff that comes from the Springboard.”

The fourth step is the Follow-up (Upföljning) after each Springboard™:

“...every panel member and entrepreneur answers to a questionnaire from CONNECT.

And, one month from the Springboard, the first Springboard, the proper Springboard, we have, within one month we have a follow-up meeting, CONNECT, with entrepreneur to talk about, what did you think about it, was it worthwhile, and CONNECT do anything else for you, how to enter this business accelerator. That's more or less the Springboard.
...we do a follow-up Springboard one year from the Springboard. And we, invite the same panel. If they can make it they come, fine, but we don't make any (effort) that you have to come. It's up to the panel member to do this. Just do it, make a follow-up, with entrepreneur. ...to see whether the entrepreneur has taken the advices seriously and done anything, and what has happened to the company.”

The Springboard™ is not only for the entrepreneurs good:

“We always make sure that there is at least one person new to the other ones in the panel, so they will not be that they always know all each other. ...there is a lot of connections in the panel, not only with the entrepreneur, but also for the panel members so they can make business. And that happens a lot. “

3.1.3.2 CONNECT FöretagsAcceleratorn®

CONNECT Sverige offers Business Accelerator services through FöretagsAcceleratorn®. The FöretagsAcceleratorn® (CONNECT Business Accelerator) is a business development process to jointly work on the strategic issues necessary for optimising long-term results. The target is a well thought-out growth strategy which will equip customer companies to meet growth challenges. The FöretagsAcceleratorn® is a growth program for small and medium-sized companies. It is designed for an entrepreneur with a strong ambition and ability to grow. The goal of program is to strengthen the entrepreneur with newly gained insights, knowledge and a tailored network to enhance continued work toward profitable growth. Unlike Springboard™, the business accelerator service is developed in Sweden and owned by CONNECT Sverige. According to Laufer et al. (2014), during 2013 altogether 104 companies participated in the FöretagsAcceleratorn® service in Sweden.

FöretagsAcceleratorn® in CONNECT Sverige embarks on a process where customer together with experts from trade and industry work out the basis for decisions, make strategies clear and draw up an action plan. The panel of experts share their knowledge and experience within critical areas. (CONNECT Sverige 2015).

FöretagsAcceleratorn® service consists of the following steps:

1. Analysis (Business Plan, Panel of Experts)
2. Measure (Mentor/Business Coach)
3. [Growth Capital (Board Competencies, Capital)]
4. Growth (Revised Business Plan, Implementation)

The first step of the FöretagsAcceleratorn® is analysis, which most often is the Springboard™ or similar analytical stage depending on the company needs.

“Business accelerator is, can be, Springboard can be a start of a business accelerator. Then it's a little, special questions that were raised during the Springboard. It's like, ‘are you, positive to have a mentor to you’, for example. So that's another question. We do some (–), the first phase (Step 1) in the business accelerator, is more or less the Springboard.”

The second step of the FöretagsAcceleratorn® is focused on measurement and support. In order to provide extra support and energy CONNECT designates mentors/business coaches who match the needs of the customer. Through mentoring and coaching company can prepare for CONNECT Tillväxtcapital (another service of
CONNECT Sverige). This service is described in detail in the later chapter focused on CONNECT Tillväxtcapital.

The third step of the CONNECT Business Accelerator takes place after CONNECT Tillväxtcapital service. It is focused on growth through revised business planning and implementation of the revised plan. CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator describes this:

“The third phase (Step 3) though, are, most of the time we do a business study, rewrite the business plan (in more detail than in the Springboard).”

Facilitated business planning leading to supported implementation are at the core of the phase three.

3.1.3.3 CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (CONNECT Business Angel Network)

CONNECT Sverige offers growth funding network services through CONNECT Tillväxtcapital. CONNECT Tillväxtcapital matches growth companies with capital and crucial competencies as well as with contacts. The network of fully 400 investors is spread across the whole of Sweden and the driving force is often a strong desire to develop companies combined with economic gain. CONNECT Sverige works actively to develop an investor network, which is found regionally, nationally and internationally. It provides Swedish growth companies with unique opportunities to financing, even from other countries. CONNECT is also active in the European Business Angel Network - EBAN. (CONNECT Sverige 2015). In order to facilitate investments CONNECT Sverige has brought forth a template for syndication deals. The combination of early investments and, for example crowdfunding is a new service type that has been implemented on several occasions.

Through Tillväxtcapital service CONNECT works both with the education of investors and of growth companies who seek capital. For entrepreneurs, Tillväxtcapital is a continuation of CONNECT Språngbrädan® (Springboard) or FöretagsAcceleratorm® (The Business Accelerator). Close to 30% of the companies who seek capital are able to reach the investment through Connects network. (CONNECT Sverige 2015). CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator describes the service:

“...we work with investors. They all, most of the time they are called business angels. They can be private persons, of course, like you and me, that would like to invest in growth companies, but also small investment firm, are of course welcome to those networks.”

CONNECT is a facilitator, not an investment company. The above described investors in the network make the investments and CONNECT remains its neutrality throughout the process:

“The business network of CONNECT, has no money on its own. It’s not an investment company. ...if they wanna invest, they invest each one of them. It has nothing to do with CONNECT so to speak. There’s no CONNECT investment made, it’s only a network.”

CONNECT Tillväxtkapital service consists of four steps. The companies that participate in Tillväxtkapital have often participated Springboard™ and/or Business Accelerator® before entering to the service. The Tillväxtkapital process consists of four main steps which are (1) Assessment, (2) Selection, (3) Presentation and (4) Follow-up.
The Step 1 and 2, Assessment and Selection take place before the meeting of investors. Only two companies are selected to meet the investors face-to-face:

“...the entrepreneur before and, at least one week before the event, we send out a short, make some short, call it, description about the company and (-) and the capital need and so on. It's not a business plan. We have a template, about two pages, because those kinds of people, they don’t want to read. At this early stage, they don't want to read business plans. They don't have the time.”

The Step 3 of the Tillväxtkapital is focused on face-to-face presentation in the regular connect investor meetings:

“These networks, like for example in Norr, we have (meetings), seven times (per county), so we have seven meetings in Norrbotten and seven meetings in Västerbotten a year. At that time, we invite the whole network of investors, to special occasion, when two companies, present their capital need, and, also what they're gonna do with the money, of course.

...it's, only about 40 minutes each. And they make an eight-minute presentation about the company and their capital needs. Then it's only about 20 minutes Q&A, questions and answers regarding that. Then the company leaves the room, more or less, and we bring in the next company, to make the same kind of 40 minutes.

The aim is that there should be contact after this investor meeting with entrepreneur and with one or a couple of the investors.”

Step 4 of the Tillväxtkapital is focused on Follow-up of the results. However, the role of CONNECT in this process is to be a neutral facilitator. CONNECT is an independent actor and that is very important factor of building trust. The private business angel or the investment company will take care of the investment or non-investment through their own processes.

“...when they meet the company after the investor forum, the investor meeting, of course then there will be, a lot more business plan like information. But that's something then, the entrepreneur handles, without CONNECT. It's more or less (-) the company of the, this meeting with investors, CONNECT investor network.

CONNECT in Sweden have, worked out some kind of template for, how an agreement or investment should look like, for this one. We have done that together with the law firm. So we have, we can assist them with, some kind of, materials to use when they are in contact with investors.”

According to CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator the Tillväxtkapital service complements the market.

“CONNECT (-) shouldn't compete with, the proper consultancy market.”

CONNECT Sverige offers specified set of value propositions for business angels. The organisation is a member of Svenska Riskkapitalföreningen (The Swedish Risk Capital Association) and in the European interest organisation EBAN (European Business Angels Network) which help business angels to network with other business angels. The added value for business angels include regular investment meetings where growth companies who seek capital present themselves, individual meetings with growth companies, access to CONNECT’s digital platform GUST receiving access to
regional as well as national investment opportunities and in the long run even on the basis of the Nordic countries. CONNECT Sverige offers also seminars and educational programs specifically designed for investors of recently started companies.

3.1.3.4 CONNECT Partner

According to the CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator the CONNECT Partner service is primarily for development of the partner network. One of the basic assumptions of the Partner service is that “an engaged entrepreneurship provides Sweden with the conditions for growth” (CONNECT Sverige 2015). Being a CONNECT Partner means contributing to the development of Sweden’s growth companies and to trade and industry. CONNECT offers for the partners an opportunity to be associated with active work for the development of companies and to the creation of new jobs. (CONNECT Sverige 2015). CONNECT aims to offer added value to every partner in the network. Partner service is about:

[1] ...how to find new partners,
[2] ...how to keep the partners,
and
[3] ...and how to be partner:

Partner is a paid service. One important element of the activities provided for partners is the partner meeting, that is a two-way communication channel for CONNECT Sverige and the partners:

“...we have, every, three months, in Norr we have partner meeting, in Luleå, Skellefteå, Umeå and should have also in (--) Östersund, where we invite the partners and tell them this is what we have done and this is what we will do in the future, how can we cooperate better. And they can give their views on, CONNECT and how (it will) work. ... So that's about the partner. It's about raising money to connect more.”

The value propositions of Partner service are many: For a partner, CONNECT offers an arena where trade and industry, entrepreneurship, growth capital and research meet. The arena is non-profit and aims to mould public opinion nationally and internationally. Moreover, Partner promises; (1) meaningful contacts in regional, national and international levels, (2) opportunity to participate CONNECT activities across the country, (3) opportunity to gain competencies through hosting CONNECT activities, (4) opportunities to contribute to the benefit of trade and industry, (5) opportunity to introduce entrepreneurship and commitment to own organisation, and (6) opportunity to set an example of social commitment by showing interest for growth companies, creation of new jobs and sustainable development of Sweden, among others.

The partners have taken active role in the development of the CONNECT network and the partners shape the services in the long run. The Partner service shapes other services and the other way round too. As an example the change mechanism in action, the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige describes:

“...they (partners) want to take, a bigger part when it comes to the investor area of CONNECT. So, we’re gonna, make a new kind of, Springboard-focused financing where we invite investors, of course, that we also put in a couple of banks and accountants and stuff, in that kind of Springboard, to assist. Because, we can't live without partners, and partners they want to be, more involved in the investor side so,
surely, we just have to do this. So, there will be less, or maybe even none, these investor events solely. Springboard with financial focus, where all investors will be invited, but also, representatives from the partner side.

3.1.3.5 CONNECT Mötesplatser

Networking is a factor for success. Across the country CONNECT Sverige offers opportunities for networking and inspiration. In order to keep the networks up to date on current issues surrounding entrepreneurship and the ways of doing business various meeting places are organized together with CONNECT Sverige’s partner holding cutting-edge competencies in many different areas. (CONNECT Sverige 2015). The Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige states that the CONNECT Mötesplatser are designed to organise variable types of events and meetings. That can be characterised as a platform for rapid experiments of new types of events and services.

“... we have events, of different kinds.
For example now, I am planning an event in September, which is about starting the, investment company in Umeå. Not a CONNECT company but, totally free from CONNECT but they want us to assist. So we will invite our network to an event about this (Mötesplatser) with a focus here to, investment company.

The big one in Sweden: We arrange energy days in Stockholm, Malmö, and Gothenburg and in the north, where we have companies, within the, energy area, looking for funding or, some kind of assistance, guidance. ... During one day, we bring in both investors and other kinds of competences from our network, to listen to interesting companies from that area, and also maybe, to find funding for those companies.

There are lots of activities going on (–) like Åre kapitalmarknadsdag (that we) arrange. (–) together with a Swedish venture capital organisation. Stockholm (–), event in Åre in March, and we have Connect to Capital down in the south of Sweden, which is a (–) investment forum. Every even that is not, Springboard, or investor meeting, more or less, all of those events we, (–) under the heading, (–) Meeting Place (Mötesplatser).”

3.1.4 The future of CONNECT Sverige

Our study also aims to analyse the future of CONNECT in Sweden in the coming years. CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator states that in 2017:

“I think we will be even more focusing on the investor network. That should be the main task. And hopefully we get some funding on a national level, and we can develop, the tools much more. Our Springboards will definitely be an important part, business accelerator will be an important part especially in the west and in Stockholm I suppose. But, I don’t think, when it comes to my perspective in North, I don’t think I will grow, I don’t think I will be that many more employees. We have eight employees and that is a little, maybe too many, because there are lots of, companies that want to cooperate with the business area and we are so many out there now. CONNECT shouldn't be another one that, gets a lot of employees. I think five or six people when it comes to CONNECT Norr, that would be quite nice.”
How does the CONNECT Sverige look like in year 2020? According to the Coordinator:

“Still, we will not drop the Springboard. But, we will (internally) focus on the investor network. There’s a need to build bigger (Nordic) market in that sense.”

The future of global CONNECT activities relies on the activity of its member organisations around the world. According to the CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator there is a need for more intense global collaboration in the global network:

“It would be good for CONNECT and for our company, if we could cooperate much more.”

However, the future of global CONNECT activities include some challenges that need to be overcome in order to increase global collaboration. Some negative signs exist for the development of CONNECT global network in the near future. First, a need for leadership exist for the global activities. CONNECT organisations are independent and established for their national business communities. The organisations are preoccupied with their national business activities which leaves only limited time for the global perspective. Moreover, their funding is in most cases does not support global activities. In that kind of situation the national activities are often prioritised above the international. Not many potential organisations exist that could/would like to take a lead in the global activities. Second, finding funding for CONNECT global activities is a challenge:

“...we (CONNECT Sverige) don’t have the time to, take a lead in the international funds. Especially funding for that, it takes a lot of work to start. I have some plans to rise funding from EU to start CONNECT in the main universities in Europe, like in, Paris, Munich and so on. But, it all comes down to funding and someone has to, really be dedicated, and we don’t have the resources to do it.”

Third, especially at the Nordic level the long geographical distances and cultural differences set some barriers that need to be overcome to speed up the collaboration.

“...it's a lot of travel. Especially here in the far north. In [organisation identity removed] and [organisation identity removed], it's not that far, and they, my opinion is that they could work much more together. ...There are differences in the culture and, I know that CONNECT [organisation identity removed] is a little, sorry that the [organisation identity removed] don't wanna work with the [service identity removed], and so. ...they had their problems there, financially and organisation-wise and so on. So there are lots of issues that have impact on the cooperation side.”

3.2 CONNECT in Norway

CONNECT Norge (CONNECT Norway) is a national level member of the international CONNECT network. According to its marketing materials “CONNECT is a private ideal organization that is independent and impartial. We are financed by our members and partners. As such, CONNECT Norway does not charge payments or ownership from entrepreneurs and growth companies. Our incentive is to give our members access to exciting business concepts and events that provide added value.”
The purpose of this chapter is to dig deeper into CONNECT Norge and to analyse what can be learned from experiences of CONNECT Norge about its transferability to Nordic countries context.

CONNECT Norge is a non-profit organisation that matches entrepreneurs with competencies and capital from trade and industry:

“This is CONNECT Norway: A non-profit organization seeking to help entrepreneurs to succeed. At the same time, we help investors find the good cases that are deserving of investment. We are a network organization that make use of the competencies of our members to further develop entrepreneurial and early phase companies.”

CONNECT Norge does not limit itself to merely a national focus. A growing number of events and projects are co-operations with CONNECT in other countries, particularly in the Nordic countries.

As CONNECT Sverige, CONNECT Norge has its origins in local organisations. Local organisations organised themselves very independently from the beginning in Norway.

### 3.2.1 Background

The role model of CONNECT Norge is the original CONNECT that was established in San Diego, California. The CEO on CONNECT Norge describes the background:

“It was in Oslo. At that point there was, some people from Bergen, from CONNECT West, and they had started a kind of a regional network, the same year I think, because they were looking at the ICT sector in Bergen, and they were, searching for a sector-specific methodology to support company success. And they were looking globally for different kinds of networks or tools or etc. CONNECT was already established in Sweden, and Denmark and....

They went over to San Diego. So they were part of, CONNECT West were part of founding CONNECT. ...So there was a regional network, one of the founders of CONNECT foundation in Norway. ... these guys from Bergen had already seen CONNECT in Sweden, Denmark and San Diego at that point.

Sweden and Denmark were established in '97, '98, '99, I don't remember, more or less. So they were up and running, both of them. And then (Torsten and Kjell), two guys from Bergen were, they actually had some companies with them as well and went to San Diego, to look at it, and shook hands with saying you can do CONNECT in Norway. So it was not technical or bureaucratic to start CONNECT. It was more or less a mental agreement and a handshake.

They travelled to meet to see what it was like and what was going on in the CONNECT in San Diego and all that stuff. Then, when they got home, they said that we can't run it, it's no use for us running a regional organisation, called CONNECT, if it should make sense, we have to do it, nationally in some kind of way. And they said, OK, then we have to make this foundation which is CONNECT Norway, which first task will be to kind of create, operational member-based networks in all the different regions in Norway. So that was their aim... And they were working with this for I don't know six, seven, ten months, something, and then this foundation, “Stiftelsen CONNECT Norge” was established in 2001 in September. Then there were the 14 founding fathers including the four five big universities. And, (which) is this, organisations for businesses in Norway, (-) from the service sector, et cetera, and there was
something called ICT Norway, and the association of the science parks in Norway, and which is a research institute, (-) five universities, six universities. That type of founders. So they all met and said, let's found this CONNECT organisation.

They put the, kind of 50,000 each in and they had a project application and there was a guy working 50 per cent. He was a Swede actually. At first, year, first two years to kind of, and his only task was to kind of, find partners to build regional networks, and then it was built in northern part of Norway and that's, I started it in 2002, in the northern part of Norway. And West was already up and running and, the mid-part, and then south came along some two years afterwards, and East, which is (so slow), was also founded at the same, in 2002, 2003. It's kind of a technical issue because some of them were started by kick-off projects. So there were (-) entities in 2003, 2004, typically.

When we started it in Norway in 2002, then was like networks and competence-sharing and co-working and co-it and co-that was just buzzwords, (but with) no actual meaning. So at that point it was kind of, something new, to do it in this way, to build different people around the same table working with all this kind of stuff. That's changed over the years. So the last three, four, five, seven years it's kind of more and more, kind of players coming into that kind of (role). So (we've kind of been) early with the way we worked. And there was a, space in the, innovation ecosystem so to speak in Norway at that point to build this kind of an organisation. It wouldn't have been possible today I guess because, it's a totally different ballgame now than it was then. But the idea at that point was as well to say that OK, we are not competing with the others. We are trying to fill in some holes, and work together with the science park, with the incubators, with all the other players.

And we started with Springboard (-) kind of the key activities (-), from San Diego (-). ...the other things have kind of evolved, more or less as a, consequence of kind of this Springboard model. ...evolved into different forums and, different other arenas to kind of, do what we are supposed to connect people."

CONNECT Norge’s CEO states that, despite the fact that the first activator of CONNECT in Norway was Swedish, CONNECT Norge was established by Norwegians and for Norway:

“(Sweden and/or Denmark had) no particular role. They were just up and running with their activities and, we met them and spoke with them and, a little bit later we have this, joint project on the Nordic-Baltic level from 2003 or 4, I think.”

### 3.2.2 CONNECT Norge today

Today CONNECT Norge is present in all Norwegian counties and has 18 employees. It seeks to help entrepreneurs who have entirely or partially unique business ideas, and where the business idea is scalable. CONNECT Norge’s CEO condenses the role of CONNECT in Norway in the following way:

“The purpose with all, is taken from CONNECT as a non-profit entity, work together to try to build an arena to make, both competence and capital equity side to meet with the investors or the entrepreneurs. So it's basically connecting companies with competence and capital. Or the other way around. (If you look at it and then) CONNECT's role is kind of this intermediary non-profit, provider.
(CONNECT Norge) is fixing the equity gap in early-stage companies. So that's kind of the most important thing that separates us from all the other players. We are the one able to build that kind of marketplace because we are situated all over (Norway) and we can cooperate cross-border quite easy. ...the idea is that the network, the marketplace feeds the activities.”

Each year, the organisation is in touch with between 500 and 600 companies in Norway. As CONNECT Sverige, CONNECT Norge is selective: “However, many of them do not satisfy our criteria, so we provide assistance to about 100 to 120 companies each year. The entrepreneur or company do not pay for our help; it's free. (CONNECT Norge 2015).”

CONNECT Norge provides free assistance to entrepreneurs with a certain technological and marketing potential. This is possible through support from members and sponsors. National cooperative partners are SIVA (Industry development and innovation), Statoil Technology Invest (Commercializing oil and gas technologies), Schibsted Growth (Investing in exceptional digital companies) and Innovation Norway (Assisting with start-up, company development and internationalisation). Today CONNECT Norge has offices all over Norway. CONNECT is a network consisting of five independent organisations in different regions:

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

CONNECT Norge’s CEO describes the role of independent regional offices and the joint foundation:

“Yeah, they are independent now legally so it’s... But on the other hand, we work together with all the regions, through the Stiftelsen, which is kind of the, thing bringing us all together. And it’s a little bit on and off, whether it has been employees or not in Stiftelsen. At some point we had somebody, employed in Stiftelsen. And for several years we have kind of run it together, which is the case now more or less. That's why I'm CEO of both CONNECT in northern part of Norway and Norway.”

CONNECT Norge identifies several types of customer segments. These segments, according to the CONNECT Norge (2015) include Entrepreneurs, Researchers, Growth companies, Investors and Service providers. Individual entrepreneurs and researchers gain insight into methods and assistance to bring their technologies forward to a business concept. Growth companies are associated with potential investors, consultants and service providers; and they get the opportunity to establish a network, including establishing contacts with potential board members and employees. Investors are presented with investment opportunities that have already been through a quality control via screening by professionals. Public and private service providers receive access to potential clients and gain an increased insight into the new economy, including technological development. They also gain a greater public visibility. CONNECT Norge Partners are
categorised to National main partners, Partners, Companies and Individuals (CONNECT Norge 2015).

At present there are more than 700 member companies. For its members (see CONNECT Norge 2015) CONNECT Norge offers:

- Connections with potential customers, partners, investments, networks.
- Opportunities to contribute with your competencies towards new growth companies, and you will be given the opportunity to invest when you think that you stand to gain from it.
- Growth of own competencies and business through teaching others and through being close to where the innovation happens.
- Branding of business and own competencies in a broad manner

Moreover, CONNECT Norge offers invitations to the Springboards of both in the local region and in the other regions in Norway, free participation to CONNECT events, discounts of events organised by partners and invitations to regional meeting and events.

CONNECT Norge promises valuable impulses for company including regular meetings with entrepreneurs and growth companies with unique business concepts, as well as with likeminded people both from local industry and from the rest of Norway. According to CONNECT Norge (2015):

“CONNECT Norway’s strength is our network of highly competent companies and individuals who are passionate about innovation and who believe in the value of sharing. Our experience suggests that the best learning happens through teaching, and as such CONNECT is particularly well suited if you have experiences and perspectives to share with others.

As a member of CONNECT, you get valuable impulses for your own company. You will meet regularly with entrepreneurs and growth companies with unique business concepts, as well as with likeminded people both from your local industry and from the rest of Norway. CONNECT is a social organization, and we know that you will thrive in it! Through CONNECT’s value creation network, Norway’s new growth companies are created and already established companies are strengthened. (CONNECT Norge 2015)”

The basic structure of the partner organisations have not changed dramatically during the existence of CONNECT Norge:

“All these founders, and, then you have to kind of build the networks with, advisors and investors, different kinds of companies and public organisations, and kind of the whole package. So it’s the kind of same basic model with the same partners. They change names now and then and some disappear and some new ones appear etc. But the basic principle is the same.”

The partner network is broad including everyone individuals in the business to Statoil and other large Norwegian businesses. The key partners, according to the CONNECT Norge’s CEO include:

- Universities
- The three big public funding agencies for innovation:
1. Innovation Norway: Norwegian Government’s instrument for innovation and development of Norwegian enterprises and industry.
2. The Research Council of Norway: a Norwegian government agency responsible for awarding grants for research as well as promoting research and science.
3. SIVA: A public enterprise owned by the Norwegian Ministry of Trade and Fisheries building facilities, investing in growth companies and developing startups and co-working spaces.
   - The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO)
   - The Enterprise Federation of Norway (Virke) and
   - IKT-Norge: the interest group for the Norwegian ICT industry.

3.2.3 Service portfolio

CONNECT Norge seeks to provide access to the most recent business ideas and a large network of industry agents who are all concerned with innovation and growth. It does so through several services. CONNECT’s core activity is to organise CONNECT Springboard and network events all over Norway. The biggest events are CONNECT Partnerforum and CONNECT Investorforum, but CONNECT also organises a host of smaller events throughout the year.

3.2.3.1 CONNECT Springbrett® [CONNECT Springboard®]

Springboard is CONNECT Norge’s main product. The CEO of CONNECT Norge characterises Springboard as “a key product or the old product or the kind of, first, way of doing stuff.” Most of the other services are based on this key service. Springboard is a meeting arena where entrepreneurs receive feedback from an interdisciplinary panel. Thus, they get to develop their business strategy, improve their business plan and prepare the company for the meeting with investors and strategic partners.

As CONNECT Sverige, CONNECT Norge is selective as it comes to the selection of companies to the Springboard service:

“If an entrepreneur is qualified to receive our help, we run a process where we help the entrepreneur improving their history. This implies that we challenge him or her to develop business plans, strategies, market analyses, good presentations etc. This happens through regular meetings between CONNECT’s business developers and the entrepreneur. When this process is done, the company is ready to implement CONNECT Springboard.”

This is an event where CONNECT applies its large network to select relevant people with extensive competencies that are relevant to the company, usually 6 to 8 people. The panel is adjusted to suit the company’s needs and consists of resource persons such as lawyers, patent experts, investors and people with knowledge about relevant markets. To get the opportunity to be a resource person, company have to be a member. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

The panel members may be investors, they may have just the right knowledge about the industry, marketing or strategy, or they may have other relevant knowledge. The entrepreneurs receive an independent review of their business plan and strategies, and are prepared for meetings with investors. CONNECT’s members are the hosts for the Springboard events and thus get the opportunity to build networks and to participate in a
learning arena for business development in practice. The entrepreneurs have been through a qualification process ahead of the Springboard event. Depending on how far the entrepreneurs have come in development of the company, CONNECT contributes to the development of strategies and to an investor presentation, so that the growth company can present a holistic and quality assured concept at the Springboard event. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

The process is very similar to the process applied in Sweden. According to CONNECT Norge (2015):

“The entrepreneur holds a 15-minute long presentation of the case and the strategy for the above-mentioned competent people. The panel then spends one to two carrying out a critical review of the entrepreneur’s case. The entrepreneur is not allowed to speak during this review, but will rather sit and listen. This provides important input about the strengths and weaknesses of the case and the chosen strategy. The experts provide their expertise for free to help the entrepreneur succeed.

When a company has completed the Springboard process with CONNECT, the company is in principle ready to approach investors if the company is in need of equity, or a bank if the company needs debt capital. (CONNECT Norge 2015).”

CONNECT Norge conducts about 100 Springboard events each year. Since the establishment, the organisation has run more than 500 growth companies through the Springboard process. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

The companies usually meet the panel again after a couple of months. According to CEO of CONNECT Norge:

“...you normally meet them, afterwards. You have some follow-up questions to the panel and to the company and then, we kind of meet them and we'll see that OK... should we do it again in let's say three months or six months, do some homework or, on the other hand you might be able to pitch to an investor lunch, you might be able to attend the partner forum in oil and gas or whatever, whatever is going on.”

However, not every Springboard leads to growth business. As the CEO of CONNECT Norge puts it: “...it may lead to the company closing down, which actually happened a couple of times and that's, I consider that a success as well, because, they don't waste two years of their time and money.”

The Springboard is free of charge to companies. This is possible through funding from the partners of CONNECT. Moreover, CONNECT Springboard is additionally supported by Innovation Norway. According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge:

“...we have an agreement or some financing through Innovation Norway which is based on kind of a, model that if we're on a Springboard, we get 25 000 (NOK), channel financing, so to speak.”

The Springboard is a truly international platform offered by global CONNECT network. Since the beginning there was a built-in global dimension in the service: a possibility to send the Nordic companies to San Diego to present their ideas. According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge: “CONNECT in San Diego had these bridge programmes bilateral stuff going on so. ...Yeah. So it's something they've, thought about from the start. ... “However, the service of CONNECT in San Diego was based on paid model. “...these programmes in San Diego, the companies usually have to pay San Diego to do something.”
The Nordic CONNECTs have developed more flexible approach in the cross-border setting of Nordic countries: “...we have had another approach to this, multilateral kind of approach to it. Which means I don't have to pay Sweden to get a Springboard in Sweden and vice versa.” According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge: “... it means that if we have a company in Norway that, wants to meet the biocluster in Copenhagen, we say to CONNECT in Denmark that: ‘hey, we have this company, doing this and that. Can you put together a panel for them in Copenhagen?’ ... and vice versa. We've been practising it on a multilateral scale in the Nordics.”

3.2.3.2 CONNECT BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator)

The CEO of CONNECT Norge states that there is a similar kind of Business Accelerator service in Norway as in Sweden. The CONNECT Business Accelerator is a business development process to jointly work on the strategic issues necessary for optimising long-term results. The target is a well thought-out growth strategy which will equip customer companies to meet growth challenges. The Accelerator is a growth program for small and medium-sized companies. It is designed for an entrepreneur with a strong ambition and ability to grow. The goal of program is to strengthen the entrepreneur with newly gained insights, knowledge and a tailored network to enhance continued work toward profitable growth.

The CONNECT Business Accelerator service is not free of charge for Norwegian businesses. According to the CEO:

“...on the Business Accelerator we also say that the companies that attend the Accelerator, they are companies that are established. They should actually be members of the network. ...which means we can use the competence of these companies as well. So then they actually have to pay a member fee.”

3.2.3.3 CONNECT Tilvekstkaptital (CONNECT Business Angel Network)

The Business Angel Network is one of the most recent services of the CONNECT Norge. According to the CEO:

“That's what we just started building. It's based on this kind of thinking that we should run local groups of investor in different cities. And, each local group is kind of a region. ...a regional group have an own regional marketplace... and then there are different kinds of investment lunches and things going on so, people can meet the cases.

On the other level this is going on in five regions of Norway, and to put all that together, we say that all persons that are members of “a local band”, and pays a membership to local CONNECT are automatically part of the kind of “Norwegian band”. So that's kind of the Norwegian side of it.

Then we say there's an added element on the Nordic platform, because we say OK, if we have, 100 investors in Norway, probably around 20, 25, 30 percent of them would be interesting in a broader range in a specific sector. So they said, OK, those who are interested in and are more or less professionals (or have done some investments) can qualify for the Nordic platform. ...if we look around us, we're tiny tiny countries so we have to have volume to build a marketplace. So that's, where the
Nordic idea came up. And the Nordic platform consists of companies and investors of all the five countries. ...so it's like, click on the Nordic button and the Nordic marketplace is open.”

Norwegian CONNECT Business Angel Network takes advantage of Gust, the technical platform for the angel networks. Gust is a Software as a Service (SaaS) funding platform that from the entrepreneur’s side “provides all the tools entrepreneurs need to manage their startup funding process, from pitch to exit”23. Gust offers the same platform for angel investors and angel investor groups. According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge:

“The cross-border investment arena is this Gust platform, software which means there are X companies, which is based on the arena, the investors can see them, the investors can cooperate, discuss, the investors can invest. ...there's a public part of it but we have kind of a, closed system. So it's, it's about letting in, both the companies and the investors which means it's kind of, closed but open system. (The partly closed system makes it possible that) there's a screening process for the investors. So that's the basic principle. ...But it's not all about the platform. It's about getting people to meet.”

Building Nordic Business Angel Network has clear advantages in terms of market size and simplified cross-border capital flow. However, the Nordic Market is at the moment far from being consistent, let alone united:

“... That's the way we have done it in Norway but if you look at the other countries, then there's another ballgame because, Fiban in Finland for instance which is part of the Nordic platform, they are for all practical purposes CONNECT but just on the angel side of it. Sweden have some other, issues and the same with Denmark. But in Norway, this marketplace has been open, and the Nordic marketplace is open, so we're trying to build those two together. That's because we're all inviting in all these other networks as well, (-) Copenhagen and Stockholm and all over the place.”

However, the CONNECT organisations are building Nordic Business Angel Network (NordicBAN)24 which seeks to build the Nordic Investment Arena. NordicBAN is a Nordic cooperation project involving CONNECT organisations in Sweden, Norway and Denmark as well as the Finnish Business Angel Network Fiban and Startupbootcamp. According to CONNECT Norge’s CEO the basic principles of NordicBAN has already been tested in the smaller scale in the form of Connect2Capital:

“... last three years or something it's been run by CONNECT West in Göteborg in Sweden. But it's been more or less a cooperation between at least Sweden, Norway and Denmark. Last year Fiban also was kind of a partner in there.”

The future questions are: ‘Can these different platforms find a real win-win for their stakeholders?’ and ‘Can these platforms join forces solve the long-term cross border

22 https://gust.com/
23 https://gust.com/
24 http://www.nordicban.org/
25 http://connect2capital.org/
collaboration challenge after the project?" There is will to make it happen. As the CEO of CONNECT Norge puts it:

"...That's hopefully, going to be a huge success, but we're still working on that...we have a lot of positive, things going on. ...we are this non-profit entity which means we can run this kind of arena, and invite all the others in. Hopefully, if we have this conversation in three years, we might, look back at a huge Nordic investment, angel success story."

3.2.3.4 CONNECT Partnerforum®

CONNECT Norge organizes Partnerforum with agents from selected industries. In Norway, CONNECT Partnerforum® has been organised for the oil and gas industry for several years. Many of the companies that have been presented here have gained valuable contacts in the industry. These can be potential suppliers, retailers, strategic partners or investors. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

CONNECT Norge Oil and Gas Partnerforum® is organised every year by CONNECT Vest in Bergen and in Stavanger. CONNECT Norge has also been responsible for similar events on a Nordic level within Cleantech. CONNECT Nordic Cleantech Partnerforum is organized every year in December, in Bergen. (CONNECT Norge 2015). CONNECT Norge is in continuous development, and seeks to expand opportunities to present companies from other industries:

"If your company wants to be a CONNECT partner and contribute to the development of a similar meeting place for new industries, please get in touch with us. (CONNECT Norge 2015)."

According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge:

"We have had some of them in Bergen for instance, the oil and gas and cleantech sector. ... there's a one-day program or half-day program, and we work with companies in a specific sector, that present themselves to, both investors, industrial players, different other kind of, entities that are interested in that specific sector. ... It's a broader scope, in some specific sector."

3.2.3.5 CONNECT Investorforum®

In CONNECT Investorforum®, growth companies that have been through Springboard give presentations to investors and other relevant partners. CONNECT organises Investorforum on a national and regional level. These events are meeting places for entrepreneurs and investors. Presenting companies for investor environments is one of the offers CONNECT can provide for companies all over the country. Most of the member organisations organise regional Investorforum®. Some organise CONNECT Investorforum regionally; others organise investor lunches or breakfasts. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

Nationally, a corresponding meeting place event is organised once a year in connection with Oslo Innovation Week. Here, CONNECT Norge collaborates with VentureLab to organise Norwegian InvestmentForum. (CONNECT Norge 2015). CONNECT investorforum also collaborates internationally, and has collaborations with Con-
nect2Capital. Companies participating to CONNECT’s events in Norway may be nominated for participation to Connect2Capital. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

3.2.3.6 CONNECT Norge Mentor Programs

CONNECT Norge offers two types of mentor programs as part of their services in collaboration with public sector. According to the CEO:

“The mentoring programme as we run them in Norway, there is somebody with money, giving a grant to, somebody applying for money. Whether it's Innovation Norway or the Research Council. And then have got this grant for the money. OK, you are paid, you got [the sum removed] NOK to pay a mentor [the sum removed] NOK. And, we get the job, to find the right mentor to the company, which means we talk to the company and discuss a lot of stuff and find out what they really want and need. Then it's about using the (CONNECT) network to find the right mentor for that specific company. And often we combine, mentorship programs with (running) Springboards and doing other stuff with them.

FORNY2020 Mentor Program

CONNECT Norge has established a co-operation with The Research Council of Norway. The FORNY2020 program is owned by The Research Council, and is meant to contribute to an increased value creation through getting research results from publicly funded research institutions and to the market. Companies originating from publicly funded research and project managers from commercialisation agents (CAs) can obtain free access to CONNECT Norge’s mentor network through FORNY2020. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

The program is earmarked for project managers and teams from commercialisation agents (CAs) and newly established companies. 50,000 NOK is set aside for each mentor, equivalent to 50 hours. The mentor process usually lasts three to five months. The mentor is selected by CONNECT Norge. A CA is here defined as a company wholly or partially owned by one or several publicly funded research institutions, or that in accordance with an agreement on behalf of such institutions administers the rights to commercial gain from research findings and ideas generated by these. It is a condition that the project applied for has received funding from FORNY, either directly as verification funds or indirectly through the CA. In this context, a newly established company is a company wholly or partially based on immaterial rights from publicly funded research institutions and that has been established with funds from FORNY or FORNY2020. In most cases, this would imply that a CA with funds from FORNY is responsible for the establishment. The company must have existed for less than six years when it applies for a mentor from FORNY2020. (CONNECT Norge 2015).

Mentor offer from Innovation Norway

The mentor service is an offer for a general manager of an entrepreneurial company. CONNECT connects general manager with experienced people in the industry and find a mentor suitable for your company. According to CONNECT Norge (2015), the entrepreneurs with ambitions of long-term growth beyond the local market as well as entrepreneurs with in a phase of development or market introduction with a unique business
idea are in the target group of the mentor service. The service includes one on one discussions with a mentor over a period of six to twelve months. CONNECT Norge will cover up to 50,000 NOK (including VAT) of the costs. This corresponds to about 40 hours of mentor guidance. As part of the mentor service, customer can participate to up to two network events. The goal of the network event is that entrepreneur shares your experiences and at the same time gather knowledge from others in the same situation. According to CONNECT Norge (2015) “the feedback from entrepreneurs and mentors to CONNECT Norway has been very positive. Few would want to do without the offer, and feedback suggests that many participants learn a lot in a short time.”

There are two different mentor program in the service portfolio of CONNECT Norge. The CEO explains the logic:

“...it's different kinds of institutions. The Innovation Norway is more or less for the established companies. The focus of the Research Council, is more focused on for example on the tech transfer offices at the universities. But the basic principle is the same. It's like you get, X to work Y hours with a mentor. ...the CONNECT's role is finding the right mentors for the specific company. So at that point we do an actual job, which we get paid for by this Innovation Norway or, the Research Council.”

3.2.3.7 CONNECT Pitch

CONNECT Pitch is a service focused on training of start-ups. This is a service CONNECT Norge has had since the day one, but it has been formalised only recently. According to the CEO CONNECT Pitch is “training entrepreneurs for short business pitches to different interest groups (investors, industry, customers, etc.). It's something we always have done, all of us (Nordic CONNECTs) in some kind of way, but now we kind of packaged it and called it Connect Pitch.”

3.2.4 The future of CONNECT Norge

According to the CEO, the innovation ecosystem of Norway have changed during CONNECT Norge’s existence:

“...whole innovation ecosystem has changed in the last couple of years because we were doing something which was just, words for most people at that time. ...you have, no, 20, 30, 40, different kind of players of different kinds of constructions that's working with, start-up this and, eco that and invest here and invest there et cetera, and it's locally-driven and some are national, some are global players et cetera. So it's a lot of, kind of organisation that's come into this kind of ecosystem, over the last years.

That's also why we kind of, have stuck to kind of the basic rules of conduct and the Springboard and the programmes, but kind of evolved to them as well and, had real hard focus over the last two three years at least in Norway on this kind of angel activities, these early-stage private investors. Because that’s, I think that's really important if you look at the positioning in the kind of, ecosystem innovation. (--) (we say) OK, if we solve the biggest problem... Someone is trying to get in.

...there are a lot of other players, and some of them, pretend to be non-profit, which actually is not the case. But they could look like it if you don't kind of dig deeper.
Yeah, it's free in a way and we are as, we kind of, that's not just what we are saying. We actually do it and mean it and work that way as well, and have been doing and have been around. But on the other hand, we could have, sit still and said, OK, we are so brilliant and so genius and we can do what we have been doing, for the last ten years the next coming years. But we said, two years ago, three years ago, in a kind of big strategic discussion in Norway, they said, OK, if we just continue on the way we are, we will be eaten up or, at some point we will say what happened. Or we can say, OK, we has to look at the positioning in the ecosystem and, we think that we should take on the biggest and most difficult challenge... and that's, at least in Norway, difference between countries, to kind of, create the system for business angels, not just use the word business angel but private investors that invest in early-stage...

... we have to position ourselves there, and then we have to build both this local and regional and national and, probably also a Nordic marketplace, because it will, otherwise it's too fragmented and it's too small... Which means that we have to go home, do our homework in Norway to build a national network at the same time and a local and regional.

Yeah, because if we look at what's going on on the Nordic level, then we can kind of, say that then we are more or less on the level with, not all the California but at least parts of California, which is kind of a market. And they said OK, we have to do this to position, ourselves to kind of, fix this tricky question. Because then we are, still will be interesting for, incubators for the network as such. If we fix that, kind of problem, then the others will come and want to be part of it. Again, it's not closed.

Yeah, it's changed because we tend to look what's going on around us. And we made this kind of strategic framework from 2014 to '16 which we are more or less in the middle of now. What we thought back in 2012, '13, is not happening in the middle of the plan, with all public players, with, focus on the angel (--) angel investments et cetera. So we were, again, so to speak, a little early adaptors and early thinkers about new ways of doing things."

According to the CEO, short-term future (2017) can be described as follows:

“...an up and running angel network that's really the marketplace in Norway and in the Nordics and we have a lot of success stories from that. And the older activities kind of, evolve from there. That's kind of what I'm hoping for. We're on the way, and we have this strategy process we said well, we can kind of, evaporate slowly, doing whatever we're doing, or we can say, let's try, let's raise the flag, try to do it for real, and if we fail, then we at least have tried. #

Regarding the long term future (2020), the CEO states:

“...the next step is looking at exists from the kind of early-stage markets, which we already are discussing with different stock exchanges, venture firm, corporate ventures et cetera. So it's kind of an unbroken line, with different kinds of equity, following the start-ups. So that's kind of the next step I guess, to kind of formalise. But it all depends on building that market. ...and the market is, what we are talking here is really the cross-border, first in the, Nordic and Baltic region. ...and the next step will be to invite investors from outside the Nordic interested in the Nordic growth firms. So that's also a kind of a next step when we have, built the market. ... They they are probably, on their way with, somebody else picking up all the good ideas and say that, let's go for global investment arena.
4 CONNECT service transfer

4.1 Sweden

4.1.1 The role of global CONNECT network in Swedish context

The global CONNECT network plays an important role in the Swedish context. According to CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator the collaboration has been most active with the following members of the global CONNECT network:

- CONNECT USA
- CONNECT Norway
- CONNECT Denmark
- CONNECT Estonia
- CONNECT Latvia
- CONNECT UK

In Europe, the collaboration has been focused especially on the CONNECT organisations in the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea region. The collaboration with CONNECT organisations in UK have been less intensive. In USA, the collaboration has been focused on collaboration with the CONNECT in California. Moreover, CONNECT Sverige has active collaboration with Munich Network of Entrepreneurship & Innovation, which is a network not “inspired by” CONNECT but strongly linked in the global CONNECT activities. Global CONNECT provides access to these kinds of 2nd tier resources as well. The contact with the rest of the world, CONNECT members in US context, South America, Middle East and Asia, have been limited to informal meetings in the Global CONNECT summit. As the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige describes:

“...Actually I have met representatives from all of these countries. But it's only at the Global Connect. So there's no formal cooperation at all.”

According to the Coordinator the key aspect related to the global services relates to global funding opportunities available through the network. The CONNECT member organisations can send companies to the other CONNECTs to present their business and search for international funding opportunities and stepping stones to international markets. These resources would not be as easily available without it:
“...when we market CONNECT, we always highlight that there are possibilities, to meet investors, both on national level in Sweden or Nordic level, but also in California and San Diego. So it is, that's a strength for CONNECT that we have this global CONNECT, and the possibility. And they should, they always welcome if we come with company, that look for funding, if we come with those companies to San Diego, they welcome us very much, no problem. That's the good part. ... global services offer a possibility for companies to raise funding through Californian networks. And when we market CONNECT, it's a good thing that we can pinpoint the opportunity.”

Global CONNECT network has functioned especially well in the Nordic countries with low cultural barriers and geographically close distance:

“... I arranged Nordic CONNECT in Umeå last spring. In 2014. We have lots of activities together. So we had from Latvia, Estonia, Russia, Denmark, Norway, all over Sweden, Finland of course, two. And, a Nordic event. (The thing was with this as well), the Norwegians had said that they should come back (in) a couple of years but they never did, they never managed. So I said now, we can't have it like this, I arrange it. So I arranged it. There were about 60 people in total. What we also had there, we had an international investment forum, with companies from Norway, Sweden and Latvia, presenting themselves in front of this Nordic CONNECT, completed with a couple of local investors, during this event. For example. So we arrange.

Yes. We have investor forums like in Åre, where we have, companies from Sweden and Norway, that is looking for raising new money. They met investors, especially from Sweden though but a couple of them, have been from Norway in panels, in financing panel so to speak, to meet those companies.

We have this, Connect to Capital which is an international one, in Gothenburg. Let's see, there were, unfortunately no Norwegian company, as my colleague in CONNECT Göteborg told me. But there were a couple of investors from Denmark and I think someone from Finland, who went to that event. So we have, investor forum is one area that we worked together. And I've for example been with a couple of companies during the years to Bergen in Norway, and it's an energy investment forum. In energy area. Yeah.

We could do much more I think. ... The most positive is to me that, learn from each other, business community, business culture in different countries.”

At the Nordic level the main challenge has been the long geographical distance:

“...the problem is geographical distance. It's so much travelling. ...for example you go to, Trondheim. Then you have to travel down to Stockholm and down to Oslo and then up to Trondheim. If you don't want to drive a car all the way which is some 1,000 kilometres almost, or more than that. So, the travel, the distances, are main obstacle for this cooperation, I must say.”

The global CONNECT networks has faced also challenges during the past years:

“...But besides of that, we don't have that much, to do with, Global CONNECT. There should be once a year a Global CONNECT event, but they haven't managed to arrange it (every year). ... So, in fact, it's good that they are there, it's good for our brand name, but otherwise, no, it's not something that I have contacts with, more
than a couple of times a year. ... But otherwise it's not that much. I don't ask for more either, we don't need to have more, contact, I think.”

### 4.1.2 Service transfer to and development in Sweden

The CONNECT flagship, The Springboard was the first and foremost service implemented in Sweden. The Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige states:

“...a couple of years, several years we worked solely with Springboards. Yeah. As I told it comes from Ingenjörsvetenskapsakademien and a couple of delegations went there to see what it was all about. They found it very interesting, so they took the idea of the Springboard process to Sweden and the licence was handed over, to different areas of the country. That's how it started.”

The CONNECT Springboard was licenced from California and the original concept was not changed much as it was implemented in Sweden. There was no major challenges in implementing the Springboard service in Sweden. CONNECT Sveriges Coordinator described that the similarities between Californian and Swedish business culture helped in the transfer process:

“We have the culture of assisting each other, (–) we want the area, the local area to grow, so we like to assist. So, the main, thing was that, business could meet, all (–) accountants and business consultancies to meet during a couple of hours, discuss a proper, case, that was well prepared. So it was worthwhile to go to the meeting, and, as I told you, I think there's a lot of businesses that have taken place out of the Springboard event, even though it's not, connected to the actual Springboard company, but to the panel members...”

However, also some challenges were faced. The number one challenge relates to funding of the Springboard service:

“Financing, has always been... We don't charge the companies in any way, we just have partners and... That's of course... Funding is actually, number one, especially when it comes to CONNECT in Sweden.”

The second challenge relates to the company profile and characteristics of more sparsely populated regions:

“When it comes to small places like Umeå, 100,000 inhabitants and stuff... Once in a while we don't see enough companies to make a Springboard. It comes and goes that, situation. Right now we had quite good companies fun to work with. But if you ask me maybe one year from now, we'd say, “OK, we are trying to find good companies that should be assisted by our network.” That's one thing. It's much easier to be in Stockholm or Gothenburg or Malmö...”

The next service that was started was FöretagsAcceleratorn. Unlike Springboard, the business accelerator service was developed in Sweden and is owned by CONNECT Sverige:
“After a couple of years, we started this business accelerator (FöretagsAccelerator). And I think (−) seven or eight years ago we started, (−)CONNECT West in Gothenburg, and it spread all over the country.”

The Tillväxtcapital-service was developed in CONNECT Sverige more recently.

“These investor meetings, we’ve been working quite a long time in Norr with this but, we started the first meeting in 2006, here in the north. When it comes to rest of the Sweden, I suppose it started about 2008 or something. …many of our Springboard companies, they requested that we must have this kind of funding service, where can we find it. It was more or less a market request that made us go into this area.”

Partner-service can be considered more as a support service when compared to the others and it has been run since the beginning of CONNECT Sverige. The same applies to CONNECT meeting places. The service developments have taken place in Sweden. However, both have their original role models in San Diego as the Springboard-service would not be fully functional without these support services.

### 4.1.3 Service transfer from Sweden to other contexts

In the Nordic and in the Baltic region, CONNECT Sverige has been the biggest organisation under CONNECT umbrella. According to CONNECT Sverige’s Coordinator:

“…we are more than maybe three times as big as the second one. And of course, with the business accelerator and, the number of Springboards that we conduct, we’re some kind of, role model of course, for the others. But Sweden is the speaking partner, and it’s located geographically in the middle but also, we have activities all over the country.”

CONNECT Sverige has had a major role in transfer of Springboard services to the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea region. The Springboard service is the same for all CONNECTs; otherwise the services transfer has been somewhat unique in each country:

“When it comes to Estonia and Latvia, CONNECT in Sweden started these organisations a long time ago. The former Coordinator of CONNECT in Sweden at that time, is more or less, worked only in the Baltic, (regarding this). It was about Springboard. So, Sweden have started these operations. And it goes also to small operation that we have in Russia, St. Petersburg today. Sweden offered lots of assistance. We were first, so it is the same with Norway and Denmark. In Sweden we were a couple of years before them, so we assisted them a lot during the start-up. …We had some, at that time, now we are talking early 2000s, we had some EU funding for assisting the Baltic countries and Norway and Denmark so, we had a Coordinator in Sweden who get more or less (paid) for doing this. …the CEO of Stockholm went there and, described the Springboard and then they just started to work by their own. More or less the same in, the Baltic countries but, a tougher start in those countries, because of their history and stuff.

…they are not doing exactly the same. Like Denmark for example, they have said that they don’t work with investors, at all. They will only work with the Springboards,
and maybe later business accelerator. But they will not have investor networks as we have and, Norwegians, perhaps will have. That’s a difference.”

Some CONNECT Sverige services developed in Sweden have already been transferred to other Nordic Countries. The Coordinator describes the service transfer:

“In Norway they're trying to have a business accelerator (comparable to FöretagsAcceleratorn), even though they... Yeah, they try to but I don’t know whether they really started it. And Denmark, no.

When it comes to investor, the investor side (Tillväxtcapital), it’s the same, the Norwegian for trying to do something that we have in Sweden. They started it recently, they don’t have any network of investors today. But they are aiming at starting a look-alike, like the ones we have here in Sweden.”

Connect Sverige has been a success story in the global network: “...as I pinpointed several times, Sweden is by far the biggest CONNECT organisation in the world, no. In Norway and Denmark the success has been good as well: “I think both, Denmark and Norway, they were quite good. You might say that these are successes. I should say.”

In the Baltic Sea region the CONNECT has not become a significant success story yet due to financial problems:

“They struggle so with the financing from the Baltic countries, so, you can’t say that CONNECT is a success in those countries. But they have representatives though, but, you shouldn't say that (there's a) success. ... Of course, there is (--), but now, a couple of months ago he (-) that he was, he had to go back to the university to finance himself by working as a teacher in the university. So CONNECT (Estonia) will be more or less put on hold and, until they get some kind of finance. There is CONNECT organisations there, but, they more or less don't work as CONNECT organisations, in those countries.”

4.1.4 Swedish suggestions for CONNECT service transfer to Finland

Regarding service transfer, CONNECT Sverige Coordinator suggest the following:

“... I think you (in Finland) maybe should start as we did in Norway and Denmark and Sweden and so on, start with the Springboard, trying to link the society and the business community, to (found) it and to take an active part in it. And also be, very sure that there isn't exactly the same being done already. (-- should then of course highlight how it works in Sweden, and it works quite well. There is a need from the, growing companies and from the entrepreneurs to have CONNECT (-) to work with CONNECT. So I think you should maybe (-- have all the tools. But Springboards, maybe focusing on the investor network. That’s, I think is the proper way to start it. Springboard (with focused financing) as we say in Sweden. (--).”
4.2 Norway

4.2.1 The role of global CONNECT network in Norwegian context

The global CONNECT network plays an important role in the Norwegian context. The CEO of CONNECT Norge highlights the importance of international collaboration and networking from the perspective of Norway:

“...it's both good and bad that we are a tiny country with tiny tiny regions and not that many people. So we have to look up, and look out, if we are able to help these companies grow and scale. So it's a necessity. It's like we can't do it on our own anyway so we have no choice, in a way. On the other hand, if you look at it, in the big picture, there's a huge opportunity there.”

According to the CEO the collaboration has been most active with the following members of the global CONNECT network:

- CONNECT USA
- CONNECT Sweden
- CONNECT Denmark
- CONNECT Estonia
- CONNECT Latvia
- CONNECT UK

In Europe the collaboration has been focused especially on the CONNECT organisations in the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea region. The collaboration with CONNECT organisations in UK have been less intensive. In the UK, CONNECT Norge has collaborated recently most closely with NISPCONNECT (http://nispconnect.org/). Moreover, CONNECT Norge together with CONNECT Sverige have active collaboration with Munich Network of Entrepreneurship & Innovation, which is a network not “inspired by” CONNECT but strongly linked in the global CONNECT activities. Global CONNECT provides access to these kinds of 2nd tier resources as well. In USA the collaboration has been focused on collaboration with the CONNECT in California:

“San Diego, that's big. The other (CONNECT organisations in the US) ones are kind of cooperates in a way. ... And they have some kind of organisation that's CONNECT -like. ... They've been in these global summits and so on and we have sent some companies to some of these forums which they have in Boston and so on. ...there is something's going on. But it's not that structured.”

The contact with the rest of the world, CONNECT members in US context, South America, Middle East and Asia, have been limited to informal meetings in the Global CONNECT event. The CEO of CONNECT Norge opens some aspects of international activities:

“It's the way it works today, is meaning that we get lots of invitations from different financial forums and arenas going on, around and we could, probably say hey,
we have a company here that might suit whatever you're looking for. Maybe they could come join. Then we have this summit (annual Global CONNECT Summit organised in San Diego).”

CONNECT Norge’s CEO recognises two different approaches to building activities in the global CONNECT network, the bilateral and the multi-lateral approach. The business culture of each context affects the preferred approach.

“...If you look at the old kind of, if you look at San Diego, they have CONNECT and CONNECT Global which are two separate entities. CONNECT Global took the role of kind of, running around, helping people to start innovation ecosystems around the globe and getting paid for it, which is, probably a good idea. ...it is this kind of bilateral model.

...we have kind of this multilateral way of thinking (Nordic model) which we have tried to bring to the table. ...people from Singapore and Thailand and Japan or Colombia kind of, like the idea of how we are working together. ... If you're going to build a cooperation, you can't build the cooperation based on what one party is interested in. So you all have to kind of give and take.”

The CEO points out the strength of having heterogeneous business ecosystems connected together through joint network:

“...we built (Nordic CONNECT network) because we are small and because that's the way we had to do it. ...when you have the ecosystem around you, you can think for your own. ...big or good clusters you have in (places like) San Diego and Silicon Valley. ... In San Diego ...they are good at some areas: they're good at some biotech, cleantech and mobile ICT and science. They have some clusters. But there's lots of other clusters. ...they could come to Singapore. So it's like building on, clusters or the uniqueness (strengths) of all these places. ...we have to kind of think, cooperation in another way. ...I don't have to know all about everybody in Singapore. I just have to know one guy in Singapore, and he knows all the Singaporeans, and they can fix up whatever is needed for these specific companies. I need to know one guy, I need to know a little bit about what kind of clusters and what kind of, special things they're looking for.”

In the Nordic countries context the multilateral model of CONNECT is in action. The CEO points out that this model might be the next one to be scaled through the global CONNECT network:

“It's just a matter of scaling. ...it's much easier to scale this model globally now, because you can use a mixture of software and, communication tools and processes and different arenas and meeting places. ...on the other hand somebody must take that vision bring all the others to the table and, that's nobody's, nobody have the responsibility to do that. But it's possible to do it. So it's like, OK. ...maybe we might take on the next step. Take the global. ...if you look at the kind of, opportunity picture or the big picture, you can say that OK, this Nordic model working together with everything could be scaled. ... we have kind of mission to say that, maybe we should think operations differently than the traditional way. Slowly I'd say it's been moving in that direction.”
Currently it seems that the global level of activities are centred around CONNECT and the global CONNECT summit in a somewhat bilateral model. The Nordic CONNECT organisations have developed a multilateral model which functions in the Nordic-Baltic context in active manner but does not interact very actively with the other CONNECT organisations outside Europe except for CONNECT in San Diego. The most active collaboration is within the Nordic context. CONNECT Norge’s CEO describes the situation in the following way:

“We met the CONNECTs in Singapore and, formerly New Zealand and Australia and Japan and Taiwan and so on, but we haven't done any actual kind of cooperation including the companies. …meeting them and discussing best practices et cetera. …We have, some people from Italy, contacting us, say OK, we'd want to do some activities, CONNECT-like, could we use the methodology …application to test it out. …there's a guy, been trying to start up some CONNECT activity in Switzerland and so on. …And Colombia we had some contacts with the Colombians, and actually introduced a company to them which, was a company up in northern Norway. The one, the girl was from Colombia and the guy was from... so, they were building some kind of internet service stuff.”

4.2.2 Service transfer to and development in Norway

Localisation has always been a part of CONNECT activities in Norway. According to the CEO:

“But all the transitions or transfers going on, it's not like, it's like, somebody sees somebody else is doing something and says, we have to translate this into Norwegian. Then you kind of do it on your own, so it's not like a big franchise model or something. You can't buy it and get a package and then you're done. You have to, adapt it to your own region or country. ... You have to adjust to your local regional or national innovation ecosystem. That's the broad picture. ...you have to look for the gaps or the holes. At least I think that's the way we have done it. Let's fill in some holes, let's do something that nobody else actually is doing here, and let's do it together with somebody else always. That's the way we've done it.

The most positive part (of cross-border service transfer) is that's a way of kind of keeping up the network on a broader scale. It means you have to cooperate with others. It means you can have a broader network for all companies and so on. I could think that's the key value of it. On the other hand of course it's important to kind of evolve your own business, so you don't kind of, fall asleep on your post and get passed by several others. But keeping up, or learning, the way we are thinking, when we meet is like, we can copy best things, best practices from all the others.”

Springboard, the core flagship service of global CONNECT network was transferred from San Diego to Norway. As a service it did not require any major adjustments to the Norwegian ecosystem. However, on practical level according to the CEO of CONNECT Norge, “it is different to put together a Springboard panel in San Diego that, for instance in Finnmark” (sparsely populated region in the northernmost Norway). The small size of the local communities have led to the network-based model where the local, regional, and national CONNECT work together as a network. According to the CEO:
“So what we have done in Norway, ...we are small, and we have small networks where we are. But at some point, we can't help them any more with just local resources, and we have to look, broader to find the right resources. So in that way we have to adapt whatever is available around you. But that's the way the network works in a good way. I can take a company to Bergen, I can take a company to Stockholm, and they could, find the right people there. I don't have to know all the Swedes, I just have to know the CONNECT guys in Sweden and they know all the others.”

The CEO of CONNECT Norge claims that BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator) service was developed in Gothenburg in Sweden and transferred to the whole of Sweden and finally to Norway. The service is more or less the same in all these countries. The minor adjustments needed for implementation were described by the CEO:

“So it's been translated into Norwegian (language) but, as well, was translated into “northern Norwegian” (context) which is really scattered area where bunch of people live in small towns... (service was taken from Gothenburg which is kind of a big city if you compared to the northern part of Norway. So then we have had, to adapt it to make it kind of easier, or not that, structured with all these modules and stuff. The (original service developed in Sweden) was really structured in a way.”

The Tilvekstkapital (The Business Angel Network) is not clearly developed in one context according to the CEO:

“It's kind of evolved. ...the idea about connecting the angels to start-ups is kind of basic. They have had business angel networks in different parts of Sweden for instance, close to CONNECT. We have always had the angels and the investors in the network making investments ... it's a little invented in Norway, a little bit here and a little bit there. ...no one has done it (earlier) in a really structured way.
...this time we've done it in a structured big Nordic way. That's the kind of new, issue there. ...it's more of a Nordic way of building a bigger multilateral market. ...that idea is developed in Norway.

The rest of the CONNECT Norge’s services have strong roots in Springboard in San Diego, but have evolved in the local context:

“...the other things have kind of evolved, more or less as a, consequence of kind of this Springboard model. ...evolved into different forums and, different other arenas to kind of, do what we are supposed to connect people.”

Investorforum was developed in Norway but it is strongly inspired by CONNECT in San Diego and the Springboard model. CONNECT Norge has developed investor-forums on a regional level and national levels as meeting places for entrepreneurs and investors.

Partnervisum, according to the CEO of CONNECT Norge, is developed in Norway using the principles of the Springboard model. This service has a strong linkage to the Norwegian oil and gas industry and the specific characteristics of the Norwegian economy. This service is not used in other Nordic countries in the similar sense.

CONNECT mentoring services started with a request from Innovation Norway. According to the CEO:
“...that was kind of, just, some bright person from Innovation Norway approached to us and asked, hey, you know a lot of people. We’ve tried a pilot on this stuff and can’t find the right mentors with the right competence. ... And then they said, couldn’t you do it, and then we kind of had a pilot and, it's evolved from there. ... we’re connecting the right people at the right time to the right company and stuff so it was kind of a no-brainer for us. At that point we said that OK, of course we can do it but we can’t, we're a non-profit organisation but we are not a non-income organisation so, that we said that we have built this network so that's, capitalising on the network, (so we kind of have to), have some kind of revenue to do that job. ... There are some different mentoring programmes (in the other Nordic CONNECTs) but it's not in the same way with CONNECT doing the same roles.”

CONNECT Pitch was packaged in Norway as a separate service but all the other CONNECT’s provide similar services as part of other services. The concept has not specifically been transferred to or from through CONNECT network.

### 4.2.3 Service transfer from Norway to other contexts

CONNECT Norge has taken an active part in transfer of CONNECT services to other contexts together with other Nordic CONNECTs. However, building partnerships in the cross-border innovation ecosystem is a challenging task. The CEO describes the challenge in the following way:

“It's more or less, there’s not that many direct competitors, as such, in the total package we deliver. But there’s a lot of players doing different kinds of stuff that is similar, in different kinds of way. On the other hand it depends on, whether you look at all these other players as competitors or somebody that you can cooperate with in some kind of way, to kind of solve whatever should be solved. Our focus has tried to, focus on the other way, to see that OK, let's see if we can do something together.”

The CEO shares a story from a situation where CONNECT Norge was challenged in an international setting by a national consultant that considered the organisation as a direct competitor:

“I suddenly got this James Bond image in my head, which I shared with, all the participants there and it’s like when you, look at a James Bond movie (--) in the water for some reasons. And then the bad guys always have black suits and the good guys always have red suits, and they're out swimming. And then it's kind of easy, then you know how to shoot. If you look at this kind of innovation ecosystems, you would have, 200 guys underneath the water and they will all have grey suits. So it depends. The way you approach them, whether they’re an enemy or a partner or whatever, and at some point you can cooperate. ...it's like, in other issues you can kind of, cooperate so.”

CONNECT Norge’s further states that some of the service transfer activities have a strong dependency to the ongoing project portfolio of the Nordic CONNECT organisations:

“We had several times that we have had, projects funded to do something together. ...we had this (3B) Nordic Baltic project, to meet and to exchange best practices.
(cross-border Springboards) been there all the way but we haven't done, a lot of them in the last years. We did a lot of them in 2004, 5, 6, 7, 8, more or less around there because we had this big Nordic Baltic (3B) project which one of the activities were actually cross-border Springboards. ... At that point a CONNECT Finland was established ... they were established. I don't know if they're, they may still exist on paper somewhere. ...the last guy that, met from CONNECT in Finland is several years ago. Hannu Jungman he's called, I remember his name.”

According to the CEO some of the service transfer activities have a strong dependency on the people:

“...it comes down to the persons, running the different entities all around. ...if nobody's doing anything, nothing will happen. On many occasions they should have. ...it would have been nice if some big guru from somewhere fixed it all and, got the money and, fixed the concepts. But that's not the way this structure works. It works bottom-up.

Because, that's kind of one of the, tricky things about an organisation like us because, nobody really has, the role to do it. Anybody could do it, but on the other hand if nobody does anything, nothing will happen on the other hand. So it's like, both disadvantageous and advantageous being who we are. Because we don't have a, big Nordic strategic forum that's, discuss for two weeks and what we should do on a great scale (and with loads of money in the bank). So it's like, if you kind of come up with some good idea, then you have to do all the work.”

Despite the above described challenges, the transfer of services to other contexts is part of the CONNECT’s genetic code. As the CEO of CONNECT Norge states: if a new CONNECT appears somewhere, it's good for everybody. Currently CONNECT Norge plays a key role in building Nordic Business Angel Network:

“...the Boreum (Building Nordic Business Angel Network) stuff, is transferred in the way that we have the idea and we, applied for funding through Nordic Innovation, and we took the risk on putting together the application and finding funding for all the partners ...all the work.”

4.2.4 Norwegian suggestions for CONNECT service transfer to Finland

CONNECT Norge’s CEO gives a couple of suggestions that could be taken into account in establishing CONNECT Finland. First, the starting point in Finland is different today than it was in Norway when CONNECT was started there:

“I think that you should have in mind that, what was going on in the innovation ecosystem in Norway at the time we started, was, it was kind of an open space. ...if you would start connecting Norway today it would be a completely other story. But I'm not sure if it would have been possible, because there are so many other players there and then we would be just another, innovation player.

...[In Finland] you should look for the kind of small holes, that can't be fixed just locally. Which is the model which, why kind of the (-)guys have (taken on) and said that OK, we are doing what you're doing. We see the potential (--), let's do something
Nordic. I think that's one of the key issues, and then you have to build and find the small holes in the ecosystem, wherever they are. I'm not that into all the details et cetera, but I guess you have all incubators, you have a lot of kind of players that's in the sector (before). And they will say, that this is what we're doing, but they ain't doing it because they have an agenda. (--) agenda and that's one, we started in Norway as well with all these incubators and science park et cetera. (--) spun out of, kind of starting help project organised through a kind of incubator or something. And the ones that succeeded fastest, was the one that said, OK, we can't have this linkage any more, we have to be totally free.

...you have to do it together with them in some kind of way, and you have to look for all these small loopholes and say, what could be added (to) what you're already doing. And if you have kind of, ten innovation players, don't start with the trickiest one. Start with the, kind of, little open-minded guy (--) well, this sounds kind of smart. And then the others might follow, because if you look at the, trickiest guy and there are tricky guys (--) (system) for sure.

...it's like, at one place we have kind of a, guy running the same spot that, wants to rule it all. And on the other hand, places you have people that are more into networking and, more open innovation, (--) so, So it differs. So you're gonna have to adapt to your local environment.

...you have to have some public support but the general in all these countries that, the states are too involved in the details. They should, I won't say the word I was thinking about, but they shouldn't be doing the job. They should kind of provide, financing and pay the ones that know what they're doing, and not kind of build services, because then they build services and arenas and they're all looking at were are the investors, where are the entrepreneurs, this is the best arena ever. Why aren't they coming? ... (regarding establishment of Fiban) there was a lot of things going on in Finland publicly structured and public this and public that. The minute or, at the point where you said that, let's skip all that stuff, let's base it on the persons actually investing, build kind of a small organisation that's run through business thinking. Then it suddenly flies.

...It's a tricky part in Norway that we're kind of too rich. The state is actually the rich guy and, this kind of programmes and stuff is going through the state. And we don't have to invent nothing, at least not, in a couple of years. Luckily the oil price has gone down because people are going to wake up a little bit.

...we have been stuck to the same kind of basic principle which I think is important, that we are this kind of non-profit, organisation. Which we see now when we are up and running angel networks and stuff. And we are probably going to succeed because we are non-profit and neutral, we can say things that others can't, because they're kind of, have some kind of a role, and some other agenda. And then we don't actually. That works and we stuck to that.

It's all this kind of a balance, issue to kind of, not fall down on, either side of the fence, but I said OK, we have to stick to kind of the basic rule for conduct.”

Interestingly, in terms of Nordic Business Angel Networks, the CEO of CONNECT Norge recognises some similarities between an existing Finnish organisation and the CONNECT:

“...there's no CONNECT organisation as such (in Finland) but ...Fiban is organised, as a non-profit entity. In my head, if CONNECT is, doing ten things, in the innovation ecosystem, Fiban is doing one or two things, which means they have a lot of activities, yeah, they have the angel network of course but, they're doing that kind of
matchmaking, between the companies and the investor, and they also have some kind of training for them. Companies can pitch to the investors. So they’re doing (partly) CONNECT work but they’re not doing as much as we do including Springboard and the broader perspective. …Fiban as it’s organised, is kind of non-profit and neutral and, could easily be called Fiban CONNECT.

…but with more narrow scope. Fiban has a kind of a narrow scope, and they're geographically …not that spread.
5 Discussion

5.1 Answers to the research questions

CONNECT activities have inevitably generated strong results at the local level in Southern California and the network has developed to a truly transnational innovation network which has offices in around 20 countries in multiple continents. However, as pointed out at the beginning of this study, inadequate knowledge exists about the transferability of the CONNECT to other business contexts at the international level.

To fill this gap, this study first described the service portfolio of CONNECT in San Diego and global CONNECT activities. Second, the results of the CONNECT transfer activities at the Nordic level were analysed from Swedish and Norwegian perspectives. The aim was to compare the current set of key services of CONNECT with the current service portfolios of the selected Scandinavian CONNECTs. This was considered as a good way to analyse which services developed by CONNECT in San Diego have been implemented in the Nordic context and to what extent. It also enabled to reflect the transferability potential of CONNECT to other contexts in Northern Europe.

The above described research aim and problem was condensed into the following research questions:

1. How did the Scandinavian business contexts became members of CONNECT’s transnational innovation network?
2. What is the role of CONNECT in the Scandinavian business contexts today?
3. What is the service portfolio offered under CONNECT umbrella in the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems and what is the relation of this portfolio to the key services of the original CONNECT in San Diego?
4. Which CONNECT services were transferred from the global CONNECT network to the Nordic business ecosystems and how? Which services were developed in the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems and how?
5. Which CONNECT services were transferred from the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems to the global network and how?

The analysis was done by case study methodology and through semi-structured interviews and analysis of public archives. The central themes of the interviews are provided as an appendix.

Answer to the research question 1: 1. How did the Scandinavian business contexts became members of CONNECT’s transnational innovation network?
Both Scandinavian CONNECTs analysed in this study followed similar formula in becoming a member of the CONNECT “family”. There has been a strong interest in the high national level to the CONNECT model, but at the same time enough space and time for generating regional commitment through bottom-up approach.

In Sweden, the central role was taken by representatives from Riskkapitalföreningen (The Risk Capital Association) and Kungl. In the spring of 1996 Swedish representatives from these organisations visited San Diego. This sparked an interest in CONNECT’s operation. A national survey was conducted to assess the possible need for a Swedish CONNECT. Based on that process, in January of 1997, results of the survey were presented and shortly thereafter a decision was made to start CONNECT in Sweden. The CONNECT Sverige was established in 1998. It is one of the early adopters of CONNECT model and services outside USA. Sweden was the first one among the Nordic Countries and among the Baltic Sea region to implement and localise CONNECT model and activities.

CONNECT Sverige’s first regional networks were formed: CONNECT Western and CONNECT Skåne. These were subsequently followed by CONNECT Eastern Sweden, CONNECT Uppsala and CONNECT Northern. The first and foremost service of CONNECT international innovation network, the Springboard, was implemented in Swedish ecosystem regionally. The Swedish successes soon inspired neighbouring countries. Eventually, following the Swedish example, CONNECT was also formed in Norway, Denmark, Estonia and Latvia. CONNECT Sverige has its origins in bottom-up logic built on the regional CONNECT organisations.

Local organisations organised themselves very independently from the beginning. This may sound contradictory to the high level commitment included in the decision process. However, since it was clear from the beginning that there is enough high level commitment for implementing the CONNECT model in Swedish ecosystem, it has generated space for regional CONNECTs to develop truly bottom up.

Norway was a quick follower. In Norway, two of the founders of CONNECT, with strong position in the national networks in Norway went over to San Diego. They had already seen CONNECT in Sweden, Denmark and San Diego at that point. Sweden and Denmark were established, up and running. They took some companies with them as well and went to San Diego, to explore it. During that benchmarking trip they mutually agreed with CONNECT to start the activities in Norway. It was neither technical nor bureaucratic.

It was decided soon that CONNECT needs to be started on national level, and therefore CONNECT Norge was first established as a foundation. This foundation, Stiftelsen CONNECT Norge, was established in 2001 in September. The first task of the foundation was to create, operational member-based networks in all regions in Norway. There were the 14 founding organisations including e.g. the biggest universities and national business agencies, associations etc. Each invested a small seed funding and they started CONNECT Norge activities as a project to build regional networks. The regional offices were established around 2001-2003. At that point the organisation was new. Since then CONNECT Norge has been able to build active and independent regional networks that work under the same CONNECT umbrella generating value for their regions and the national business ecosystem.

Answer to the research question 2: What is the role of CONNECT in the Scandinavian business contexts today?

CONNECT has been present in Sweden since 1998. The idea remains the same: to create a meeting place where entrepreneurs are brought together with competencies and capital. CONNECT provides innovators and entrepreneurs with professional coaching.
The operation is built on the voluntary contributions of private citizens, businesses and organisations alike. Experienced individuals from trade and industry, universities and colleges participate and contribute with their competencies.

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

CONNECT has been present in Norway since 2001. It seeks to help entrepreneurs who have entirely or partially unique business ideas, and where the business idea is scalable. The CEO of CONNECT Norge condenses its role in Norway in the following way: “The purpose with all, is taken from CONNECT as a non-profit entity, work together to try to build an arena to make, both competence and capital equity side to meet with the investors or the entrepreneurs.”

Today CONNECT Norge is present in all Norwegian counties and has 18 employees. The organisation provides free assistance to entrepreneurs with a certain technological and marketing potential. This is possible through support from members and sponsors. National cooperative partners are SIVA (industry development and innovation), Statoil Technology Invest (commercialising oil and gas technologies), Schibsted Growth (investing in exceptional digital companies) and Innovation Norway (assisting with start-up, company development and internationalisation). Today CONNECT Norge has offices all over Norway. CONNECT is a network consisting of five independent organisations in different regions: CONNECT Northern Norway (Nordland, Troms and Finnmark), CONNECT Southern Norway (Aust-Agder and Vest-Agder), CONNECT Trøndelag (Sør-Trøndelag and Nord-Trøndelag), CONNECT Western Norway (Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane and Møre og Romsdal) and CONNECT Eastern Norway (Østfold, Vestfold, Akershus, Oslo, Buskerud, Telemark, Oppland and Hedmark).

Answer to the research question 3: What is the service portfolio offered under CONNECT umbrella in the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems and what is the relation of this portfolio to the key services of the original CONNECT in San Diego?

Analysis of the service portfolios of CONNECT Sverige and CONNECT Norge was provided in the Chapter 3. The service portfolios were clarified by analysis of the public archives and by interviews of the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige and the CEO of CONNECT Norge. The key characteristics of the services defined by CONNECT Sverige and clarified through interview of the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige are presented in the following table:
### Table 4. The key characteristics of the services of CONNECT Sverige

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The service</th>
<th>The key characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1. CONNECT Språngbrädan® (Licenced version of The Springboard)</td>
<td>Connect Språngbrädan (CONNECT Springboard) is a service licenced from CONNECT. It is a flagship service provided by CONNECT Sverige. The Springboard is a unique and well-tested process which, in a fast and carefully prepared manner, aims to increase the company's growth. Within The Springboard free of charge access to a tailored panel of experts will be offered. The panel has long-term experience in trade and industry including actors for growth capital, business- and patent attorneys, market- and management consultants as well as leaders from successful entrepreneurial companies. The CEO receives training how to present business plan and is assisted in putting together his/her offer to be able to communicate more effectively with market actors and financiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2. CONNECT FöretagsAcceleratorn® (Business Accelerator)</td>
<td>The FöretagsAcceleratorn (CONNECT Business Accelerator) is a business development process to jointly work on the strategic issues necessary for optimizing long-term results. The target is a well thought-out growth strategy which will equip customer companies to meet growth challenges. The FöretagsAcceleratorn is a growth program for small and medium-sized companies. It is designed for an entrepreneur with a strong ambition and ability to grow. The goal of program is to strengthen the entrepreneur with newly gained insights, knowledge and a tailored network to enhance continued work toward profitable growth. Unlike Språngbrädan, the business accelerator service is developed in Sweden and owned by CONNECT Sverige.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3. CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
<td>Connect Sverige offers growth funding network services through CONNECT Tillväxtkapital that matches growth companies with capital and crucial competencies as well as with contacts. The network of fully 400 investors is spread across the whole of Sweden and the driving force is often a strong desire to develop companies combined with economic gain. CONNECT Sverige works actively to develop an investor network, which is found regionally, nationally and internationally. It provides Swedish growth companies with unique opportunities to financing, even from other countries. CONNECT is also active in the European Business Angel Network - EBAN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4. CONNECT Partner (Partner Services)</td>
<td>The CONNECT Partner service is primarily service for development of the partner network. One of the basic assumptions of the service is that an engaged entrepreneurship provides Sweden with the conditions for growth. Being a CONNECT Partner means contributing to the development of Sweden’s growth companies and to trade and industry. CONNECT offers the partners an opportunity to be associated with active work for the development of companies and to the creation of new jobs. For a partner, CONNECT offers an arena where trade and industry, entrepreneurship, growth capital and research meet. The arena is non-profit and aims to mould public opinion nationally and internationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5. CONNECT Mötesplatser (Generator of Events and Meetings)</td>
<td>CONNECT Mötesplatser generator and test bed of new types of of Events and Meetings Across the country. CONNECT offers opportunities for networking and inspiration. In order to keep the networks up to date on current issues surrounding entrepreneurship and the ways of doing business various meeting places are organised together with CONNECT Sverige's partner holding cutting-edge competencies in many different areas.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The key characteristics of the services defined by CONNECT Norge and clarified through interview of the CONNECT Norge are presented in the following table:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The service</th>
<th>The key characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N1. CONNECT Springbrett® (Lisenced version of Springboard)</td>
<td>CONNECT Springbrett is CONNECT Norge's main product. Most of the other services are based on this key service. Springboard is a meeting arena where entrepreneurs receive feedback from an interdisciplinary panel. Thus, they get to develop their business strategy, improve their business plan and prepare the company for the meeting with investors and strategic partners. The panel is adjusted to suit the company's needs and consists of resource persons such as lawyers, patent experts, investors and people with knowledge about relevant markets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2. CONNECT BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator)</td>
<td>The CONNECT BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator) is a business development process to jointly work on the strategic issues necessary for optimizing long-term results. The target is a well thought-out growth strategy which will equip customer companies to meet growth challenges. The Accelerator is a growth program for small and medium-sized companies. It is designed for an entrepreneur with a strong ambition and ability to grow. The goal of program is to strengthen the entrepreneur with newly gained insights, knowledge and a tailored network to enhance continued work toward profitable growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3. CONNECT tilvekstkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
<td>CONNEC Norge works actively to develop an investor network, which is found regionally, nationally and internationally. It provides Swedish growth companies with unique opportunities to financing, even from other countries. Norwegian CONNECT Business Angel Network takes advantage of Gust, the technical platform for the angel networks. Gust is a Software as a Service (SaaS) funding platform that from the entrepreneur’s side provides all the tools entrepreneurs need to manage their start-up funding process, from pitch to exit. Gust offers the same platform for angel investors and angel investor groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N4. CONNECT Partnerforum® (Forum for Oil and Gas Industries)</td>
<td>CONNECT Norge organises Partnerforum with agents from selected industries. In Norway, CONNECT Partnerforum has been organised for the oil and gas industry for several years. Many of the companies that have been presented have gained valuable contacts in the industry. These can be potential suppliers, retailers, strategic partners or investors. CONNECT Norge Oil and Gas Partnerforum is organised every year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N5. CONNECT Investorforum® (Regional and National Investorforums)</td>
<td>In CONNECT Investorforum, growth companies that have been through Springboard give presentations to investors and other relevant partners. CONNECT organises Investorforum on a national and regional level. These events are meeting places for entrepreneurs and investors. Presenting companies for investor environments is one of the offers CONNECT can provide for companies all over the country. Most of the member organisations organise regional Investorforum. Some organise CONNECT Investorforum regionally; others organise investor lunches or breakfasts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N6. CONNECT Mentor Programs (Mentor Programs)</td>
<td>CONNECT Norge offers two types of mentor programs as part of their services in collaboration with public sector. The FORNY2020 program is owned by The Research Council, and is meant to contribute to an increased value creation through getting research results from publicly funded research institutions to the market. With Innovation Norway CONNECT offers another mentor service. CONNECT connects general manager with experienced people in the industry and find a mentor suitable for your company. The entrepreneurs with ambitions of long-term growth beyond the local market as well as entrepreneurs with in a phase of development or market introduction with a unique business idea are in the target group of the mentor service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N7. CONNECT Pitch (Training for Pitching)</td>
<td>CONNECT Pitch is a service focused on training of start-ups. This service CONNECT Norge has had since the day one but it has been formalised only recently. According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge CONNECT Pitch is training entrepreneurs for short business pitches to different interest groups (investors, industry, customers, etc.).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More detailed descriptions of each service were provided in chapter 3. Several services started by CONNECT’s in Sweden and Norway have been more or less remained the same or sharpened, others have been added, and other ones have been shut down. Sprinboard is an example of the flagship or core services that has remained more or less the same through the years, only sharpened. Business Angel Network is an example of the second type. CONNECT Sverige and Norge did not have the investor network from the beginning. Today, the Business Angel networks established are not only a truly national network of investors in Sweden and Norway, but also a cross-border investment arena that is rapidly developing and tightly connected to other European business angel networks. Some services once offered have been closed in both contexts. Those services were for example found to overlap with the services of other players. There is a continuous flux in the market and the organisations need to be able continuously prove their mission.

In the table 6, the current service portfolios of CONNECT Sverige and CONNECT Norge are compared with the key services of CONNECT in San Diego:

**Table 6. Comparison of the key services of CONNECT, CONNECT Sverige, and CONNECT Norge**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>CONNECT in San Diego (CONNECT in the USA)</th>
<th>CONNECT Sverige (CONNECT Sweden)</th>
<th>CONNECT Norge (CONNECT Norway)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>U1. Springboard</td>
<td>S1. Sprängbrädan® (Licensed version of Springboard)</td>
<td>N1. CONNECT Springbrett® (Licensed version of Springboard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>U2. Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR)</td>
<td>Considered as business as usual – not defined as a separate service</td>
<td>Considered as business as usual – not defined as a separate service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>U3. Most Innovative New Product Awards (MIP)</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>U4. CONNECT Frameworks Workshops</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>U5. CONNECT Industry Roundtables</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>U6. Frontiers in Science &amp; Technology</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>U7. Rock Stars of Innovation</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>U8. Public Policy Committee</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>U9. Entrepreneurs for Young Innovators</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>U10. Innovation Report</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
<td>Not provided as a defined service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td></td>
<td>S2. CONNECT Företagsacceleratoren® (Business Accelerator)</td>
<td>N2. CONNECT Bedriftsakceleratoren (Business Accelerator)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
<td>S3. CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
<td>N3. CONNECT tillvekstkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td>S4. Connect Partner (Partner Services)</td>
<td>Considered as business as usual – not defined as a separate service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>S5. Connect Mötesplatser (Generator of Events and</td>
<td>Considered as business as usual – not defined as a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As presented in the table, the only service directly licenced from San Diego to Scandinavian context is the Springboard. As in the context of Southern California, in Sweden and Norway, the Springboard is considered as the flagship service of CONNECT. The rest of the services are either developed completely in the Scandinavian market and for the Scandinavian market or inspired by one or more CONNECT’s key services.

Answer to the research question 4: Which CONNECT services were transferred from the global CONNECT network to the Nordic business ecosystems and how? Which services were developed in the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems and how?

The answer to the research question 4 was provided in the chapter 4, CONNECT service transfer analysis. The global CONNECT network plays an important role in the Swedish context. The collaboration has been most active with the following members of the global CONNECT network: CONNECT in San Diego, CONNECT Norway, CONNECT Denmark, CONNECT Estonia, CONNECT Latvia and CONNECT UK. In Europe the collaboration has been focused especially on the CONNECT organisations in the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea region. The collaboration with CONNECT organisations in UK have been less intensive. Moreover, CONNECT Sverige has active collaboration with Munich Network of Entrepreneurship & Innovation, which is a network not “inspired by” CONNECT but strongly linked in the global CONNECT activities. Global CONNECT provides access to these kinds of 2nd tier resources as well. The contact with the rest of the world, CONNECT members in US context, South America, Middle East and Asia, have been limited to informal meetings in the Global CONNECT summit.

The service transfer activities of the CONNECT Sverige are described in the condensed form in table 7:
Table 7. The transfer of services from global CONNECT network to CONNECT Sverige

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The service</th>
<th>The characteristics of the service transfer or development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1. CONNECT Språngbrädan® (Licenced version of The Springboard)</td>
<td>The CONNECT flagship service, The Springboard was the first and foremost service implemented in Sweden. The CONNECT Springboard was licenced from California and the original context was not changed much as it was implemented in Sweden. There was no major challenges in implementing the Springboard service in Sweden. As the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige states: “We have the culture of assisting each other, we want the area, the local area to grow, so we like to assist.” The biggest challenge has been the logic of financing as Springboard service, which is free of charge to companies in Sweden. As the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige states: “We have the culture of assisting each other, we want the area, the local area to grow, so we like to assist.” The biggest challenge has been the logic of financing as Springboard service, which is free of charge to companies in Sweden. The second notable challenge has been finding the companies with right profile and characteristics in the northern sparsely populated regions of Sweden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2. CONNECT FöretagsAcceleratorn® (Business Accelerator)</td>
<td>FöretagsAcceleratorn (Business Accelerator) service was developed in Sweden and is owned by CONNECT Sverige. It was first developed by CONNECT West in Gothenburg and then implemented in other CONNECT organisations in Sweden and also cross-border.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3. CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
<td>CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (Business Angel Network) service was developed by CONNECT Sverige for the Swedish market. The starting point for the CONNECT was in the true market need. The starting point was that Springboard companies requested this type of service and based on this request, CONNECT started to develop the service. CONNECT Sverige works actively to develop an investor network, which is found regionally, nationally and internationally. It provides Swedish growth companies with unique opportunities to financing. Connect is active in the development of European Business Angel Network - EBAN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4. CONNECT Partner (Partner Services)</td>
<td>CONNECT Partner service can be considered more as a support service when compared to the others and it has been run since the beginning of CONNECT Sverige. The service development and implementation have taken place in Sweden. However, it has its original role model in the CONNECT in San Diego as the Springboard – service would not be fully functional without these support services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5. CONNECT Mötesplatser (Generator of Events and Meetings)</td>
<td>CONNECT Mötesplatser service can be considered more as a support service when compared to the others and it has been run since the beginning of CONNECT Sverige. The service development and implementation have taken place in Sweden. However, it has its original role model in CONNECT in San Diego as the Springboard – service would not be fully functional without these support services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The global network of CONNECT plays an important role also in the Norwegian context. The CEO of CONNECT Norge highlights the importance of international collaboration and networking. The collaboration has been most active with the following members of the global CONNECT network: CONNECT in San Diego, CONNECT Sweden, CONNECT Denmark, CONNECT Estonia, CONNECT Latvia and CONNECT UK. In Europe the collaboration has been focused especially on the CONNECT organisations in the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea region. The collaboration with CONNECT organisations in UK have been less intensive. In the UK, CONNECT Norge has collaborated recently most closely with NISPCONNECT (http://nispconnect.org/). Moreover, CONNECT Norge together with CONNECT Sverige have active collaboration with Munich Network of Entrepreneurship & Innovation, which is a network not “inspired by” CONNECT but strongly linked in the global CONNECT activities. Global CONNECT provides access to these kinds of 2nd tier resources as well. The service transfer activities of the CONNECT Norge are described in the condensed form in table 8:
Table 8. The transfer of services from global CONNECT network to CONNECT Norge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The service</th>
<th>The characteristics of the service transfer and/or development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N1. CONNECT Springbrett® (Licensed version of Springboard)</td>
<td>CONNECT Springboard, the core flagship service of CONNECT global network was transferred from San Diego to Norway. As a service it did not require any major adjustments to the Norwegian ecosystem. However, the small size of the local communities have led to the network-based model where the local, regional, and national CONNECT work together as a network. As CEO of CONNECT Norge states: “...the network works in a good way. I can take a company to Bergen, I can take a company to Stockholm, and they could, find the right people there.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2. CONNECT BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator)</td>
<td>CONNECT Norge BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator) service was developed in Gothenburg in Sweden and transferred to the whole of Sweden and finally to Norway. The service is more or less the same in all these countries. The minor adjustments needed for implementation include translation and cultural and regional adjustments especially in the northern Norway.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3. CONNECT tilvekstkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
<td>The CONNECT tilvekstkapital (The Business Angel Network) is not clearly developed in one context. Both CONNECTs, Norway and Sweden, has it. The idea about connecting the angels to start-ups is basic. CONNECT has always had the angels and the investors in the network making investments. However, the idea of building a bigger multilateral market in a structured Nordic way originates in CONNECT Norge. It is currently being developed further within Scandinavian-Baltic context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N4. CONNECT Partnerforum® (Forum for Oil and Gas Industries)</td>
<td>CONNECT Partnerforum, according to CONNECT Norge’s CEO is developed in Norway using the principles of the Springboard model. This service has a strong linkage to the Norwegian oil and gas industry and the specific characteristics of the Norwegian economy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N5. CONNECT Investorforum® (Regional and National Investorforums)</td>
<td>CONNECT investorforum was developed in Norway but it is strongly inspired by CONNECT in San Diego and the Springboard model. CONNECT Norge has developed investorforums on a regional level and national levels as meeting places for entrepreneurs and investors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N6. CONNECT Mentor Programs (Mentor Programs)</td>
<td>CONNECT Mentor Programs were developed in Norway in co-operation with public service providers. However, the roots are in the CONNECT Springboard model. The CONNECT mentoring services stated with a request from Innovation Norway, which was piloting the mentor service. CONNECT joint as it already had formed network of experienced business people with right competences and strong networks ready to serve as mentors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N7. CONNECT Pitch (Training for Pitching)</td>
<td>CONNECT Pitch was packaged in Norway as a separate service. All the other CONNECT’s provide similar services as part of other services. As a service concept it has not been transferred through CONNECT network.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answer to the research question 5: Which CONNECT services were transferred from the selected Scandinavian business ecosystems to the global network and how?

The answer to the research question 5 was also provided in the chapter 4, CONNECT service transfer analysis. According to the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige and the CEO of CONNECT Norge the Springboard service is rallying point for all Nordic CONNECTs, but otherwise the services transfer and development has been more or less unique and independent from CONNECT (to an extent) in each country. The service transfer activities of the CONNECT Sverige and Norge are described in the condensed form in the tables 9 and 10 below.
Table 9. The transfer of services from CONNECT Sverige to global CONNECT network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The service</th>
<th>The characteristics of the service transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1. CONNECT Språngbrädan® (Licenced version of The Springboard)</td>
<td>CONNECT Sverige has had a significant indirect role in licensing and transfer of Springboard services at the Nordic Countries (Denmark and Norway) and the Baltic Sea region (Estonia, Latvia). Moreover, it has opened the discussions with Finland and Russia which are not active today. The licencing was carried out in each country directly with CONNECT in San Diego, the owner of the trademark. However, CONNECT Sverige had a major indirect role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2. CONNECT FöretagsAcceleratorn® (Business Accelerator)</td>
<td>The Business Accelerator service was first developed by CONNECT Sverige. It became a role model for development of Business Accelerator service in Norway. This service has not been transferred to the other CONNECTs in Scandinavia/ Baltic Sea Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3. CONNECT Tillväxtkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
<td>The Business Angel Network was first started in Sweden and later in Norway. Sweden had a major role in implementing this service in the national level and providing a model for the CONNECT Norge. Sweden has an active role in collaboration with European Business Angel Network and in joint development of Nordic Business Angel Network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4. CONNECT Partner (Partner Services)</td>
<td>This service package has not been transferred as such to other CONNECTs. However, elements of it are in action as part of other services in the CONNECT’s of Scandinavia and Baltic Sea Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5. CONNECT Mötesplatser (Generator of Events and Meetings)</td>
<td>This service package has not been transferred as such to other CONNECTs. However, elements of it are in action as part of other services in the CONNECT’s of Scandinavia and Baltic Sea Region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10. The transfer of services from CONNECT Norge to global CONNECT network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The service</th>
<th>The characteristics of the service transfer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N1. CONNECT Springbrett® (Lisenced version of Springboard)</td>
<td>CONNECT Norge has had a significant supportive role in licensing and transfer of Springboard services at the Baltic Sea region. The licencing was carried out in each country directly with CONNECT in San Diego, the owner of the trademark. However, CONNECT Sverige had an indirect support role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N2. CONNECT BedriftsAkseleratoren (Business Accelerator)</td>
<td>The Business Angel Network was first started in Sweden and later in Norway. As the CEO of CONNECT Norge states: if a new CONNECT appears somewhere, it’s good for everybody. Currently CONNECT Norge plays a key role in building Nordic Business Angel Network. Its aim is to develop joint market which has enough critical mass to be competitive at global scale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N3. CONNECT tillekstkapital (Business Angel Network)</td>
<td>CONNECT Norge has been active in developing a structured model for Business Angel Network. The idea of building a bigger multilateral market in a structured Nordic way originates in Norway. It is currently being developed further within Scandinavian-Baltic context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N4. CONNECT Partnerforum® (Forum for Oil and Gas Industries)</td>
<td>This service package has not been transferred as such to other CONNECTs. However, elements of it are in action as part of other services in the CONNECT’s of Scandinavia and Baltic Sea Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N5. CONNECT Investorforum® (Regional and National Investorforums)</td>
<td>This service package has not been transferred as such to other CONNECTs. However, elements of it are in action as part of other services in the CONNECT’s of Scandinavia and Baltic Sea Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N6. CONNECT Mentor Programs (Mentor Programs)</td>
<td>This service package has not been transferred as such to other CONNECTs. However, elements of it are in action as part of other services in the CONNECT’s of Scandinavia and Baltic Sea Region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N7. CONNECT Pitch (Training for Pitching)</td>
<td>This service package has not been transferred as such to other CONNECTs. However, elements of it are in action as part of other services in the CONNECT’s of Scandinavia and Baltic Sea Region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A key issue in the transfer of services in the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea Region have been financing. In the Scandinavian and the Baltic Sea Region the service transfer activities have a strong dependency to the ongoing project portfolio of the CONNECT organisations. The transfer activities have activated and deactivated through project portfolio. This is a challenge in the network. Moreover, the service transfer activities have until now had a strong dependency on the people on board. CONNECT at the moment lacks Nordic strategic forums where the transfer activities could be coordinated in a more structured and strategic manner. The same applies to the global level of transfer activities. Despite the above described challenges, the transfer of services to other contexts is part of the CONNECT’s genetic code.

5.2 Concluding remarks

Since licensing of the CONNECT Springboard service, no other services have directly been licensed or even directly transferred from San Diego to the Scandinavian context. The CONNECTs in Scandinavia seem to have developed their service portfolios within the network’s umbrella mostly independently, taking into account the preconditions and requirements of their own business ecosystem. However, even though most of the services built around the licenced Springboard model are not directly transferred from CONNECT or from other related entities outside the Scandinavian context, the services are deeply inspired by CONNECT values.

The analysis conducted in this study shows that CONNECT, as a transnational network of innovation, is relatively loose in its structure. It encourages independent service development within different business ecosystems around the world under joint umbrella. The flagship service Springboard was licenced to both Scandinavian case networks. However, since licensing the Springboard model, both networks have developed their own portfolio of services “inspired by CONNECT” but developed independently for the Scandinavian contexts.

Many services have been developed in CONNECT in San Diego since the Springboard model was licenced to Sweden and Norway. However, these more recent services have not been directly transferred to Scandinavian context. Since licensing the Springboard model, the Scandinavian CONNECTs have co-developed many of their services in local collaboration, which has led to many similarities between the Scandinavian service portfolios. However, many important elements of the more recent services of CONNECT can be found in the service portfolios of both CONNECT Sweden and Norway. The implementation of the elements has mostly happened within the Scandinavian-Baltic collaboration, which is clearly visible in the similarities of their service portfolios.

Transfer of the applicable elements have been possible due to the active communication with CONNECT in San Diego and relatively frequent visits. Global CONNECT Summits, which are typically organised on a yearly basis, form an important forum for exchange of experiences for different CONNECT organisations around the world. The services are being developed simultaneously in different parts of the world and the service portfolios of national and regional the networks under the umbrella of global brand are uniquely built around the original innovation: the Springboard model.

A key issue in the transfer of services in the Nordic Countries and the Baltic Sea Region have been financing. In the Scandinavian and the Baltic Sea Region the service transfer activities have a strong dependency on the ongoing project portfolio of the
CONNECT organisations. The transfer activities have activated and deactivated through project portfolio. This is a challenge for the network. Moreover, the service transfer activities have had a strong dependency on the active people on board. CONNECT at the moment lacks Nordic strategic forums where the transfer activities could be coordinated in a more structured and strategic manner. The same applies to the transfer activities on a global level. Despite the above described challenges, the transfer of services to other contexts can be expected to continue.

The future of global CONNECT activities relies on the activity of its member organisations around the world. According to the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige and the CEO of CONNECT Norge there is a need for more intense global collaboration in the CONNECT network. The future of CONNECT global activities include some challenges that, according to the Coordinator of CONNECT Sverige, need to be overcome. Some negative signs exist in the development of global CONNECT network in the near future. First, there is a need for leadership for the global activities. CONNECT organisations are independent and established for their national business communities. The CONNECT organisations are preoccupied with their national business activities which leaves only limited time for the global perspective. Moreover, their funding in most cases does not support global activities. In that kind of situation the national activities are often prioritised above the international. There are not many potential organisations that could/would like to take a lead in the global activities. Second, finding funding for global activities is a challenge in Nordic and Baltic contexts. Third, especially at the Nordic level the long geographical distances and cultural differences set some barriers that need to be overcome in a short run to speed up the collaboration.

The current hot topic, Building Nordic Business Angel Network, has clear advantages in terms of market size and simplified cross-border capital flow. The CONNECT organisations are building Nordic Business Angel Network (NordicBAN) which seeks to build the Nordic Investment Arena. NordicBAN is a Nordic cooperation project involving CONNECT organisations in Sweden, Norway and Denmark as well as the Finnish Business Angel Network Fiban and Startupbootcamp. According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge the basic principles of NordicBAN have already been tested on a smaller scale in the form of Connect2Capital. However, at the moment the Nordic Market is far from consistent, let alone united: According to the CEO of CONNECT Norge: “Fiban in Finland for instance which is part of the Nordic platform, they are for all practical purposes CONNECT, but just on the angel side of it. Sweden have some other issues and the same with Denmark. But in Norway, this marketplace has been open, and the Nordic marketplace is open, so we're trying to build those two together. That's because we're all inviting in all these other networks as well in Copenhagen and Stockholm and all over the place.”

This report has aimed to shed light on many aspects of local and international CONNECT networks. While a will for collaboration exists and there is a strong foundation in the transnational CONNECT platform, many questions should be addressed to make the network stronger in the future. These include, for example, the following: Can these different platforms find a real win-win for their stakeholders? Furthermore, can these platforms join forces solve the long-term cross-border collaboration challenge after single projects?

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26 http://www.nordicban.org/
27 http://connect2capital.org/
Appendix

Questionnaire, Case study of CONNECT Sweden and CONNECT Norway

1. Interviewee –related information
   1.1. Name:
   1.2. Address:
   1.3. Email:
   1.4. Tel:
   1.5. Position:
   1.6. Working experience in the organisation (years):

2. Organisation related information
   2.1. Name of the organisation:
   2.2. Year of establishment:
   2.3. Current number of employees:

3. CONNECT Transferability Analysis
   3.1. CONNECT history in [country]
      3.1.1. Please tell the story of national CONNECT [country] starting from the establishment.
      3.1.2. What is the role of CONNECT [country] in the national and local business ecosystem today? Key partners? Key competitors?
      3.1.3. How the role of CONNECT [country] has changed?

   3.2. CONNECT services in [country]
      3.2.1. Describe the current service portfolio of CONNECT [country]?
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________
      Service ________________________________________

      3.2.2. Describe how CONNECT [country] service portfolio have developed starting from the establishment?
3.2.3. What services have been transferred to CONNECT [country] from abroad? From which country each service was transferred?
3.2.4. How each service was transferred to CONNECT [country] from abroad? Please describe the local adjustments?
3.2.5. Describe positive experiences related to transfer of services from abroad? Any success stories?
3.2.6. Describe negative experiences related to transfer of services from abroad? Any failures?
3.2.7. What services have been developed internally in CONNECT [country]?
3.2.8. How the services were developed in CONNECT [country]?
3.2.9. Describe positive experiences related to development of services internally? Any success stories?
3.2.10. Describe negative experiences related to development of services internally? Any failures?
3.2.11. What services have been transferred from CONNECT [country] to other country/countries? To which countries?
3.2.12. How the services were transferred from CONNECT [country] to other country/countries? Please describe the local adjustments?
3.2.13. Describe positive experiences related to transfer of services from CONNECT [country] to other country/countries? Any success stories?
3.2.14. Describe positive experiences related to transfer of services from CONNECT [country] to other country/countries? Any failures?
3.2.15. What makes CONNECT unique in [country]? What services CONNECT offers that others don’t?

3.3. CONNECT global services
3.3.1. Please tell the story of global CONNECT network from perspective of CONNECT [country]?
3.3.2. What is the role of global CONNECT network in CONNECT [country] today?
3.3.3. What is the role of CONNECT [country] within global CONNECT network?
3.3.4. Which countries has CONNECT [country] collaborated within the global CONNECT network?
3.3.5. Please describe services (includes activities) that CONNECT global network offers for national CONNECTs?
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
   Service ________________________________________
3.3.6. Please describe what CONNECT global services CONNECT [country] has used?
3.3.7. Please describe positive experiences related to services within global CONNECT network?
3.3.8. Please describe negative experiences related to services within global CONNECT network?

3.4. CONNECT future

3.4.1. Please describe what the CONNECT [country] looks like in 2017?
3.4.2. Please describe what the CONNECT [country] looks like in 2020?
3.4.3. Please describe what the CONNECT global network looks like in 2017?
3.4.4. Please describe what the CONNECT global network looks like in 2020?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONNECT global network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>EUROPE</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECT Denmark, CONNECT Estonia, CONNECT Latvia, CONNECT Norway, CONNECT Sweden, CONNECT UK and other organisations not inspired by CONNECT but reachable through Global CONNECT network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NORTH AMERICA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECT USA (San Diego, Midwest, Northwest, Northern New Mexico, Davis etc.) and other organisations not inspired by CONNECT but reachable through Global CONNECT network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SOUTH AMERICA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECT COLOMBIA and other organisations not inspired by CONNECT but reachable through Global CONNECT network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ASIA</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECT Taiwan and other organisations not inspired by CONNECT but reachable through Global CONNECT network.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MIDDLE EAST</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONNECT Jordan and other organisations not inspired by CONNECT but reachable through Global CONNECT network.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References

CONNECT Sverige (2015) “CONNECT service portfolio description”.
Walshok, M.L., Shapiro, J.D. & Owens, N.J. (2013) “Unraveling the cultural and social dynamics of regional innovation systems”, University of California, San Diego, USA.