Introduction

Projects and networks are central features of innovation. They constitute contemporary and critical contexts for much of innovation activities in a range of industries and sectors. This course centers on networks and projects and their role for innovation, and more particularly the balance, interaction, and dynamics between the permanent and temporary features of innovation.

Modern economies to a greater extent rely on inter-organizational relations, collaborative networks, and various kinds of inter-organizational projects to create and diffuse innovation. In particular, networks play a pivotal role in explicating the propensity to innovate, the diffusion of innovation and ultimately the market success of innovation.

The underlying development accentuates the significant role of networks and projects for innovation, which contrasts to much conventional writings on innovation that typically has focused on the single firm as the primary locus for innovation. As a response to this development, this course will cover several streams of research to locate the contexts and institutional and network embeddedness of innovation, the network and inter-organizational dimensions of innovation. The course addresses social structure, the network of relations among actors, as an essential feature for goal attainment. In particular, networks play a pivotal role in explicating the propensity to innovate, the diffusion of innovation and ultimately the market success of innovation. Through the study of state-of-the-art network research, we will deliberate on the linkages between social structure and key properties of innovation. Students should also learn about the informal side of innovation and networks, the organizational side of innovation and networks, the role of project in managing networks, innovation networks of project-based firms, and innovation networking in times of open innovation. For all these themes academic papers will be discussed, which have important managerial and methodological implications.

The course also elaborates on the role of projects to drive innovation and new organizational forms to foster innovation, especially innovation in large-scale projects and project-based organizations. In that respect, the course seeks to combine recent research within the area of networks and projects to offer an alternative to the conventional firm-centric view on innovation. In that respect, the course seeks to move beyond merely addressing networks and projects as separate contexts and aspects of innovation, and develop an understand that addresses how projects and networks are aligned to drive and disseminate innovation.
The course consists of two modules and a final seminar where course papers will be presented. The first module centers on aspects related to projects and organizing by projects, whereas the second module addresses approaches to networks and innovation.

**Learning outcomes**

The course will give the participants understanding of the classic and recent literatures on innovation networks and innovation projects. The participants will gain knowledge about the classic and recent literatures on networks and projects, especially the part of this literature that is relevant for the understanding of innovation. The course aims at clarifying the role of the network and the role of the project in the process of innovation. The course also aims to provide theoretical perspectives on project-based firms as contexts for innovation in a range of empirical settings. In sum, this course aims at giving the participants a good understanding of:

- classic and recent literature on projects with a particular focus on innovation.
- classic and recent literature on networks with a particular focus on innovation.
- the role that projects have for the development of innovation.
- different kinds of innovation projects.
- the role that various kinds of inter-organizational networks have for the development of innovation.
- different kinds of inter-organizational networks in an innovation context.
- how networks and projects interact to shape and drive innovation.

**Prerequisites**

Admission to a PhD Program is a general requirement for participation in PhD courses at BI Norwegian Business School.

External candidates are kindly asked to attach confirmation of admission to a PhD program when signing up for a course with the doctoral administration. Candidates can be allowed to sit in on courses by approval of the course leader. Sitting in on courses does not permit registration for courses, handing in exams or gaining credits for the course. Course certificates or confirmation letters will not be issued for sitting in on courses.

**Compulsory readings**

See reading list.
Course outline
Topics covered:

- The nature and dynamics of innovation projects
- Innovation in projects
- Innovation in project-based firms
- Network perspectives on innovation
- Innovation networks and inter-organizational collaboration
- Network embeddedness of innovation and projects
- Doing research on projects, innovation and networks

Learning process and workload
The course is divided into two parts, and consists of six days of teaching. In total approximately 48 hours of scheduled tuition plus tutoring sessions.

Examination
A paper of 15 to 25 pages is required in addition to active participation in the seminars. The evaluation will be based on the student’s participation in the seminars and teamwork as well as the submitted paper.

The paper should be original work, and be written specifically for this course, although the topic and empirical focus may overlap with the student’s dissertation.

The grade is pass/fail.

Honor code
Academic honesty and trust are important to all of us as individuals, and represent values that are encouraged and promoted by the honor code system. This is a most significant university tradition. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the ideals of the honor code system, to which the faculty are also deeply committed.

Any violation of the honor code will be dealt with in accordance with BI’s procedures for cheating. These issues are a serious matter to everyone associated with the programs at BI and are at the heart of the honor code and academic integrity. If you have any questions about your responsibilities under the honor code, please ask.
Course faculty

**Jonas Söderlund**, PhD, Professor, BI Norwegian Business School. Jonas Söderlund has published widely on projects, project-based firms, capability development and innovation. He is a co-founder of KITE – a major research program addressing knowledge integration and innovation and one of the editors of the Project Management Journal. He sits on the editorial board of Organization Studies. His work has appeared in such journals as Organization Studies, Human Relations, Long Range Planning, Advances in Strategic Management, Management Learning, and International Journal of Management Reviews. Contact: [jonas.soderlund@bi.no](mailto:jonas.soderlund@bi.no), +4646410862.

**Andrew Davies**, PhD, Professor, University College London. Andrew Davies is one of the leading scholars in the area of project-based organizations and innovation. He has published several seminal papers in this area in journals such as Research Policy, Industry and Corporate Change, MIT Sloan Management Review, California Management Review, and Organization Studies. He was an adjunct professor at BI Norwegian Business School for more than five years and has been on the faculty of University of Sussex and Imperial College.

**Amir Sasson**, PhD, is professor of strategy at BI Norwegian Business School and head of its research management office. Dr Sasson’s research has addressed topics such as cluster formation, alliances, entrepreneurship, and innovation. His work has appeared in journals such as Organization Science, Journal of Management Studies, and Long Range Planning.

**Hans Georg Gemünden**, PhD, Professor II, BI Norwegian Business School. Dr Gemünden is since 2016 an adjunct professor at BI. He formerly held the chair in innovation management at TU Berlin. He is one of the most prolific scholars in the area of innovation and project organizing. He has published more than 200 refereed papers in leading journals such as Organization Science, Journal of Product Innovation Management, and Research Policy. He is currently the editor-in-chief of the Project Management Journal.

Course administration

Any questions about the course can be sent to Professor Jonas Söderlund who is the course director of the course (see contact information above).

Questions about registration and administration can be sent to Birte Horn Hansen: [birte.m.horn-hanssen@bi.no](mailto:birte.m.horn-hanssen@bi.no), or call +47 46410876.
Detailed schedule

Part I: Projects in innovation
September 4-September 6 2017

Day 1 September 4 2017
Faculty: Andrew Davies and Jonas Söderlund

Session 1: Introduction
- Presentation of aim of course and course outline
- Presentation of faculty
- Presentation of participants

Session 2. Innovation contexts
- Overview of the field of projects
- Overview of the field of innovation
- Workshop on innovation contexts

Day 2 September 5 2017
Faculty: Andrew Davies and Jonas Söderlund

Session 3. The nature and dynamics of innovative projects
- Introduction to innovative and vanguard projects
- Handout assignment
- Group work to analyze selected innovation projects
- Presentation of analysis

Session 4: Mega projects and innovation
- Introduction to mega projects
- Handout assignment
- Group work to analyze and compare three mega projects
- Presentation of analysis
Day 3 September 6 2017
Faculty: Andrew Davies and Jonas Söderlund

Session 5. Project-based organizations, capabilities and learning
- Introduction to project-based organizations
- Handout of assignment to literature seminar
- Roundtable among students on selected papers and topics
- Presentation of discussion findings

Session 6. Publishing on innovation and projects
- Introduction to routines and projects
- Workshop on reviewing and publishing
- Presentation of analysis
Part II: Networks in innovation and synthesis
September 25-September 27 2017

Day 1 September 25 2017
Faculty: Amir Sasson

Session 1: Introduction to network theories and the classics
- The seminal work
- Inside the firm
- The role of geography
- Good ideas and patents

Session 2: Workshop on networks and innovation

Day 2 September 26 2017
Faculty: Hans Georg Gemünden and Jonas Söderlund

Session 3a: The informal side of innovation and networks, i.e. key individual roles in innovation networks, champions, relationship promoters, and technological gatekeepers, and project managers as networkers.

Session 3b: The organizational side of innovation and networks, i.e. network competence, and its antecedents and performance effects.

Session 4a: The role or project and program characteristics in managing networks, the ability and limitations to control international R&D programs by means of a design structure matrix, the usefulness of combining weak and strong ties.

Session 4b: Innovation networks and open innovation in project-based settings

Day 3 September 27 2017
Faculty: Jonas Söderlund

Session 5: Workshop on impact on own research

Session 6: Lessons learned and formulation of research questions
Innovation in Projects and Networks

Readings

Part I: Innovation in Projects

Session 1: The nature and context of project-based organizing


Session 2: Projects and innovation management


Session 3: The nature and dynamics of innovative projects


Session 4: Innovation in megaprojects


Session 5: Project-based firms, capabilities and organizational learning


Session 6: Projects and routines


Innovation in Projects and Networks
Readings

Part II: Innovation in Networks

Day 1: Innovation and networks


Day 2: Innovation, projects, and networks

The informal side of innovation and networks: key individual roles in innovation networks, champions, relationship promotors, and technological gatekeepers, and project managers as networkers.


**The organizational side of innovation and networks**, i.e. network competence, and its antecedents and performance effects.


**The role or project and program characteristics in managing networks**, the ability and limitations to control international R&D programs by means of a design structure matrix, the usefulness of combining weak and strong ties.


**Innovation networks and open innovation in project-based settings**


Day 3: Creating a synthesis and future outlook


