

11. Analysis of Actor Rationales for Participation (Swissnex)

This chapter complements the reconstruction of Swissnex's development (chapter 10) and examines the instrumentation of Swissnex, i.e., the use of this instrument by key actors. It also generates additional evidence of the (gradual) institutionalisation of Swissnex. The chapter is divided into two main parts; the first part (section 11.1) addresses the (political) objectives and goals that Swissnex has responded to over time. The second part (section 11.2) presents the rationales of key actors, which explain their participation in Swissnex and enable a better understanding of how the instrument is used. In combination, these two analytical stages provide an insight into how Swissnex is interpreted and used by key actors, as well as how it is embedded in its context. In other words, this chapter presents evidence regarding Swissnex's instrumentation, which may ultimately push forward institutionalisation dynamics.

11.1. Political Objectives

The following section analyses the political objectives that Swissnex should respond to, i.e., their political instrumentation. To evaluate Swissnex's political framing, a document analysis of publicly available political documents was conducted (see Table 31 and Appendix 2.2). This analysis adds another layer of insights into Swissnex's (gradual) institutionalisation since it reveals how the instrument has been used over time by key political actors. Before we turn to the results, it is vital to discuss one of Swissnex's key characteristics. Swissnex possesses a significant degree of autonomy and operates within a broader political framework although its distinct tasks and activities may vary between locations and are client and market-driven. This has implications for the data analysis; with regard to the political documents which have been analysed, it is not possible to clearly establish whether the themes considered are distinct (new) political objectives or a political endorsement of Swissnex's work. In other words: Do the reports reflect original political objectives? Or do they reflect the tasks and objectives which Swissnex defined for itself? Either way, it can be assumed that these objectives were politically endorsed if they appear in the documents.

11. Analysis of Actor Rationales for Participation (Swissnex)

With this in mind, the analysis identifies four main objectives which were revealed in the documents²³⁰: 1) the international branding and positioning of Switzerland, 2) knowledge transfer and innovation, 3) internationalisation efforts and 4) foreign policy goals. As such, they differ slightly from objectives identified in the German case study.

11.1.1. International Branding and Positioning

International branding and international positioning appear to be the key objectives of Swissnex, which have remained stable over time. This is not surprising and was also confirmed in the previous chapter (chapter 10): Swissnex was established with the intention of making a difference in the international landscape and positioning Switzerland as a highly innovative country. More specifically, Switzerland's science capacity and expertise were seen as vehicles to reinforce this international positioning. Thus, Swissnex is seen as an instrument which can facilitate international cooperation and engage in networking activities to create international ties and enhance the visibility of Swiss institutions in particular and Switzerland in general. These goals have remained consistent and indicate Swissnex's core purpose: to position Switzerland internationally as a key actor in education, research and science.

11.1.2. Knowledge Transfer and Innovation

In a similar vein, a further key Swissnex objective is the promotion of Swiss knowledge and innovation. These objectives have repeatedly been connected to Swissnex in a range of different ways through it promoting the valorisation of knowledge (as a key element of innovativeness), facilitating market entry for new businesses, helping start-ups to gain ground or, more generally, providing information. In a similar vein, Swissnex is also seen to have a trend-scouting role (Schweizer Bundesrat, 2020b) to secure a

230 These themes are not 100% watertight and Swissnex's framing is very granular at times. Some of the aspects which emerged from the analysis could, in principle, correspond to multiple themes. In addition, certain aspects were mentioned in one breath and these aspects were not separated, such as considerations which link to foreign policy goals.

competitive advantage²³¹. In particular, the most recent policy document highlights these aspects in detail (Schweizer Bundesrat, 2020b).

11.1.3. Internationalisation Efforts

What is more, Swissnex is also regarded as an instrument that facilitates internationalisation efforts. This reaffirms previous findings which specify that Swissnex developed as a salient response to distinct internationalisation pressures and in light of increased international competition (chapter 10). Swissnex was initially considered to be an instrument that promotes academic mobility and attracts foreign talent to Switzerland (Schweizer Bundesrat, 2002). The attraction of foreign talent reflects an economic dimension which is often tied to knowledge society discourse (cf. Välimaa & Hoffman, 2008). Over time, these aspects have changed in favour of considerations such as strengthening partnerships with strategically relevant partners in regions that are scientific heavyweights. What is more, Swissnex is also viewed as a vital instrument for the Swiss vocational and professional education system and for promoting bilateral cooperation programmes in education and science in key regions such as North America, Singapore or China (Schweizer Bundesrat, 2007). The data provides evidence that the internationalisation aspect was particularly relevant in the early years of Swissnex, while its exact focus and framing has shifted slightly in recent years. This aspect also appears to be relevant again in the most recent documents (Schweizer Bundesrat, 2018, 2020b).

11.1.4. Foreign Policy Goals

From the start, Swissnex was regarded as creating a new kind of diplomacy, which draws on science (see chapter 10): scientific diplomacy. This has left its mark on Swissnex's DNA and this aspect has been referred to more or less prominently in *Botschaft* and international strategy documents in different years (see Table 31). Furthermore, Swissnex has acted as a blueprint for other countries (Schweizer Bundesrat, 2012), has been regarded as contributing to the impact of Switzerland's external network and has

231 This aspect was already mentioned in the interviews which were conducted in 2018/2019; however, it was manifested in political documents only in 2020 in line with the regular *Botschaft* cycles (see Schweizer Bundesrat (2020b)).

also been considered a vehicle for improving Switzerland's international relations and reinforcing its political priorities (this was most explicitly formulated in 2010 and 2018 (cf. Schweizer Bundesrat, 2010, 2018)). What is more, Switzerland has positioned itself in the realm of science diplomacy: scientific excellence is seen as being beneficial for its diplomacy. The 2018 international strategy refers explicitly to key assumptions which characterise current science diplomacy discourse: international cooperation creates trust between nations, builds bridges and enables exchange in the pre-political sphere in relation to non-political topics (Schweizer Bundesrat, 2018). Swissnex is seen as a distinct instrument that facilitates this.

11.1.5. Conclusions

To sum up, the findings of the analysis made it possible to identify four main themes to which Swissnex responded: 1) the international branding and positioning of Switzerland, 2) knowledge transfer and innovation, 3) internationalisation efforts and 4) foreign policy goals. These findings are not surprising and reaffirm the findings regarding Swissnex's development (cf. chapter 10), although in a more nuanced way. It became evident that core themes have remained stable; however, the notions encompassed by these themes are more fluid and certain topics have arisen in some years and become less significant in others. Most notably, the initial goal of and justification for Swissnex—overcoming the brain drain situation which Switzerland had encountered—was no longer explicitly referred to after Swissnex was established (it was last mentioned in 2002, (cf. Schweizer Bundesrat, 2002)). Swissnex is seen as playing a vital role in Swiss international policy, while it also serves as a blueprint for other countries. Swissnex's key targets appear to have remained stable: these include facilitating international exchange between higher education institutions, scientists and Swiss enterprises, and positioning Switzerland internationally as a key actor in education, research and science. Furthermore, new focuses have also emerged (such as the support for start-ups). Arguably, Swissnex has experienced layering and also seems to act as a platform for responding to changing stakeholder goals.

Table 31 Core Themes and Objectives tied to Swissnex²³²

| | 2004 – 2007 | 2008 – 2011 | 2010/2 012 | 2013 – 2016 | 2012 – 2015 | 2017 – 2020 | 2018 | 2019 | 2021 – 2024 |
|---|-------------|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|------|-------------|
| Reverse a brain drain | | | | | | | | | |
| International Branding & Positioning of Switzerland | | | | | | | | | |
| Brand & position Switzerland (internationally) | | | | | | | | | |
| Contribute to being internationally competitive by having a collective presence | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote and strengthen international cooperation and networking between Swiss actors and international partners | | | | | | | | | |
| Strengthen international visibility of Swiss institutions & Swiss know-how | | | | | | | | | |
| Knowledge Transfer & Innovation | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote the valorisation of knowledge | | | | | | | | | |
| Facilitate market entries | | | | | | | | | |
| Support Start-ups & promote innovation | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote Exports | | | | | | | | | |
| Source of information (trend-scouting role) | | | | | | | | | |
| Internationalisation | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote academic mobility | | | | | | | | | |
| Attract academic talent to Switzerland | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide administrative and logistical support to its stakeholders | | | | | | | | | |
| Consolidate partnerships with scientifically strong regions | | | | | | | | | |
| Launch cooperation with strategically relevant countries which possess scientific & technology potential | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote bilateral cooperation agreements | | | | | | | | | |
| Promote vocational and professional education | | | | | | | | | |
| Foreign Policy Goals | | | | | | | | | |
| Reinforce impact of Switzerland's external network and political priorities | | | | | | | | | |
| Contribute to Swiss international relations (element of diplomacy) | | | | | | | | * | |

Source: created by the author.

Legend

Grey cells = topic is mentioned in the report

Please note:

- * 2010 & 2012 merges two documents: 1) 10.109 Botschaft 2012 and 2) the Swiss International Strategy.
- * 2012-2015: the FDFA's strategy does not refer to Swissnex (and potential objectives).
- * 2018*: This document emphasises distinct notions of science diplomacy: trust, bridge-building, exchange over non-political topics.
- * 2019: the FDFA's vision of Switzerland 2028 refers only once to Swissnex. However, the importance of science to technological progress as well as for diplomacy is highlighted.

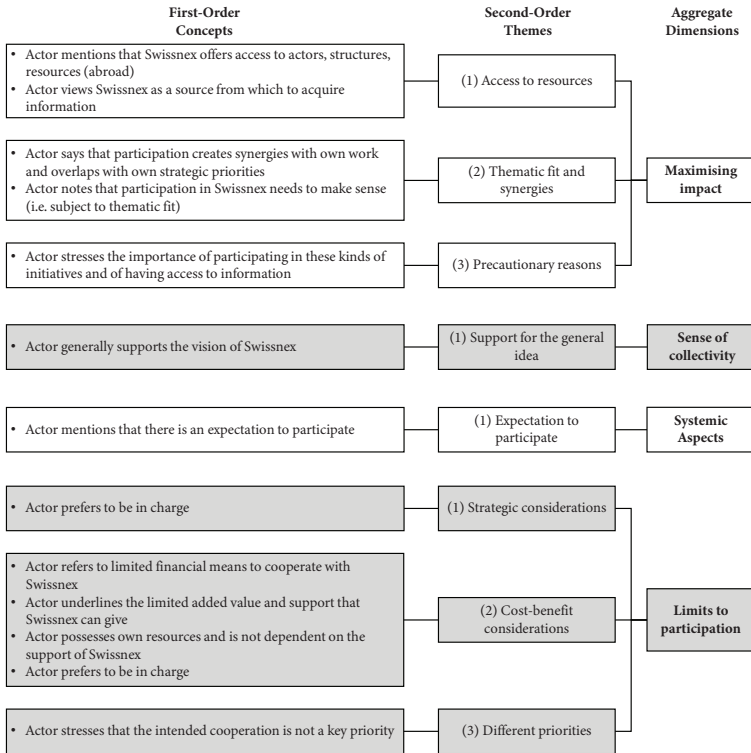
11.2. Key Stakeholder Rationales

The following section presents an aggregated analysis which explains why actors participate in Swissnex and how they use this instrument. The analysis identifies three overarching dimensions, which can be viewed as explanations for actor participation: (1) actors' strategic interests, (2) aspects that link to a sense of collectivity and general support for the instrument and (3) explanations that are of a systemic nature. In addition, the interview data points to factors that limit participation (see the data structure displayed in Figure 13). These elements are discussed in more detail in the following sections.

The results presented in this chapter should be considered in relation to the key principles of Swiss political structures, such as the autonomy of science actors and a pragmatic, bottom-up policy-making style. In addition, it should be noted that Swissnex operates on a service-oriented basis. This implies that stakeholders collaborate on the basis of ad hoc contracts with Swissnex and reimburse Swissnex for its work. This presumably impacts the actors' rationales for using Swissnex. This funding arrangement constitutes a key difference to the German set-up, where the DWIH makes limited amounts of funding available to its supporters for joint action.

232 Please note: 2010 & 2012 merges two documents: 1) 10.109 Botschaft 2012 and 2) the Swiss International Strategy. 2012–2015: the FDFA's strategy does not refer to Swissnex (and potential objectives). 2018*: This document emphasises distinct notions of science diplomacy: trust, bridge-building, exchange over non-political topics. 2019: the FDFA's vision of Switzerland 2028 refers to Swissnex only once. However, the importance of science to technological progress as well as for diplomacy is highlighted.

Figure 13 Rationales for Actor Participation (Swissnex)



Source: created by the author.

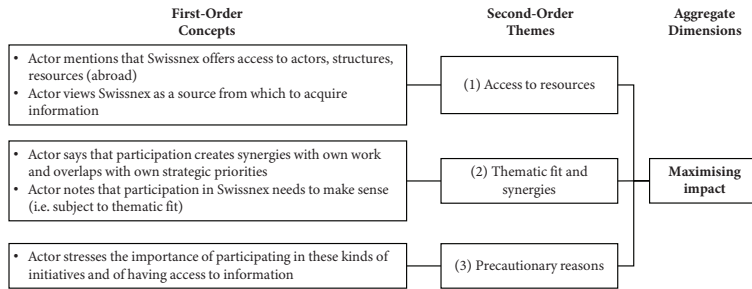
11.3. Strategic Considerations: Maximising Impact

The first set of considerations that explain actor participation are aimed at reinforcing actors' own positions. Swissnex is seen as working as a multiplier for actors and helps to reinforce actors' activities and ultimately maximise their impact (see Figure 14). The data shows that Swissnex is used in such a way that it constitutes a meaningful asset for actors. More specifically, it yields added value because it serves as a door-opener in certain circumstances or facilitates gaining access to specific resources which would otherwise not be at these actors' disposal. This door-opening role is particularly valuable if actors are entering a new field and would encounter difficulties gaining access on their own (interviews SIW2, SIW4,

II. Analysis of Actor Rationales for Participation (Swissnex)

SIW7). More specifically, the analysis identified three sub-themes which characterise the use of Swissnex and reflect the way it is interpreted by key actors. These three aspects are: (1) gaining access to various resources (such as structures, networks, etc.), (2) alignment with their own priorities and topics, and (3) participation for precautionary reasons. In combination, these considerations can be seen as improving the visibility of actors and Switzerland in general, although this is not mentioned explicitly in the data. This may either be because it is considered to be obvious, or it may, in line with the Swiss habitus, reflect the key principle of understatement (which is elaborated on further below). The next section discusses these aspects in detail; however, there is no suggestion of a hierarchy in terms of importance.

Figure 14 Actor Rationales: Maximising Impact



Source: created by the author.

II.3.1. Access to Resources

Using Swissnex is linked with gaining access to resources (see Table 32). In line with Swissnex's core mission, the interview data stresses the value of Swissnex's door-opening function in some situations. More specifically, Swissnex is seen as an instrument which serves as a multiplier for actors' strategic objectives; Swissnex provides access to resources, which supports actors in conducting their key missions. The data provides evidence that actors use Swissnex in those cases where it a) provides access to facilities, b) works in a connecting way or c) is able to support actors in various (administrative) matters. These activities pave the way for the actors to be able to conduct activities abroad and engage in an international environment. What is more, the data reflects that, in addition to acting as a stepping stone

for actors to operate internationally, Swissnex is also seen as a valuable source of information. On the one hand, this relates to situations in which actors require specific knowledge about a certain country, the region or type of infrastructure. On the other hand, Swissnex is viewed as acting as an early-warning system: it may provide actors with valuable (strategic) insights into relevant developments in science and technology. Swissnex is seen as playing a role in terms of trend scouting and horizon scanning. Accordingly, actors view Swissnex's ability to provide significant information as added value. In a similar vein, the interview data demonstrates that participation is also viewed as an opportunity to gain access to relevant actors and structures. In other words, Swissnex is seen as a source of information and as being in a position to provide distinct, country-specific knowledge, which ultimately facilitates actors' own operations.

Table 32 Actor Rationales: Access to Resources

(1) Access to Resources

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Actor mentions that Swissnex offers access to actors, structures, resources (abroad) | <p>That is something; they make the contacts for us, and this is a real added value for [actor x]. But to summarize, it really depends on where the Swissnex is and who the people are, what their interests are, because that differs. [...] For places such as India or Brazil [...] it is good if you have someone there who speaks the same language, who knows both local cultures. (SIW2)</p> <p>“So, we use them more; for example [...] in [location x], we use some of the rooms for our students in innovation”. (SIW3_2018-04-23-08: 12 - 12)</p> <p>“At this time, it was quite useful because at this time [actor x] was a little bit less known than now, so we had contact with them”. (SIW3)</p> <p>Because [...] if we, [...] for instance, are planning a trip by [person x] [...] then we would immediately go to the places where Swissnex is and then we</p> | <p>“Da ist etwas, sie stellen die Kontakte her und das ist ein echter Mehrwert für [actor x]. Also kommt es wirklich sehr stark darauf an, zusammenfassend, wo ist das Swissnex, was sind die Personen, was haben die für Interessen, weil auch das ist unterschiedlich. [...] Für Plätze wie Indien oder Brasilien, da ist es, da würden diese Elemente wegfallen. Also da, ja da wäre es. Es ist schon gut, wenn man an solchen Orten jemanden hat, der die gleiche Sprache spricht, der die, der beide lokalen Kulturen auch kennt“. (SIW2_2018-04-19: 48 - 48)</p> <p>“Weil wenn [...] sagen wir [...] eine Reise von [person x] planen möchten, dann würden wir sofort in den Orten wo Swissnex ist und</p> |
|---|---|--|

(1) Access to Resources

would count on Swissnex to bring us the most relevant people, because the embassy can't do that. (SIW7)

dann würden wir auf Swissnex zählen, dass sie uns die wichtigsten Leute bringen, weil die Botschaft kann das nicht machen“. (SIW7_2019-12-16_spracherkennung: 14 - 14)

Participation is a good opportunity to get in touch with the network, generally. (SIW8)

Actor views Swissnex as a source with which to acquire information

The strength of participating in a Swissnex is knowing; knowing what is happening in a country, just knowing what is happening in Bangalore, what the current topics are, who the specialists are. And there, we, [...] it is difficult to develop this knowledge everywhere in the world, and there you have an entrance door in the country where you, yes, you get a short business card. (SIW4)

“Die Stärke, von einem Swissnex ist gerade ein Wissen; die wissen, was in dem Land passiert, oder gerade so in Bangalore zu wissen, ja was sind gerade da die aktuellen Themen, wer sind da die Spezialisten. Und da, wir [...] ist schwierig dann dieses Know-how überall auf der Welt zu entwickeln und da hat man eine Eingangstür in dem Land, wo man ein bisschen ja, kurz eine Visitenkarte bekommt“. (SIW4_2019-12-13: 30 - 30)

It is just that the network is permanently there. And that is also one of their tasks, to report things to us. I think they did that sometimes; they do it a little less now. (SIW7).

“Es ist einfach, dass das Netzwerk da permanent da ist. Und das ist auch ihre Aufgabe uns Sachen zu melden. Ich glaube das hatten sie manchmal gemacht, sie machen das ein bisschen weniger jetzt“. (SIW7_2019-12-16_spracherkennung: 16 - 16)

“But on the other hand, we use them for other purposes. For example, we gave them some mandate some time [...].We [...] want to make research collaboration with the US and major problems that we have is funding. [...] So, our programme was to look the different ways of research funding in the [country x]. So, we ask the people from Swissnex [x], it was [x], to come here and to give a talk to all our researchers about the funding possibility in the [country x]. And that is an example of a practical, we could have done it ourselves, but we don't have the, it is better to give this mandate to Swissnex because they know much better than us how they find this money. So, they came here for two days and they made a pre-

(1) Access to Resources

sentation of how the funding possibility to our researchers. That was very successful. That is an example how we work with them” [sic]. (SIW3_2018-04-23-08: 16 - 16)

Source: created by the author.

11.3.2. Thematic Fit and Synergies

The analysis of the interview data also reveals thematic fit and the creation of synergies as distinct aspects (see Table 33). The quotations below show that there is general (proactive) support for the work, the idea and largely also the concept of Swissnex. This is illustrated by the fact that actors give annual mandates to Swissnex, which in turn carries out specific activities or provides services for those actors and is reflective of the funding mechanisms of Swissnex (cf. section 9.2, interviews SIW2, SIW3, SIW7). Beyond this ongoing support, stakeholders critically examine cooperation opportunities in terms of thematic fit and monetary aspects. The thematic fit of activities thereby seems to be a highly relevant consideration, particularly for activities that take place outside these mandates. A certain reluctance towards the latter was revealed in the data; though this might be context-related and dependent, for instance, on the availability of their own resources. The data furthermore shows examples that underline the support of common goals: stakeholders approach Swissnex and suggest certain (low-threshold) activities which support the work of Swissnex (i.e., connect actors) and create a mutually beneficial situation (interview SIW2). Also, Swissnex itself approaches actors with specific ideas and suggestions for cooperation. This proactive behaviour reflects the entrepreneurial character of Swissnex and is explained by its need to generate its own income.

Table 33 Thematic Fit and Synergies

(2) Thematic Fit and Synergies

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| Actor notes that participation in Swissnex needs to make sense | Well, so this mandate, we actually renew it every year. We haven't changed that content-wise since the very beginning. [...] And then it is really like that, that the respective Swissnex approaches us and says we | “Wobei (unv.) also diese, eben dieses Mandat, das erneuern wir eigentlich jedes Jahr. Wir haben das auch nicht geändert inhaltlich seit eigentlich dem Anfang. [...] |
|---|--|--|

(2) Thematic Fit and Synergies

(i.e., subject to thematic fit)

have this and that idea. And then we look at it and sometimes we do it and sometimes don't. But we do not have [actor x] internal planning on how we want to cooperate with Swissnex. We don't have that. It is really more driven from this side and, yes, in that sense the decision on which issues, this depends on what they suggest to us. And that is something, if you have known each other for a long time, then they also know what is relevant for [actor x]. So, we basically look at everything and when it makes sense to [actor x] and if we can finance it, then we do it. (SIW2)

Und dann ist es eigentlich so, dass das jeweilige Swissnex auf uns zukommt und sagt, wir hätten diese und diese Idee. Und dann schauen wir es an. Und manchmal machen wir es und manchmal nicht. Aber es gibt nicht bei uns [actor x] eine Planung, wie wollen wir jetzt mit den Swissnex zusammenarbeiten. Das haben wir nicht. Es ist mehr wirklich getrieben von dieser Seite und ja, insofern ist die Entscheidung zu welchen Themen, die ist getrieben dadurch, dass, es kommt darauf an, was sie an uns herantragen. Und das ist dann auch wieder etwas, wo man, wenn man sich kennt über längere Zeit, dann die wissen auch, also mittlerweile an was [actor x] interessiert ist. [...] Also wir schauen uns grundsätzlich alles an. Und wenn es aus Sicht [actor x] Sinn macht, dann, und wir das auch finanzieren können, dann machen wir das“. (SIW2_2018-04-19: 34 - 34)

Actor says that participation creates synergies with own work and overlaps with own strategic priorities

We also try and in fact we do that, to link them, so we write an e-mail to Swissnex and say Prof. XY is in [place x] during this and that time, in case of mutual interests, for example for a talk, for an alumni event, etc., you should get in contact. [...] That is also something where we actually give, but that is also good for our people, because it's also a way for our alumni, the [actor x] alumni, to show something of [actor x]. This is also support for professors etc. in this general form. [...] That is somehow our approach and if it aligns with our goals, then we are certainly willing to make our contribution. (SIW2)

“Wir versuchen die immer und wir tun das auch, wir verlinken die immer dann mit dem, also wir schreiben Swissnex eine E-Mail und sagen Prof. XY ist während dieser und dieser Zeit in [place x], wenn es mutual interest gibt, beispielsweise für einen Talk bei Swissnex, für ein Alumni Event usw. dann schließt euch kurz. [...] Das ist auch etwas wo wir geben eigentlich, aber das bringt unseren Leuten auch etwas, denn für uns es auch ein Weg um unsere Alumnis, den [actor x] Alumnis etwas von der [actor x] zu zeigen. Das ist auch ein Support of Professors usw. in dieser allgemeinen Form. [...] Das ist so ein bisschen die Haltung und je nachdem, wenn es dann auch mit unseren Zielen übereinstimmt sind wir selbstverständlich gerne bereit auch unseren Beitrag da zu leisten“. (SIW2_2018-04-19: 60 - 60)

Source: created by the author.

11.3.3. Precautionary Reasons

The interview data also reveals that precautionary measures are another reason why actors engage with Swissnex (see Table 34). Some actors explain their decision to participate in relation to strategic (governance) considerations; they wish to be informed about the latest developments and receive relevant information to be able to (potentially) influence these decisions. In addition, actors report that participating in Swissnex is beneficial because they have the opportunity to give feedback on relevant network-related decisions. This aspect, however, was only referred to in very few cases, yet it underpins the importance for actors of being able to potentially influence Swissnex’s governance and operations. Furthermore, the interview data emphasises that obtaining information and being in a strategic position are considered relevant aspects to an actors’ (potential) impact.

Table 34 Precautionary Reasons

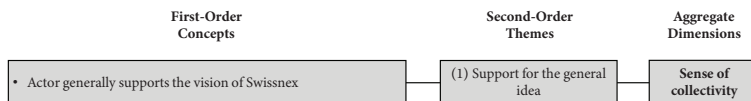
| (1) Precautionary Reasons | | |
|---|--|---|
| Actor stresses the importance of participating in these kinds of initiatives and of having access to information | If there is going to be a new location, or what it should look like in the USA. And there it is essential that we can give general feedback [...] also if it is about closing a Swissnex, or expanding one, it is probably good to know (SIW4) | “Ob es einen neuen Standort, oder wie es in den USA aussehen sollte. Und da ist wichtig auch mal, dass wir eine allgemeine Rückmeldung geben können [...]. Also wenn es darum geht, ein Swissnex zu schließen, zu erweitern, ist wahrscheinlich gut zu wissen“ (SIW4_2019-12-13: 12 - 12) |

Source: created by the author.

11.4. Sense of Collectivity

These aspects, which were discussed initially, aim to improve the (strategic) position of actors; furthermore, the analysis also reveals considerations that encompass actors’ contributions to the general landscape (see Figure 15).

Figure 15 Actor Rationales: Sense of Collectivity



Source: created by the author.

Apart from the considerations that aim to put actors in a better position, the interview data reveals those that take Switzerland as a frame of reference and seek to benefit the country more generally (see Table 35). Participation in Swissnex is linked to a sense of collectivity that is manifested in general support for the instrument (cf. interview SIW8). The data suggests that actors support the instrument due to the belief that Swissnex is beneficial for the individual actor but also to promote Switzerland's international visibility (interviews SIW2, SIW8). To expand on the second aspect, the interview data shows that actors support Swissnex for the sake of Swissnex, i.e., its concept and because of the idea it encapsulates rather than looking only at its benefits for individual actors. Swissnex is supported because it is viewed as a *shell* that is dependent on external input (interviews SIW2, SIW3). Accordingly, key actors are willing to provide content for that shell.

Table 35 Sense of Collectivity

(1) Sense of Collectivity

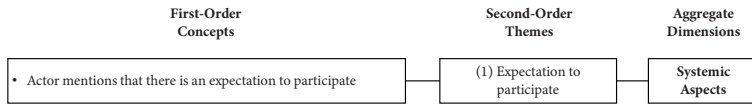
| | | |
|--|--|---|
| Actor generally supports the idea of Swissnex | <p>It is a very good thing that, in principle, you have these outposts that try to connect Switzerland with the respective region, with a focus on certain topics. [...] But [actor x] would not disappear and is resilient enough to cope with a loss of the Swissnex network. But certainly, for the whole of Switzerland it possesses, I think, depending on the location, in fact, an added value. (SIW2)</p> <p>But perhaps fundamentally it is good that the instrument is continued. [...] the tool is useful and makes sense and we support the fact that there is another phase. (SIW4)</p> <p>The idea was to intensify this, but we do that on a very loose basis. We pay for something because we believe that it is good work. (SIW7)</p> | <p>“Das ist eine gute Sache, dass du im Prinzip diese Outposts hast, die versuchen die Schweiz mit dem jeweiligen Standort zu verbinden mit einem Fokus auf gewissen Themen, also. [...] Aber [actor x] würde nicht verschwinden und ist genug resilient, um einen Verlust des Swissnex-Netzwerkes zu verkraften. Aber klar, es ist für die Gesamt Schweiz ist es, denke ich, eben je nach Standort schon immer noch ein Mehrwert“ (SIW2_2018-04-19: 48 - 48)</p> <p>“Aber vielleicht grundsätzlich, dass wir gesagt haben, es ist gut, dass das Instrument weitergeführt wird. [...] doch das Instrument ist nützlich und sinnvoll und wir unterstützen, dass es noch eine weitere Phase gibt“. (SIW4_2019-12-13: 6 - 6)</p> <p>“Die Idee war es zu intensivieren, aber wir machen das auf eine ziemlich lockere Ebene. Wir bezahlen etwas, weil wir denken, dass es ist eine gute Arbeit“. (SIW7_2019-12-16_spracherkennung: 8 - 8)</p> |
|--|--|---|

Source: created by the author.

11.5. Systemic Aspects to Participation

The analysis reveals that there is a (perceived) expectation to participate in Swissnex (see Figure 16).

Figure 16 Actor Rationales: Systemic Aspects



Source: created by the author.

This is reflected in the quote below and is explained by certain institutional constellations and interdependences. However, the interview data suggests that this expectation is not explicitly expressed (see Table 36). On the contrary, it appears to be an implicit (normative) expectation to comply with. A decision not to participate in Swissnex would presumably lead to questions (interview SIW8). Accordingly, a certain degree of (implicit) compliance is expected, which explains participation in the instrument, although the added value for the actor might be limited.

Table 36 Systemic Aspects

(1) Systemic Aspects

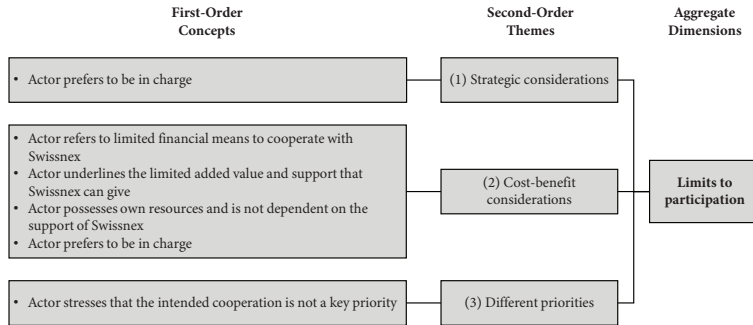
| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Actor mentions that there is an expectation to participate | I think that [actor x] has a certain obligation with respect to Swissnex [...] that we, I would say, that we cooperate. (SIW2) | “Ich glaube [actor x], hat eine gewisse Verpflichtung gegenüber des Swissnex [...] dass man, ich sage jetzt mal, dass man zusammenarbeitet.“ (SIW2_2018-04-19: 10 - 10) |
|---|--|---|

Source: created by the author.

11.6. Limits to Participation

In the previous sections, considerations which explain actor participation were discussed. Similarly, the interview data identifies reasons that constitute limits to participation (see Figure 17). To some extent these aspects invert the previous findings. Three key aspects have been identified, which will be discussed in the following: (1) strategic considerations, (2) cost-benefit considerations and (3) different priorities.

Figure 17 Actor Rationales: Limits to Participation



Source: created by the author.

11.6.1. Strategic Considerations

Strategic considerations pose limits to participation. This can be further explained by some actors preferring to remain in charge of their (strategic) resources. The interview data shows that there is sometimes a deliberate and strategic decision to not delegate activities to Swissnex but to keep them in the hands of the actor. This is explained by quality considerations, which assume that the actor is better able to conduct and control certain activities and links to strategic resources, and that they do not wish to give up control of these aspects. The quote below illustrates that the actor does not trust Swissnex to carry out a certain activity and instead decided to build up in-house resources and infrastructure. Interconnected to these strategic considerations are the aspects of ownership and visibility. In the case of joint events, the actor’s visibility needs to be maintained and should be more prominent than that of Swissnex (e.g., by using a larger logo); in fact, the actor brings visibility to Swissnex and constitutes the bigger brand:

People come to these events mostly not because of Swissnex, but because of [actor x], because that is the content²³³ (interview SIW2).

This underlines the earlier assertion that Swissnex is a shell that is dependent on the support and contributions of key actors (see Table 37). These considerations are of a strategic nature and impact an actor’s decision about

233 “Die Leute kommen an diese Veranstaltungen häufig nicht wegen Swissnex, sondern wegen der [actor x], weil das der Inhalt ist“ (SIW2).

whether to participate in Swissnex, while also revealing the conditions for participation (e.g., the use of logos).

Table 37 Strategic Considerations

| (1) Strategic Considerations | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Actor prefers to be in charge | We decided against this and have instead created certain structures here internally for [topic x]. We are convinced that this, in the long run, will have more added value than if we would simply / a key problem is [actor x] has its DNA, [actor y] has its DNA, Switzerland has its DNA. All very different though partially overlapping. And we do not trust a non [actor x] person, I would say, to sell [actor x]. (SIW2) | “Wir haben uns dagegen entschieden und haben dafür aber hier intern bei uns Strukturen aufgebaut für [topic x]. Weil wir überzeugt sind, dass das längerfristig mehr wert ist, als wenn wir einfach, ein wesentliches Problem ist oder, wenn du, [actor x] hat ihre DNA, [actor y] hat ihre DNA, die Schweiz hat ihre DNA. Sind unterschiedlich, wenn auch zum Teil überlappend. Und wir trauen nicht einer nicht [actor x] Person sage ich mal zu, [actor x] zu verkaufen“. (SIW2_2018-04-19: 24 - 24) |

Source: created by the author.

11.6.2. Cost-Benefit Considerations

Cost-benefit considerations emerged as being significant to actors' decisions about whether to participate in Swissnex (see Table 38). Three aspects are identified in the analysis: financial constraints, a lack of added value and the availability of an actor's own resources. To start with, financial constraints are identified as a clear limiting factor; due to Swissnex's set-up, an actor needs to have financial means at their disposal in order to cooperate with Swissnex. Participation obviously depends on the availability of these resources: does the actor have the respective means to enter into a contract with Swissnex? A second factor that limits participation points to a lack of added value. The interview data shows that, in some cases, Swissnex is not viewed as an asset for certain activities that are part of an actor's core mission. Instead, in these cases, actors must draw on their own channels and resources to fulfil their needs. This non-participation seems to be subject to structural and systemic aspects since the scope of Swissnex's outreach and the service it can provide do not always correspond to actor needs, despite the fact that they both operate in a similar realm. However, this does not level a criticism per se since Swissnex's capacities are limited and its core mission is not to accommodate all actor demands. Third, the

analysis highlights that those actors who have access to their own distinct resources are less dependent on support from Swissnex (again financial means are a factor here). The two quotations below indicate that actors that have access to selected regions are independent and able to operate outside the Swissnex framework. While this might be advantageous from an actor perspective, it can be challenging for Swissnex since it limits the contracts that are signed and ultimately has an impact on its financial set-up. Nevertheless, the fact that some actors do not require support from Swissnex is also viewed as a success factor. To recall, the data highlighted that Swissnex is viewed as having been successful in its mission (i.e., making contacts and being a door-opener) if it is no longer needed and becomes obsolete (section 10.2.3). However, the data suggests that this design principle creates a paradoxical situation: Swissnex needs the actors and their support to fulfil a distinct part of its key mission, while actors may not necessarily need Swissnex (SIW2).

Table 38 Cost-Benefit Considerations

| (2) Cost-Benefit Considerations | | |
|--|---|--|
| Actor refers to limited financial means to cooperate with Swissnex | In an ideal case, they [Swissnex] pay for the flight, etc., but if they can't do so, then we take care of this. That is ok. But in fact, that's ok for such things as a speaker, but when the situation relates to bigger things, then it is different. (SIW2) | „Im Idealfall bezahlen die dann den Flug usw., aber wenn sie das nicht können, dann machen wir es. Das ist ok. Aber eben das ist, das geht bei solchen Dingen, wenn es um einen Speaker geht, wenn es aber um größere Dinge geht, dann ist das schon etwas anderes.“ (SIW2_2018-04-19: 16 - 16) |
| Actor underlines the limited added value and support that Swissnex can give | We either have a direct relation with [actor x] and then we have our own platforms to talk. And that would be in [places and actor x]. And here, Swissnex cannot fundamentally contribute, because they do not have access to these platforms. (SIW7) | „Entweder haben wir eine direkte Beziehung mit einer [actor x] und dann haben wir unsere Plattformen, um darüber zu sprechen. Und das wäre [places and actors x]. Und hier kann Swissnex nichts Grundsätzliches bringen, weil die haben keinen Zugang zu diesen Plattformen.“ (SIW7_2019-12-16_spracherkennung: 10 - 10) |
| Actor possesses own resources and is not dependent on the support of Swissnex | I will give an example, on [date] we will have a big public event in [city x], including media and everything related to the topic [x]. And we can in fact do that without, we do that, without local support, well not without local support, but without support from a Swissnex, for example. (SIW2) | „Ich gebe ein Beispiel am [date] werden wir in [city x] wieder eine große Veranstaltung machen öffentlich, inklusive Medien und alles zum Thema [topic x]. Und eben das machen wir ohne, das können wir ohne, das können wir ohne lokalen Support machen, also nicht ohne |

(2) Cost-Benefit Considerations

lokalen Support aber ohne Support von einem Swissnex beispielsweise“. (SIW2_2018-04-19: 14 - 14)

“We have quite a lot of our own network, we also have also some things, in the case of China, we had, now it is no more the case, but in the past, we had our [resources x] in China. So, we didn't need Swissnex China for our own networking in China, in the past. Also, you have to realise that since we are the same with the US for example, we don't need Swissnex for the contact. We have that contact with the universities, foreign university“. (SIW3_2018-04-23-08: 12 - 12)

Source: created by the author.

11.6.3. Different Priorities

A difference in priorities is the third element that emerges in the analysis as impacting and more specifically limiting participation in Swissnex (see Table 39). Since Swissnex needs to generate its own income, it is not uncommon and is, in fact, anticipated that it will approach actors to identify topics and areas for possible cooperation. As is evident from the quotations below, whether (or not) this cooperation indeed takes place depends on a (paying) key actor's strategic interests and considerations. The data suggests that considerations are on the one hand linked to aspects of thematic coverage and strategic, institutional positioning. On the other hand, these different priorities address regional and geographic aspects. In combination, these considerations reveal the limits of participation.

Table 39 Different Priorities

(3) Different Priorities

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Actor stresses that the intended cooperation is not a key priority | But we don't do that. We are not doing it because we think for the whole institution; we have, not very long-term, but we have a few plans of what we actually want to do roughly and things of this size need early planning and we need to have a discussion | “Aber das machen wir nicht. Wir machen es deshalb nicht, weil wir denken für die gesamte Institution, wir haben nicht sehr langfristig, aber wir haben so ein bisschen Pläne was wir überhaupt machen ungefähr und Dinge in dieser Größenord- |
|---|--|---|

(3) Different Priorities

about how and by means of which instruments, which exhibitions or the like, we want to position ourselves [actor x]. And then [topic x] is not the right one. That means we have to say no, and that causes frustration on both sides. (SIW2)

“With [country x] we have much less, because [country x] is not, I would say it is not a priority country for us. We only have contact with a few institutions, but so far we haven’t invested too much energy and time in [country x]”. SIW3_2018-04-23-08: 32 - 32)

nung, die müssen früh in die Planung eingehen und da müssen wir eine Grundsatzdiskussion führen, wie, über welche Instrumente, über welche Ausstellungen oder sowas wir [actor x] positionieren. Und da ist eben [topic x] nicht das richtige. Das heißt wir müssen Nein sagen. Das führt auf beiden Seiten zu Frustration“. (SIW2_2018-04-19: 16 - 16)

Source: created by the author.

11.7. Findings and Discussion

This chapter identified the rationales that are tied to Swissnex: ministerial and key stakeholder rationales. Doing so added another layer of insights into the (gradual) institutionalisation of Swissnex and thereby a) helped us to better understand and position key developments and design principles of Swissnex. At the same time, this also b) generated insights into the instrumentation of Swissnex. The analysis of the political objectives reflected that Swissnex is primarily viewed as an instrument which is intended to position and brand Switzerland internationally. Over time, internationalisation concerns and notions of science diplomacy discourse have also been added to Swissnex’s core objectives, although these have been subject to change. Swissnex’s role of promoting knowledge transfer and innovation has, however, remained rather stable. In essence, the analysis showed that Swissnex has experienced layering and seemed to work as a platform from which to transport changing (political) goals.

The analysis of stakeholder rationales was carried out using an aggregated approach to data presentation; this showed the richness of considerations that ultimately account for an actor’s decision to participate in Swissnex. For reasons of anonymity, there was a deliberate decision not to focus on the level of the individual actor. As the sample for the Swiss case

study is considerably smaller than the Germany sample, individual actors were automatically more central. The analysis identified three themes as being relevant to participation (see Table 40). Strategic considerations, i.e., those that aim to maximise the impact of the actor were discussed as being explanatory. In addition, reasons that refer to a sense of collectivity as well as systemic aspects were shown to be linked to actor participation. Furthermore, the analysis addressed those factors that limit participation in Swissnex. Again, these considerations were defined as being mainly individual strategic considerations.

Table 40 Overview: Rationales for Participation

| Swissnex | |
|--|--|
| Maximise (and Reinforce) Own Impact | (1) Access to resources (2) Thematic fit and synergies to own work (3) Precautionary reasons |
| Sense of Collectivity | (1) Support for the general idea |
| Systemic Aspects | (1) (Institutional) Expectation to participate |
| Limits to Participation | (1) Strategic considerations (2) Cost-benefit considerations (3) Different priorities |

Source: created by the author.

Accordingly, these findings underline that the logic of action which drives participation is linked primarily to an actor's own interests and agendas. The analysis found that Swissnex is viewed and used as a multiplier for actors' own activities, signalling the hierarchy of interests. Nevertheless, a general willingness to support the instrument was observed. Notably, the Swiss case study also revealed some reactive behaviour from key actors: this was evident from the way that some actors situate themselves in relation to this new instrument and adapt their initial position where this is feasible. Adhering to the design principles of bottom-up management as well as distinct autonomy, the empirical sections demonstrated that a) the oppor-

tunities to influence the development of Swissnex and b) the willingness to do so among the actors seem to be limited (displaying a significant, yet system-inherent difference to the German case study). These findings thereby reaffirm the assertions on the institutionalisation of Swissnex, as discussed in the previous chapter (chapter 10).

To complement the results presented above, it is relevant to consider in more detail the element of the actors' independence from the work of Swissnex. The fact that actors are not dependent on Swissnex to carry out their core missions is not surprising. Instead, it mirrors a functionally divided and organised ecosystem that is able to survive even in the absence of Swissnex. In addition, this links to the self-understanding that is rooted in the Swiss science system in terms of autonomy. A certain level of independence on the part of actors in relation to Swissnex was also identified as a criterion for success. The data reveals that it is a key operation principle of Swissnex and Swiss science diplomacy to become superfluous (although this principle was challenged, see also the previous chapter). For example, Swissnex Singapore was closed for these reasons: collaborations between key actors were consolidated in such a way that the support of Swissnex was no longer needed (section 10.2.3). In a similar vein, the data underlines that the work and added value of Swissnex must be seen in a temporal dimension. While Swissnex is perceived as a door-opener in some countries (interview SIW2), this may change over time, for instance once an actor has set foot in a certain region. The added value of Swissnex is hence diminishing:

“At this time, it was quite useful because at this time [actor x] was a little bit less known than now, so we had contact with them [Swissnex]” (interview SIW3).

In the very beginning [...] to start all that, Swissnex was really helpful. [...] They were very very supportive in the beginning, when we hadn't set foot there, yet²³⁴ (interview SIW2).

On a contextualisation note, it should be made explicit that the individual line of reasoning that an actor takes strongly depends on the actor's points of departure, which is best reflected by their access to and possession of resources. This creates by definition a different point of departure and

234 *“ganz zu Beginn [...] um das Ganze aufzubauen, da war Swissnex sehr hilfreich. [...] Und die waren sehr sehr unterstützend zu Beginn, als wir eben noch nicht Fuß gefasst hatten dort“* (interview SIW2).

influences an actor's positioning and reasons for participating. While the analysis focused mainly on Swissnex, the interview data also referred to cooperation with science and technology counsellors, who are also a part of Switzerland's external network (see chapter 9). Several examples were mentioned where the actor dealt with science and technology counsellors rather than Swissnex (interviews SIW3, SIW7). The criteria for selecting one over the other were linked to the nature of the activities (i.e., whether they required consular guidance) or geographical presence, rather than quality considerations. What is more, interview partners mentioned that, in practice, the demarcations are not relevant:

“And we treat them more or less the same. For us, it is [sic] not two different categories. Sometimes we don't even know the Swissnex. We know it, but I mean we, some of my colleagues don't even realise if that is Swissnex or not” (interview SIW3).

Another aspect that should be highlighted is the differences in institutions' decision-making processes with regard to Swissnex. While in some cases, the decisions on cooperation are taken centrally, in other cases it was shown to be a decentralised process (interviews SIW2, SIW3, SIW4, SIW7). In consequence, this may point to different sense-making and unravels individual preferences rather than institutional ones (while for this study only institutional views were included). Remarkably—and this anticipates the comparative discussion which follows—the reinforcement of actors' international visibility was not explicitly referred to in the interview data as a consideration that drives participation. Compared to the German case, this is a noteworthy finding. The fact that Swissnex is not explicitly seen as a strategic tool might be explained by the fact that it is an obvious objective; however, it might also link to the Swiss habitus and principles of understatement.

In addition, and that will also be discussed in depth in the next chapter, Swissnex possesses a unique structure that differs from its German counterpart such as a lean governance structure, and bottom-up governance. The factors constitute conditions that differ from the German case, while also providing a different basis for actors to (in principle) influence and impact the work of Swissnex. Finally, and that has been repeatedly stressed, the non-use of the instrument by actors is not linked per se to negative connotations. Instead, the opposite may be true, and this constitutes a sign that Swissnex works well since it is on a path to making itself superfluous (for some actors or for some locations). This development has been argued

as being ideal-typical. However, this line of argument can be challenged, particularly with regard to the older and consolidated Swissnex locations, which were presumably institutionalised in such a way that they have become brands and should deliberately keep their flagship function (see section 10.2.3). Furthermore, this underlines the fact that, for actors, the use of and need for Swissnex might change over time.

11.7.1. Interim Analysis of Case Study (II): Instrumentation Effects

Now that the empirical data that forms the basis of the Swissnex case study, being a manifestation of the service-oriented model, has been presented, this section allows us to draw conclusions and provide an interpretation of Swissnex's instrumentation. The data indicates that certain instrumentation effects are encountered, which consolidate each other over time, and that they reinforce the (gradual) institutionalisation of the instrument (see Table 41). In line with the conceptual premise, the trajectory of Swissnex reflects a longevity and inertia over time (Lascoumes & Simard, 2011, p. 14). In light of critical junctures and pressures such as audit exercises and governmental struggles, the instrument remains firmly in place and seems to have even been consolidated. This can primarily be explained by a representation effect. Over time, a direct cognitive effect has been linked to Swissnex, within Switzerland, and beyond. Swissnex seems to have become self-referential. Swissnex is viewed as an instrument that promotes international cooperation and collaboration and aims to secure Switzerland's role in the future. This perception has, over time, become widely shared by (national) key stakeholders.

In addition, there is substantial external awareness of Swissnex, in terms of it being an instrument that is closely monitored and envied by other countries. This recognition can be seen as underlining the instrument's value and seems to suggest that a certain level of visibility is transmitted. Accordingly, it can be confirmed that the instrument is viewed as having an effect on *“those steering public policy and on the competition that drives them”* (Badout, 2011, p. 93). It should, however, be noted that the frame of reference in this case expands beyond Switzerland. This allows us to interpret a) that there is strong explanatory reasoning and value to Swissnex, while b) the instrument also holds a symbolic function. The latter is evident from the dual logic that applies to the success of its locations and their (potential) closure. In combination, these effects seem to have contributed

to the gradual institutionalisation of Swissnex. Furthermore, the analysis of the political motivations that guide the instrument reveals an appropriation effect. Swissnex is used as a platform for reformulations by political actors and is subject to re-framing (over time), as the analysis at the beginning of this chapter showed (see section 11.1).

Table 41 Instrumentation Effects: Swissnex, Switzerland

| Swissnex | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Aggregation Effect | * Inertia & longevity of the instrument despite a critical audit |
| Representation Effect | * Framed as a reliable instrument that promotes international cooperation and is known for its focus on innovation (within Switzerland and beyond) |
| Appropriation Effect | * Used as a platform for reformulations (and layering) by political actors |

Source: created by the author.

