Opening Up to business: Toolkit on Clusters

(or: Master class to Adaptive Strategy for Changing Economic and Social Landscapes) by Anu Manickam and Karel van Berkel

Nowadays many economic regions suffer from problems due to global developments. Businesses and governments respond with budget costs to the growing competitiveness, meaning loss of employment. Products seem to age with the speed of light.

Economic environments have become dramatically dynamic and unpredictable. Old solutions have become obsolete. Change of the perspective is needed to find new solutions.

The European Union is very much convinced that clusters are the answer. Clusters of businesses, government and universities working together on innovative ideas.

The Master class on Toolkit on Clusters or with its full name “Adaptive Strategy for Changing Economic and Social Landscapes” will present a toolkit for cluster strategy.

Case 1: Karlstad has been a for long time the capital of paper and pulp. The local paper company had become very successful, based on the inventions of Johan Richter. The success had a downside. Lake Vänern, in which the paper mills dump their waste water, got polluted up to a level that it became an environmental disaster. Strict regulations by the government finally led to new conglomerates (paper and packaging, ICT and engineering) and new industries like Biomedicine (taken from wood). The government is very active in making businesses work together and only provides subsidies to those who do collaborate.

www.nordregio.se
As Anu Manickam and Karel van Berkel say it: “.. clusters are complex, clusters are ‘messy’; there is no clear logic and no one agrees to how it can be successful.” Clusters are facing ‘wicked problems’.

In 3 days participants will recognize the nature of these so called wicked problems\(^1\), explore the current economic landscape and understand the changes in the interaction between the stakeholders.

**Case 2:** Eindhoven has had an agricultural and traditional industry based on tobacco, and textiles for many centuries. Eindhoven was also famous for Philips which was for decades the major employer. Since Philips left in the ’80’s the focus has changed to high tech innovation, where businesses like ASML and VDL together with a long list of start-ups are working on creating the products of tomorrow in close cooperation with the universities and governments. In 2011 the region was elected as the ‘Intelligent Community of the Year’ and with the self-proclaimed title of Brain port of the Netherlands it positions itself apart from Seaport Rotterdam and Airport Amsterdam.

\(^1\) There is no agreement about the problem. Multiple stakeholders with conflicting values and interests. Consensus is not possible, only more or less acceptable ‘solutions’.

2. There are many ways to ‘explain’ the problem that is often part of a ‘system of problems’. Each explanation creates possible solutions: multiple explanations and solutions possible.

3. Each solution alters the problem, not solve it. Solutions create new problems. There is no turning back.

4. Stakeholders and/or political forces need to seek solutions based on collective processes and judgments.

5. There are no expert answers. Each wicked problem is unique. High levels of uncertainty of outcomes. Solutions often by ‘trial and error’.
Topics are:
- European policy and regional development
- Mapping complex economic and social landscapes
- Historical and geographical contexts – understanding these in future planning
- Wicked problems and strategy
- New communication and interactions – social media and social networks
- Using diversity and game changing rules
- Transition to new economic and regional development

3 DAY PROGRAM

1. THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

a) Recognizing complexity and ‘wicked problems’

b) Understanding how the current economic landscape

c) Understanding the factors that affect the development of the region now and in the future – drivers of change

d) Understanding the development of the region: history, geography and culture

2. THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

e) Understanding how regions expect to deal with the changing competences for changing landscapes

f) Identifying the regional playing field: scope, identity and rules

g) Identifying the players and how they perceive, connect and act

h) Identifying the competitive advantage of the clusters

3. CHANGES IN THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE STAKEHOLDERS.

i) Understanding changes in collaborations and interactions

j) Understanding the new patterns that are emerging

k) Understanding where the changes are coming from centrally steered or are they bottom-up initiatives – self-organizing processes

Didactics:
- Examples of cases from practice and new developments
- Guest speakers who are leading innovative national or regional projects
- Apply directly the knowledge and tools gained in the program
− Interactive sessions where groups work with colleagues dealing with similar issues in the North Sea Region (Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, UK, Denmark)
− Benchmarking and international perspectives to the own cases