TCI Newsletter

News from the global practitioners network for competitiveness, clusters and innovation

Newsletter May 2014

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Message from the President

Dear TCI friends,

Welcome to the May edition of the TCI newsletter, again with a rich set of updates and articles from the world of cluster-based economic development.

Many exiting things are happening, but unfortunately we also have to share a piece of less positive news: Together with our partners in Bern we have decided to cancel the ICT & Hightech event that we had planned for June. The new model of firm-focused event we had envisioned turned out to require more preparation than there was time for at this occasion. We will learn from this, and make a new attempt in the future. All registered participants have been informed; if you were not registered but were considering to come to Bern, have a look instead at what's in store at the TCI global conference in Monterrey, Mexico in November.

TCI is a global exchange for cutting-edge ideas and practices in the field of cluster-based economic development. Through our monthly listing of relevant academic articles and the collaboration with the "Competitiveness Review" we aim to be a 'bridge' connecting the results of academic cluster research to the practice of cluster-based economic development. That such a bridge is needed is evident in research that too often is disconnected from practice but also in practice that is not based on a systematic analysis of facts.

"Emerging industries" is one of the areas in which I currently see a harmful gap between policy objectives, economic development practice, and academic research. Policy makers on both sides of the Atlantic as well as elsewhere around the globe see such industries as critical to unlock new growth in the post-crisis context. What are the key hypotheses underpinning their focus on 'emerging industries'? First, that growth does stem mainly from such new areas. Second, that these new areas are re-combinations of industries from different clusters and entirely new industries. And third, that lagging regions in particular are stuck in the 'wrong' clusters and have in 'emerging industries' their best chance of transformation.

In policy practice, this thinking has then triggered a number of specific initiatives: New organizations and initiatives have been launched with the specific task to connect previously unrelated industries and in that way foster the emergence of new types of clusters. Existing cluster initiatives are pushed to systematically reach out to other industries and explore new cross-industry opportunities. And there is a broad push to encourage 'entrepreneurial discovery' where companies explore the market potential of new industries.

How does this policy ambition and action square with the findings from cluster research? Not that well, it turns out: First,

growth (or the lack therefor) tends to come more from existing industries than from new ones. New areas can be important and there is structural change, but it is dangerous to ignore the existing base. Second, cluster efforts show an impact on the performance of existing economic activities but no returns if such critical mass is not (yet) visible. Third, clusters capture as groupings of related industries by design already many cross-industry dynamics. Technological and other changes can, of course, affect the importance of specific linkages but the changes to cluster boundary that this triggers tend to occur slowly. Fourth, lagging regions lag because of weak business environment and poor cluster dynamics, not because of being stuck in the wrong sectors. The successful transition to more attractive economic activities is closely connected to the upgrading of business environments and clusters. Fifth, structural change happens through upgrading within clusters and the emergence of new clusters related to existing strengths; jumping into entirely new areas works only in very rare instances.

What can be done, and how might the TCI Network be able to help? As a practitioner network, I think we play an important role in communicating the real and well-founded interest of practitioners in supporting structural change and finding areas of potential growth to the research community. As a network with deep ties into academia, we can help trigger and inform research on policy tools appropriate to support the exploration of new fields and on diagnostic tools that can help regions identify new fields most appropriate for them.

Finally, I am happy to welcome three new organizational members: Eurochile Business Foundation in Chile, Region Rhônes-Alpes in France and Gekon from Iceland. I would like to welcome them. We are grateful for your support, and happy to have you engaged with the TCI Network.

Best wishes from Heidelberg, where I have today the pleasure of attending the Annual Meeting of our TCI member BioRN, one of the winners of the German Leading Cluster competition.

Christian Ketels, TCI President

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TCI Australasian Cluster Conference, Sydney, 30 May: follow the event on TCI's social media channels

80 cluster practitioners from Australia and New Zealand have registered for the TCI Network Oceania Chapter one-day cluster conference, organized in collaboration with Regional Development Australia, Brisbane. The event will be held in Sydney on 30 May 2014 on the theme of "How clusters can reinvigorate Australian regions & industry". Join the debate using the official hashtag #TCIOceania14. Presentations and videos will be available on TCI's social media channels.

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TCI Monterrey 2014: New deadline for Call for presentations - 30 June

The deadline for submitting presentations for the TCI global conference to be held in Monterrey, Mexico, on 10-13 November 2014 has been extended to 30 June. Have a look a the preliminary program which includes the keynote speakers already confirmed!

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New TCI website to be launched soon

TCI has always been aware of the importance of digital tools in facilitating communication among its members, so that they can easily network and get direct access to latest information on cluster based economic development. In order to keep up with the latest trends, we are currently working on a newly designed website to be launched in summer. Stay tuned!

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Sara Schiavon joins TCI Secretariat as a trainee

We are pleased to welcome Sara Schiavon as intern at the Secretariat of TCI Network. She will be mainly working on communication issues and network management.

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New TCI organizational members from Chile, France and Iceland

This month, we are pleased to welcome three new organizational members: Eurochile Business Foundation in Chile, Region Rhônes-Alpes in France and Gekon from Iceland. We look forward to working with them in the framework of our activities!

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Cluster-to-Cluster Conference and Matchmaking, Berlin, 18-19 September

The TCI Network is collaborating in the 2nd BSR Stars Cluster-to-Cluster Conference and Matchmaking event to be held in Berlin, Germany, on 18-19 September. It will be Europe's largest cluster matchmaking event in 2014. Check out the preliminary program.

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TCI member SPI organizes the China Executive Tour 2014

TCI member Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação organized between the 13 and 20 of April the China Executive Tour 2014, a one week programme that took place in Beijing and Tianjin. The programme included face-to-face meetings with selected Chinese innovation leaders and key stakeholders, direct access to leading science parks, incubators and technology transfer organizations.

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Publications: Fostering Business Responsibility in MSME Clusters

TCI member Foundation for MSME Clusters in India has published a methodology document on Fostering Business Responisbility in MSME Clusters. The documents can be downloaded from the web.

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Clusters a Focal Point of the II National Transformation Forum – Cabo Verde 2030

From 14-16 of May 2014, the Government of Cabo Verde, led by the Strategic Policy Center in the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, organized the Second National Transformation Forum – Cabo Verde 2030, in the capital city of Praia. TCI President Christian Ketels contributed with an online intervention.

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Academic articles on clusters - 11

The TCI Network seeks to develop tighter bridges between the practitioners in our network and the academic community working on clusters. As a first step, we will regularly post listings of new academic articles on clusters and competitiveness on our website. A further selection is available here.

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Cluster agenda for 2014

We are pleased to list cluster related conferences we have identified at a global level. Let us know about the cluster related events in your regions and countries - we will be happy to share them among the global TCI community.

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Cluster training: a selection of courses

There is an increasing demand for professionals who possess the special qualifications needed for the competent management of clusters. In order to cover this need, various courses are offered around the world. TCI is pleased to present a selection of it.

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TCI supporting organizations

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