

Seminar report for

CONCEPTUALIZING THE LEARNING REGION: ECONOMIC- GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS

Friday 17th April 2009

Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands

The seminar started with four presentations of PhD-students (Danny Soetanto, Martijn Smit, Dessy Irawati and Pieter de Bruijn) working on a specific aspect of the Learning Region. Each presentation was followed by comments from a senior researcher working on a similar topic. The papers were made available to the senior researchers beforehand. Each paper plus commentary was followed by a brief plenary discussion.

After a coffee break, Frans Boekema and Roel Rutten welcomed the participants and gave an extensive overview of twenty years of research on Learning Regions. This was followed by a plenary discussion about the merits of the Learning Region approach to regional development.

James Simmie from Brookes University then presented a paper on the conceptual and empirical connections between Learning Regions and path-dependence.

The first session after lunch was dedicated to three presentations. Frank van Oort and Arnoud Legendijk kicked off with a presentation on the multiplicity of ways in which Territorial Innovation Models become articulated in the development trajectories of particular regions. Robert Hassink then voiced a friendly criticism of the Learning Region concept. Fumi Kitagawa from Lund University concluded the session with a paper on the positioning of universities in the Learning Region.

After a coffee break, Fabiënne Corvers from DG Research presented a policy perspective on the Learning Regions. She called for learning at three levels of alignment: the firm as an innovative actor, the regional innovation system and multi-level governance.

A 30-minute plenary discussion on the various comments and observations collected throughout the day followed. One core issue discussed was the extent to which the 'Learning Region' needs to be seen as a more descriptive-analytical or a more normative concept.

The seminar was closed by Frans Boekema and Roel Rutten. Most of the participants joined for dinner where discussions were continued.