

call for papers

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Special Issue

Firm Clusters: Challenges for Management and Public Policy

In the last decade cluster initiatives have appeared as a new instrument of public policy. Business development, universities and private as well as public consulting firms have founded cluster initiatives in order to bring the aims of public policy and private companies together. All different groups of participants have different expectations on cluster policy. Public policy and the labour unions are hoping for more jobs and the head associations of the industry trusts that cluster policy will heighten efficiency. Huge companies which are situated in rural areas believe in better opportunities in the field of recruitment and SMEs hope to improve their competitiveness.

From a resource-oriented approach, networks hold a variety of advantages for their members, such as access to material and immaterial resources, information and knowledge. But for the single participating enterprise it is always a mixed blessing and they are well advised to look for their own vested interests. Opportunistic behaviour of collaboration partners can lead to outbound spillover rents e.g. due to diffused information. There is the danger that information like human capital is diffusing into the web. Especially SMEs have to take care not to lose their competitive edge e. g. in common product development initiatives.

Other approaches also hold a view on what effects clusters have on competitive advantages. A relational oriented approach views clusters as means where both collaborative and competitive actions take place at the same time. Clusters consist of certain configurations of resources, actors and activities which are shaped through interaction. Firms will position themselves in connection to each other and in connection to other relationships in the cluster. Different long and short term aims of the firms in the cluster will produce more or less tension. This can be productive for the development of the cluster but can also threaten the cluster and make it disintegrate. Managing within clusters will be complicated due to the complex and dynamic nature of the interconnected relationships in the cluster. Innovations are some of the core outcomes of cooperation with others in the cluster. These innovations will be depending on prior choices made in the firms. I.e. technology, competences and other. The competitiveness of the single firm will therefore be depending of the competitiveness of the whole cluster.

management revue

The triggers to initiate clusters are the success-stories like the Silicon Valley or the Swiss Watch Cluster. But until now it is not known exactly what makes a cluster a cluster, what distinguishes a cluster from a network or what theoretical framework can explain how to develop and how to manage a cluster.

In the special issue and the corresponding seminar, we would like to discuss firm clusters in an adequately broad and interdisciplinary way. We are particularly interested in questions such as:

- What makes a cluster a cluster? What kinds of clusters are to be found in the industry?
- What theoretical framework can explain the development of clusters?
- What kind of opportunities and what kind of risks are going along with being a cluster member?
- What are the consequences for the management of clusters from the web as well as from the public policy level?
- What are the concepts and implications for the management of clusters on the different level.

The seminar "Industrial Cluster: Challenges for Management and Public Policy" will be held in June of 2012 at the University of Southern Denmark / Campus Sønderborg. The organizer is the Department of Border Region Studies. Cluster-researcher and cluster manager who can report experiences and help to make aware of typical advantages and problems are invited.

Deadline:

The deadline for the submission of the paper / abstract is the 30th of March 2012.

All submitted contributions for the special issue will undergo a double blind review process. All writers whose contributions are accepted (in minimum, accepted with minor revisions) and selected by the editors for the special issue will be invited to give a presentation of their paper on the seminar and will subsequently have the possibility to improve their article based on the reviews as well as on the discussion on the seminar. Cluster managers just have to hand in an abstract (2 pages) describing the content of their presentation.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

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