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The EUROPA 2021 colloquium on "The policies of local and regional authorities in Europe for the economic development of their territories".

Round Table 2: Territorial economic development based on attractiveness, competitiveness and innovation, or how to reconcile solidarity, territorial justice and territorial competition.

The regional economy as an accelerator in an inter-administrative and integral approach

In the Dutch case, it is good to know that the region as a political-administrative entity no longer exists since 2015. The local government in the Netherlands is the municipality. In addition, there is a functional local body of government, the water board.

That does not mean there is no regional focus on economic development. This mainly takes place based on cooperation, in which municipalities are often important players. The regional partnerships based on triple helix are particularly successful. Here, governments (municipalities and sometimes province and central government), the business community and knowledge organizations (research and education) come together. These often work together on a theme in which the region is already a frontrunner. The triple helix collaboration mainly stimulates innovation with economic development as a result.

Brainport Eindhoven, for example, is very successful. This is partly due to the collaboration of the municipality, the technical university and industry. A high-tech campus was created there, which has become a breeding ground for innovative start-ups.

The Green Ports are a successful example of regional triple helix, economic development and innovation in the horticultural sectors. This formula has been rolled out in six regions, with overarching coordination. Each of these regions has its own spearhead in horticulture, such as greenhouse horticulture in the Westland. This example is interesting because it shows that through cooperation and alignment, regions can strengthen their position instead of being competitors. Some of these regions are world leaders in their specific specialty.

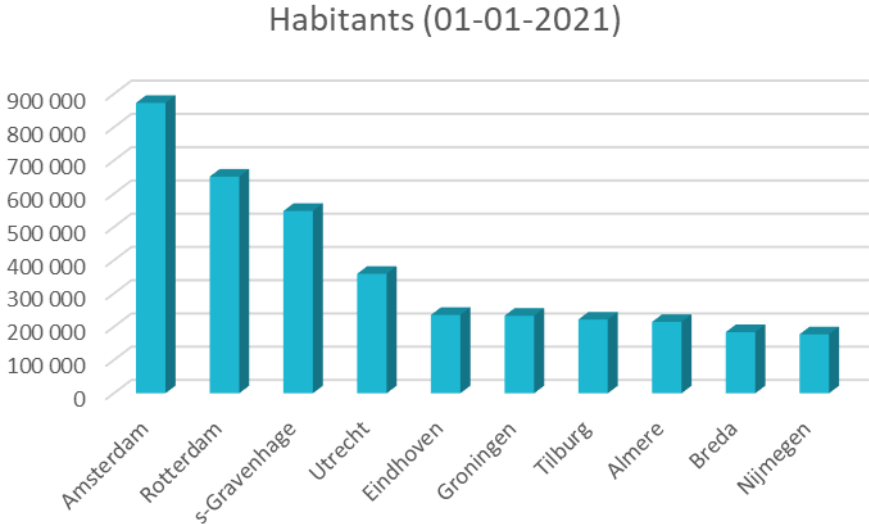
As a final example, I would like to dwell on the Quantum Delta. This is an example of regional innovation based on triple helix with a French dimension. The Delta includes five regional hubs: Amsterdam, Delft, Leiden, Eindhoven and Twente. Each of these regions has a strong technical university or a university with a strong technical and mathematical branch. And each region has a strong triple helix network between these universities, the government and innovative companies. The mission of Quantum Delta NL is to position the Netherlands as a leading ecosystem in quantum technologies. This new technology can be a flywheel for driving start-ups and innovations and the economic development that has been going on with them.

This initiative is interesting because it involves regional, supra-regional and even European cooperation, particularly with France. This year, state secretaries Mona Keijzer and Cédric O signed a letter of intent for the Netherlands and France to jointly expand the European quantum sector in the coming years. Quantum Delta NL will collaborate with the French national Quantum initiative. The first initiative was the joint job board, with an overview of the available quantum jobs in the Netherlands and France.

The Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG) is very active in stimulating and supporting

municipalities in regional economic cooperation. To this end, the Regional Economic Development and Labour Market Programme has been set up. As in the forementioned examples of regional cooperation, this programme advocates working from the local and regional DNA; building on existing strength. By jointly achieving good initiatives and experiments, support from the European Structural and Investment Funds can be claimed. The VNG argues for a directing role for the central government, in which the strengthening of agglomeration power and cooperation between (well-connected agglomerations of medium-sized cities) cities, in contrast to competition between cities, are central. (The Netherlands has no big cities. The largest municipality is Amsterdam with 873,000 inhabitants.)

Table 1 – Ten largest Dutch municipalities



There is a growing awareness that the region cannot do it alone and that many social challenges require a more integrated approach. Economic development cannot be seen in isolation from social cohesion, climate, the energy transition, migration, etc. The Netherlands, like many European countries, will face several challenges in the coming period. These are tasks that are not limited to the boundaries of a municipality or region or a particular policy area. The central government, municipalities, provinces and water boards have agreed to tackle these major social challenges together. To this end, the Inter-administrative Programme (IAP) was launched in 2018. This program focuses on nine social challenges (physical, economic and social).

Table 2 – The nine IAP challenges

1. Working together for the climate
2. Future-proof living
3. Regional economy as an accelerator
4. Vital countryside
5. Noticeably better in the social domain
6. The Netherlands and migrant well prepared
7. Preventing and resolving problematic debts
8. Good public administration in a changing society
9. Appropriate financial relationships

The region can be an important force in innovation and economic development. Regional economy is therefore one of the nine tasks, in which the regional economy is seen as an accelerator on the other tasks. The economic system at the regional level can be seen as an 'ecosystem', where success is determined by many factors. This concerns, for example, a healthy labour market, which matches the labour force, and an active and innovative business community. But also, about accessibility,

digitization, sustainability and the quality of the living and living environment with good facilities, culture and heritage.

Within the IAP, a learning platform is being developed, where regions can learn from each other and support each other. In regional development, the triple helix approach is strongly advocated. Within the triple helix, the governments primarily have the role of connector, facilitator and booster. With this approach, the IAP aims to both accelerate the economic development of the regions and strengthen the connection between the economic policies of the various governments in the Netherlands and Europe. After all, the most successful are countries and regions that are effective in aligning and synchronizing economic development at all levels.

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