

Introduction to the Technology Management in the Knowledge Based Economy Minitrack

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This minitrack focuses on the impact of modern IT on regions, industrial districts, or clusters. The idea is that intra- and inter-cluster interrelatedness and competition will foster economic development. The minitrack consists of three papers.

In the first paper Anders Edstrom, Mikael Lind, and Jan Ljungberg state that regional clusters of companies are becoming an increasingly important focus of government industrial policy makers and researchers. The delimited characteristics of a cluster to a regional area and an industrial sector, makes possible to view the cluster as an arena or laboratory. The concept of regions as laboratories, stresses the interactive and cooperative aspects, which emerge organically in a regional cluster. The paper presents the formation of a research arena in cooperation between the University College of Borås and the industry organization of Swedish mail order companies for studies of learning and innovations in IT usage within the cluster.

In the second paper Alea Fairchild and Bruno de Vuyst, starting from a resource-based view, discuss the Flanders Language Valley (FLV) initiative, which was established to create a global center of competence in speech and language technologies. This clustering of innovation occurred in an isolated location within a small European country and was reliant, not on inherent strength of knowledge within that country or region but on tradable technological interdependencies, with codifiable knowledge sold through licensing. Given these issues, FLV fell into bankruptcy and disarray early, due to fraud within Lernout and Hauspie (L&H), the fraud being brought out – much before Enron, Andersen, WorldCom and others – because of ‘spontaneous’ investigative journalism subsequent to the decision to acquire Dictaphone. This decision overreached the underlying political and economical-financial capacity to protect and preserve a parochial-based “hot spot” against major national security interests of a superpower. Their paper discusses the decline and fall of FLV, based on historical record, and provides some insights into what may curtail “hot spot” knowledge development.

The third paper by Chorng Shyong Ong and Jung-Yu Ia is an innovative paper that develops and tests the validity of an instrument that may be used to measure the user satisfaction of a KM system. The authors develop a comprehensive model, and argue that current models and instruments are not fully applicable for evaluating user satisfaction with knowledge management systems because they are developed in either traditional data processing or end-user computing environment. Based on a survey of 90 respondents practicing mostly in three international semiconductor-manufacturing companies at the Hsin-Chu Science-based Industrial Park in Taiwan they suggest a 18-item instrument that measures five dimensions of user satisfaction with knowledge management systems -- knowledge content, knowledge map, knowledge manipulation, personalization, and knowledge community. In addition the construction of the instrument itself, the detailed discussion of the methods that were used to check various types of validity will be valuable to those interested in methodology.