

City-region network: the health cluster in the Metropolises of Lisbon and Porto

Helder Santos

PhD Student, Department of Geography of the University of Porto, hfcs75@hotmail.com

Célia Cavaleiro

PhD Student, Department of Geography of the University of Porto, liacavaleiro@gmail.com

Teresa Sá Marques

PhD, Department of Geography of the University of Porto, teresasamarques@gmail.com

Abstract:

From the perspective of the institutional paradigm of economic geography, the differences between territories are rooted in the specific institutions in each of the places. These regulate the economic standard and shape the *modus operandi* and the *modus faciendi* of the economic agents.

The recent creation of “Health Cluster Portugal”, based in the Metropolitan Regions of Porto and Lisbon, represents a challenge when we try, based on the institutional paradigm’s theoretical and methodological corpus, to identify and analyse the resources which enabled the emergence of this cluster of competitiveness in health care. The fact that it was established in these two metropolises was not by chance, and we will thus seek to identify the reasons and processes underlying the institutions, embedded in these metropolises, which lead to the belief that the territory is ‘real’ and meaningful as a relevant unit for the analysis of the concentration of innovation processes. This study is more focused on the flows / interdependencies, rather than on the attributes; and aims to develop a regional/national and global perspective.

The slogan, “From knowledge to market”, chosen by “Health Cluster Portugal”, is revealing of its positioning in the context of the knowledge society and economy. This cluster’s main objectives are clearly stated: the development of initiatives and activities leading to the creation of a national cluster of competitiveness, innovation and technology, with an international outlook, by promoting and fostering cooperation between companies, organizations, universities and public bodies. It aims to increase business turnover, exports, and qualified employment in the economic areas associated with health, and improve health care services. (Article 3, nº 1 of the Health Cluster Portugal Statutes: Association of the Health Competitiveness Cluster).

As an emergent sector, based on the production, use and transfer of intensive knowledge, emerging in a markedly urban setting, we will seek to identify and interpret the networks that were established among the organizations comprising “Health Cluster Portugal” at two distinct moments: before the cluster’s formal creation

and the new perspectives for the future. This dynamic temporal approach integrates one of the structural dimensions of the evolutionist paradigm of economic geography. This historical perspective is essential to understand the cluster's gestation and subsequent eclosion. The goal is to also evaluate to what extent the personal (researchers, businessmen and other personalities) and institutional (research and technological transfer centres, companies and other public and private organizations) pathways and the networks that were built or incorporated were determinant in the creation of this cluster, and how they are contributing to the economic and social innovation of these metropolitan territories.

What exists is a complex of centres with a certain degree of functional differentiation which leads to an increase in the flows of information through multiple channels. It is localized knowledge, which encompasses a capacity for collective learning, integrated in a chain of global value. These networks of knowledge and learning are based on organisational agents and architectures which develop different spatial combinations.

In summary, we aim to answer this question: how does the Health Cluster contribute to the construction of a large-scale city-region, linked externally on a global scale and internally over thousands of km².



SOURCE: Health Cluster Portugal