



EVENT REPORT



**RELOS3 - 1st Long-Term Visit
Emmen (NL), 17-20 September 2018**

REPORT OF THE EVENT

After five Thematic Events, covering topics such as:

- 1) Thematic Event 1 in Malta - *From regional to local. How to make the most of RIS3 at local level?*
- 2) Thematic Event 2 in Bologna (Italy) - *How to build sustainable quadruple helix structures for developing RIS3 aligned with local economic development strategies?*
- 3) Thematic Event 3 in Tartu (Estonia) - *The challenge of including the private sector: How to build private-private projects in line with regional smart specialisations?*
- 4) Thematic Event 4 in Wielkopolska (Poland) - *Removing policy silos between R&D policies and public led innovation ecosystems.*
- 5) Thematic Event 5 - Capacity building event in Seville (Spain) - *amalgamating the knowledge of all the topics, with input from the S3 Platform.*

This concluded the project's first phase. The second phase of the project started, with Long-Term Visits. The Long-Term Visits are described in the application as:

- *Give local representatives the tools to understand the different components of the most recent concepts and trends in innovation policy at subnational and local scale.*
- *Make them aware of the potential of RIS3 to promote innovation and competitiveness in their local environments*
- *Present to political representatives of the partners what has been achieved in the RELOS3 project and make them aware of the need for new instruments or redesign on existing ones to implement new economic promotion / innovation policies (Local Action Plans)*

The programme had a well-defined structure. On the first day, Emmen and the regional area of Drenthe was introduced, the second day had a focus on Green Chemistry, one of the innovative sectors included in the project from the beginning. The third day the project joined forces with three other Interreg Europe projects in the region to form a big conference, marking the start for the Management Authority in the north of the Netherlands to gather input for the next EU programming period. The last day was dedicated to a new sector that has been profiting from collaboration in the quadruple helix: tourism, leisure and healthy ageing. In this manner, participants had a very good overview about the situation in Emmen, facilitating deep discussion on smart specialisation in the area.

DAY 1 -17 September 2018

The visit was started at the Growing Emmen flexible workspace in the city centre of Emmen. At first the Dutch hosts Roel Folkersma and Wian Stienstra provided an overview of Emmen and its surroundings. From a small history lesson we learnt about Dutch specialisation starting after the Second World War, and how it helped shape the Green Chemistry Cluster that Emmen is today.

The second part of the visit was used for the actual location of Growing Emmen to present their concept as a business incubator. Owner Dènis Assen explained how by building networks within the community of (starting) entrepreneurs, existing companies and government (at local and regional level) a good ecosystem has been built that provides a lot of opportunities for the region. The organisation was changed from a member-run cooperative to a for-profit company as the demands were too big on the members of the cooperative to run the organisation as needed.



Illustration 1: Dènis Assen of Growing Emmen explains

A local champion is Vasco Games, a company that develops games for mobile use. They reached over 1 billion in sales on Google Play and now employ about 50 people all over the world. The company started at Growing Emmen. Another nationally known company that started at Growing Emmen is CodeGorilla, which is a boot camp-type of education course for jobseekers, that lead to fully paid jobs.

A first was heard during the session too. Growing Emmen decided to join forces with another entrepreneurial network across the street, the Ondernemersfabriek (Company Factory). Together the network and impact would be extended and more effect from local actions was foreseen.

Surprise visit: Klaas-Wybo van der Hoek (Stenden/NHL)

Whilst at Growing Emmen, the local manager for the Stenden/NHL Professional University came by, Klaas-Wybo van der Hoek. We had a great discussion on how education related to Smart Specialisation and how best to organise this vis-à-vis other stakeholders. Although this was unplanned and - it should be said - unprepared, the discussion give some interesting insights, if only for the illustration how close links can be in the context of a geographically small area such as Emmen.

Renewed city centre/urban Lab: former Zoo

To provide a good insight in the renewed city centre, Emmen colleague Martijn Prent showed the Rensenpark, the former area of the zoo. It's about 11 hectares in size, and housed the zoo from 1970 until 2015. Now, this area in the middle of the city centre has become vacant and on this area, an urban Lab is founded: with space for artisans, artists, educational projects, art galleries and so on.



Illustration 2: Guests in Rensenpark

DAY 2 - Tuesday 18 September 2018

The second day's sessions were devoted to the Quadruple Helix in Green Chemistry (often referred to as the Bio-Based Economy in Dutch).

Two key questions were formulated:

- what can we learn from each other as partners with our different experiences and best practices
- why is smart specialisation important at the local level and why is bottom-up approach needed.

Stenden/NHL University

Day 2 focussed on the green chemistry in the Emmen area. The first part was done by Jan Jager, who is a Professor at Stenden/NHL University. In about 45 minutes time, he explained the need for renewable plastics and how the university is working together with students and companies to develop a healthy ecosystem.

The lecture (which was interspersed with illustrations) was followed by a visit to the lab for further illustration and demonstration. After that, Cor Kamminga and Roel Folkersma explained more about the overall strategy from a government and company point of view, with particular attention to the new concept of innovation brokers (a special function to stimulate innovation).



Illustration 3: Professor Jager explaining 3D-printing

After lunch, the group went to visit several companies on the adjacent EMMTEC site.

Morssinkhof Plastics - company visit

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The group visited local company Morssinkhof Plastics. The company has seven main plants all over Europe. The facility in Emmen focuses on recycling plastics types HDPE, PP, PS and PET. The company is a pioneer in plastic recycling, The presentation provided a general overview of the company, and showed the visitors around. This provided a good insight in the various processes that are used to recycle about 200.000 tonnes of plastic every year.

Here we learnt about the development from recycling (i.e. making sure that waste is properly processed) to upcycling. Upcycling in this case means enabling that a product can be used again, again and again, so no valuable resources are lost.

Morssinkhof also spoke about the collaboration in the Quaduple Helix in Emmen and how it benefitted them. He especially valued the common facilities at the EMMTEC industrial site, and the collaboration with Stenden/NHL.

After lunch, we changed back to Growing Emmen, where we heard about the Start-Up Scene in Emmen.



Illustration 4: Morssinkhof factory

Start-up Scene in Emmen

Presentation of Derren de Jong - Facilitator for Start-Ups

Local stakeholder Derren de Jong also presented his company, that exists in helping high-tech startups. Often these entrepreneurs come from outside the EU, and need a foothold in the EU in order to scale up. Dutch government has a special regulation that facilitates high-tech startups. Derren explained the services he delivers and the processes that underlie these high-tech startups, he also explained the intensive contacts he has been having with Ministries, the local government and other official institutions.



Illustration 5: Derren de Jong on advantages of Emmen over the Randstad area

Presentation of CodeGorilla - Bootcamp for jobseekers

We also heard about the concept of CodeGorilla. CodeGorilla is a company led by Diem Do, and was founded at the Growing Emmen facility. The business model is such, that jobseekers first take part in a Hackathon, supplemented with homework. This is a first test to see if candidates have the personal competencies to go to the next step.

The next step is a 3-month long bootcamp, in which students are taught about programming. Both the hard skills (i.e. the programming languages and configuration of servers) and soft skills (how to interact with peers, scrumming and so on) are taught. This programme is partly funded by local government, and partly by companies.

Companies who co-fund the activities have first choice in selecting candidates. It is common for 100% of candidates to be hired straight from the bootcamp, because demand for programmers is so high in the Netherlands. Those who are not hired are often not hired for a particular reason, that is typically easier to resolve when the motivation for a meaningful job exists.

Both cases saw us discussing and comparing the situation in each of the other's regions. This ended the 2nd day of the event.

DAY 3 - Wednesday 19 September 2018

Day 3 of the event was devoted to the Smart Up! event. It was organised with the other Interreg Europe projects BeyondEDP, ClusterFY and TraCS3. About 100 participants attended, even from far away countries such as Turkey and Finland. For the entire day, a special website was made on <www.snn.nl/smart-up>.

PLENARY 1: EMILY WISE MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL

“*Mirror mirror on the wall, how can we up our game and become smarter by next fall?*” asked Emily Wise, a research fellow at Lund University and an independent consultant on innovation policy. This question was at the core of the Smart Up! event. Two key note addresses from experts in the field of innovation set the stage for the interactive programme. We dove into case studies from other parts of Europe and drew interesting lessons for our own region.

The answer to our question is not unequivocal. Rather, the way forward consists of several different but interrelated steps. The key learnings of the Smart Up! event help the Northern Netherlands in our way forward. They are the building blocks for a smarter Northern Netherlands.



Illustration 6: Emily Wise opening the conference

PLENARY 2: RON BOSCHMA

THE ONLY WAY TO INNOVATE IS TO MAKE CHOICES BASED ON REGIONAL STRENGTHS AND CAPABILITIES

A regional innovation strategy is dedicated to the smart use of a region's capacities and potential. Ron Boschma is Professor in Regional Economics at Utrecht University and Professor in Innovation Studies at UiS Business School at Stavanger University. In his key note speech, Boschma argued that the only way to innovate and renew an economy is by prioritizing based on evidence. He is one of the founders of the relatedness-concept.

“Relatedness refers to the development of new complex technologies built on existing structures. In order to innovate with high value and low risk, you need to find out your region's strengths and underlying territorial capabilities.”

“Don't try to build Cathedrals in the desert” he emphasized . Focus on new activities, but new activities that build on related activities already present. Boschma underlined that, in order to further these potential areas of innovation, a region has to cooperate. *“Actors must share knowledge and skills. Make cross-overs and build external linkages. Look outside the box. Embrace people from outside the network to bring in new activities, new entrepreneurship and additional knowledge.”*

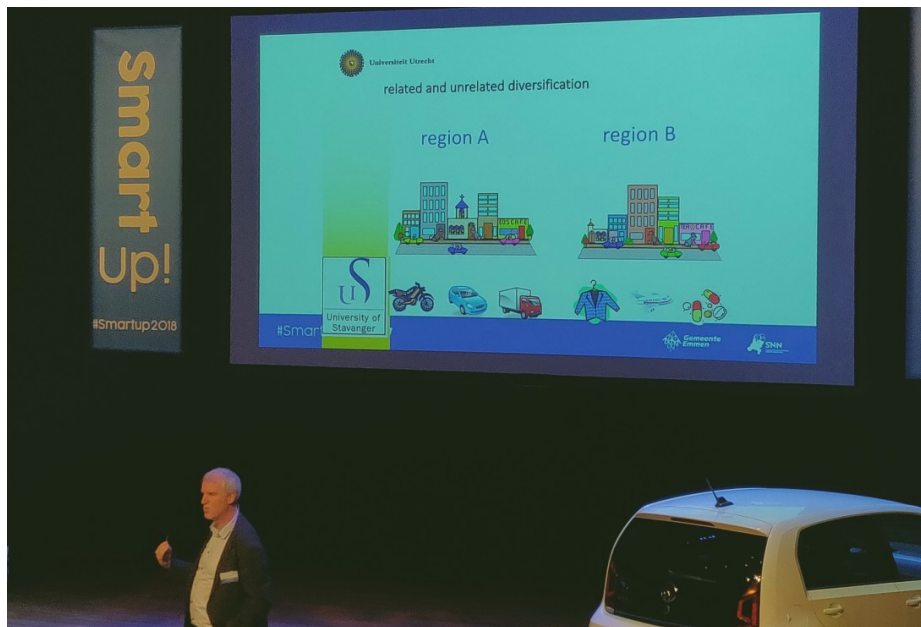


Illustration 7: Ron Boschma on diversification

PLENARY 2: MERETE DANIEL NIELSEN CLUSTERS FACILITATE INNOVATION BY SMARTING UP SMES

There are many important actors in the innovation ecosystem. Businesses, knowledge institutes, authorities, civil society organizations, innovation(test)environments, innovation networks, innovation hubs, incubators, accelerators, and of course, clusters. Especially for a region such as the Northern Netherlands, where SMEs are the engine of the economy, clusters are important.

Merete Daniel Nielsen is director at Cluster Excellence Denmark and an expert on innovation, regional development and clusters. As part of her key note speech at the Smart Up! event, Nielsen argued that clusters build knowledge bridges between companies and knowledge institutes.

“Clusters facilitate innovation by smarting up SMEs, for example through encouraging knowledge sharing, matchmaking and the development of innovation projects. They also stimulate entrepreneurship, competence development and internationalisation”. Nielsen advised to align the regional cluster strategy with the regional innovation strategy. “Clusters are vehicles for moving. By sharing knowledge and skills, understanding the region’s capabilities and combining them with new activities from ‘outside’, clusters can become an instrument for implementing the regional innovation strategy”.

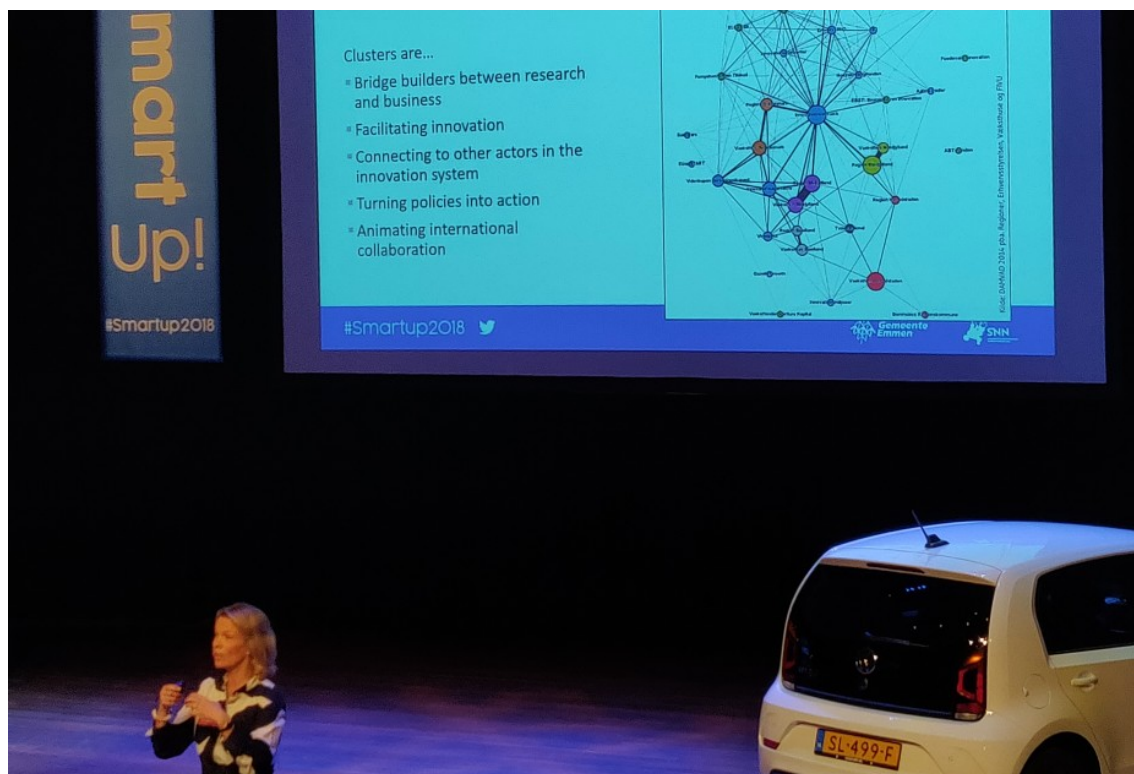


Illustration 8: Clusters in Denmark

WORKSHOP 1 - MIREN ESTENSORO HOW TO INVOLVE THE LOCAL LEVEL IN INNOVATION STRATEGIES?

Over the last few years the Basque region started to involve the local level in innovation strategies. Like the Northern-Netherlands, the region faces a challenge of increasing innovation among SMEs. Experiences in the Basque region show that local governments and their stakeholders can play a key role. Miren Estensoro of Orkestra, the Basque Institute of Competitiveness, shared this interesting strategy. This session was moderated by Christian Saublens, former director of the European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA).

The main question of this case study was how to attract SMEs and how to get them involved in the innovation ecosystem the right way. The problem is that many SMEs don't seem to realise that they need to innovate and cooperate. Contrary to a more demand-driven approach, Orkestra proposes that SMEs need to be made aware of the necessity of innovation. But then the question arises of who would be best fit to take on this role.

The danger that lurks in bestowing government with this role, is that it might induce the idea of a top-down policy. During the discussion, participants agreed that the solution rather lies in attracting visionaries. Frontrunner stakeholders and local government officials might best facilitate this process, as they are closest to SMEs. These facilitators should understand the ecosystem really well and know the relevant actors in their network. They are almost like family doctors: they are trusted and able to build bridges. In the end, they are the ones who can stimulate commitment from other actors.

WORKSHOP 2 - NINA ALKÆRSIG JENSEN HOW TO UNLOCK INNOVATION POTENTIAL THROUGH CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION?

In the port of Kalundborg in Denmark, a unique collaboration has been established in an organic way between companies: the residual materials in one company becomes a resource in another. This is what is called 'industrial symbiosis'. Not only does this collaboration save money, it also reduces the ecological footprint. Nina Alkærsg Jensen of the Symbiosis Center Denmark elaborated on how the center today facilitates new symbiosis collaborations nationally as well as internationally by disseminating the particular mindset from Kalundborg. This session was moderated by Merete Daniel Nielsen, director at Cluster Excellence Denmark.

The participants worked on the question of how to take a systematic approach to resource optimization, through the identification of potential resource exchanges between companies across sectors. Within the discussion, the following building blocks were found essential: trust between companies, joint building of cooperation, involving SMEs, cross-sector cooperation and a strong innovative spirit among entrepreneurs.

The main recommendation of this case was to bring companies closer together at a slow pace and within small projects. Local authorities should facilitate rather than

enforce cooperation between companies. Entrepreneurs need to engage in organic cooperation themselves, and local governments and knowledge institutions can best play a supporting role. This bottom-up process, of course, doesn't happen overnight: it's about building trust. It takes time.

WORKSHOP 3 - MATTIAS FLODSTRÖM HOW TO COORDINATE INNOVATION PROCESSES BOTTOM-UP?

Coordinating multi-actor innovation processes and strategies is not an easy thing to do. Mattias Flodström shared the experiences of the Swedish region of Östergötland on how to create a fertile ground for collaborative innovation. This region has taken a pragmatic route and developed an approach in which key actors in an innovation ecosystem are closely connected and effectively work together to get the most out of entrepreneurial discoveries, with great results.

This session was moderated by Richard Tuffs, former director at the European Regions Research and Innovation Network (ERRIN). The main question of this case study was how to change the innovation ecosystem of a region, and accordingly how to coordinate all the innovation processes bottom-up. The first issue to come up in this respect is the issue of 'ownership', or, more to the point, 'orchestration'. Who orchestrates these processes that involve so many different actors?

The local and/or regional government should act as a continuous facilitator. A facilitator attracts the relevant actors and leading stakeholders. Together, they aim to commit, mobilize and align all the actors in the ecosystem. Creating such a fertile ecosystem for innovation involves a systematic approach: it's a long term process. Therefore, regional coordination continues to be of great importance.



Illustration 9: Session for meeting the speakers and moderators

PLENARY EVALUATION + PANEL DISCUSSION THE KEY ELEMENTS, DISCOVERIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THREE CASES

The case studies addressed several elements and challenges connected to smarting up a region. The Basque Country in Spain addressed the role of the local level in innovation; Denmark presented a new way of unlocking innovation potential through cross-sectoral collaboration; and the Östergötland region in Sweden shared their successful route to coordinating innovation processes bottom-up. These cases functioned as a mirror: they provided good practice examples, helpful lessons and ideas on how the Northern Netherlands can become smarter.

The key elements, discoveries and recommendations of the different cases were connected and reflected upon. Interestingly, a number of recommendations recurred throughout all three case sessions.

The recurring recommendations are the key lessons to take on board in the early stages of the quest to make the Northern Netherlands an even smarter region. A first lesson is that the region must invest in its relations with actors in the ecosystem. Building trust among the stakeholders. Being open-minded. Listening. This way, the local actors feel safe to be honest and open about their needs. After all, creating a fertile ecosystem for innovation is a fundamentally bottom-up process. This is the second recurring element.

Encouraging continuous collaboration between actors in the ecosystem requires a long-term and systematic approach. It also requires, as a third element, relevant people with mobilizing capabilities. The human factor is of great importance, as the process needs frontrunners, facilitators and coordinators. Fourth, and related, is the issue of strong leadership and good governance.

Leadership that are not just authorities, but represent all the different actors in the ecosystem. A fifth element to take away was the importance to look outward: outside the usual suspects, outside your network, outside your region, outside the box.



Illustration 10: Local entrepreneur in discussion

And with that we concluded the 3rd day of the long-term visit to Emmen.

DAY 4 - Thursday 19 September

From Green Chemistry to Tourism, Leisure and Healthy Aging

In Emmen, the RIS3 process with a Quadruple Helix is alive and well in the Green Chemistry sector. The Tourism and Leisure is another sector where we expect the concept of Smart Specialisation to follow.

An important stakeholder in this process is the Rijnland Instituut <<http://rijnlandinstituut.com/>>. It is a cooperation between the leading educational institutes of the area. It aims to become a cross-border knowledge network for regional development in the Northern Netherlands and Northwest Germany.

The name Rijnland Instituut was inspired by the so-called Rhineland Model, a term that was originally used to describe the principles of the economic model and of society in Germany and the countries around it. It emphasises collaboration between all stakeholders, and aims to seek for the best long-term solutions in the interest of society in general. It is often compared to the Anglo-Saxon Model.

The institute informs about cross-border employment, the accessibility of learning and doing business for entrepreneurs, and citizens. Also it works on language and cultural issues. Its mission is to be a cross-border 'knowledge consulate' of technology, leisure economy, language skills and culture, and it participates in many projects, also creating valuable industry experience for students.

In attempt to show how Emmen is trying to cross-pollinate ideas from the green chemistry into another sector, it was decided to tourism and leisure. As a showcase, but also to gather feedback from our peers during the visit.

And so the day was spent at Center Parcs Parc Sandur in Emmen. The day was opened by Vice Mayor Robert Kleine of Emmen, who welcomed the guests and explained the main traits of the current and future policies for tourism and leisure in his local authority.



Illustration 11: Vice Mayo Robert Kleine of Emmen

RELOS3 stakeholder Cigdem Zantingh provided an overview of tourism and leisure from the education's point of view and the Communities of Practice principle that the region has adopted in this industry. She was assisted by Elizabeth Ellison of Emmen.

After that, our host Center Parcs Sandur discussed innovation in a leisure environment. 'Parc Sandur' as it's locally known is a shared environment. Part is a normal residential area and part is operated by Center Parcs as a holiday village. Shared facilities (supermarket, swimming pool, restaurants) are accessible to the public. The entire area is styled like New Garden Cities in the UK, such as Welwyn.



Illustration 12: Project Manager Roel Folkersma providing background information

Mr Bert de Groot discussed the innovation aspects for 'his' holiday park, Center Parcs Parc Sandur. He discussed the big trends for this area in the Netherlands, their impact on his business model and also how the Communities of Practice had helped him to meet his goals. He particularly appreciated the 'peer reviews' from other companies in the same sector, education and the facilities that are created by Emmen local authority.

The major trends are:

- more luxurious holidays (accommodation, but also the hospitality offer)
- luxury also for handicapped people
- shorter holidays, but more frequent
- more exotic, but nearer to home
- always something new, preferably something new every week

It was summed up as:



Illustration 13: Strategy for Center Parcs

in a newspaper in early 2019.

We were shown around a few of the holiday homes, and facilities like the petting zoo, where we also learnt about social employment.

At the end, there was some detailed discussion about cooperation in the Quadruple Helix in this sector in relation to economic excellence. It's clear that there is still plenty of potential to be developed. Particularly in development of information in different languages, setting up transnational tourism products and so on. Nevertheless, with the help of RELOS3 and other activities, progress is being made.

Conclusion

The first Long-Term visit to Emmen was concluded with a meeting after lunch evaluating the entire event. As this was the first meeting of its kind in the project, there was no previous experience. It seemed like everybody enjoyed the rhythm of the visit, with a 'deep dive' into the inner workings of the Emmen ecosystems. To many, the information about plastics and green chemistry was really an eye-opener. The approach of SmartUp! was really appreciated too, and the last day with a link to a new sector was appreciated too, and perhaps a suitable touch to an exhaustive few days with so many new insights.

The lead partner thanked the local authority of Emmen for organising this event. After taking a group picture everybody left around 14:00, just in time for flights home from Amsterdam Airport.



Illustration 14: Group photo, just before departure.