

# Learning Regions and Development Networks

Thomas Stahl

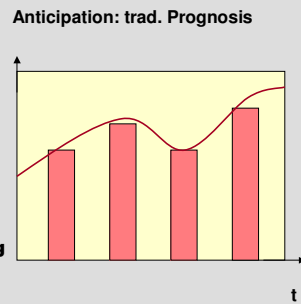
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## Learning Regions are at the political agenda

- The ESF-Initiatives Employment and ADAPT
- The new ESF-Initiative EQUAL
- Program of the European Parliament: Acting locally for employment
- Art. 6 Program of the ESF (local employment)
- The EU-Memorandum on life long learning (2000)
- Many national programs (e.g. 3 new German programs)
- 2 EU-US-Conferences on Learning Regions (Acron/Bologna)

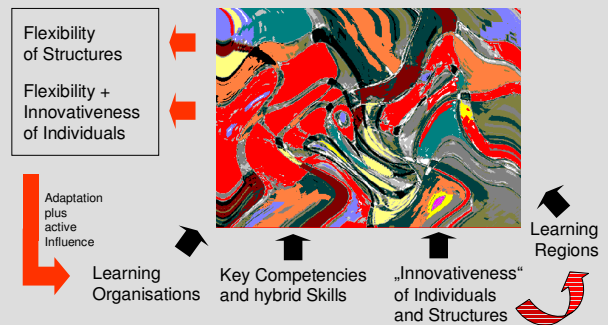
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- Reliability rather low
- Status quo extrapolation (deterministic models, linear thinking)
- Level of aggregation to high for practical planning in enterprises



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## Anticipating the Unpredictable



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## Key Elements of Learning Regions

- ◆ „Bottom-up“ Initiative

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## Key Elements of Learning Regions

- ◆ „Bottom-up“ Initiative
- ◆ Networking and Partnership

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## Learning regions networks:

- beyond bureaucratic hierarchy
  - beyond market relations
  - Strength of „weak ties“
    - common or complementary interests
    - trust and confidence
    - common living space
- } social capital

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## Complex Dimensions of a Learning Region Network

- Fostering bottom-up creativity
- Fostering „network-learning“
- Fostering innovation („innovativeness“)
- Provide „openness“ for everybody
- Provide operations and results (effectivity)
- Provide sustainability

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## Key Elements of Learning Regions

- ◆ „Bottom-up“ Initiative
- ◆ Networking and Partnership
- ◆ Regionalism

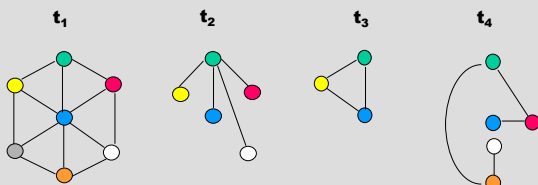
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## Key Elements of Learning Regions

- ◆ „Bottom-up“ Initiative
- ◆ Networking and Partnership
- ◆ Regionalism
- ◆ Flexibility

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## Learning Region = Flexibility in Structures



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## Thinking Network

- **“Sustaining development networks is not about creating new institutions, new structures or new positions. It is about establishing a new culture of *thinking networks*.”**

(The ADAPT-project Bootstrap, Sweden)

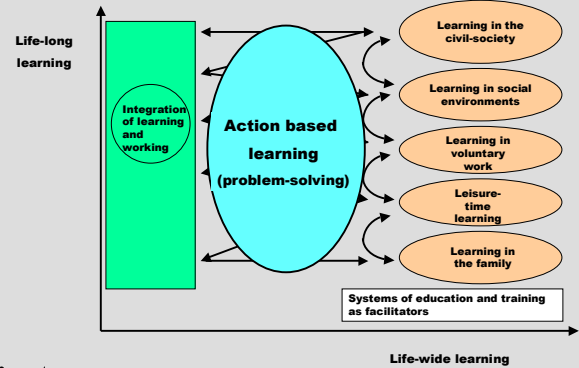
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## Key Elements of Learning Regions

- ◆ „Bottom-up“ Initiative
- ◆ Networking and Partnership
- ◆ Regionalism
- ◆ Flexibility
- ◆ individual and structural Learning

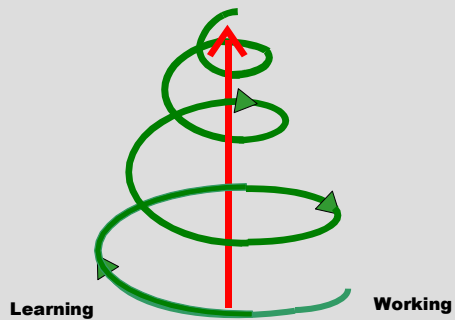
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## Multi-dimensional understanding of action-based learning in holistic biographies



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## Learning of the Organisation



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## Learning Networks

- not only disseminate information and implement know-how among SMEs but they also
- create new knowledge by co-producing solutions for common problems and
- exploit real knowledge through shared experience.

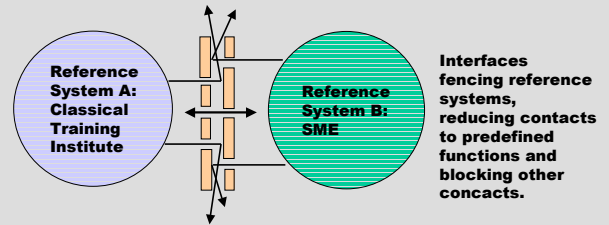
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## Key Elements of Learning Regions

- ◆ „Bottom-up“ Initiative
- ◆ Networking and Partnership
- ◆ Regionalism
- ◆ Flexibility
- ◆ individual and structural Learning
- ◆ Co-producing Innovation

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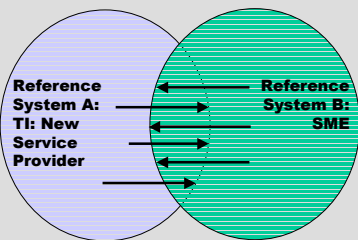
## Controlling Interfaces



Interfaces fencing reference systems, reducing contacts to predefined functions and blocking other contacts.

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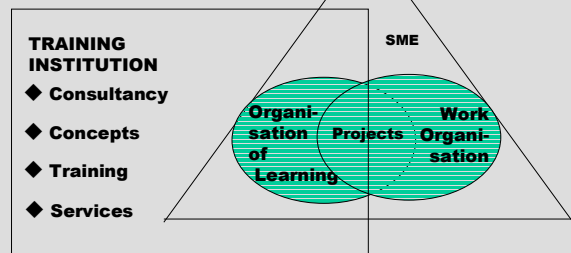
## Innovating Interfaces



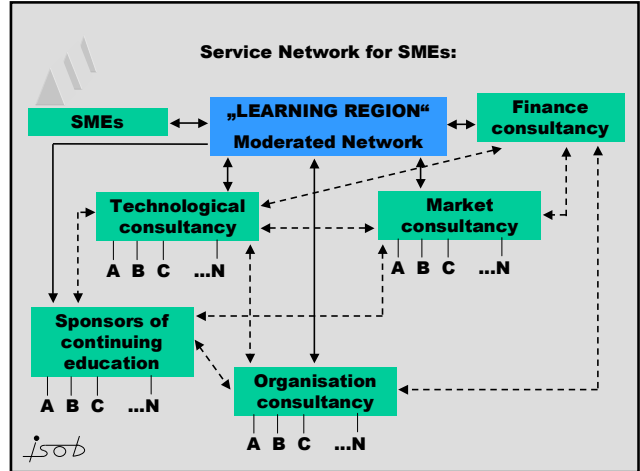
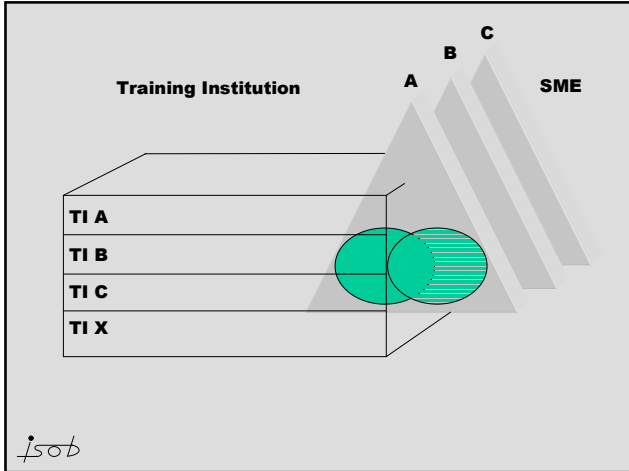
Innovativeness is fostered by common space of co-production. This interface knows no predefined functions but allows an open exchange of interests, beliefs, values, knowledge, materials, etc.

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## Integration of External Training Competencies in the SME



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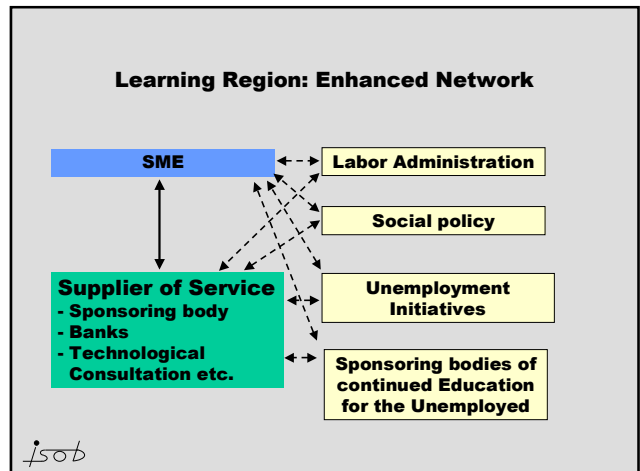


**Regional Development Networks**

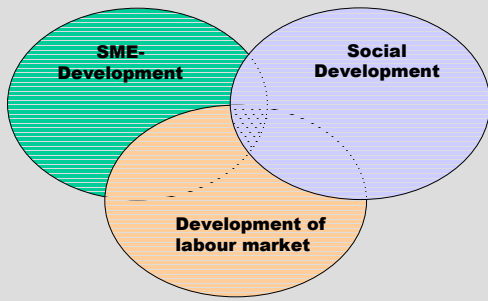
**A system of co-operation in which SMEs**

- analyse and articulate their opportunities, problems and needs;
- use the network to develop the services they need;
- secure the outside assistance and expertise they require;
- learn together and are able to innovate together.

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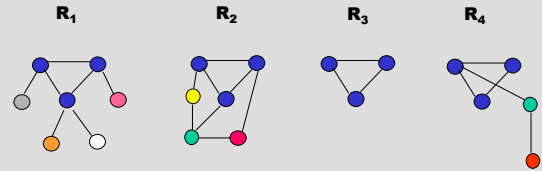


**Learning Region creates integrated Problem Solutions**



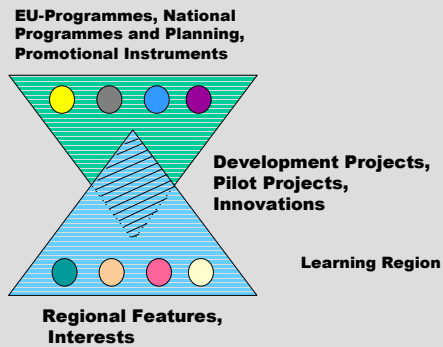
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**Learning Region = Self Similarity**



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**Integrating top-down and bottom-up policies**



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**Learning Regions**

**Open Questions:**

- ➡ Sustainability of Networks and Initiatives?
- ➡ Management of Regional Networks?
- ➡ 'Regionality': A Development Pattern?
- ➡ Flexibility vs. Continuity of Regional Development?

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