

Analysis of the synergistic repositioning of the Central and Eastern Europe economies under sustainable regional development conditions. Case study: Romania

Author: Assoc. Prof. Oana BĂRBULESCU

Summary

Long-term economic growth and social prosperity rely on the ability of the regional economies to sustain high levels of productivity growth, while ensuring a broad-base distribution of the benefits. As economies become larger, the creation and diffusion of innovation become the main triggers of continued prosperity. Recognizing that innovation investment means building future prosperity and setting the ground for sustainable upward convergence represents the starting point of the habilitation thesis entitled *"Analysis of the synergistic repositioning of the Central and Eastern Europe economies under sustainable regional development conditions. Case study: Romania."*

The first part of the habilitation thesis highlights some major coordinates of the main analytical vectors that underpin the sustainable regional development, such as innovation, collaborative networks, internationalization and entrepreneurship. The rise of digital technologies, such as M2M (Machine to Machine) and IoT (Internet of Things) and their increasing convergence with the physical world has brought rapid and deep changes in the way that innovation is created and diffused, redefining entire industries. In order to identify the opinions of the managers within wine industry on the benefits and the limits of M2M and IoT technologies, to emphasize the marketing strategies and techniques considered innovative in the field of viticulture and also to analyse the relationship between the responsible wine consumption and sustainability, a qualitative marketing research was conducted, in which 15 managers of wine producing companies from Romania's wine-growing areas were interviewed. In the first chapter, the results of this marketing research are presented, underlining that some traditional sectors of Romanian's economy have a number of comparative, even competitive advantages. Furthermore, in this chapter some theoretical insights into how innovation in cluster firms is related to the concepts of proximity are revealed; in the next chapter, these concepts are further applied.

In today's global economy, interorganizational knowledge networks are considered key assets for cluster innovation. Starting from the existing empirical evidence which suggests that, while networks can

improve the innovative performance of firms, not all network connections exert the same influence, the second chapter of the thesis explores how the involvement in business networks and technical knowledge influences the innovation of the companies in a textile cluster. With a view to deepening the analysis of the interconnections established between the firms in a cluster, as well as the implications from the development of the competences required for the management of the cluster firm's relationship network, an empirical study focused on a sample of 42 firms belonging to Muntenia-Oltenia wine cluster in Romania was conducted and its results are presented herein.

Another aspect analysed within this chapter is the impact of the collaborative networks on a firm's international presence in the contexts of Muntenia-Oltenia wine cluster in Romania. After the structure and morphology of these collaborative networks have been analysed, the influence of these networks developed with both other companies and technical and market support institutions on the intensity of the international presence of cluster firms is examined.

In order to boost innovation activity, entrepreneurship is considered a crucial factor. The third chapter of the thesis focuses on identifying both the large companies' role in stimulating local entrepreneurship and the higher education institutions' contribution to fostering entrepreneurial activity in order to achieve an innovative ecosystem. In this respect, I mention the results of a qualitative marketing research on how companies cooperate with local startups in the business activities and the role played by Transilvania University of Brasov in developing the students' entrepreneurial skills and in establishing new startups, which was carried out among 18 representatives of companies and public institutions active in Brasov city, Romania.

This research, which proposes several models of collaboration between large companies and startups, in order to accomplish the most successful innovations and to create an innovative ecosystem, offers a deeper insight into open innovation activities. The results emphasize the need to involve several categories of actors, such as the public sector, academia, industry, and citizens, in achieving a sustainable entrepreneurial environment.

The second part of the habilitation thesis is dedicated to the directions of academic career development and scientific research, based on my scientific experience, as well as on the professional experience gained in the field of collaborative networks and entrepreneurship. The career development and plans that I have presented in this section provide an overview of ongoing projects and of what I intend to develop in the future.

The third section contains bibliographic references used to integrate the research activities described in previous sections.