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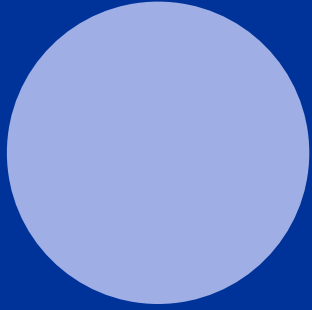
ESPON Seminar

Small and medium-sized cities in Europe

15-16 November 2023 in Cuenca, Spain

*Innovations in SMT&C: from heritage and path
dependency to path creation*
Joaquín Farinós Dasí





Talent Cities session 1: innovation, economic transition and tech transformation

1. Conditions fostering innovation

2. How to retain talent in the territory

3. Policies fostering innovation, economic transition and tech transformation

1. Conditions fostering innovation

- Geography/location matters: 'so far, so close' (ying-yang). The examples of Villena (from Madrid, Valencia, Alicante, the coast...) and Soria (from Madrid, Zaragoza, Basc Country, Valladolid...)
- Local/Territorial character (good path dependency/heritage) for Smart Specialisation Strategies
- The 'human resource' and leadership are the key for social innovation for path creation
- Ownership and innovative/technological sovereignty? (e.g. renewable energy)?
- Good interconnetivity give more opportunities to SMSTCS, giving more development opportunities, productivity possibilites and services delivery than their size can predict ('borrowed size' effect)

1. Conditions fostering innovation

- Public administration challenges: innovation is also organizational
 - Administrative burden & complexity of procedures as barrier + Better knowledge & use/management existing programs and funds
 - Technical assistance and support from regional, national and EU levels + Better effective involvement of SMSTCS in setting programs priorities and implementation of existing instruments (CLLD, ITI, EUI, Urban Agendas....)
 - Better citizen involvement /commitment
- Private sector challenges: Companies Size - Oligopolistic tendency – Mature/Strong demand economic sectors

2. How to retain talent in the territory

- Which kind innovation:
 - Traditional ('business as usual') or
 - New (alternative, more 'radical'... and which kind if so); EU New Green Deal
- Basic Soft conditions:
 - Culture (facing big-cities urban mental/cultural model)
 - Training (mainly for young people, as Youth Commission of Villena Economic Social Forum with initiatives as EDIFICANT, with regional government support),
 - Good quality of life for all (walkable and more livable cities / very low unemployment taxes / very good environmental conditions)

2. How to retain talent in the territory

- Soft conditions are very important, but not always enough:
 - Basic services as specialized health and social ones for elder people
 - Housing, right rental prices
 - Connectivity (transport low carbon infrastructures)
 - ITCs availability and ability to be used
- Combining Soft and Material: Public administrations role (as detonating when necessary; economic diversification is key in order to keep young people) + Private initiatives + P-P partnerships
 - As in Soria, urban projects (pedestriation: Parking Mariano Granados y Espolón; Municipal Market Place projects) led by public administration can be linked to other private initiatives increasing tourism and local commerce
 - Also in Villena: urban regeneration, pedestriation and new Open Commerce project; important culture economy cluster

3. Policies fostering innovation, economic transition and tech transformation

- Small is beautiful and possible (biomass and more efficient energy consumption linked to urban regeneration projects in Soria, footwear and agriculture in Villena)... Until when?
 - Small enterprises are more flexible and resilient in crisis (positive Gross and Net Domestic Product as well as unemployment taxes in Soria and Villena)
 - Support Small and Medium Size Enterprises (S&MSE), as well as Social Economy and Care Economy,
 - Combining local employment markets (production and consumption); the very important role of local commerce (linked to urban regeneration initiatives both in Soria and Villena)

3. Policies fostering innovation, economic transition and tech transformation

- Value the local (El Hueco in Soria; Economic & Social Forum in Villena) + Multilevel relationships + Strategic Networking (SDO in Soria, Cultural industry in Villena)
- Improve and ensure connectivity (transport and ICT networks) for better spatial but also cultural proximities
- More attention to be paid to Small Cities when medium autonomous ones (outside metropolitan regions) are lacking (Intermediary role; not just a question of size)
- Territorial / inter-municipal cooperation as solution for services delivery (Soria) but also for future economic strategic projects (Villena and the dry-port project)
- Spatial planning as instrumental support for Ecological transition and Territorial Cohesion

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