

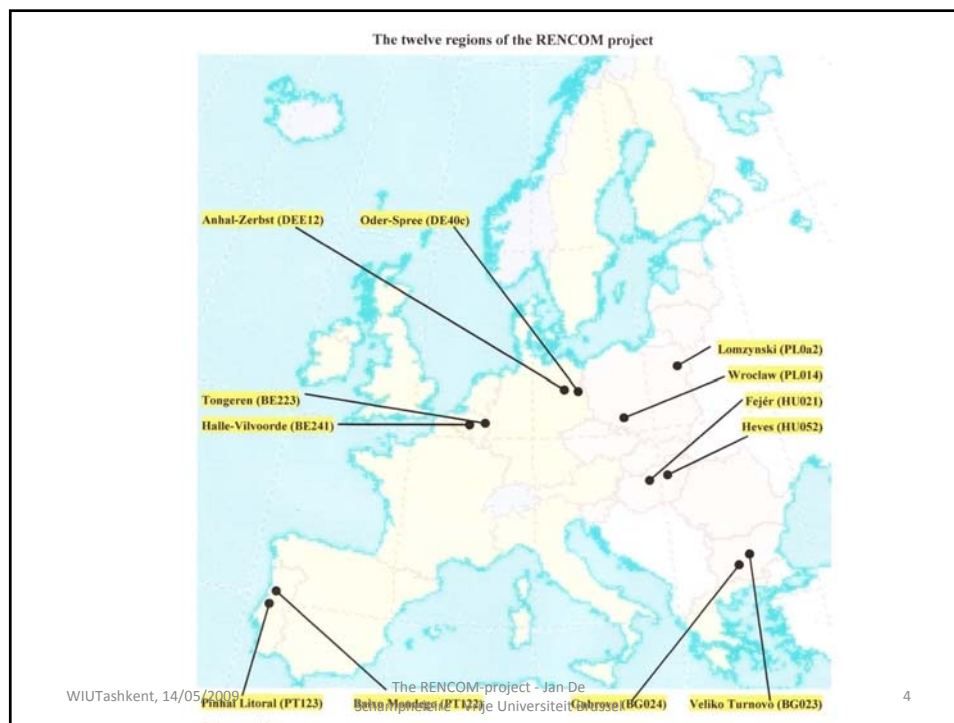
The **RENCOM**-project (2002-2005) and the role of universities in regional development

Introduction (1)

- RENCOM = *Facilitating regional learning processes in a **competitive** environment: regional socio-economic and cultural development in three accession countries and three member states.*
- Project within the Key Action *Improving the Socio-Economic Base*, 5th Framework programme, EU (2002-2004).

Introduction (2)

- Network project involving six European countries:
 - 3 WE: Belgium, Germany, Portugal;
 - 3 EE: Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria.
- Each country studies two of its regions: a **greenfield type of region** and a **traditional heavy industry region being modernised**.



Technical background

- To study regions at NUTS 3 level.
- To apply Structural Indicators from national level (NUTS 1) to regional (NUTS 3) level.

Theoretical background: (1) The learning region

- Morgan 1997:
 - Globalisation and localisation
 - Bottom-up: a region should be understood from the inside.
 - Regions have institutional specificities (untradable): labour market, political institutions, practises...
 - The involved persons and institutions exchange information and learn from each other's experience.
 - **A region *reinvents* itself.**

Theoretical background: (2) Actor-network theory

- An actor has a role in a network of actors.
- An actor involves in (re)defining his role and the roles of others.
- Actors try to make associations (i.e. they try to develop complementary roles).
- [Phases in innovation: (1) problematisation (2) interesment (3) enrolment (4) mobilisation of allies . Michel Callon, 1986]

The RENCOM case studies (per country)

- **The Lomza Credit Guarantee Fund (Lomzynski, Poland);
The Lower Silesian Science Festival (Wroclaw, Poland).**
- **The Bull's Blood project in Eger (Heves, Hungary);
The commercial airport project in Fejér (Hungary).**
- **Rahovetsgas (Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria);
Vidima Ideal-Standard (Gabrovo, Bulgaria).**

- **The direct-sellers network in Anhalt-Zerbst (Germany);
The competence network in metal industry (Oder-Spree,
Germany).**
- **The fruit auction co-operatives of Haspengouw (Belgium);
The DHL superhub project in Zaventem (Halle-Vilvoorde,
Belgium).**
- **Learning networks in Marinha Grande (Pinhal Litoral, Portugal);
The Instituto Pedro Nunes (IPN) (Baixo Mondego, Portugal).**

The RENCOM case studies (per topic)

- **Making a market:**
 - The Lower Silesian Science Festival (Wroclaw, Poland);
 - The direct-sellers network in Anhalt-Zerbst (Germany);
 - The Bull's Blood project in Eger (Heves, Hungary);
 - The fruit auction co-operatives of Haspengouw (Belgium).
- **Improving entrepreneurship conditions:**
 - The Lomza Credit Guarantee Fund (Lomzynski, Poland);
 - Learning networks in Marinha Grande (Pinhal Litoral, Portugal);
 - The Instituto Pedro Nunes (IPN) (Baixo Mondego, Portugal);
 - The competence network in metal industry (Oder-Spree, Germany).
- **Incorporating an external investor:**
 - Vidima Ideal-Standard (Gabrovo, Bulgaria);
 - The commercial airport project in Fejér (Hungary);
 - The DHL superhub project in Zaventem (Halle-Vilvoorde, Belgium);
 - Rahovetsgas (Veliko Turnovo, Bulgaria).

The role of universities in regional development (general)

- Universities and R&D centra are intermediate actors (or facilitators or mediators):
 - they bring actors together,
 - they translate their needs,
 - they offer technological solutions.

The role of universities in regional development (1)

- Role 1: to organise a market where academics and entrepreneurs meet.
 - E.g. The Lower Silesian Science Festival (Wroclaw, Poland).

The role of universities in regional development (2)

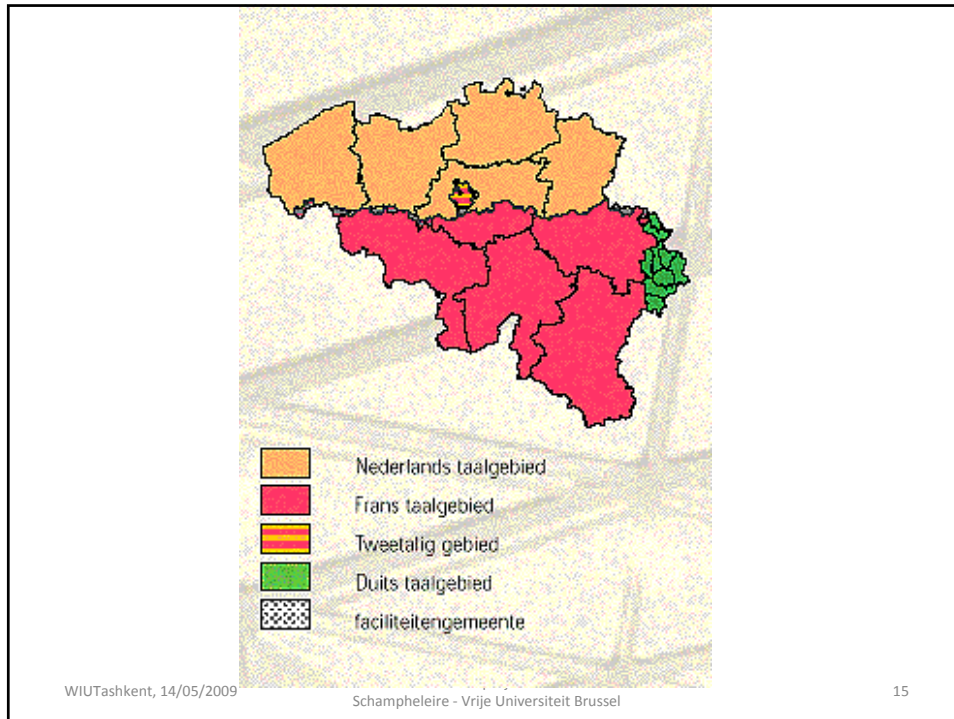
- Role 2: to give advise for the development of commercial markets (i.c. developing standards).
 - E.g. The Bull's Blood project in Eger (Heves, Hungary);
 - E.g. The fruit auction co-operatives of Haspengouw (Belgium).

The role of universities in regional development (3)

- Role 3: to supply business incubators.
 - E.g. The Instituto Pedro Nunes (IPN) (Baixo Mondego, Portugal);
 - E.g. The competence network in metal industry (Oder-Spree, Germany).

The role of universities in regional development (4)

- Role 4: to give advise to (foreign) investors. To analyse and explain untradable characteristics:
 - the labour markets,
 - regional institutions and conventions.
- E.g. The commercial airport project in Fejér (Hungary).
- E.g. The DHL superhub project in Zaventem (Halle-Vilvoorde, Belgium).



Key references in regional development

- Actors reinvent themselves. They define new roles for themselves and for others.
- Actors involve in association building.
- An association implies inclusion and exclusion.
- Intermediate actors facilitate association building.
- Intermediate actors are not neutral.

The mediating role in regional development (1)

1. Concentrate on a region level that is politically relevant.
2. Aim for a development from within (bottom-up approach).
3. Try do describe the untradable characteristics of the region (adapted structural indicators).

The mediating role in regional development (2)

4. Look for a well respected **neutral advisor** (who has a well established network in the region, who has no [urgent] self-interest).
5. Set up the time and space for **face-to-face meetings**.