

An innovative milieu: a view on regional reputation building

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An innovative milieu - a view on regional reputation building: Case study of the Lahti urban region.

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Abstract

This article examines regional innovation strategies and their relationships in building regional reputation. The article studies whether it is possible for a region to build its reputation as an innovative milieu squeezed in-between the large urban regions with universities, and how such a reputation can be further enhanced. At the same time, an opinion is expressed as to how the concept of reputation can be adapted in the framework of cities' image or attraction factors.

Keywords: Reputation, innovative milieu, innovation policy, regional development, innovation systems, social capital

JEL Codes: R58, O31, O52, O18

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Introduction

The importance of the regional level as a socio-economic actor has risen during the last two decades. In many cases the recent literature in the fields of, for example, evolutionary and institutional economics, see e.g. BOSCHMA, 2004 , network theory, see e.g. CANTNER & GRAF, 2006, innovation and learning systems, see e.g. HARMAAKORPI, 2006 , as well as in sociology, see e.g. TURA & HARMAAKORPI, 2005a , has focused on regional level questions seeing a region as an essential part of the economic coordination under the present techno-economic and socio-institutional paradigm see, e.g. PIHKALA et al., FORTHCOMING. The regions are seen as nodal points in the worldwide network society, where the questions of regional competitiveness should be assessed from new perspectives. The sources of regional competitiveness are seemingly changing in the current information era. In the present world, the meaning of the old resource-base creating competitiveness in the industrial era has been widely replaced by the new factors. These are often quite abstract in their nature and are typically closely related to the history, culture and institutional structure of a region.

In this article innovativeness and good reputation are seen to be important sources of regional competitiveness. Firstly we present the ability to innovate helps a region to renovate its resource and competence base in order to respond to the ever-changing techno-economic environment. Secondly we argue that a good reputation enables a region to use its resources and competences in the networked society efficiently making it a desired partner for economic transactions. The purpose is to conceptually connect the characteristics of the competitive regional innovation environment with reputation management to a cornerstone of regional competitiveness. To do this, the model of innovative milieu building is introduced. The case of the Lahti urban region in Finland is used to

1
2
3 illustrate the study. The region aims at becoming known as an advanced innovative milieu, despite
4
5 lacking a university and research base. In addition, our goal is to deliberate the idea that the
6
7 reputation will be earned by implementing a network-facilitating innovation policy focusing on
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9 promoting practice-based innovation activities, in particular.
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15 16 *A model of how an innovative milieu is built*

17 18 19 Regional competitiveness and coordinated innovation policy

20
21 The concept of regional competitiveness has been debated in recent years. KRUGMAN, 1998
22
23 questions the whole idea of territorial competitiveness as being wrong and even dangerously
24
25 misleading. However, in a vast array of literature the regional level is strongly growing in
26
27 importance as a reasonable entity in assessing economic growth and socio-institutional adjustment
28
29 see e.g. FLORIDA, 1995; STORPER, 1997; COOKE *et al.*, 1997; SCOTT, 2000; CAMAGNI, 2002;
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31 CARLSSON, 2004; ISAKSEN, 2005. These theorists emphasise the meaning of the local business
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33 environment for the success of firms. Firms, being the real competitors in the global business forums,
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35 are seen as strongly embedded in their territorial socio-institutional set-up, see GRANOVETTER,
36
37 1985.
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45 There is much evidence that some regions have been able to construct a more competitive
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47 environment for success than others, see e.g. SAXENIAN, 1994; BRUSCO, 1982; KOSTIAINEN,
48
49 2004. Related to this COOKE AND LEYDENSORFF, 2006, have introduced the concept of
50
51 constructed competitive advantage of the regions. Contrary to the comparative and competitive
52
53 advantages, a constructive advantage necessitates coordinated policy measures in various directions
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55 COOKE & LEYDENSORFF, 2006, 10:

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57
58 – Economy, for example, regionalisation of economic development, integration of knowledge
59
60 generation and commercialisation, strong local and global business networks.

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- 2
- 3 – Governance, for example, strong policy support for innovators, vision led policy leadership.
- 4
- 5 – Knowledge infrastructure, for example, universities public sector research, mediating agencies
- 6
- 7 etc. have to be actively involved as structural puzzle-solving capacities.
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- 9
- 10 – Community and Culture, for example, cosmopolitanism, creative cultural environments, social
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- 12 tolerance.
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17 "Hence, the constructed advantage is both means of understanding the noted metamorphosis in
18 economic growth activity and a strategic policy perspective of practical use to business firms,
19 associations, academics and policy makers" COOKE & LEYDENSORFF, 2006, 10. Such a set-
20 up calls for coordinated policy actions, since deliberate actions are required to increase regional
21 competitiveness significantly: without those interactions the impact of regional spillovers is
22 reduced, RONDÉ & HUSSLER, 2005, 1163. Building a constructive advantage by coordinated
23 policy measures is suggested to be especially fruitful in coordinated market economies, for
24 example, the Nordic Countries, c.f. ASHEIM & COENEN, 2005.
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37 In this study, coordinated innovation policy is seen to be an essential sector of regional
38 competitiveness policy. Innovations are the most essential factor in promoting regional
39 productivity, which in the long run secures competitiveness and wellbeing for the citizens of a
40 region FREEMAN, 1994. The concept of innovation was earlier most often understood to be a
41 technological improvement, accomplished by an independent inventor or a scientific research
42 group. Nowadays, innovation is considered to be most often a result of co-operation in normal
43 social and economic activities KLINE & ROSENBERG, 1986; LUNDVALL, 1988, DOSI, 1988.
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53 The science push effect as the driving force of innovations is an exception rather than a rule in these
54 processes SCHIENSTOCK & HÄMÄLÄINEN, 2001. More important to the creation of innovative
55 capability is the ability of the many actors to interact, learn collectively and build a trustworthy and
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60 creative atmosphere between the innovating partners.

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5 Innovation policy measures have, however, basically been directed at strengthening national and
6 regional knowledge bases. The innovation policy has been largely equivalent to science and
7 technology policy and scientific research and technology development have been seen as the key
8 activity in producing innovations SCHIENSTOCK & HÄMÄLÄINEN, 2001. The traditional
9 science and technology activities will still be crucial in the future, but the emphasis nowadays is
10 more on the ability of knowledge and technology transfer and adaptation of the vast masses of
11 information available SCHIENSTOCK & HÄMÄLÄINEN, 2001. Managing the technology and
12 knowledge transfer is thus the most essential source of innovativeness in the modern information
13 society. Where there is a rich innovative infrastructure, ranging from research institutes, to
14 universities, colleges and technology transfer agencies, and institutional learning is routine, firms
15 have considerable opportunities to access or test knowledge, whether internally or externally
16 generated to the region, COOKE, 2002. Therefore, besides the main-stream science and technology
17 policies, new coordinated innovation policies should be promoted in order to achieve constructed
18 regional advantage, HARMAAKORPI, 2006. These policy measures are targeted at facilitating
19 building a regional innovative milieu rich in interaction between the innovating partners inside and
20 outside the region.
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45 A regional innovative milieu

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47 An innovative milieu is the set, or the complex network of mainly informal social relationships in a
48 limited geographical area, often determining a specific external 'image' and internal 'representation'
49 and sense of belonging, which enhance the local innovative capability through synergetic and
50 collective learning processes, CAMAGNI, 1991, 3, and build a strong regional reputation. An
51 innovative milieu is built on the regional innovation system, see e.g. BRACZYK *et al.* 1998, which
52 is a system of innovative networks and institutions located within a certain geographical area, with
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3 regular and strong internal interaction promoting the innovativeness of the region KOSTIAINEN,
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5 2002.
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10 Thus, a regional innovation system consists of different multi-actor innovation networks aiming at
11 increasing regional innovativeness. These networks have different forms defined by, for example,
12 their origin, size, structure and objective HARMAAKORPI & NIUKKANEN, 2007. They are
13 typically formed of heterogeneous groups including representatives of firms, universities,
14 technology centres and development organisations. Because of the loose structures, special attention
15 should be paid to both the relationships inside a network and the relationships between different
16 networks, emphasising the significance of a trustworthy regional atmosphere as the source of
17 innovation TURA & HARMAAKORPI, 2005a.
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30 In the networked innovative milieu *social capital* NAHAPIET & GOSHAL, 1998; ADLER &
31 KWON, 2000 is, therefore, a central factor in promoting innovativeness TURA &
32 HARMAAKORPI, 2005a. According to PORTES, 1998, 7, “whereas the economic capital is in
33 people’s bank accounts and human capital is in their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of
34 their relationships”. Social capital cannot be traded, but is in practice created only through constant
35 co-operation. The importance of social capital in creating regional competitiveness is related to the
36 fact that it cannot be copied or transferred from one regional innovative milieu to another. However,
37 it can easily be destroyed because of the bottlenecks and problems existing in the network.
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51 An essential source of innovation and thus also a prerequisite for a regional innovative milieu is
52 *creativity*. Eliminating the obstacles to creativity is one of the vital elements in maintaining the
53 innovative capability. Our society is overflowing with creativity-stifling factors against which an
54 enriching dialogue within an innovative milieu may act BOHM & PEAT, 1992; HIMANEN, 2004.
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60 The regional innovation system should thus include sufficient openness and creative tension: one

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should be able to also express dissenting opinions and critical comments in the networks

SOTARAUTA & MUSTIKKAMÄKI, 2001. Without this creative tension the networks of the innovative milieu are threatened by lock-ins, closure and cliques leading to a collective blindness.

Knowledge is said to be the most important production factor, and learning to be the most important process in modern society LUNDVALL & JOHNSON, 1994. In the innovative milieu, an interactive and collective way to learn is emphasised HARMAAKORPI & MELKAS, 2005.

Collective learning is a process of dynamic and cumulative knowledge creation that has, due to its interactive character, numerous synergy advantages CAMAGNI, 1995. Synergy advantages in the innovative milieu emerge, when knowledge is transferred from one expert to another, and trust is built in the collective learning process. This process based on intensive sharing creates innovations and new knowledge.

Significant innovations are often created through coincidence. Growth centres grow because they have *interfaces for coincidences*, HARMAAKORPI & TURA, 2006. Complexity is said to nourish innovations. In the innovative milieu the aim is therefore to find innovations in the middle-ground of different technologies and industries JOHANSSON, 2004, in other words, to give coincidence a chance in sometimes very unorthodox combinations.

The competitiveness gained in the innovative milieu by the existing resources rapidly becomes outdated as the technologies and the operational environment are renewed. The regions must take care that these renewal processes can be taken into account in organisational and institutional development. The future competitiveness demands the new technologies and working methods be brought to the use of the organisations, on the one hand, and promote the visionary capability of the organisations to become aware of these changes, on the other. The future should be looked to

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2
3 through the resource-based *future research* in order to assist the renewal of the innovative milieu
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5 UOTILA, MELKAS & HARMAAKORPI, 2005; HARMAAKORPI & UOTILA, 2006.
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10 The alleged interdependencies of innovativeness, an innovative milieu and regional competitiveness
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12 are the basis of the first proposition of our model.
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17 Proposition 1: Improving regional competitiveness necessitates the development of a
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19 regional innovative milieu.
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22 23 24 An innovative milieu enhances regional innovative capability

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26 According to the resource-based view an actor's performance depends on its resources and
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28 capabilities, see e.g. WERNERFELT, 1984; BARNEY, 1991. Valuable, rare, inimitable and non-
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30 substitutable resource configurations lay the foundation for the competitiveness of an actor. The
31
32 world is in continuous change and the actors face the risk that the old resource-base will become
33
34 uncompetitive leading to a declining performance. Therefore, the resource configurations need to be
35
36 renewed continuously. The framework of dynamic capabilities, see TEECE et al., 1997, offer a fair
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38 foundation on which to assess the capabilities needed in the transformation processes of an actor.
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42 An actor's dynamic capabilities can be defined as the actor's processes that use resources, especially
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44 the processes that integrate, reconfigure, gain and release resources, to match and even create
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46 market change. Thus, dynamic capabilities are the organisational and strategic routines by which
47
48 actors achieve new resource configurations as markets emerge, collide, split, evolve and die.
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52 EISENHARDT AND MARTIN 2000, 1107. Actually, it is basically a question of an actor's
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54 capability to innovate, since "the production and use of knowledge is at the core of value-added
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56 activities, and innovation is at the core of firms' and nations' strategies for growth", ARCHIBUGI
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58 AND MICHIE, 1995. In this study regional innovative milieu is seen the resource configuration
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3 enabling a region to innovate and to increase the region's innovative capability as a core dynamic
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5 capability.
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9 Regional innovative capability can be defined as the ability of a regional innovative milieu to
10 interactively use and renew the regional and interregional resources and to create regional
11 competitiveness through networked innovation activities HARMAAKORPI, 2004. Regional
12 innovative capability not only helps to defend against the negative impacts of changes, it also
13 encourages the use of the opportunities they offer. This all necessitates a significant increase in the
14 regional innovative capability, which in turn calls for a coordinated regional innovation policy. This
15 notion opens up the second proposition of our model.
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28 Proposition 2: Regional competitiveness necessitates enhancing innovative capability
29 and coordinated innovation policy.
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35 Can an innovative milieu be a cornerstone for regional reputation?
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38 In the business world, the concept of reputation has been one of the eye-openers in recent times.
39 Reputation and reputation management have been studied, for example, from the perspectives of
40 economic success FOMBRUN, 1996; AULA & HEINONEN, 2002, competitiveness DAVIES *et*
41 *al.*, 2003, business and social responsibility WILLMOTT, 2001 and cultural representations
42 KARVONEN, 1999 and risk management LARKIN, 2003. Measuring reputation has been
43 discussed widely FOMBRUN & VAN RIEL, 2003; CARUANA *et al.*, 1995; CARUANA, 1997;
44 LEWIS, 2001. On average, a business reputation has been regarded as a strategic issue comprising
45 extended impressions of the organisation built around images and actions FOMBRUN &
46 SHANLEY, 1990. This view includes the argument that reputation is positively related to
47 companies' competitive advantage FOMBRUN, 1996; FOMBRUN & VAN RIEL, 2004. However,
48 reputation is not limited to corporations and other organisations. Regional reputation can be
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3 conceptualised as the composition of the images and experiences which emerges from the
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5 encounters of the region and its interest groups AULA & HEINONEN, 2002; AULA &
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7 MANTERE, 2005.
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12 Reputation can be connected to three fundamentals. On the one hand, reputation is something talked
13
14 and told about SMYTHE, DORWARD & REBACK, 1992. From this perspective, reputation is
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16 produced and reformed through storytelling or in other kinds of culturally bound representations
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18 GEERTZ, 1973. Reputation is thus always linked to communicational dimension, which can be
19
20 called the communication principle of reputation. On the other hand, reputation is related to an
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22 assessment of its object, which can be called the evaluation principle of reputation. In addition,
23
24 reputation has something that makes a difference between one object and another; this can be called
25
26 the distinction principle of reputation. Through these principles, good regional reputation
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28 necessitates functional communication networks both inside a region and between a region and its
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30 co-operation partners. A region must endeavour to manage its reputation and thus affect the
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32 evaluations made of it. Moreover, a region must develop something unique, which distinguishes it
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34 from other regions.
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42 The significance of a good reputation is often described through the concept of emotional appeal
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44 FOMBRUN, 1996; FOMBRUN & VAN RIEL, 2003. In the same way as an organisation's
45
46 reputation affects how good it is considered to be, a region's reputation affects its appeal. The more
47
48 attractive a region the better its potential for economic success. From a regional point of view, a
49
50 good reputation affects regional operational preconditions. Reputation builds trust and brings
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52 esteem. Reputation affects the opinions of the regionally important interest groups and evaluations
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54 of the region, and is significant in, for example, placing or investment decisions.
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3 On the one hand, reputation is built on continuity, stability and established actions. From a regional
4 point of view, for instance, local economic and socio-historical factors are important. This is a
5 conservative side of reputation, and reputation is built and developed through evolution. On the
6 other hand, there is also a dramatic dimension to reputation. Good regional reputation must reflect
7 the object's ability to change constantly, the direction, strategies and objectives of development.
8 Simultaneously, a good reputation is a guarantee of movement, driving a municipality or a town
9 towards its objectives and better actions. Often, the change is unpredictable. Thus reputation can
10 evolve in a revolutionary manner, in leaps and bounds AULA & HEINONEN, 2002; AULA &
11 MANTERE, 2005.
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26 A high-quality reputation cannot exist without genuine substance. Thus, to be at the heart of a good
27 reputation, an innovative milieu must exist in reality. "Real" comes from actions requiring active
28 initiative and careful planning. An innovative milieu is a platform for a potential reputation, and its
29 building can be guided with a coordinated regional innovation policy. A regional innovative milieu,
30 in turn, compiles innovative capability and develops reputation, which in the long term can lead to
31 improved regional competitiveness. This leads us to the last proposition of our model.
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42 Proposition 3: Improving regional competitiveness necessitates the active
43 development of reputation
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49 With the three propositions and their interdependencies we are able to sketch a model on the
50 development of an innovative milieu reputation (Figure 1).
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55 Figure 1 about here
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Data and Methods

The model of the development of an innovative milieu reputation (Figure 1) will act as a heuristic tool when examining the potential of a region to have a reputation as an innovative milieu. The study design is close to an explorative case study YIN, 1993, as the phenomenon to be examined is new, lacking former empirical evidence. Although not guaranteeing generalised observations, the explorative approach enables the increased understanding of this specific phenomenon. Instead of empirical causal explanations, we have aimed at more theoretical, authentic and credible generalisations, see YIN 1981; ALVESSON & DEETZ 2000.

Our research data consists of the innovation strategies or other strategy texts containing comments on innovation policy of the nine largest urban regions in Finland. These texts can be assumed to present the official innovation policies of the urban regions, which form, or should form, the basis of the development of the local innovation systems.

We conducted our analyses of the strategies inductively, and the data was examined and categorised thematically in two stages. Comments on innovation strategy were selected as observations. In the first stage, we read strategies and coded all relevant strategy texts using broad categories based on our heuristic model. We used a generic three-category coding schema for strategy reading (“innovative milieu”, “innovative capability”, and “reputation”). The categorised texts were studied closer and classified and juxtaposed by each urban region. Thus, it was possible to examine the eventual similarities and differences. The example of the comparative data of the regions studied is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

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3 In the second stage we focused on the case Lahti urban region to capture the more detailed level of
4
5 the practices and operations done which could be categorised under the terms of development of a
6
7 regional innovative milieu and reputation building. With the intention of capturing the operational
8
9 side of the Lahti strategy, we expanded our data collection to other documents in addition to
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11 strategy texts. This categorisation was then reflected against the strategies of other urban regions.
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14 This proved to be a workable method, raising the characteristics typical of one urban region and
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16 their conditioning on the strategies of other urban regions. Finally, we set the findings against the
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18 generated model (Figure 1) which led to complementing and refocusing the model.
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25 *The context: urban regions and regional innovation strategies*

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30 The Advisory Committee for Large Urban Regions decided on 28 September 2004 that the nine
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32 largest urban regions will draft their own regional innovation strategy by 1 May 2005, in which they
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34 will also study their role as part of the national innovation system. The request contrived to achieve
35
36 commensurate strategies according to the following guidelines, SISÄASIAINMINISTERIÖ, 2004:
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41 “In the preparation of the urban region innovation strategy, it should be taken into account that there
42
43 may be certain common elements, which can act as a base for a large urban region policy mix being
44
45 devised. The functioning of the innovation chains in the different clusters is important and the
46
47 development of innovation systems with the support of, for instance, universities has a crucial role
48
49 in the policy mix. The policy mix also means the development of, for instance, transportation
50
51 systems, strengthening social integrity and multi-cultural values and improving the urban
52
53 environment. These measures, in turn, necessitate the contribution of several ministries, such as
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55 letters of intent related to the transportation systems from the Ministry of Transport and
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57 Communications, development project funding from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to
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3 solve the special problems in the large urban regions, and the projects of the Ministry of the
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5 Environment to improve the quality of the urban environment and public facilities, as well as
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7 suburbs.”
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12 The urban regions responded in different ways, either by making new strategies or by referring to
13
14 their existing strategy or strategies. The urban strategies of the Helsinki Metropolitan District,
15
16 Jyväskylä, Lahti, Lappeenranta-Imatra and Vaasa were completed by June. In Kuopio, the contents
17
18 of the innovation strategy are dealt with via the existing strategies. In Tampere, a compilation of the
19
20 regional innovation plans was gathered based on the existing strategies. In Turku, innovation
21
22 activities are related to the city and cluster strategies. In Oulu, the regional innovation strategy
23
24 corresponds to the growth pact of the Oulu region for 2006. The core points of the regional
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26 innovation strategies are presented in Table 2.
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33 Table 2 about here
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38 The different attitude of the urban regions towards the commission by the Ministry of the Interior
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40 makes it more difficult to compare the strategies of the urban regions and those of Lahti. However,
41
42 the innovation strategy of the Lahti urban region differs from the others. In other urban regions, the
43
44 central elements of the strategies are the general development of the innovation environment,
45
46 strengthening the knowledge base and trust in strong research. Also, the strategies typically seem to
47
48 have faith in the economies of scale in producing innovations. There are several mentions of the
49
50 significance of networking in the strategies, but very often they are general. In the Lahti urban
51
52 region, the focus is on launching practice-based innovation processes and creating regional
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54 networks and supporting them concretely. There is a strong belief in the region to be able to connect
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56 the scientific knowledge in the neighbouring strong research centres to the emerging practice-based
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3 regional innovation processes. The region strives to generate, in a practice-based way, opportunities
4 for coincidences and to build high-level interfaces to exploit them.
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10 The central differences between the innovation strategies of the large urban regions with
11 universities, and those of Lahti, are condensed in Table 3.
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16 Table 3 about here
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22 *Case: the Lahti urban region*

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28 The Lahti urban region is among the nine largest urban regions in Finland. In this group it is the
29 only urban district without a university of its own, which results in a lower level of research
30 compared to the other large urban regions. Having a university is seen as one basis for innovation,
31 and a low level of research does not provide a good foundation for the image of the Lahti urban
32 region as an innovative milieu. The region has, however, decided to start building an innovative
33 milieu through the concept “network-facilitating innovation policy”.
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45 Coordinated innovation policy and its objectives in building regional innovative 46 milieu 47 48 49

50 The Lahti urban region lacks the important scientific resources to produce radical innovations.
51 However, because of the University Consortium (including connections to the university main
52 campuses) and the Polytechnics, the region has the potential to create functioning innovation policy
53 methodsⁱⁱ. The Lahti urban region concentrates on creating a “network-facilitating innovation
54 policy” SCHIENSTOCK & HÄMÄLÄINEN, 2001; HARMAAKORPI, 2004. Through the
55 network-facilitating innovation policy, the regional innovation system is developed in a way that
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3 the regional resource platform can be exploited benefiting both the private and public sectors.

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5 Because of the narrow regional resource platform, attention must also be paid to the inter-regional
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7 networking and accumulation of active communication networks to get all the knowledge needed in
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9 the region and spread the reputation.
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14 The aims of developing the regional innovative milieu are described mainly in three regional
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16 strategy papers: Innovation strategy of the Lahti Region PÄIJÄT-HÄMEEN
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18 INNOVAATIOSTRATEGIA – KOHTI VERKOSTOJA PALVELEVAA
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20 INNOVAATIOPOLITIIKKAA, 2005, Development strategy of Lahti urban region innovation
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22 environment LAHDEN KAUPUNKISEUDUN INNOVAATIOYMPÄRISTÖN
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24 KEHITTÄMISSTRATEGIA, 2005, and Higher education and research policy of the Lahti Region
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26 PÄIJÄT-HÄME KÄYTÄNTÖLÄHTÖISEN INNOVAATIOIMINNAN HUIPPUALUEEKSI –
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28 YLIOPISTOJEN JA KORKEAKOULUJEN ALUEELLINEN STRATEGIA, 2005.
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35 According to innovation strategies the special task of the network-facilitating innovation policy is to
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37 produce practice-based actions to remove the obstacles of innovativeness and bring the needed
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39 knowledge in support of the innovation processes. From the point of view of reputation
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41 accumulation, the innovation policy directs the functional core of reputation.
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47 The network-facilitating innovation policy in the Lahti urban region should, in particular PÄIJÄT-
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49 HÄMEEN INNOVAATIOSTRATEGIA – KOHTI VERKOSTOJA PALVELEVAA
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51 INNOVAATIOPOLITIIKKAA, 2005:

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53 • create practice-based innovation processes
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55 • create multi-actor and multi-disciplinary innovation networks to support the objectives set in
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57 other regional strategies
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- bring the knowledge located outside the region to the use of the local actors through inter-regional networking
- promote generating creative social capital and creative collective eruptions in the networks
- promote collective learning including managing the future knowledge, tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge
- eliminate the bottlenecks and problems in the networks hindering the networking
- prevent the development of the regional lock-ins with an active search for new development paths
- create chances and interfaces for coincidences

The goal of the Lahti urban region innovation environment development strategy is to turn Lahti into LAHDEN KAUPUNKISEUDUN INNOVAATIOYMPÄRISTÖN

KEHITTÄMISSTRATEGIA, 2005:

- a region with the best practice-based innovation activities in Finland
- the best developer of the public sector innovativeness and productivity in Finland
- a centre of international environmental expertise
- a centre of creative culture

First and foremost the regional innovation strategies try to build “a regionally networked innovation system” as defined by ASHEIM & ISAKSEN, 2005, 83. The aim is to move the emphasis from the research and development (R&D) functions towards connect and development functions (C&D), see HUSTON & SAKKAB, 2006. Due to the lack of a regional science-base, practical contexts are stressed as a source of innovation. Practice-based innovation activities mean the innovation processes triggered by problem-setting in a practical context and are conducted in un-linear processes using synthetic, see ASHEIM & COENEN, 2005 or Mode 2, see GIBBONS *et al.* 1994,

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3 knowledge production in cross-disciplinary multi-actor innovation networks. In order to succeed the
4
5 practice-based innovation processes also need new research and education strategies.
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10 Reputation, regional innovation policy and higher education

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12 Universities and polytechnics form an essential part of the Finnish innovation system. The Lahti
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14 urban region is a university consortium area with strong polytechnic activities. The region differs to
15
16 a great extent from the traditional university regions, which are seeking success through focused
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18 research activities and the advantages of agglomeration. There the normal flow of students to the
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20 universities can guarantee the constant flow of human capital. Also, there the universities are able to
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22 lean on the economies of scale: they have human capital available for research resulting in
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24 competitiveness and wellbeing in the region. University regions do research-based innovation
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26 activities relying on increasing the research input, creating research centres of excellence and
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28 promoting technology transfer as the continuance of research. In the Lahti urban region, in turn, the
29
30 universities and the polytechnic are expected to enhance practice-based innovation activities
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32 through network-facilitating innovation policy and first-rate knowledge transfer mechanisms into
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34 the region. PÄIJÄT-HÄME KÄYTÄNTÖLÄHTÖISEN INNOVAATIOIMINNAN
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36 HUIPPUALUEEKSI – YLIOPISTOJEN JA KORKEAKOULUJEN ALUEELLINEN
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38 STRATEGIA, 2005. The policy in the Lahti urban region will, thus, create prerequisites for the
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40 demands of the distinct reputation principle on uniqueness and distinction.
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50 The actors in the Lahti urban region are contemplating whether there are some advantages in
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52 “economies of mid-scale” in the university activities with which to compete with economies of
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54 scale. The Lahti urban region with its middle-sized centre, Lahti, could be diversified enough to
55
56 move towards a genuinely interesting new kind of university policy. The region seeks, through
57
58 social networking, network externalities and knowledge transfer mechanisms, to overcome the
59
60 relative weakness caused by a rather limited regional knowledge base. PÄIJÄT-HÄME

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3 KÄYTÄNTÖLÄHTÖISEN INNOVAATIOIMINNAN HUIPPUALUEEKSI – YLIOPISTOJEN
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5 JA KORKEAKOULUJEN ALUEELLINEN STRATEGIA, 2005.
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10 Table 4 outlines the differences between the traditional university region and the Lahti urban region
11 with a university consortium, as well as the reflections of the differences on the accumulation of the
12 regional reputation of Lahti, cf. PÄIJÄT-HÄME KÄYTÄNTÖLÄHTÖISEN
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14 INNOVAATIOIMINNAN HUIPPUALUEEKSI – YLIOPISTOJEN JA KORKEAKOULUJEN
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16 ALUEELLINENN STRATEGIA, 2005.
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24 Table 4 about here
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32 Innovation tools: the practice of reputation building

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34 The directions of coordinated innovation policy and its objectives are insufficient to build a regional
35 innovative milieu. The policy objectives need to be put into practice by adequate innovation tools
36 that enable the forming of innovative milieu, increasing the regional innovative capability and
37 setting the cornerstone of the regional reputation building. These practical tools are presented in this
38 section of the article.
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48 There are many, even controversial views on the contents of the concept of reputation. There seems
49 to be unanimity on one thing: a good reputation cannot be built without good actions. From the
50 regional point of view this means that a good regional reputation cannot be built, for example, on
51 image campaigns alone. From the regional point of view, Lahti city and the Lahti urban region
52 pique one's interest. Many people remember the efforts to build "regional brands" in recent
53 decades. The reputation of Lahti as the "Chicago of Finland" and the slogan "Lahti, the business
54 city" remain alive in many stories. If the Lahti urban region wishes to gain a reputation as an
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3 innovative milieu and thus fulfil its reputation goal, the prerequisites are good actions, in other
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5 words, an active regional innovation policy and ways to implement it.
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10 It seems to indicate that the Lahti urban region has developed, and will be developing, the means to
11 support the network-facilitating innovation policy, with the aim of evoking practice-based
12 innovation processes and network the necessary know-how to support them. The aim is to break the
13 traditional chain of basic research – applied research and R&D by absorbing the basic level research
14 knowledge to the ongoing organisation's innovation processes. The central new idea, a sort of
15 institutional innovation, is the use of the tools presented in a coordinated, determined and co-
16 operational way as part of the regional innovation policy. These tools are related to, cf. LAHDEN
17 KAUPUNKISEUDUN INNOVAATIOYMPÄRISTÖN KEHITTÄMISSTRATEGIA, 2005
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- 27 • the renewal of companies, the public sector and the third sector
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- 29 • the promotion of generating new companies
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- 31 • the futures foresight
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- 33 • the networking between companies and regional innovation policy questions
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- 35 • the networking with inter-regional research organisations
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- 37 • the new innovation policy evaluation model
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45 *The renewal of companies, the public sector and the third sector*
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49 The core of the renewal of companies, the public sector and the third sector is the creation of
50 practice-based, multi-actor innovation networks. Their creation can be enhanced in many ways. One
51 renewal supporting practical tool in the Lahti urban region innovation strategy is organising
52 company, cluster, thematic and future foresight related innovation sessions, see HARMAAKORPI
53 & TURA, 2006, and supporting the following innovation processes.
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3 The meaning of the innovation sessions is to combine the regional and inter-regional expertise for
4 the benefit of the companies' innovation measures. The sessions are always company-oriented
5 although active measures are taken to forward different new themes in companies. The innovation
6 sessions are never single events, securing the continuum of the processes has been taken into
7 account in planning every session. This places special demands on the co-operation of the whole
8 innovation system. The innovation sessions create opportunities for innovations, but the final
9 success is determined by new interfaces being offered to new success stories. The aim is to organise
10 30 innovation sessions yearly in the Lahti urban region. After about 50 organised innovation
11 sessions the experiences are encouraging, indeed.
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26 The innovation session method is targeted mainly at finding new strategic moves through mega
27 trends and new technologies. However, quite a significant innovation potential can be found in the
28 organisations' "everyday" activities. Unfortunately, the culture and the innovation promotion
29 systems in organisations do not often support such exploitation of the innovation potential; separate,
30 single innovations are not realised and the whole innovative capability of an organisation will
31 deteriorate. The "innovation catcher" system is aimed at promoting the "floor level" innovativeness
32 in organisations. It is a systematic way of going through the innovation ideas created during the
33 normal everyday activities. Its purpose is to couple the knowledge existing in the innovation system
34 to the evaluation and development of the innovation ideas, and to support the building of an
35 innovative organisation culture. The innovation catcher system is being tested in the Lahti urban
36 region to explore this innovation potential. The aim is to "install" 20 innovation catchers yearly in
37 the Lahti urban region. Innovation sessions and innovation catchers are being tested in the public
38 and third sector on the same principles as in the private sector.
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3 *The promotion of generating new companies*
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8 The network-facilitating innovation policy is, at its best, the lever for developing innovative
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10 company ideas through innovation sessions and innovation catchers. Sources for company ideas are
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12 mainly the innovations ideas outside the existing companies' core competences, the spin-offs which
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14 can be attracted to the region through the experts participating in the innovation systems outside the
15
16 region, and the company ideas developed from the public sector innovative solutions. The crucial
17
18 task is to create mechanisms to process new company ideas during the innovation sessions and
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20 innovation catchers, and to pick up on these company ideas. It is essential to link the regional
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22 incubators to process the company ideas further.
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28 *Futures foresight*
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33 Part of the implementation of the regional innovation strategy is the foresight process on the
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35 technology and environment changes, conducted regularly through resource-based futures research.
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37 The process is as follows: HARMAAKORPI & UOTILA, 2006: 1) defining the regionally crucial
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39 megatrends and technology processes to be assessed, 2) exploring the weak technology signals
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41 using the Delphi process with the assistance of selected high-level experts, 3) inject the weak
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43 technology signals of the first Delphi round into the companies' innovation processes through
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45 innovation sessions. In the Lahti urban region, the first foresight process was conducted in 2005.
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48 The results are used continuously in the innovation sessions.
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53 *Innovation club*
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58 A regional innovation benchmarking club energises the co-operation of companies and familiarises
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60 them with the new questions of innovation processes and systems. The aim of the club is to transfer

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3 best-practices between the companies and to transmit the practical demands of the companies for
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5 the development of the regional innovation system. The concept of innovation benchmarking also
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7 includes education organised for the innovation personnel of the companies as well for the
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9 personnel in the public sector.
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12 13 14 *Mentor professor and innovation promoter system* 15

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18 The mentor professor and innovation promoter system was introduced in the regional university
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20 strategy (2005). The system is essential when conducting the network-facilitating innovation policy
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22 and enhancing practice-based innovation activities. It is a new way of developing the regional
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24 effectiveness of the Finnish university system. In the Lahti urban region, the aim is to promote the
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26 networking of the regional university and polytechnic activities to the regional innovation processes
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28 in practice and to the sources of high-level knowledge without scattering the scarce national
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30 resources.
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36 The principle of the mentor professor system is to integrate the knowledge in strong research
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38 centres as part of the regional innovation system and practice-based innovation activities. The fields
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40 of knowledge essential to the Lahti urban region are linked to the region by forming strategic
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42 alliances with the university faculties, departments and professors. The mentor professors are
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44 university professors by whose assistance methods for dialogue and co-operation between the
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46 region and the allied university faculties are created. The innovation promoter system at
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48 polytechnics also differs from the traditional methods. The innovation promoters are experts in the
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50 network-facilitating innovation policy methods, contributing actively to the regional innovation
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52 processes, and continuously making links between the knowledge in their own mentor organisations
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54 and the on-going innovation processes.
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3 *The new innovation policy evaluation model*
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8 The network-facilitating innovation policy can be described as a well-grounded assumption or, in a
9 loose sense, “a theory” the relevant means by which the companies and the public and third sectors
10 in the region can produce innovations and increase the regional competitiveness and well-being.
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13 The correctness and long-term success of the policy as a theory can perhaps be evaluated in a few
14 years. The success of the innovation policy is thus finally always measured by its results and
15 regional effectiveness. It is crucial to show if the chosen policy enables success also in changing
16 conditions TURA & HARMAAKORPI, 2005b.
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26 Thus, it is critical to monitor and redirect the regional innovation policy also in the short term. The
27 evaluation must answer whether the innovation policy has the potential to finally affect the
28 competitiveness: does it enhance the formation of such structures and actions that may give rise to
29 the long-term development of innovativeness. The network-facilitating innovation policy is guided
30 especially by the following elements TURA & HARMAAKORPI, 2005b:
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- 40 • Innovations are created in very unpredictable ways and in unpredictable places.
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- 42 • Innovations are created in the interfaces of different actors and sectors – in multi-actor,
43 multidisciplinary networks benefiting from the resources outside the region.
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- 45 • Innovations are created in places with creative social capital and prerequisites for collective
46 learning.
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53 There are characteristics in the Lahti urban region making its position problematic in the national
54 innovation system. The main ones are the absence of a university and the low regional investment
55 in research. From the evolution-oriented perspective, the Lahti urban region emphasises factors in
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3 its strategies which at their best can act as strengths in building a reputation. The challenge here is
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5 how to apply the potential in practice.
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10 *Discussion*

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16 The purpose of this paper is to conceptually connect the characteristics of the competitive regional
17 innovation environment with reputation management to a cornerstone of regional competitiveness.
18 We used the case of the Lahti urban region to illustrate these connections both in conceptual and
19 practical levels.
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27 We made theoretical propositions that connected regional competitiveness to regional innovative
28 milieu, innovative capability and coordinated innovation policy, as well as active reputation
29 management. Our task was not to empirically prove these connections, but to identify
30 characteristics which could help us describe and understand the explicit operations made to enhance
31 regional competitiveness through innovative milieu, capability and policy, and reputation. We used
32 case Lahti to examine these connections. One thing learnt from our case study is the interconnected
33 nature of regional social capital and reputation and, thus, innovative milieu.
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46 The reputation of the Lahti urban region as an innovative milieu is versatile and complex. It seems
47 that regional reputation is strongly attached to how a region is able to create and accumulate
48 regional social capital. In the question of regional reputation, social capital can be observed as an
49 analogy to social capital in organisations. According to the sketching of NAHAPIET & GHOSPAL,
50 1998; see also AULA & MANTERE, 2005 social capital in an organisation includes structural,
51 relational and cognitive dimensions.
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3 Seen from the regional point of view, the structural dimension of social capital includes the social
4 network of the region and its actors. This can either relate to the official PR of the regional
5 authorities, or the personal relationships of its actors, like the representatives of companies and
6 other organisations. Thus, in organisation research, structural social capital relates to the width of
7 the network, and the position of the organisation within the network: whether it has an important or
8 marginal role in the network. Regionally, the situation is parallel. The structural social capital in a
9 region is dependent on the position it holds in the network, and its actions there.

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21 Relational social capital does not deal with the structure of the network, but the quality of the
22 relationship the organisation has with other members of the network. Regionally, we can speak
23 about relational capital. A region with rich relational capital is trusted and it is desirable to have a
24 relationship with it. Besides trust, common identification, norms, mutual agreements, and other
25 social phenomena determining the inter-relationships within the network are crucial. The cognitive
26 dimension, in turn, is related to the cultural and symbolical capital besides social capital. It includes
27 the common language shared by the actors, common stories and meanings. Simply being in the
28 network is not enough, nor is forming good relationships with the other actors; what is necessary is
29 the ability to communicate efficiently in the network. Organisations' reputations among the
30 organisation interest groups are built on stories and other shared meanings. Thus, it is very much a
31 part of the socio-cognitive capital of an organisation. On the other hand, reputation is also related to
32 trust and other features of relational capital. A good reputation is not built merely on the fact that an
33 organisation is known, a good reputation means that the organisation is trusted and you can identify
34 with it AULA & MANTERE, 2005.

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56 The integration of regional reputation and social capital necessitates a revision of the earlier model
57 presented of building an innovative milieu (Figure 2).
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3 Figure 2 about here
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11 It should be emphasised that focused reputation building is irrelevant if adequate attention is not
12 paid to the evaluation of the action and follow-up of the results. It can be shown that a reputation
13 cannot be managed or built if there is no awareness of its nature and changeability. Therefore, one
14 crucial process in reputation building is evaluation. Plainly stated, reputation evaluation means
15 monitoring a reputation through systematic, expedient meters. If the goals for reputation building
16 are defined, the evaluation of the results causes no problems when the same evaluation methods are
17 used systematically. The aim of the reputation evaluation processes is to create a continuous,
18 systematic method to produce, from the internal and external environment, usable foresight
19 knowledge to support decision-making AULA & HEINONEN, 2002.
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33 Finland is among the first countries by all measurements on research and development costs.
34 However, there is no corresponding amount of wellbeing contributed by research, as innovation
35 processes do not offer enough support to practice-based innovation processes. The Lahti urban
36 region wants the reputation of a pacemaker of practice-based innovation activities, which it
37 presumes to have good potential due to the logistic position of the region, industrial tradition,
38 competence structure and the application of network-facilitating innovation policy. There is a vast
39 national opportunity in developing the public sector productivity and innovativeness. The Lahti
40 urban region seems to have started to actively use this potential also outside strategy texts. The size
41 and structure of the Lahti urban region, as well as the competence basis in the region, set
42 qualifications which may become the innovative milieu set in the objectives, with an innovative
43 public sector and a new regional service structure.
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3 The Lahti urban region has plenty, and on other hand, it has nothing as yet. The region has the
4 potential to become an innovative milieu. Still, it has no automatic motors for building the milieu,
5 such as strong university and research activities, which evidently could raise the innovativeness in
6 the region. So, the Lahti urban region must succeed in building innovative capability in other, also
7 unorthodox methods. This places high demands on the regional network of developers and their co-
8 operation ability – their social capital. In particular, it demands a vast amount of social energy to
9 implement the necessary change in the regional cultural actions. It is a question of a competition
10 between the practice-based activities and social capital in the Lahti urban region and the research-
11 orientation and intellectual capital in the university regions. In the Lahti urban region, the energy of
12 actions leading to success can be seen in the thoughts of BENNIS & WARD BIEDERMAN, 1996
13 on features characterising very creative groups: one of them is that the groups feel they are
14 challengers or winning underdogs. These groups are often rebellious enough to seek success outside
15 the mainstream and are proud of their fresh achievements KOSKI, 2001. It is to be assumed that
16 such an atmosphere is necessary in building an innovative milieu out of the Lahti urban region,
17 willing to go against the mainstream and being confident in its own way to create success. A
18 region's reputation as an innovative milieu can at its best be formed over many years through
19 distinctive actions and communication of work well done.
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44 The Lahti urban region is an individual case, but it is not unique: there are many similar regions in
45 the world squeezed in between large university regions. It would be extremely interesting to
46 compare, for example, similar European regions through the developed model. Due to the limited
47 space this has to be left for further studies, unfortunately. In this study we have to be satisfied with
48 the assumption that a model that works with some object will most probably be applicable to other
49 fairly similar objects, in this case sub-national regions, as well, KASANEN *et al.*, 1993. Therefore,
50 this study focused on one deep case study and comparison of this case with the university regions in
51 Finland. The model will be used in comparative studies in the near future.
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Conclusions

Our model of the building of an innovative region contains an implicit allegation on the relationship of regional reputation and reality. Reality building is imperative for reputation building, but it is insufficient on its own. A good regional reputation necessitates, besides good actions (innovative capability), “telling of the good”, that is, active reputation management AULA & MANTERE, 2005.

From our point of view, the reputation of an innovative milieu is largely built on the social capital accumulating and maintained in the region. The essential thing in the concept of structural social capital is how well the actors of the innovation system and the innovation actions themselves are known, and how well the actors know other actors contributing to innovation systems outside the region. A reputation built on cognitive social capital requires active communication networks both inside and outside the regional milieu. To work, the communication networks need communicative skills, common language and common experiences. Inspected from the perspective of relational capital, a reputation is built on good relationships: how well the regional innovation system and thus the innovative milieu are considered. To be constructed, relational social capital requires strong trust and an adequately uniform identity AULA & MANTERE, 2005. The relationship between social capital and regional reputation can be specified by stating that regions, as organisations, are dependent on their reputation.

To sum up, it is safe to conclude that an innovative milieu is a possible foundation for a reputation. At its best, an innovative milieu gives originality to a region, and builds factors for distinction (the distinction principle of reputation). The idea of an innovative milieu has to be integrated in all the

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3 pull-factors of reputation, which are used as measurements in the evaluation of a region, and which
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5 affect the regional decision-making (the evaluation principle of reputation). When building a
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7 regional reputation, it must be remembered that the contents of reputation depend on internal factors
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9 like regional identity, see FOMBRUN, 1996, and functional communication networks (the
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11 communication principle of reputation).
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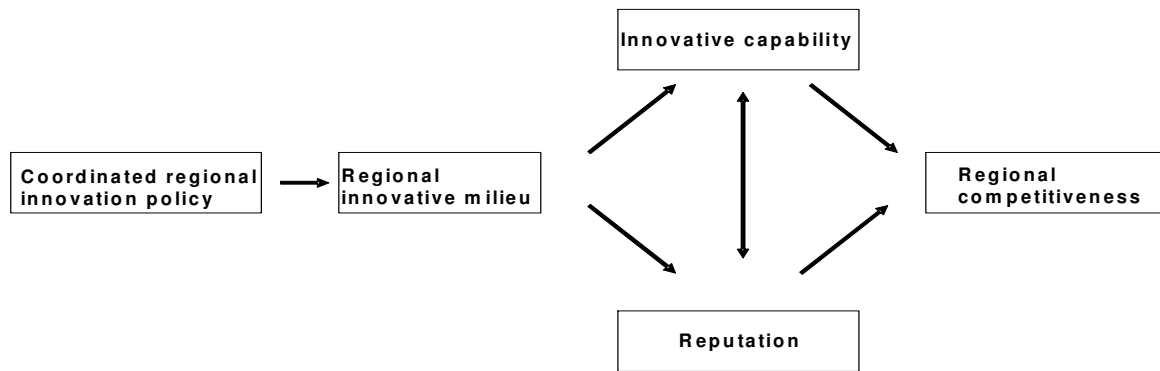


Figure 1. Model of the development of an innovative milieu reputation.

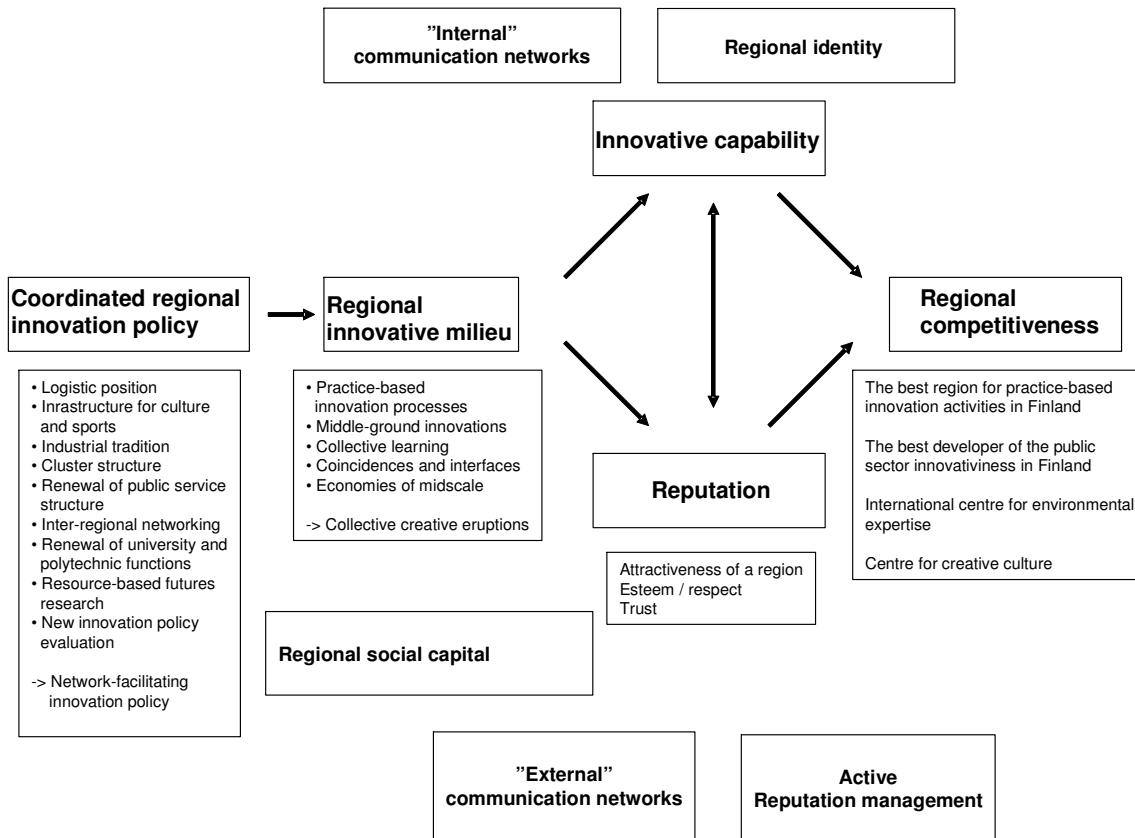


Figure 2. Revised model of innovative milieu building in the Lahti urban region.

	Population in the region	In Polytechnics share of people over 15 years	In Universities, share of people over 15 years	Degrees in polytechnics or universities, share of people over 15 years	R&D Million euros	€/resident	R&D index (whole country = 100)
Urban Regions	people	%	%	%			
Greater Helsinki	1, 224, 257	3.2	6.1	33.3	2, 212.1	1, 806.9	181.7
Jyväskylä	163, 390	4.7	10.3	27.4	180.8	1, 106.6	124.0
Kuopio	118, 050	5.6	6.2	27.3	101.2	875.3	82.6
Lahti	169, 386	3.5	0.1	21.5	43.3	255.6	23.2
Imatra-Lappeenranta	109, 791	3.1	6.0	21.2	77.8	708.6	
Oulu	202, 898	3.9	9.2	29.7	663.0	3, 267.7	226.4
Tampere	313, 748	2.9	9.9	28.2	793.8	2, 530.1	248.1
Turku	290, 524	3.3	8.8	26.8	315.0	1, 084.2	107.1
Vaasa	88, 798	6.9	9.3	27.4	88.3	994.4	94.3
Source: Statistics Finland 10/19/2005							

Table 1. Large urban regions: population, relative share of people in polytechnics and universities, R&D costs per region.

Urban region	Innovation strategy	Characterisation	Central objectives, Vision
Helsinki Metropolitan District	Together to the top: Innovation strategy of the Helsinki Metropolitan District	Independent innovation strategy. Very extensive operation to draft a regional innovation strategy	Helsinki Metropolitan District “the nationally important core of the competitiveness of Finland”
Jyväskylä urban region	Renewing its innovation strategy: Case Jyväskylä – Jyväskylä Human City	Extensive report to support the innovation strategy. Chiefly a background paper for the preparation of the innovation strategy	“vision is to develop Jyväskylä region into a centre of business and innovation expertise”
Lappeenranta-Imatra urban region	Innovation strategy of Lappeenranta-Imatra urban region	Independent innovation strategy	“the purpose of the innovation strategy is to strengthen the regional ability to create new knowledge and ideas”
Turku urban region	Turku strategy, the cluster strategies of Turku Science Park	No independent innovation strategy. Relates to the recently completed city strategy, meant to be developed into partial strategies, one of which is on innovation policy	Focuses are “competitiveness and sustainable development, wellness and quality of life, and promotion of vitality”
Lahti urban region	Innovation environment development strategy of the Lahti urban region	Independent innovation strategy	“Network-facilitating innovation policy aiming to increase practice-based innovation activities”
Vaasa urban region	Innovation strategy of Vaasa urban region	Independent innovation strategy. Is based on many existing partial strategies.	Implementation of “a scenario of growth and development”. “The most important goal in the development of the innovation system is local, national and international networking”
Tampere urban region	Innovation plans in Tampere region	No independent innovation strategy. Document “Urban region innovation plans”, drafted by the Regional Centre Programme	“attracting skilful people and companies, functioning infrastructure and transportation, cosy living environment

Oulu urban region	Growth pact Oulu 2006	No independent innovation strategy. Relates to a couple years old Growth pact	Central objective is to strengthen the region's "competitiveness and position as an internationally acknowledged centre of expertise
Kuopio urban region	Will and actions in the Kuopio region: Kuopio region in 2012, Kuopio strategy 2012 and objectives 2004, Kuopio on the globe – the globe in Kuopio: the internationalisation strategy of Kuopio 2012	No independent innovation strategy. Relates to other strategies.	"The objective of the region is to be in 2012 a centre of wellbeing, which is open to new ideas, attractive and internationalising

Table 2. The innovation strategies of the urban regions and the objectives and/or visions related to them.

Other large urban regions	Lahti urban region
Economies of scale	Economies of mid-scale
Research-based innovation processes	Practice-based innovation processes
General networking rhetoric	Concrete networking tools
Research-based university policy	Practice-based university policy
Human capital	Social capital

Table 3. The central differences in the innovation strategies

Large urban regions with universities	Lahti urban region – university consortium region	Reflections on the accumulation of regional reputation of Lahti
Strong focus on production of research knowledge	Main focus on inter-regional transfer of research knowledge, interactive dialogue with research centres of excellence	if realised, will increase networking and thus potential reputation
Strong investment on research knowledge production enables the creation of disciplinary centres of excellence	Low investment on research enable only a few areas of research, with the centred effort of the whole university community, success is sought especially on disciplinary interfaces	enables strong local identity
Big universities rely on their own largeness, pursuing co-operation with other universities and polytechnics is not seen essential	Units of the university consortium are small, to gain adequate critical mass, the success of the regional universities is sought through co-operation	if realised, will increase networking and thus potential reputation
New university level human and social capital in the region is gained through normal student applications	Increase of human and social capital should be realised through education models enabling lifelong learning	social capital crucial for reputation
Resource configuration to regional wellbeing and to a wider sphere of influence	Because of low resource configuration, university activities must rise from the needs of the region	risk for reputation, if the focus areas are mis-selected
Good conditions for the internationalisation process of the university and the region	Special attention must be paid the internationalisation process of the university and the region	risk for reputation, if internationalisation process fails
In big universities, there are new activities and structures slowing down multi-disciplinary co-operation	New regional multi-university model of action creates new possibilities for cross-disciplinary co-operation and ways of action	if realised, will increase networking and thus potential reputation

Table 4. Differences between university regions and university consortium regions; reflections on reputation accumulation.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ The regions are Helsinki Metropolitan District, and Jyväskylä, Lappeenranta-Imatra, Turku, Lahti, Vaasa, Tampere, Oulu, and Kuopio urban regions.

ⁱⁱ University Consortium is a university network of the subsidiaries of three universities located in Lahti. The University Consortium has about 250 employees and the consortium focuses mainly on the fields of adult education, regional development and technology transfer. The Polytechnics are college-level institutions with about 5,500 students and 464 employees in the Lahti urban region.