Regional Mission Impossible?
The Twente Region and the University of Twente

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THE TWENTE REGION

- ~ 626,500 inhabitants (3.6% of the Dutch population)

- EUREGIO

- Agriculture & textile industry versus high-tech entrepreneurship

- UT, Saxion UAS, ROC

- In Top 3 'Most Innovative Region of the Netherlands' 2017
THE UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

- “A world-class entrepreneurial university with a strong regional network”
- The most entrepreneurial university in the NL & the top Dutch university in commercial knowledge transfer (2013 & 2015)
“If the university works with the region, it is often by coincidence [and not] by strategy”
DATA:

- 12 semi-structured open-ended interviews
- Academics & university administrators
- Strategic regional partners
Data

(Benneworth, 2017)

Stakeholder misalignment
- Tensions in regional boards/strategies
  - Boards are too partial
  - Strategies are not innovative
- Tensions in university mission/strategies
  - Pressures for global competition
    - UT only interested in big companies
  - University lacks a regional policy

Absence of clear intermediaries
- Ambiguities around entry points
- Novel-T too highly focused on niche

Absence of continuity
- Dependence on personal networks
- Short-term nature of 'regional' funding
  - Lock-in to old ways of working & working practices

Knowledge asymmetry
- "Hidden" university knowledge
- Lack of strategic engagement data
“while the community of the university is becoming more and more international, […] the needs of the region are more and more Dutch, or local of the region”

“universities, cities, companies – everyone has a different message… we are one region, the Twente region, but we do not tell the same story”
**Data**  
(Benneworth, 2017)

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“What is the phone number of the university?”
Data
(Benneworth, 2017)

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“[This is] not a knowledge system that keeps the knowledge”
Data
(Benneworth, 2017)

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“Because the university does not really care about the region, and the region doesn’t really know what is happening [there], they are not coming together”
WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
Failure of typical bureaucratic solutions & poor strategic management

➢ Review & reconfigure regional governance
➢ Sharpen regional HEI’s profiles
➢ UT as a “global-local pipeline”?
Complex & uncoordinated intermediary structure

- Consolidation
- Communication
- Expansion
Unmanageability of informal relationships & hidden/ unused university knowledge

➢ Supply - Demand
➢ Mutual responsibility
➢ Institutional research on regional engagement
➢ HRM & networks
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION, COMMENTS, AND QUESTIONS!

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This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 722295.