

Laboured learning

Investigating challenged localities
through a geography of vocational
education systems

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Challenged regions and the role of vocational education systems

- Diverging development trajectories across regions in advanced capitalist economies – increasing polarity
- Hitherto focus on the role of higher education for development (HEIs in innovation systems and migration patterns/brain drain)
- Lack of focus on the vocationally educated, despite their importance for labour markets in peripheralised regions (declining industrial regions and rural regions).
- Demand for vocationally educated labour (debate). The VET system is relatively more important for peripheralised labour markets than urban labour markets.
- VET system challenged by low student demand and high drop-out rates. It is extremely vocationally and geographically complex.

Analytical framework: Theoretical underpinnings

Processes of peripheralisation and centralisation

Peripheralisation is dynamic, multi-dimensional, interrelated and multi-scalar: economic, political / governance dimensions, social and discursive.

Governance: Herrschel 2012: Scales of influence

Copus 2012: networks of influences, between the nodes

Geography of education:

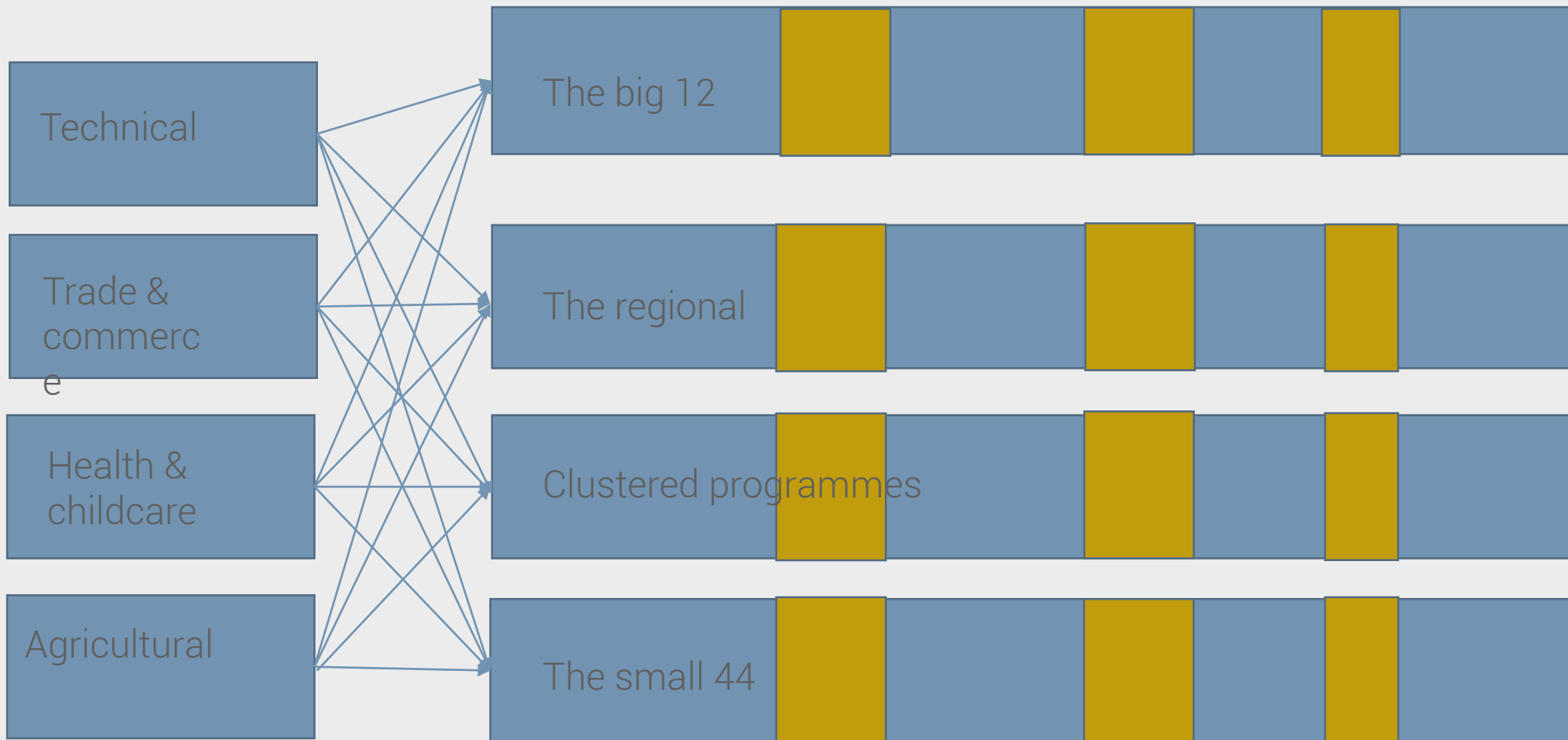
From distance to spatial orientation capacities. Mobility imperatives. Focus on transition geographies.

What are the effects of the spatial distribution structures of the Danish VET system on youth transition and mobility patterns and how do these patterns affect the development trajectories of challenged regions in Denmark?

Analytical framework: empirical methods (mixed methods)

- Analyses of the structural and geographical complexity of Vocational education provision in peripheralised regions over time (economic, governance and social dimensions). Literature-review.
- Register data-based mapping of VET youths geographical mobility patterns.
- Narrative interviews of 24 VET students in transition into and through the VET system: spatial orientation preferences

VET system as context: governance-induced complexity



Results of tempo-spatial analyses of the VET system

- A dominant national scale: the regional scale is almost nonexistant within VET governancing.
 - National labour market partners
 - Neo-liberalisation as dominant management tool
- Non-governed gap between Basic and Main programme.
 - The VET system is governed by the Ministry of Education and by labour market partners. Each has a domain. Students must bridge `no man's land' between the state-governed school domain and the labour market governed apprenticeship market.

Statistical results: Youth Cohort 2000 in 3 case municipalities

- HEI- outmigration rates: 66-80 % of a youth cohort
- VET –outmigration rates: 36-50 %.
- Combining this with employment statistics indicates that youth who select a vocational education are an important source of skilled labour for peripheralised labour markets.
- 70 % of vocational students complete all or part of their vocational degree at the most proximate vocational education college, meaning that this college functions as their point of entry into the VET system.
- Unskilled youth in their late twenties are VET education dropouts (25-30%).

Three displays of orientation preferences in transition processes

- Displays a vocational orientation preference
- Displays a mobility orientation preference
- Displays a local orientation preference

- Analysis of socio-vocational background of the interviewed students: those with a local orientation preference tend to be children of parents who are unskilled or are marginalised on the labour market.

Conclusions

- The dominance of the national governance scale combined with neo-liberal institutional management tools generates high supra-local orientation and mobility imperatives for VET students
- Lack of governance between state- and labour market partner-controlled parts of the system leave transition bridging up to the weakest actors in the system: the young VET students
- The effects of this are that students from socio-vocationally `strong´ backgrounds are able to transition through the system, while this is not the case for the socio-vocationally challenged students, i.e. low social mobility capacity from unskilled into vocationally skilled social groups.
- This is a problem for peripheralised labour markets that demand vocationally educated labour and do NOT demand unskilled labour.



Thank you!