Podcast "O Porto em Conversa"
April, 20th, 2010

[Vitor Silva] - What do you think about the Portic initiative?
You've been here for two days, now, and you've talked with about 30 companies...

[Micael Gustafsson] - We've been talking to [them] has representatives of one of the largest ICT cluster in Europe, in the euro zone region, [a] cross-border region between Sweden and Denmark.
We've been talking to Portic for quite a long time now about this event and I must say that I'm really impressed by the effort that Portic has made, getting all this companies to meet us, and I also think that the strategy that Portic has is the right one, because instead of just looking to the market here in Portugal they are very focused to go to other markets and find collaborations with other strong clusters in Europe, and I feel that that is the way for the companies, the ICT companies here in Porto, companies within the Portic initiative... that it the right way.

[VS] - It's a different strategy than you had in Oresund because you started by growing your community...

[MG] - Yes... we're lucky because we're in a region that has been expanding very fast during the latest 10 years, we have been lucky with the very good collaboration between industry and academia building up some large companies in the region and, of course we [already] had a very solid base of telcom companies which were founded back in the eighties like SonyEricsson, so there was a very good soil for us to develop from.
Giving the environment and the circumstances here in Porto, I think that Portic is doing the right thing; I think that they can actually speed up the process that it takes to build up a strong ICT sector by growing internationally directly.

[VS] - How do you compare this initiative with others you've met in Europe... you had 10 meetings here, each one of you, we're they productive?

[MG] - I would say they were very productive, I mean, normally when we are on this types of journeys, meeting different types of ICT companies around Europe maybe you meet 1 company out of 10, 15, that you think "ok, they are excellent, they have something that we can collaborate around", [but] today I met at least 4 companies of those 10 that I think have those skills. I think that you significantly differ from other regions when it comes to technical skills...

[VS] - Do you have any explanation for that comparison? Is it because we're still an unexplored market or something like that?

[MG] - One explanation is that you have a very good technical university here, another explanation is that maybe you are somehow in the same situation that we were in our region 20 years ago when we had a lot of companies who were quite old working within the dockyard industries for instance and they had to shut down their business and we decided to "well let's try to do something else", and I think that you have somehow been in that position and been eager to turn towards new things instead of starting up new factories.
Of course that is a big challenge for society, for politicians to have the courage to actually change the economy towards a more knowledge based and experience based economy than an economy based on producing things...

[VS] - The Oresund cluster is now 10 years old, what do you think is the time necessary to see things happen here in Portugal

[MG] - Normally I would say that it actually takes ten years for a cluster, at least for the organization, to start producing value for society, but on the other hand, the Portic initiative is going international immediately so hopefully you'll start producing results in maybe two, three years time span, and maybe, with a bit of luck you can even do things faster, but it's important to understand that collaboration is built on trust and it takes some time to build trust between people. We're in a lucky circumstance that we actually know some of the people that have founded Portic and we've known them for several years, so it's very easy for us to have trust in them.
And when we go home now we will tell the companies in the Oresund region, in our cluster, that we have some terrific guys from Porto and that they should try to collaborate with them... and since they trust us we will actually speed up the process because that is the most important thing from my point of view, that we start collaborations between the companies in the Oresund region and the companies in the ICT sector here in Porto and use Portic as the gate to the companies in our region.
I have already two or three very clear business opportunities that I see, and that I will actually try to find some partners in Sweden or Denmark and I will certainly come back here in a couple a months and hopefully bring back some agreements and collaborations and start developing things together because I think there are very good business opportunities both between companies here but I'm also seeing things in the FEUP university that are very interesting for us.

[VS] - We're talking about ICT, information and communication technologies, and there is a big focus on technology and engineering, but nowadays we're hearing more and more about the necessity to work with other disciplines like design and other kinds of disciplines, what do you think about it and how does the Oresund cluster faces that?

[MG] - I'm not an engineer myself, I studied social sciences but I've been working in marketing and sales for all my time in the industry so I think it's very important to have an holistic view of

things because if you focus too much on technology you'll actually forget about your customers and the value that you're supposed to create on a market, so for me it's very important to focus not only on technology but also on how to commercialize technology, if it's sellable, and also on how to collaborate with other sectors in society because it's actually in the cross fields between, for instance, ICT and the food industry or ICT and the fashion industry, and so on, where we will see the really new innovations, that we'll see the new companies grow. I know that you have some initiatives here around fashion industry, I think that they're very exciting because the fashion industry, even though they're fashion, they're quite old-fashion when it comes to how to present the things they're selling, and when we combine ICT, New Media, the Creative Industries and the Fashion Industries I think we can do a lot of things in order to improve that sector and..

[VS] ...and add value to a sector that may even be a traditional one...

[MG] - Yes, and you also have a long tradition in the marine sector with your fishing industry... why do you not combine marine research with ICT research and maybe with creative industries to find some new things... that is something that we have been working a lot in the Oresund region for the last four or five years, trying to combine different sectors, Life Science with ICT, Food with ICT, and hopefully we can help... maybe we can help you to do workshops or something, trying to combine the Creative Industry here with the Creative Industry in our region and the ICT industry here.