Erasmus Initiative

Dynamics of Inclusive Prosperity in 1010 words

Commitment
Erasmus University Rotterdam has an overriding drive to bring science and society together. Therefore the University takes the dynamics of inclusive prosperity as the heart of this research initiative. The strive for inclusive prosperity entails furthering sustainable economic growth and enabling more people, now and in the future, to live their lives in accordance with their inherent human dignity, that is to provide for and sustain a fair share of prosperity in the widest sense. The dynamics of inclusive prosperity refer first of all to those activities, mechanisms and processes in the past, the present and the future that aim at or result in a better life for more people. However, more often than not the promotion of that goal starts with countering tendencies or collateral effects towards the opposite. EUR wants its research of these dynamics, both the positive and the negative, to serve society in fostering inclusive prosperity on the basis of healthy economic and social development. To that end a new research community is created, drawing on the forces in three Schools/Faculties, of Law, Management and Philosophy. Inside that community researchers will cross the boundaries of schools and disciplines to share and discuss results, join hands in new research activities and projects and reach out to academia worldwide and society at large with the richer knowledge obtained in that way.

Multi-disciplinary methods
To reach for inclusive prosperity is a goal for society in all its complexity. Consequently, the research under this theme can but embrace a cross disciplinary approach. Better knowledge for society becomes available when the methodologies of management studies, law and humanities are deployed in the research activities. Researchers from the various disciplines join forces to co-execute research into a specific problem, in order to grasp the variety of dimensions that complex phenomena have. Some limitations will apply in terms of the disciplines involved (life and earth sciences are not as such represented), as well as in terms of the scientific feasibility of concrete research projects.

Multi-actor perspective
The dynamics comprise activities, mechanisms and processes that presuppose human involvement. Therefore the choice of actors in the object definition is important. The research community of this Initiative will implement a multi-actor perspective, which means that all persons, institutions and organizations in business, government and civil society (in any form or shape) can be represented in the dynamics that we research. In doing research we take an actor not as a single object, but as party to a relation or node in a network of relations, where interaction takes place. It goes without saying that the actors focus can be and will be much more diversified than just a triangle (business, government, civil society). Inside the separate organizational actor categories a multitude of subcategories will be relevant. Even inside one organization it can be very relevant to differentiate between several parts or persons. Real relations and interactions dictate the perspective here and not theoretical abstractions, irrespective of whether the relations demonstrate in fact a cooperative, a neutral or an antagonistic functionality. For this multi-actor perspective the tradition of Erasmus University and the combination of disciplines and schools/faculties in this Initiative represent a superb jumping board. Business and government are allies in the relevant dynamics and will therefore be present as actor in many research
Traditionally these actors take central stage in the research activity of the schools/faculties involved, although an extension to NGO’s in civil society can be found in abundance.

Relevant Developments
Realities, such as global warming, modern slavery, endemic violence and blatant inequality in the access to healthy living conditions learn that local and global society will need purposeful change in order to foster inclusive prosperity and secure long term economic development. Under this finality three developments merit pointing out here: the internationalization of politics, the privatization in the promotion of common interests and the ICT revolution. Inclusive prosperity is enjoyed locally and promoted both locally and globally. International institutions, organizations and alliances have adopted a wide range of instruments that avail regional and local actors with an enriched toolbox for their activities. The UN Sustainable Development Goals Initiative, for example, inspires corporations, institutions, NGO’s and individuals worldwide for arranging, organizing and measuring progress towards inclusive prosperity. These values are firmly advocated by authorities, civil society organizations, innovative sustainability entrepreneurs and large business corporations that added long term non-financial goals to their strategic decision making process. The public-private divide has lost much of its meaning, if not anywhere then here for sure. Finally, the persistent penetration of information and communication technology in all aspects of life and in almost all corners of the world has changed the scene dramatically. The impact of this technology revolution carries a huge potential in view of more fairness and innovative economic development, but may not automatically be positive in all its consequences.

Programmatic prospects
A host of research projects emerge out of this multi-disciplinary study of the developments with a multi-actor perspective. Three research themes are selected to inspire the new community and capitalize the present research traditions. The first theme concerns the question how the dynamics towards inclusion are affected by the changes in mechanisms – legal and non-legal – that set norms to economic activity and redefines responsibilities. The actors, the processes and the nature of the norms have shifted and in the wake thereof the frameworks for accountability and oversight. The second theme pertains to innovation for positive change. An innovative atmosphere is a prerequisite for promoting change, but innovations in business, regulation and governance, either technology driven or not, can have both positive and adverse effects for inclusive prosperity. These dynamics of innovation will be studied and the empirical, ethical and legal ramifications of innovation explored. The third theme focusses on the dynamics in the economic and financial system as a driver for the change that aspires to increase inclusive prosperity. Governance in terms of regulation and oversight, and the behavior of actors, both institutional and individual, are studied in function of the move towards inclusiveness.