

My time with Mesopartner



My professional life can be divided into three phases: a seven-year period of working as an economist in a German engineering consulting company engaged in projects in Germany and later increasingly abroad. The second phase lasted about three years and focused on consultancy and evaluation tasks around innovation. The third phase spans the last 10 years and runs parallel with the history of Mesopartner. In all three phases I gained important experiences and insights and made relevant contacts which then helped me to get ready for the next phase.

The first phase saw me developing into a consultant and made me familiar with the economic aspects of the infrastructure side of LED. In the second phase, I learned about innovation management, consultancy at the national level and coordinating large-scale projects abroad (Indonesia). And in this phase I also met and worked with Jörg Meyer-Stamer. At the beginning of the third phase, I accepted Jörg's invitation to found Mesopartner with the initial intention of increasing the supply side for disseminating the PACA methodology.

As a 'mesopartner' I developed from a rather traditional consultant into a participatory and interactive facilitator and trainer. One of the key insights during this process was that methodologies and tools are useful to simplify and practically apply theoretic concepts, but that more important than the instruments are the principles behind them. This period also taught me that rapid appraisals can achieve the same and often even more than lengthy consultant studies and research activities, above all through the creation of motivation for change among local stakeholders.

Mesopartner provides a lot of flexibility and freedom for partners and associates. The legal form 'associated partners' allows us to act as freelancers who offer their services under one brand name. And this brand has received increasing attention during the past decade as a niche provider and developer of participatory approaches to development. In coordination with the other partners we can locate ourselves anywhere in the world – in my case Southeast Asia – and focus on consulting and training opportunities there. Mesopartner is not only a company but also an intensive learning network composed of partners, associates and key customers who constantly challenge each other. The annual Summer Academy on Economic Development and recently the JMS scholarship further stimulate and enhance this learning effort and experience exchange.

Mesopartner with all its parameters (scope of thematic focus and offerings, partners and associates involved, type of customers) looks largely different than it did ten years ago and I expect that in ten years from now it will look different again. It is exciting and strongly motivating to help balance this continuous transformation process shaped by internal and external forces, with the final objective of delivering development work in a more efficient and effective way.

Christian Schoen (cs@mesopartner.com)