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Meso organisations need to be innovative and anticipate future trends

The future is already here – it's just not evenly distributed. - William Grant

Meso organisations need to be innovative because their management style and creative use of resources infuses the system with dynamism, optimism and new ideas. But meso organisations not only need to be creative and innovative



to be good examples to local enterprises, but they need to adapt and update their services to new requirements and changes in the environment. They need to innovate, not only in the way they design and offer their services to the businesses in a region, but also in the way they enable these businesses to become more innovative and competitive in a dynamic global market place.

Meso organisations are in a unique position to anticipate future trends and adapt to them early on. From their vantage point, where they can move between different market actors, they are able to detect small shifts in the way things are done, identify pioneers who overcome boundaries in innovative ways, or detect new capabilities in the system. In addition, they need to continuously screen what happens beyond the region and how the national and international trends could influence their region – and what this means for their offering.

When meso organisations become better able to detect change in others and adapt to these changes, the dynamic of the whole system improves. Meso organisations are important for

disseminating knowledge about new opportunities, changes in conditions or innovations, while at the same time they need to be able to adapt their offerings to changing demands. In this way, they lower the barriers to upgrading and increase the pressure on enterprises to use new capabilities and resources to become more competitive.

It is not enough, however, for meso organisations to detect small changes after they have happened. These organisations also need to anticipate future pathways and scenarios, and to guide and support enterprises in their process of discovery of what is possible within their context. This means that the offerings of meso organisations cannot only be shaped by what incumbent firms are willing to try or demand, but must constantly assess what the new entry requirements are and what capabilities, resources and sources of knowledge may be needed to enable enterprises to adjust or for new business to be established in a dynamic, competitive environment.





Various future search methods that can help meso organisations prepare for the future include scenario development and technology road mapping. At the same time, meso organisations that stay in touch or closely follow mavericks and innovators will also be exposed to what is possible despite the conditions or obstacles in a marketplace. To prepare for an unpredictable future means that the meso organisations must purposefully create a variety of options based on what they anticipate even when demand for these new ideas is currently low or non-existent. This involves identifying the pioneers who are willing to try, and to experiment with or invest in new possibilities.

Meso organisations do not do this in isolation. They need to network with other organisations and enterprises that are also striving to increase their competitiveness or the competitiveness of the region. It may be necessary for the meso organisation to assist other management teams in their network so that they themselves become more sensitive to change.

We see at least three kinds of shifts that meso organisations must constantly reflect on and respond to:

- Continuous shifts in national and global policies that may have a direct or indirect effect on the economic system. Are enterprises aware of these shifts, and are they prepared? Do they make certain kinds of markets, technologies or strategies more or less attractive? Are new skills, capabilities or services going to be needed? Related to this shift is the ability of

the meso organisation to communicate expected or detected trends back to the relevant policy makers and funders, while at the same time communicating these political shifts to enterprises.

- Shifts at the micro level where enterprises are created, formed and compete. This requires that meso organisations detect changes in how their services are used, and that they are sensitive to changes in performance at the level of enterprises.
- Shifts in the meso level itself. Over time, the number and diversity of meso organisations tend to increase. This provides more opportunities for specialisation and the development of depth, but it could also mean that enterprises could more easily be confused or overwhelmed by the options they face. The changes in the meso level could also offer opportunities for collaboration between different organisations to address related issues or to harness synergies.

To assist meso organisations to become more adaptable requires leadership within these organisations to frequently reflect jointly with others on the small and large shifts they detect in their context and beyond. To become more sensitive and responsive to such shifts might require changes in governance structures of meso organisations, but it might also imply a more diversified base of expertise, as people from different disciplines tend to interpret situations differently.

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