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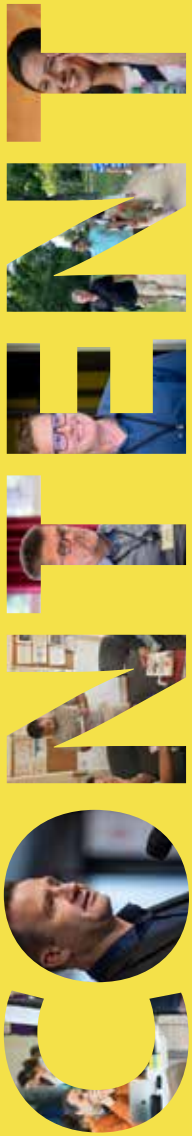
connect the dots

Annual Reflection 2021-2022



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Mesopartner Profile

Mesopartner is a knowledge firm specialising in economic development, competitiveness and innovation. Our strategic intent is to be globally acknowledged as an innovator in economic development practice. Combining theory, practice and reflection, we enable clients to explore options and support decision-making processes. We collaborate with strategic partners to create knowledge of contextually sound economic development.

We operate as advisers and service providers to development agencies, ODA (Official Development Assistance) donors, development banks, NGOs, cluster networks and others, to private and public sector decision-makers and consultants and consulting firms. Since 2003, the knowledge we have shared and the tools we have developed have helped development organisations and stakeholders in many developing and transformation countries conduct territorial and sectoral development more effectively and efficiently.

Mesopartner offers the knowledge that local actors need to address the challenge of innovation and change in a systemic and complexity-sensitive way. We develop innovative tools based on local and regional economic development, cluster and value chain promotion, market systems development, strengthening of local innovation systems and related topics. We coach and equip development practitioners to design interventions in socioeconomic systems and conduct leading-edge learning events for practitioners. We facilitate development processes and give policy advice.

Foreword

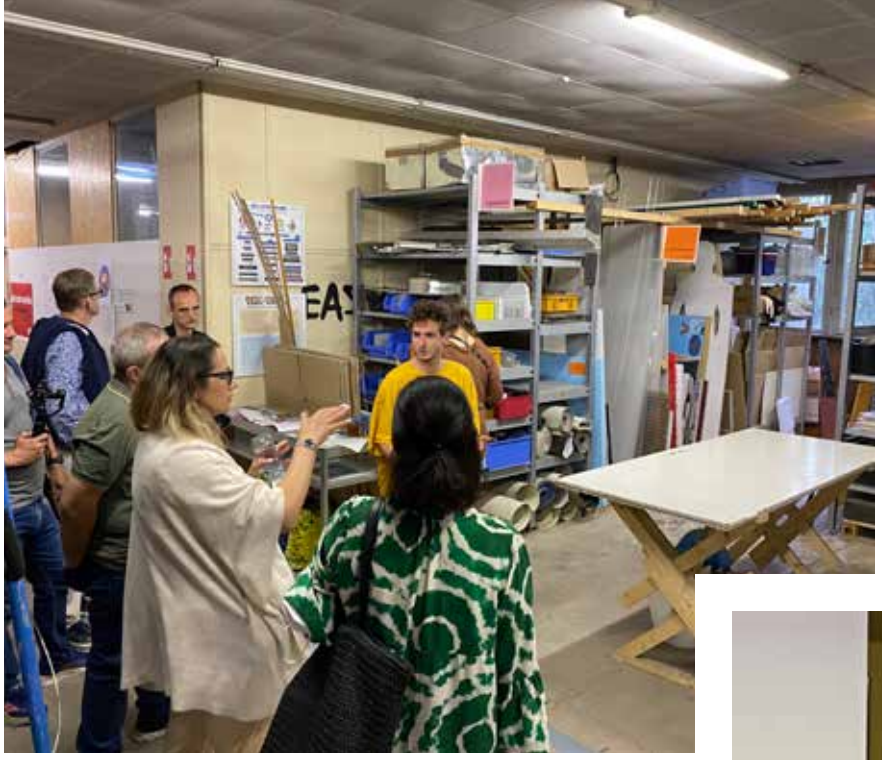
Covid-19 has thrown us out of rhythm. While we usually produce our Annual Reflection yearly, we took a break during the last two years. Adjusting our working mode and focusing on the new conditions during the pandemic, we discontinued some of our usual practices. However, in early 2023 we decided to look back on our insights and experiments of the last two years and summarise our learning in the seven articles of this 2021/22 Annual Reflection.

Working mainly from home, we had the opportunity to further develop some of our key concepts and moderation formats with selected customers. We expect these advanced concepts will introduce additional depth to our consultancy and training.

The acceleration of technological change is challenging for industries and countries, but even more so for developing countries and emerging economies. Mesopartner is supporting the government of South Africa in setting up a technological observatory and preparing profiles of emergent technologies, such as artificial intelligence or cloud-based computing. This supports organisations in the public and private sectors in strategic decision-making (see article 1)

Entrepreneurial or business ecosystems have become an increasingly interesting topic for research and analysis. In 2020, Mesopartner partnered with VDI/VDE Innovation + Technology to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem assessment instrument for the GIZ. This instrument contains seven measurable functions of entrepreneurial ecosystems plus two other ambiguous factors (see article 2).

In the early days of Mesopartner, we started developing an analytical framework to capture the dynamics of innovation systems. When designing the RALIS approach in the early 2000s, we used a framework comprising four typical characteristics of innovation systems. We now operate with seven factors, called the seven lines of inquiry.



This framework helps to assume a multi-dimensional perspective on the incentives the actors in an innovation system face when learning about new ideas, technologies and opportunities (see article 3).

Systemic Insight is Mesopartner's process logic used for process design and execution. About 10 years ago we developed this template for search and discovery processes in situations of uncertainty and complexity. Since then, we have regularly used this logical framework in our work and further developed it. Article 4 describes the six distinct lenses of Systemic Insight and how we understand them today. The article highlights that Systemic Insight does not prescribe a linear process flowing through a set of activities in a given sequence. Rather, all the lenses are continuously present, shaping the questions and decisions in an economic development process.

Over the last few years, we have again been increasingly involved in Local Economic Development (LED) training, consultancy and facilitation. Mesopartner started up with a special focus on this topic twenty years ago, and we are happy that this approach is regaining traction. In Georgia, where a customer has commissioned us to do LED work (SDC), we had the chance to develop a LED system framework. This framework merges our conceptual experience that LED is a system comprising local-level and national-level stakeholders and intermediaries who move between these levels. Article 5 describes the LED system framework and elaborates on its use in theory and practice.

Article 6 describes one of our experimental activities during COVID-19. We applied the moderation technique of Warm Data to explore the question: How can we contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of the places and communities in which we work? Under the heading "Reimagining place", we discussed this question in a series of Warm Data Labs with friends and collaborators. It was interesting to note that the discussion flow in every session moved from just sharing professional arguments to sharing personal stories.

The final article in this Annual Reflection looks at one of the essential topics of our time, which

is also becoming increasingly relevant for LED, namely migration. While LED encourages the immigration of a skilled workforce, it must also manage unwanted out-migration and immigration. We applied one of our key frameworks, Typology of Regions, to explore how LED triggers migration and how migration affects territories. Article 7 benefits from the discussion results of the first Summer Academy we organised after the pandemic in July 2022. At this event we ran a session on LED and migration, which emphasised the importance of this topic that we will further explore in future.

We hope this edition of the Annual Reflection will be a valuable continuation of our series of publications, briefly interrupted by the COVID-19 crisis. We will apply the concepts and frameworks described in this booklet and further develop them with our customers and collaborators. As usual, feedback and comments are welcome in any form and at any time.

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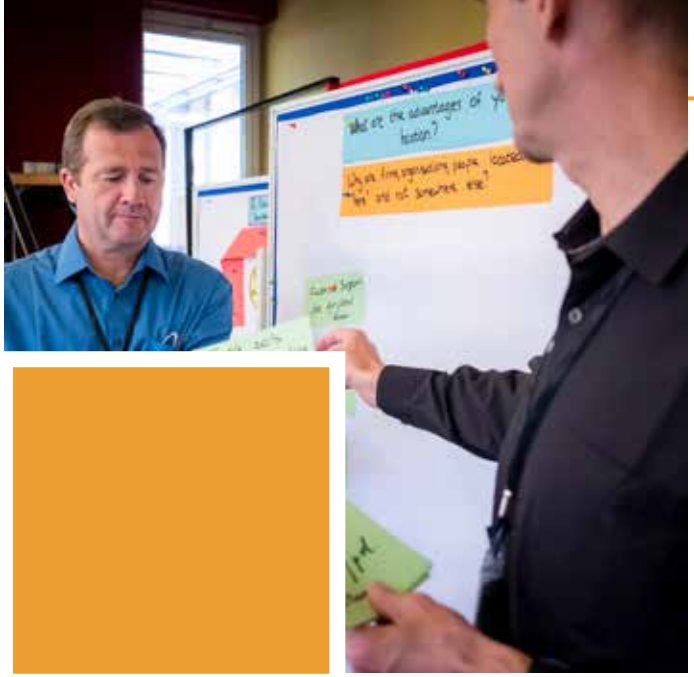
01

Building the technological intelligence of industries and supporting organisations

Like the economies of many developing and middle-income countries, the South African economy has a fair share of innovators and globally competitive firms in many different sectors. The challenge is that there are only a few innovative companies and many lagging companies in each sector. Given the high unemployment rate and the distance from important markets, South Africa can hardly afford to be caught off-guard by technologies developed elsewhere that disrupt local industries and thin markets.

Mesopartner is working with Trade and Industry Policy Strategies (TIPS) to track and create awareness of disruptive innovation and discontinuous technological



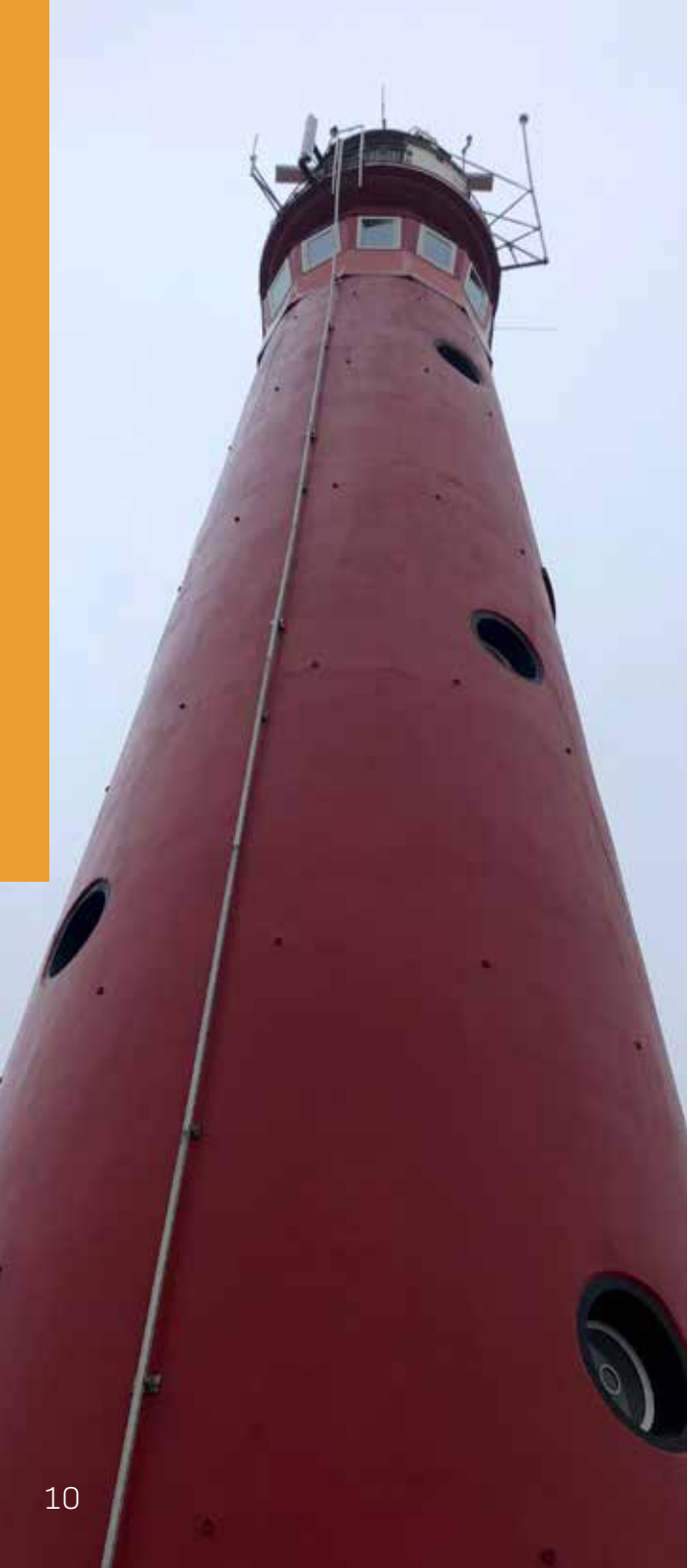
change of organisations in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors in South Africa. TIPS is a not-for-profit economic research and policy advisory organisation based in South Africa. The project is called the Technological Change and Innovation System Observatory, or the Observatory for short.

The increased media and policy attention brought about by the 4th Industrial Revolution hype was important to raise awareness of the digital divide and the changes needed in the country's skills development and infrastructure investments. However, a downside of all the hype is that many people think that technological changes will happen in the distant future, not realising that many of the emergent technologies are already here in the present.

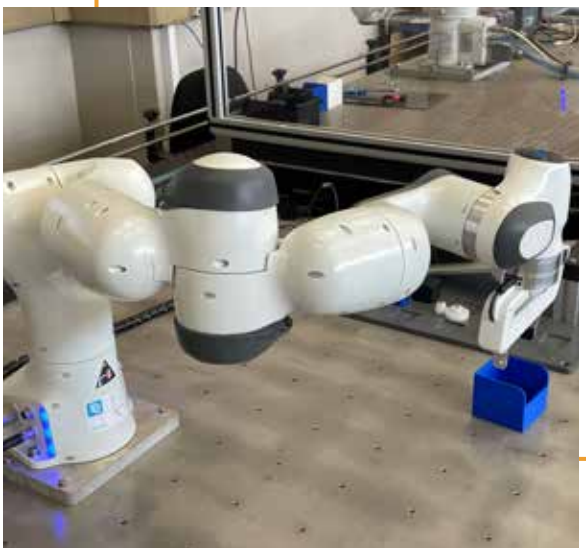
When trying to promote technological learning and innovation, we are often faced with the challenge that people in government and industry are focused narrowly on physical technologies in the form of things, machines, software code or processes. Very few workplaces pay any attention to the many social technologies needed to rearrange or adapt workplaces around new technological capabilities. Furthermore, there is little open dialogue between different stakeholders about how the gaps can be closed between industries and technological and educational institutions or how lacking technological infrastructure can be addressed.

The Observatory supports organisations in the public and private sectors by:

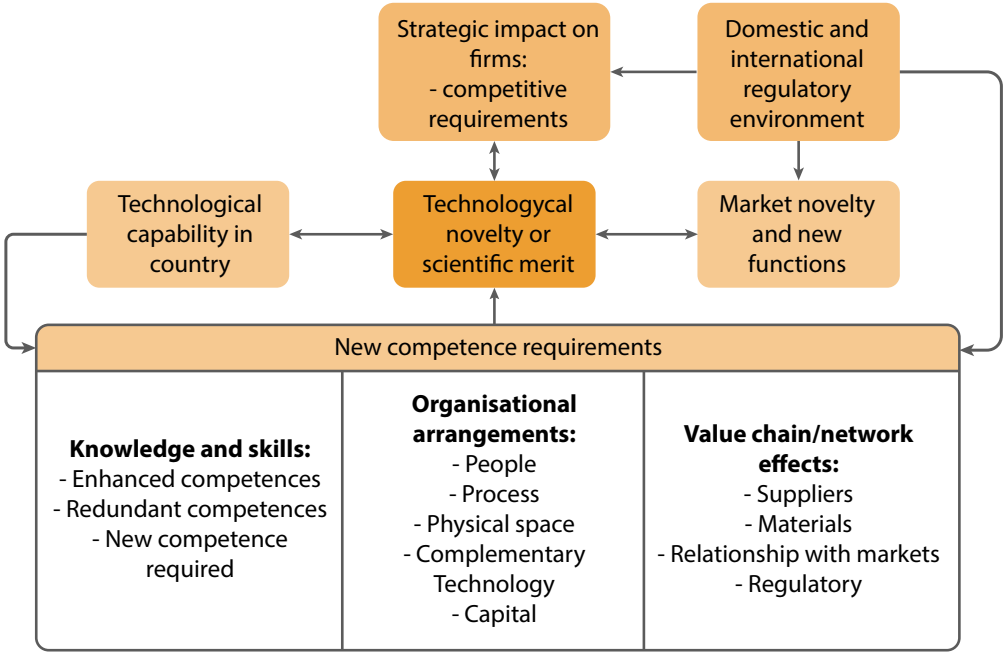
- Improving their integrated strategic response to global and local technological shifts
- Strengthening their role in enhancing the dynamism and resilience of the South African innovation system
- Improving coordination between organisations by supporting dialogue, joint research and information sharing
- Raising the awareness of underutilised technology capabilities in the innovation system
- Developing open data sources and analytical frameworks
- When needed, supporting public organisations to improve their analysis and measurement of technological change to enhance their service delivery to the public.



One of the instruments we use to improve awareness of the possibilities of new technologies and the existing knowledge infrastructure is to develop Technology Intelligence profiles of the emergent technologies tracked by the World Economic Forum, UNIDO, and other organisations. While each profile must cover the basics of the technology, the focus is on the social technologies and innovations needed to harness their physical technological capability. We use the profiles in discussion with leadership teams to support them to better anticipate the possibilities for their organisation in embracing technological change. For instance, in each profile, we explore the:



- Competence requirements: What is needed to make this technology work effectively within the organisational context? What are the new knowledge, additional skills, organisational arrangements, capital, supplier networks, additional technologies and infrastructure that need to be secured?
- Market effect: What does this new technological capability mean for markets? What expected new functions/features are being offered to the market?
- Strategic impact on the competitive position of the organisation: How will this ability influence the organisation's position, and what will it take to continue innovation if others follow? How will the changes we make trigger change in other organisations?
- Supporting technological capability in the ecosystem: Who can we rely on for technical assistance, problem-solving, testing or other technological support? Where is there hidden or deep expertise that we can leverage?
- Anticipated regulatory adjustments: Which regulations will be required, or will already have changed elsewhere and will most likely have effects here at some point? Can we support dialogue about how regulations would have to change based on experiences in other countries and our local context?



When building technological awareness, it is important to remember not to get too distracted by the features of the technology itself but to direct people to explore the effects on organisational capabilities, market structures and the other social innovations needed to make the technology easier to understand and adopt. Because it is hard to imagine how more abstract technologies (like artificial intelligence or cloud-based computing) might affect companies, more emphasis should be placed on making technology demonstration and learning-by-doing easier for businesses and public officials.

Adopting some of the emergent technologies is like learning a new language or becoming part of a new culture. Many emergent technologies are interconnected, so additional options become possible when new technologies are mastered. Because of the convergence of many digital technologies, a change in the production process of a company will likely affect many other areas of the business as well. Therefore technological upgrading is no longer a project or something done now and then. In addition, what is currently described as “emerging” is also changing the whole time. What is emerging in one sector may already be old news in another sector.

Because of the increased interconnectedness of technological domains, a small improvement in one area, for instance the battery life of small gadgets or equipment, might have many ripple effects elsewhere in companies, markets and societies. Therefore industries and government programmes must also build their shared technological intelligence. The more people there are who are looking out for technological change and innovation opportunities, the better.

Of particular importance in strengthening the technological intelligence of a company or industry is to pay attention to the ability of the leadership team both to sense and act on the required internal adjustments while at the same time being very aware of and responsive to changes in the external environment. At the same time, management teams must pay attention to required changes in the configuration and arrangements of both physical and social technologies.

David Teece[1] has argued that there are two levels of organisational competencies. The base level is operational and includes capabilities such as routine functions, administration and basic governance that allow the organisation to pursue certain activities. The higher-order competencies, what Teece calls the dynamic capabilities, include new product development, expansion into new sales regions, the assignment of product mandates across larger companies and other actions that constitute astute managerial decision-making under uncertainty. These dynamic capabilities are about being able to continuously sense and identify opportunities, being able to seize these opportunities by allocating sufficient resources and authority to internal innovation efforts and being able to transform their organisational structures around these new capabilities.

The technology profile structure (see graphic above) can also be used in a workshop setting with different stakeholders from an industry or a technology domain where the dimensions of the profile can be explored collectively.

For instance, we have used the profile with business leaders from an industry organisation wanting to increase their collective response to technologies possibilities. We have also used these headings as a guide for interviews with technology experts and managers of research laboratories or technology centres. One of the interesting side-effects of developing these profiles is that we are discovering hidden or hard-to-access technological capabilities in research programmes, training courses or private companies. As we develop each profile, we make new connections between sector associations, research organisations, technology extension centres and companies. The profiles are published on the TIPS Observatory website, but they are also re-published and shared with industry associations, research centres and the networks working with the Observatory.

For more information about the Technological Change and Innovation System Observatory, visit https://www.tips.org.za/projects/technological-change-and-innovation-system-observatory

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1 *Teece, D.J. 2018. Business models and dynamic capabilities. Long Range Planning, vol. 51(1) pp. 40–49.*

02

Fostering dynamic entrepreneurial innovation ecosystems

In the natural sciences, an ecosystem is understood as a system of interconnected elements, formed by a community of organisms interacting with their environment. Ecosystems are often nested structures, and drawing a boundary around them is hard. Think of life on the bark of a tree in a forest. The tree is an ecosystem for the creatures that live on it and in it, while the tree itself is part of the forest ecosystem, and so on.

When humans are part of ecosystems, the arrangements of activities, physical objects and resources are usually made with intent. Agents in the ecosystem

shape the ecosystem through their interactions and behaviour. Still, at the same time, the ecosystem shapes the options available to, and the evolutionary potentials of, the different agents.

Many scholars studying entrepreneurial ecosystems draw on the pioneering work of Frederick Moore[2]. He describes a business ecosystem as "an economic community supported by a foundation of interacting organizations and individuals producing goods and services of value to customers, who are themselves members of the ecosystem. The member organisms also include suppliers, lead producers, competitors, and other stakeholders. Over time, they coevolve their capabilities and roles, and tend to align themselves with the directions set by one or more central companies …".

It is hard to copy whole ecosystems or even just elements that work from one ecosystem to another, although ecosystems can learn from each other. Silicon Valley, a famous example of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, is not only hard to copy, but it has also proven resistant to spreading into nearby business parks. Equally, attempts to create new ecosystems from scratch often fail.

However, there are certain behaviours that can be fostered that may result in the emergence of an ecosystem. For example, Hwang and Horowitt argue that promoting entrepreneurial ecosystems is more like supporting rainforests than managing plantations[3]. Their message is not to copy Silicon Valley, but to imagine a "next" ecosystem that is fostered around certain key principles. They argue that by promoting practices such as "learning by doing", "diversity enhancement", "celebrating role models", "building tribes of trust", "creating social feedback loops" and "making social contacts explicit" in a place will create the conditions from which a range of entrepreneurial activities are likely to emerge.

During 2020, Mesopartner partnered with VDI/VDE Innovation + Technology to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem assessment instrument for the GIZ. We identified nine key functions of an entrepreneurial ecosystem, of which seven could be benchmarked or assessed. The assessment intends to support strengthening the dynamism and resilience of these systems and to help more of the actors become aware of their role in the ecosystem. With the pioneer Daniel Isenberg as

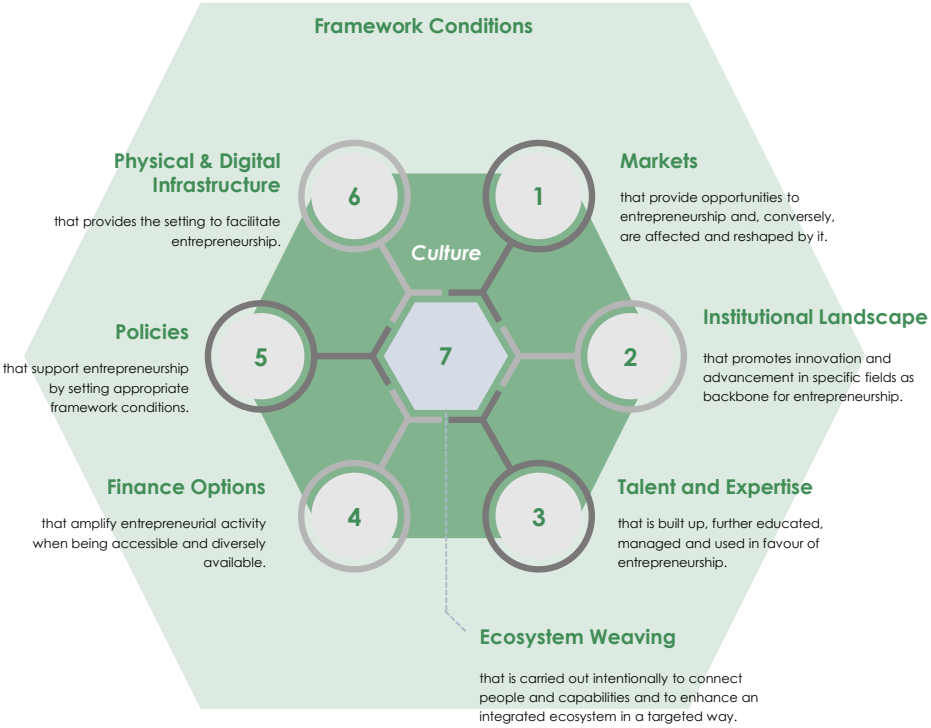
2 Moore, J., F. 1996. The death of competition: leadership and strategy in the age of business ecosystems. New York: HarperCollins.

3 Hwang, V.W. & Horowitt, G. 2012. The Rainforest: The secret to building the next Silicon Valley. Regenwald.

our inspiration, we identified different functions that capture the dynamics of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. These functions capture the affordances that entrepreneurs typically draw on from the ecosystem. It is, therefore, immaterial whether the public or the private sector provides these functions. What is more important is that these functions – depending on their maturity – add value, promote innovation and induce diversity in the ecosystem.

The seven measurable functions provided by entrepreneurial ecosystems are:

1. Access to **markets** that provide opportunities and feedback
2. The **institutional landscape** that promotes innovation and advancement
3. The availability of **talent and expertise**
4. A variety of **financial options** that amplify entrepreneurial activity
5. **Policies** that encourage entrepreneurship
6. **The physical and digital infrastructures** that enable investment and growth
7. Intentional efforts to continuously **weave ecosystem** relationships and collective action



There are two additional functions: 8) the **culture of collaboration and competition** between the agents, and 9) **framework conditions** that encourage risk-taking and innovation. These functions are harder to capture because they are more ambiguous: factors that discourage most businesses often inspire a few entrepreneurs and techno-enthusiasts to innovate. For example, harsh trading conditions might paralyse most businesses, but that may be the source of inspiration for a few entrepreneurs to develop alternative solutions.

Drawing from this work, I would like to offer a few observations for development practitioners interested in promoting entrepreneurial ecosystems to help them recognise some of the common characteristics of the ecosystems they are observing:

- A few agents usually play the role of knowledge brokers, bringing in new knowledge and ideas from the outside or connecting different knowledge domains within the ecosystem.
- Much of the knowledge needed for innovation is already embedded in the ecosystem.
- Often there is healthy competitive pressure on individuals, teams and companies to be innovative, exploit new knowledge, attract talent and successfully enter new markets.
- When critical functions are not available in the ecosystem or in the broader environment, entrepreneurs must make up for the lack of these external functions internally. While some will be able to make up for what is lacking and innovate while doing so, wider entrepreneurial innovation may be curtailed by the missing functions.

- The configuration of different functions will change over time as the ecosystem evolves. The importance of different functions will depend on the stage and the needs of the different agents.
- The agents in the ecosystem are continuously solving many problems on different fronts, resulting in a continuous evolution of the ecosystem. While some may be focused on pushing the technological frontiers, others may be focused on creating new markets.
- Winning ideas are quickly disseminated across organisational boundaries as problems are solved or as workarounds become available.
- Tacit knowledge flows easily between individuals collaborating across organisational boundaries, even if the organisations themselves are different. In fact, the exposure to diverse knowledge bases and different competencies often fuels more innovation,

which in turn attracts more talent and resources to the ecosystem.

- Constraints that are overcome through innovation and collaboration become part of the DNA of the ecosystem. These breakthroughs often shape the downstream evolutionary pathways of the ecosystem.
- In dynamic ecosystems, it is not only the entrepreneurs who are collaborating. Employees, individual tinkerers and representatives from supporting organisations often self-organise around common interests or ideas.

I have found the entrepreneurial ecosystem approach to be valuable in helping me think through what entrepreneurs and innovators are drawing from and contributing to their

environment. The seven functions draw attention to the affordances available in the system and how the organisations providing these functions co-evolve with the innovators, problem solvers and the new capabilities built up in the system. The two additional functions are also valuable because they draw our attention to where the ecosystem might go from here. If challenges and constraints in the broader environment and

socio-cultural context can be overcome, these breakthroughs shape the future developmental pathways of the ecosystem in different ways to the solutions that other ecosystems are generating.

There are three short warnings that I must often repeat: Firstly, do not only focus on the private sector. Public sector and civil society organisations must also learn and adapt along with the agents in the ecosystem.

Secondly, entrepreneurial ecosystems can often be concentrated in a very small geographical area. They do not necessarily represent the whole place or industry; they are a node in a bigger system. Be careful how much ambition you expect from an ecosystem. Perhaps the most valuable contribution of an ecosystem is that it is a problem-solving and knowledge-recycling device in society. Perhaps it is unfair to burden ecosystems with the pressure to achieve other of our preferred indicators like job creation, inclusion and so on.

Thirdly, just because a group of entrepreneurs or businesses is co-located does not mean an ecosystem exists. In ecosystems, the members are highly interdependent. The networks that make ecosystems innovative are not only between the entrepreneurs themselves but between employees, cross-organisational interest groups, and actors from the broader environment. A dynamic ecosystem is a place where new knowledge is highly valued and where today's innovations grow out of last year's constraints.

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03

How societies learn and build competencies

Have you ever wondered why some companies, industries or even places appear to be more able to innovate and harness new knowledge, while others are lagging or stagnant?

Being innovative involves the ability to combine existing knowledge in new ways as well as to combine existing knowledge with newly gained knowledge. As the general sophistication of technologies in an industry or place grows, the ability of any organisation to have all the relevant knowledge in-house is diminishing. As a result, knowledge is increasingly being spread out among a larger number of

actors, who need to interact dynamically to create new products, processes, services, organisations, markets and enabling institutions, that is, to learn and innovate. This means that it is becoming harder and harder for individual firms to innovate and more and more necessary for diverse actors to work together effectively.

We developed an analytical framework to capture these dynamics based on the most salient characteristics of dynamic innovation systems. The framework consists of seven lines of enquiry that practitioners can use to design a diagnostic or exploratory process without having to understand the whole theory of innovation systems. This framework offers a multi-dimensional perspective on the incentives agents in an innovation system face when learning about new ideas, technologies and opportunities.

Here is a short summary of the seven lines of enquiry.

1. The competitive pressure and productive structure at the level of firms, sectors, locations or technologies

A large part of imitating, innovating, learning and problem-solving occurs where companies and individuals transact, compete and collaborate. A diagnostic process must therefore consider the networks that firms are part of (such as a value chain, cluster or locational network), the characteristics of the key technologies in different firms, and the leading firms' strategies to develop the networks they form part of. Assessing the productive structure also calls for exploring the inner workings of companies, how physical and social technologies are arranged, and how technologies are changing these social arrangements.

3. The depth and diversity of organisations that disseminate technological knowledge

Firms depend on various public or private organisations to disseminate technological knowledge that enables them to solve problems, innovate, compete and grow. These organisations lower the barriers of access to scarce expertise and expensive equipment or provide services tailored to the competence of companies. A diagnostic process must therefore map and assess the gaps between the supply of technological services from these organisations and the changing needs of the businesses in the innovation system.

2. The ability and performance of the education system to upgrade formal knowledge systems

This line of enquiry looks at the formal public and private education institutions and how effectively they equip or prepare society to absorb and master formal knowledge. It looks at the diversity of education and skills development options and the education system's effectiveness in responding to change. The education system plays an important role in shaping the starting conditions from where individuals and organisations solve problems. It provides the technological language used to solve problems, explore abstract ideas and cooperate with others.

4. The framework conditions that incentivise learning, innovation and risk-taking

Firms' innovation efforts are not usually driven purely by enthusiasm for innovation alone, but also by the outcome of necessity – firms must innovate because their competitors are innovating too, and because they will lose their market share if they do not innovate. As a result, firms that are experiencing little competitive pressure will often not be inclined to put much effort into innovation. The framework conditions that incentivise firms to innovate are created by the broader macroeconomic, regulatory, political, environmental and social conditions. These framework conditions define the incentives that firms face and the risks that entrepreneurs, investors and public officials must manage.

5. Dynamism and interaction between different agents in an innovation system, and between the innovation system and the broader environment

This line of enquiry is about how the different agents collaborate, share information, adapt to new knowledge and make collective decisions. Companies and their supporting institutions typically co-evolve, just like physical and social technologies co-evolve. Innovation systems also co-evolve with the broader socio-economic and technological environment. Hence this line of enquiry is about describing whether and how learning and innovation between different agents, knowledge domains and institutions happen. It is about understanding how aware different actors are of the effects of their decisions on other parts of the system, and whether and how people intentionally work together to improve the system's overall health. It is also about how information flows and how different actors adapt their behaviour based on what they learn from others.

6. Poorly articulated needs, capabilities and opportunities in the system

In economies undergoing large structural adjustments, there is typically a lack of reliable data on how the economy is changing, where new markets and competencies are emerging, and where there is a need to strengthen or create new institutional capabilities. When there is a lot of uncertainty, companies generally cling to proven technologies and markets, even if they are outdated.

There are two sub-areas to explore in this line of enquiry.

- The first concerns identifying coordination failures around pressing issues that could be used to stimulate innovation and new networks.
- The second sub-area concerns investigating some of the information asymmetries that exist between different actors in the innovation system.

7. The ability of the innovation system to foster and support the emergence of alternative innovation arrangements and development pathways

Many companies are innovating in a slow and ongoing incremental process, with some disruptions along the way. The supporting institutions may respond to the industry's clearly articulated needs and may anticipate future requirements along a specific path or trajectory. While this linear process has advantages, there are also disadvantages such as path dependency, lock-in or the marginalisation of segments of society. Moreover, dominant technological arrangements or widely shared world views could make it hard for actors to imagine or contemplate alternative technical arrangements and pathways. In many cases, these alternative arrangements already exist but lack sufficient scale or support. At worst, alternative ways of doing things might even be blocked by stakeholders or regulators. Determining whether such dynamics exist is the aim of this line of enquiry.

In the last year, we have successfully used the seven lines of enquiry to conduct a market analysis of the ICT and agrifood systems in Moldova. In South Africa, we diagnosed the innovation systems in the clothing and textiles, leather and related goods and also the plastics manufacturing sectors. The framework helped us to shift the attention of stakeholders from patents and physical technologies towards how people are learning, how institutions are adapting and where coordination gaps and systemiac failures are stubbornly persisting.

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04

Gaining Systemic Insight when facing complexity

In our 2019 Annual Reflections we described the Systemic Insight process logic, a template for a process of search and discovery that we developed in Mesopartner. Process logic is aimed at partners and clients who work under conditions of uncertainty where answers are not easy to find, and exploration is needed.

Since we wrote that article, we have further developed Systemic Insight into a way of thinking and acting in situations marked by ambiguity, uncertainty

and complexity. The underlying questions it poses are: How do we gain Systemic Insight? And how do we act when we don't know what to do? The approach to gaining Systemic Insight is built around a collection of six postures that invite us to pay attention or act in different ways. The postures can either be used as a template to design a change process, or individual postures can be used to guide a continuous exploration of complex situations. We chose the term posture as it expresses a particular way of dealing with or considering something, an approach or attitude towards it. It encompasses both the outward positioning and the inner disposition that shape how individuals and organisations engage with or perceive a given circumstance. Systemic Insight can be used by individuals, teams, organisations and whole communities.

New ways of thinking about change and templates to guide people in change processes are urgently required. We live in a time when the dominant view of how change happens in the world is at odds with our new (or arguably re-gained) emerging understanding of how the world works. Much can go wrong when what we think works is not aligned with how the world actually works.

The dominant view of how change occurs is based on formulating a clear objective (an ideal future state), knowledge of the causal steps needed to close the gap between the now and the ideal future state, and the ability to plan activities and allocate resources. In contrast, our emerging understanding of how the world works paints a picture of life as a complex dynamic system that defies such linearity; a system that is entangled and dispositional rather than linear and causal. There are numerous examples of how directly fixing problems based on a linear understanding of the world has not achieved what was intended but has led to unintended consequences and more problems down the line. Yesterday's solutions are often today's problems.

We developed Systemic Insight with an understanding that change is continuous, not limited to a discreet amount of time with a clearly definable before and after. Yet there are stabilities and trajectories that we can map and explore. Shaping trajectories is about engaging relational and co-evolutionary processes between various contexts and actors.

Systemic Insight is about becoming more aware of the present and the options and opportunities

we have at our disposal now rather than in the uncertain future so that we can act collectively from where we are. The focus on the present not only unearths opportunities to explore but also allows us to adapt our perceptions and behaviours over time and to create new dynamism and new or different relationships.

While there are some six postures in Systemic Insight, it is important to note that this is not intended to be a linear process flowing through a set of activities in the sequence in which they are presented here. The medium we are using forces us to choose a sequence, and we chose the sequence below because we think it makes the most sense if somebody is at the very beginning of a process. Over time, however, all the postures will be continuously present and shape the questions you ask and the decisions you make. Postures will be more useful at certain moments as they put things into perspective that are relevant for you, while others remain more in the background for a time. Yet the full set of postures is what we think is needed for a coherent process of learning and discovery in a complex human system.

Pause and reflect means that you should not rush into a situation and do something for the sake of doing something. It emphasises why we are concerned about a specific issue or situation and what we bring with us that might influence how we perceive and are likely to act in a given situation. It is also about becoming aware of and naming our preferred solutions, cultural biases and blind spots. Our current understanding of knowledge in the Western world is rooted in an atomistic (composed of many simple elements) and hierarchical philosophy of knowing, which excludes, and even suppresses, many other ways of knowing, particularly those outside of Western culture. We need to start observing ourselves and notice how we sometimes impose what we think is the right thing to do on others. This also implies that we need to be aware of whom we are referring to when we say or write "we".

The posture of sensing the system and **discovering** what is going on puts the focus on building situational awareness while not necessarily revealing every detail of what is going on. We can map constraints, connections, exchanges, attractors, identities, habitual practices and rituals, diversity, understand roles and scripts, and capture and feel the aesthetics, the moods, the rhythms, etc. The posture invites us not to focus on a certain domain or area of

expertise but to scan as broadly as we can. At the same time, if we find a problem for which we can know all the details, we can and should apply an analytical approach to it so we can discern as much detail as possible.

Making sense is focusing on trying to figure out jointly what is really going on so we can act in meaningful ways. What is going on cannot be completely known, but we can calibrate in a group or team what we observe and what we think this means. We should also invite dissenting views as a form of diversifying the response to an issue or situation. We do not wish to find only one possible answer to implement but explore the range of possible answers that we might consider.

We want to get a feel for the dispositions and propensities in a system, be able to map the contributing factors and understand which factors we can influence that keep the situation in place. Sense-making can occur on several levels at the same time, leading to different but coherent responses. For example, it can be done by individuals, in local action groups, in organisations, in local and national governments, etc. Different levels will make sense in different ways, leading to different paths to be chosen. This diversity allows different things to be tried.

Defining a direction is a posture that focuses on figuring out what we consider to be a "better" situation than the one we see now. It is not about

describing an ideal future nor about developing a plan on how to get there. We need to get an idea of what stories we want to hear more of and what stories we want to hear less of. Defining direction is about having a broad conversation on what "better" can look like. The defining of direction also includes agreeing with other actors on what we can do together and what is desirable for all of us. However, the strategic intent is not an attempt to get everybody to agree on a specific action or plan, but to create a structure that allows a common direction of travel to emerge; a sense of direction that brings different people and organisations together on a common journey.

Acting meaningfully with others in a complex living system is a delicate matter. Yet we do so all the time. Indeed, we cannot fail to influence a system we are part of. The questions to focus on through this posture are: What do we do next? How do we act based on what we know? What are different things we could try to explore in the space of the possible? We need to understand how to intervene in a complex living system. Directly fixing problems leads to unintended consequences and is generally counterproductive. Change often occurs because of a change in perception and a change in relationships. It occurs indirectly by rearranging constraints, relationships and interdependencies, not directly by changing behaviours. Possible ways to act are adaptive moves, portfolios of safe-to-fail experiments, or bringing people together in dialogue.

Learning and adjusting are what we need to be constantly doing; all the other postures feed into this. Learning is about monitoring and measuring change. We need to be able to assess the consequences of our actions, most importantly the unintended ones (there are always unintended actions). We need to be able to capture weak signals to react early to unintended changes. We need to amplify positive patterns and damp down negative patterns. Yet learning and adjusting are about much more than monitoring; they are about learning how to be and act together and adjust to and with each other.

For people who are new to complexity, it is most obvious that one should arrange these postures into a process sequence, starting with a reflection on their own role, then discovering to get a feel for the system. This is followed by making sense of the

overview created, asking what is really going on here. Once you have an idea of what is going on, you can develop a sense of the direction in which the various stakeholders wish to travel together and start with small, tentative joint actions to probe the system and then observe how patterns are or are not shifting. Adjusting allows us to give more attention to where it is needed or where we need to be careful as we see signs of unintended and potentially negative effects.

At a more advanced stage, you will notice that all the postures influence our way of looking at and being present in systems. We need to find time to pause and reflect, time to discover, time to make sense of what is going on, time to define the direction of travel and time to act with others. At this stage the different postures often overlap, and no obvious sequence can be defined. Learning and adjusting is a central way of being in systems, rather than just a means of getting somewhere, since a core way of understanding complex living systems is that they are fuelled by continuous mutual learning.

In Mesopartner we use this way of thinking when we approach systems and change initiatives. It has helped us to avoid jumping in and starting to fix problems and instead reflect on how the situation has evolved into the state that it is now in and what the roles of the different actors in the system are. Marshalling the right actors into a change initiative can lead to more realistic change objectives and longer-term effects that are more meaningful for the people we work with.

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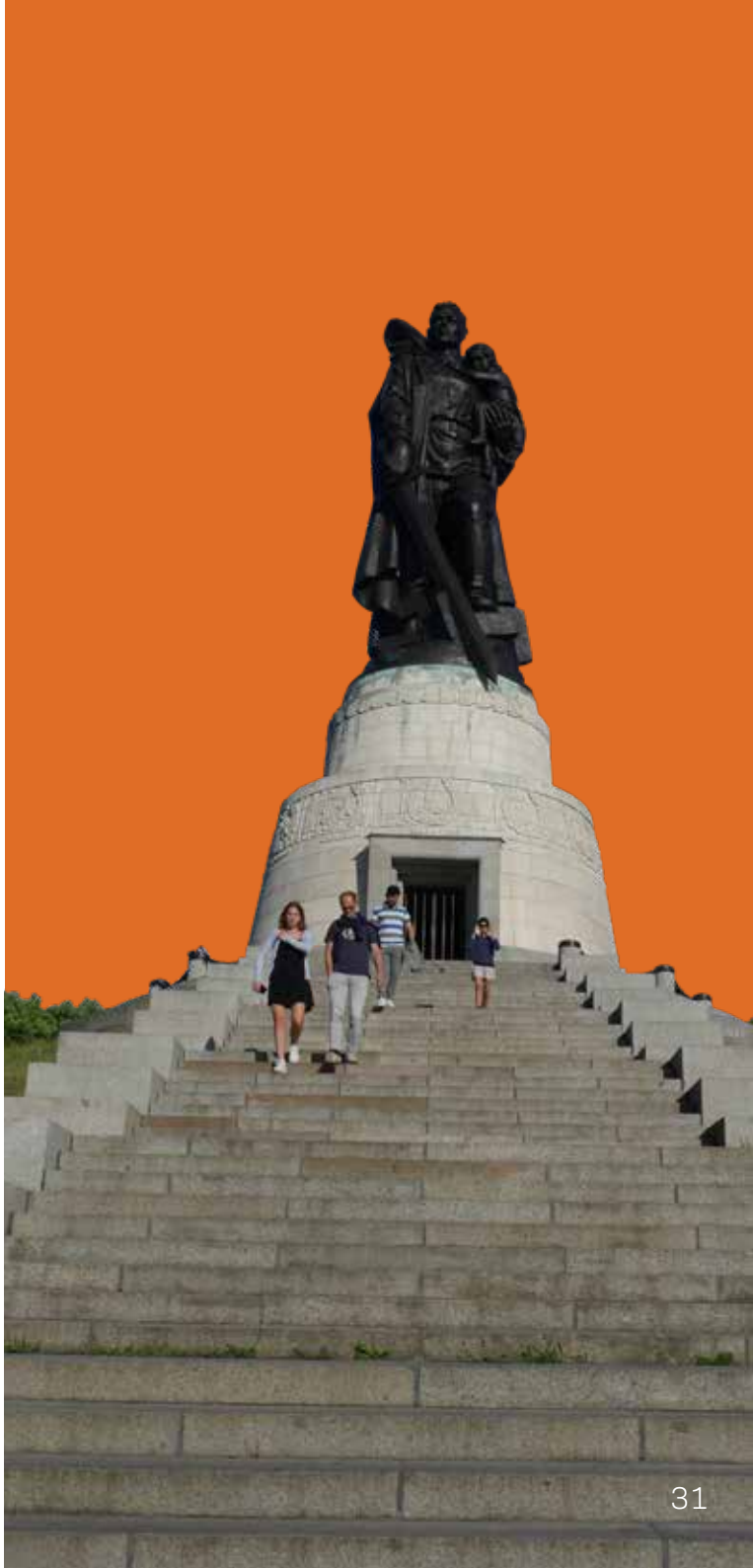
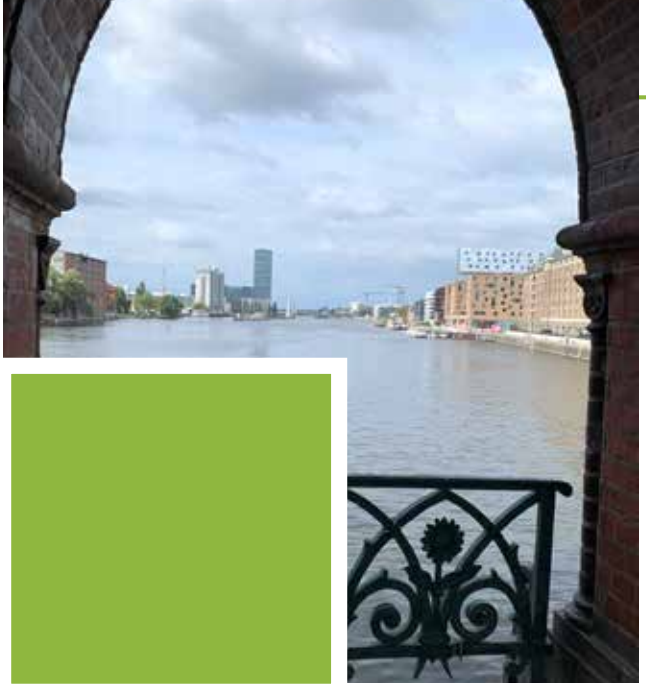


05

The system perspective on LED

Mesopartner has regularly been asked to support the introduction of Local Economic Development (LED) or strengthen LED as an economic development approach in a country (see AR 2018, Article 3: How to introduce LED as an approach to economic change in a country).

Strengthening LED requires the focus to be broadened from the local level – where traditionally LED initiatives operate – to the broader system that enables LED. Based on our experiences over the years, Mesopartner has developed a conceptual understanding of LED as a system that comprises both local-



level and national-level stakeholders, as well as intermediaries who can move between these levels. Various actors on both local and national levels need to work together to create the conditions necessary for LED to work, including the relevant legislation, policies, processes, mandates, knowledge and information flows, competent development plans, etc. What we term the LED System thereby comprises all the relevant actors, both local and national, as well as their relationships and relevant artefacts such as laws, policies, plans, etc. that enable effective and meaningful LED processes to take place, as shown schematically in Figure 1. The illustration shows both top-down, bottom-up and horizontal relationships on each level.

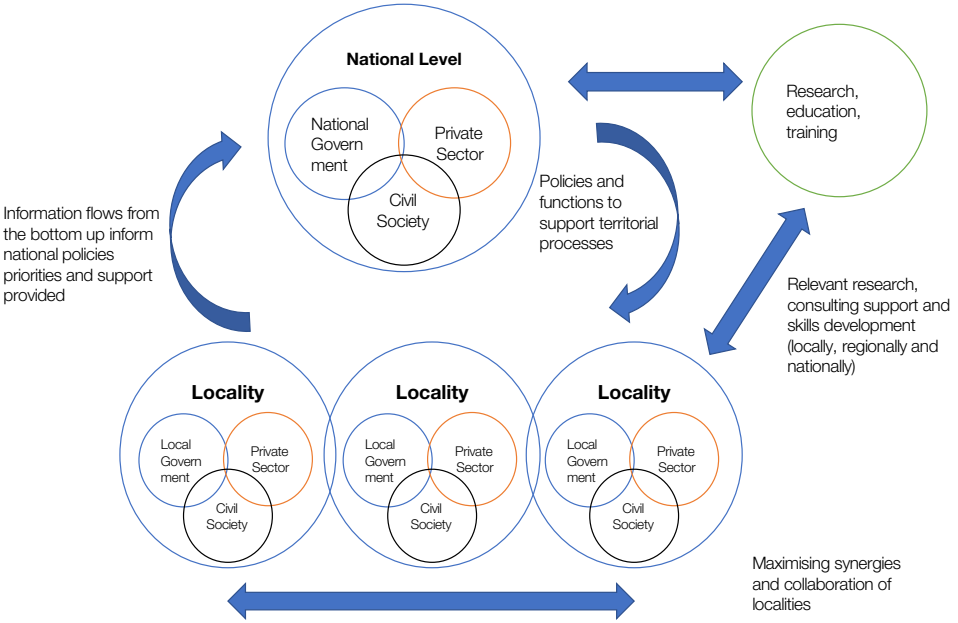
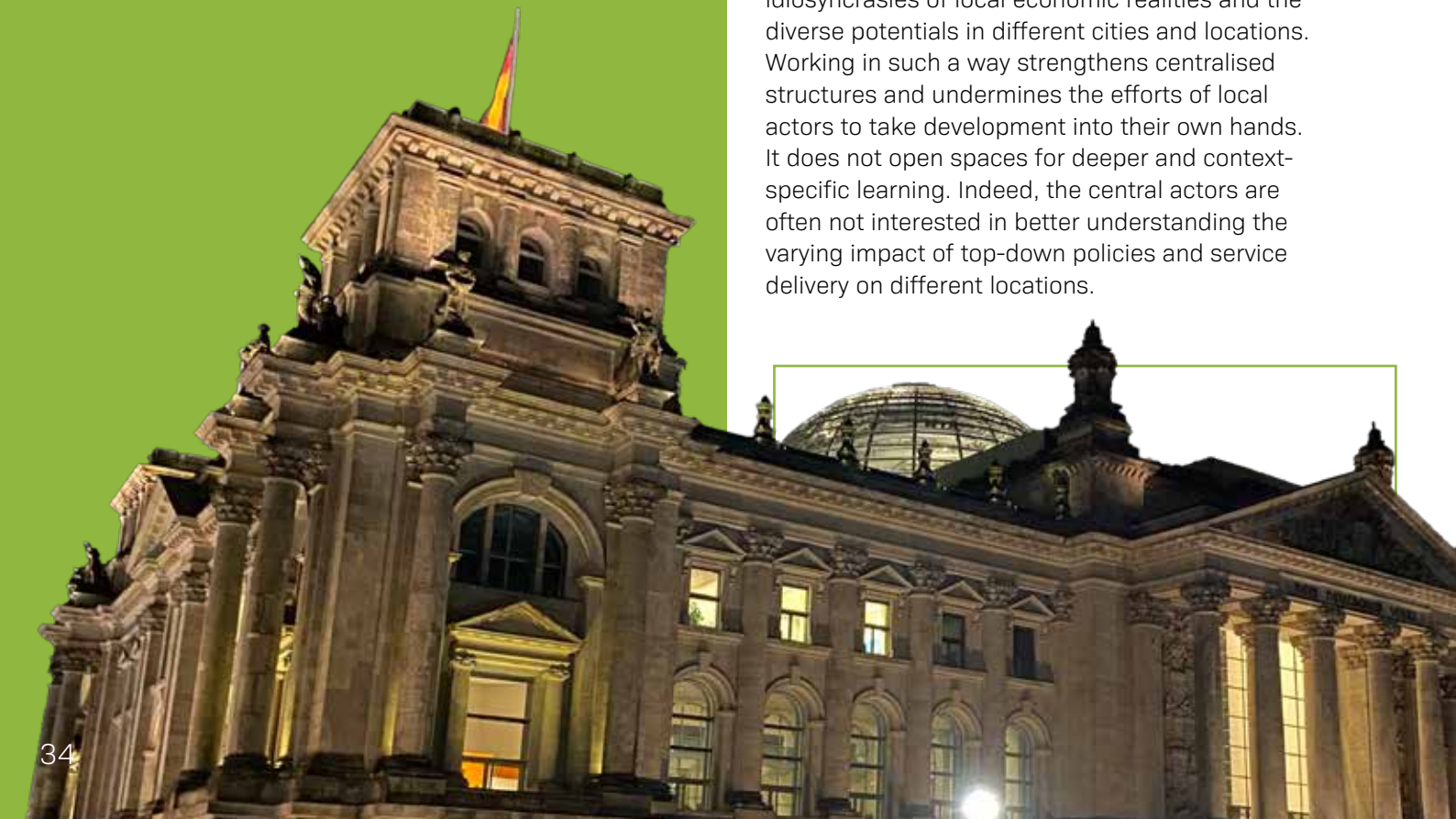


Figure 1: A schematic depiction of the LED system perspective

National-level actors design LED policies and support territorial processes by providing funding or technical expertise. Local actors engage in the LED process but also feed information back to the national level from the bottom up to inform national policy priorities and articulate the demand for the support expected from the national level. Research, education and training institutions provide relevant research and consulting support and skills development on all levels. In addition, on the local level, actors maximise synergies through exchange and collaboration between different localities, which can be facilitated by national-level actors.

Adopting this LED system perspective is helpful to counteract two dominant yet contradictory tendencies in LED. On the one hand, it complements approaches to LED that adopt a predominantly top-down logic, which can often be found in countries with centralised governance systems. In these countries we find that national-level actors, such as ministries or line agencies, understand LED as being their responsibility. They see their role in LED as developing local infrastructure, promoting nationally chosen export sectors locally, or strengthening start-ups and innovative businesses with a blanket approach. This happens without considering the idiosyncrasies of local economic realities and the diverse potentials in different cities and locations. Working in such a way strengthens centralised structures and undermines the efforts of local actors to take development into their own hands. It does not open spaces for deeper and context-specific learning. Indeed, the central actors are often not interested in better understanding the varying impact of top-down policies and service delivery on different locations.



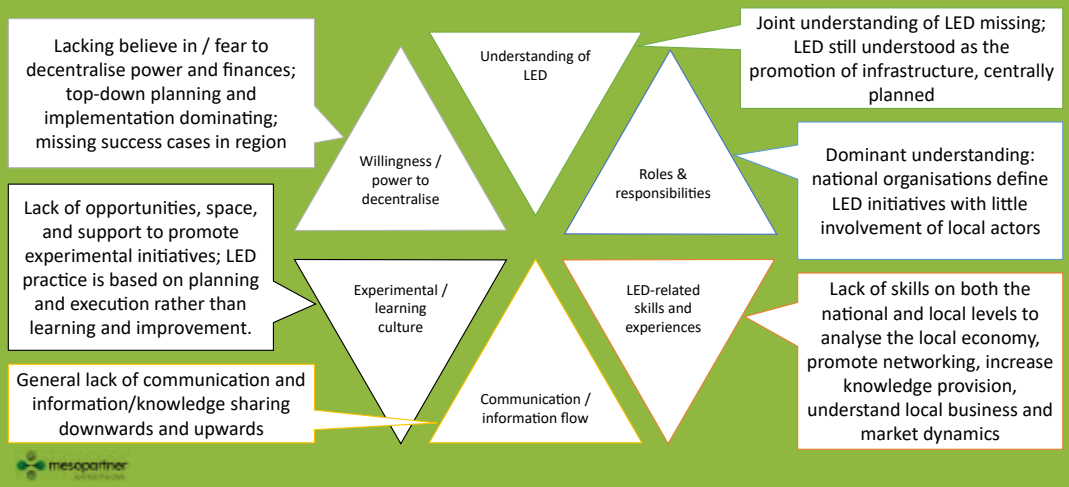
A key advantage of the LED system perspective is that it creates awareness among national-level players of the specifics of local challenges and advantages and how to respond to them. Local actors feel seen and supported by national agencies. As a result, constraints for local development that can only be addressed at the national level are tackled. Naturally, LED processes embracing the LED system perspective must involve local and national stakeholders from the beginning in a joint process of learning and discovery.

Mesopartner favours LED as a locally driven, context-sensitive and relational process that builds on the analysis of the local economic reality and the promotion of network-oriented development initiatives. At the same time, the LED system perspective creates the awareness that LED only works with the appropriate support of national-level actors, as they play an important role in enabling LED to work effectively on the local level.

Promoting the LED system perspective has been at the core of Mesopartner's engagement in Georgia since 2021. Mandated by the Swiss Cooperation Office (SCO) in Tbilisi, Mesopartner has been supporting a group of organisations to embark on a learning journey to assess the LED status in Georgia and define a strategy to strengthen LED in the country. We call this group the LED Core Group. It comprises both Georgian and international organisations, including representatives from key ministries, a relevant parliamentary committee, an association representing local governments, non-governmental organisations, private sector associations, and international donors. Given that this initiative started with a group of national-level actors, we have used the LED system perspective to conceptualise the process and guide the definition of the roles of the various actors.

As part of a stock-taking exercise that involved LED actors beyond the LED Core Group, we identified six key constraints in the LED system (see Figure 2):

Figure 2: An overview of the challenges for LED in Georgia



It became clear that the experience in LED was mainly related to local infrastructure development, the promotion of economic sectors deemed relevant by the national level, and the provision of generic national support programmes to businesses and farmers.

Based on this stocktaking, the LED Core Group and Mesopartner realised a large number of activities at the local and national levels to encourage new relationships and introduce new methodologies, tools and formats. The PACA methodology was introduced in two municipalities in western Georgia, allowing us to engage the local level closely in the LED learning journey. Innovative workshop formats of Public-Private Dialogue and a Citython followed the PACA appraisals, and the first initiatives were implemented. Finally, the 1st National Conference on the LED system in Georgia provided a platform to share experiences and to develop concrete initiatives for the next three years. All activities provided ample opportunities for the national-level stakeholders to learn how LED works on the ground and how they can support local stakeholders to overcome jointly identified challenges. We expect this to strengthen the relationships among actors at the local level and between local and national actors.

Our experiences and learning will be taken up by a 12-year LED project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), which started in the second half of 2022.

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06

Let's reimagine place together

Introduction

In November 2021, Mesopartner and a group of friends organised an online dialogue series. We invited a diverse group to jointly reimagine what we mean by "place" and how we approach this concept.

Mesopartner has a long history of supporting place-based development. As a firm, we have developed a widely used approach to Local and Regional Economic Development (LRED). "Place" has always played an important role for us as we believe territories are central to all development efforts (see AR Article: AR 2015/Article 1).

Places are always made up of the people and communities living in them. The reality in places is continuously changing; they are ecologies that are evolving, not machines that can be repaired. Vibrant communities come together in dialogue, not on the outside, but inside the challenges and muddles of people's lives, connecting from person to person, continuously learning together. Healthy and vital relationships between people and shared practices within a community provide the figurative soil from which enriching and nourishing initiatives can grow. These initiatives help the community to thrive and make their places more friendly and liveable.

We therefore wanted to explore how we could not only contribute with frameworks and processes which people in places could use to foster their economic development, but also how we could engage people to strengthen the vitality and vibrancy of the places in which they live. For us, relational vitality is a basis for, and ideally goes together with, any development.

The question we asked in the dialogue series was: ***How can we contribute to the vitality and vibrancy of the places and communities in which we work?***

Warm Data

The format of the dialogue series was built on Warm Data, and the associated People Need People (PNP) process. Warm Data is a living practice that Nora Bateson of the International Bateson Institute (IBI) developed. Marcus Jenal and Frank Waeltring are trained Warm Data hosts. We also invited some friends who are trained hosts as well to co-host the dialogue series with us.

Warm Data invites us to embrace this "trans-contextuality" of life and see its inherent potential. The Reimagining Place dialogue series invited people to meet the complexity of these challenges with the richness and resourcefulness of their full human potential.

The Dialogue series

The series took place in five online sessions in November 2021. Each session, except the last one, started with a story related by one of the hosts, and then the participants were invited to have conversations inspired by a question that was shared with them for the session. At the end of each session and during the fifth session, the participants were invited to reflect on the conversations and share learning. How has this turned out?

How has this turned out

It is difficult to evaluate Warm Data practices – one could even say that it would constitute an act of violence against the very nature of the practice. So instead of trying to search for the effects or outcomes of the Reimagining Place series, we would like to share our personal reflections and those of some of our co-hosts.

Marcus Jenal's view

What has stuck in my mind from the dialogue series is the shift in tone in the conversations. Given that most of the participants were partners, collaborators or clients of Mesopartner, the initial tone was professional. The aesthetics of the conversations were characterised by an objective assessment of the questions and presentation of arguments from one's point of view. As the conversations went on, the tone and aesthetics shifted. The tone became much more personal. People started to talk about their own lives and their personal experiences. The meaning of place shifted from something to intervene into something we live in.

This is the beauty of Warm Data practices. They soften us, the participants, into our humanity; they loosen the constraints of professionalism and role and the façade that we erect to show what we think others expect. But in the end, we are all human, and the richest conversations occur when we do not withhold our humanity but fully engage.

If we managed to create a space and an atmosphere where people were more human in their interactions with each other, even in our small series, what effect could this practice have on a place? What would happen if we brought together people from a place in a series of dialogues, not with a specific outcome in mind, but to connect with them in their humanity and thus widen what could be discussed.

Since even the small group we brought together in the series moved from just sharing professional arguments to sharing personal stories, what effect would it have when people in a place started to share more personal stories?

Frank Waeltring's view

I was excited to share this PNP dialogue approach with colleagues, friends and partners to see whether it affected them in the way it affected me and if it could open a new space for connecting, talking and sharing openly about our daily work and the personal aspects connected with it. "Reimagining place" tackles emotions such as belonging, individual histories, path dependencies of local societies, relationships experienced and conflicts. When I am "in my place", I feel entwined in it with all my being and life history. Nonetheless, sometimes in my work in my own or other places, I experience the tools, methodologies and skills I transfer as a protective shield or as a grip to maintain control over myself, my role before others and partially the process. "Being in the map and not in the territory", a phrase I picked up from Nora Bateson, makes total sense. Finally, our core work is about relationship building, addressing people's feelings towards their place and discovering why they are interested in putting creativity and development efforts into it. Reaching towards these sentiments should become part of our work. We can only do this if we are part of this process as individuals or humans, not just as experts. This also requires us to put aside the protective shields we often like to use. It rather requires discovering what is really going on between people and representative bodies. Encouraging openness through dialogue

I am thankful that it managed to open a new way of communication between the participants and us. I realised again that this way of talking to each other is needed more in our sphere of work, between each other as colleagues and with partners in the places where we work. We need to move out of our expert role more often. The pure expert view could undermine a real discovery process. In other words: embracing the territory versus embracing a plan enriches what we see and discover, creating new relationships relevant to reimagining the place.

Roger Duck's view

The freer people feel as they share stories in PNP sessions, the more alive the process becomes.

This series was framed by an invitation to "reimagine the role of community and place in development". Any intention such as this inevitably reduces variety by focusing on what is talked about. This can work well for attracting a certain audience but risks throttling the life out of emergent possibility.

As a warm data host, I take it that conscious awareness is just the tiniest glimmer of the unimaginably complex vitality of Mind and Nature. Warm Data hosting opens the widest possible space for people to find their way into new ways of knowing in their own ways. I have come to understand more deeply that learning together does not mean learning the same things, and much of the learning may not be expressible in language.

I can only comment on my own learning, much of which has submerged below awareness with the passing of time. I retain the sense, however, that the four PNP sessions had an aliveness and fluidity, which did not feel overly constrained by the defined topic. I sometimes sense a "softening" of my certainties in PNPs. This can be uncomfortable, but I sense a settling over time into a deeper appreciation of aliveness-in-togetherness. During this experience, I tried to capture something of this movement out of separation and into vitality with a poem, framed by the theme of reimagining place.

My place is the space that I live in

Distinct from those places apart.

To cut up a space creates places

That tidily cover the chart.

I've fallen in love with my models

The territory lost in the maps

Extraordinary places undreamt of

Unseen in the shimmering gaps.

Reality thought of as static

Where images hang in a room

Conceptions of up, down and sideways

Just fingers that hint at the moon.

Our thinking invisibly structures

A pattern that holds us in place

Life disrupts

In tangled touches.

Through purple as deep as the evening

A whisper of yellow gives birth

To losing this love of the models

And plunging in love with the earth.

Togethering softly I settle,

In sanity, into myself

A home where my being feels normal

A place of untameable health.

In rhythms of wildness

We step into awe

For nothing is ever

Just that and no more.

Emily Stewart's view

As a member of Generation Rent, I have a gnawing sense that the inquiry into reimaging place is existential. It returns back (and goes forward) to ancestry, to the tears in the fabric of our paths, the practice and experience of community, the village, mutual aid and gentrification. This series was an easy invitation to accept, not least because of the joy of co-hosting with the souls alongside me. Still, because the relationship to place – as a muse, concept, location, space, invitation, idea and verb – is one, I believe, that the 21st century is asking us to play with. Joining an organisation's invitation is particularly interesting, as we make an agreement as hosts to go in blind. As usual, I had no idea who was in the room, who of the (I'm sure) very impressive attendees did what, or where, or what their relationship was to Mesopartner. This is the style of labs – the lack of roles extends to how we observe ourselves as hosts. So, I was not able to censor, just as this inquiry occurred within me, between me and others, and among the group as a whole. Poetry emerged, as it often does (see above), by giving it space. That is our role as hosts – to somehow find a way to allow and request and set a tone of a place that can welcome in the contour lines and the old paths, the rivers and the source. From this, I think we can begin to find a way.

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07

Implications of migration for territorial development

Migration is essential to human development and has contributed towards altering societies and economies for thousands of years. Depending on various factors discussed in this article, migration can be a blessing or a curse for a country's or a sub-national location's development trajectory.

Since migration is a vast and sensitive topic, this article focuses on the interrelation between migration and local economic development (LED). It discusses a few key questions: How are locations economically and socially affected by out-migration or immigration? How can LED policy encourage

immigration in the first place? What can LED policy do to respond to wanted or unwanted migration? How can an undesirable migration situation be turned into a locational advantage?

Reasons for migration

Territories cannot be moved, but people can move between territories. Many people commute daily between home and work. But people also leave their birthplaces and long-term homes to live in other places in the same or a different country. Continuous migration from rural areas to cities (urbanisation) often occurs within certain countries, predominantly towards rapidly growing metropolitan areas.

The reasons for migration are manifold. A distinction can be made between pull and push factors. The pull factors refer to place utility, such as the real or assumed advantages of economic opportunities, quality of education or general living standards. On the other hand, push factors motivate or even force people to leave their place of origin. Push factors can be defined as a search for safety and security not offered in the home country. Push factors often originate in the lack of prospects or man-made and natural disasters such as wars or famine. Persecution due to political views, sexual orientation or religion is a particular cause of refugee migration. In the future, cross-border climate migration will become increasingly relevant. For now, 75% of climate refugees move within the borders of their own countries, but this will likely change (World Bank, 2022).

Migration and LED

Territories compete for resources, including human resources, therefore the attraction of human capital and the resulting migration of human resources is an inherent objective of LED. Whether the outcome is more positive or negative for a location depends on various factors, including the motivation for migration, the number and skills level of the migrants, the absorption capacity of the local economy, the socio-economic situation in the destination country (unemployment, wage growth, inflation), the “welcome culture” of the destination location and the subsequent in- or outflow of other resources, especially financial resources.

The development of territories, such as villages, cities and regions, can be positively influenced by migration. Richard Florida (2012) argues that territories offering employment opportunities

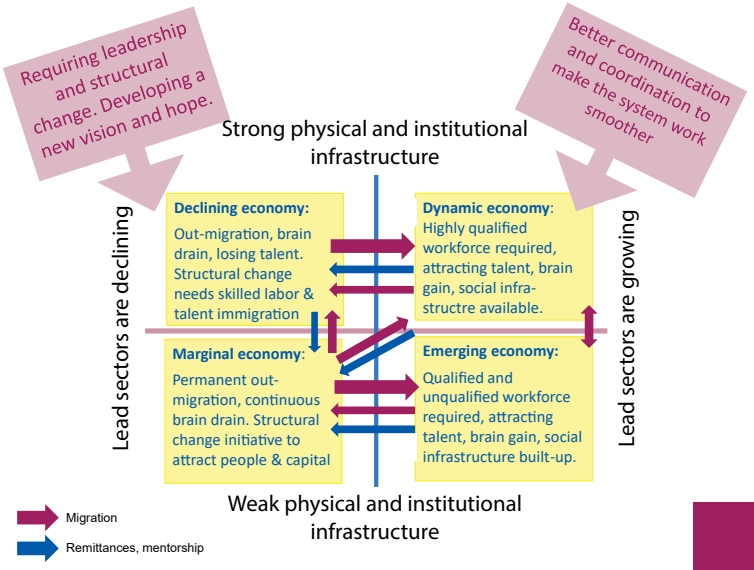
attract migrants, who contribute to economic activity and tax revenue through employment and consumption, triggering a virtuous development cycle. Therefore economic development policy at the national and sub-national levels often focuses on attracting talented, skilled and creative migrants to boost the economy and counteract the impact of ageing populations.

Territorial innovation systems and clusters frequently benefit from the cultural differences of migrants, as diversity promotes innovation (Parrilli, 2019). The entrepreneurial spirit of immigrants is often particularly pronounced. Immigrants are about 80% more likely to find a company than native-born residents (Azoulay et al., 2022). Overall, immigrant territories benefit from brain gain in the long run.

Conversely, the territories from which people migrate often suffer, as it is mostly the younger and economically more capable people who leave. Territorial development studies refer to this phenomenon as a brain drain. The outflow of high performers and consumers shrinks local economies and can promote a vicious circle of economic decline or even marginalisation of a location. Population loss harms municipal fiscal strength and cuts resources for economic development activities.

Relevance of migration for different types of regions

The framework of Typology of Regions helps to analyse the desire for and the impact of migration on territories. The Typology of Regions describes four archetypes of local/regional development realities in a two-by-two matrix structure (see AR 2018, Article 2). The matrix distinguishes between the level of institutional and physical infrastructure on the y-axis and the performance of leading economic sectors on the x-axis. This results in four local economic realities: dynamic, emerging, declining and marginalised. Migration plays out differently in each of these scenarios.



Migration reflection in the four Types-of-Region framework

On the right side of the matrix, emerging and dynamic regions with growing lead sectors require a highly qualified workforce. They are usually busy attracting talent from elsewhere and experience net immigration and brain gain. Social infrastructure for integrating migrants is already available (dynamic regions) or is currently established (emerging regions).

The regions on the left side of the matrix suffer from out-migration and brain drain. Due to the historical (marginal regions) or recent (declining regions) lack of economic success, these regions lose talent and skilled labour, who move to emerging and more dynamic locations. However, declining or marginalised places need structural change efforts, which again require the immigration of qualified workers and entrepreneurs in the newly targeted sectors. The LED policy must set the right incentives to attract capital and human resources to bring back or start economic success in such regions. This is a challenging endeavour, as LED officers in the Ruhr Valley in Germany (converting from steel and coal to tourism and healthcare services) or Bilbao, Spain (converting from steel and shipbuilding industries to culture and tourism)

know very well. Retraining parts of the existing workforce and attracting skilled workers from other places and countries are prerequisites for successful economic conversion efforts.

Local policy responses to migration

For territories benefitting from immigration, the issue of successful integration arises. A question that often arises is how the previous resident population reacts to immigrants. Is there a "welcome culture" or rather resentment towards foreigners? Do similarities or differences in the cultural context of the migrants' origin and destination matter? The interterritorial distribution of migrants within their target location is also essential.

Integration policy measures include the promotion of financial literacy, language skills training, setting up job search platforms specifically for migrants and refugees and using social media to provide relevant information to the migrant community and the local receiving community, including potential future employees.

Failure to quickly integrate migrants into the local labour market and offer the necessary social infrastructure (housing, schools and health facilities) could result in high social costs for the receiving community and may be socially explosive.

Turning undesired migration into an advantage

The future relationship with their emigrants, who have settled elsewhere, can become an asset for territories losing population. Successful entrepreneurs and employees often have emotional ties to their home regions and transfer remittances to their family members who have

remained. Successful entrepreneurs often act as investors and business mentors in their countries of origin. Diaspora networks play an important role here. In this way, the brain drain can be at least partially transformed into a brain and capital regain.

In countries with large numbers of overseas foreign workers, such as Nepal or the Philippines, service industries such as banks or insurance companies target the finances of the out-migrants living abroad. National or local governments encourage the receivers of remittances to productively invest the non-consumed share of the incoming payments, including investment in their children's education. In countries such as Nepal, primarily young men emigrate for work, resulting in a "feminisation" of local economies, with both positive and negative impacts on the local economic performance.

Return migration could be observed during COVID-19, such as in Nepal or Albania. Since the pandemic ended, this trend is reverting again. Active LED policies, for example in Albania, target returnees by offering capacity building and job opportunities.

Even though attracting immigrants from within the country or abroad plays a vital role in LED, regions could always consider raising the local skill levels while encouraging potential out-migrants to remain by increasing opportunities through conventional regional policy action.

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Mesopartner's strategic clients 2021-2022

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EDA Development Agency Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina
GIZ Local and Provincial Economic Development (LPED), Project, Nepal
GIZ Sector Project Sustainable Economic Policy and Private Sector Promotion, Bonn
GIZ Project Sustainable economic development and promotion of SMEs at the sub-national level, Peru
GIZ Vocational Training and Food Security (VTFS) Project in Eastern Sudan
GIZ Sustainable Economic Development Program Uzbekistan
GPQI, Global Project Quality Infrastructure (GPQI), Berlin
HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation, Switzerland
Interamerican Development Bank, IDB, Washington DC
International Finance Corporation (IFC), Sri Lanka
International Trade Center (ITC), Geneva
Ministry of Industry, Commerce & Mipymes (MICM) of the Dominican Republic, National Council for Quality (CODOCA)
Oxford Policy Management – DFID Private Sector Development Decision Support Unit in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)
PTB, Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt, National Metrology Institute, International Technical Cooperation, Germany
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, Employment and Income Network, Bern, Switzerland
Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS), South Africa
University of Leipzig, Germany
WEST GmbH-Wirtschaftsförderung Kreis Steinfurt
World Bank Group, Finance, Competitiveness, and Innovation, Washington DC

We also provide a range of direct coaching, advisory and facilitation services to companies and other organizations not included in this list.

Countries in which

Mesopartner was active in 2021-2022

Albania
Argentina
Barbados
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Colombia
Costa Rica
Ecuador
Egypt
Germany
Georgia
Guatemala
Guyana
Honduras
Indonesia
Kenya
Kiribati
Macedonia
Malaysia
Mauretania
Mexico
Moldova
Myanmar
Nepal
Peru
Solomon Islands
Somalia
South Africa
Sri Lanka
St. Kitts and Nevis
Switzerland
Trinidad and Tobago
Tuvalu
Uruguay
USA
Vanuatu
Vietnam

The partners

Shawn Cunningham

Ulrich Harmes - Liedke

Marcus Jenal

Christian Schoen

Frank Wältring

SHAWN CUNNINGHAM

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Born 1973. PhD Business Administration, 2009 and MBA, 2001 from the Potchefstroom Business School, North-West University, South Africa. Based in Pretoria, South Africa.

Based in Pretoria, South Africa.

Main fields of expertise:

- Advisory support to leaders in government, business and academia to make decisions despite complexity and uncertainty
- Meso resilience and how societies form and adapt meso organisations
- Enabling search, discovery, experimentation and innovation process facilitation
- Technological capability and modernisation through Science, Technology and Innovation systems promotion

Working experience:

Since 2008: Partner in Mesopartner
2015 - current: Part time Faculty Member (Innovation, Strategy & Technology Management), Stellenbosch Business School, Executive Education
2010 – 2018: Research Associate (Innovation Systems & Policy) at the Institute for Economic Research on Innovation, Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa
2003 – 2007: Senior expert in the GTZ South Africa Local Economic Development and Business Development Services Programme
2001 – 2002: Worked in a South African development agency National Manufacturing Advisory Centre Programme
1996 – 2001: Own business in the IT sector

ULRICH HARMES-LIEDTKE

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Born 1965. PhD in political science and economics (Bremen 1999), MA in Economics (Hamburg 1991). Based in Bad Homburg, Germany.

Main fields of expertise:

- Territorial development, Cluster and value chain promotion
- Quality infrastructure
- Green and Circular Economy
- Process facilitation and social presencing

Working experience:

Founding partner of Mesopartner (2003)
1997 – 2002: ISA Consult GmbH, Bochum (Germany), senior consultant
1996 –1997: Foundation CIREM, Barcelona (Spain), junior consultant
1991 – 1994: University of Bremen, research project on regional development in Europe, researcher.

MARCUS JENAL
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Born 1980. Diploma (MSc) in Environmental Sciences from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zürich, 2007.
Based in Gateshead, United Kingdom

Main fields of expertise:

- Adaptive management and decision-making under conditions of uncertainty
- Continuous exploration and learning in teams and organisations
- Monitoring and evaluation of systemic change initiatives
- Narrative and participatory sensemaking
- Market Systems Development
- Knowledge network and community of practice facilitation

Working experience:

Since 2015: Partner of Mesopartner
2014-2017: Lead, monitoring, impact evaluation and evidence, the BEAM Exchange
2011-present: Member of the backstopping team for the employment and income network of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).
2011-2015: Independent consultant in market systems development and systemic approaches
2009-2011: Programme officer at Intercooperation (now HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation), Banglades

CHRISTIAN SCHOEN
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Born 1965. MA in Economics (Bayreuth / Munich, 1991).
Based in Hanoi, Vietnam

Main fields of expertise:
- Local and regional economic development
- Value chain and cluster promotion
- Green economic development
- National Quality Infrastructure system assessment and promotion
- Business/investment climate surveys and competitiveness rankings
- Program and project design and evaluations
- Process facilitation

Working experience:
2003 Founding partner of Mesopartner
2002 – 2003: Freelance economic development consultant
2001 – 2002: Fraunhofer Gesellschaft e.V., Jakarta (Indonesia), PERISKOP project coordinator and senior consultant
1999 – 2000: Fraunhofer Management GmbH, Munich (Germany), senior consultant
1992 – 1999: Dorsch Consult Ingenieurgesellschaft mbH, Munich (Germany), consultant

FRANK WÄLTRING
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Born 1968. MA in social sciences with specialisation in economics (Duisburg, 1999).

Based in Bremen and Elte, Germany

Main fields of expertise:

- Promotion of local innovation and network systems in rural and urban spaces
- Promotion of smart city and smart rural area concepts linking competitiveness with green economic development
- Promoting green transformation processes in cities and regions
- Initiating visioning processes to reimagine places
- Learning from and with Germany: Knowledge Transfer from insights into innovative approaches in the German eco-system via study tours, visits and research papers
- Promotion of innovative support instruments like innovation hubs, coworking spaces and research labs

Working experience:

Since 2004: partner in Mesopartner
2016 to 2018: Lecturer at Jacobs-University Bremen on Development Economics and Innovation Economics
2007 – present: Lecturer at the SEPT Master Course from the University of Leipzig in Leipzig, Hanoi and Ho-Chi-Minh-City on the topic of Regional Competitiveness
2003 – 2004: Private sector development specialist at GTZ headquarters, special focus on South-East Europe
2003 – 2018: Consultant on main fields of expertise in developing countries, EU and Germany
2001 – 2003: Junior professional in GTZ private sector development programme in Honduras
1999 – 2001: Researcher in joint INEF/IDS local cluster and global value chain
Born 1974. Moster“s degree in Business Adminisirotion, North-West University.

Mesopartner Administration

ANNELIEN CUNNINGHAM

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Annelien provides administrative and content support to Mesopartner. Her main tasks involve organising events such as the Summer Academy in Berlin, maintaining the website, managing the client database and customer communication. Her background in business enables her to provide content and fieldwork-related support to Mesopartner.

Mesopartner Associates in 2021-22

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Born 1969. Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po Aix), France, 1992.
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ZDRAVKO MIOVCIC

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Born 1958. Master's Degree in Management with specialisation in solving development problems (UN University for Peace, ECPD Belgrade, 1991). Founder and Director of Eda - Enterprise Development Agency in Banjaluka.
Based in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia.

Mesopartner Publications in 2021/22

Canelas-Santiesteban, E., Harmes-Liedtke, U., Valqui, A., Flores-Campos, M., Lugo, G., Liewald, W. and Rivadeneira, M. 2022. Quality Infrastructure for the Circular Economy in Latin America and the Caribbean. Quality Infrastructure Of The Americas Papers. QICA.

Cunningham, S. 2022a. Additive Manufacturing: 3D and 4D Printing. Profiling Technologies at the Frontier. Profile 1, Pretoria: Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS).

Cunningham, S. 2022b. Augmented Reality in the Manufacturing Sector. Profiling Technologies at the Frontier. Profile 4, Pretoria: Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS).

Cunningham, S. 2022c. How Do We Connect ICT with Digital Transformation in Development Work? Helvetas Mosaic. Scholl, M. (Ed.). Helvetas Eastern Europe. Bern.

Cunningham, S. 2022d. Information Processing: Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Big Data. Profiling Technologies at the Frontier. Profile 3, Pretoria: Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS).

Cunningham, S. 2022e. The Internet of Things. Profiling Technologies at the Frontier. Profile 2, Pretoria: Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS).

Cunningham, S. and Levin, S. 2021. Technological Change and the DTIC: Innovation in Industry. Policy Brief. Technological Change. Pretoria: Trade & Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS).

Di Battista, A., Lee, S. and Zahidi, S. 2021. Markets of Tomorrow: Pathways to a New Economy. Geneva: World Economic Forum (WEF).

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Harmes-Liedkte, U. 2021. Quality Infrastructure in Brazil. Pretoria: Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS).

Harmes-Liedkte, U. 2022. Quality Infrastructure: National Systems and International Context. In Normungs- und Standardisierungsstrategien in China und Indien. Freimuth, J., Kaiser, S. and Schädler, M. (Eds.), Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.

Harmes-Liedkte, U. and Di Mateo, O. 2021. Global Quality Infrastructure Index - Report 2020. Duisburg: Mesopartner.

Harmes-Liedkte, U., Di Mateo, O. and Muñoz, J.J. 2022. GQII Report 2021: Tends, Comparision & Use of Data. GQII Data & Analytics Paper. Buenos Aires and Bad Homburg: Mesopartner.

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Khakurel, D., Baidya, N. and Schoen, C. 2022. Participatory Appraisal of Competitive Advantage (PACA). Customised to the Nepali context. Khumaltar: Local and Provincial Economic Development Project implemented by GIZ.

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UNIDO and Cunningham, S. 2022. Micronarratives of change and progress. Improving the quality of essential and vegetable oils in South Africa., Vienna: The UNIDO Global Quality and Standards Programme South Africa (GQSP-SA).

Waeltring, F. 2022. Climate-neutral Cities: learning from inspiring implementation examples. A review of the Connective Cities/COVID-19 program's Climate-neutral Urban Development led by Mesopartner. Duisburg: Mesopartner.

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WEF. 2022. How can bold government work with the private sector to create the markets of tomorrow?, Geneva: World Economic Forum.

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