Abstract

Purpose – The aim of the paper is to investigate the emerging and subtle role of the intermediaries or knowledge brokers and how to increase the learning and development of the innovation intermediaries with a governance perspective.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper is the elaboration of the Mintzberg idea of rebuilding companies as communities to foster innovation in communities by using specially designed meeting format called systemic meeting.

Findings – There are emerging patterns of the firms creating value networks to accelerate innovation and share knowledge. Intermediaries or knowledge brokers acting as an interface between seekers and solvers will need different mindset or approach to innovation with more of governance perspective than that of government.

Originality/value – This paper extends the understanding of the intermediaries and proposed a new systemic approach to the Innovation intermediaries.

Key words – intermediaries, knowledge broker, open innovation, communities, storytelling, governance.

Introduction

Innovation is recognized key driver of the firm’s growth, profitability, competitiveness and sustainability (Drucker, 1988; Christensen, 1997; Denton, 1999, Jon and Johan, 1999; Darroch, 2002; Oetinger, 2004; Simme, 2008). The reason being, the innovative companies respond to the market challenges better and faster than the non-innovative firms (Jimenez and Valle, 2008). Access, management and internalization of the external knowledge into the internal processes of the companies become the source of the Sustainable competitive advantage (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990; Nonaka, konno and Toyama: 2001; Verganti and Buganza, 2009).

The theoretical approach to systems of innovation is judged central to what is sometimes referred to as “Broad view on innovation”, based on the elements and their relationship (Lundvall, 1995), innovation performance (Asheim and Isaksen 1997: Nelson & Rosenberg,
With the new business landscape characterized by the “Open innovation” (chesbrough, 2003) cracking the old monarchy of the closed innovation, connectivity and collaboration (Howells, 1999) is the key for the growth and survival in today’s turbulent markets. The creation of value networks with multiple nodes and links will not only create benefits but also increase complexities. These complexities will give rise to a new type of the system actors that can jointly be called as Intermediaries (Watkins and Horley, 1986), third parties (Mantel and Rosegger, 1987), Bridger’s (Bessent and rush, 1995), knowledge brokers (Hargadon, 1998 and 2002; Lomas, 2007), innovation brokers (Klerkx et al., 2009), superstructure organization (Lynn et al., 1996), Innomediaries (Mohabir et al. 2003), infomediaries (Cillo, 2005) and innovation intermediaries (Howells, 2006).

Chesbrough (2006) and P. Frank and D. Kathleen (2009) studied the growing roles of intermediaries in the emerging open innovation landscape. Intermediaries with a range of new business models provide linkage services of various sorts, for IP trade, for commercialisations of patents (Howells, 2006) and more generally for creations of different types of innovation partnerships and communities (Lynn et al., 1996). The paper puts the development of the SFIN cluster organisation into this open innovation and intermediary framework. It shows how we used the evaluation and foresight exercises to develop both a conceptual model and a method for intermediary development.

**Innovation intermediary**

An intermediary has many different systems actors working collectively on diversity of tasks within innovation processes (Frank and Kathleen, 2009). An intermediary in knowledge system defined by Smedlund (2006, p. 210) as “an organization that functions in the midst of the users and producers of knowledge”.

Howells (2006) defined innovation intermediary as: “An organization or body that acts as an agent or broker in any aspect of the innovation process between two or more parties. Such intermediary activities include: helping to provide information about potential collaborators; brokering a transaction between two or more parties; acting as a mediator, or go-between; bodies or organizations that are already collaborating; and helping find advice, funding and support for the innovation outcomes of such collaborations.”

An innovation broker (Winch and Courtney, 2007) is “an organization acting as a member of a network of actors that is focused neither on the organization nor the implementation of innovations, but on enabling other organizations to innovate”.

Development of intermediaries over time and their different roles in innovation systems and processes investigated by Howell (2006):

- Intermediaries’ initial role was the diffusion of innovation and technology transfer and also called Change agents (Hägerstrand 1952; Rogers 1962). (Watkins and Horley, 1986) studied the technology transfer between MNE’s and SME’s and their roles in negotiations and contractual skills (Shohert and Prevezer 1996).
• Studies on the innovation management suggest that Intermediaries can be seen an organizations dealing not only with the technology and knowledge transfer but also helping in the transformation of these ideas (Hargadon and Sutton, 1997).
• Intermediaries also exists in the innovation systems and networks frameworks with different perspectives as intermediary firm (Stankiewicz, 1995), superstructure organizations (Lynn et al., 1996) linking for the information flow.
• Literature on intermediaries as service organization in context of Knowledge Intensive Business Service (KIBS) explored their growth (Miles, 2000; Muller and Zenker, 2001) continuous interactions of the organizations and their clients (Howells, 2006).

Roles of innovation Intermediaries

The basic functions of the intermediaries (Klerkx and Leeuwis, 2008; Lente et al., 2003) are:

**Demand articulation:** Enunciating the innovation need and demands with respect to technology transfer, knowledge, policy and funding.

**Network formation:** Creation and facilitation of the value networks among the different systems entities.

**Innovation process management:** Alignment of the heterogeneous networked actors enhancing the learning in the innovation process.

Howells (2006) identified the diversified and holistic roles by intermediaries as: Foresight and diagnostics, Scanning and information processing, Knowledge processing and combination/recombination, gate keeping and brokering, testing and validation, accreditation, validation and regulation, protecting the results, commercialization and evaluation of outcomes.

The network approach to intermediaries working on higher level of innovation systems and their functions (Howells, 2006) are: *discussion and analysis of intermediaries is that they operate in a simple triadic 'one-to-one-to-one' basis between, for example, a supplier and its customer in some kind of vertical relationship. However, in distributed innovation systems, intermediaries are increasingly involved in more complex relationships, such as 'many-to-one-to-one', 'one-to-one to-many', 'many-to-one-to-many', or even 'many to-many-to-many' collaborations, forming both vertical and horizontal relationships in increasingly distributed innovation networks.*

An intermediary organization can also provide one to one services to different organizations without the involvement of the third parties (Howells, 2006), providing technical and research assistance. Not only organizations, but individuals, research institutes, trade unions can also play the intermediary roles (Mantel and Rosegger, 1987; Braun, 1993). Universities and networks of universities are the emerging intermediaries fostering innovation in different regions. Callon (1994) discussed the heterogeneous nature of the intermediaries. Majority of the studies focussed on the private or non-private organizations (Howells, 2006) narrowing the roles of the intermediary. The paper will contribute to that more complex and diversified nature of the innovation intermediaries involving different actors in the innovations process.
There is also growing attention for systemic intermediaries (Klerkx and Leeuwis, 2009) filling the network gaps in regional, national or international innovation systems. Innovation intermediaries also impart systemic values in policy perspective in innovation systems (Howells, 2006; Klerkx and Leeuwis, 2009) by bridging gaps and animateur role in collaboration and enhancing connections. But there is a need to develop the tools for the complex interaction of the actors in the innovation intermediaries. This paper will present “systemic meeting” as a tool for bridging gaps and enhancing collaborations the innovation intermediaries and that has been successfully tested in SFIN.

**Systemic meeting**

**Systemic meetings as conscious search meetings**

The systemic meeting starts up with (1) storytelling, followed by (2) interpretation by dialogue through identification of patterns and choices in the story told and (3) identification of possible innovations and entrepreneurial actions stemming from the recognition of patterns and choices, individual actions as well as actions organised as projects or in other ways.

As a next step (4) a higher systemic level perspective on patterns, choices and actions is provided, by participants with such higher level roles in the community. The final step (5) is a shared – all perspectives together – reflection on the meeting thus hold and its significance for innovation community development (Exhibit 1)
Exhibit 1. Systemic meeting

The design of the systemic meeting is based on systems theory, learning theory and organisational theory. The meeting also helps develop such theory, in our case packaged as innovation theory. Complexity theory – the theory of complex adaptive systems as it is sometimes called (also a sort of an innovation theory package) – makes a distinction between three “zones”: the “order” zone, the “complexity” zone and the “chaos” zone. With its base in spontaneous storytelling, as opposed to planned story telling as discussed in for example Denning (2004), it opens up for working constructively in the complexity zone.

In recent years story telling has gained interest as a tool for enhancing the communications, learning and organizational change (Armstrong, 1992). The systemic meeting goes further than this though. The systemic meeting is also designed to surface the order zone connections, which in our case means the knowledge service connections of each of the five parts of the systemic meeting.

The basic idea about story interpretations through dialogue is reflection based on individual concerns. Participants, according to our experience, will focus on what is important to them. Already the selection of a story by one of the participants will signal concerns regarding daily life experiences. It is part of the meeting set up (see information base sheet), as we have practiced it, not to decide upon subject matters or stories in advance, but rather to have them forwarded by the energies in the particular group of participants that have come to meet. As mentioned, open invitation is another part of the set up. And the importance signalling, again due to the meeting method, will continue during the course of the meeting, and also afterwards in the actions factually taken, as well as by the ones proclaimed to be taken during the meeting.

All eight stories of the evaluation and foresight exercises (four in each) were end consumer stories or strongly end consumer related stories. As mentioned, leaders didn’t meet in peer groups around leadership issues. Instead they met in mixed groups relating leadership issues or challenges to “moments of truth” (Normann 2000) not only in product development, but also in everyday consumer situations. This was also the learning base for developing high level innovation system services, like the evaluation and foresight services.

We saw that innovation-systemic knowledge could easily be packaged in Web questionnaire evaluations and Web basket foresights. The problem was not a lack of knowledge but a lack of learning. We also saw that people were more than willing to discuss their experiences, more willing than reading texts, and that such discussions could incur learning. The problem was how to make this discussion based learning supported by knowledge.

Intermediaries’ role in innovation: Skåne food innovation network (SFIN) Case
This paper discusses the possibilities to strengthen innovation communities, such as industry clusters and regional innovation systems, by the aid of innovation governance. The discussion is based on experiences from two exercises within the Win-Growth program Innovation at Interfaces (IaI), one evaluation exercise in 2006, and one foresight exercise in 2007. IaI is now in its 5th year of supporting the Food Cluster of Skåne, Sweden. The program is channelled through the cluster organisation Skåne Food Innovation Network\(^1\) (SFIN for short).

Research and development on innovation has been a major part of the IaI program since its start. It was therefore natural to participate in 2006 in the Vinnova\(^2\) funded effort on the part of SiQ\(^3\) to develop a Web questionnaire tool and procedure for self evaluations of innovation programs, a participation which came to co-shape what we refer to as the evaluation exercise. For the same reason, the program also took part in 2007 in the EU-funded four-party/four-country foresight development project called “Foresight Lab”, a participation that came to design much of the foresight exercise.

This paper is not primarily a report on the two exercises. Such reports have been published elsewhere (Gälldin-Holmberg 2008 and Jönsson and Sarv 2007), and we therefore restrict ourselves to brief summaries. The primary purpose of this paper is instead to reflect upon the later developments of the SFIN cluster organisation, based on the exercise experiences and other developments. More specifically the paper focuses upon the possibilities to shape and develop cluster organisations, such as the SFIN organisation, as what we call a systemic intermediary.

**Research design**

**The evaluation and foresight exercises**

The evaluation exercise of 2006 took its stand in a scrutiny of the SFIN cluster organisation as self sustained organisation, using the Malcolm Baldridge Award framework that SiQ had provided for many years to Swedish private and public organisations, to be used as a self evaluation framework. A Web questionnaire had been developed by SiQ and also validated on studies of a number of European cluster organisations. The questionnaire took the view of cluster companies as customers to the SFIN cluster organisation. However, we also wanted to take a broader view on the cluster organisation, recognising also its many other systemic linkages, for example to universities and research organisations, to sub-regional, regional, national and cross-national public organisations and also to a number of innovation intermediaries in Skåne. We wanted to open up for a business model investigation of the SFIN cluster organisation, recognising its long term strategic opportunities, ranging over the 10 year Vinnova funding period.

For this purpose we supplemented the Web Questionnaire development, distribution and analysis with a number of systemic meetings (Lagnevik and Sarv 2008), inviting larger and larger circles of food innovation stakeholders to dialogues demonstrating systemic linkages and challenges of all sorts. The evaluation task force\(^4\) started up by using a modified systemic

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\(^1\) “Skånes Livsmedelsakademi”, founded in 1994
\(^2\) The Swedish Governmental Agency for Innovation Systems
\(^3\) Swedish Institute for Quality
\(^4\) Björn Eriksson, Barbro Gälldin-Holmberg and Hans Sarv
meeting procedure in interviewing a number of entrepreneurs, researchers, intermediaries and public officials, all part of or connected to the food cluster. The procedure essentially meant that we asked the interviewees to recap a specific series of events in their daily affairs, followed by an interpretation by the interviewers recognising systemic patterns and choices in the account of the events, followed thereafter by a dialogue between the interviewers and the interviewee on the validity and the possible systemic implications of the identified patterns and choices.

This way we all felt that we gained systemic insights that would probably not have been gained by regular questions and answers. We got insights on the present roles and performances of the SFIN cluster organisation in the food innovation community, and also insights on current and evolving patterns in this community as a whole. We were also able to relate the insights to knowledge and theory on innovation communities, clusters, cluster organisations and other types of intermediaries. We could investigate the applicability, relevance and possible implications of the Malcolm Baldridge theory on organisational success and sustainability for cluster organisations such as the SFIN cluster organisation. This helped us develop the Web questionnaire as a tool for cluster organisation evaluations. But the systemic interviews also helped us investigate the applicability, relevance and possible implications of a number of other theories, findings and concepts on innovation communities, for example on networking, open innovation and user driven innovation.

By relating the recognised current systemic patterns of the food cluster and its cluster organisation to theories and concepts on clusters, cluster organisations and innovation communities at large a foresight view was also taken, together with the evaluation view. The systemic meetings were not only backward looking but also forward looking. It was therefore natural to use the same base methodology also in the foresight exercise initiated shortly after the evaluation exercise. The choice to do so was supported by the initial foresight interviews in 2007, performed with 10 leading food cluster stakeholders, presidents of food companies, regional innovation officials, food researchers and heads of food intermediaries. The interviewees asked the foresight task force to focus also on possible forthcoming food innovation-systemic developments, not just possible futures for new types of foods. This systemic view created a link to the evaluation exercise, also concerned with the system as a whole.

Four systemic meetings were held in the foresight exercise, or “Gillen” as we now called them, “Gille” (related to the English term guild) being an old Skåne term for community gatherings. The first three were based on entrepreneurial narratives, that of a coffee house entrepreneur (Coffee House by George), that of bread bakery Pågens managing to make crisp rolls into an international success and that of a grocer in a small Skåne city exploring the potentials of local supplies, while struggling with restricting chain strategies.

The fourth “Gille” opened upon for an even broader view on the food innovation system. The theme for the Gille was: “Food innovation as health care renewal”. The Gille, again a 50 person cross-systemic gathering, included dieticians, medical doctors, researchers from different food related fields, product developers and marketing managers from the industry, public officials, SFIN cluster managers, and intermediaries. Three narratives from one doctor,

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5 The interviews were performed the 2007 foresight task force consisting of Håkan Jönsson and Hans Sarv
one home care nurse and one dietician were initiating systemic meetings in three parallel mixed groups, finalised by a common concluding discussion.

This later Gille in particular, but also the previous ones and the evaluation meetings, showed a way for materialising and continuously developing the SFIN cluster organisation as a systemic intermediary.

**The conceptual model of a systemic intermediary**

Henry Chesbrough in his reference to the Ely-Lilly innovation intermediary offspring InnoCentive, uses the terms “seekers” and “solvers”. Solvers are providers of solutions to seeker problems or challenges. The base set-up was Ely-Lilly publishing on the Web its seeker problems for voluntary attendance by chemical problem solvers all over the world, thereby multiplying the company’s potential, and as it showed also real, problem solving capacity. The set-up and also demonstrates the concept of open innovation. InnoCentive provides a number of intermediary services linking seekers and solvers in ways that benefit both parties. The services range from seeker problem defining services to solver reimbursement services.

The role of the intermediary can be seen as a bridge builder developing bridge abutments on both sides and also a bridge that facilitate seeker contacts with solvers and solver contacts with seekers (Exhibit 2):

![Exhibit 2. The role of an intermediary](image)

The direct contacts, as well as the indirect ones, can be of two types, Web contacts and Face contacts. We call all types of written contacts “Web contacts” and all types of verbal contacts “Face contacts”.

Let’s try to clarify the idea of the model through an example. One of the main bridge building ideas emanating from the foresight exercise, and manifest through the foresight Gille, was that of creating what we refer to as “dedicated sub communities” within the larger food innovation community. A grocer innovation community is currently being developed as an example. This community will connect grocers, as “solvers”, to food consumers as “seekers”, and the SFIN
cluster organisation (SFIN-CO for short) is currently developing its role as a systemic intermediary. Social media in general is providing (Web type) bridge abutments on the seeker side and voluntary grocer networks are providing (Face type) bridge abutments on the solver side. SFIN-CO assisting is strengthening the two types of abutments as parts of bridges connecting the two parties in different ways. The thus created bridges will help grocer communities to communicate interactively with food consumer communities, and vice versa.

Nothing of course prevents grocers in this case from benefiting directly from social media and the food consumer contacts provided by such media. But in order to benefit more fully from food such consumer contacts developments have to be made in grocer innovation processes. A grocer adoption of the concept of user driven innovation, for example, requires implementation of tools and procedures geared towards this concept. This is what we mean by bridge abutment development, and helping with such a development is part of the emerging business model of SFIN-CO. SFIN-CO helps with bridge developments through a set of services.

The grocer community is a fairly new community. Two of the older sub-communities are the presidents’ community and the student community, dating 3-4 years back. The two communities have a two-way connection in that the presidents’ community is a seeker community (seeking a skilled workforce) in relation to the student community as a solver community (providing such a work force), but also in that the student community is seeking jobs and careers with the presidents’ community and the recently started HR manager community as providers (the latter also of course involved in the workforce seeking). The bridge abutment development on the student side has involved the creation of a student advisory board resulting in a number of bridging services developed by SFIN-CO, for example study visits, meetings with presidents and curriculum suggestions. A multi-company trainee program is another bridging service, launched during 2010.

Other sub-communities include a food researcher community and R&D manager community. Not the least important is the linking between the sub-communities; and the linking between the sub-communities and numerous “external” communities or networks (not under the supervision of SFIN-CO). Some of the more significant external communities are the Öresund Food Network (ÖFN), the regions’ initiative “Food in Skåne”\(^6\), The Strategy Group of the Swedish Ministry for Agriculture\(^7\), The Academy of Gastronomy in Kristianstad\(^8\), The Baltic Food steering committee\(^9\) and the The Net Growth steering committee\(^10\). Members of the SFIN-CO management team are participating in each of these sub-communities, and several others. The linking set-up reminds about the set-up of Australian intermediary InnovationXChange (IXC), described by Chesbrough (2006), with their “trusted intermediaries” paralleling the members of the management team, joining together to account for their experiences in each of the external communities, as linked to their experiences in the SFIN-CO internal communities (Exhibit 3).

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\(^6\) In Swedish: “Maten I Skåne”
\(^7\) In Swedish: “Jordbruksdepartementets strategigrupp”
\(^8\) In Swedish “Gastronomiska akademien i Kristianstad”
\(^9\) Partly financed by Swedish Vinnova
\(^10\) Net growth being an multi-country EU project on cluster development
The SFIN-CO management team can be thought of as an innovation system governance community. They work with a continuous evaluation/foresight perspective. Their meetings can be seen as systemic meetings, in that individual recaps of community events are subject to a dialogue based interpretation regarding patterns and choices, followed by actions to strengthen the food innovation system as a whole. The management team also continuously involves the SFIN board in this dialogue. The strategic direction of SFIN-CO, formulated in a series of vision statements, the VAMS as it is called, is in these ways continuously challenged and vitalised.

**The case for a systemic intermediary**

A cluster organisation like SFIN-CO wouldn’t first hand be thought of as an intermediary. What then do we mean by the term systemic intermediary, and why should SFIN-CO be thought of as one? We have described the basic structure of SFIN-CO in the previous
paragraphs. But what is the essence of a systemic intermediary, and what are the potentials of looking on a cluster organisation with this mind set?

The intermediaries described by Chesbrough (2006) all have specific roles, related to IPs, patents and definable problems, seeking explicit solutions. However, innovation systems such as industry clusters and regional innovation systems are not just about specifics. Opportunities for innovation hide in the complexities of our everyday lives, harbouring for example our needs for food. And, likewise, propositions for innovations – in the forms of new foods and food services – also have to meet with the complexities of our everyday lives, determining whether or not the propositions will be accepted.

Let us take one of the stories told at the foresight gille called “Food innovation as health care renewal” as an explanatory example.

Agda is a senior citizen living in a retreat for elderly in the city of Malmö. The story about Agda was told by a home nurse who visits her often and is one of the key members of the care team around Agda. The home nurse started by taking off her coat. “It is so important that I hang my coat beside the door before I address Agda. If I don’t do that, Agda feels that I am just rushing though and that I do not give her enough attention”, explained the home nurse.

Then she carried on by telling us the story about Agdas life and her problems concerning food and care. She added information about malnutrition in elderly care in general, she told us about how it is to be old and feel lonely. She told us about work habits and attitudes in the care team. She expressed that food should be Agdas last joy in life.

After the story, in the reflection session, many issues were discussed. We discussed the pattern that Agda often starts to eat her food after the time that the service personnel has departed. What happens then? We discussed the potentials of healthy food with good taste, good production methods and good logistics. We discussed alternative food providers, cooking possibilities in different kinds of living, we discussed pain and disabilities, loss of appetite and we also discussed what target group Agda belongs to from an industrial point of view.

There were many “seekers” and “solvers” in the discussions, dieticians mixing with health care officials and managers, food company executives, food researchers, logisticians, consultants etc. Food companies, dieticians and logisticians were potential solvers of the problems experienced by the home nurses and the health care managers/officials, seen as “seekers”. But in the same time these potential solvers were also seekers of health care openings, potentially provided by the home nurses and health care managers/officials, seen as “solvers”.

Acknowledging the complexities of Agdas everyday life also means acknowledging the complexities of the home nurses, dieticians and others up the (innovation) system levels. Each level can be seen as seekers with fuzzy problems. But each, not the least Agda herself, can also be seen as providers of solutions. The interrelatedness between the many levels of the system calls for systemic approaches. There are no grand linear solutions. Instead a continuous reflection and experimentation throughout the system is needed and a systemic intermediary has a role in creating forms, or offering linkage services, for this.
A dedicated sub-community, like the one founded as a result of the gille, centred round the food for elderly challenge, can be seen as a forefront community, much like those of for example Logicas “Spark Centres” or Intels “Innovation Value Institute” or SAP:s “Industry Communities”, only with the decisive difference that it is not a technology push centre but rather an interactive centre mixing the seeker/solver positions and joining the forces of many system levels at the same time.

The Web of course is a tool for having a forefront community like the food for elderly forefront community stick together for a longer period of time and also for communicating with the food for elderly community at large. The Web is also a tool for supporting an open forefront community, with people entering and leaving as they see fit. In the same time such a “Web community” also has to be matched by a corresponding “Face community” set up, i.e. by community members also meeting face to face in a trust building process characterised by something like the three B:s (“Beer, Bonding and Being there”), to again cite Australian IXC and connecting clearly to the Skåne Gille tradition.

There are many “Open Innovation Forum” coming up the horizon, for example the Belgian Exnovate, part-modelled by the Berkeley Innovation Forum\(^\text{11}\). SFIN in itself can be seen as such a forum, supported by Web as well as Face community developments. The SFIN home page\(^\text{12}\) offers stories on all types of food related innovations and also a geographical map pinpointing planned, current and finalized projects connected too the SFIN community. These general “Open Innovation Forum” models are models also for the dedicated forefront sub-communities in their combined Web and Face expressions, only with the difference that they undertake more specific systemic challenges. Social media provide developmental opportunities for the Web expressions. The SFIN home page provides social media features. A daily Twitter on Agdas, and here peers, life events, entered by Agda or her home nurses could provide a base not only for food for elderly developments but also for other types of home care developments with potential synergies for the food developments, and vice versa.

The case for a systemic intermediary is clarified by the need for what we refer to as a “landing perspective” on all specific developments in a food innovation system, and any other type of innovation system. The unfolding Agda story provides such a landing perspective and the forming and performing of dedicated forefront sub-communities round the Agda story is the heart of a systemic intermediary.

**Gillen as governance meetings**

Our experience from the two sets of meetings has led us to reflect on the systemic meeting as a governance tool\(^\text{13}\). We then make a point of a distinction between government, as pursued under some kind of hierarchical control, and governance as pursued in multiparty settings, like for example in clusters or regional innovation systems. Government then would be exercised within companies, or universities, or regional authorities, while governance is pursued as a collaborative effort between such parties, and other innovation community stakeholders.

\(^{11}\) [http://openinnovation.haas.berkeley.edu](http://openinnovation.haas.berkeley.edu); see Innovationmanagement.se Oct 26, 2009

\(^{12}\) [http://livemedelsakademin.se](http://livemedelsakademin.se)

\(^{13}\) For a closer discussion on this point, see Lagnevik and Sarv 2007 or Lagnevik and Sarv 2008
Of course, the government framework can be applied also for such collaborative efforts. The heads of the different stakeholders may well meet to form regional innovation strategies, or cluster strategies, just like if they were on the same board of directors of a jurisdictional organization. In fact, the evaluation questionnaire used such a government framework in asking stakeholders how they perceived the strategies and procedures of the food cluster program, “Food Innovation at Interfaces”. Designing a questionnaire to ask about the cluster performance as a whole would require a more systemic than organizational mind set though.

On the other hand, a governance – or systemic – framework can be applied also to organizations, or innovation programs. In his HBR-article “Rebuilding Companies as Communities”\textsuperscript{14} Mintzberg suggests precisely this. And he claims innovative and entrepreneurial advantages by doing it.

We started out with the evaluation and foresight frameworks as two different sets of procedures. \textit{We have ended up with the evaluation perspective as a foresight perspective, and the foresight perspective as an evaluation perspective}. And we have ended up in seeing both as systemic learning endeavours. An exploration or “evaluation” of the daily lives of food consumers, like the one we undertook in the foresight exercises can be seen as a foresight regarding were to go for the community stakeholders. Combining the two perspectives (what is and what could be) in a systemic setting (with people from many parts of the system) has the advantage of not only providing a forward looking energy to the participants (which is a foresight idea), but also to organize action to take the system towards the desired state, which is an evaluation idea. Repeated meetings encourage the type of learning that we want to see from both foresights and evaluations. All and all, collecting system stakeholders this way can be seen as a form of governance.

The conscious search introduced by the systemic meetings means searching together in a form that some participants can relate to systemic theory. This facilitates the development of systemic theory, and concepts/language to be used in leadership learning and innovation systems development. It also facilitates introductions or improvements of high level systemic services, like evaluation and foresight services or the formation and support of dedicated forefront sub-communities.

The emphasis of this paper has been on the practicing side of innovation community governance. We have tried to describe a possible mind set for innovation community governance. But our main concern has been on the how to organize for mindset changes. This is not a fixed concept type of development. We don’t claim that we have found the mind set for innovation community governance. But we do claim a way to work with the systemic mind sets, together with the more practical and daily concerns of innovation and entrepreneurship. We also think that this togetherness is important.

\textsuperscript{14} Henry Mintzberg, Rebuilding Companies as Communities, Harvard Business Review, July–August 2009, pp. 140-143
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