

Inter-Organizational Trust Among Organizations in a Competitiveness Cluster

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Introduction

Manufacturing stands as the cornerstone of innovation (constituting 90 percent of R&D) and competitiveness (comprising 80% of exports) in France, serving as a pivotal driver for the nation's economic growth. However, over the past two decades, the landscape of commerce has undergone significant transformations within this economic framework. Since 1978, the manufacturing sector has witnessed a decline, resulting in the loss of 1.5 million jobs. The rise of the technology economy and the emergence of new global competitors, particularly the BRIC nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), have reshaped market dynamics, intensifying the race for innovation. Moreover, the industry faces formidable competition in both labor-intensive and technology-driven domains. In the current economic climate, France's primary objective is to navigate through turbulent waters and maintain its competitive stance. In economic terms, "competitiveness" entails not only sustaining a commercial foothold but also possessing the capability to harness crucial technological and commercial resources [1].

Subsequently, improving France's situation requires a substantial investment in expertise, which is primarily based on financial commitments from both private and public entities in the fields of education, research, and development (R&D), and innovation. Both the Raffarin 1 and the De Villepin 2 administrations have implemented a clustering strategy to address this need and foster innovation. This approach not only brings together entrepreneurs, research facility managers, and higher education officials but also policymakers and stakeholders, aiming to strengthen their connections and encourage collaboration to generate value. However, according to a study by KPMG (2006) on these new types of businesses, larger players are hesitant to share years of research funding and improve overall performance with smaller ones. Simultaneously, smaller players are concerned about the potential impact of size imbalances in cooperation, leading to a lack of trust among actors. This underscores the critical role that trust plays as a fundamental aspect of change and business evaluation within social systems [2].

Dele Rue and Berard suggest that trust serves as the "lubricant" that motivates the operation and performance of a social system. Similarly, Simon and Pesqueux argue for the necessity

of establishing "open" collaborative endeavors. However, the process of social integration often faces challenges due to differences in strategies, cultures, employer types, control patterns, and communication styles. Nevertheless, established trust agreements have been shown to facilitate cooperative learning experiences while allowing businesses to safeguard their unique competencies [3].

In the context of Competitiveness Poles (PC), we propose a three-phase approach: PC initiation in the initial phase, inter-actor cooperation in PC during the second phase, and the production version of PC in the final phase. Competitiveness Poles represent numerous opportunities and challenges for contemporary society. These clusters serve as focal points for technological advancement, innovation, and quality, attracting attention, from organizations, clients, and talent. PC fosters networks comprising educational institutions, research facilities, and businesses, working collaboratively to achieve common goals in specific markets [4].

Sixty such groups were established in July 2005 under the guidance of French authorities, typically managed by associations, service providers, research institutions, and schools as lightweight structures. The primary mission of PC is to promote business innovation activities, research and development, and workforce education, thereby generating new ideas for regional economic development. Since 2009, PC has entered its second phase, known as model 2, aimed at enhancing innovation, developing

new activities, and improving competitiveness. The stability of PC is pivotal in promoting employment, fostering innovation, enhancing France's attractiveness, and bolstering its global financial competitiveness and growth, as noted by the Association for the Use of Frameworks (APEC).

Conclusion

The Competitiveness Poles (PC) have the potential to create jobs through the establishment of governance structures, the formation of new partnerships, and the initiation of improvement projects. This approach, exemplified by overseas clusters, underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in fostering innovation, driving economic growth, and creating employment opportunities. By leveraging the collective expertise and resources of various stakeholders, PC can serve as catalysts for regional development and competitiveness in the global marketplace.

Acknowledgment

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Conflict of Interest

None.

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