What A Meso Framework Can Offer for Assessing Gender Equality in R&I

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Background

- Truth decay in political and civil discourse;
- Science trust crisis: Declining trust in formerly respected sources of factual information; The increasing relative volume, and resulting influence, of opinion and personal experience over fact;
- Changes in the information system;
- The dysfunctional working of the global economy (distrust in the efficiency of markets);
- Increasing inequality and ecological problems;
- The change in global governance discourse and architecture;
- Political, sociodemographic, and economic polarization; and
- The complexity of the Sustainability Agenda, which requires a new framework to understand and address our wicked problems.

SDGs

5 Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

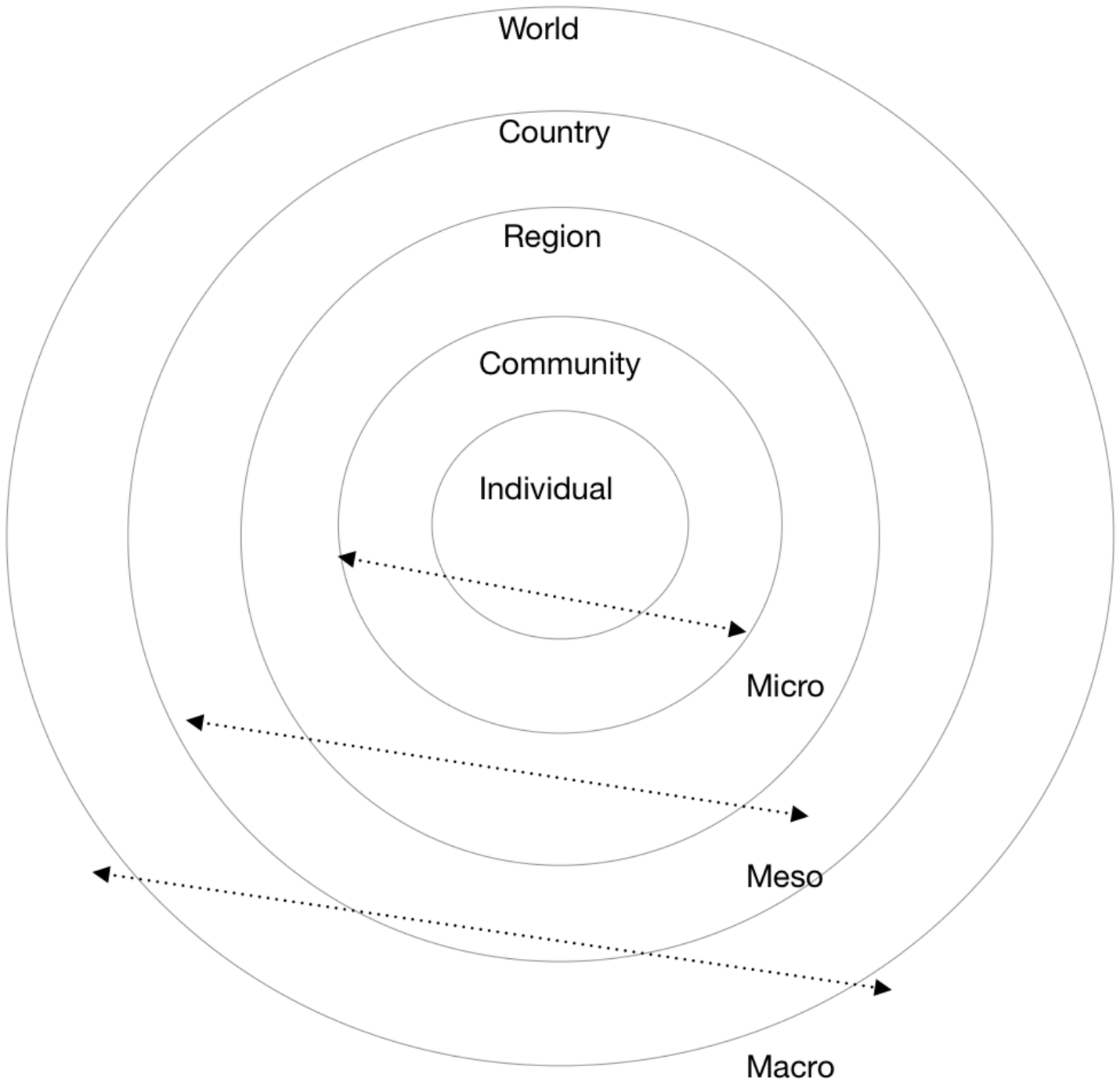
TARGET 5.2
Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation
TARGET 5.3
Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation
TARGET 5.4
Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate
TARGET 5.5
Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life
TARGET 5.6
Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences
TARGET 5.b
Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

The Meso level is central

- The meso level is considered the proper aggregate level of the production and reproduction of systems of institutions, i.e. culture.

The meso level is an interpretive frame, not just a scale

Common sense representation of micro, meso, macro interactions



What is the meso level

- The sociological strand that goes back to Merton and its middle range theories.
    - Coleman (1986) introduced the well-known “bath-tub” diagram, which has become quite a popular representation of the micro-macro challenge not only in sociology, but also in economics, public policy and political science.
- The institutionalism, and in particular, the evolutionary political economy
- Complexity theory
- Behavioral sciences

What is the meso level

- Evolutionary political economists suggest that the macro-level, conventionally understood as the national level, has become less relevant in light of globalization.

- The emergence of informal institutions take place in the context of processes with emergent properties.

What is the meso level

- Thus to understand the pace, direction, and impact of social change, the meso frame is meant to explore:
  - the interconnections across different organizational/ institutional strata, leading to
  - emergent innovation,
  - adaptation, and
  - coordination processes within complex systems.

What is the meso level

- Institutions or institutional structures can be described as systems of established and prevalent social rules that shape social interactions.

- Institutions help solve coordination problems and thus carry new and jointly learned knowledge, however, in an informal and tacit way.

Complexity paradigm

- The economy is comprised of multiple complex adaptive systems.

- Complex adaptive systems encompass large numbers of elements the properties of which are modifiable as a result of environmental interaction.

- Agents are very diverse in their preferences and behaviors [Agent-based models]

- Complex adaptive systems process limited information, and can modify their internal organization in response to such information.

Complexity & Sustainability

- And a growing body of studies applies the notion of complex systems to the exploration of sustainability dimensions

  - Agency, non-linearity, uncertainty, multiple futures and multiple-scenario analyses are used for:

    - integrating human-environment systems;

    - modeling participatory processes addressing and incorporating multiple perspectives to understand undecidability; and

    - supporting adaptive management efforts.

Complexity & Sustainability

- The complementaries existing between complexity and sustainability sciences contribute to explaining:
  - the mechanisms that drive the dynamic behaviors of complex systems
  - transformative solutions for sustainability-centered policy design.

Behavioral sciences

- Cognitive biases and shortcuts
- Heuristics orienting individual and collective choices
- Policymaking is non linear and is organized on many spatial and temporal scales

Complexity & Behavioral Sciences

- Complexity theory and experimental findings from behavioral science (including behavioral economics, public policy, and public administration):
  - the logic and biases of policymaking and institution working
  - including biases in the minds of those who carry out impact assessments of programs and policies.

The Meso level is central

- What is worth emphasizing is
  - the policy process needs not to be exclusively led by the national government but by new governance configurations to be explored and possibly strengthened.
  - The meso level becomes central for policy design and management of nudge strategies.

The Meso level is central

- The meso level institutions and networks a filter the impact of macro trends (higher-level economic and social factors, such as GDP, interest rates, aggregate consumption and savings.

- and propagate micro learning behavior of individuals and communities

Engaging with GE

- Sociological perspectives can support the analysis of inequality reduction measures and the maintenance of life-support systems across the different realms of health, education, gender, employment.

- By looking into gender inequality then intersections with other forms of inequality emerge as related to:
    - class,
    - race,
    - ethnicity, and
    - sexuality.

- …and highlight the significance of social institutions in shaping and solving social problems.

Engaging with GE

- Evolutionary-institutional economists can delve deeper into the logic of structural emergence and innovation across capitalist systems to understand the dynamics and effectiveness of sustainability transitions.

Engaging with GE

- Complexity and sustainability scientists can further cater meso concepts to the social realm to adequately account for power, conflict, undecidability, and/or uncertainty.
- For instance according to embeddedness: social norms and institutions affect actors operating in delimited contexts as well as social groups and organizations working in broader environments, where formal rules and informal institutions operate on a larger scale.
- Gender inequality is undergirded by a gender ideology that justifies the unequal state of gender relations, socially and materially, which is in turn embedded in a variety of institutions, including marriage laws, property laws, labor markets, and cultural and religious institutions

Engaging with GE

- INTERDEPENDENCES: more cooperative distribution of caring labor and paid work is linked to both existing supply of social services as well as flexible working conditions within firms and public agencies. Family care may draw boundaries to potential outsourcing practices (boundaries as viewed in systems thinking)

Engaging with GE

- For example, time is not equally distributed between care (unpaid work) within the household → time poverty

- Income differences that accompany labor market practices of hiring, job security, retirement benefits, health benefits, and pay scales do not fall equally on everyone.

- Labor market discrimination that pushes some people into part-time jobs with low pay, irregular hours, and no benefits, or that renders them structurally unemployed, does not fall equally across social groups.

Engaging with GE

- Policy studies as well as behavioral experiments face the challenge of conceptualizing and operationalizing cognitive biases, lock-ins, and feedback mechanisms where reflective actors abound.

- In this domain, a meso evaluation lens can rigorously assess the effectiveness of the governance capacities in accomplishing transformative sustainability solutions.

Engaging with GE

- Stereotypes, or widely shared beliefs about how men and women “are” and how they “should be,” function as cognitive short cuts in decision making, especially under conditions of ambiguity.

- When performance information is minimal or ambiguous, gender stereotypes fill in the gaps in knowledge.

- This process often occurs at an implicit or unconscious level, although conscious gender biases still exist.

Disciplinary Perspectives	Key Theoretical Constructs	Mechanisms	Normative Dimensions
Sociology	Middle range theories Social mechanisms Critical realism	Interaction between micro and macro levels are mediated through the meso	Social inequalities across, health, education, gender, class, ethnicity, employment political representation.
Evolutionary Economics	Heteogeneity of agents and uncertainty Innovation Co-evolutionary processes of institutional emergence	Institutional emergence: Firms, organisations Complex organization	Innovation in capitalist systems and businesses The genetic explanation of social rules and interactions Agency, capacity, and resilience
Complexity Theory	Complex adaptive systems Heterogeneity of actors Emergence	Network architecture Non linear causality Emergent properties Embeddedness	Explaining trust and cooperative behavior Interdepedences at different system levels
Sustainability Science	Integration between linked human-environment systems—i.e., cross-scale, cross-sector, cross-level and inter-institutional	Co-production Heterarchy and partcipatory decision making styles	Social conflicts and time-consuming processes of multi-stakeholders' involvement Politicization Citizens' science
Behavioral Sciences	Bounded rationality Cognitive biases Prospect theory Unconscious behavior	Framing effects, based on emotional and moral judgements; The representativeness heuristic The 'availability heuristic Cognitive dissonance	Social and policy learning Organizational equivalence
Policy & Governance Studies	Nudge No central coordination Inter-institutional cooperation Meta-governance and	Policy networks and interactions Conceptual use of applied social science Self-correcting feedback mechanisms	State paternalism/feminism The role of power The shadow of hierarchy Polycentrism Partnership

Building meso evaluation capacity

- At least two challenges

- First, accelerative dynamics at the central level with systems of informational surveillance that creates an infrastructure of technical and financial international facilities operating on nationally determined contributions.

- In this context, the norm of transparency may downgrade the regulative system of accountability to mere numerical accounting practices and indicators, processing, and communicating numerical data

Building meso evaluation capacity

- Second, incorporating a meso policy analytic paradigm may be then perceived as threatening the balance among the different institutional/ organizational bodies, and the accredited professional communities

Conclusions

- Promoting co-production of evaluative knowledge at the meso level may encourage dialogue between actors providing different sources of information and perspectives.

- Co-production is often described as more effective than simply seeking advice from experts, particularly when scientific uncertainty is high, there is no simple recourse to expert authority, and there is a predisposition to listen to what the others have to say and to re-consider one's preferences.

Conclusions

- Open dialogue in which people use deliberative techniques to piece together their disparate knowledge and communicate the social norms crucial to cooperation may curb both politicization and the élite capture of the political arena.

- Collaborative governance suggest a paradigm shift in favor of higher participation of stakeholders and the active promotion of different social groups' and users' experience alongside expert knowledge to frame goals, needs, expected outcomes, and potential positive and negative side effects.