THE BINOMIAL “TECHNOLOGY CENTERS, CONSULTING COMPANIES”. BASTION OF REGIONAL INNOVATION

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I continue with the series of**restructuring of the technological centers**, to now focus attention on the possibilities that are opening up, directing the activity in another market niche to which innovation policies may not have given a sufficient degree of priority.
There is a large volume of companies that operate in local markets (around two thirds of GDP) that are often very small (more than 90% of Spanish companies have less than 5 jobs) and operate in low-carbon-intensive sectors. technology (like a good part of the industrial sector, construction and, of course, that of the more traditional services). These companies do not have the "glamour" of the most technology-intensive ones, but there is no doubt that **the degree of development, well-being and employment in the region depends on their competitiveness**.
In one way or another, supporting this type of company has been on the agenda of many technology centers, but this has led them to **provide services far removed from what is understood by R&D** and , in many cases, to enter into direct competition with consulting companies that are sometimes accused of intrusiveness and unfair competition for intervening in the market, counting on favorable treatment from the public sector.
Despite this debate, the truth is, however, that **companies of this type do not have a well-articulated offer of business services to promote innovation appropriate to their needs**. Or in very colloquial terms: "one for the other, the house without sweeping". The fundamental question, therefore, **is whether technology centers can play a different and strategically more relevant role**in this field of play, contributing differential value to the competitiveness of this type of company.
My position is that they can, but giving a radical turn to their actions and **orienting themselves to service and engineering companies that become their preferred customers**. In this new scenario, technology centers become strategic allies of advanced services companies and contribute their knowledge and experience, as well as their capacity for applied research and relationships and networking with other international research centers to develop new business models, systems capable of taking advantage of the innovative potential of all the people in the organization, new methods of competitive surveillance based on the rapid development of ICTs and an infinite battery of possibilities for new products and services aimed at creating a new concept of innovative company.
For technology centers, this path forces them, on the one hand, to change the focus of their activity and derive their action from the world of technology, towards that of competitiveness that adds many other tangible and intangible variables and, on the other, to significant investments in resources, people and organization to provide itself with a credible and solvent structure that adds value to the consulting sector from applied research. The apparently simpler alternative of focusing on providing consulting services directly to companies is, on the other hand, an option with very little strategic path since it contradicts the very foundation of its existence.
This new option makes much more sense in a **new context of regional industrial policy** that seeks to broaden the base of innovative companies, strengthening **collaboration platforms and business interrelation**l that take advantage of the great potential for creativity and innovation that service companies have and that offers technology centers (or some of them) a stellar role in this radical transformation process. The pairing "technology centers, consulting companies" also generates a very relevant additional dividend that is none other than the important contribution that this implies for the development, professionalism and excellence of the advanced services sector and becomes a **true bulwark of regional innovation potential**.

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