Mass participation in innovation – the foundation of a modern organization and beyond

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Abstract
In this practice reflection paper I share hands-on experiences on innovation ecosystems. They have taught me that if we want innovation to be the core catalyst of value creation, we need an advanced set of tools, mechanisms and approaches to encourage horizontal cooperation and mass engagement in generation of innovative propositions that can turn into innovation. Even more, I stress that only mass innovation can ensure the appropriate culture and conditions for innovative breakthroughs. At the same time it is important that we do not merely transfer an effective model for mass innovation from one environment to another. Instead, we should first consider observing and learning about the evolution phase, the level of absorptiveness, the existing innovation experiences, and the structural and human capital present in an environment. Based on those observations we should create the model, which should be authentic, unique and adjusted to the local environment and local idiosyncrasies. Only with such adjustments one can hope to achieve optimal results. I will support my arguments with examples and experiences from the field.

Keywords
Mass innovation, business evolution, horizontal structures, absorptive level, and safe environment

1 Mass innovation and innovation ecosystems

Innovation ecosystems are an effective form of co-operation, co-creation and co-existence in modern organisations and in society as a whole. They encourage horizontal integration of all stakeholders, who jointly co-create mutually beneficial results using a diversified set of tools and approaches along the way.

There are two types of innovation ecosystems – open and closed [Chesbrough, 2003]. Closed innovation ecosystems share and apply the results of their work internally in order to create a new value within a defined ecosystem. Open innovation ecosystems share the results of their work, against payments or free of charge, with external stakeholders.

Innovation ecosystems can be developed within an individual sector, industry, local community, state or region. They can also integrate various groups of stakeholders, industries, interest groups, and sometimes individuals, owners of knowledge, owners of needs or/and any

1 I would like to stress at the beginning that the following article is written from a practitioner’s point of view. It mostly presents my personal experiences and points of view that were generated over the last 14 years of my engagements with developing innovation ecosystems in corporate environments and within local communities. There are hardly any references to academic literature; mainly because I have not found many authors that would see and experience innovation ecosystems from the same point of view as I had. At the same time, I am aware, that many of my thoughts and conclusions are under the influence of people, customers, partners that I have met in my practise and I am deeply grateful to all of them to push me over the edge of my perceptions. But for most of the thoughts – they simply have evolved over the time and I hope they will contribute to your knowledge, as well. Innovation is here to stay as an important enabler for success and we are just starting to understand its nature.

2 An environment and a group of different stakeholders co-creating (added) value.
other matters. They can be geographically or virtually delimited. Regardless of their type or nature, they share a common characteristic: namely that a successful development of innovation initiatives\(^3\) is based on larger number of participants, interconnectedness, integration, and mutual benefits, based on systemic (comprehensive) thinking and systemic solutions.

But this was not the case in the past. The generation of initiatives used to be predominantly limited to small groups of experts. These groups used to seek solutions for the foreseen needs or identified problems and applied them as products on the market, usually in the form of technological innovations.

The need for innovation has increased with the reinforcement of globalisation and a free flow of goods. In order to be globally present, you needed to differentiate yourself from the others; you needed to establish your own recognizable identity. Thus, the concept of innovation was extended further to service, organisational, marketing, and social innovation (cf. Figure 1). These types of innovation significantly broadened the circle of stakeholders necessary to generate enough ideas\(^4\), inventions\(^5\) and innovations\(^6\). The innovation process started to include an increasing number of individuals and groups that had the needed competences (knowledge holders).

The ability to shape a business culture that encourages and develops innovation environments that could handle a large number of participants (mass innovation) has become a distinctive identifiable element between successful and less successful companies [Bulc, 2012].

![Figure 1: Development of the perception of innovation](Source: A.T. Kearney [2009])

With the increasing number and broadening variety of innovative initiatives, and the increasing need for mass involvement of a broader (open) number of participants in the

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3 Ideas with the potential to become innovations (formally drafted and submitted for review)
4 A new view, a new understanding
5 A new idea successfully implemented in practice; a new idea that works
6 A new idea that works and generates (added) value
process of value creation, the micro and macro environments were faced with a new challenge, i.e. their absorptive capability for successful development and placement of innovative initiatives. In other words, they were challenged by their own ability to understand the advantages and weaknesses of innovation, and to comprehend the environments where it could be generated, as well as, to adapt to all the necessary adjustments for their successful implementation.

This paper will focus on three key elements of business innovation ecosystems: the organizational evolution, mass involvement, and absorptive capability, with a special reference to the importance of a safe space within.

1.1 The influence of organizational evolution on the development of innovation

Since the very beginnings, innovation has been one of the driving forces of humanity [Bulc, 2012]. Throughout the various phases of our civilisation, innovation has been perceived from different points of view and manifested in different forms: in a relation to different economic environments, layers, and in the respect of different social impacts.

For a few hundreds of years - up until the end of the previous century, the development of the business world was commonly linked to technological milestones, such as: the steam engine, the electromotor, the microchip, or new materials (nanotechnology). In business environments during that time, innovation has been exclusively perceived as technological innovation and the value creation has been under the influence of continuous increase of productivity (cf. Figure 1), primarily achieved through developments of new technologies, processes, automation and robotization.

![Model of business evolution](source: Bulc, V. [2006]. Ritmi poslovne evolucije (The rhythms of business evolution))

Technological innovation was usually developed within small, privileged groups of experts/developers/scientists. Their circle for exchanging ideas rarely included other employees or external participants.

The dominance of productivity as value creation started to change by the proliferation of global economy, connecting continents, opening state boundaries and encouraging free trade and global cooperation. With these changes occurring Europe could no longer compete on global markets solely on the level of price [European Commission, 2013].
So, in the 1980s, a new driving force for a value creation swept across the globe – “the quality” driver (cf. Figure 2). The increase of internationalisation and globalization in business started pushing, for example, those European companies that persisted with creating productivity-based value add, further towards the margin of survival. This was a result of the growing prices of energy, work force and raw materials. In order to maintain a strong position in the global economy, the European economy needed to use quality as a new driving force for value creation.

With quality as the new driver of value creation, new needs and new opportunities arose for innovation. The differentiation among companies was expanded to services and work practice that provided solutions for market penetrations, value chain improvements, integrated solutions, and methods for a successful teamwork. The process became the key subject of business observation. The process of constant improvement became the primary tool in the hands of management for staying in the competitive game. This resulted in including more people into innovative thinking. Innovation spread from research and development to all other organizational units and processes within companies. Through appropriate communication and motivation approaches, innovative proposals started to emerge from all levels of business practice. More and more people understood innovation philosophy and its nature. Consequently, the business environment was more inclined towards embracing the changes proposed by innovative concepts. The innovation in business modelling and in proposed value became a new focus and a new driver of success (cf. Figure 2).

However, this new rhythm presented the business environment with a new issue – the issue of the absorptive capability of the people who were responsible for implementing changes on the strategic and operational business levels (cf. Figure 3), as well as, for the markets and supply chains, to recognise the value that innovative ideas bring. This is why, in addition to motivation, a more comprehensive development of individuals that are flexible and opened to change [InnoGrips, 2013] was necessary.

While productivity was a driving force of added value for a few hundred years, quality held this place for a mere twenty years. Yet, it enabled an increasing interest in knowledge and cooperation, and brought an attention to different markets (industries, quality segments, regions). Markets were no longer looked at as a single entity but rather as diverse segmented groups, based on the expected quality and the associated price.

Due to the growing influence of the Internet and other modern information technologies that enabled global communication, trade, and co-operation, the central driving force of generating added value at the beginning of the 21st century, became innovation. And that is still the case today. The need for establishing identity on the levels of the objects, individuals, groups and
structures, is on the rise. Those needs are becoming increasingly diverse. Instead of products and processes, **correlations** and understandings of relationships are of a growing importance. Therefore, **organizational and marketing innovations are stepping forward.** Innovation is driven by the relationship with markets based on the needs and behaviours of the targeted groups of customers, by the diversification of local environment, and the new vibration of the Planet itself (cf. Figure 1).

**Open innovation ecosystems have been established** as a new form of co-operation and co-creation and these, in addition to the internal resources (employees), also include external stakeholders (strategic partners, suppliers, knowledge holders, the environment) who are actively included in the process of innovation [Chesbrough, 2003]. The number of active participants is growing and so are the number and complexity of innovation propositions. Companies that do not succeed in activating a mass approach lose ground with respect to the market, thus failing in terms of business success.

A special type of co-operation is being developed in the form of open innovation ecosystems in which the principle of co-creation and joint application of results represent a border beyond which something new and exciting can be expected in the future. To ensure that thinking environments have an absorptive capability (cf. Figure 3), a **comprehensive development of competences** of individuals, teams and communities needs to be present. **Cross-structural teams** prove to be the most efficient, for within them, participants stimulate each other's growth by challenging each other, encouraging each other to expand beyond the known, and discovering new insights and solutions through a new visions and proactive points of view. According to Simard and West [2005] deep networks and their knowledge are easily accessed, but the knowledge they possess is usually redundant and can lead only to minor changes and innovation. On the other hand, “wide ties provide the benefit of access to non-redundant information and thus a greater potential for innovation, but without the trust inherent in deep ties. Wide ties are also hence more difficult to manage, particularly in capturing and re-combining these, sometimes disparate, information elements into new knowledge. Again, a major role for informal ties makes it difficult to predict, capture and plan the role of such ties”.

Thus, **a horizontal innovation infrastructure** is being established in a support to the innovation process and development of the innovation culture. The innovation infrastructure helps to maintain transparency and visibility of innovation proposals and ensures a unified model for assessing innovation proposals, as well as, provides tools and knowledge resources for encouraging ‘out-of-the-box thinking’. It is essential that those terms are aligning with the **organizational strategy and vision**, as well as, with the corporate values and mission.

As explained through the model of business and innovation evolution (cf. Figure 1,2), every phase brings a need for more organizational and horizontal involvement of all the participants of business ecosystems. Therefore, by establishing **mass innovation** and establishing appropriate **absorptive capability** of the ecosystems, we do not merely insure the growth in generation of innovative ideas, but also simultaneously ensure a suitable environment for the development of premium innovation, e.g., the so-called **breakthrough innovation**. It is worth pointing out that the concept of absorptive capacity received considerable attention in the last two decades [Flatten, Engelen, Zahra, Brettel, 2011]. It has been shown, that absorptive capacity influences organizational innovation performance [Tsai, 2001], as well as inter-organizational learning [Lane, Salk, Lyles, 2001]. The pioneers of absorptive capacity

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7 In professional literature the expression inter-structural has also been noticed.
8 Simard and West (2005)
[Cohen, Levinthal 1990] conceptualized absorptive capacity as the firm’s ability to “recognize the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends.”

The experiences are showing us, that only when the (business) environment has established a broader support and readiness for mass innovation, such an environment can also successfully absorb the needed changes and adjustments for a radical innovation to take place on the level of the organization and the entire innovation ecosystem.

To summarize, the successful implementation and market manifestation of a certain types of innovation proposals require a corresponding environment and certain preconditions in place: a proper stage of organizational evolution, a proper innovation culture, a proper level of awareness among people, appropriate resources for added value creation, and a proper open market conditions. Thank we can strive for a higher stages of innovation, e.g., on the level of business models, organizations, ecosystems, require a larger lever of globalization, open markets and a high level of connectivity among diversified actors.

The generation of innovation propositions and the speed needed for a successful implementation of market proven innovation proposals is increased by mass participation of people involved in organization or innovation ecosystem. This is a precondition for ensuring an appropriate corporate culture that leads towards a desired absorptive capability of the environment, to implement the necessary changes. It needs to be emphasized that innovation can generate added value only if the other two key forces of business success (i.e. productivity and quality) are successfully put in place, and managed well.

2 Methodology

The results and the models presented in the forthcoming subsections are based on a “from practice to theory” approach. They have been evolving in the last 14 years of my consultancy business and they contribute to the approximately 60% of my yearly revenues. Their sole purpose is to help companies and local communities to understand their core competences, mission and vision, to help to transform those elements to their short and long term goals and developmental strategies, and to help them to recognize the customers’ needs, potentials for value creation, and opportunities for manifestation of their innovative power. The models have been used primarily for a sustainable organic growth of organizations and for building horizontal innovation infrastructures for mass innovation.

As shown in Figure 4, over the past 10 years, we worked on strategic development with 29 organizations (13 companies from manufacturing sector, 10 companies from service sector and 6 companies from public sector). The manifestation of the innovation infrastructures started in 2008, and till today 8 organizations were included in such a process (5 from a manufacturing sector, 1 from a service sector and 2 from a public sector). One of the key messages from those practical cases, relevant for this article, is that elements which need to be covered in such projects are mostly the same, however, the path in which they are addressed and the context itself, depends on the evolution phase that the organization is in, the size of the organization, the level of (innovation) culture, and the type of the environment in which the organization operates.
As shown in Figure 4 Slovenian companies have started to become more aware of the importance of the innovation outcome from the year 2008 on, which is in line with the results of the European Innovation Scoreboard 2009 [European Commission, 2010] which show that Slovenia has in 2009 for the first time classified among Innovation followers.

3 Mass innovation

Today, mass innovation is recognized as one of the key catalysts of successful innovation ecosystems. The first set of organizations is indicating that for innovation to be considered "massive" within a company, ideas need to be generated by more than 30% of employees, more than once per year. This includes improvements, ideas, inventions and innovations. It also seems that the level of participation corresponds with the evolutionary phase that an organization is in or has the ability to move towards to.
3.1 The mass innovation model

Figure 6: Model for mass innovation

We have mentioned, “mass innovation” several times already. Now, let us take a closer look at it. Figure 6 shows a generic model for the development of mass innovation. It highlights the elements that are directly connected to successful management and the development of mass innovation. However, the essence of the solution lies at its heart – the organizational core competences and values, which are unique and specific to every company, organization, community, or a team. None of the previously mentioned 8 organizations (Figure 4) share the same approach to the development of the innovation ecosystem and mass innovation. Each organization has taken into account its specific corporate culture, company’s evolution level, and the previous experiences with innovation. Cultural sensitivity is an important aspect of success, for it is tied to people and the richness of their conscious and unconscious relationship with life.

The implementation of the mass innovation model should take into account the specific key abilities of the organizations:

a) its communication style that should include innovation and innovative communication;

b) the type of leadership, that should be a combination of innovative and innovation leadership.

Let us look at some of them: Petrol (a national petroleum company), for example, applied the concept of promoters that periodically work with people to encourage mass innovation; BTC (shopping, entertainment, sport and logistic center) uses strategic and motivational workshops; Elektro Maribor named innovation ambassadors in each of their organisational

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9 Innovation communication: communication about innovation; innovative communication: communication in an innovative manner
10 Innovation leadership: leadership that creates a favorable environment for innovation to take place; innovative leadership: a leadership that innovates in its leadership style, in business modeling, in new market approaches, etc.
units, etc. The above examples show that different criteria and motivational systems were used for encouraging the development of mass innovation. In one of the examples the incentives were non-financial, while elsewhere they were predominantly financial. Their forms and methods of communication were also different. Some relied on the personal presentation of information and assessment results, while other published everything online (intranets, internal newsletters). There are also noticeable differences in the formal organisation of the innovation environment. Some manage innovation through an actual others through a virtual project office, while the third group used the change management process or formal linear structures to achieve similar results. The "right/wrong" concept does not apply to these solutions. In the end, all that matters are the results and the ability to evolve further.

3.2 Innovation infrastructure (I2)

The Innovation infrastructure (I2) is one of the important elements/tools for the development of mass innovation in an organization. It boasts a fresh, alluring approach and consists of three key modules:

1. The first module incorporates the prerequisite steps, and the content for designing an efficient model for innovation infrastructure, which is in harmony with the development strategy of the company and the organizational evolution phase:
   - Social framework
   - Strategic directions
   - The model of participants of innovation ecosystem
   - Technology breakthroughs
   - The phase of business evolution
   - Innovation communication framework

2. The second module contains the steps as indispensable for the successful design of an innovative process and generated via various diagnostic tools:
   - Diagnostics of the level of trust and respect present (safe environment)
   - Diagnostics of innovation absorption
   - Diagnostics of the key business relationships
   - Diagnostics of the corporate business evolution
   - Definition of the key innovation ecosystems participants
   - Definition of the innovation process
   - Design of the core competence model
   - Design of innovation subsystem for sustainable innovation

3. The third module comprises the proposals, guidelines and the descriptions of best practice for the implementation of the innovation infrastructure within the company and for establishing an environment for sustainable innovation as defined by the 5 disciplines of value creation [Curtis, 2006]:
   - Politics
   - Rules of conducts
   - Definition of roles
• Model for I4 segmentation
• Model for Idea evaluation (criteria)
• Catalogue for training and education
• Reward system
• Rewards
• Events
• Organizational tools
• IT tools
• Evaluation and monitoring tools
• Library
• Needs/behaviours/challenges

A special characteristic of the I2 model is that it is based on, and encourages the development of open innovation, it observes the characteristics of the evolutionary corporate development (their absorptive capacity) and it facilitates the integration of key strategic orientations toward the innovation model of the company (it enables the development of the dynamic structures of corporate governance).

I2 is the first tool made in Slovenia, for systematic and wider development of innovation in organizations, based on local experience of the past 14 years.

The core experiences gained from 8 Slovenian examples\(^{11}\) where I2 was established can be summarized in the following:

- the elements used in all cases are the same, the process how the I2 was established and the content of each of the elements is unique
- there are many social, organizational and economical situations that have an influence on the dynamic in which the I2 is implemented
- innovation is a very subjective business element that is hard to control and lead; all the manages seem to be able to do is to inspire and create an environment, and continue adjusting it based on the experiences, knowledge, observation, intuition and different levels of personalization
- for innovation to expand and move on the level of mass participation, we need to encourage development of intuition that allows, together with learning and experiencing, a comprehensive decision making process [Bulc, Kovačič, Batellino, 2013]
- the motivational tools need to be readjusted and possibly changed every year to keep people alert
- it is very important to clearly communicate vision, mission and the core strategies that need to be taken into account in the search for good ideas, as well as, for braking those same leads, rules and established thrust
- mass innovation does not evolve well in hierarchy, therefore, a new organizational structures are required in order to keep a sustainable success and development

3.3 Dynamic environment

Providing a dynamic environment is one of the key challenges of mass innovation and absorptive capability of people. Among other things, this means breaking the routine and stepping out of the comfort zone into constant motion, adaptation, transformation and progression into the new. All of the above is a particularly difficult challenge for people trained for (working) industrious and learning environments (Figure 2).

So far, our experience gained from 8 Slovenian examples\(^\text{12}\) confirms the statement above. These examples served as the basis for creating the Innovation Infrastructure model\(^\text{13}\) (I2). The dynamic environment for supporting mass innovation within an innovation infrastructure\(^\text{14}\) is provided through four points of entry:

1. **Model of criteria** for assessing innovation proposals

   *Explanation*: the model of criteria integrates the key strategic goals of the company that the employees need to be aware of when shaping their ideas; the model can be changed and adapted according to the current strategic goals or the company’s vision; I recommend a set of 7-9 criteria with the 1,2,3 assessment scale. The model should apply uniformly to all employees regardless of their role in the organisational structure. I recommend that the criteria are categorised in relation to the complexity of the proposals: a special set of criteria for more simple innovation proposals (they can be implemented within the operational action plans) and another set for more complex innovation proposals (they can be implemented on a project level).

2. **Motivational methods** supported with innovation communication and innovative communication

   *Explanation*: motivational approaches within an innovation process need to be adapted constantly otherwise they lose effectiveness. Experience show that motivational measures need to be refreshed and/or upgraded at least once per year. The individual, team and organisational needs of a business environment need to be identified and addressed simultaneously. Motivational measures may comprise of: monetary and non-monetary incentives, interesting experiences, events, visits, information of other innovation proposals, introduction of weak signals, breakthrough technologies, examples of best practices and other similar topics that help provide the employees with inspiration and moral support. The attitude of managers towards creativity, mistakes and success, is extremely important for motivation. Business is people. People are unpredictable, physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and social beings who perceive their environment on all of these levels and make decisions/adaptations according to the received impulses and their own genetic memory. Motivational measures must break through the walls of the familiar and stimulate the need of the individuals towards constant evolution and readjustment.

3. **Methods for generating ideas** and innovation proposals

   *Explanation*: similar to motivational methods, methods for generating ideas require constant creation of new approaches. The most effective method for

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13 http://www.vibacom.si/page.php?54

14 Innovation infrastructure is a formal environment with a set of rules that provide all participants within the innovation ecosystem with equal access to the process of generating ideas, as well as in the assessment and implementation of the ideas. It comprises of: steps, leverage, building blocks, business effects and manifestations.
generating ideas is playing games that help us shed our habitual patterns, release our adrenaline and open the world of lateral thinking. A few methods that have been proven in practice: »Krea Natura« (a psychology-based approach that helps us achieve the maximum results in a creative process), »Open Innovation« (a global approach to the development of open innovation based on the stakeholder model), »Different Thinking in Business« (ensuring sustainable competitive advantages), structured innovation methods and processes (Lead Users Research, Blue Ocean Strategy, Synectics, Stage Gate, TRIZ, Structured Management of Ideas, Idea Pool, Innovation Risk Management). The role of management is also important in the idea generation process, as their body language and active communication on the role of innovation in achieving good business results can encourage innovative thinking. For me personally, the most inspiring method for seeking new ideas is the concept of “seeking the new at the edge”: we recognize everything that is known, that exists, and we seek what could possibly be at the edge of the known (the next industry, the next material, the next customer segment, the next behaviour, the next wisdom, the next logical partner,…).

4. Cross-structural teams

Explanation: nowadays, it is hard to imagine successful mass innovation without cross-structural teams. The core philosophy behind them is that a creative team must comprise of individuals with different knowledge, from different fields and cultural backgrounds. This ensures diversity with respect to the chosen reality. And it is precisely this diversity that triggers various lateral thought correlations, which lead to breakthroughs in thinking. Practical experience has clearly shown that challenges, e.g. in sales, are difficult to overcome by the sales department alone. Only if presented with views from the financial, production, purchasing and other departments can they achieve a breakthrough in thinking and find comprehensive solutions. The same holds true on the levels of projects, processes and communities. There are no wrong or stupid questions in inter-structural teams. It often happens that a seemingly inappropriate or unrelated question triggers an intensive storm of thoughts in someone else. Participants in inter-structural teams often feel that: "It is unimportant who comes up with the breakthrough thought, as long as someone does. The person who comes up with it can explain it to the others and we can all move on; some create a space, some get inspired, but we all participate that an idea occur." Together we create the conditions for new awareness and new insights. This is why it is so important to encourage a mass approach to the shaping of innovative awareness and endeavour to reinforce our environments as a whole.

3.4 Safe environment

The next challenge of mass innovation is to create a safe environment. Only a person with a sense of being safe can realize his/her full creative potential. A sense of safety is established when we feel we are appreciated, heard and taken into consideration; when we feel we are in the field of respect and trust provided by our fellow team members, managers and the (business) environment.
Figure 7: Elements that create a safe environment

Based on the discussions with employees (from different fields and levels of employment) of 15 Slovenian companies (7 companies from production, and 8 companies from service sector) in 2012 we identify the main elements of a safe environment. We asked them to express which elements define safe working environment where they can fully empower their creative potential. Based on the responses we identified 80 elements of a safe environment, that we classified into three groups: the first group includes elements that relate to the impact power of an individual (28 items or 35% of all elements belong to this group), the second group is composed of elements on the team level (12 elements or 15% of all elements), the third group presents the elements on the organizational level (40 elements or 50% of all elements). Items were then ranked in terms of importance (Table 1); the group of the most important elements includes elements that gained 10 or more points (1 point means that one of the respondents mentioned this element as an important element), a group of important elements is composed of elements that received 7 to 9 points, and a group of potentially important elements consist of the elements that received 4 to 6 points, whereas each of the respondents indicated one or more elements of a safe environment.

The results suggest that safe environment is not ensured merely through financial security. When we asked employees in 15 Slovenian companies how they perceive a safe environment that would enable them to release their maximum creative potential only two four participants stated that money was a precondition for this, and only three participants mentioned material means (Figure 4). Other participants listed the basic human values and types of information necessary for goal-oriented thinking: team spirit, management support, effective task delegation, good relationships, information quality, openness to new ideas, mutual respect, ability to reach decisions, professionalism, clearly set goals, information on customers, positive charge, tolerance, enough time for quality work, etc. The results encourage us to conclude that financial security is not a precondition for creativity (when the basic social
standards are met). Our creative spirit is most significantly influenced by mutual relationships and access to information, which allow us to understand the environment in which we work and for which we create. Simply, we try to be useful and therefore we need an access to information and we need a co-operation of others to succeed.

Based on these results I suggest that when we find ourselves in challenging moments, i.e. being pressured by the market, suppliers, partners, owners, etc., we invite people from different organizational structures into a safe environment (in a conference room, in an office, in a forest); we present a challenge and the goal to the group, and invite them into a creative process. Moderate the process well, ensuring that they all can express their feelings, thoughts, inspirations, ideas, and lead them towards the most appropriate solution based on the initial goal. I am confident that the results will not be disappointing and that the collective intelligence will exhibit its true creative power: through the inspiration of an individual and the power of the collective consciousness.

3.5 Innovative leadership and innovation leadership

Mass innovation requires a new leadership style. It requires a constant interaction between the characteristics of innovative leadership and innovation leadership. Often, both roles are enacted in the same person. The role of the innovation leader is to establish the rules and conditions for effective creativity of individuals. The role of the innovative leader is to constantly monitor the stakeholders and the situation within and outside the company, and to identify the opportunities for new business models, new definitions of processes and new work methods, to drive towards the new borders, beyond the known, to define new ecosystems, to discover new opportunities.

In both cases, leaders in innovation ecosystems must motivate, encourage, connect and clearly communicate the needs and goals of the company as the fundamental stimulus for successful innovation.

Experience has taught us that the role of an innovation leader is a difficult one for individuals who have not tried innovative leadership, or at least created an innovation on a level of a product or service, i.e. individuals who have not previously practiced innovation. Only personal experience in innovation can truly enable a person to understand the requirements, opportunities and pitfalls of innovation ecosystems and later contribute to the effective drafting of rules and the creation of a safe environment for the development of innovations, e.g., be a successful innovation leader.

3.6 Innovative communication and innovation communication

Special communication forms were developed to support mass innovation. Innovation communication is communication about innovation. Innovation communication deals with the appropriate representation of innovation topics on communication channels. It encourages telling a story in a way that highlights the following aspects:

- clearly defines the level of development of the described innovation (in which part of the innovation life cycle is the idea presented in the story: on a level of idea, invention or innovation);
- describes the stakeholders contributing to the story (presents the contributors of knowledge, experience and resources necessary for success);

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15 Innovation communication (www.incogibanje.si) is a comprehensive process of identifying, understanding and promoting innovation through comprehensive and systematic communication. In practice, it is a movement that integrates all stakeholders in the innovation environment and strengthens the network of interdisciplinary connections and relationships, both in the sense of content and structure.
defines the impact that the story might have on the industry/the area that it emerged from, as well as, the impacts that it has/will have on other fields/industries;

defines the duration of the effects (whether the innovation will have a short- or long-term life cycle; whether the subject has a short span or it is something with lasting effects on a society);

forecasts the future topics that the story might inspire (a possibilities for a new development).

A special role in the existence of innovation ecosystems plays also innovative communication. Innovative communication seeks new tools and communication channels and adapts them according to the needs and/or behaviour of the target customer segments, thus repeatedly reshaping the communication environment in an innovative manner.

In Slovenia most experiences in innovative communication and innovation communication come from the activities performed by the InCo movement between 2006 and 2012. The InCo movement has been systematically promoting the development of innovation culture in Slovenia through both types of communication and dismantled taboos of the new innovation paradigm by setting an example of innovative and innovation ecosystem by itself. One of its important conclusions/propositions, coming out of experiences, was that a common language was necessary for the development of mass innovation. When the InCo movement defined various stakeholder groups we found out that they used different jargons and terminologies that were specific to their internal use and often foreign to external observers or potential partners. A public debate on the glossary of terms and continuous creation of new environments for inter-structural communication, stimulated the co-operation between different stakeholders, and provided new insights about the behaviour and the inner streams of co-operation within innovation ecosystems.

A common language brings various groups closer together and creates an arena for sharing thoughts. Furthermore, it enables more successful mass dissemination of innovative ideas. In order to achieve an optimum effect in spreading a new story about an innovation, we should simultaneously send the same information through different communication channels, to different target audiences, in their authentic languages, at the same time. This produces a net effect; when the congestion is right, the dots horizontally connect and create by themselves an open environment which shares the same information.

3.7 Cultural context (local impact)

Even though we have not done any systemic research on the «cultural context» element of the model for mass innovation, we have sensed in all of our projects the impact and the influence of the organizational culture and the social environment. This will be our further field of exploration. We hope to improve our method with new elements that will address the specific characteristics that derive from local cultures (organizational, social) and allow a positive influence on the innovation process and the process of creation.

16 Innovative manner of communication.
18 departments, communities, teams, companies, regions
4 Conclusion

Systematic observation, management, leadership and development of mass innovation represent four levels of sustainable success in the age of globalisation and open markets. All the elements of the mass innovation model hereby presented, need to be addressed professionally and systematically, and need to be a subject of constant readjustment and transformation. Two new elements that deserve special attention are “absorptive capability” and “safe environments”. It is worth re-emphasising a new type of leadership and communication approaches that empower innovation ecosystems on a horizontal level. Positive outcomes in organizations that followed the implementation of mass innovation and innovation infrastructure encourage me to seek further. There are many new opportunities that need to be explored: for example, the impact of subconscious levels on inspiration and creation, the impact of culture and the evolutionary phases of different organizational levels and environments, etc. These new points of view might be a possible model for a prosperous and sustainable, thrivable Planet, where everyone creates common good based on his/her best abilities, with a strong impact of individuality, responsibility and visions of light.

References


