

Editorial

As the world was about to recover from the first wave of the financial crisis in autumn 2010, 'Practicing innovation in times of discontinuity' was a highly adequate theme for the 11th Continuous Innovation Network (CINet) conference. Discontinuity and disruptive events can have several shapes or forms, and their impact can vary accordingly. The downturn in the economy, as we saw from 2008, brought both firms and countries out of their comfort zones, and many firms had to restructure their activities, with cost savings as the dominant priority. However, neglecting innovation in such times could mean missing opportunities and lack of competitiveness when the markets are picking up again, or missing the chance to develop and shape a whole new market, through new products, processes or business models. All these aspects highlight the importance for firms of being able to effectively manage exploitation and exploration simultaneously, what we define as the core of the Continuous Innovation Network.

At the time of the launch of this special issue, we face the second wave of the downturn in the economy. Several, even well-run, companies are influenced by what now has developed, especially in Europe, into a state of financial crisis. In times like these, innovation may not be the top priority for managers and companies. However, preparing for the future through improving efficiency *and* innovation is critical for firms, even in difficult times. 'Practicing innovation in times of discontinuity', therefore, is as important now as when it was the theme of the CINet conference in Zürich in September 2010.

This issue of *Creativity and Innovation Management* contains a set of four articles that are based on papers presented at this CINet conference. Thematically, the four articles focus on the early phases of innovation, i.e. in the idea or search phase. Although they share the focus on the early stages of the innovation process, the articles study this with significantly different lenses and, therefore, contribute to a broader understanding of the phenomenon.

Jens Hemphälä and Mats Magnusson focus on the way in which social networks contribute to innovation. They demonstrate that the characteristics of social networks have a

major influence on the outcome of the innovation process. Dense or open networks support incremental or radical innovations, respectively.

The article by Jennie Björk brings up the theme of ideation in companies. While the importance of ideation for the innovation process is widely recognized, the ideation process is far from being fully understood. Björk's research demonstrates that individuals who span different domains have a higher ideation performance compared to their within-domain colleagues.

Silvia Cantarello, Antonella Martini and Anna Nosella investigate how an organization can pursue both exploitation and exploration simultaneously in the search phase for innovations. They do this through a multi-level analysis of both the operational and managerial levels in the organization.

In the final article of this special section, Jacqueline Holzer presents how an organization and the individuals in the organization understand innovation and discusses the consequences for the development of new products and processes. Holzer demonstrates how a crisis occurring during the development process can have a positive influence on the innovation process when the development team is allowed to construct a whole new understanding of the ongoing project. In this process, communication, boundary objects and artefacts play a central role.

In addition to the special CINet section, this issue of *Creativity and Innovation Management* contains four 'regular' articles. Marcel Bogers and Joel West review the literature on the management of distributed innovation. They contrast the vertically integrated innovation model to open innovation, user innovation and other distributed processes, and discuss open source software and crowdsourcing as applications of these perspectives. They consider differences in the nature of distributed innovation and contrast the predictions of the perspectives on the sources, motivation and value appropriation of external innovation. On the basis of this, they provide a framework for the strategic management of distributed innovation.

Rita Faullant, Erich Schwarz, Ines Krajger, and Robert Breitenecker focus on creativity and lead users. While lead user research

has made important advances, there is still a significant lack of understanding of the antecedents of lead user-ness. The authors provide a comprehensive framework for understanding who these leading-edge users are. On the basis of an empirical study in the field of small kitchen appliances, they show that lead user-ness is fundamentally linked to individual creativity, creativity- and domain-relevant skills, and personal characteristics such as education, gender and openness to experience.

Suvi Konsti-Laakso, Timo Pihkala and Sacha Kraus studied how the innovation capability of small- and medium-sized firms can be fostered through business networking. They present a case study of the development of a young innovation network, in which they demonstrate how SME innovation can

be promoted through facilitated network development.

In the final paper in this issue, Philippe Duverger states that variety is the spice of innovation. Grounded in the service innovation literature, this paper reports an empirical study in which innovative service ideas are extracted from ordinary users in three different service domains, in order to identify the salient characteristics of the most innovative customers. The results show that variety seeking mediates the relationship between subjective knowledge and unmet needs.

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