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3. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON INDICATORS AND CONCEPTS OF INNOVATION (ICICI 2009)

„The Social Dimension of Innovation“

October 1-2, 2009

Prague, Czech

Republic

Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague

Centre for Economic studies, College of Economics and Management, Prague

Competence Centre for Management, Berne School of Business and Administration, Berne

Keynote Speaker:

**Prof. Nico Stehr (Zeppelin University
Friedrichshafen)**

Conference Homepage

<http://innocon.wordpress.com>

ICICI 2009: The Social Dimension of Innovation

The issue of innovation: social and cognitive challenges

Continuing efforts to promote international conferences on indicators and concepts of innovation have been contributing to the formation of a platform for the professional discussion of an important social issue of current societies – the issue of innovation. The notion of innovation has been penetrating all public debates concerning their key challenges: economic growth, regulatory role of markets, regulatory policies, institutional reforms and many others. To a large extent, such advancement has been supported and enabled by the cognitive outcome of economic studies of innovation. These, following the message of A. Schumpeter, have succeeded in explaining clusters of interdependent factors influencing growth of innovations. Their concept of a *national innovation system* has played an important role in regulatory policies of states. The circulation of the concept of innovation between the practical decision-makers and economic community has borne further fruit. Within the debates of economic community the concepts of a *knowledge-based economy* (Rodrigues 2002, Soete 2006) and the concept of social production have been developed to organise the study of regulatory and institutional consequences of innovation-based economic growth (Hollingsworth, Boyer 1997). Advances in economic studies of innovation have been evidently transcending into the cognitive realms of further social sciences. Such positive steps become quite explicit in the concept of *learning economy* and the empirical findings organised by this concept (Lundvall 1992, Lundvall, Tomilson 2002, Lundvall 2006) – opportunities for advanced learning are conditioned by social modes of production and organisation. In political terms the challenges for understanding the role of innovation are even more explicit: the Lisbon strategy counts on the interplay of technological, economic and social factors to be key sources of competitiveness.

That said, one has to ask the question of how the social dimension of innovation can be understood, what may be the contribution of the other social sciences to the study of innovation?

Before proposing an answer to the question, some remarks on the cognitive status of the above outlined issue should be made. We are going to claim that the issue of innovation can become a productive problem area for interdisciplinary studies. The scope of the possible interdisciplinary insight can be quite broad since the issue of innovation concerns scientific, technological, economic, and socio-cultural areas. Not only does it bring researchers from different social science disciplines together into the discussion, but it can also question the current division of science between nomothetic and idiographic discursive cultures (Wallerstein 1996). Of course, the study of innovation in interdisciplinary perspective can follow incremental steps, which can, e.g., identify the *social implications of techno-economic nature of innovation* or the ways *socially embedded resources* can be mobilised in favour of innovation. The concept of innovation can, however, inspire an even more profound study of issues concerning institutionalised split among political, economic and socio-cultural spheres and background knowledge of modern science itself, such as understanding the notions of time, locality and space, which in terms of Cartesian perspective presume the duality between nature and culture (Wallerstein 82-83) and are firmly embedded in our value pattern.

International Conferences on Indicators and Concepts of Innovation

Widely shared experience of social scientists resulting from studies of innovation has been

offering a chance for discussions about the nature of innovation. This chance has been taken up by annual International Conferences on Indicators and Concepts of Innovation (ICICI). Their aim has been to support the emerging niche of interdisciplinary studies of innovation and coordinate the discussion both on conceptual and empirical issues. ICICI 2008, which was organised by the Berne School of Business and Administration (<http://unternehmensfuehrung-en.bfh.ch/>), has attempted to support the discussion by a radicalisation of the topic: the presented papers and discussion intended to disclose non-economic and non-technological resources and impacts of innovation (see the conference proceedings: <http://www.peterlang.com/Index.cfm?vID=11815&vLang=D>). It turned out, indeed, that delineating the problem while creating the differences helps understand not only the boundary conditions but also the reasons for an autonomy of the relevant area: in fact, economic issues are not understood because of their functional specificity but due to their context of existing non-economic issues. The same can be said about technological issues. Such orientation has also borne its fruit: both the conceptual issues and the interpretations presented have been discussed by case studies and research projects. The former topic has offered an interesting contribution to systemic nature of innovation, which can refer to *system theory of Niklas Luhmann*. Another conceptual orientation has focused on the concept of different *forms of capitals (Pierre Bourdieu)* and its interpretative power for study of regulatory role of markets in coordination of relevant resources of innovation. The latter contribution, i.e., of case studies and research projects, has been focused on country-and-branch-specific issues of innovation systems as well as their regional dimension. The discussed cluster of conceptual and empirical issues of innovation studies has turned out to be close to findings of social studies of science of technology which claim that only socially robust growth of science and technology will secure their importance for society (Nowotny, Scott, Gibbons 2001). The *concept of social robust innovation* has been formulated (Roth 2009) in a similar way.

It is the aim of ICICI 2009, which will be held in Prague on 1st-2nd October, 2009, and supported by the long-standing public university (Charles university), a new private university (College of Economics and Management) and a foreign partner (Berne School of Business and Administration), to continue in the ongoing discussion about innovation and develop the issues addressed and discussed in the previous conference rounds. The title of the conference is calling for a larger step to be taken in the ongoing discussion outlined above. By the term of social dimension we do not mean an additional aspect to the economic, technological or political ones, but a factor, which is co-shaping their assets and gaining (or losing) its power by doing so.

Knowledge resources for an interdisciplinary study of innovation

A good lesson about ways interdisciplinary study can start and proceed can be learnt from *social studies of science and technology*. Having the advantage of the participation of social sciences and humanities in the study of modern science and technology (S&T), this multidisciplinary field of study has examined step by step, and in a specific order, a wider context of S&T institutions. Firstly, the problem shows us that we need a better understanding of social implications of science and technology. It was assumed that a better knowledge about negative implications or high risks of science and technology could lead to proposals for their better governance. Such steps have brought some positive results – S&T actors have become aware of ambivalent implications of their knowledge when it is utilised. Further on, institutional issues have enriched the research agenda, the study of value orientations of scientists and their role in ongoing processes of *de-institutionalisation of research sphere* (Gibbons et al. 1994). The ensuing cognitive efforts have focused on the issue of re-institutionalisation and its key problem of how autonomy of science can be maintained in the

process of advancing the role of scientific knowledge in current societies. The first unique proposal of three-stage model of finalisation (Böhme et al. 1978) was later advanced by a closer description of boundary conditions between science institutions and society (Nowotny et al. 2001) as well as by the claim for a better understanding of *Mode-2* society. A fruitful contribution to this line of social studies of science and technology, which examines not only social implications of science and technology but also the process of their social shaping, has been presented by a recent study on the situation of science-society interface in Europe (Felt, Wynne 2007). It presents a persuasive picture about discursive and social resources of re-institutionalisation of science and technology.

The above-outlined development of problem orientations in social studies of science and technology can serve as a good lesson for an advancement of innovation research to a level of social studies. However, it does not mean that the other social sciences, or their related spheres, cannot offer conceptual and empirical knowledge to the issue. On the contrary, most of them deal with the phenomenon of change. But available conceptual approaches, theoretical frameworks and methodologies are quite diverging. Although no cognitive platform for multidisciplinary study of innovation has been formed so far, it is possible to identify many transcendent contributions to this issue. First of all, a neo-Schumpeterian conceptual approach within the *economic studies of innovation* (Dosi, Pavitt, Soete 1990) has brought up the following interesting findings about the socio-economic framework of science and technology:

- re-conceptualisation of NIS (Soete, Arundel 1993, OECD 2005),
- projection of advanced innovation concept to Community Innovation Scoreboard (CIS 2005),
- clustering of innovative firms by strategic and imitative technological resources (Arundel, Hollanders, 2005),
- embedding of knowledge resources of firms in modes of production and organisation and their impact on learning and communicative capacities of firms and market environments (Lundvall, Tomilson 2002, Lundvall 2006), and
- a wider distribution of knowledge as well as knowledge interacting with growing sources of enterprising and creativity can be taken as evidence of a new technological paradigm which should be applied in economic studies of innovation (Soete 2006).

The issue of innovation has been studied by many social sciences under the label of diffusion of artefacts and symbols. Recently, it has also been explicitly addressed by some social scientists studying a macro-framework of current societies (e.g. concepts of knowledge societies or social studies of modernity). The above-mentioned analysis of democratic European knowledge society suggests that „steps should be taken away from the present narrow and exclusive understanding of innovation towards recognising more socially distributed, autonomous and diverse collective forms of enterprise” (Felt, Wynne 2007: 10). Fruitful contributions have been proposed by a follow-up debate to the course of implementation of Lisbon strategy. Official critical assessments (European Commission, 2004, Aho report 2006) have focused on *economic resources of competitiveness* and shifted the issues of social coherence to the background with the argument of their cost-consuming nature. Giddens formulates an alternative assessment in which he calls for an understanding of social factors based on resources, not costs. However, such an understanding can only emerge if social processes are reflected not only as passive, indirect, dependent factors, but also as active and independent forms of transformation.

Sector of services is an exemplary sphere where the contours of the clash between passive and active forms of social transformation can be observed. Their passive forms are shaped by an industrial mode of knowledge production (with a separated position of knowledge producer and knowledge user), a flow of knowledge from producer to user, activity of producer and passivity of user, organised forms for top-down flows, corresponding economic and social advantages (high status for producers, high wages for technology and value added producing actors). The assessment of the service sector in current social transformations is locked in an industrial techno-economic paradigm. The active forms of services have to be identified with the understanding of the *new roles of technology, knowledge and markets* in relation to the increasing competences and activities of users. Innovation resources are much more dependent on the variety of interfaces to users, flexible networking and personification of services. „The knowledge in new economy is certainly in part scientific and technological – as the very impact of information technology shows. But even more important are creativity, the testing of new ideas and the opening up of new markets according to changing patterns of demand ... which is met by stylistic appeal, clever design and effective marketing (Giddens 2007: 179). These are strong arguments to label current changes in economy by the term *knowledge-based economy and services* (Soete 2006, Giddens 2007).

The above-outlined recommendation to turn the attention of innovation studies to the services in order to be able to follow the new knowledge paradigm supports also our aim to better understand the social dimension of innovation. Indeed, in the perspective of ongoing social transformations, the contours of social resources promoting innovation growth in services can be more clearly identified. The trend of *individuation* (Beck 1993, Beck, Giddens, Lash 1994) has been projected into the mode of personification of services, a new pattern of knowledge resources bound to it and the implication for governance of such social transformations. The questions are asked to what extent the governance should be shaped by the public or private spheres, by markets or hierarchies, by the generalizing power of money or public reputation, by economic or political rationale? The answers to these questions presume a closer study of the boundary conditions of these realms as well as their interface with cultural resources of societies. N. Stehr and his concept of knowledge societies have fruitfully contributed to such answers (Stehr 1994). While stressing the (new) role of *knowledge as a capacity of action* (and reflecting so the trend of individuation), he also points to important structural changes: (i) the growth of welfare of households, (ii) the growth of scale and scope of education and practical knowledge in social action, and (iii) the separation of consumption from production. The differentiation of consumption from production undermines current patterns of meritocratic evaluation. It is a field, where “the unattainable is being strived for, unthinkable becomes subject of deliberation ... processes of embedding and orientation, fear and trust to relevant actors and procedures happen ... and products attain moral content (Stehr 2007:71). Has the consumer really become the key actor of current societies? And how can their democratic nature be maintained if current trends are indicating that consumers have only rights and no obligations? Stehr is aware of the issue and offers a solution – “markets are occupied by people with responsibilities which they take over with respect to their own interests, but also by consumers, producers, distributors who are forced to responsibility by logic of market operation” (Stehr 2007:74). The solution cannot be found without taking the interface of consumers and citizens into account. Here we face again the old problem of democracies – what is the role of markets and civil societies in their maintenance and growth? In our discussion: what is the relationship between the *citizen and the consumer*? One can observe that the interface between both roles is shaped by specific environments and regulatory forms - markets and public agencies supported by expertise (Giddens 2007: 104-106) - and that the boundary conditions between them are noted by mutual interpenetration and “transfers” of some functions from one side to another hereby reflecting the increasing

moralisation of markets (Stehr 2007).

The above-mentioned socio-cultural circumstances of innovation performance outline a new framework of innovation governance and regulatory policies: the growing role of decentralised forms, participatory decision-making, institutional reflexivity, discursive communication and public trust, which could reflect on and facilitate horizontally distributed resources of knowledge and creativity.

The social dimension of innovation – problem areas of ICICI 2009

With reference to the above-outlined received views in the social studies of innovation the discussion at the ICICI 2009 in Prague will be focused on the following topics:

- Innovation in the sphere of services – innovating firms and their strategies, knowledge and technology resources of innovating firms, regulatory forms (public/private divide), interfaces to users, specific features for different branches of services,
- Marketing practices of innovating firms – marketing strategies – forms and means of shaping markets position and interfaces to users, role in adaptive and learning capacities of innovating firms, position and role of consumer activities and associations,
- Ethical, methodological and managerial implications of consumer integration into the innovation process by means of open innovation,
- Targeting innovation on environmental issues – regulatory practices and schemes of support, innovating actors and their technological, economic and social resources, public responses and the role of informed consent,
- Regionally oriented innovations - types and resources of innovating firms, the context of their formation and networking, regulatory environments, trajectories of their growth,
- Innovation policies in public debate – a range of stakeholders, discursive forms of negotiation, applied symbolic tokens (arguments, master narratives), chances for public learning.

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Conference board:

Assoc. Prof. Karel Müller, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University Prague, Czech Republic
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Abstract Submission:

Please send an abstract of max. 500 words to muellerk@fhs.cuni.cz and to steffen.roth@bfh.ch until *June 21st, 2009* at the latest. The notification of acceptance will be on *July 5th, 2009*.

Final paper submission: *September 13th, 2009*; presented papers will be published in the conference proceedings after a peer-review process.

Contributions from young practitioners, policy makers and researchers in innovation research up from the PhD-student level are welcome.

Registration fees:

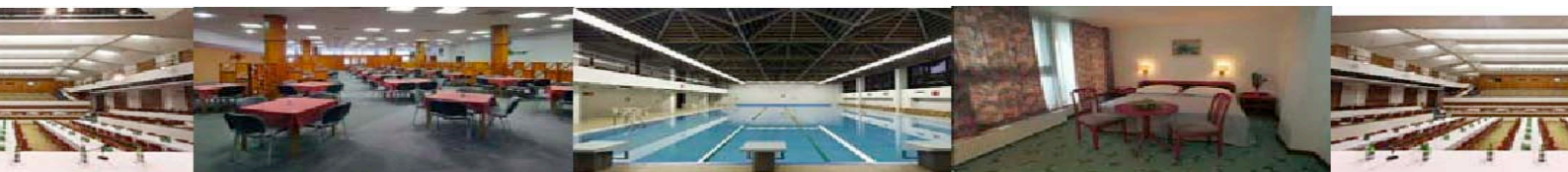
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Conference Venue:

The conference will be held in Conference Centre “Olsanka” which is located in Prague 3, close to historical centre of the city. At the end of September and the beginning of October the weather is usually agreeable (15-20°C), autumn colours are framing impressive background for the enjoyment of specific combination of historical artefacts, the rich culture, the international flair and the artistic (Bohemian) flavour of social atmosphere, by which the city has been noted.

Accommodation:

The accommodation can be reserved in Hotel “Olsanka”, Praha 3 - Žižkov, Táboritská 23: <http://www.hotelolsanka.cz/>, Email: reservace@hotelolsanka.cz.
The price for night/person: 2’100 CZK (75 Euro), night/2 persons 2’900CZK (103 Euro).