

Innovation

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In an age of aesthetic economy, the rationalist paradigm of the **organization* is substituted with that of a sensuous organism (Reckwitz 2017), its values residing more in signs and symbols than in functions and technical knowledge. In this context, the perceived need to search for a state of permanent innovation leads creativity to become a *wish* and *imperative*, highlighting an area of closer interaction between business and art.

Following Reckwitz, creativity has two dimensions:

“First, it refers to the potential and the act of producing something dynamically new. [...] This production of novelty is thought of not as an act occurring once only, but rather as something that happens again and again over a longer period of time. Second, the topos of creativity harks back to the modern figure of the artist, the artistic and the aesthetic in general. In this sense, creativity is more than purely technical innovation.” (2017: 2)

This definition emphasizes the interplay between creativity and innovation, referring to the artistic as the field where innovation is realized at its highest degree, exceeding the complexity of technical innovation. Even though the interplay between creativity and innovation has been widely analyzed and the process of artistic creation is generally recognized as a privileged field of experimentation, the very nature of the process through which creativity becomes innovation remains ambiguous (**Artist*).

Competence-based vs. Market-based Perspectives

Introduced in the economic sense as a trigger of change, innovation was traditionally seen as a source of invention and “creative destruction” (Schumpeter 1934), a wave of usually technologically driven change that weakens the position of incumbents while creating opportunities for newcomers. From the beginning, then, the concept of innovation identified a combination of creation

and destruction as opposite and complementary processes, connected implicitly with the idea of creativity as originating from technical inventions.

Looking at innovation from today’s relevant perspectives in the economic field (Bergek et al. 2013) – competence-based and market-based – offers a different definition of the classical, binomial distinction between radical, potentially disruptive projects and incremental, accumulating ones.

From a competence-based perspective, disruption begins when technological change destroys the knowledge base of consolidated companies that are using previous technologies to control the market (**Computer*). Thus, incumbents lose their leading role, while newcomers exploit emerging knowledge to grow their position.

The subsequent classification of modular and architectural innovations further reinforces this perspective. In the mid-1990s, the consolidation of a strong technical perspective supported the decomposition of the understanding of innovation into its conceptual or conceived part(s) and its physical or engineering part(s). As a result, modular and architectural innovations (Henderson/Clark 1990) are defined in terms of changes either affecting single, separate elements of a product (hence modular approach) or changing the relationship between two or more of its elements (hence architectural approach). This revised classification emphasizes the technical nature of innovation, explaining its managerial organization as a consequence of choices made in terms of the product’s conceptual architecture (**Product*). The competence-based perspective thus coheres with a scientific approach to management, recognizing the supremacy of technical knowledge over the organizational and human dimensions of the process of innovation.

From a market-based perspective, the degrees of radicalness and disruption caused by technological change are defined in terms of the performance attributes valued by the market. Disruptive innovations are defined as those able to change market preferences, establishing and catering to a new segment of users and dismantling the position of previous market leaders. As a consequence, newcomers generally drive the process of disruption by entering the market from below, eroding the position of incumbents thanks to the satisfaction of low-margin market segments that typically had been unaddressed. Starting from these initial offerings, newcomers will reinforce their efforts by introducing new levels of performance to develop market segments with higher margins, definitively eroding the position of incumbents. This market-based framework is completed by identifying innovation strategies that supposedly provide for ongoing change.

Though the competence- and market-based perspectives focus on different dimensions – one can be said to be internally driven, the other externally driven – they both view innovation as a technical process managed by a group of

professionals in the organization, thus adhering to and confirming the “management-oriented strand of innovation” (Reckwitz 2017: 99). The impact of innovation here depends on the capability to introduce discontinuity in a state of equilibrium, creating more or less radical changes that might result in a Schumpeterian ‘creative destruction’. Quite interestingly, radical, even disruptive innovations are defined not in terms of creativity but as competence- or market-destroying weapons. Creativity thus remains in the background, analyzed initially as an individual process embodied by the entrepreneur, who is recognized as the agent of creative change, “the creator of unpredictable novelty” (Reckwitz 2017: 96). Even when Amabile (1988) defines creativity as a process that starts with a creative actor and ends with a result that must be new and valuable, the concept remains ambiguous in many respects. Who are the creative agents involved at various stages in the process? How is the result of the process evaluated as a novel and useful product? (**Valorization*) Is it just a question of market success?

Innovation and Creativity in Artistic Creation

The most recent literature on managing innovation has paid much more attention to the question of creativity, focusing on new actors, such as designers and creative professionals, and progressively widening the list of who is considered to ‘be creative’ (**Co-Creation*). As Reckwitz (2017) underlined, everybody is now urged to act creatively, generating novel and useful ideas and potentially developing products or services, or even startups.

In this context, and on first sight strangely enough, the world of art becomes an ideal field of investigation for management scholars. Creative urgency and the passionate dedication to art for art’s sake appear to be coherent with the idea of the artist as a kind of creative hero producing radical innovations (**Improvisation*). But, once again, the risk is that a rhetoric is chosen that obscures a considerably more complex substance.

The emergence and consolidation of radical innovations in artistic history resulted from an interplay of individual and collective choices, with creative processes embedded in social and cultural contexts characterized by rules, aims, and institutional roles. The history of artistic innovations thus offers a complex and meaningful setting to analyze and interpret the strategy of those actors – the artists and the artistic system – to promote what could be considered radical innovations and enable high levels of creativity.

A good example is represented by the emergence of Cubism as a radical innovation in the artistic language of the twentieth century (**Deaestheticization*). This innovation resulted from the interplay of three different dimensions (Sgourev 2013): individual creativity of individual artists, such as Picasso and Braque, who led the movement; the collective action of all those professionals

involved at various levels in the artistic process of producing, distributing, and promoting the paintings; and social changes in the context of painting in Paris. The co-evolution of these three levels enabled the process of radical innovation, supporting a trajectory of artistically radical and commercially successful change. More specifically, two dynamics emerging from the study of Cubism can add useful insights to the relationship between creativity and innovation.

The first dynamic relates to the level of ambiguity and fragmentation that characterized painting in Paris at the beginning of the twentieth century. These dimensions favored the artistic independence and experimental approach of Picasso and Braque, which facilitated the emergence of a radically new language. These two artists benefited from the proliferation of aesthetic positions, nurtured by a high level of “protected” isolation where their work could follow new ideas and personal purposes without being influenced by the need to stay in the market. Their protection took the form of a guarantee: a number of dealers bought their paintings in advance. Thus, “[a]s the costs of experimentation were suddenly reduced and dealers began to assume the risk of failure, the preconditions were created for the pursuit of art that was not simply different, but radically so” (Sgourev 2013: 1612; **Museum*).

The second dynamic relates to the relationship between the management of collective processes of innovation and the resistance these encounter from established and conservative actors. In traditional contexts of technological innovation, radical projects discard existing positions and meet resistance from an establishment (incumbents and their networks). In the case of Cubism, the absence of clear guidelines from the most prominent artists (Picasso and Braque, who preferred to work in isolation and even at a certain distance from Paris) gave more space to other artists to experiment, adapt, and combine convergence and divergence with greater freedom. As a result, the growing number of artists recognizing themselves in the new movement represented a difficult, moving target to identify or resist (**Creative Crowd*). The lack of strong opposition thus increased in those artists the possibility to experiment with processes of divergence, which are traditionally involved when creativity and radical innovation are enacted.

The story of Cubism offers some interesting insights on the relationship between creativity and innovation, confirming that the radicalness of the innovative process depends on the interplay between and dynamic co-evolution of individual, collective, and socio-cultural dimensions. In this way, ambiguity, fragmentation, diversity, and loosely coupled coordination increase the possibility of reaching high levels of innovation while reducing the social control of incumbents. At the same time, innovation – whether radical and disruptive or incremental and sustaining – has a double aim to be both novel and useful (and consequently to gain success in the market). Where one of these aims is missing, creativity remains merely rhetorical. This confirms the model of **aesthe-*

tic capitalism, in which the artist is poised to become the most meaningful representative of a new generation of super consultants for the creative company.

References

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Museum

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Andreas Reckwitz defines the present as an epoch under the control of a "creativity dispositif" (2017: 9) whose "formational phase, a time of incubation" was in "the period from around 1900 to the 1960s" (ibid: 31). In fact, there is ample evidence for this claim. At the start of the incubation period for the creativity dispositif, there is Leo Tolstoy's programmatic prediction, pregnant with Christian Socialist ideology, that in the future "[artistic activity] will become accessible to every simple person" (1995: 151). Formulated in his treatise "What is art?", Tolstoy's prediction and his anti-elite understanding of art remained largely inconsequential at the time. At the end of the incubation period for the creativity dispositif, however, another Christian Socialist vision would become rapidly popular in the form of Joseph Beuys' dictum, "Everyone is an artist" (*Capital, *Artist).

Within the course of a generation, the image of mankind propagated by Beuys was accepted without nearly any resistance. Reckwitz immediately makes up the balance with the first sentence of his book: "If there is a desire in contemporary society that defies comprehension, it is the desire *not* to be creative" (2017: 1, emphasis in the original). The phrase "everyone is an artist" could serve as the motto for the creativity dispositif whose new ideals are democratization and the empowerment of the individual. These new ideals are so successful because they suit the growing economization of nearly every area of contemporary life: being creative promises not only being able to have an authentic and unalienated experience, even as an individual; it also means having a chance of success in a competitive society oriented toward performance, since the creative type is supposedly faster, more original, and more surprising than others.

Ever since creativity has become a general requirement, people have increasingly gone on the search for its sources of inspiration. Since many are not able to discover a sufficient amount of the postulated creative potential in themselves, they increasingly rely on finding creativity in other sources. They fear that they do not have enough ideas, that they are not flexible enough, spontaneous