

Foreword

This book presents new thoughts and research on innovation. Innovation with care emphasizes both the care for people and the care for doing innovation in a proper way. Most innovative attempts fail and create economic loss and individual disappointment.

Another book in the overwhelming stream of books on innovation? Can it contribute with new knowledge? We believe it can by taking a primarily sociological approach to innovation. Not that the economic aspects are forgotten, but the sociological aspects are emphasized complimentary to the economic ones. This is not very common in innovation literature. The individual – the entrepreneur – has been emphasized, but rarely the social processes with different actors and roles and innovation as an interactive process.

In the increasing contemporary theoretical and practical interest for innovation, the social aspects of the innovation process has often been forgotten. Emphasis has primarily been on economic processes and policy. However, innovation is a process that is carried out by people in interaction with people. It may be that the result of the process is part of the market economy, but the process itself is a social process where the economic results are not at all sure. Recently the social processes have come more into focus. Innovation projects, creativity and user-involvement have become objects in the front research. This book is one contribution to this movement.

The book is a presentation of more than 15 years of research in the Innovation Research Group at Roskilde University in Denmark. In this group we have had a preference for the out-of-mainstream approaches to innovation: Innovation in services and the experience economy, innovation as non-sophisticated, quick practical ideas, continuous incremental innovation, user/customers' and employees' role in the innovation process, innovation as an organizational sensemaking process and so on. This has been amusing and informative for us and we believe it can provide new knowledge for researchers, students and others interested in innovation as both an economic and a social phenomenon.

We think that the future for the phenomenon of innovation – and thus for innovation research and practical innovation work in firms and societies – is to return to the original point of departure: A general change of behavior and economic structures – social and economic change. We believe that

innovation in the future will be a much more comprehensive phenomenon than just R&D, entrepreneurship as establishment of new high-tech firms or narrow industrial policy. Social entrepreneurship as solving social problems, innovation as a value creating organizational development factor and as a collective social activity in- or outside the formal economy will probably be future highlights within innovation research. This will develop innovation theory and make it more exciting, but also more diffuse since it will concern social change in general. The latter will challenge the theory development, but there is no way around this if we want to explain economic development, which in the future will concern phenomena such as lifestyle, experience, corporate identity, solution of social problems and so on.

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