

The “You Can Learn to Innovate” Manifesto

From the digital society to the innovation society.

(2.0., Dec. 06, 2010)

1. Innovation is the way out of the current economic crisis. Innovation means producing new ideas, products and services from the people and by the people, in the academia, in the market and in society.
2. We are already in a digital society. ICT and Internet as transversal technologies set up the basis of this new culture of innovation, still in construction. This new culture is opening up the old models of innovation. WWW was a great innovation. It was more than a product in a market. It created a new market. Now the Web 2.0 (blogs, wikis, ...) are again great innovations. It is more than “products in a market”. They are recreating the market. Innovation is becoming a matter of the overall society.
3. The new innovation models are even transforming the traditional research and development systems. In the classical textbooks, innovation was the final result of the research and development cycle. In the new culture, innovation usually is the first step of radical new research programs. This always happened in ICT. The first electronic computer was a radical innovation before the beginning of the computer science. The same happened with Internet and the Web.
4. The evolution of our digital networks, economies and societies are now creating slowly some open innovation structures: living labs, social networks, even “innovation universities”.... These structures embody this new culture of open innovation. Open networks can produce open innovation structures. But the process is dramatically slow. Web 2.0 applications are demonstrating that people can innovate. But after some years of experience, it is still an hypothesis to be validated.
5. We live surrounded by digital stuff, but the overwhelming the majority of companies, institutions, schools don't know how to innovate. Yes, the majority of our companies are already digital but they don't know how to apply the digital technology to reinvent their own business or to create a new one. We are users of technology, but not yet innovator with the new technology. We live already in a digital society, but not in an innovation society. Could we take profit of the current crisis to move on?
6. But how to do it? We all agree that there is a promising era of “democratizing the innovation” in front of us. But how to accelerate it? How to extend it to SMEs, to cities, to schools, to everyone? Our answer is: through a learning process. You can learn to innovate. Innovation is not a gene. It is a culture. And culture is something that you can learn, a process that you can design and develop it, correct it, better it step by step.
7. The problem is that our training systems and our innovation systems don't speak each other. During your education process, you do not innovate. And when you start to

innovate, your education finish.
How can we solve this problem?

Two possible complementary ways: the innovation systems should have the ability to teach, to train to educate in the innovation processes. And the education system should enter in the realm of innovation.

The new innovation models cannot be learned in separated specialized departments, or in closed R&D industrial labs. They need new open innovation structures across academic, companies and social institutions, creating a new culture of public-private-people partnership. The transversal model of innovation needs transversal learning structures.

Open innovation structures, like living labs, and other PPPP structures, are beginning to see themselves as schools of innovation for final users. We are starting to develop the first experiences like the first Summer School of Living Labs, celebrated in Paris in summer 2010. Currently we have in Europe more than 200 living labs accredited by the European Network of Living Labs. These structures can become schools and labs at the same time facilitating to SMEs and all kind of organizations entering in the culture of innovation.

In the other side, dynamics educational institutions of all kind Applied Science Universities, or some programs in traditional universities like iCells at UPC, that are trying to use traditional formats like Masters and post-graduated course to implement real innovation projects.

8. The new culture of innovation appears frequently in small organizations, in SMEs, or small autonomous units in a big corporation or institution. Some times it appears in small and medium cities or applied science universities, not from the center, but from the periphery, from the users, from “the ends”. This end-to-end innovation system is a grown-up of the end-to-end principle of the Internet architecture. They don't need to wait the order of the central commander-in-chief. But they need a lot, a lot of coordination and synergies to overcome isolation and get critical mass.
9. To consolidate this new wave of distributed innovation we need new funding mechanisms....The funding models of this emerging innovation system should be new itself. User based funding mechanisms are possible. Micropayments and microbanking is a real success for fighting poverty in emerging countries. Could it be a great help to solve the “innovation scarcity” problem in our old societies. Cooperative agreements between SMEs, SMCs and Applied Science Universities, jointly with local people can develop interesting partnerships to funding the new innovation models. The creation of distributed funding mechanisms in big corporations and institutions are also possible. The results should be to increase dramatically the total amount of funding dedicated to innovation projects.

Briefly, the European Welfare State can only be saved by an Innovation Society, supported by open innovative structures and open networks.