
Preface

“Another book about innovation—the bookshops are full of them.”... but anyway.

The purpose of this book is to venture beyond the phenomenology of innovation and to shed some light on the causes, reasons and drivers of innovation. It is about the why, about the understanding of innovation, which comes in so many facets. It is about people who have ideas, who invent, about organizations for which innovation is the elixir of life and whose existence depends on it, about markets that cannot get enough innovation. It is about success and failure, chance and luck.

Innovation leads to change and change leads to innovation. This elementary cycle forces perpetual change. It is also the causes of the complexity of innovation processes, and complex processes have the truly unpleasant property that it is not easy—if at all possible—to understand, to see through them. Therefore, the underlying general tenor in every reasoning is that the future is by its very nature unforeseeable and certainly not predictable. Future is contingent—it can turn out one way, but also some quite different way. The reader will notice that I used in the text often weak words like “often,” “usually,” “sometimes,” “occasionally,” “hardly” is used, rather than strong words such as “always” or “never.” This has precisely to do with the fact that statements are not always or never true—even if they seem so obvious and counter-arguments or examples do not immediately come to one’s mind.

Innovation is art. An artist should master the techniques and rules of his profession, even when he develops other techniques and breaks the rules—the art lies in the idea, the composition and the specific execution. Likewise, the innovator must master the techniques and rules that lead from idea to innovation, even if he intends to go an entirely different course himself. The art of innovation lies in the idea, the design and implementation in different proportions.

The book is the result of over 30 years working with innovation. In these years, I discussed and debated in countless meetings with teachers, work colleagues and friends even on evenings and weekends. From each of these encounters I have taken a lot. From this perspective, many are involved in this book, including Professor Herbert Kroemer, who is Nobel Prize laureate (2000) in Physics, and Michael Ashby, grandson of Ross Ashby, one of the founders of cybernetics, who I will refer to in this book. However, to list them all would be beyond the scope of this book as well as my recollections.

Essential for this book are the contributions, constructive criticism, and the enthusiasm of Dr. Joachim Crone (Munich), Ines Engel (Asperg), Peter Graeser (Berlin/Freiburg), Dr. Susanne Happ (Bonn), Susanne Moser (Munich), Dr. Astrid Sandweg (Stuttgart) and Thomas Volk (London/Bobingen).

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