

Discussion Note

Friday April 7 2006.

The Role of Journalism in Innovation Systems

- Moderator: David Nordfors, Program Leader, Innovation Journalism, Stanford University
- Karin Markides, Deputy Director General, VINNOVA, Sweden
- Lisa Chiles, USAID/Pakistan Mission Director
- Ellen Levy, Director of Industry Collaboration and Research, Media X, Stanford University; Network Advisor, Draper Fisher Jurvetson
- Patrick Windham, Lecturer, Public Policy Program, Stanford University
- Joseph Yang, Director of the Science & Technology Division of the Taipei Economical and Cultural Office (TECO) in San Francisco, Taiwan
- Antti Hautamäki, Director of Innovation Research, SITRA, Finland; Visiting Scholar UC Berkeley School of Information, Finland
- Markku Huusko, Arvopaperi Magazine, Finland

Comments by Antti Hautamäki

1 Politicizing of Innovation Journalism

It seems to me that Innovation Journalism is not so much a gender of journalism than a special capability to understand innovations and their meaning. To understand the role of InJo we have to distinguish two notions of “innovation system”: national innovation system and innovation ecosystem.

1.1 Two central concepts: NIS and Innovation ecosystem

1.1.1 National Innovation System:

- NIS is a set of distinct institutions which jointly and individually contribute to the development and diffusion of new technologies and which provides the framework within which government forms and implements policies to influence the innovation process.

(Metcalf: Handbook of Economics of Innovation and Technical Change (1995).)

This concept is top down and works well on the national level. It's traditionally technologically oriented (but not so much any more). In Finland the concept of NIS adopted as a basis for innovation and technology policy in the early 90's.

1.1.2 Innovation ecosystem:

There is a great pressure to develop a “now innovation policy”, not based on the concept of NIS but stressing more specialized networks, local conditions and creative centers. The new concept of innovation ecosystem is emerging.

- Innovation ecosystem consists of a large number of participants, that can be business firms, institutions, groups of people etc.
- Participants are interconnected and interacting
- They are capable of conscious decisions of their own part and they can compete or co-operate
- Interconnectedness and interaction lead to shared fate
- Innovation ecosystem is like a **rainforest**, where many kinds of innovation will emerge: technological, conceptual, organizational, social, business etc.
- The innovation ecosystem is coupled to its environment, which is open and unpredictable

This concept is bottom up type and its focus is on regional and local levels. If National innovation system provides good conditions for innovations and entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystem is the dynamic process of innovation creation and experimentation (see AnnaLee Saxenian: The new Argonauts, Regional Advantages in a Global Economy, Harvard University Press 2006)

1.2 The role of InJo in innovation systems

Jyrki Alkio said in the conference that journalists are involved in the process of making the future. I agree and want to add three points:

1.2.1 Information circulation in innovation ecosystem

I would say that journals and journalists are tacit members of innovation ecosystem. This means that they contribute to the development of ecosystem independent whether they are conscious about it. This is so because the heart of ecosystem is the circulation of information and knowledge. Media is “mediating” information or clues of information among players of innovation ecosystem. Many times innovation journalism could define the agenda of interesting things to know and debate.

1.2.2 Innovation: a focus of national politics

Innovation policy is becoming a focus of national politics. The reason is that global economy is turning to be “innovation economy”, where enterprises compete by innovations and nations compete by providing an attractive innovation environment - innovation ecosystem for enterprises.

To be successful in this competition a huge amount of reforms is needed in education system, in universities, in taxation, in IP-legislation, in regional development, in public services etc. So the issue is the deep transformation from industrial society to globally networked society and innovation economy.

1.2.3 The rise of ethical issues of innovations

The third point is that some fields of research and technologies are ethically disputable. Say genetic manipulation, new control technologies based on IT, some forms of energy technology etc. This kind of issues might have deep implications to the success of innovation policy and competitiveness. For example USA might lose its edge in biotechnology thanks of its restrictive attitude towards embryo manipulation.

Innovation journalism will be involved in all these issues. In this kind of situation, the role of innovation journalism will be crucial to reforms needed in global economy. Innovation journalism must be open to all "voices" in society: business, universities, politicians, ordinary people etc.

Earlier, say in 90's, investments in science and technology was generally accepted among Finnish politicians. But now the debate in innovation policy is becoming harder. A Good example is a university issue in Finland. Like you know there are no fees for students. Universities need the right to sell examinations to countries outside EU. The proposal to take even moderate fees from student outside EU has raised a huge protest among Finnish students and the left side of politics.

So my conclusion is that topics of innovation journalism will be extremely important and disputable. This will lead to **the politicizing of innovation issues!**

Antti Hautamäki has worked in the Finnish National Fund for Research and Development Sitra since 1996. He is the director of innovation research and is during 2006-2007 a visiting scholar at Berkeley School of Information at UCB. Before that he was leading the new Innovation Programme and the research team of Sitra. He is a docent of theoretical philosophy in the University of Helsinki. Before Sitra he worked several years as a researcher in University of Helsinki, Academy of Finland and Nokia Research Center, and as a consultant in public and private organizations. Mr. Hautamäki has been a member of several committees preparing research programs or proposals for the Academy of Finland and for different ministries. He was also a member of steering group of a project of the Finnish Government: "Finland in the Global Economy" (2004). He has done his thesis about philosophical logic in 1986. He has published over 150 articles and books about philosophy, cognitive science, innovations, information society and public policy.