

Breaking organizational routines as a requirement for knowledge broker's leadership role

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Abstract – *In the paper based on conclusions stemming from literature connected with organizational knowledge creation, territorial innovation models as well as knowledge intermediaries author tries to build hypothesis relating to the possibility of changing ways of both performing tasks and achieving goals. It is proposed that such kind of opportunity is related to the nature of the projects under realization reflected by the type of learning that occurs.*

Keywords – knowledge brokers, types of learning, leadership

I. Introduction

It can be assumed that the task for knowledge broker aspiring for leadership role (knowledge leader to be continued) is to cause that mutual knowledge exchanges take place among interested parties (Krogh, Nonaka, Rechsteiner 2012). Hence, knowledge leaders need to operate in space spreading among different organizational contexts. It can be understood as multi-layered “Ba” (Nonaka, Toyama 2005, p. 423). Knowledge leaders are expected to perceive those networks from different viewpoints, e. g. human entity, team member, organizational member. Nevertheless, there is a necessity for them to take into account influences from institutional environment in region which might be decisive about the kind of solutions preferred in given sector, knowledge assets that are used as well as the kind of targets parties are to achieve. The last factor is explained in literature by means of two quite commonly used terms, that is explorative learning and exploitative learning (e. g. Gupta, Smith, Shalley 2006). Cooperation can have more explorative nature when involves searching for technologies or products new for partners or even for all sector. But when cooperation is directed at making improvements in existing products or production processes it can be said that it is more exploitative (Hermans 2013, p. 43). The leaders should also be able to be familiar with values system of knowledge creators with whom they try to cooperate (Nonaka, Toyama 2005, p. 420). The core of those processes is that external knowledge becomes a part of processes like socialization, externalization, combination or internalization (Lopez-Saez et al. 2010). The main issue here is to be able to say when common knowledge creation can occur.

II. Knowledge leaders and their practices

In general when knowledge creation happens some simultaneous processes are to be present. It was proved for example by Mason and Leek (2008). Their point of departure was Hamel and Prahalad (1994) definition. They identified two basic elements of business models

discussed in literature: structure and routines. What is more, they assumed that dynamic business models can be conceptualized as emerging network structures built by the development of routines which are decisive about making the use of given ways of finding solutions to considered problems. As a result of this, they concluded, among three components of dynamic business models there were network structure, inter-firm routines as well as types of knowledge. Then it should be required that problems are currently solved in order to improve organizations on daily basis (Mason, Leek 2008). So, in order to analyse what the company's ability to both transfer as well as create knowledge could be, we can think through some examples.

In order to capture the essence of advantages that can be derived as a result of cooperation in multi-layered networks we can consider conclusions drawn by Hargadon and Fanelli (2002). They analysed how consulting companies that are specialized in the development of new products interact with their customers in order to produce something new. Here we have the situation that companies deliver new solutions to their customers who otherwise may perceive them as impossible whereas customers provide companies with opportunities to put into practice their ideas. It was not until customers began to cooperate with consulting companies that they became more open to new possibilities for knowledge creation.

Also during the Silesian Innovation Forum 2017 issues related to the introduction of innovations concerning technologies and business models were discussed. On the one hand, technological challenges were emphasized, e. g. in case of both airspace and aviation industry (Płonka 2017). On the other hand, the importance is attached to the change of point of view on region, e. g. there is a necessity to see a human being and its needs as the most important ones, which is why both quality advantage and innovation creation in networks of partners and clusters emerge (Ławniczak 2017). It should be undoubtedly stressed that it becomes visible that the impact customers' expectations have lead to the changes in business models in sectors hitherto focusing on technological issues (Płonka 2017). We may add that accordingly to views presented on brokers' roles played by many people in regions (Lawson, Lorenzen 1997) or later on so called collective bridges (Zhao, Anand 2013) in Silesia region there is a broad understanding of the role to be played by all people. Social nature underlying many modern innovations emerges, for example, in encouraging all habitants to take part in activities and discussions on intelligent specializations in region. Finally it should be possible that regional policy can be commonly built in a way that ensures that it is best suited to all people needs and expectations (ris.slaskie.pl). Innovation activities that are currently undertaken not only do need to be skillfully selected in order to contribute to the wealth of community (Open Innovation 2.0 Yearbook 2015, EC, Brussels 2015, p. 24) but also they need to cover new values popularized in societies (Nonaka et al. 2014).

III. Breaking routines hypothesis

In order to move on to our hypothesis we need to notice that theorists claim that in order to manage dynamic knowledge creation, leaders need to create necessary conditions which are as follows: (1) autonomy – related to the fact that all human beings should be rest assured that they have an autonomy to the extent that is possible under given conditions; it is assumed that thanks to autonomous activities undertaken by human beings, organizations increases probability that some unexpected but advantageous conditions begin to occur and at the same time people become more motivated to create knowledge (Nonaka, Takeuchi 2000, p. 101), (2) instability and creative chaos – they induce some interactions between organization and its external environment and are related to the fact that each time organization is more open to signals from the environment, it may take an advantage from its ambiguity, abundance or disruptions and make its knowledge system improved; it is assumed that together with the implementation of factors like instability within organizational boundaries, organizational members face with the challenge of breaking routines procedures, habits and cognitive frameworks (Nonaka, Takeuchi 2000, pp. 104-105) (3) redundancy – is related to the existence of excessive amount of information that is not used directly with relation to operational needs of organizational members, such kind of information is connected with tacit knowledge as well as makes it possible for human beings to understand all others who are trying to express their viewpoint; it is assumed that thanks to it human beings are able to exceed functional boundaries with ease and as a consequence of this to discuss different opinions (Nonaka, Takeuchi 2000, p. 107), (4) related variety – it connects with Ashby's law which says that in order for organization to be able to deal with demands imposed by environment, its internal variety has to be adjusted to variety and complexity that are specific for the environment; it is assumed that members are able to deal with many unexpected events under condition that they differ from each other to the some extent that is achieved due to the ability to match information quickly and flexibly as well as both to ensure that all organizational members have equal access to information (Nonaka Takeuchi, 2000, pp. 108-109) and there are safety, commitment or even love, care and trust (Nonaka, Toyama 2005, pp. 431-432).

Having considered the above-mentioned examples we may conclude that in order for effective knowledge creation induced by leaders could happen it is required that some routine procedures be broken. But in order to make our analysis more comprehensive we need to pay attention to the fact that companies may sometimes be more focused on rather incremental results (Maskell, Lorenzen 2004). Taking it into account we can try to build following hypothesis:

H1a: When cooperators' trials to both define and solve problems accompany knowledge exchanges undertaken by them, the participation of broker who operates inconsistently with the rules that are abided by others in region can be effective in case of more explorative projects. This is

because it leads to a break of routines related to hitherto practiced ways of cooperation and implies the implementation of innovative solution.

H1b: When cooperators' trials to both define and solve problems accompany knowledge exchanges undertaken by them, the participation of broker who operates consistently with the rules that are abided by others in region can be effective in case of more exploitative projects. This is because it leads to a break of routines related to hitherto practiced ways of cooperation and implies the implementation of innovative solution.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned hypothesis is based on the assumption inferred actually from three literature streams. The first one is connected with dynamic knowledge creation and it requires that we pay attention to a break of routine practices as the condition for knowledge creation. The second stream relates to territorial innovation models and let us imply that in order for regional actors to cooperate smoothly, the existence of some common practices in region is needed. The third stream of literature analyses a matter of the advantages that can be derived by brokers who connect ideas possessed by people who otherwise be unfamiliar with themselves. The question that arises is how in practice brokers try to encourage others to abandon their routine practices and whether they can achieve these advantageous results from the point of view of all community acting inconsistently with the ways which all are familiar with. The paper proposes that it can be related to the nature of the projects under realization reflected by the type of learning that occurs.

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