

# **Innovation Leadership in Practice**

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# **Innovation Leadership in Practice: How Leaders Turn Ideas into Value in a Changing World**

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United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

Emerald Publishing Limited  
Emerald Publishing, Floor 5, Northspring, 21-23 Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 4DL.

First edition 2024

Editorial Matter and Selection © 2024 Karina R. Jensen, Stephanie Kaudela-Baum and Rob Sheffield.

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**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-83753-397-8 (Print)

ISBN: 978-1-83753-396-1 (Online)

ISBN: 978-1-83753-398-5 (Epub)



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

From Karina:

*To all of the innovation leaders who inspire and co-create new opportunities and positive impact around the world.*

From Stephanie:

*For my family, Stefan, Benedikt and Ruth, who give me the freedom to do what I love.*

From Rob:

*To my children, Ella and Cormac, thanks for being with me while giving me the space for work like this. I'm hugely proud of you both.*

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# Foreword

– Dr John Bessant

There's almost certainly a list somewhere on the internet of the world's most over-worked words. And it's a fair bet that two which feature high up that list will be 'leadership' and 'innovation'. You can't escape them – the calls for strategic leadership in times of crisis, the urgent need for innovation to help cope with a VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous – world. Of course, these things matter but there's a real risk that we fall into the Humpty Dumpty trap; following the character in 'Alice in Wonderland' who famously claimed to 'use words to mean whatever I want them to mean' we risk having multiple definitions attached to the words. Put them together – 'innovation leadership' – and we've got a real problem.

What's missing is an understanding of what 'innovation leadership' actually involves. How does it play out in practice, is there a standard model or does it vary with different situations – and, most important, what are the core characteristics of a good innovation leader and how might we develop those skills? And that's where this book is welcome, a timely breath of wind to clear away the fog and give us some clear insights grounded in practice.

It helps, not least by clearing up some common misconceptions about innovation leadership. It's not about being a superstar, someone with great ideas who has put them into practice and built a successful organisation on the back of that. This can help – but whilst we have Thomas Edison or Steve Jobs to explore as role models, closer analysis reveals that they may not always have been the most supportive, patient or understanding of bosses. Inventive brilliance may be an asset but it's not what's needed at the heart of innovation leadership.

Nor is the kind of leader who sense the challenges in the future and sends his or her people forward with instructions to scale the heights, cross the ocean or otherwise fulfil the mission set for them. Again, we have role models for visionary leaders – but too often such people lack a detailed understanding of what goes on in the innovation process. Point and click isn't going to cut it, even if the pointer is stretching towards the edges of the screen. We need leaders who understand the delicate process of growing and nurturing ideas to the point where they create value.

And we also don't need the laissez-faire approach in which an innovation leader sees themselves as providing a comfortable world which allows permanent play-time, ideally taking place in an environment with minimal boundaries of time and space. Innovation is a discipline and being able to repeat the trick even more so.

It's about walking a tightrope between creativity and control, about managing projects against constraints of time and resources and, at the limit, being able to stop innovation as well as get it started, if the project is getting lost and out of control.

What we need is a complex mix of skills linked to creating the context, making it possible for individuals to contribute and share their creativity, knowledge and energy to bring ideas to life. And to do so towards a shared goal.

Several years ago, I had the privilege of working with a large German company over an extended period of time and I used the opportunity to write an innovation history of the firm. They're not a lucky newcomer; they've put in the hard yards since their foundation back in 1899 and they've continued to grow despite the huge challenges which the 20th and now the 21st century has thrown at them. Innovation is at the heart of what they do and has helped them grow to a multi-billion euro size and employ tens of thousands of people around the world. This isn't luck – they have a commitment to innovation as a core value. For me, this was exemplified in the (then) owner and chairman who set out his concept of innovation leadership simply and elegantly. He called it 'entrepreneurial responsibility' and by this, he meant a mutual obligation. On the part of all employees to deliver their creativity, knowledge and energy to help with the innovation mission. And on the part of his team of senior managers – the 'innovation leaders' – to create the context in which those employees could deliver on their innovation role.

That's a message I see reinforced and elaborated in this excellent book; from many complementary perspectives, it sets out practical guidelines through which innovation leadership can be enabled in organisations of all shapes and sizes. Far from being an empty label, we need innovation leadership more than ever in our challenging world; this book helps put that in place.

John Bessant,  
Emeritus Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship,  
University of Exeter, UK

# Foreword

– Dr Bettina von Stamm

*Innovation Philosopher, World Citizen and Founder of the Innovation Leadership Forum.*

I am honoured and delighted to have been asked to write a foreword for this important book. Even more so as a dear and long time friend and colleague, John Bessant, will do the same. This fact demonstrates that the authors are readily embracing an emerging and fast growing understanding of leadership in the 21st century: that it is shared. Goodbye to the controlling, all-knowing, all powerful hero leader, and welcome to the humble, cooperative and empowering servant leader.

The concept of shared, collaborative leadership is also one that seems to be running through many of the chapters, be the focus on self leadership, leadership at the team, organisational or ecosystem level. That is hugely encouraging as such a shift is made necessary by the highly complex context in which we all operate. A context where change is being introduced at an ever faster rate and where everything and everyone are connected. A world where communication is instantaneous and, once out in the digital world, almost impossible to retract. A world in which customary boundaries blur and the concept of ‘one right way’ has all but disappeared. And a world, where the challenges to our beautiful planet start to look rather daunting and insurmountable. In such a context, it is impossible for any one person – or organisation or country – to have the answers to our challenges; but collectively we might. If each and everyone of us offers our hands, minds and hearts, contributing what makes us unique, we may yet have a chance to shape a world in which humans and nature live in harmony. That’s why self-leadership and truly appreciating diversity are essential. We need to know ourselves, our strengths and weaknesses, and we need to be kind to ourselves – which is a far cry from being selfish or self-centered. And rather than being frightened or annoyed by those who are different, we need to turn that fear and annoyance into curiosity, appreciation and delight. Only by bringing everyone together, pooling our resources, insights and experiences, will we be able to come up with the radically new approaches and offerings that are so urgently needed.

Whom we have customary thought of as leader will be replaced by those who are orchestrators, encouragers, enablers, providers of the most appropriate context and upholders of the vision. While such a shift in understanding and execution of leadership is urgent and necessary, it is also a rather tricky one: it requires

leaders to put their (often rather big) egos to one side and put themselves into the service of a greater good. No doubt, that greater good must be innovating towards a sustainable world.

So it will come as no surprise that I consider ‘Leadership’ and ‘Innovation’ – individually or combined – to be key for shaping our future. Innovation is absolutely critical as humanity has forged paths that are utterly unsustainable, as should be absolutely clear to everyone by now. Only through innovating can we shape new ones. Leaders and leadership play a critical role, as it requires vision, and a great deal of courage and determination to leave the accustomed path. The importance of leaders and leadership in the context of innovation was one of the first realisations I had in the over 30 years that I have been working, researching, writing in the field of innovation. It has taken me a little longer though to understand and appreciate the difference between ‘leading of’ and ‘leading for innovation’.

I introduced this distinction about a decade ago when I realised that many of those in a leading position, in the sense that they are asked to make decisions about innovation, are not comfortable with ambiguity, uncertainty and risk taking, and are hence uncomfortable with sanctioning highly innovative projects (the often uttered observation that middle management is the key blocker to innovation with a capital ‘I’). Their forté is the management of costs and efficiencies – which is of course also a hugely important skill and mindset in organisational contexts. We cannot – and should not – make everyone an innovation enthusiast. But rather than allowing a context where decisions on path-altering innovations are influenced by individuals’ own preferences, or worse, fears, such decisions should be made by a triumvirate (a set of three): the person passionate about the idea, a person reserved and critical about change (and hence innovation) and one who thrives and invites change. That way it can become possible to make decisions that are in the best interest of the greater good, or, at least, in the best interest of the organisation.

While not all of us need to become leaders of innovation – leading and driving highly innovative projects forward, I certainly believe that many more of us need to become leaders for innovation: understanding ourselves and our attitude towards innovation and being truly appreciative of diversity. *Innovation Leadership in Practice* makes a great contribution to what this might look and feel like, at all different levels: individual, team, organisation and ecosystem.

# Preface

If you want a place to serve as inspiration, it's hard to beat Florence in Italy. After all, in Renaissance times the '... Italian city-state produced an explosion of great art and brilliant ideas, the likes of which the world has not seen before or since' (Weiner, 2016).

And, at the June 2019 International Society for Professional Innovation Management (ISPIM) conference, around 700 people gathered in Florence to share their insights on innovation. Attending sessions and workshops, gathering in small and large groups, informally over coffee and pastries, and without any planning in the best tradition of random conversations.

And that's where the idea for an Innovation Leadership Special Interest Group began to be discussed. The book editors, Karina, Stephanie and Rob, along with what would become other members of the leadership group, Russell Ward, Alex Booth and John Metselaar, all met, talked and started to plan. And the seed of something exciting was planted.

In the coming months, Joerg Reckhenrich joined the leadership group, bringing a perspective from the arts, and Ajit Paul joined from Bangalore, with his digital expertise while expanding the geographic reach of the group. In September 2019, we held our first informal meeting, exploring the potential for a community to be built around this topic. We recognised that there was around 100 years of research on both innovation and leadership, but much less that looked at their confluence. We noted the sustained contributions to practice and research from Bettina Von Stamm (2017); Shalley and Gilson's (2004) article in a 2004 special issue from *The Leadership Quarterly*; Rickards and Moger's (2006) article summarising a decade's understanding of leadership as contributing to creativity and innovation; and the more practice-oriented insights from *McKinsey* (Barsh, Capozzi, & Davidson, 2008).

We also recognised that this field has very different disciplinary approaches and that the results of the research work from these disciplines are still rather loosely linked. Psychological, sociological, communication science, economic, design-oriented and art approaches to the topic of innovation leadership have all come together and explored similar problems. But making the respective results accessible to a broader professional community requires 'translation work'. The interest in innovation leadership was certainly growing – from different perspectives, from academia and from leadership practice.

There was a growing recognition of the importance of enacting leadership within wider, particular system contexts. From the leadership field, we were alert

to changing conceptions of leadership itself, as notions of relational, shared, collective and distributed leadership challenged more traditional, ‘lone-hero’ versions. And, through our collective gathering of weak and stronger signals, we sensed a growing demand for a greater understanding of leadership approaches that enabled and inspired others to turn ideas into value.

It seemed a good bet to us, as we shared our perspectives from leadership research, leadership development practice, broader consulting and our own experience of leading teams. The group was formalised as a Special interest Group within the ISPIM network in Spring 2020, just as the world was going into COVID-19 lockdown. We kept the momentum, running online monthly meetings and growing the wider community – now more than 240 members at the time of writing.

We invited consultants, leadership practitioners and researchers to share their insights and experiences at these monthly meetings. We started to build some foundational ideas about the purpose and aims for the group. How might we learn about effective innovation leadership practice, and spread this? How might we attract excellent researchers to advance the work? All while growing the international community, serving practicing leaders, consultants and researchers? As we continued our journey, our monthly meetings attracted innovation leaders and speakers with open sessions for knowledge-sharing, ideation and networking. They inspired working groups in developing an innovation leadership framework, research projects and a video series featuring innovation leaders.

Conferences helped to focus our attention and share our work. There were the ISPIM global virtual and Berlin online conferences in 2020 and 2021. The in-person ISPIM 2022 conference in Copenhagen allowed us to connect with our community and celebrate innovation leadership through social gatherings and work sessions where we continued to build the meaning of leading innovation in changing contexts. This led to a dedicated two-day workshop in Reims where champagne and innovation leadership sparked contributions to the framework and chapter proposals for this book. Through all these events, we shared our emerging thoughts about the goals and projects of the group, and received feedback from interested others, all of which enriched further conversations and expanded group membership. People joined us from all over Europe, Turkey, Australia, the USA, Canada, India, Nigeria and elsewhere.

Getting people’s time and attention is no small matter in the distractable digital age. Momentum grew steadily, as did the pressure to make all this increasingly relevant to the different stakeholders and their interests in our group. When the thought arose for this book, it seemed a natural evolution of our previous conversations. Something that would gather a wide range of contributions from different author perspectives, types of organisations, sectors and geographies. And that would signpost the way to further valuable work. We hope it does that and look forward to what comes next.

Dr Karina R. Jensen  
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Dr Rob Sheffield  
April 15<sup>th</sup> 2023

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# Acknowledgements

The authors would like to express their gratitude to the many people who helped with the thinking, motivation, development and production of this book. We are especially grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with the 38 authors who have contributed to this book. Thank you to our many work colleagues whose ideas and professionalism helped inform our ongoing work.

Many thanks to the ISPIM (International Society for Professional Innovation Management) directors, Steffen Conn and Iain Bitran, for supporting our enthusiasm for innovation leadership research and practice through the creation of an Innovation Leadership Special Interest Group. We are especially appreciative of their support for the paper development workshops at ISPIM Copenhagen conference and the SIG workshop in Reims through continued encouragement and engagement of the global ISPIM community. We also extend our thanks and appreciation to respected ISPIM leaders John and Anna Bessant of the Teaching & Coaching SIG, Joanne Hyland and Magnus Karlsson of the Body of Knowledge SIG who encouraged us to further develop the framework dedicated to future skills and competencies in innovation leadership.

Stephanie would like to thank the innovation research community at the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts. In particular, the colleagues from the Competence Centre Business Development, Leadership and HR, in which both research and consulting projects as well as further education programmes on the topic of innovation leadership have been realised in interdisciplinary teams for over 15 years.

Karina would like to thank colleagues at NEOMA Business School for their support in hosting the dedicated research and writing workshop on the Future of Innovation Leadership that inspired some of the chapters featured in this book. Special thanks to NEOMA professors Olli-Pekka Kauppila, Gaël Bonnin, Edgar Bellow and Sharam Alijani for their participation and support.

Rob would like to thank the leadership academics from the University of West of England, UK, for years of support in teaching and research. In particular, thanks to Professors Carol Jarvis and Richard Bolden, and Associate Professors, Peter Simpson and Selen Kars Unluoglu – for being a pleasure to work alongside, and for keeping the work fresh and relevant.

We would like to extend our appreciation to our valued colleagues of the Innovation Leadership SIG team for their engagement in research and development initiatives that led to this book project: Russell Ward, Joerg Reckhenrich, Alex Booth, Ajit Paul and John Metselaar. A special thanks to our dedicated

*xxiv Acknowledgements*

SIG members who have contributed their enthusiasm and support since the start and throughout this wonderful journey: Bryan Cassady, Mikael Johnsson, Tove Brink, Maria Vittoria Colucci, Letizia Migliola, Krista Keränen, Vilho Jonsson, Christophe Deutsch, Jelto von Schuckmann and Ole Tangsgaard.

And a big thanks to the members of the international Innovation Leadership community. You are why the group exists: to bring learning that aids innovation leadership practice and improves solutions for people and the planet.

Finally, we would like to recognise the team at Emerald for your support through the whole process. A heartfelt thank you to Nick Wallwork, our editor, for your interest and support in making this book a reality. An extended thank you to Thomas Creighton for his editorial and design skills and Kousalya Thangarusu for her expert guidance in the production process of transforming the manuscript into a final book.

# Chapter 1

## Leading Innovation in a Changing World

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### Abstract

This chapter first describes the essential aspects of a currently changing world, which is characterised by digitalisation, globalisation and politically unstable situations. Based on this transformation context, key concepts such as leadership, innovation, innovation leadership and leadership competences are introduced, along with a new definition and framework for innovation leadership. The chapter discusses the distinction between innovation leadership and innovation management, and the connecting lines between these two concepts. The innovation leadership framework is described and related to the individual contributions of the authors in the book. The chapter frames these contributions along the dimensions of self-leadership, team leadership, organisational leadership and ecosystem leadership.

*Keywords:* Innovation leadership; self-leadership; team leadership; organisational leadership; ecosystem leadership; leadership competences; innovation management

### 1. Introduction

Leaders are facing changing and uncertain contexts with continued pressure to innovate, create value and drive growth for their organisations. Within a turbulent environment, innovation is the driving force for growth and sustainability for all organisations in private and public sectors across the world. And the expectation to deliver innovation is not only the role of the innovation centre or group, but it

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**Innovation Leadership in Practice:**

**How Leaders Turn Ideas into Value in a Changing World, 1–24**

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doi:[10.1108/978-1-83753-396-120231001](https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-83753-396-120231001)

also becomes an integrated practice for people across the value chain to achieve organisational performance and market success. Then how can leaders inspire and engage the organisation in creating a dynamic innovation process and culture? Innovation leadership in practice becomes an important focus in transforming ideas into valuable products, services, programmes and solutions.

There is a lot of academic literature on innovation leadership (Bossink, 2007; De Jong & Den Hartog, 2007; Denti & Hemlin, 2012; Elkins & Keller, 2003; Gliddon & Rothwell, 2018; Hohn, 2000; Isaksen & Tidd, 2006; Kuczmariski, 1996; Mumford & Hemlin, 2017; Mumford, Newbold, Fichtel, & England 2022; Rickards & Morger, 2006; Rosing, Frese, & Bausch 2011; Rosing, Rosenbusch, & Frese 2010; Surie & Hazy 2006), but we know still little about effective people-centered, relationship-based innovation leadership practices in organisations (Alsolami, Cheng, & Twalh, 2016). Innovation leadership development is often very fragmented and sporadic in organisations. Research on specific competencies development appears to be limited with little evidence of a cumulative and coherent body of knowledge (Ashlubolagh et al., 2013; Vlok, 2012; Vlok, Ungerer, & Malan, 2019). The strategic importance is underlined by many studies, but the competence models are vague and training concepts stand loosely side by side.

This was one reason why a SIG focusing on Innovation Leadership formed within the International Society for Professional Innovation Management (ISPIM) in 2020. The Innovation Leadership SIG focusing aims to empower and develop leaders who can inspire, connect and engage teams and organisations to innovate for greater value and impact. The work of the leadership team along with a growing international community of members has resulted in an updated definition as well as a framework for pursuing research and practice on competencies required by the changing dynamics of today's global and digitally connected environment. This book examines more closely the application of innovation leadership competencies in different sectors and types of organisations. We already knew that context matters, but these chapters help to better understand how specific contextual factors, and the relationship between different innovation leadership competence levels affect organisational outcomes such as innovation performance and employee engagement.

Innovation leadership concerns different groups of leaders. Leaders who are responsible for innovation programmes as well as those who are introducing new initiatives for products, services or programmes (Lang, Handley, & Jablkow, 2018). A complex and changing world requires attention to four critical levels of innovation leadership that include self, team, organisation and ecosystems. We wanted to explore how operating throughout the innovation journey at these different levels, affects the knowledge, skills, behaviour and mindset necessary for inspiring and enabling creativity and innovation, from concept to market.

### ***1.1. Leading in Changing Innovation Contexts***

Organisations today find themselves in a constantly changing and volatile environment, confronted with new paradigms that encompass sustainability, digitalisation, globalisation and interactive and inclusive value networks with numerous partners and platforms. Innovation leaders must face increasingly competing

technologies and dramatically changing political conditions (Steude, 2017). At the same time, information is now available to companies on a vast scale. Organisations today are only competitive if they can process and solve information and problems efficiently.

Navigating a global value chain demands an increasingly interdependent process. Organisations need to develop integrated innovation capabilities in optimising a global footprint, collaboration, communication and receptivity (Doz & Wilson, 2012). Through new digital forms of communication and new technologies, the value chain can be optimised through geographic locations that provide competitive advantage, from logistics to operations, marketing, sales and after-sales services. With a digitally connected environment, there is more pressure to optimise the collective intelligence of geographically distributed teams through technology platforms. The resulting internal and external networks operate within a radius that goes beyond the usual spatial and temporal boundaries. They facilitate access to new partnerships and provide more flexibility in configuring resources that can contribute to higher levels of performance.

The issues described here are profoundly changing the context of innovation. Hierarchical leadership structures are limited in their capacity to initiate responses quickly and effectively. This is no longer questioned nowadays. But even conventional secondary structures such as project, process and matrix structures may not respond adequately to the social and market dynamics of change. Instead, non-linear, network-like, self-organised and agile structures are emerging as effective approaches for organisational development. The focus is on the development of value-based, resilient and innovation-oriented organisational and leadership systems that facilitate collaboration. Tensions and contradictions are likely to be part of the situational complexity for leaders, pressing on them the need for the competencies to navigate continued change and disruptions (Schoemaker, Heaton, & Teece, 2018). For example, on the one hand, leaders will need to facilitate collaborative innovation that will inspire human-centric creativity. And they will be required to integrate new technologies that enhance team and organisational performance. A socio-technical challenge for our times.

The third edition of the *World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs Report* (WEF, 2020) predicts that 97 million jobs may soon emerge that are better adapted to the new division of labour between humans, machines and algorithms. According to the Top 10 Skills of 2025, employers believe there will be a greater demand for skills such as analytical thinking and innovation, active learning and learning strategies, complex problem-solving, critical thinking and analysis and initiative-taking that develops original ideas through a creative process. Leaders will need to consider ideas and concepts that solve critical problems and provide long-term value to customers and communities around the world. This implies a human-centric approach and development of a blended environment where interpersonal interactions enable the digital employee and customer experiences (Global Minds Network, 2021).

As humans sharpen critical thinking, learning and creativity skills, machines and algorithms will be developed as support systems for innovation. One response to this evolution is to use artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to process the information to save costs (Haefner, Wincent, Parida, & Gassmann, 2021). However, knowledge about the possibilities and limits of AI in the context of innovation is still quite limited. This is because the use of AI and machine learning in the field of creativity and innovation is very different from the established areas where AI has already complemented or replaced traditional management. AI will also have a significant influence on leadership relationships and requires new leadership skills and, above all, a leadership attitude that approaches new technologies with great enthusiasm for experimentation, but also reflects critically on the consequences of the use of technology.

The emerging hybrid environment in the post-pandemic era could further influence a networked environment that is connected by creative-entrepreneurial islands and highly efficient digital processes. To sustain knowledge-sharing and learning, leaders will increasingly serve as knowledge facilitators and innovation orchestrators in optimising the collective intelligence of a global network for increased creativity and innovation (Jensen, 2017). Leaders and organisations will be faced with great challenges that require collective problem-solving across diverse boundaries, such as cultures, disciplines, expertise and organisations. In creating greater impact and value, organisations will need to optimise the collective intelligence of networks and ecosystems. This will require innovation leaders who can inspire ideas, knowledge-sharing and learning while ensuring effective execution for successful results.

How has the definition and role of innovation leadership evolved for a changing world? The conceptual integration of the two terms ‘leadership’ and ‘innovation’ follows in the next section. The two terms in themselves have already been researched through a multidisciplinary approach, which requires a clear epistemological basis and foundation for the integration of both. Furthermore, this book focusses on an integrated perspective of innovation leadership across the different levels of self-leadership, team leadership, organisational leadership and ecosystem leadership. These levels are also discussed below.

## **2. Theoretical Foundations**

### ***2.1. Innovation Leadership***

Organisations are viewed as complex, relational systems, that appear as the product of a multitude of people whose actions are interrelated. The rules of the ‘leadership game’ are an expression of specific conceptions of reality, images and attitudes that come together. Through communication and negotiation, a continuous social construction process is set in motion among the actors. This provides a basis of trust that enables a certain degree of joint action (Bouwen & Fry, 1991, p. 38).

*Leadership* encourages the development of a shared vision and provides guidance for achieving objectives and performance within organisations. A more

comprehensive definition views leadership as ‘the process of influencing others to understand and agree what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives’ (Yukl, 2006). The social construction process among diverse groups is influenced by a leader who can unify and motivate through a shared vision that results in high performance. Viewing leadership as social interaction (Alvesson, 2019; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Kaudela-Baum, Holzer, & Kocher, 2023; Kaudela-Baum & Nussbaum, 2022; Stacey & Griffin, 2005; Stephens & Carmeli, 2017; Jensen, 2022) provides an important foundation for many recent leadership approaches focussed on collaboration and agility. Hosking (2011) suggests that leadership is ‘a relational practice, on-going in and supportive of dialogues, emergent processes, relational responsiveness, multiplicity and appreciation’ (p. 462). According to Gardner (2017), leaders must learn how to pool knowledge, skills and resources across boundaries within the company so that the most able and suitable people can connect together in order to create innovative practices and products. Based on her extensive research, Gardner highlights that innovation performance can only occur if the employees see smart collaboration among the leader and their leadership team. The leader must ‘model the kinds of collaboration [they] want to see take root’ (p. 108).

All of this reflects an ontological paradigm shift in the trajectory of leadership research. Early leadership research focussed more on traits, or styles of leadership. In other words, with the assumption that ‘leadership’ was something inherent within the person in the role of authority. It took little notice of context. Later thinking, such as leader-member exchange theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), explored the quality of interaction between leader and team members, thus exploring one facet of context, but not the other contextual factors already listed in this chapter. And, still, ‘leadership’ was assumed to reside within the person in the leadership role. Transformational leadership research (Bass & Avolio, 1993) attempted to consider how leaders might influence the wider context by engaging others to forge the *strategy-culture alloy* for their organisations. And later theories acknowledged that the process of leadership was rarely contained within one person, but often spread across leadership teams, or even devolved to people outside of formal leadership roles, but who would be empowered to act, within boundaries, thus spreading initiative-taking and rapid action. Shared, collective and distributed leadership models all sprung from this thinking, each acknowledging a great deal of complexity in the environment and emphasising the criticality of relationships in the practice of leadership.

From a relational leadership perspective, leadership only works when both participate in a leadership relationship between the leader and the led. The definition by Rickards and Moger (2006) goes in a similar direction: ‘Leadership is seen as interpretive, and a property of the perceptual relationship between leaders and others within a context, or community of practice’ (p. 14). Fairhurst and Connaughton (2014) describe a constructionist perspective by noting that ‘leadership actors are reflexive practitioners who shape and are shaped by realities they co-create. They also have the capacity for morally grounded, relationally responsive action as they account for their action to themselves and others’ (p. 22). In order

to understand how leadership influences innovation, it is important to examine its meaning.

*Innovation* is the successful exploitation of new ideas and is the process of translating ideas into useful new products, processes and services (Tidd & Bessant, 2021, pp. 19–45; Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2021, p.47). According to Rogers (1983) an

innovation is an idea, practice or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption. It matters little, so far as human behavior is concerned, whether or not an idea is ‘objectively’ new .... If the idea seems new to the individual, it is an innovation. (p. 11)

## Innovation

is about growth – about recognizing opportunities for doing something new and implementing those ideas to create some kind of value. It could be business growth; it could be social change. But at its heart is the creative human spirit, the urge to make change in our environment. (Tidd & Bessant, 2021, p. 44)

If we take this perspective, then *creativity* is the generation of novel and useful ideas while *innovation* refers to the realisation of ideas (Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, & Staw, 2005; Woerkum, Aarts, & Grip, 2007). Creativity comes first and provides content for many forms of innovation.

It seems worthwhile to focus more on *innovation leadership* – in the sense of a long-term, integrative change leadership task. This is evidenced not only by the rich literature on innovation management. Here, for example, leadership tasks on how to realise innovation are addressed (Dawson & Andriopoulos, 2021; Tidd & Bessant, 2021): It is usually interpreted as a linear process from idea development to selection, implementation and promotion. The innovation leader is responsible for recognising and promoting the competences of the innovators and for regulating the contradictions and conflicts triggered by the innovation process. These leadership tasks, which primarily aim to overcome internal organisational barriers to innovation to implement rationally planned innovation processes, are certainly central. However, they are not sufficient.

Developed by the ISPIM Innovation Leadership SIG, *Innovation Leadership is defined as an integrated practice to inspire and enable people, teams, organisations and ecosystems to create and innovate, from concept to market. It involves the full innovation cycle with attention to exploration and exploitations for a sustainable innovation process with a long-term view to deliver value for a global and digitally connected environment.* This definition used here is intended to guide leadership practice in the competence development of innovation leaders.

Innovation leadership stands for the creation of an innovation-promoting interplay of all internal and external innovation actors. Leadership competencies in the sense of heuristic expertise are required above all, that is, the ability to cope

with novel situations, as well as the creative development of methods for action planning, self-direction, the design of autonomy and for dealing with contradictions. Furthermore, above all, competences in relation to the effective design of leadership relationships and a good empathy towards different innovation actors are required. Within a turbulent and changing environment, innovation is the driving force for growth and sustainability for all organisations in private and public sectors across the world. Innovation leadership is therefore not only the role of the innovation centre or group, but also an *integrated practice* across the value network in order to achieve innovativeness and market success. This movement is expanding the roles and responsibilities of leaders who are responsible for innovation programmes as well as those who are introducing new initiatives for products, services or cross-functional programmes.

For this reason, we conceive of innovation leadership as practised by individual leaders and as collective leadership. Especially at the more complex organisational and network levels, leadership must also be considered as a collective, context-steering force. A leadership network consists of different leadership role owners, personal and expert leaders, who take on leadership responsibility collectively and in a distributed manner (Berraies, Hamza, & Chtioui, 2020; Davis & Eisenhardt, 2011). It is also important to consider the new contextual demands and complexities in a multicultural and digitally connected environment. A global leader is then viewed as ‘an individual who inspires a group of people to pursue a positive vision while fostering individual and collective growth in a context characterised by complexity, flow, and presence’ (Mendenhall, Reiche, Bird, & Osland, 2012, p. 75). Yet global leaders who are responsible for the specific context of leading global innovation, from concept to launch, is a contextual lens that is necessary to understand global innovation leadership (Jensen, 2022).

## ***2.2. Innovation Leadership Versus Innovation Management***

The differences between the terms innovation leadership and innovation management have been discussed in many articles and books (Ailin & Lindgren, 2008, p. 97; Algahtani, 2014; Isaksen & Tidd, 2006, p. 136; Kaudela-Baum et al., 2023). While innovation leadership is mainly associated with long-term innovation goals based on innovation strategies, innovation management focusses more on short-term innovation goals based on innovation tactics. In the following, the leadership-related and managerial key aspects are presented in an overview.

### *Key aspects of innovation leadership:*

- Strategic orientation (focus on internal and external processes), development and maintenance of internal networks and involvement of external network partners.
- Innovation success is based on long-term innovation projects, learning and knowledge development.
- Focus on empowerment, (intrinsic) motivation and inspiration.
- Focus on changing values and a vision for the future.
- Focus on people and relationships among people.

- Taking (calculated) risks.
- Dealing with paradoxes, uncertainty and complexity.

*Key aspects of innovation management:*

- Operational and implementation-oriented focus (focus on internal processes).
- Innovation success is based on cost savings, time savings, product/service/business model success.
- Focus on the architecture of cultural and structural change.
- Concentration on a selected innovation project.
- Focus on control and problem-solving.
- Focus on products and services.
- Minimising risks and monitor performance indicators.

*Innovation leadership* stands more for the creation of an innovation-promoting interplay of all central internal and external innovation actors, and leadership competences in the sense of heuristic expertise are required above all, that is the ability to cope with novel situations, as well as the creative development of methods for action planning, for self-control, for the design of innovation-promoting freedom and for dealing with contradictions and innovation paradoxes (Bledow, Frese, & Mueller, 2011; Jansen, Vera, & Crossan, 2009; Rosing et al., 2011; Smith & Lewis, 2011; Smith & Tushman, 2005; Visser & Scheepers, 2021; Zuraik & Kelly, 2019).

*Innovation management* is more responsible for creating a routinised, separated playing field for innovation and the focus is on a high level of methodological and technical competence (epistemic technical competence). This comparison is in no way intended to 'reduce' innovation management to a purely operational dimension, but it is intended to emphasise that innovation leadership is more concerned with the question of the purpose of innovation, the shaping of relationships with key internal and external stakeholders and, above all, the people in the innovation process. Leadership work in the innovation context also focusses on the inexplicable, difficult, not easily explainable things in innovation that have to be solved in addition to the daily business. The leadership perspective complements the current innovation management discourse and enriches it, and vice versa.

While it is important to differentiate the roles of innovation leadership and innovation management, it is also clear that interdependencies and synergies exist between these two practices. Both roles are necessary to inspire, co-create, plan and implement innovation in organisations. They recognise the social reality of innovation within complex systems involving multiple stakeholders. ISO 56000 defines Innovation Management as 'coordinated activities to direct and control an organizational entity with regard to innovation' (ISO, 2020). It also recognises that innovation leadership is crucial through future-focussed leaders that are defined as 'leaders at all levels, driven by curiosity and courage, who challenge the status quo by building an inspiring vision and purpose by continuously engaging people to achieve those aims' (ISO, 2020, p. 26). The debate concerning the differences between leadership and management has existed between scholars