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ORGANIZATIONAL DESIGN SUPPORTING INNOVATIVENESS

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Introduction

As one of the main tasks of strategic management is looking for the sources of value, contemporary organizations naturally concentrate on competitive advantage, value creation and capture (Porter, Kramer, 2011, p. 4), as well as firm performance (Ronda-Pupo, Guerras-Martin, 2012). Paying attention to the outcomes where the value lies is a natural managerial behaviour. This paper posits, that apart from concentrating on outcomes, organizations could more eagerly shift focus on the primary sources of firm performance, namely the creative idea generation, where the value is being born. The challenge of creating a proper organizational design that will stimulate new idea generation, translating most promising and marketable ideas into innovations, and commercializing them, is vital.

Shaping a context supporting new ideas generation creates some tensions, mostly between structures allowing

spontaneity and improvisation, and structures promoting concentration and diligent business planning. Concentration and intensity of activities makes it possible to implement the strategic plan effectively, manage projects timely, and commercialize innovations successfully. On the other hand, loose structures allow to generate new ideas that can lead to preparing more innovations.

Apart from structures, the literature distinguishes some more elements of the organizational design that can potentially stimulate innovations, e.g. organizational culture, meritocratic climate, proper knowledge management, holistic thinking. Therefore, this paper will present some findings as to organizational design that can potentially support innovativeness of organizations. The first part of the paper presents some conceptual findings concerning the organizational design. Following the conceptualization of Bilton

and Cummings (2010) the paper operationalizes some elements of the organizational design. Finally, the results of the empirical research carried out among organizations in Poland, assessing the operationalized elements of organizational design supporting innovativeness are presented.

Organizational design for innovativeness – some theoretical findings

The management literature tackles the problem of organizational design mostly from two perspectives. The first one concerns designing proper structures (e.g. DeSanctis et al., 2002), that will effectively cope with the R&D management complexity, as well as with the dynamics between the new idea generation requiring loose, organic structures, and commercialization requiring diligent strategic actions. The second perspective treats organizational design as a co-ordinated system of integrated actions facilitating effective information processing in the times of uncertainty (Puranam et al., 2012, p. 419), decision making (Thompson, 1967, p. 57) or conflict management (Alino, Schneider, 2012). As contemporary organizations are knowledge-intensive, where learning and creativity matter (Vera, Crossan, 2004, p. 232) the former perspective will be considered here, with a concentration on dynamic structures and other key elements of management that allow both generate new ideas as well as commercialize innovations.

Organizational structures may influence innovativeness, as they shape the way organizations scan the environment for opportunity identification and exploitation, and the way organization members generate or discover creative ideas (Tushman et al., 2010). Centralized, formal, bureaucratic structures are perceived as appropriate for large organizations with complex R&D departments making it possible to introduce new products (DeSanctis et al., 2002). On the other hand, informal and loose structures may be the sources of radical innovations (Ettlie et al., 1984). Formal and concentrated structures generate incremental and systematic innovations, while building the organizational design around loose, organic structures results in discontinuous innovations (Chell, 2001).

This creates a certain tension, that can be resolved taking into consideration the phase of innovation. First, during the initial phase, i.e. the creative idea generation, the dominating structures should rather be organic, informal, project or virtual, allowing flexibility, and dynamics both in best practices identification, opportunity discovery and idea generation. The creativity phase focuses on informal relations in the teams, moderate pressure on deadlines and outcomes, informal planning and arbitrary work breakdown structures. Next, during the phase of filtering most promising creative ideas, and selecting the ones that will be turned into innovations, the unit structure should become more formal – functional or divisional, requiring the effort from other functional units as far as diligent planning is concerned. Eventually, the phase of commercialization of innovations requires divisional, matrix or hybrid structures, for bringing marketable ideas into life. What is more, this phase requires building relations with

stakeholders, as well as creating network structures outside organizations for acquiring complementary resources beyond organization's control (Dyduch, 2013).

Researchers indicate, that regardless of the adopted organizational structure, and the strategy that will follow, it is vital to translate the organizational creativity and innovativeness into value, and unleash even more innovation through creating the shared value (Porter, Kramer, 2011). Some recommendations are given as well (DeSanctis et al., 2002, p. 64): (a) designing strategic mechanisms that support creativity and idea commercialization (e.g. high priority for R&D expenses, intellectual property protection mechanisms, appropriation regimes), (b) top management team engagement in new product development, (c) developing entrepreneurial culture supporting opportunity identification, (d) knowledge sharing throughout the whole organization, (e) searching for opportunities outside organization, (f) readiness for changing structures, designing hybrid structures for quick responding to signals coming from the environment.

Stimulating organizational innovativeness requires creating and developing such a structure, and such vital features of the organization, where the processes of creativity and innovativeness will be naturally developing and evolving. Organizational design supporting innovativeness should create a proper organizational context, where strategic potential with effectively orchestrated resources will result in desired outcomes, such as a higher level of innovativeness and increase in value creation. The organizational context stimulating creativity requires both tight and loose structures, as well as balancing between concentration time and slack time (Bilton, Cummings, 2010). Tight structures assure implementing of the strategic plan, whereas loose structures allow bottom-up ideas, and innovative approaches to problem solving. Concentration time, with proper intensity of actions and behaviours will result in meeting the requirements expected in the strategic plan. Slack time makes it possible for organization members to think and reflect on new ideas, and facilitates the „eureka” effect. Innovative organizations face the challenge of managing the tensions resulting from the paradox of formal, tight and centralized structures assuring effective strategic plan implementation, versus loose, organic and informal structures promoting creativity, bottom-up experimentation, opportunity identification and new idea generation – both at the same time.

The approach to organizing is connected with stimulating creativity and innovativeness (Johnston, Bate, 2007). Organizational design founded on centralization of the control function, top-down common values sharing throughout the whole organization, may stimulate creativity to a lesser extent. On the other hand, building the organizational design on the autonomy of the organization's units that promotes the strategic manoeuvre freedom for bottom-up experimenting, social capital and network building, can create a support for the creativity and innovativeness processes. After all, in large organizations business units seek different strategies, hence the administrative mechanisms for managing these units should

also be different (Govindarajan, 1988). Organizational creativity and innovativeness are strengthened by organic, flexible design that re-orientates organizations towards changes, dynamic capabilities development and opportunity identification through flat structures and dependencies (Alsaaty, 2004), decentralization of decision-making processes and shaping actions around processes, not tasks (Nel et al., 2004). Organic design shapes organizational culture based on teamwork, where quick decisions can be made (Jackson et al., 2003).

When designing an innovative organization, it is important to consider the influence of creativity and innovative processes onto changing roles of organization members, relations between them, and decision making. Strategic leaders need to consider a design that would facilitate free information flow, coordination of efforts between top management and other functional units, strategic support of the creativity process, and mechanisms unleashing innovations (Okumus, 2003). Various types of innovations require various organizational structures. Incremental innovations are managed in the existing business unit, while radical innovations require separating structures from the core business during preparation, development and commercialization (Kates, Galbraith, 2007, p. 184).

It is evident, that apart from the organizational structures, there are other element of the organizational design that need to be developed. A proper organizational design that promotes creativity and innovativeness should feature certain attributes that will unleash creativity within, and outside the organizational structures. According to C. Bilton and S. Cummings (2010, p. 207) the strategic design of a creative organization needs to spot the following features: (a) strong and adaptative organizational culture, that on the one hand integrates and unifies the whole organization, but on the other hand allows it to adopt to environmental changes and introduce innovative ideas, (b) meritocratic organizational climate, where promising creative ideas are assessed objectively and promoted depending on their value, regardless of where they come from, and by whom they are introduced, (c) knowledge management environment that leaves room for idea exchange between experts and naive enthusiasts, (d) intrapreneurship processes and autonomy, with new idea generation both inside and outside of the organization, (e) environment promoting multitasking, holistic thinking and using various perspectives, (f) optimal approach towards introducing change; avoiding change just for the sake of changing (g) ambidexterity, understood as managing paradoxes present in all the dimensions of the organizational design.

It is worth looking closer at the offered dimensions of the organizational design promoting creativity and innovativeness. The first important component of the design promoting innovativeness is the organizational culture. On the one hand, it should be strong and built around commonly shared values and norms that create a spine integrating members, providing the perception of a community. On the other hand, the organizational culture should be flexible enough allowing openness to

change and adaptative enough promoting bottom-up experimentation, new idea acceptance, dynamic capabilities development. Underestimating the organizational culture may lead to market failures (Zheng et al., 2010).

The second important element of the proper organizational design promoting innovativeness is the organizational climate, i.e. the degree of trust, morale, conflict, rewards equity, leader credibility, resistance to change, and scapegoating (Burton et. al., 2004) where valuable ideas are being recognized, and selected on the meritocratic, not political basis. A climate of trust and teamwork requires strategic mechanisms of valuable ideas recognition already at the moment of their appearance, as well as proper filtering and selection of marketable ideas. In 2003, long before the first iPhone was launched, Nokia had a prototype of a business-targeted, touch screen Linux-based computer-like smartphone with a fast processor and Internet access. Due to the climate supporting the status-quo of the Symbian operating system, the new ideas were neglected. With the first iPhone in 2007, Nokia continued to produce Symbian-based phones with buttons. When it eventually launched a touchscreen phone with a different system, it was too late (Bingham et al., 2011).

The third component of the organizational design supporting innovativeness is stimulating knowledge management, with sabotaging and questioning expert and specialized knowledge for new idea appearance; constant improvement of learning processes, seeking for new perspectives in problem solving. This approach based on questioning the existing *status quo* results in better problem solving, as well as identifying common areas between various points of reference. Knowledge management, with knowledge sharing is seen as a dynamic capability (Bueno et al., 2008).

When promoting new idea generation and innovativeness, it is vital to mention intrapreneurship (Pinchot, 1995). It is not only about giving autonomy and financial support to certain organization members responsible for creating new products and services. The idea of intrapreneurship lies in recognizing complex sources of new ideas. Hence, the organization uses products and ideas created by its members (Alpkan et al, 2010), but also resorts to products and services generated outside (*extrapreneurship*), often imitating, improving them, and applying a firm-specific marketing strategy.

In order to stimulate the work dynamics and keep the interest of the team members in idea generation, a proper organizing should involve multitasking and changing perspectives, i.e. frequent shifting roles, assigning tasks that are not directly connected to one's expertise, occasional shifting specialists into the project teams, using various perspectives in idea generation and innovation preparation. This component of the organizational design requires avoiding problem solving within one unit of the organization, by the same team. On the other hand, seeking heterogeneity and promoting multitasking should not lead to organization member dispersion. Still, multitasking based on empowerment, designing project teams with members from different organization parts may result in better cooperation and higher level of creativity (Phelps et al., 2007, p. 11).

Another important element of the design stimulating creativity and innovativeness is designing places to work that would allow for concentrated, and for creative work. The former can be designed around closed areas, which helps to work effectively on the assigned projects and tasks. The latter are more open, therefore facilitating communication, idea exchange, allowing people to meet, talk and inspire each other before concentrated work. This characteristic reminds of the concept of organization's environment for learning and knowledge exchange (Nonaka, Takeuchi, 1995) where various spaces (*Ba*) are designed to exchange knowledge, create new knowledge and use it later in the individual work.

The final element of the organizational design is a proper intensity in introducing change, that does not overwhelm organization members' capacity to accept them. It requires developing the ability to cope with the changes introduced. At the same time, this characteristic of the organizational design requires strategic mechanisms that reject changes that are trivial, unnecessary, or are introduced just for the sake of change (Bilton, Cummings, 2010).

The elements of the organizational design promoting creativity and supporting innovativeness described above can lead to offering a conceptual framework (Figure 1) that considers the key elements described above: organizational culture, climate of trust and meritocracy, knowledge management, places of work stimulating creativity and concentration, multitasking environment, intrapreneurship and extrapreneurship, change management (Bilton, Cummings, 2010). At the same time, it is important to concentrate on developing the characteristics of ambidextrous organization, that is one capable of managing the tensions resulting from the paradoxes present in the element of organizational design promoting creativity and innovativeness. As a result, explorative and exploitative learning with autonomy of members, cooperation, and involvement in processes management, strategic control could well translate into value creation.

The framework assumes that proper structures for units preparing innovations should be chosen, depending on the innovation phase: it would be different for the stages of idea generation, preparing innovations, and commercialization. For the organizational creativity phase the choice would boil down to simple, organic, adhocratic, flexible, virtual structures. For the innovation preparation phase, the structures would be more complex, usually functional, divisional or project teams. The phase of commercializing innovations would already require complex divisional, matrix, network or hybrid structures for effective R&D, complementary resources organization, and seeking for support from external stakeholders.

Organizational design supporting innovativeness: empirical assessment

For operationalizing and assessing the dimensions of the organizational design, a survey was carried out. Dimensions of the design, as well as of the innovativeness were operationalized and assessed as statements in the questionnaire. The respondents' task was to assess the statements on the 7-point Likert scale: nine concerning the organizational design, two relating to the contradictions management in the design. The questionnaire was sent to top managers dealing with strategic issues in business organizations operating in Poland. The companies were randomly selected from all sectors of activity. The choice of the transition economy organizations is justified by the drive towards innovation, relatively high speed of change, orientation for creativity and opportunity exploitation. 606 questionnaires qualifying for further empirical analyses were returned. The return rate was relatively high due to phone calls or personal visits in the companies. 50.5% of organizations were small, 16.1 % medium-sized, and 33.4% were large corporations. 18.2% of the researched organizations operate in services, 16% in trade, 11.1% are involved in production, 10.7% operate in the building and constructions sector, 9.7% deal with finance and insurance.

Figure 1. Conceptual model of organizational design supporting innovativeness
Source: own elaboration on the basis of Bilton, Cummings, 2010

The remaining branches represented less than 10%. To analyse the data and test the hypotheses the IBM SPSS 20 was used. In order to empirically test the dimensions of organizational design, the factor analysis was carried out. The results of the factor analysis show, that all the empirical dimensions of organizational design offered in the conceptual model fit theoretical categories well, creating one construct. The values of Cronbach's alphas are high, which means that the proposed operationalization of the organizational design construct is proper, and that the dimensions of the design can be described by variables included in the questionnaire.

The majority of the researched organizations assessed their ability to shape the organizational design promoting innovativeness between 3.5 and 5. This structure suggests that organization characteristics necessary for innovativeness support are relatively well-developed in the researched organizations. When using control variables (Table 1), it seems that the differences in the assessments are low, and statistically insignificant. The ability to develop the organizational design promoting innovativeness is average in young and little older organizations (up to 14 years of existence), and highest in mature organizations (14–22 years), after this period the ability to shape the organizational design decreases. It may be driven by the fact that when organizations become grown corporations the design is mature and developed enough so it does not require continuous changing of its elements, acting as a routine for R&D, as well as new idea generation and implementation. Taking into consideration the size of organizations, it seems that larger organizations reflect a better ability to design both loose and tight structures, strong and adaptative culture, organize for flexible and concentrated work, change management, multitasking, etc. that promote innovativeness. When looking at the sectors of activity, constructions and financial services obtained the highest scores, while production and industry scored the lowest.

The carried out assessments also reveal, that in the researched organizations vital components of the organizational design promoting innovativeness included: (a) ability to create both organic, loose structures allowing for bottom-up experimentation, and centralized structures assuring diligent preparation of innovations; (b) ability to create strong organizational culture making an organizational spine, and being adaptative at the same time to new idea creation (c) meritocratic climate of trust, however, the respondents indicated the processes of organizational politicking present in their organizations. On average, these three elements were scored the highest. It also seems, that for an effective innovativeness stimulation, diligent planning and precise preparation of ventures and business projects is more important than uncoordinated looking for opportunities with improvisation and spontaneity, which can only have a complementary effect on the process of strategic innovativeness.

When analysing the level of the organizational design paradoxes management, Table 2 indicates it clearly, that with all paradoxes of the organizational design, the majority of the researched organizations are in the strategic alertness situation. This means, that instead of reconciling

the paradoxes fully, organizations tend to choose extreme solutions. A relatively high number of organizations are capable of fully reconciling the paradoxes. Only ten per cent of the organizations are facing a strategic threat and choosing extreme solutions instead of benefiting from two contradicting options at the same time. The ability to reconcile strategic paradoxes within the organizational design and benefiting at the same time from concurrent organic vs. formal structures, strong vs. adaptative culture, improvisation, creativity vs. strategic planning is visible in large and mature organizations, operating in modern services (Table 3). Small, young firms operating in traditional sectors do not cope with reconciling paradoxes present in the organizational design components.

Table 1. Assessments of the organizational design supporting innovativeness

Organization's age	N	Average assessment
< 5 years	99	4.32
5–13 years	145	4.33
14–22 years	105	4.40
> 22 years	75	4.24
<i>Total</i>	424	4.33
Organization type:	N	Average assessment
Small	277	4.26
Medium	88	4.31
Large	183	4.37
<i>Total</i>	548	4.31
Sector of activity	N	Average assessment
Production and industry	67	4.24
Constructions	65	4.35
Trade	97	4.31
Financial services	59	4.37
Other services	110	4.32
<i>Total</i>	398	4.31

Source: own calculation

The correlation analysis has revealed, that the construct of the organizational design indicates a statistically significant ($p=0.000$) and relatively high (0.767) correlation with the innovativeness level of the researched company. The structures, culture, climate, and knowledge management are the components of the design related to the highest extent with innovativeness. The level of variance indicated however, that the organizational design, as operationalized in this study, only partially explains the level of innovativeness of the researched organizations. This creates a potential insight for future research.

Table 2 Reconciling paradoxes of organizational design in the researched organizations

	N	%
Organizations are able to manage tensions between the contradictory solutions of organizational design, benefiting from both facets of the design (e.g. being able to design centralized and organic structures, culture that is strong and adaptative at the same time)	145	23.9%
Organizations are in the state of strategic alert. They tend to choose one type of solutions, neglecting the other ones (e.g. only centralized, formal structure, only one type of places to work)	400	66.0%
Organizations are in the state of strategic threat. They cannot shape organizational design that benefits from managing tensions and reconciling paradoxes	61	10.1%

Source: own calculation

Table 3. Reconciling paradoxes of organizational design according to age, size and sector of activity

The age of organizations	N	Assessment (lower is better)
< 5	99	4.08
6–13	145	4.22
14–22	105	3.81
> 22	75	4.14
Total	424	4.07
The size of organizations	N	Assessment (lower is better)
Small	277	4.12
Medium	88	4.15
Large	183	3.98
Total	548	4.08
Type of activity	N	Assessment (lower is better)
Production and industry	67	4.04
Constructions	65	3.92
Trade	97	3.84
Financial services	59	3.77
Other services	110	3.91
Total	398	3.90

Source: own calculation

Conclusions

This paper attempted to look at the construct of the organizational design supporting innovativeness. It sought to describe the dimensions of the design, operationalize and assess them. Specifically, the concept of Bilton and Cummings (2010) has been used, where the organizational design supporting creativity and innovativeness is reflected in the following dimensions: ability to build centralized and

formal structures, together with autonomous organic structures; shaping strong, yet flexible and learning organizational culture; creating climate of trust, creating the environment for learning and knowledge management, stimulating intrapreneurship, promoting multitasking and holistic thinking, organizing places to work that allow both for concentration and bottom-up experimentation, and finally change management.

The assessment results show, that the researched organizations similarly assess their ability to shape the organizational design, though it is average in young and little older organizations but the highest in mature organizations. Larger organizations are able to design both loose and tight structures, strong and adaptative culture promoting innovativeness. The strategic managers in the researched organizations pointed specifically at three elements of the organizational design they perceive as important: creating both organic, loose structures allowing for bottom-up experimentation, and centralized structures assuring diligent preparation of innovations; shaping strong organizational culture making an organizational spine, and being adaptative at the same time to new idea creation, and building climate of trust.

The contribution of this paper was to operationalize and assess empirically the elements of the organizational design stimulating the processes of creativity and innovativeness. This study opens some discussion as to the vital components of the organizational design that can potentially stimulate innovativeness, and as such should be supported at the strategic level. This study has its limitations. Firstly, concentrating on merely one or two theoretical concepts to operationalize them is not sufficient, and it would require extending the idea of the organizational design in the future with maybe offering more elements of the design. Secondly, analysing the organizations in Poland only creates a certain sample bias. It would be interesting to see how other types of organizations, in other contextual settings assess their ability to shape the organizational design, and how they are able to reconcile the paradoxes present in particular elements of the design. Thirdly, it would be interesting to analyse the relations between other strategic mechanisms and other elements of the organizational design and the innovativeness itself, which creates an favourable direction for the future research.

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Projekt organizacji wspierającej innowacyjność

Streszczenie

Jednym z głównych zadań współczesnego zarządzania strategicznego jest poszukiwanie źródeł wartości. Analiza treści artykułów z zarządzania strategicznego wskazuje, że organizacje skupiają się w dużej mierze na wynikach i efektywności funkcjonowania, nieco zaniedbując strategiczne wsparcie dla pierwotnego źródła wartości, jakim jest generowanie nowych i wartościowych idei, które mają szansę stać się innowacjami. Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje dyskusję dotyczącą istoty strategicznego kształtowania projektu organizacji, którego elementy będą w stanie ożywić innowacyjność. W pierwszej części przywołano podstawy koncepcyjne oraz zaproponowano i opisano elementy projektu organizacyjnego. W kolejnej części przedstawiono wyniki badań, w których kadra menedżerska poddała ocenie zaproponowane komponenty projektu wspierającego innowacyjność. Okazuje się, że badane organizacje nie różnią się istotnie w ocenach zaproponowanych komponentów, jednak nie wszystkie z nich mają tę samą zdolność strategiczną do ich rozwijania i wykorzystania w celu ożywiania innowacyjności. Analizowane elementy projektu organizacyjnego wspierają innowacyjność, jednak nie są jedyną podstawą jej ożywiania w badanych organizacjach.

Słowa kluczowe

projekt organizacji, innowacyjność