Cities as Platforms for Co-creating Experience-based Business and Social Innovations

An Experimental Approach

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(Case 2: Co-Creation Workshop on City Tales: Collaborative Comics Storytelling

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Abstract

The core principle of co-creation is engaging people to create valuable experiences together while enhancing network economics (Ramaswamy & Gouillart 2010). A central element of the transition to co-creation is the ability to develop and manage effective two-way communications and information systems (Leavy 2011). The power of co-creation is applicable anywhere along the value chain and to any type of industry (Leavy 2011). Co-creation can apply to any business, large or small whose customers have experiences and interactions. Moreover, customer engagement can take many forms, from face-to-face meetings involving a handful of people to web-enabled, large-scale social interactions involving many thousands (Leavy 2011, Ramaswamy & Gouillart 2010). We are interested in expanding these concepts to all parts of society (e.g. the triangle market, (welfare) state, and civil society).

Finding solutions to address societies' challenges remains a concern for governments, cities, businesses and social innovators. These solutions emerge out of changes in technologies, advancement of knowledge as well as of the emerging model of the collaborative and sharing economy and networked peer local and global communities.

This paper presents the outcomes of the Athens Co-Creation Workshop 2012, a collaborative initiative of two universities: the Panteion University; Athens and the Copenhagen Business School / Co-Creation of Experienced-Based Innovation Consortium (CCEBI); Copenhagen.

Our main question is: How can co-creation and experience-based learning and innovation in Living Labs across diverse sectors, organizations, institutions, companies and startups, help cities becoming platforms that facilitate networking, collaboration and innovation? Our main challenge is to explore such an opportunity regarding the city of Athens.

Creating a human ecosystem reflecting all powers and involved stakeholders in such an endeavor, the workshop organizers and participants, following a co-creation and design thinking methodology, formed "ad-hoc" networks of reflective practitioners and researchers, experimenting with responding to the challenges set by the participants (the "challenge owners").

The paper presents the outcomes of applying co-creation and design thinking to solving the challenges presented by the Impact Hub Athens, a global social business incubator and co-working space that was testing its concept and business model as it was preparing its local launch in Athens; by working with challenges of using storytelling about Athens, and by testing the launch of the corporate university lab of Korres, a Greek skincare brand that has scaled up internationally.

Given the different approaches to the notion of the co-creation built on experience, we discuss the results of those co-creation sessions in terms of (a) the methodology applied, the participants' experience of collaboratively solving a problem connected with a solution-space, (c) the lessons learned from the cases about emerging into a shared language, discourse, and action around the concept, and (d) the potential of co-creating on the basis of experienced-based learning and innovating as a model for sustainable cities (and markets).

1   Co-Creating cities as platforms for experience-based innovation

1.1 Co-creating our cities: What is at stake?

Finding solutions to societies' vital, sometimes even 'burning' challenges remains an important concern for cities, governments, business and social innovators. The challenges and solutions emerge out of changes in technologies, advancement of knowledge as well as of the emerging models of the collaborative and sharing economy and networked local and global peer communities. The emergence and development of those communities, eco-systems, and networks can in our humble opinion be fostered and advanced by means of co-creation and experienced based learning / innovation as a solution creating and knowledge producing method.

1.2 Why focus on (big) cities?

Since the early nineties the interest in the evolution and the role of cities in the global and local level (Czarniawska 2002) has been connected with and discussed under the concepts of "intelligent cities" Komninos 2011), "smart cities"(Cohen 2013 and 2014), "digital", "sustainable"(Nevens et al. 2013, Mezher 2011), "creative" (Florida 2005), "liveable" ‐ and more recently "networked", "shareable" and "startup" cities.

All these urban and regional developments are driven and catalyzed by new Internet and mobile technologies including the Internet of Things (IoT; web 3.0), the semantic web, and cloud computing. They have also been related with the political, social and economic agendas emphasizing and prioritizing the innovation-driven economies and 'open-data' policies (Mulder 2013) to address the most urgent problems and challenges in terms of envisioning and implementing new economic and business models and models of participatory citizenship, that are sustainable, social innovation-led, participative, open and accountable. G. West's model also demonstrates a crucial way in which human-built cities break the patterns of biological life: as cities get bigger they generate ideas (at a faster clip ('superlinear scaling'), and do not slow down; "[…] the average resident of a metropolis with a population of five million people was almost three times more creative than the average resident of a town of a hundred thousand" (Johnson 2011: 10f.)

One of the major 'tasks' for cities is: in order to become smart, they must take on organizing and initiating large-scale participatory innovation processes for creating applications, that will run and improve every sector of activity, city cluster, and infrastructure. "All city economic activities and utilities can be seen as innovation ecosystems in which citizens and organizations participate in the development, supply, and consumption of goods and services" (Schaffers et al. 2011: 435).

Cities' dynamics and evolution have been discussed in the context of the 'Experience Economy' (Pine 1999). Many European cities, Athens included, have for decades being ranked low on innovation and knowledge economy in OECD reports. To counterbalance this 'innovation deficit', cities like Athens have invested in sectors of the Experiential Economy such as tourism and in branding themselves as global event-organizers (e.g. the Athens Olympic Games in 2004). Cities are perceived, as "experiences in themselves or they may constitute parts of experience products" (Lorentzen 2009).

Even though small also cities are considered as potential global competitive players in the Experience Economy too, Claude Fisher concludes from his own research (contrary to the ideas advanced by Louis Wirth (1991) in his seminal book 'Urbanism as a way of life'), that "*big* [italics by the authors] cities nurture (innovative) subcultures much more effectively than suburbs or small towns" (Johnson 2011: 160).

Cities as Platforms for social innovations

Big cities' innovators, local authorities, researchers or grassroots urban reformers have been experimenting with co-creation methodologies and LivingLabs in order to "foster innovation in real-life contexts", i.e. in an open and user-driven innovation setting and context, bringing together stakeholders and partners from diverse professional, social, experience and knowledge backgrounds (e.g. Rotterdam). The key challenge is to 'tap' on the 'rich experiences' and inspirations of all the involved participants in a co-creation LivingLab, with the vision to co-produce and co-create their cities and use the results in order "to inform social innovation and policymaking" (Mulder 2012).

The central theme of the Athens workshop "Co-creating cities as platforms for experience-based innovation" has been inspired and was conceived as an active LivingLab: On the one hand, part-taking in the global debate and development that focusses on cities as the loci of innovation and exploring; on the other hand, offering a living experience to all participants with what co-creation could mean. Last but not least, the workshops wanted to explore LivingLabs' potential of experienced-based innovation for collaborative city transformation, enabling an open, participatory, sharing and responsible civic culture.

As an epicenter of economic, social and cultural turbulence, Athens seems to be a hothouse for evolving innovation in many business sectors. This aspect of the city (a constraint?) was to be captured and enhanced. On the other side, the LivingLabs at the same time take an approach different to the crisis-driven analyses and discourses. Inspired by Clay Shirky's (2010) radical thinking, LivingLabs elaborate on the "cognitive surplus" as the key feature of the "connected age", where open source, open code technologies and the willingness of people to devote generously more time into sharing their creative endeavors, create a much bigger 'abundance' than the social and economic scarcity models can provide. Furthermore, the Athens Co-Creation workshop aimed as well at triggering to explore the in situ dynamics of the participants as co-creators of abundance (see Kotler & Diamandis 2012), expanding their potentials of creating shared value instead of focusing and competing on how to negotiate and take their 'share' of limited resources.

The "core principle" of co-creation built on experienced based learning (see http://www.cocreatech.dk/) is "engaging people to create valuable experiences together while enhancing network economics" (Ramaswamy & Gouillart 2010). The power of co-creation is applicable anywhere along the value chain and to any type of industry (Leavy 2011). Co- creation can apply to any business, large or small whose customers have 'experiences' and interact. Moreover, customer or citizen [sic!] engagement can take many forms, from face-to-face meetings involving a handful of people to web-enabled, large-scale social interactions, to involving many thousands (Leavy 2011, Ramaswamy & Gouillart 2010).

Our paper discusses the outcomes of the Athens Co-Creation Workshop 2012 (http://www.cocreatech.dk/?page=athens_workshop; 05.10.2014), a collaborative initiative of two universities: the Panteion University, Athens and the Copenhagen Business School /Co-Creating Experienced Based Innovation Innitiatve; Copenhagen (http://www.cocreatech.dk/?page=home) in order to contribute to answer the question

> How can co-creation and experience-based learning and innovation in Living Labs, across diverse sectors, organizations, institutions, companies and startups, help cities becoming platforms that facilitate networking, collaboration and innovation?

2   The Athens Co-Creation Workshop 2012

In order to answer this question, we explore how the Athens Workshop contributed by its design to creating a human ecosystem reflecting all powers and involved stakeholders , by following a co-creation, experience based learning and design thinking methodology when working in "ad-hoc" networks . These random groups of reflective practitioners and researchers experimented in developing responses to the challenges 'thrown into the arena' of a co-creation space by the 'challenge owners'.

In the era of globalization, a big challenge for cities is the question, how to use co-creation, experienced-based learning and design thinking for innovation in order to create future markets (of products, services, concepts, ideas) with a focus on innovative sets of products, policies, strategies, alliances, services and models in order to distribute the gains of innovation in a more equitable manner across borders (see: http://www.cocreatech.dk/?page=home; 05.10.2014).

"To do that, co-creation does not presuppose the preeminence of knowledge, but a need for shared experience around a locus where work of the solution will occur. More specifically, people involved in a CCEBI [Co-Creating Experienced Based Innovation] process need not be from the same knowledge domain, but need to share an experience around a locus that might ideally enable them to focus on solutions from their own vantage point. […] Thus co-creation presumes experience as the locus for innovation and the driver for creating new markets, meaning individuals should share a common experience around a locus that they will use to work on the solution set. Hence co-creation shifts the focus from the preeminence of knowledge around a solution set to the preeminence of experience" (Copenhagen Business School (CBS), Copenhagen Institute for Futures Studies (CIFS) and the Co-Creation Camp (2012): Co-Creating Innovation for Sustainable Future Markets; Co-Creation Workshop, June 18th-19th 2012; http://www.cocreationcamp.com/cocreation/copenhagen 05.10.2014)

The Athens workshop took place on November 22nd – 24th, 2012. The sessions consisted of short plenary discussions leading to challenges. In this way the participants were both presenters (of their own challenge) and co-creators providing responses to the challenges they or others set, working in random groups, experimenting with different methods. A diverse circle of approximately 50 participants, all central stakeholders in innovation, creativity, education, research, and business, such as social impact grassroots and institutional actors, representatives of the Municipality of Athens and of the arts and cultural sectors were invited to experiment and collaborate in a two days long intensive workshop. The co-creating participants were students, professors, executives, start-uppers, volunteers and public sector leaders; a wide variety of backgrounds and skill sets created a great potential for disruptive solutions and fruitful ideas. A whole eco-system of people engaged and delved into different organizational challenges, as co-creation emerged, "putting their collective intelligence in good use" (Kokkinakis & Lamprou 2012), paving the way for experimentation and intensive work, gathering the city's important co-creating agents under a new networking and creative environment.

In the remainder of our contribution, we are going to present the potentials and challenges of applying a co-creation, experience-based innovation and design thinking approach to cities as platforms for social, technological and commercial innovation by reporting the outcomes of three different cases. All three workshops are based on challenges presented by leading and crucial city stakeholders, such as (1) the Impact Hub Athens, a global social business incubator and co-working space that was testing its concept and business model as it was preparing its local launch in Athens, (2) City Tales as collaborative comics storytelling, (3) the company Korres, a Greek producer of skincare products with international presence, testing its "Korres UniLab" concept.

The three cases will be explored in regard to the question of how co-creation, experienced-based learning and design thinking can contribute to foster and support the meeting of different knowledge systems, the opening and expanding of problem and solution spaces around a shared locus, participation and involvement, and developing and managing effective two- way communications.

We will investigate these questions by the following three workshops and projects:

Case 1: Co-Creating the Impact Hub Athens' business and communication model

Case 2: Co-Creating workshop on city tales: Collaborative comics storytelling

Case 3: The Korres Uni Lab challenge

Aiming at developing the concept of Co-Creation of Experienced Based Innovation further, we discuss the results of the three cases in terms of

(a) the methodology applied,

(b) the participants' consensus around a problem space connected with a solution-space,

(c) the lessons learned on trying to form a shared space, language and discourse around the concept of co-creating experienced-based models as a general option for shaping sustainable cities and markets. Taking about markets, we talk about markets in a broader sense: as markets ('agoras') of ideas, social innovators, institutions and corporate players.

2.1 Three cases of designing and organizing LivingLabs

2.1.1 Case 1: Co-creating the Impact Hub Athens' business and communication model

The initiative

The Impact Hub Athens is a local network that is globally connected, bringing together people who take solution-oriented actions for a 'better world'. The main objective is to create virtual, physical and social infrastructures, enabling and scaling up high impact initiatives in order to solve social challenges. Impact Hubs make up a global network of people, places, and programs as a rapidly expanding, diverse global network of over 7500+ people in 63+ locations (Kokkinakis & Lamprou 2012).

The founding members of the local Impact Hub Athens are part of the global Impact Hub Network since 2010, having working experience from the Impact Hub Vienna and the Impact Hub Madrid for more than 2 years. They were working with different communities around subjects like youth entrepreneurship, environment, social innovation, and mobility. These experiences gave them a holistic picture and grounded knowledge on the design specifications, the learning qualifications, the environment and the requirements of the services in order to take the decision to start up the Impact Hub Athens in autumn 2012.

The Impact Hub in the making: Adopting a co-creation/ design methodology

Starting in autumn 2012, the Impact Hub Athens co-founders, adopting a design methodology, conducted individual, semi-structured research interviews with more than 30 key players in the ecosystem. The interviews were aiming at identifying market needs, opportunities, and impact potentials in order to assess the viability of the Impact Hub Athens and design a proposal that would address those effectively.

During this process in November 2012, the co-founders participated as forces for social transformation in the city at the mentioned Athens co-creation workshop organized by the Panteion University and the CCEBI network (Copenhagen Business School).

The challenge

To test their business and communication model, the Impact Hub's co-founders introduced the participants to the Impact Hub community's core values, mission and collaborative approaches in

terms of building community, addressing social challenges, achieving social impact and leadership in shaping the newly founded and emergent social entrepreneurship ecosystem in Athens.

They asked the participants to co-create a more meaningful context for their core value equation:

entrepreneurial ideas x [inspiring spaces + vibrant community + meaningful events] (collaborative practices) = impact

The co-creation challenge was framed around the key question:

How could the Impact Hub Athens launch and embed a culture of transparency, simplicity, community, creativity, active participation, and collaboration in the city of Athens' emerging and vibrant social and innovative 'tech' startup ecosystem?

The results

The co-creation harvesting has provided feasible suggestions and a concrete action plan by creating a common multilevel understanding of the market potential and problem space. More specifically the founding members of the Impact Hub Athens used the feedback and outcomes:

a. in a feasibility study,

b. to develop the business and communication model of the Impact Hub Athens,

c. to cross-validate the main value proposition and the collaborative community model based on trust through peer-to-peer dynamics and programs offered,

d. as a communication test of and evaluation procedure for future projects – like testing and evaluating the projects of launching a Social Impact Award or introducing the concept of Social Impact Investments through stakeholder workshops and open-seminars.

The key values of the Impact Hub Athens were further elaborated and discussed within the co-creating teams as well as during a plenary session, reaching a shared and more concrete meaning and understanding of the following values:

• Transparency and Simplicity: being clear on practices and value exchange

• Hosting: accompanying, creating connections, generating content out of community needs/dynamics

• Self-management: proactively engaging with space and change; operate within and on IT-ownership

• Active Participation: engaging with the Impact Hub Athens' activities, initiatives and community.

• Creation/Collaboration: putting quests on the table and solving them/acting together

• Sharing: giving ideas network expertise clear gives and gets, under the spectrum of collaboration (Creative Commons)

Co-creative/participatory leadership: Emphasis on collaborative practices

From November 2012 to August 2014, five community events have brought together the Impact Hub community to collectively create and deal with key opportunities for the Impact Hub, suggest solutions and create new collaborations between the members. More than 23% of the events hosted at the Impact Hub have been organized by members, 6 projects have participated in international

gatherings and opportunities, 28+ job opportunities where realized through the Impact Hub Athens' network and 7 solution oriented workshops based on members' business challenges took place in the course of this time.

The Impact Hub community consists today of a diverse team of professionals, doers and entrepreneurs, social innovators, 'creatives' and citizens with an urge to engage. Furthermore, it is supported by a local network of senior advisors from across Europe, all coming from such diverse fields and sectors as education, technology, environment, culture, tourism, responsible citizenship, and ethical consumption.

The Impact Hub Athens' co-founders perceive their role in this ecosystem as to facilitate connections for value creation and connect this ever-growing community with an international dynamic network of social innovators. In this sense they have shaped a community in the city of Athens, where co-creation and experienced-based learning can take place, but at the same time, they have used the potential of experienced-based learning and co-creation to (co-)create this community.

Discussion of the learnings from the case

This case shows that fostering eco-systems and communities in cities actually can play a substantial role in co-creation and experience-based innovation across diverse sectors, organizations, institutions, companies and startups, becoming platforms that facilitate networking, collaboration and innovation.

The Impact Hub Athens' case illustrates that – in order to achieve this - it is crucial that managing the initiative or its co-creation processes means first and foremost creating a space, where co-creation and experienced based learning can take place during the focused interaction of the participants / members.

The case further testifies how important 'pilots' and 'first movers' are for the dissemination and adaption of the concept. Those do not disseminate the concept by promoting it in talk, but in action. This is important because it might be that co-creation cannot be taught – but it can be learned (in experiencing it).

Furthermore, the Impact Hub Athens as the (g)localized version of a globally implemented idea can stimulate the discussion, if not only communities are co-created as a locus and space, where different knowledge systems come together (e.g. knowledge based on rational thinking and knowledge based on experience), but also the co-creation itself can be co-created.

2.1.2. Case 2: Co-Creation Workshop on city tales: Collaborative comic storytelling

Introduction

Comics are a narrative genre that combines two different forms of expression, namely words and pictures (Jenkins 2006, McCloud 1994). During the creation of a comic story you might work alone or you might have to work with others as a team (script writer and penciler, inker, letterer etc.). The creation of comics, nevertheless, is always a co-creation process in a broad sense. No matter if you work alone, or you work in a team, you always interact with your audience and the external environment. During the Athens Co-Creation Workshop, a storyteller and the Public Relations, Art and Educational Director of Comicdom Press, a nonprofit organization dedicated to comics, used comic storytelling as a tool to foster team work and creativity (Tsene et al. 2014, Gottschall 2013, Dallacqua 2012). Inspired by the Athens Co-Creation Workshop's main theme (Co-creating cities as platforms for co-creating) , the workshop facilitators asked the participants to create short comic stories inspired by their cities and to experience and reflect on co-creation through their collaborative work.

The challenge

Although the initial challenge of the particular session was to collect the participants' perceptions toward their cities, the most important challenge was to observe if they could work as a team, in a short period of time, in order to produce the final product: the comic story.

In comics and comic books, we often meet teams of superheroes. In superhero teams people from different and diverse backgrounds and with different (c)abilities work together towards a common scope. *The Fantastic Four*, *Avengers* or *X-Men* are some of the most popular superhero teams. What makes them so successful? And how can we be inspired by superhero teams in real live? If we take for example *Avengers* or *X-Men*, we can see the main characteristics of a successful team, as well as the stages of the development of a group turning into a team.

"But, a group of individuals does not necessarily make a team. Teams customarily have members with complementary skills and generate synergy through a coordinated effort which allows each member to maximize his/her strengths and minimize his/her weaknesses. As in *The Avengers*, team members must learn how to be of assistance to one another. They help one another realize their true

potential and create an environment that allows everyone to go beyond their limitations" (The building of a Superhero Team, http://www.venturestreet.com/articles/The-Building-of-a-Super-Hero-Team-1444; 01.08.2014). In order to become a successful team, the workshop participants have to think creatively and to agree on the way they would visualize their stories main characters, landmarks etc. in order to overcome the barrier of the different drawing styles, and to agree on highlighting common issues through their stories, although they come from different cities.

The methodology

The workshop applied the collaborative comic storytelling methodology, where participants form small teams in order to co-create their comic story. Each team had to write the script and then transform it to a comic story, following the instructions by the facilitators of the workshop. The challenging part of the creation of the story was that each member of the team had to draw at least one panel of the comic. This methodology reassures that all participants take part in the drawing session and have to find a way to collaborate so that their story looks like has been created by a single person.

The results and outcomes

If we attempt an analysis based on our observations during the session, we can come to the following conclusions:

a) All teams went through the typical stages of a team building and collaborative process (see Suzy Thorman and Kathy Mendonca's team building toolkit (http://hrweb.berkeley.edu/files/attachments/Team-Building-Toolkit-KEYS.pdf ;01.8.2014).

The stages are:

Forming: in the forming stage, team members are getting to know one another, and understanding the team's purpose and their roles.

Storming: in this stage, politeness begins to wear off and creative dissension occurs over basic issues and operating procedures.

Norming: when team members recognize their differences and have dealt with them, they move on to the following stage where they explore how are they going to accomplish their goal.

Performing: this is the final stage of team development. A high performing team is exactly this: a highly effective, problem-solving unit.

b) Regarding team work and collaboration, most of the teams scored highly to the mentioned skills. They worked well as teams, discussed a lot on their scripts and took collaborative decisions.

c) It was rather interesting to observe the climaxing of the engagement to the project. In the beginning most participants were a bit tight, but as the session was developing, they started to loosen up and to participate more. In the end, when they had to present their work all teams appeared extra enthusiastic.

d) All participants seemed to enjoy the session and shared a common co-creation experience.

The stories produced during the session became part of the 'The City Speaks'- exhibition in Thessaloniki organized by the British Council.

Learnings from the case

Techniques or methods like collaborative comic storytelling can stimulate not only teambuilding processes, but also via disruption or 'Verfremdung' (Brecht 1964 [1949]) open up for spaces for other than rational thinking based knowledge systems to come in play.

The contributions to the exhibition 'The City Speaks' gave different stakeholders / citizens with very different backgrounds a voice across a diversity of sectors, organizations, institutions, companies and startups, by becoming a platform that facilitates networking, collaboration and innovation in the city. At the same time the collective stories, that were told, gave the citizens (!) the opportunity to bring their experienced-based knowledge about living in the city into a discourse, where really much (their life and citizenship) is at stake.

2.1.4 Case 4: The Korres UniLab Challenge

Introduction

The Korres skincare brand ((http://www.korres.com/) was founded in 1996 as the first homeopathic pharmacy in Athens by the pharmacist George Korres. Today it has turned into a brand with a global presence, investing in research, new technologies, environmental and social sustainability, and in building partnerships with Greek Universities, producer associations and cooperatives.

The founder of Korres considers his company as an intense training school for all new Korres team members. Together with the Global Communications Director, the founder joined the Athens Co-Creation Workshop with the aim to evaluate and further develop the Korres Uni Lab, a newly formulated project, and tap in into the creative ideas of the top-level and multi-sector expertise of the workshop. He also wanted to experiment with the methodology of co-creation itself, as it seemed to be highly connected to the company spirit and culture.

The challenge: Developing the Korres UniLab

Mr. Korres and his team, having the opportunity to give frequently guest lectures at many Greek Universities and having earned a strong local and international reputation   as an innovative and environmentally friendly business, recognized an untapped opportunity in the constant demand of students to gain real-life experience. The students are asking for experiencing everyday work settings, research labs, business creativity and innovation challenges. They are eager to engage as participants in these challenging settings, where they can bridge the perceived gap between research and theoretical knowledge as well as implement and use of their knowledge and skills in an organizational business context.

The core idea of the KorresUni Lab has therefore been to invite student teams from six Greek university departments to work during six months together with Korres' executives and researchers in three interconnected projects: the development of new products, the global Korres concept store, and the development of a digital strategy.

The guiding questions for the workshop participants, which task was to 'test', evaluate and develop the ideas further, have been:

How attractive and meaningful could the UniLab be both for interested students and the Korres executives and researchers?

What creative ways could be introduced to select the students to participate to Korres UniLab?

How could the selected students add value to the UniLAb program and contribute with their knowledge from the university to introducing and implementing innovation in the three selected areas at Korres?

How could the UniLab at the same time enable the participating students to expand their skills, creativity and experience, and thereby gain new knowledge from the corporate world and from the professions for their academic learning at the university.

Methodology

During the workshop, the two Korres representatives undertook the roles of workshop facilitators, engaging meaningfully with all participants, keeping detailed notes. According to the workshop organizers' observations, all participants seemed fascinated by the chance to contribute and by the impression that their ideas were appreciated by one of the most respected company leaders.

In contrast to other sessions of the Co-Creating Athens, the participants did not form distinct small working/ co-creation teams but preferred to work altogether as one big 'think-tank' group.

Outcomes and results

The representatives of Korres shared with all participants at the end of the co-creation session, how impressed they were by the quality of the ideas and insights that were co-created in such a time-limited but intense creative workshop setting. They also considered this type of methodology as a method to stimulate more and faster innovation in terms of ideas as well as in terms of implementation. The Korres Uni Lab has been designed, organized and implemented in 2013 and 2014 adopting several of the ideas that emerged and were elaborated during the Athens Co-Creation Workshop.

400 students from the invited universities applied for participating in the UniLab. The applicants come from the University of Athens, Department of Pharmaceutics, School of Medicine, School of

Engineers, Department of Communication, Media and Culture of Panteion University, and from the Athens University of Economics and Business. 40 students were selected to collaborate during the UniLab on the basis of the production of a creative video, where they were teamed with architects and graphic designers.

According to Korres' own statements in the traditional and social media, and by testimonials of the participating students, it seems that the Korres UniLab is achieving its main goals for all parties involved. This has led to the prospect to continue in the next years and to the ambition to launch new products and implement digital communication ideas and approaches that have been developed in its context in the near future.

Learnings from the case

Co-creation developed its full potential: A fast pace, a welcoming atmosphere and an eager spirit emerged out of the challenges, while participants adapted quite easily and followed the pace. Combining different backgrounds, skills and strengths, they co-created unexpected solutions that can be put in action, and they created innovative ideas that are able to disrupt markets and provide new opportunities in new globalized cultural economies.

Co-operation and co-creating of new ideas, concepts, even (communication) products seems to be a way of how to react on the different roles that consumers have in the 21st century pull society (Dinesen 2008) as co-producers of products, services and new markets.

The Korres case also demonstrates the potential of co-creation to mobilize different knowledge systems and not only different expert knowledge/s and different fields of experience or different fields of expertise (as in project teams). Members of different Communities of Practice (Lave & Wenger 1991) and Discourse Communities (Swales 1990) can work and talk together (Pogner 2012) across different boundaries of public institutions, private companies, startups, communication agencies, citizenship, administration in a combination of test stand and think tank.

Those co-creation labs can also be used to develop new ideas and concepts of co-creation, but also to assess and evaluate them – and to disseminate them.

This case also demonstrates clearly a kind of a HAIKU –paradox. In order to bring the different creative skills and knowledge systems into play, you have to disrupt the 'normal' way of saying and doing things. But at the same time you have to give a kind of frame (like the HAIKU genre gives a rigid structure for a poem) for defining and solve the challenge.

3 Conclusions

Our main question was: How can co-creation and experience-based learning and innovation in LivingLabs, across diverse sectors, organizations, institutions, companies and startups, help cities becoming platforms that facilitate networking, collaboration and innovation?

The cases contribute to the answers to this question by stressing that LivingLabs have to be designed in a way that they enable the participants to bring different knowledge systems (their rationally structured knowledge as well as their experienced based knowledge) and their different talents, gifts and skills into play. LivingLabs like the Athens Co-creation Workshop use different methods and techniques of disruption and 'Verfremdung' (Brecht 1964 [1949]) to open up for creativity and out-of-the-box-thinking. When it comes to innovation (both social and commercial) very often these techniques are used to come to the collective definition of and discourse about the definition and solution of ill-defined problems (Schön 1983). When co-creating these 'problems'

can be turned into problem spaces (opening broader solution spaces), where communities, groups of 'stakeholders of the city' (CITY'zens) come together sharing an experience around a locus that should enable them to focus on solutions from their own vantage point.

The art of fostering co-creation lies in the challenge of balancing the structuration of the processes with the openness and open-endedness of the approach. If the balance tips too much into the direction of structure and perhaps even control, co-creation is in the danger of becoming colonized as an extension of the R&D department of a company or public institution with a result of a depowerment of the citizens instead of an empowerment. If it tips too much to the openness, the involvement and participation of some (crucial) stakeholders will vanish quickly.

If LivingLabs should be able to help cities to becoming platforms that facilitate networking, collaboration and innovation, they should be facilitated by a co-creation and design thinking methodology that helps ad-hoc networks of reflective practitioners (Schön 1983) and researchers to emerge and supports the participants / stakeholders in experiencing responding to challenges they 'have thrown into the arena' themselves.

The different cases contribute to this endeavor by providing ideas, tools and techniques and experiencing these ideas, tools and techniques:

- How to engage people to create valuable experiences together while enhancing network economics (Athens co-creation workshop)

- An emerging model of collaborative and sharing economy (Impact Hub Athens) and of networked peer local and global communities (Impact Hub Athens, the comic storytelling, Korres UniLab).

- How to develop a co-creation and design thinking methodology (Athens co-creation workshop)

- How to foster and nourish (cultivate?) ad-hoc networks of reflective practitioners, researches, stakeholders (Impact Hub Athens, the comic storytelling, Korres UniLab) .

- The main technique for letting co-creation happen seems to be (co-)creating space for it (Impact Hub Athens, the comic storytelling, Korres UniLab).

In the course of the investigation of the cases not only answers to the main questions became visible, but also a lot of new important questions and challenges arose. The approach of co-creating experienced-based learning and innovation in LivingLabs with the focus on cities opens up for the following challenges and questions:

- Managing innovational creative processes as co-creation has elements of a paradox: in order to set creativity and new ideas 'free', one sometime has to stage / organize spaces (even rules?) as frames in order to focus on the challenge at hand.

- The approach can open and limit problem and solution spaces at the same time, it is both enabling and constraining.

- Is co-creation a "genre"? And if it, is a genre of what?

- The crucial role of disruption seems to be obvious; but how is it related to co-creation?

- Techniques for letting co-creation happen: is it (co-)creating space for it?

- Can one co-create the tools, techniques, and enablers together with (all) the participants?

- Does it make sense to use the concept 'concept' in the context of experience-based learning?

Future research should furthermore collect data (in LivingLabs and / or other settings) in order to analyze both the discourse and the construction of co-operation and co-creating as an innovation technique in order to get more insight into:

- How to facilitate focused co-creation and experienced-based learning together with knowledge creation?

- How to nurture participation and involvement?

- If or how or if the principle of Challenge-based learning can be transferred / translated to other settings?

- What 'co-creation' negotiated, co-produced, co-created means in different settings?

- How people "do" co-creating?

- When people do co-creating?

- How people do co-creating co-creation?

- Free-riders tend to proliferate in social/ organizational environments that have embedded collaborative cultures and practices ('collaboration paradox'). How do we deal with free-riders disrupting the co-creation processes within the sharing communities of practice?

- A very crucial question: who 'owns' the processes and the results / outcomes?

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