Towards a new perspective of managing ideas in front-end innovation as actor networks

For decades the innovation process in R&D organisations has been discussed. Product development processes is well-established in R&D organisations and improvements has been implemented through theories as Lean product development and agile methods. In recent decades, more diffuse processes have been identified as front-end innovation processes. The front-end innovation is distinguished from linear product development and characterised as more informal, unstructured, and unpredictable. This paper presents the preliminary results of a PhD project concerning idea management in front-end innovation of R&D organisations. Through theoretical and empirical investigations of managing activities of idea processes an indicative analysis in the perspective of actor network theory is performed. The analysis show how managers and employees navigate in a complex environment of organisational structures, technical features and design, creativity and social interaction. The analysis inputs an initial conceptualisation of a new theoretical framework of idea management. The theoretical framework suggests a dynamic network structure comprised of the dimensions of space, content, and process.

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