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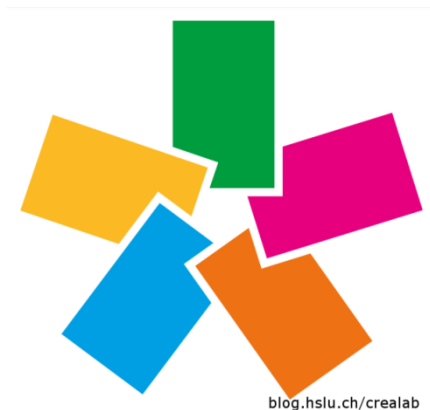
Idea Hotel
How Conventional Business Hotels Could Become a Pivotal Resource in the Innovation Journey of Their Clients

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Abstract

This paper builds on the premise that hotels and other providers of meeting facilities largely fail to address increasing requirements for temporary project spaces that support creativity. It is known that organizational, methodological, physical, technological and psychological factors can have a positive influence on how well people perform in temporary face-to-face collaboration. However, knowledge about those factors is scattered across many different research disciplines, academic communities and publications. There is a need for a cohesive conceptual framework that can be used to (re)design hotel facilities and services according to the needs of the creative class customers. This paper presents such a conceptual framework that has been jointly developed by researchers and practitioners.

Keywords

Idea Hotel, Innovation Ecology, Creativity, Provider of Facilities

1. Introduction

Innovation happens in a cycle that consists of the three phases exploration, ideation, and implementation [Scholl 2009; Brown 2008]. The activities in this cycle are collectively called creative-generative processes. Creative-generative processes are always bounded to a physical space where they happen. The impact of physical space on the outcomes of creative-generative processes is high: Brown [2009 p. 35] for example illustrates "how using real space helps the process". His company IDEO, a design and innovation consultancy, reserves so-called project rooms to their teams for the time of their project. Teams leave all their photos, flip-charts, scribbles, prototypes, etc. in these spaces so all these various artefacts representing their research remain accessible all of the time. "So integral are these project spaces to our creative process that we have exported them, whenever possible, to our clients. (…) As Dilbert has shown, regulation-size spaces tend to produce regulation-size ideas" [Brown 2009, p. 36].

The insight that physical space impacts creative-generative processes is not new and has triggered a variety of research conceptualizing and studying environments to stimulate creativity and innovation. Examples range from concepts for whole Knowledge Cities where knowledge flows would be intensive, on-going, rich, diverse and complex [Dvir 2005] via Future Centres as physical working environments for breaking out of patterns and routines [Dvir et al. 2006; Kune 2008; Dvir 2008] to Fab Labs, TechShops and Hackerspaces as the "Libraries of the Peer Production Era" [Troxler 2011, p. 86]. Also, since almost ten years, a growing number of organisations constructed and used rooms that were particularly designed for creative-generative processes [Edvinsson 2002]. Examples are Office Innovation Centers [Spath & Kern 2003], Interactive Creativity Landscapes [Haner, 2005] or nowadays "design-driven labs" [Verganti 2009].

The above examples underline the importance of physical space to creative-generative processes. They also represent two contemporary types of answers to the challenge of finding the right place for innovation: Either organizations build up their own physical space for creativity, or they rent spaces available to the public. These options are however not available to the majority: Teams from small and medium enterprises or interest groups in the society though often cannot afford – and do not want – to build up their own "innovation center". The spaces to rent are preciously few (for example, there are eight Future Centers worldwide). Moreover, most of them are specialized in supporting certain phases of creative-generative processes (Fabl Labs, Design Labs), while teams engaged in creative-generative processes need access to several different spaces, particularly in the ideation phase. During this phase, a team has to conduct the shift from brainstorming (thinking, writing, drawing) that is an information processing task to execution (making, prototypes) that requires to "get your hands dirty" [Akrich et al. 2001]. To make it even more difficult, creative-generative processes are not linear but might iterate back and forth between phases several times.

Hotels and other providers of meeting facilities (PoF) could help out here. This would also make sense from an economic perspective: Because trends in society such as the emergence of the creative class and an increase in lateral and networked business-to-business cooperation increase the demand for temporary project spaces [Boschma & Fritsch 2009, Hansen, et al. 2009], they are increasingly receiving requests for temporary project spaces that support creativity. However, PoF largely fail to address them and as such risk losing an important and growing clientele to other players in the market [Ottenbacher 2007].

We assume here that this is a result of a lack of incorporating extant knowledge in a framework conceiving the structural provisions for such an offering. Knowledge on what makes a good creative space is available but not easily accessible because it stems from a variety of disciplines

that are hardly interconnected. Like this, hoteliers and CEOs and managers of other PoF suffer from not having a reliable conceptual framework that assembles the aforementioned knowledge and makes it accessible to the (re)design of hotel facilities. The project this paper presents was designed to address and overcome this gap through developing a conceptual framework that would guide PoF to (re)develop their offerings. Offering a systematic conceptual framework to hoteliers and CEOs and managers of other PoF is important because it is the first step towards enabling PoF to cope with the societal claims for physical space enabling creative-generative processes.

Below, we first frame the requirements to physical space in innovation processes in the context of societal trends, and discuss based on the state of the art of hospitality research why today's PoF hardly if at all respond to these requirements. We briefly outline how we together with practitioners proceeded to develop a conceptual framework called the "Idea Hotel". Thereafter, we detail the framework and its building blocks – organizational, methodological, physical, technological and psychological – and describe two real cases as examples. Finally, we review our conceptual framework, discussing its merits and implications, and identifying further research needed.

2. Hotels and the Creative Class

The appearance of spaces that foster creative-generative processes can be seen in a larger societal context. 'Creativity' in this sense is certainly more than just a buzzword but rather a societal megatrend. It can be argued, that creativity is indeed critical for societies that want to master the challenges of the future. In a creative society, value creation is heavily based on the creative-generative innovation processes initiated and driven by a 'creative class' [Scott 1999, Florida 2002, Florida & Tiangli, 2004].

According to Florida, the 'creative class' constitutes the core of innovative industries and can be divided into two occupational sub groups: First, the 'Super Creative Core' comprising persons who carry out creative tasks within computing, architecture, arts, science and education. Second, 'Creative Professionals' work with business, health care as well as financial and legal issues [Florida 2002, p. 328]. "The creative class – especially the Super Creative Core – contributes with the 'raw material' of innovative production: new ideas, new approaches and visions. Compared to research stressing the importance of the individual genius, Florida links idea-generation and thus, innovativeness to the availability of a heterogeneity of voices and perspectives. The more heterogeneous the creative class is, the more possibilities it opens for combining and mixing different ideas and viewpoints, which in turn leads to a large supply of potential innovations." [Hansen et al. 2009, p. 101]

Collaboration in projects is the main way to organize work in creative-generative processes, and as team members often have a multi-disciplinary and cross-organizational background distributed teamwork has gained importance as the typical form to collaborate in the 21st century [Nardi & Whittaker 2002]. As network patterns and lateral growth emerge as dominating features of cooperation between businesses [Naisbitt 1982, Rifkin 2011], demand for temporary access to creative spaces is set to grow. Traditionally the hospitality industry has been providing such spaces, yet typically in a more traditional, 'regulation-size' manner. Only few of those providers of facilities realized the potential of above trends. Although the creative class should be an interesting new group of clients to PoF, particularly hotel businesses have so far not developed offerings that would turn them into pivotal resources in the innovation journey of their clients.

Like other markets, the traditional hospitality industry has been affected by the societal transformation towards a creative society [Scott 1999, Florida 2002, Florida & Tiangli 2004]. However, the business hospitality market is still characterized by a traditional mindset, increasingly faces cutthroat, and ruinous competition [Ottenbacher 2007]. Additionally, there is a real threat of substitution. Information technologies like video conferencing and real-time document sharing allow users in different locations to have virtual collaborative meetings.

The creative class, when using hotel facilities for business purposes, is not served as a special target customer group yet but treated as part of the overall business customer segment. However, research shows that its members think, collaborate, produce ideas, test and realize solutions in another way than traditional business customers [Boschma & Fritsch 2009, Hansen, et al. 2009]. This implies that there is a need to identify the specific needs and expected benefits of creative class customers who temporary use facilities provided by PoF for meetings. Research shows that temporary face-to-face collaboration plays a critical role in the way creative class members work [Storper & Venables 2004, Olson et al. 2002], despite the growing share of technology-mediated distributed collaboration. Designing the experience of those highly valuable face-to-face moments requires much more attention than "just" providing facilities.

Hospitality research studies aspects of the hospitality field such as accommodation and food and beverage, leisure, travel, conventions, and so on [Ottenbacher et al. 2009]. It is a relatively young academic discipline [Yoo & Weber 2005] that has so far "failed to concretely define hospitality both theoretically and empirically" [Ottenbacher et al. 2009: 281]. Most of the extant empirical studies focus on traditional topics like marketing, administration and operations management and human resources [for a summary, see Ottenbacher et al. 2009]. This research therefore provides so far no real help to hospitality businesses that aim to developing offerings for the creative class and/or transforming their business model.

Furthermore, knowledge about organizational, physical, psychological, methodological and technological factors that can have a positive influence on how well people (and particularly creative class professionals) perform in temporary face-to-face collaboration is scattered across many different research disciplines, academic communities and publications. There is a need for a cohesive framework that could form a basis for (re)adjusting PoF facilities and services to the needs of the creative class customers. This paper aims to contribute to closing this gap through presenting and illustrating a conceptual framework - i.e. a framework that covers the essential concepts - that CEOs and managers of PoF can use to (re)design hotel facilities and services according to the needs of the creative class customers. The purpose of a conceptual framework is to stimulate thinking in analysis and development activities and to ensure no important aspects are neglected or forgotten.

The conceptual framework was labelled "Idea Hotel". An "Idea Hotel" is a hospitality facility (such as a hotel) that provides members of the creative class with an innovation ecology supporting learning and creating with best conditions for groups to have effective and innovative meetings. Meetings are defined as temporary face-to-face collaboration situations in small to large groups. Other than innovation centres, the idea hotel is physically based in a hotel or convention centre. It is set up an innovation ecology where creative class people can develop and prototype innovative ideas.

3. Research Process and Methods

The conceptual framework we describe below is the result of an explorative research journey which started in 2008 when a group of three PoF and six researchers from six countries set a joint research and development agenda to develop innovative business ideas particularly designed for the creative society. The development of the conceptual framework was an intrinsically interdisciplinary endeavour, combing several domains of expertise – knowledge in the areas of hospitality business and innovation management, of organizational, physical and technical factors of work spaces and of meeting designs that support creativity and innovation. Moreover, the strong cooperation between practitioners and academics made it truly transdisciplinary [Hansmann et al. 2009].

The team agreed to use a research design applying iterative circles of group discussions and literature study. Group discussions are a qualitative research method proposed as a method of interrogation first by the studies of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research [Pollock 1955]. Compared to group interviews, group discussions enable a research team to build upon the "dynamic of developing conversations in the discussion as the central source of knowledge." [Flick 2009, p. 196]. Blumer [1969, p. 41] underlines that "a small number of individuals, brought together in a discussion or resource group, is more valuable many times than any representative sample. Such a group, discussing collectively their sphere of life and probing into it as they meet one another's disagreements, will do more to lift the veils covering the sphere of life than any other device that I know of."

Between summer 2008 and summer 2010, the group continuously meet every three to six months for group discussions and worked on the idea hotel framework. Overall, there were seven physical meetings. Meeting dates and agendas were usually set up by researchers. The group met at the universities and at the meeting facilities of the partners from industries, depending on the topics. When results of research were to be presented, the university was the meeting place. When specific challenges of the PoF had to be discussed, the group went to the place in question (for example a hotel of one of the partners).

All meetings were documented in meeting minutes. Every time, one of the researchers was designated to write down the discussions and the contributions of the participants in situ, whereas the other researchers took notes from memory. Furthermore, the group documented their discussions on large wall papers that were photographed and integrated into the meeting minutes. The researcher designated to document the discussion drafted meeting minutes and left them to all other researchers for revision and amendments to reduce biases [Flick, 2009]. In a third round, meeting minutes were validated by the partners from the PoF.

Between the meetings, researchers analysed the meeting minutes and extracted the most relevant questions, which they verified via e-mail again with the partners from the PoF. They then sought for answers to these questions in state of the art literature. Examples for questions are the impact of space, of light or facilitation methodology on group creativity. In the group discussions, the findings of the research team were presented, discussed and linked to the practical experiences of the PoF. For certain questions, additional experts were invited to the group discussions. For example, when studying the impact of light, the group involved light designers who helped them to understand the state of the art in this particular business.

4. Idea Hotel Building Blocks

An "Idea Hotel" is a hospitality facility like hotels that provides members of the creative class with an innovation ecology supporting learning and creating with best conditions for groups to have effective and innovative meetings. Meetings are defined as temporary face-to-face collaboration situations in small to large groups.

Idea hotels have to be designed and operated in a way so they apply the concept of value innovation [Kim & Mauborgne 2005]: On the one hand, they should offer unique value to their clients like for example a very special atmosphere or the opportunity to meet other interesting creative people. On the other hand, they have to operate economically effective.

The conceptual framework for the idea hotel consists of a set of five building blocks. Each block represents pertinent knowledge from one dimension or discipline that is relevant to the idea hotel concept and needs to be taken into consideration when setting up an idea hotel.

1. Dimension of Organization
2. Dimension of Methods
3. Dimension of Spaces
4. Dimension of Technology
5. Dimension of People

The knowledge presented in these building blocks stems from original disciplinary research. Hence, those pieces of knowledge are not new themselves. The contribution of the idea hotel concept is rather to create interrelations between the building blocks and thus integrating them in an interdisciplinary framework. In that way disciplinary knowledge can be combined and used as a basis to generate holistic offerings that are required in an emerging innovation ecology designed for the creative class.

The idea behind the set of building blocks is that the framework should be applicable in any specific case of an idea hotel implementation, but that the particular design could be customized to the specific needs, constraints, possibilities and circumstances of that specific case.

The design of a particular idea hotel depends very much on the specific context and on the vision and value it would provide to its creative class customers and the specific goals the hotel would want to achieve over time. Whereas one idea hotel might aim to enhance innovation in the region where it is located, another one might strive for developing solutions to global or national challenges to the future, or one idea hotel might want to specialize for the legal profession, for economists, politicians or policymakers, an other idea hotel might focus on communication, media and advertising businesses, and yet another one might cater for a more industrial or design oriented clientele. One hotel might want to achieve quick wins with relatively small investments while another one would choose a more long-term oriented transformation strategy.

Below, the building blocks are described in more detail. Besides, short imaginary scenarios modified from Hermann [2007] are integrated in the text. These scenarios served as starting point for the research at the very beginning of the project and describe how members of the creative class would use the facilities and services as well as how their stay in the idea hotel would translate into concrete experiences of their innovation journey.

4.1. Building block 1: Organizational dimension

Kune [2008] identified 13 *operating principles* that guide the operation of an innovation center. Operating principles are philosophies and values that guide the operation of the innovation center. The four most relevant principles that idea hotels should adapt from innovation centers and operate upon are
1. linking past, present and future,
2. combining thinking, dreaming, playing and working,
3. balancing continuity and discontinuity, and
4. inviting multiple perspectives and multi-disciplinary

The operating principles imply that the hotel should provide excellent conditions for encounters between creative people from different knowledge domains. Consequently, it has to be organized in a way that it can offer a portfolio of events stimulating and facilitating encounters where people can create new ideas and to interact, from facilitated creative workshops to innovation camps and creative weekend retreats.

> *Scenario 1: Lounge, 12. July 2015, 7.50 pm*
> *At the end of an unseasonably cold and rainy summer day, the evening sun breaks through the clouds for a short but intensive gig. Werner K., 58 years old, curator of a Swiss Museum of Art, heads the beautiful stairway downstairs to the lounge in order to relax after a challenging day. The informal talks with the other idea community members by the fireside have been proven to be a pleasant contrast to the engaged sessions in the "Creadrom". The unstructured reflection that happens there is a very effective and easy form of networking.*

Extant research from psychology of work shows that creativity of individuals and groups in organizations are impacted by organizational conditions. Amabile [1996] studied enabling and constraining organizational conditions to creativity. They found that *autonomy and freedom* in working on tasks as well as *sufficient resources and challenging work* are organisational enabling factors for creativity in working environments. Idea hotels should provide their staff with such conditions for creating an authentic innovative atmosphere and benefiting from the creativity of their staff.

Another organizational enabling factor for creativity is support by supervisors and leaders. *Leadership* in innovation faces the tension between creative disruption needed to make innovation happen and operational efficiency required in day-to-day operations, as Lombardo & Roddy [2011] showed. For the former, innovation managers need to go with the flow and understand that 'managing' innovation at best means being able to manoeuvre the innovation journey, but not to control it [Meissner et al. 2009, Wolf et al. 2011a].

4.2. Building block 2: Methodological dimension

The idea hotel should offer a large (and continually growing) toolkit – set of facilitation, interaction, collaboration and ideation methods and tools. Methods and tools are applied in the frame of facilitation methodologies. These comprise both more traditional methods like Osborn's Creative Problem Solving, Buzan's Mind Mapping, or De Bono's Lateral Thinking [for an overview, see von Stamm [2008], and Backerra et al. [2007]] as well as younger and recently more popular methodologies like Owen's Open Space Technology [Owen 1997], Future Conferences [Troxler & Kuhnt 2007], and Knowledge Cafes [Dvir 2008], just to name a few. Methods can be used on a self-service basis, or lead by a facilitator.

> *Scenario 2: Room 221, 7. October 2015, 6.50 pm*
> *Kumar O. from Tamil Nadu welcomes the sunrise in the Alps during his early morning yoga exercises. The 62 years old author and CEO of a publishing house aims today at developing a creativity room for balanced nutrition together with a mixed group of people coming from different cultures. The team will be supported by a professional aerohydrotherapy therapist and a facilitator. In the new environment, the group will than create exceptional ideas on the topic of 'Healthy water for the world population'. Language barriers will be overcome through mimic, gesture and body language – it will be exciting to find out how nonverbal communication allows for developing ideas, creativity and inspiration.*

The idea hotel offering that adds a unique value to its clients is however neither the idea hotel handbook with the descriptions of methods and methodologies nor the provision of facilitators. What is unique is the customization service that enables the client – supported by idea hotel staff – to purposefully develop an innovation- and event journey that makes the most effective use of the methods and methodologies at hand. The idea hotel builds here on the concept of unconferencing [Wolf & Troxler 2008; Wolf et al. 2011b], an event concept that ensures individual knowledge transformation and social learning for developing innovative solutions.

4.3. Building block 3: Space dimension

Psychology of architecture studies how different architectonic elements impact the productivity of the user. Elements like furniture, light, air or colour can be used to evoke emotions and stimulate creative processes [Walden 2008]. McCoy [2005] proposed to look at five aspects of the physical environment when designing environments for creativity, namely at „spatial organization, architectonic details, views, resources, and ambient conditions" [ibid, 18; see also McCoy & Evans, 2002]. Dvir [2008] describes in his book different factors that should be considered when designing a creative environment, including ambiance, furniture, use of colours, use of sounds, functional layout, accessories, interaction with the neighbouring organizations, use of outdoor environments, and more. Hemlin et al. [2008] systematically studied and described the different components of a creative knowledge environment.

> *Scenario 3: Holodeck Space Simulation Chamber, 11. November 2017, 9.20 pm*
> *Pavlo S. O. from Moscow, 23 years old, fashion designer, seeks for inspiration for the dresses for stewardesses for the first public mars expedition. He uses the Holodeck to explore the wide, silence and red colour of the mars planet. He wishes to live the loneliness of the dark, endless flight and therefore simulates the clinic environment at the board of the mars voyager space ship. He sits in a neutral but sophisticatedly upholstered 3D printed chair and submits to the forces of the illusion. After two hours he feels dizzy but completely enthused and full of new ideas. He therefore switches the room back to neutral studio mode and draws the outline of the collection in vigorous colours.*

The idea hotel should make use of these studies and findings and develop the space in a way that innovation and creativity are stimulated and supported.

4.4. Building block 4: Technological dimension

In innovation processes, it is very often important to be able to have access to disperse expert knowledge and to be able to integrate people who cannot physically be present [Connaughton & Shuffler 2007]. Furthermore, there should be the technological infrastructure to facilitate the development of prototypes and scenarios.

Scenario 4: Workspace, 30. January 2014, 11.20 am
Anna P. from Helsinki, 34 years old, CEO of a finish airline, is used to escape with her innovation team from cold and long polar nights. She shortens the dark season in her homeland through opening up for new ideas at a place that inspires her. The ideas will be further developed into innovations until the summer. The Workspace provides her with the necessary infrastructure for staying connected to her working environment during the weeks of her absence. Mobile and flexible working, supplemented with options like 3D-printing prototypes that the idea hotel FabLab offers – for Anna P. and her team a light at the polar circle.

Fernando [2008] lists and describes more than 230 information technologies that can be used in innovation centers in order to increase effectiveness of on-site meetings, expand the boundaries of meetings (to include off-site people), and speed up ideation and rapid prototyping processes. Rogers et al. [2010] demonstrate that mobile devices can inspire innovation processes and help during the ideation phase through facilitating collaborative sense making activities in groups. Troxler [2011] proposes fabrication laboratories (FabLab) as a possibility to grant creative class members access to IT infrastructure and technology for personal digital fabrication. Hotels could either build up their own FabLab or cooperate with one close by.

In addition, each idea hotel should offer the opportunity to simulate scenarios in a game zone. Miller et al. [2008] argue that playing innovation games helps innovators to develop creative approaches to competition and collaboration in the future market that take into account distinct contexts. For service innovators, the idea hotel should offer the opportunity to test new services in role plays with clients or professional actors in a physical prototype-environment or a virtual reality lab [Schäfer & Aebersold 2009].

4.5. Building block 5: People dimension

As suggested by studies from psychology of work, staff members will have a lot of autonomy and freedom in their work and will be provided with all necessary support, guidance and resources so that the idea hotel would benefit from the creativity of their staff [Amabile et al. 1996]. In return, staff members are expected to apply their own creativity to further improve every aspect of the hotel, such as the restaurant menu, the way each guest is welcomed, creative ways to market and sell services. Moreover, staff members are encouraged to interact informally with guests, share thoughts, provide feedback to ideas. Idea hotel staff members should be carefully selected according to two criteria: They need to have a profound professional education and experience as bosses, waitresses, reception desk professionals etc. and they should be innovative, creative and flexible. The latter is tested during one week where applicants interact with guests in their potential future jobs in real life situations. All involved members of the idea hotel team as well as selected guests should approve the applicant in the end. Successful applicants would then be invited to participate in special idea hotel training where they learn the details about the facilities, the technology and the methodologies.

Another important aspect is the integration of the idea hotel into the surrounding system. Van de Ven et al. [1999] emphasize the importance of system integration when stating "innovation leaders and investors can intervene and place boundaries on divergent and convergent patterns. (...) resource investments and organizational structuring enable undertaking the innovation journey, while external institutional rules and internal focus constrain the boundaries of cycles in this journey." [ibid, 213] To integrate different stakeholders who all their own objectives and to form a local and a global community is one of the major challenges idea hotels face.

> *Scenario 5: Record Studio. 31. March 2014, 3.15 pm*
> *Antonella B., 39 years old, graphic designer from Palermo, just finished her first pod cast in the professional audio and video studio. After a cold drink at the bar with her friend Nicoletta T., she presents the result to the idea community. Later, she uploads the stories to the news portal and assures thereby, that her brilliant ideas are not only professionally documented but also unlimited accessible. Because her ideas and stories from and about the "Idea Hotel" do not only fascinate her business partners from South Italy.*

Methods to attract and integrate people with different backgrounds, personalities and visions in a way that they would form a sustainable community should be carefully designed [Russo & Rossi 2009]. One option for a local measure might be an annual brainstorming meeting, open to the public, is an opportunity to revisit the hotel vision and operation mode from the perspectives of all stakeholders in order to maximize contribution to the region, citizens, community and owners.

5. Exemplary substantiations

While the research project we reported above achieved its goal with providing the framework and the description of the five building blocks as components of the Idea Hotel, we applied it to two cases of PoF that independently started to provide innovative meeting spaces akin to the Idea Hotel concept – the Dutch provider of meeting spaces seats2meet and the Norwegian FabLab at Solvyk Farm.

As it name suggests, seats2meet provides seats for people who want to meet. The two main offerings are single places at large tables for individuals and more traditional meeting rooms. For the latter seats2meet changed some aspects of traditional meetings industry: clients pay per seat, not per room, and they can cancel reservations free of charge up to 24 hours before the meeting. For the former, seats2meet applies a completely new business model: individuals pay with "social value" rather than money – they make themselves and their experience available to all the other clients who are present at that seats2meet location. Seats2meet started with a strong organizational and societal vision – Society 3.0 [van den Hoff 2011] – added state-of-the-art technology, suitably located facilities, and a small number of very specific methodological elements – 24/7 online booking, straight forward cancellation policy, free coffee and lunches as opportunities to randomly meet. The measure of success? Since its inception in 2007 in Utrecht, seats2meet has grown to a network that comprises 16 locations across the Netherlands, run as franchises. And contrary to naïve preconceptions based on traditional economic beliefs the number of free riders is negligible [Dinjens 2012].

The Fab Lab at Solvyk Farm in Lyngen, a small community about 100 km from Tromsø, was established in 2005 as an extension to the existing business lines of Solvyk Farm (next to farming): accommodation, farm holiday, horse riding, bike hire, restaurant. The laboratory equipment includes design tools, fabrication machinery, monitoring, testing and sensory equipment, computers

and network services, publicly accessible for free. The Fab Lab serves as an innovation hub in the local industry cluster [Gjengedal 2006], attracts schools, national and international conferences, and it serves the local farming industry, too, when they are in need of technological innovation. Most notable is the "electronic shepherd" project, electronic devices that keep track of the sheep in the Lyngen Alps by using mesh network technology [Thorstensen 2004]. While technology certainly was a crucial driver for this specific extension of Solvyk Farm, it is not its core building block. As in the first example, organizational principles (free access) lay at the core of the Fab Lab as well as the belief in the ability of people to take care of their own development. Facilities of the Fab Lab are purpose built and reflect both the needs of a high-tech lab and its cultural embedding in the Lyngen Alps. The Fab Lab offers specific methods, such as boot camps. The Fab Lab is an economic success—as one in very few it reported being self-sustaining in 2010—and it attracts according to Lassiter et al. [2011] 5000-6000 visitors a year.

6.   What is next?

In this paper, we explored the challenges innovation poses and framed the needs of users of temporary meeting spaces – especially those from the creative class. We noticed that creative class members are a group that is currently underserved by PoF particularly by hotels as the current offers of the hospitality industry for meeting places supporting creativity do not meet the needs of clients. We then reported on a three years research journey where a group of researchers and practitioners jointly developed a conceptual framework for transforming regular hotels into "Idea Hotels". We coined the term "Idea Hotel" to describe meeting places offered by hospitality businesses which provide the perfect ecology for creativity and innovation based upon a set of building blocks related to the organizational, technological, physical, human and methodological dimension of those offerings.

The building blocks are discussed based upon findings from an extensive literature review. They can now provide practitioners from the hospitality industry with a conceptual framework that might guide intentions to transform a hotel in an idea hotel. The authors assume that due to the innovation ecology, meetings would be more effective if they are conducted in an idea hotel environment than in standard, traditional environments available today in most meeting places. Idea hotel meetings are expected to lead not only to ideas but also to turn into concrete actions because they provide the conditions for openness, collaboration, contactivity between people, and for exploring challenges from multiple perspectives.

The concept of the idea hotel should be interesting to PoF as it has the potential to provide them with the right environment and services to attract a growing group of non-users, i.e. the members of the creative class. While each idea hotel implementation will be unique, there are strong differences between them and the offerings of traditional hotel meeting facilities. Traditional offerings aim to either standardize or brand single elements of meeting ecologies supportive to creativity like for example furniture, environment, food and lodging, recreational elements, facilitation, etc. The idea hotel offering is a holistic product-service-system that focuses on the outcome for the client: the experience of productive creative face-to-face meetings. The idea hotel accompanies its clients on a certain step or phase of their innovation journey – as opposed to traditional PoFs that (at best) accompany their clients for the time of their stay at a location or their use of a meeting room. The difference, hence, is not in the single elements of the offering, but the overall value proposition.

The conceptual framework presented in this paper is not to be mistaken as a model or a methodology (or even worse: a "tool") for the transformation of hotel facilities. However,

practitioners would certainly want additional "how to" guidelines: What and how to apply the framework? What to do, what to consider first? How to measure performance? How to evaluate the transformation process? There is ample research and practical experience in the field of organization studies and consultancy on the transformational aspects, yet further research is needed to verify if extant knowledge is sufficient for the practical implementation of the framework. At the moment, the project group therefore applied for funding to support the research of a transformation of a conventional hotel into an idea hotel. Other studies that work on similar cases in the hospitality industry are very much encouraged. Particularly, the needs of specific industries or professions should be studied in more detail. Furthermore, after having drawn a holistic picture of the components an idea hotel should be based upon, their interrelation should be studied into more detail. Equally, an evaluation methodology to assess the outcomes of applying the idea hotel conceptual framework in practice would need to be developed.

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