

2.30-3.05 OPEN INNOVATION ECOLOGY: CREATING A COMMONS OF CAPABILITY

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Open Schmopen....Seems that everything these days is called Open X, where X=whatever one does. The only buzz word more egregiously misused is perhaps "Innovation". So what could be more fun than juxtaposing these? Maybe the sum cancels out the silliness. But underlying the hype are some great truths and greater opportunities.

The term Open Innovation has been around for a few years and has commonly been used to describe a business model in which a firm seeks inputs to innovation from customers and indeed from any and all contributors to internalize, monetize and profit from. But this use of the term is too limiting.

At CAMBIA we use the term 'Open' as an adduct to 'Innovation' not to talk about how a *firm* profits, but how *society* benefits. The single greatest leverage point for public good in innovating - especially in science and technology-enabled innovation - is to increase the efficiency of the innovation system. One of the principal points of intervention to increase efficiency is to increase the transparency of the system - notably the patent system and its uses.

Increasing efficiency will reduce costs (financial costs, opportunity costs and transaction costs) and increase confidence. Decreasing costs will expand the demographics of problem solving and engage more people and enterprises in defining and attacking their own challenges. Thus a logical consequence of innovation system efficiency is more people solving smaller market problems effectively. In short: social equity in problem solving.

So how can we talk about Open Innovation constructively? We use Open particularly to mean 'inclusive' and 'transparent'. Anyone can play. That's REAL open. But in science and technology-enabled innovation the playing field is a minefield and not a level minefield either!

To really use science or technology to help craft solutions to the problems in society or the market invariably needs the aggregation and assembly of tens or hundreds of component pieces; discoveries, platforms, standards, technologies. And these granular components are themselves enshrined in myriad intellectual property claims and rights, especially since the public sector has started to queer the pitch with their own patent gaming strategies.

Intellectual property, and particularly the overuse of patents - has created enormous complexities in assembling a constellation of rights to solve problems as modern science has become privatized and dynamic. The patent literature is about the most opaque, clergy-ridden, ecclesiastical literature since Torquemada started the idea of billable hours. How can we turn liturgical texts into understandable and inspiring tools of decision support? How can we build an efficient innovation system in which we balance private rights with the fundamentals of social benefit and equity? I'll describe how we've built the largest, fastest and most comprehensive independent, international open platform for patent transparency called the Patent Lens, how its in its infancy and how it will mature.

I'll talk about what's happened with science and society to get us to the point in which only the big market or high margin targets get attention and resources. And how we can - without throwing out the baby - clean up the bath water and get more and better innovation for small markets, small margins and indeed for market failures.

InnoFuture 2008 KEYNOTE SYNOPSES



I'll talk about how we're approaching this with the umbrella Initiative for Open Innovation, using Web 2.0 and advanced informatics to create transparency in the patent system; using the BIOS initiative to explore means of building shared commons of capability in the life sciences on which competitive private enterprise at all scales can build with confidence. I'll talk about how we've been at the coal face of this exercise for some years, and have explored using molecular biology to build toolkits for business that are shared with all players to create what we call a Commons of Capability. Our vision is that competition for products and services must happen in a vigorous ecology, where the core tools, platforms, standards and its underpinning of foundational understanding are shared, dynamic, cooperative and secure.

In a sense we're morphing some of the best pragmatic aspects of open source software into the vastly more complex world of patent-associated science and technology-enabled innovation. We're also going way beyond this and pushing into unknown territory. I'll describe the challenges and the failures and fun, as well as the grand possibilities that are around the corner when collaboration becomes a tool for prosperity and competition resumes its place as another tool for innovation, but not an end.