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PRACTISING INNOVATION

A SOCIOMATERIAL VIEW

foreword
Evert Gummesson

preface
Jim Spohrer

afterword
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Foreword

Evert Gummesson[*]

Complexity is a keyword at the cutting edge of contemporary thinking to better understand the reality we live in. The concept attracts scholars from all sciences, be they natural, social or human. For example, many are passionately engaged in the study of self-organisation, artificial intelligence, the environment and sustainability thus breaking ground in new realms of knowledge for the twenty-first century.

Complexity issues in business and management have not yet reached the critical mass of researchers necessary for a major impact.

In this book, Tiziana Russo Spena and Cristina Mele address the complexity of *service studies* by challenging the dynamics and implications of the new interconnected social and technological phenomena. It is a valuable effort to embrace the complexity paradigm and replace the conventional positivistic and reductionistic tradition in social sciences.

The authors offer a new narrative of a journey in innovation and a new approach to describe, analyse and interpret innovation. The practice-oriented *service science* and *service dominant (S-D) logic* theories open up for novel thinking by establishing a composite vision in their "texture of socio-material

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practices". The texture framework well depicts the complexity of the social and technological connections that occur among a group of actors – individuals, collectives and organizations – and integrates different kinds of material and social resources (e.g. tools, knowledge, images, material objects, rules, value, schemas etc.) to solve problems and co-create mutual benefits.

Issues that could previously be assigned to either *human* or *non-human* dimensions and handled separately turn out to be closely interrelated in unexpected ways. Technologies alter the nature of practices by reconfiguring the contribution of human participation and how practices are reproduced or change. This implies an unprecedented degree of complexity for business and economic development. In such a complex landscape, all market actors are seen as co-creators finding ways of innovating together by effectively participating in intricate networks. The view of innovating as socio-material connections in action embraces the *high tech/high touch* relationship. The conventional idea that tech takes over is beaten by the idea that tech and human touch are interdependent. It is a both/and relationship; it's not either/or. It is one of the few both/and concepts that seems to be increasingly accepted in research. It was introduced by John Naisbitt in the book *Megatrends* in 1982 and I find it even more true today. High tech/high touch is based on the notion of balancing the material wonders of technology with the spiritual demand of the human nature.

Tiziana Russo Spena and Cristina Mele have succeded in offering an insightful view of innovating as emerging on a nonlinear pathway, through interacting actors that participate in ongoing, accidental, deliberate, and negotiated sets of practices. Their book promotes an enrichment of the innovation debate by attempting to cut through complexity in order to uncover the core of the real world.