Open Societal Innovation

The Alemannic Definition

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IBH Projekt eSociety Bodensee 2020
www.esocietybodensee2020.org

Open societal innovation (OSI) refers to the adaptation and subsequent sustainable use of appropriate open innovation approaches from business, adapted and utilized by state and society to solve societal challenges.

Particularly desirable is the creation of an innovation culture that appeals to and includes all societal actors equally, thus providing innovative potential for the community and the entire Lake Constance region.

The intention is to take up innovation impulses ("outside-in") to develop them further within society, together with politics and administration, as well as to carry innovation impulses to the outside ("inside-out"). The two approaches can also be combined ("coupled"). Modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) might accelerate these processes. As catalysts ICTs can reach relevant actors in society, bring them together, and ignite common activities. One goal is to tackle these societal challenges, through the expansion of the innovation space, at the local, regional, national and even international level in order to solve them in a common effort. Concrete starting points therefore are found in the innovation cycle of politics and in the innovation process of administration, but also in many other areas of civic life, including education, arts, culture, sports, and recreation.

The International Lake Constance region will play a pioneering role as an enabler for an open, well-understood, and citizen-oriented culture of
innovation. By targeting interested citizens the number of initiators and the
number of stimuli can increase in all areas of a connected society. This can,
lead to real innovation, balanced opinion making, and common creation and
design of ideas, concepts, offers, and events by and with citizens, businesses,
government agencies, and other relevant social groups. The existing
innovation and creativity potential and already available tools, services, offers,
and formats can equally be used for technical, organizational, political and
societal issues. Therein lies the power of open innovation through which the
vision of a modern civil society can be realized for the benefit of all. It
promotes the networking of stakeholders and contributes to the increase of
quality of life, community, and location.

Innovation is not only used for the benefit of society but also to tap the
innovative potential within society. Thus the term “Open Societal Innovation”
(OSI) should be used. Open innovation from society refers to innovation with
openness to results, and in particular to opening up innovation processes with
the absence of exclusivity. The outcome of open innovation in and for society
refers to innovation in society, politics, and economy (‘social innovation’),
which affects human living together and the improvement of quality of life and
locational conditions.

Five exemplary approaches have been identified for open innovation to
address societal challenges: the lead user method, the open innovation tool
kit, ideas and innovation platforms, special event formats, and competitions.

In business, the lead user method is intended to involve trend-leading users
in product development. Transferred to the public sector, the lead user
method focuses on the direct involvement of relevant stakeholders and
opinion-makers in solving social issues.

An open Innovation tool kit can support persons in charge in selecting from
a variety of applicable methods and applying those best suited to specific
conditions. This can comprise of brainstorming and open creation,
consultations, reviews, and feedback comments. Modern ICTs allow through
computer support many of these methods to be used, locally or globally
distributed, synchronous and asynchronous. A hybrid solution as combination
of both computer-supported and non-computerized approaches seems preferable, as an open innovation tool kit ideally comprises of the total pool of suitable methods, software and online services.

**Idea and innovation platforms** aim to address problems and open questions through the use of selected information and communication technologies within one portal. On behalf of the client, a set of interoperable tools and appropriate services are selected, such as brainstorming, documentation, feedback, discussion, or rating services. Provision and use of suitable open data is furthermore advisable. During the creative phase, the platforms are freely and easily accessible to interested users. They allow a systematical evaluation at the end of the process.

It often makes sense to link virtual ideas and innovation platforms with **real event formats** to provide the initial spark. This can include open innovation formats like creativity workshops, world cafe, open space conferences, bar camps, hack days, citizens’ councils, citizens’ panels, juries, foresight processes, future workshops, and future conferences. These events benefit from the personal, face-to-face exchange of actors. Additional effort and cost of travel and meetings can be justified by new ideas and suggestions gained from interpersonal dialogue and mutual exchange.

**Idea competitions** benefit from open questions, prices, and deadlines to encourage problem solving capability. The call for proposals, designs, concepts, and solutions motivates prospects to address a topic and search for solutions. The purpose of **implementation competitions** is to find practical applications. In the age of social media and web 2.0 technologies, programming competitions are gaining importance in that context. **Quality competitions** help to increase the quality of existing solutions and applications.

Supported by approaches and methods as illustrated above, open societal innovation can contribute to solving social challenges in the coming years. Through collaboration and the "wisdom of crowds" (‘crowdsourcing’), the value of contributions as a whole can improve. The project "eSociety Bodensee 2020" of the International University of Lake Constance
(Internationale Bodensee-Hochschule (IBH)) addresses these considerations in view of the Lake Constance region and expands the possibilities of a connected society systematically. Flagship of the project will be an **open innovation tool kit**, which will be developed in the course of the project and which can be used in future OSI scenarios. Testing these methods and tools not only supports individual innovation projects. It furthermore contributes to developing a unique regional innovation culture for the Lake Constance region by acquainting relevant stakeholders with innovation techniques and organizational forms. It is important to reflect that innovation is not a programmatic guideline but a process developed through the interaction of people and ideas in the Lake Constance area. Therefore, "eSociety Bodensee 2020" supports the objectives of the International Lake Constance Conference (Internationale Bodensee Konferenz (IBK)), as set out in its mission statement in 2008.

**Literature**


**Internationale Bodensee Konferenz:** Leitbild der Internationalen Bodensee Konferenz (IBK) für den Bodenseeraum, Konstanz 2008.