

## Jury Member Report – Doctor of Philosophy thesis.

**Name of Candidate:** Anja Tekic

**PhD Program:** Engineering Systems

**Title of Thesis:** Contextualized intellectual property management in co-creation: a configuration approach to strategy development

**Supervisor:** Prof. Kelvin Willoughby

**Chair of PhD defense Jury:** Prof. Clement Fortin

**Email:** C.Fortin@skoltech.ru

**Date of Thesis Defense:** 24 September 2019

**Name of the Reviewer:** Prof. Maurizio Sobrero

I confirm the absence of any conflict of interest

**Signature:**



25/8/19

**Date: DD-MM-YYYY**

*The purpose of this report is to obtain an independent review from the members of PhD defense Jury before the thesis defense. The members of PhD defense Jury are asked to submit signed copy of the report at least 30 days prior the thesis defense. The Reviewers are asked to bring a copy of the completed report to the thesis defense and to discuss the contents of each report with each other before the thesis defense.*

*If the reviewers have any queries about the thesis which they wish to raise in advance, please contact the Chair of the Jury.*

### Reviewer's Report

Reviewers report should contain the following items:

- Brief evaluation of the thesis quality and overall structure of the dissertation.

Overall the thesis shows an excellent command of the current literature on open innovation, a distinctive and original choice of the problem to be analyzed and a sufficient engagement in its empirical analysis. It is written in a very clear manner, although at times there are some repetitions and not all parts are equally developed. With some of the chapter already published in journal of medium reputation it also shows the interest for the topics covered and the capacity of the candidate to venture in the publication journey. Overall it is of sufficient quality to grant the admission to the thesis-defence, although it still suffers from different limitations. Given the amount of data collected and the knowledge of the relevant literature, however, it shows that the candidate has a significant material to be further exploited to develop one or possibly two articles targeted to the top journals in the field.

- The relevance of the topic of dissertation work to its actual content

The thesis addresses a problem that is both theoretically and managerially relevant: how should companies approach IP management when engaging in co-creation processes. The distinction of whether these interactions occur on or off-line adds another dimension of analysis which is quite relevant to both discriminate different interaction spaces, and to fully consider the set of available alternatives. Its further disentangling of multiple dimensions associated with the deployment of an IP strategy is also a timely effort to recognize the multifaced nature of such decision-making processes. On a managerial level the candidate, in this current version, does not fully exploit all the potential of the data collected, as the examples are scant and not fully developed. While the propositions developed offer a clear and simple guidance, a more thorough description of some of the projects examined might provide a richer opportunity for understanding the nuances and guide future practical choices. Indeed, a proper presentation of this type of data which seems to be available although not discussed, could form a solid base for a publication targeting more practice oriented top journals such as Harvard Business Review or Sloan Management Review.

The main limitation of the dissertation is the unfulfillment of its initial promises to offer a conceptual and methodological contribution to the literature on contingency theory and on configurational approaches. I must confess that I was really intrigued by this claim made in the first pages of the dissertation. And yet, aside from the articulation of different dimensions characterizing an IP strategy, the rest of the conceptual and empirical part does not do much else. Contingency models are always fully anchored to the relationships which link the nature of the problem faced, the organizational solution envisioned and the outcome obtained. These three main building blocks might be enriched with additional considerations on the nature of the context and the extent to which it should be considered as exogenous or endogenous. Similarly, the level at which the organizational solutions could be specified might vary and be linked to more general organizational-level variables to more micro task-partitioning ones. While most of contingency approaches focus on the property of the best solution possible given the task and the context, configurational approaches recognize that such solutions might just be ideal and focus more on identifying alternative mixes of the design choices, associating their deviation from the best with the final outcome. This leads to justify the survival of multiple alternatives and the existence of variance in the organizational designs chosen, challenging the one-size-fits-all strategy. The theoretical part of the thesis, however, does not consider in any way the task domain, focuses on only one organizational macro design choice (make it or buy it) and makes it interact with the on-line vs. off-line choice, and then digs deeply in more micro organizational design choices associated with the structure of the IP agreement among the partners. At best, we are missing a big element, the task. At worst, we are also missing other relevant organizational design choices (e.g. who manages these interactions, who makes the relevant decisions etc. etc.). As it stands the thesis offers a contribution in sorting out the need for conceptual clarity with respect to the co-creation concept and a rich empirical analysis isolating IP management alternatives to be applied in on-line and off-line contexts. This is still too far, however, to be claimed as a contribution to the contingency and the configurational literature.

- The relevance of the methods used in the dissertation

I must confess that I am not familiar with the method used. I will read before our meeting the original pieces, I hope, to try to get a better understanding. Whatever the math behind the QCA, however, it seems a rather complicated way to try to parse the information available and to create robust clusters. I wonder if other approaches were tried as well and how the results might differ. For example, in one of the articles cited when referring to configurational approaches (Drazin and Van de Ven, 1985), the authors used principal component analysis to derive ideal types and then calculate multiple dimension Euclidean distances to assess the position of the specific cases examined and use these results to

analyze their performance implications. Other examples could be found in the special issue of the Academy of Management Journal (volume 6 of 1993) some articles of which are also present in the thesis references. The major concern that I have and for which I have included some notes in the manuscript for the candidate to consider in her preparation for the defense, is the treatment of the variance, or lack of variance, especially when certain data are considered in the full sample (project performance) but then the analysis is conducted on a subset of the data. In more than one occasion, although all numbers ends up converging, it is not easy to grasp the logical sense and its practical implications. And in any case, as I mentioned in my previous comment, there is no treatment of the task related conditions of the different project examined nor of possible conditions related to company specific policies which could explain ex ante the use of the solutions observed not as a specific choice for a given project and context, but rather as the application of a general level organizational standard.

- The scientific significance of the results obtained and their compliance with the international level and current state of the art

With the aim of further improving the work done to achieve a significant publication on a top journal in the field I would recommend to consider several research design issue. First, at present the thesis lack a proper treatment of validity and reliability issues and the extent to which the choices made in the data collection process might be relevant or not in strengthening or weakening the results along these lines. Several details are not properly spelled out and a reader is left with more doubts than necessary. For example, for the preliminary empirical analysis there is no indication of the sources where the material was collected, why those and not others, exactly what kind of information was collected, the extent to which this might under/over represent the phenomenon of interest, the level of variance not only among companies, but more interestingly within companies. Similarly, in the main empirical study it looks as if all the information used was retrieved thanks to the intermediation of HYVE, but there is no discussion on their role, the extent to which they were responsible or not for the choices observed, how they helped their clients, if and how they participated in the interaction, if and how certain practices changed in the time span observed, if and how it is possible again to analyze within company differences. My impression is that all this information is available, together with more data which could be usefully included in the analysis to take into proper consideration task related aspects.

- The relevance of the obtained results to applications (if applicable)

As it stands the thesis offers to IP professionals working in different companies an interesting descriptive analysis of what happens within co-creation projects in rather diversified set. This certainly offers learning opportunities and might be further enriched with a deeper description of the different projects analyzed as I said above. The final propositions sound still too prescriptive, given the potential improvements in the overall analysis, but offer some preliminary guidance.

- The quality of publications

It is always hard to define a quality of a publication without reading it. I did not have the time to download the papers cited by the candidate. Looking only at the journals where they were published and using the most recent (2018) Academic Journal Guide released by the Chartered Association of Business Schools which is used in several institutions either alone or in combination with other lists (e.g. the French CNRS list, the Italian Anvur list etc.) they all fall in class 2 out of 4, excluding top level ones labeled as 4\*. While the rest of the material presented in the thesis and not published yet might find an opportunity in journals of a similar class, I think there is room to be more ambitious, given the topic and the amount of data not used, provided that more effort is given to overcome the current weaknesses briefly sketched above.

**Provisional Recommendation**

*I recommend that the candidate should defend the thesis by means of a formal thesis defense*

*I recommend that the candidate should defend the thesis by means of a formal thesis defense only after appropriate changes would be introduced in candidate's thesis according to the recommendations of the present report*

*The thesis is not acceptable and I recommend that the candidate be exempt from the formal thesis defense*

