

Christiane Rau, Anne-Katrin Neyer, Agnes Schipanski,
Fiona Schweitzer*

A long way home: How an intra-organizational innovation network overcomes its political boundaries**

This article focuses on the still understudied link among political boundaries and innovation practices and its inherent boundary-crossing mechanisms in intra-organizational innovation networks. Our single case study at the sports company adidas derives two particular combinations of boundaries and boundary-crossing mechanisms to overcome political boundaries in intra-organizational innovation networks. These are the ‘open-closed (minded) boundaries’ and ‘everybody-is-an-innovator boundaries’. They have been addressed with distinct innovation practices that comprise the boundary-crossing mechanisms ‘reframe interests’ and ‘negotiate interests’. We find that these boundary-crossing mechanisms to be crucial in the process of managing the intra-organizational innovation network. Our findings have implications for the organizational anchoring of innovation practices given its importance as enabler or barrier to overcome political boundaries in intra-organizational innovation networks.

Key words: **political boundaries, intra-organizational innovation networks, innovation practices, knowledge exchange, innovation management, boundary management, organizational practices**
(JEL: O30, O31, D83, M10)

* Christiane Rau (corresponding author), Centre of Innovation and Product Management, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, Wels, Austria.
E-mail: christiane.rau@fh-wels.at.

Anne-Katrin Neyer, Chair of Human Resources Management and Business Governance, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle/Saale, Germany. E-mail: anne-katrin.neyer@wiwi.uni-halle.de.

Agnes Schipanski, Media Management, SRH Hochschule der populären Künste (hdpk), Berlin, Germany. E-mail: a.schipanski@hdpk.de.

Fiona Schweitzer, Centre of Innovation and Product Management, University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria, Wels, Austria. E-mail: fiona.schweitzer@fh-wels.at.

** This paper builds on the dissertation project of the first author and an earlier conference paper that has heavily profited from feedback from the respective audience.

Article received: July 7, 2014

Revised version accepted after double blind review: August 3, 2016.