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ESADE Creapolis
ESADE Business School
Barcelona, Spain
www.esadecreapolis.com

August 2012
AACSB International
ESADE Creapolis

In 2005, Barcelona’s ESADE Business School founded ESADE Creapolis – the first international business innovation park to practice “Open Innovation.” In building and designing Creapolis, meticulous attention was given to creating a park whose design, structure, and available amenities would come together to create the ideal environment for fostering innovation among its residents. As Dean Alfons Sauquet explains, an “element of circumstance and opportunity to meet faculty interests and the school’s strategic plan” was behind the implementation of Creapolis. From the start, ESADE faculty, administration, and the Director-General at the time strongly advocated for the initiative, which would follow the school’s strategic mission of supporting innovation in business.

Mission of Creapolis

The mission of Creapolis is to “speed up innovation by providing space (both physical and knowledge) to stimulate interaction between the business school, the business world, and other knowledge and innovation networks in order to detect new market opportunities, and drive their successful development and marketing.” Innovation is viewed as an attitude rather than a set of processes, adds Sauquet. Creapolis does not follow the typical technological value-added process, nor can it be characterized as being an incubator. According to ESADE, Open & Cross Innovation is “a collaborative work, exchanging knowledge and experience across sectors in order to accelerate innovation.” Sauquet emphasizes that the park’s main focus lies on this concept and centers on the activities taking place outside organizational bounds, bringing them inside the organization, and analyzing how they can be useful to the organization.

By encouraging optimal representation from various sectors, the philosophy behind Creapolis is that it will enhance the lateral innovation processes of a company through the guidance of ESADE experts and the collaboration and cohabitation between participants. Creapolis firmly supports the belief that “No organization should believe that the best ideas and most successful products/services that they are going to bring to market are produced alone and solely from within their own organization. A company will have to work and collaborate with the best, whether they are inside or outside of the organization.”

Becoming Involved

Companies apply to become residents at Creapolis, and upon acceptance pay a fee to “rent” a space in the park. Companies can choose to rent an iOffice or Business Center Commercial Space Suite. While the iOffices are larger and more customized spaces, both include access to common areas designed to encourage “Open & Cross Innovation.” Such areas include:
- Coffee Brain Corners
- Open & Cross Innovation Labs
- Focus Group Rooms
- Meeting Rooms
- Open Offices
- Perimeter Terraces
- Green Areas

Included in the rent are services such as training programs and seminars on aspects of business creation and entrepreneurship, as well as "care and first diagnosis of new projects" (start up, spin off, entrepreneurship). Residents pay to "live" in the Creapolis ecosystem and participate in various events and meetings at the business park, where they are presented with opportunities to interact with ESADE faculty and academics and other residents. Residents also have access to an international network of entrepreneurs and business schools through ESADE Business School, as well as through the Innovation Club of ESADE Alumni. The flat rate for residency is currently under discussion, with either moving to a sliding scale based on levels of access and participation, or establishing a differential cost based on the company's stage of development, being considered as resident rent options. Sauquet adds that companies remain with the park on average two to four years; however some of the original residents are still at Creapolis. The resident fees in combination with other funds from ESADE are used to subsidize the park.

The application process for residents is run by the management team of the business park, which is comprised of non-faculty members serving various functions at Creapolis. The management team is guided by the Board of Creapolis and oversees the effectiveness of arrangements and makes changes where necessary. The Board comprises the Program Director of Creapolis along with faculty who are involved with innovation activities at ESADE. The Board members meet bi-monthly to discuss the activities and outputs at the park, as well as search for areas in and outside ESADE that Creapolis can be involved in. ESADE faculty play an important role at Creapolis, and the business school maintains a proactive role in encouraging faculty to share their innovation interests, become involved with projects and related research, and act as a resource for the park's staff and residents. For instance, residents can enquire about access to information and documentation about innovation and resources from the ESADE Business School library, or have their company be the subject of a case study prepared by ESADE Business School and its partner universities.
The Ecosystem

The sharing of formal and informal environments through coexistence with other residents, as well as faculty and other experts, is central to the Creapolis’s mission to promote effective collaboration, and as a result, lateral innovation among these groups. Sauquet shares an anecdote in which a designer asked where the coffee machines would be located in a facility he was building, considering that these locations would inevitably be where the most interaction among staff would take place, and would require special attention in designing and constructing. Intentionally designing and including these types of ‘hot spots’ for resident interaction is one of the main aspects and goals behind the design of Creapolis.

The amenities and facilities within the business park are strategically designed with the motto, “Accelerate your innovation, take advantage of opportunities, orientate your business to the market, increase your profitability,” in mind. The business park’s design and construction was led by two teams of individuals. One team focused on the academic needs, while the other strived to create an infrastructure with multi-functional spaces that would also encourage frequent interaction among residents. The aim is to foster a “loose” atmosphere allowing easy access to the park’s amenities and co-residents. Each detail of the design was heavily discussed and analyzed among the teams. For example, initially the park was envisioned to be a completely open space with no walls, but the idea was dismissed after much debate. Sauquet explains that the park’s infrastructure is still a work in progress and is continuously open to modifications and new innovations in order to fit the needs of its residents.

Looking Ahead

Creapolis was born as a relatively local initiative, however throughout the years has gained more international interest and is attracting more international residents – currently over 40 countries are represented by the resident companies. At ESADE 85 percent of programs are delivered in English, and Sauquet adds that there are plans to expand the business school’s activities and programs to Creapolis. Although internship opportunities at Creapolis are available to MBA students, Sauquet and staff aim to enhance this practice by making more linked connections between Creapolis and the MBA program. MBA students have expressed enthusiasm for more hands-on opportunities for their own entrepreneurial ambitions with the various innovation activities taking place at Creapolis, says Sauquet. So far, companies who reside in the park have shown to be less eager in working more directly with students, but Sauquet believes the value in such collaboration will inevitably be realized. For instance, the CEO of Peugeot wanted to look into the use of electrical cars, and utilized students from the business school as well as those from technology fields to aid in the research and exploration of this issue, finding the experience to be a valuable one.
Much of the success that residents of Creapolis gain from their involvement with the park comes from their own commitment to being open in exchanging and sharing ideas with other residents. The philosophy behind Creapolis, as well as the support of Creapolis staff and ESADE faculty and administration helps create an open environment in which residents feel comfortable reaching out to their neighbors to share and discuss plans, ideas, and problems that their companies might be facing. Sauquet praises the Creapolis's strong commitment to the practice of Open Innovation, which “allows residents to find solutions two doors down,” to be the main driver for the success and the unique-factor of the park.

Acknowledgements: AACSB International is grateful for the assistance of Alfons Sauquet Rovira, Dean of ESADE Business School.
End Notes