
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Jérémy Legardeur is an Assistant Professor of the Engineering School of Advanced Industrial Technologies (ESTIA) and in the Laboratory IMS of the Bordeaux University in France. He graduated as Mechanical Engineer from the Montpellier University in 1997 and completed his PhD from the INPG (Institut National Polytechnique de Grenoble) in 2001. His research interest is focused on the methods and tools to foster creativity and ideas lifecycle management in early design phases of innovative product. His work is based both on an observation/participation of industrial design situation and the development of new software tools to foster interaction and collaboration among design participants in concurrent engineering. He has published more than 70 papers in international journals, conferences and books.

This special issue titled ‘Towards new challenges for entrepreneurship and innovation management’ is based on the selection of the best contributions to the first ERIMA Symposium. This conference was held in March 2007 in the ESTIA Engineering Institute located at Biarritz France.

The global objective of ERIMA (European Research on Innovation and Management) is to constitute a ‘network of European excellence’ in the field of innovation and industrial management (I&IM). ERIMA is currently formed by highly-qualified European universities and research centres from different countries in Europe. The aim of this network is to promote new theories, methods and techniques in I&IM issues.

The ERIMA07 conference had gathered researchers, business leaders of both SMEs and large companies, public sector representatives and practitioners focused on innovation management. The objective of the conference was to provide an inspiring background and stimulus for a focused, target-oriented discussion regarding the new concepts in collaborative working environment, systematic innovation and their respective management and support ICT tools and technologies.

This special issue is composed of nine papers that propose new concepts in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation management.

The first paper titled ‘Innovation in cross-national alliance ecosystems’ written by N.S. Levinson highlights the roles of ecosystems and entrepreneurship to foster innovation in the context of cross-national alliance management. Based upon emerging research and field interviews with alliance leaders in USA organisations in four sectors, particular attention is paid to the professionalisation and institutionalisation of an alliance management capability and to a focus on ‘ecosystems’ as a unit of analysis and operation.

In the paper titled 'A resource-based view on entrepreneurship and innovation', P. Shum and G. Lin develop an empirical model that identifies critical entrepreneurial resources and capabilities, spanning from opportunity recognition to organising these resources and creating heterogeneous outputs that result in superior firm performance. This model integrates and supports previous corporate entrepreneurship theories and frameworks. The results also provide empirical evidence to support the resource-based view and the dynamic capabilities approach.

In the field of innovation and entrepreneurship, incubators are organisations that support the creation of new innovative ventures. The paper 'Management of university incubators in China and in France: a comparative analysis' of M. Matt and M. Tang compares the management of university incubators in China and France and provides some insights into the way university incubators should be managed to enable the creation of successful start-ups. By analysing the contexts for their emergence in both countries, the authors assess the similarities and differences between the two systems and provide some explanation for performance differences.

Instability of economic, social and political environments in innovation context requires reconsidering the organisation of work. Employees are supposed to move in between several companies and functions, in brief to develop their own adaptability. This phenomenon concerns the main socio-professional groups such as young, seniors, low qualified people and executives. In their paper 'About the transferability of behavioural skills', M. Saumonneau, I. Franchisteguy-Couloume and V. Lartigue focus on people with 'low levels of qualifications' and study the transferability of knowledge focussing on the behavioural skills.

The research carried out in practical applications uses the reference model established in the BE3P research project, a specific collaboration experience in the field of innovation management between a university (Mondragon Unibertsitatea), a technology centre (Ikerlan) and five industrial companies (Ulma Packaging, Orkli, Geyser Gastech, Fagor Ederlan and MCC Componentes).

In their paper 'A framework for applying innovation concepts in collaborative R&D projects', I. Zugasti, J.M. Goenaga and L. Berasategi present a framework that uses the reference model of a research project to apply key innovation concepts to the exploitation phase of collaboration projects (e.g., European projects). Thus, the main objective of this framework is to facilitate this reflection to establish areas for market opportunities, business models, selected strategic business plans and a new project development plan. This framework can be used especially when technology and research results have to be exploited on emerging or unstable markets (e.g., telemedicine and welfare). The authors propose tools and results to build a bridge between R&D collaboration projects and entrepreneurs.

Outsourcing the implementation of several management systems is one specific strategy for SMEs (small and medium enterprises). In their paper 'Innovation in the organisation of management systems in Portuguese SMEs', D.A. Coelho and J.C.O. Matias present examples of two forms of outsourcing and the selection criteria inherent to this decision process are discussed based on the results of a survey of Portuguese companies.

There is notably a lack of tools to support decisions to explore effects on performance related to new product introductions, changes in production equipment, changes in planning concepts and their cross sections. In their paper 'Balancing environmental and economic performance in the food-processing industry', R. Akkerman and D.P. van

Donk present a scenario-based simulation approach to study the relationship between product design and process design in the food industry.

Learning processes are crucial for innovation. In their paper 'A conceptual and computational approach to support learning and education in wide organisations', F. Sartori, S. Bandini, F. Petraglia and J. Svensson investigate how case-based reasoning and storytelling can be integrated to build computational system to support the training of newcomers in wide organisations, according to learning by doing strategy. This paper illustrates a conceptual and computational framework exploiting the case based reasoning paradigm, where the problem to solve in the learning by doing context is modelled as a story.

Globalisation is also a new challenge for European SME's; indeed, on the one hand it represents a threat, since new emerging companies are entering their domestic market, but, on the other hand, it represents the opportunity to enter new emerging and growing markets. G. Perrone, L. Scarpulla and L. Cuccia report the results of an ongoing research project aiming at improving the networking capacity of SMEs through an innovative conception of the business ecosystem idea. Their paper titled 'Developing business networking opportunities for SMEs through business ecosystem and ICT' shows how the innovative networking business ecosystem has been conceived and how it works for pursuing this aim.