
Introduction

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Innovation and entrepreneurship are described as going hand in hand and are likened to two sides of the same coin (Soriano and Huarnig, 2013). Innovation is described as an instrumental tool of entrepreneurship (Drucker, 1985) while entrepreneurship is defined as the process of identifying, evaluating and implementing business opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). Together, this duo is widely recognised as key drivers of productivity and economic growth (Bibbee, 2012; OECD, 2009). Boosting innovation is increasingly important for firms seeking to thrive in global competitive markets. Strategies to foster entrepreneurship to revamp traditional firms or to support the creation of start-ups are pervasive in developed and developing economies (Isenberg, 2010).

However, innovation and entrepreneurship do not happen in isolation; a set of agents in the [eco] system of innovation tends to be present, and the development of specific incentives for and actual interactions between those agents also need to take place (Edquist, 1997; Isenberg, 2010; Lundvall, 1992; Nelson, 1993). Thus, as Bibbee (2012) states, innovation is most likely to flourish under sound structural conditions that favour the operation of entrepreneurial firms, education systems that support the creation and continuous development of human resources, a set of policies that promote and support innovation and innovation capacity building within firms, and encourage linkages between academia and industry; the functioning of strong financial systems; and observance of intellectual property rights (IPR) regimes.

The aim of this special issue is two-fold. On the one hand, through a series of empirical papers we intend to stimulate discussion on the drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship at the business and the [eco] system level. On the other hand, the papers in this volume draw attention and provide evidence on the contribution of entrepreneurship and innovation to enhance economic and social growth. In line with recent debates in the literature, the papers illustrate the pertinence of looking at entrepreneurship and innovation from a broad perspective; indeed, economic and technological aspects are at least as important as social and distributive considerations (Santiago, 2014). In effect, issues around social innovation and social entrepreneurship feature prominently in some of the contributions to this special issue. The combination of papers from developed and developing countries should help the reader to draw some insights about the perceived importance of innovation and entrepreneurship in a variety of contextual and cultural settings; as well as cases where the agents involved feature different levels of competencies to address the issues at hand. We believe that the mix of qualitative, quantitative and theoretical approaches to the analysis makes a robust contribution to the current body of literature on entrepreneurship and innovation.

Since the seminal work of Lundvall (1992), a well-established line of research has emphasised the importance of interactivity for innovation; in effect, collaborative and interactive learning play central roles in innovation and entrepreneurship. Identifying new collaboration schemes where different agents such as government, higher education institutions, private organisations, NGOs and individuals engage to foster entrepreneurship and innovation remains relevant for our understanding of the dynamics of innovation and entrepreneurial activities. Collaborations can build on novel technologies, methodologies and business models. For example, the role of large companies in the development of entrepreneurial firms is not just in creating spinoffs (Bahrami and Evans, 1995), nor in spawning employees who go on to create their own firms (Saxenian, 2006). The roles between corporations and entrepreneurial firms are multi-directional in that corporations can facilitate opportunities for entrepreneurs that would otherwise be too costly for the younger firm, yet simultaneously benefit the large

company's R&D and innovation efforts by being potential acquirers of the entrepreneurial firm.

Against this background, the first paper of this special issue 'A behavioural game theory perspective on the collaboration between innovative and entrepreneurial firms' by Bandera and Thomas, emphasises the importance of collaboration between small and larger firms, and argues that the success of small young innovative firms often depends on whether they can establish a stable long-term cooperative relationship with larger entrepreneurial firms. Those relationships often assist in the commercialisation of inventions within the window of opportunity present in the market. This paper applies behavioural game theory, as well as Coasean bargaining notions to characterise the key factors that facilitate or prevent the formation of such an asymmetric alliance to commercialise a technological innovation. This paper emphasises the need to cooperate during the commercialisation process. However, to overcome the 'valley of death' this process requires that both firms devote sufficient financial support, and devote complementary efforts to reach the technological and commercial milestones. These findings have several implications for strategic interactions in technology clusters, business incubators, or business networks. These findings also have implications for policy makers to help innovative firms reach more efficient equilibriums and help them cross the 'valley of death'.

The literature on social innovation highlights the need to improve our understating of how communities identify opportunities and build capacities to drive change and adapt and thrive even in the face of harsh developmental conditions. Westley (2008) defines social innovation as "a complex process of introducing new products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows, or beliefs of the social system in which the innovation occurs". Thus, understanding the conditions that promote social innovation remains of key importance across different settings (Cozzens and Sutz, 2014). The second paper in this special issue written by Annika Voltan 'Scaling impact from grassroots social innovation: a conceptual network-based model' contributes to the discussion on social innovation by building a conceptual integrative framework for scaling social innovation. The framework developed in this paper depicts three main elements which are important for affecting system-level change and increasing organisational resiliency: individual leadership and entrepreneurial characteristics (agency), shared values and informal knowledge-sharing (social capital and organisational learning), and formalised collaboration between individuals and groups that do not typically work together (collaboration). The author uses the framework to analyse the case of community supported agriculture in Nova Scotia to assess its potential as a scalable social innovation. The study offers a good theoretical discussion and provides empirical evidence on the factors needed for scaling social innovation.

From another agricultural setting, José Luis Sampedro-Hernández and Alexandre O. Vera-Cruz study learning and social entrepreneurship supported by a government program. The authors of the third paper in this special issue 'Learning and entrepreneurship in the agricultural sector: building social entrepreneurial capabilities in young farmers' describe the Mexican agricultural sector and analyse the impact that public programs have to advance technological and entrepreneurial capabilities (EC) of young farmers. The authors describe the agriculture sector in Mexico as characterised by the presence of a large number of small farmers with seasonal lands, and low levels of

technological capabilities. One of the main problems they identified is the inability of poorly educated farmers to absorb and retain knowledge-building efforts aimed at improving their capabilities and performance. Public programs of institutional intermediaries such as the Produce Foundation are playing a key role to develop technological and productive capabilities in the agriculture sector. This paper makes an important contribution to identify learning mechanisms intended to develop EC in young farmers, which are required to foster economic behaviour and rural communities.

Entrepreneurial leadership is considered a key feature with respect to the identification of strategies to overcome barriers to innovation and entrepreneurship especially for companies moving through the stages of their life cycle, and crossing thresholds from one style of operation to another (Zahra et al., 2009). The fourth paper in this special issue 'Developing entrepreneurial leadership: the challenge for sustainable organisations' by David Rae builds on four case studies in Canada and the UK that showcase the role of entrepreneurial leadership relative to the development of sustainable, growth-oriented and innovating organisations. The paper analyses the challenges that organisations aiming for sustainability face regarding generating long-term entrepreneurial leadership, developing an entrepreneurial culture, and facilitating people into leadership roles to bring continuing innovation, development and growth. The author develops a model to analyse sustainable entrepreneurial leadership using strategic direction, culture, community, and entrepreneurial innovation. The paper contributes to the discussion of the role of the leader's principles and ethical values, community involvement, opportunity scanning, and social innovation to build sustainable community organisations. This study has important implications for educational institutions and the roles they play in preparing people for leadership that drive sustainable organisations.

Developed and developing economies face different challenges when fostering innovation and entrepreneurship at the firm level and within the [eco] system around firms. Just as important as identifying the main drivers of entrepreneurship and innovation, it is to recognise the role of the context and communities. The body of literature on these topics has grown significantly in the last decades. Understanding the drivers for venture creation has also been recognised as a necessary input for the promotion of economic growth and social development and remains at the core of theoretical and empirical discussions. In this regard, the fifth paper in this special issue 'Entrepreneurial capabilities and innovation in firms from late industrialising countries: a case study of a Mexican firm' written by Arturo Torres and Javier Jasso focuses on a firm from the medical devices sector in Mexico, and studies the role of EC in the process of innovation of firms from late industrialising countries. The study characterises the emergence and growth of a Mexican firm with regard to the complexity and configuration of EC, and analyses the process of acquisition of technological and organisational capabilities required for the design and production of medical care devices. The authors develop a three phase model for the analysis of EC. This study emphasises that EC evolve and become collective capabilities internalised in firm's routines that contribute to the development of technological and organisational capabilities.

The different articles included in this special issue illustrate some frontier topics in the broad fields of innovation and entrepreneurship. The variety of topics and approaches should offer insights that suit the interest of business leaders and policy makers seeking inputs to their decision-making regarding strategies and experiences relating to entrepreneurship and innovation. Our expectation is to also provide some useful knowledge to individuals and community organisations that, through continuous

engagement with entrepreneurs and innovators, seek to boost contributions to economic growth and social wellbeing.

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