

Creativity and Innovation Management

Special Issue – Call for papers

Exploring the unknowns of Open Innovation

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One of the most promising perspectives proposed in the extant literature interprets Open Innovation (OI) as a process (West and Bogers, 2013; Ollila and Elmquist, 2011). This perspective has great potential for both theory and practice as it provides both academics as well as managers/professionals with tangible guidance to understand and set up Open Innovation (Tavakoli et al., 2017). The adoption of a process perspective, while entailing a thorough understanding of the activities and phases involved in an OI process, suggests two avenues of investigation (reflected by the two dimensions of Table 1): the boundaries of the unit of analysis and the direction of the flow of technological knowledge exchanged in the OI process.

Looking at the boundaries of the unit of analysis, the adoption of a process perspective for interpreting the OI phenomenon implies multiple levels of analysis *per se* (Du et al., 2014; Chesbrough and Bogers, 2014; Bogers et al., 2017; Järvi et al., 2018). The process can be researched at the project, the firm, and at the inter-organizational level. Specifically, the project level of analysis entails focusing on the activities and phases involved in single innovation projects, some of which are opened to external partners. The firm level of analysis requires enlarging the boundaries of the analysis to the inter-process relationships between a set of OI projects a firm has. At the inter-organizational level of analysis, the heed is on the activities executed by different firms that open their innovation funnel; this way, the unit of analysis conglomerates the different firms/actors involved in an OI project.

With respect to the flow of technological knowledge, three key processes can be distinguished (Enkel et al., 2009; Gassmann and Enkel, 2004): the inbound process, which consists of accessing the technical/scientific knowledge and competence from external sources to integrate them internally; the outbound process, which involves looking for partners with a business model better suited to commercialize a technology (Chiaroni et al., 2011; Aloini et al., 2020); and the coupled process, in which the two processes coexist by means of partnerships, collaborations, alliances, joint ventures, or other forms of interorganizational collaboration (Gassmann and Enkel, 2004).

So far, extant academic research has predominantly settled on inbound innovation (Chesbrough and Bogers, 2014) at the firm level (Ollila and Yström A., 2016; Du et al., 2014), as shown by the blue cell in Table 1. The outbound/coupled processes, as well as the project/inter-organizational units of analysis are a lot less understood, so still remaining largely unknown.

		Knowledge flow		
		Inbound	Coupled	Outbound
Unit of analysis	Project			
	Firm			
	Inter-organizational			

Table 1: What is (un)known in the OI literature

The objective of this special issue is to investigate specifically the outbound/coupled processes and the interfaces among OI at the different levels, i.e. how firms can ensure coherence among OI choices, organization and management at the project – firm – inter-organizational level. In addition, this special issue aims at understanding the role played by digital technologies as enablers for generating and distributing technological knowledge (Trabucchi et al. 2018; Ooms et al., 2015). Integration of digital technologies in OI processes has been one of the main motives for recent change in organizations (Barlatier et al., 2020). Thus, it is important to expand our understanding of the value related to the implementation and organization of digital technologies for firms to be able to better manage their boundaries.

This special issue aims to advance the scientific debate with new and in-depth knowledge on these two dimensions. Furthermore, we aim at providing practitioners with robust guidance by understanding the key variables at play as well as their relationships in outbound/coupled OI at different levels of the firm. We hope to get a better understanding of the main contextual variables that have a role in explaining specific decisions in terms of types of partners and phases to be opened in outbound or coupled OI projects and the outcomes these decisions imply. From a managerial point of view, deeper knowledge is needed for making OI decisions in settings that are up to now scarcely investigated in the literature. Managers should be provided with guidance on what phases of the innovation funnel to open in a coupled OI project, or what variables impact the commercialization of a technology along its Technology Readiness Levels (TRL).

Building on these premises, and specifically on the necessity to investigate the unknown aspects and settings of outbound/coupled OI at project, firm and/or interorganizational level, this special issue welcomes empirically-based studies that develop both a strong theoretical and a compelling managerial contribution on the following topics, including but not limited to:

- Enablers of, and barriers to, open innovation.
- Factors explaining the success and failure of open innovation.
- The effects of external (e.g. market, technological and competitive context) and internal (e.g. strategy and firm size) aspects on open innovation .
- Legal (e.g. Intellectual Property Rights) aspects of open innovation.
- The role of digital technologies in open innovation.
- The implications of open innovation in terms of possible outcomes, such as, for example, innovation and business performance, organizational learning and innovation capability.
- The management and organization of a firm's portfolio of open innovation projects.
- The effects of interorganizational configuration (e.g. innovation ecosystem, strategic alliance, ...) on open innovation.

Submission

Deadlines (latest)

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First round of reviews: May, 30th 2021

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Guidelines

All submissions should follow the author guidelines for CIM as published on the Journal website (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/14678691>). For any further information, please visit the Journal website or contact the Special Issue guest editor

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