

**Special issue on:
“Leveraging open innovation to improve society:
past achievements and future trajectories”**

GUEST EDITORS

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Many innovative organisations strive for the achievement of societal goals such as the eradication of diseases, the reduction of carbon emissions, or the achievement of more sustainable products and services (Bornmann, 2013). Hence, organizations need to understand whether their current approaches toward innovation may contribute to achieve these ends, and ultimately to improve society.

Open innovation (OI) practices, i.e. the development of innovation via the purposeful leveraging of inflows and outflows of knowledge (Chesbrough, 2003), may help in this regard. For example, the available anecdotal evidence points at how OI practices can be employed to achieve societal impact by firms interested in improving their sustainability strategy (e.g. Jones et al. 2013). Furthermore, authors have shown that academics are under ever more pressure to both increase their OI approach (the interaction with industry to develop and commercialise their research outputs (Alexander et al., 2015)) and, at the same time, to demonstrate the societal impact of their research (Bornmann, 2013). Others have shown how enterprises such as *Emergency*, with a clear societal agenda, adopt OI approaches (Chesbrough et al. 2014). Finally, in order to involve citizens in administration, European and many governments have exploited OI approaches: *Living Lab* networks, smart city projects, and wiki-based legislation can be such examples (EC, 2015; Leminen et al., 2012; Hilgers and Piller, 2011). All this notwithstanding, very few efforts have been directed at linking OI to societal impact (Chesbrough et al. 2014). This special issue aims to fill this gap.

What should your paper cover?

We propose to advance the state of the art in research on OI and societal impact in at least three interrelated directions. First, we believe that it is time to develop an appropriate measurement system for societal impact, in particular within the OI context. Second, more research should look at the mechanisms by which OI contributes to societal goals. Third, more evidence is needed on which OI approaches are more effective to foster societal impact. Suggested contributions to the special issue topic include, but are not limited, to the following:

- 1) *How can OI's societal impact be evaluated?* The impact of OI is typically measured on the basis of economic parameters (e.g. in firms (Lamberti et al., 2015, Zhao et al., 2015), and in academic contexts (Perkmann et al., 2013)), neither of which, however, suffice to evaluate OI in terms of its broader societal impact. The development of a measurement system is a stepping-stone towards the appreciation of whether societal impacts can be achieved (by OI or other means). In fact, we still do not know much about the nature, the characteristics, and idiosyncrasies of societal impact. Some science and public policy studies have addressed the determinants of societal impact, mostly rooting it into universities' characteristics and public research (Bornmann, 2013), whereas a handful of other studies of societal impact mostly refer to approaches developed by practitioners (Ebrahim et al., 2014). A clear view has not yet been reached. Therefore, how should we measure societal impact? How can cross-fertilizations between OI research, and science and public policy studies help in better understanding the determinants and consequences of societal impact? As part of this effort, some research should address whether, and how, societal impact is linked to other forms of impact, such as economic or social ones.

- 2) *How do OI practices deliver societal impact?* Innovation can be considered as a means to achieve societal goals, such as improve public health, reduce the challenges for the aging population, and reduce poverty. Some examples (e.g. *Living Labs* www.openlivinglabs.eu) have pointed to the potential of OI approaches to achieve societal gains. However, these examples have yet to be studied, to explain the dynamics and mechanisms by which societal goals can be reached via OI. One hypothesis (Murray et al., 2010), is that the achievement of societal goals is underpinned by technical innovations, which, in turn, lead to important social changes or “social innovation” and thus to the meeting of societal goals (Chesbrough et al., 2014). So, how does the social innovation underpinning OI methods (e.g. the changing of the dynamics of how innovation is developed and used) link to and deliver societal impact? How do sociology, economics, and management disciplines and theories, as well as their interactions, help in this regard?
- 3) *What empirical and conceptual evidence exists that OI effectively leads to societal impact?* As we develop our understanding of this issue, it would be important to start determining the potential and effectiveness of OI practices for achieving societal benefits, and to start developing and testing theories in this respect. For instance, is the societal impact originated by OI activities in public research contexts similar/dissimilar to the one gained from OI that is led by private firms/research centres? Is societal impact achieved more easily through OI practices than with other means? Which OI practices work best in this sense?

Submission Procedure

The deadline for submissions is **31st December 2016** and the special issue is intended for publication in 2018. Papers to be considered for this special issue should be submitted online via <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/rndm> (selecting ‘Special Issue Paper’ as the Manuscript Type). Please direct questions about the submission process, or any administrative matter, to the Managing Editor at RADMedoffice@wiley.com.

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