M@n@gement

CALL FOR PAPERS

Delivering Sustainability through Ecosystem Innovation

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The generalization of open innovation and the associated plasticity of organizational boundaries, the increasing importance of alliances, networks, platforms, crowds, social media, the mobility of highly-skilled talents, as well as the ever-expanding role of technology and innovation in shaping and reshaping our organizational lives (Augier & Teece, 2008; Du et al., 2014; Barlatier et al., 2023), all point to the emergence of a hyper-connected world, begging for a better understanding of the *problem-driven* work that takes place at the intersection of firms and *ecosystems* – rather than its

individual components – as the unit of analysis (Davis & Marquis, 2005). As such, adopting an *ecosystem* view (Jacobides et al., 2018) contributes to finding new (cross-disciplinary, cross-boundary) opportunities and solving grand challenges (George et al., 2016).

At the same time, sustainability concerns have never been so pronounced. Practitioners, communities, environmental activists, all cry for attention and solutions to a green(er) and more sustainable world – in other words, an ecologically centered (or "ecocentric") inter-organizational relations and internal management activities (Shrivastava, 1995), or the "sustaincentrism" (Gladwin et al., 1995). This concern intersects with the social dimension of corporate responsibility, pointing to the need to ensure a just transition where the social and the environmental issues are reconciled. Tackling such challenges requires a shift in our level of analysis from a focus on the firm and its collaborations to that of ecosystems and their ability to deliver innovations in a more sustainably way (Davis & Marquis, 2005).

In view of the sustainability challenges that organizations and our society are facing, we need more research to understand better how innovation ecosystems can deliver on environmental and social sustainability. Against this backdrop, we devote this special issue to the important topic of *delivering sustainability through ecosystem innovation* and solicit original contributions to address relevant issues. We welcome a variety of research methods, theories, and concepts. We are not only interested in research on individuals, organizations, crowds and communities that are *creating and developing* innovation ecosystems, but also that are *influenced by* innovation ecosystems and modern technologies. More specifically, we appreciate submissions on – but not limited to – the following topics:

1. New Ways of Organizing in Sustainable Innovation Ecosystems

The ever expanding and porous organizational boundaries, the increasing inter- and multi- disciplinary collaborations, the intricate connections across organizations, industries, and nations, fueled by accelerated technological advancements have jointly brought ample opportunities for new organizational modes. Existing research has introduced a few new – or untraditional – ways of organizing, for example, meta-organizations (Ahrne & Brunsson 2005; Valente & Oliver, 2018); "open team production" (Berti & Pitelis, 2022); "crowdsourcing" (Lykourentzou et al., 2021) or "transnational commons" (Ansari et al., 2013). We are particularly interested in novel, unconventional, or potentially disrupting or enriching organizational modes that will lead to better sustainable performance, that are transforming our ways of working and our organizational lives, that are going to cast a profound impact on our social/natural environment and societies. We call for original submissions which introduce, for example:

- New way(s) of organizing in sustainable innovation ecosystems, esp. those that are empowered or influenced by technology advancements
- New way(s) of working in sustainable innovation ecosystems

- New collaboration, competition, or co-opetition mode(s). How do individuals and organizations collaborate and coordinate to achieve sustainable ecosystem results?
- What impact do the modern technologies have on collaboration, coordination, and competition within and between innovation ecosystems for sustainability?

2. The Emergence of Sustainable Innovation Ecosystems

Innovation ecosystems do not come into existence as given, rather, they emerge through complex processes – they are triggered and resisted, strategized and configured, shaped and reshaped by multiple actors through iterative stages of development. Actors in innovation ecosystems include – but are not limited to – individuals, organizations, communities, and crowds. How do innovation ecosystems emerge? Existing studies touched upon a collection of, yet rather scattered processes, factors or contexts, and there is ample room for further explorations. For example, studying firms' response to the complexities of sustainability in sub-Saharan Africa, Valente & Oliver (2018) documented the formation process of one organizational type – the meta-organizations. Building on and further extending this work, Saniossian et al. (2022) investigate the process that underlies the creation of multi-stakeholder meta-organizations and show that their creation process is based on the coordination, negotiation, and actualization of the practices of meta-organization members. Ansari et al. (2013) show that the emergence of an overarching, hybrid logic at the field level initially started from the frame changes at the actor-level. Kapoor & Agarwal (2017) show that the evolutionary features of the ecosystem are instrumental in sustaining the superior performance of platform firms. How do these features impact sustainability outcomes at a societal, ecosystem or firm level? Potential research topics on the emergence of innovation ecosystems for sustainability include:

- The process of innovation ecosystem emergence in a particular field or a few adjacent or distant fields
- The mechanisms, success, driving forces and enabling factors for innovation ecosystem emergence
- The influence of technologies (e.g., AI or generative AI) on innovation ecosystem emergence
- The role played and strategies adopted by employees, managers, activists, the government, the community, the crowd, and/or the society
- The resistances, challenges and difficulties in such processes

3. Business Model Innovation, Disruption and the Emergence of New Ecosystems for Sustainability

Where does it all start? There is a strong connection between the emergence of new ecosystems and the initial disruption of existing ecosystems. Disruption can have various origins that include new technologies but also business model innovation. Such disruption in the area of sustainability includes new circular models, the emergence of impact investment or the increasing interest for social

enterprises. Adopting a pragmatist lens, Demil, Lecocq and Warnier (2018) argue that business models and ecosystems are not static but co-evolve. Ecosystems constrain the business models, but also offer new opportunities for the business models through mutual interactions. Eklund & Kapoor (2019) uncover the challenges that incumbents face as they pursue the new model in tandem with the existing dominant model and help explain why some incumbents may successfully navigate the changing industry landscape while others may stumble. Viewing strategy from a broader perspective, Priem et al. (2013) offer an expanded boundary model that includes the demand side, business models, and business ecosystems within the strategy research "umbrella." Studying novel business models, Leppänen et al. (2023) propose that novelty alone is insufficient for high performance, and the authors show how novelty combines effectively with other value drivers and strategies contingent on the intensity of competition, firm size, and firms' technological environment. More research is needed connecting the triggering factors of ecosystem innovation and how they can lead to delivering on sustainability. Topics of interest include:

- What are the new sustainable business models that have emerged thanks to technology advancement and/or ecosystem innovation?
- How to successfully evolve or upgrade the existing business models to catch the wave of sustainability?
- How to develop new business models for sustainability?

4. Sustainable Innovation Ecosystems Structure and Governance

Ecosystem orchestration and governance is another topic which promises great research potential, especially considering the sheer scale, volume, and diversity of actors and relationships embedded in ecosystems. In particular, the design, structure and governance of innovation ecosystems deserve particular attention, because of their uncertainty, dynamism, and (oftentimes) unpredictability. Wareham et al. (2014) study the underlying mechanics and appropriate governance for technology ecosystem governance, highlighting the importance of analysis at the ecosystem level. Employing contingency theory, Theodoraki (2020) explores incubators' strategic fit for differentiation within the entrepreneurial support ecosystem, and the various combinations of individual and collective strategies that they use. What are the specific features of ecosystem's structure and governance that are most likely to deliver for sustainability? In particular:

- The optimal structure for sustainable innovation ecosystems
- The underlying mechanism and preferred governance model for sustainable innovation ecosystems
- Strategic leadership for sustainable innovation ecosystems
- Strategic decision making for sustainable innovation ecosystems

5. Capabilities and Requirements of Sustainable Innovation Ecosystems

The rapid development of technologies and the hyper connection among organizations, industries and nations have also posted new requirements and call for new capabilities for both individuals and organizations. Deken et al. (2018) study how managers establish resource complementarity during their strategizing efforts for interorganizational collaboration. Fan & Zietsma (2017) researching how actors embedded in disparate logics across multiple fields can overcome the constraints of their home logics to construct a new, shared governance logic together; how would such shared logic emerge in the pursuit of sustainability? Future research could explore, for example:

- The new requirements posted to individuals and/or organizations brought by innovation ecosystem
- The new capabilities needed by individuals and/or organizations to take part in innovative ecosystems for sustainability

6. Integrating Stakeholders in Sustainable Innovation Ecosystems

Sustainable innovation ecosystems are shaped by, and reacting to, a variety of stakeholders (Koenig, 2012), even sometimes gathered in communities (Ruiz & Gandia, 2023). There is an ever-expanding list of both internal and external stakeholders that may affect the success or failure of ecosystems. For example, activists increasingly seek to influence organizations that also espouse support for social movement goals, encouraging the use of collaborative tactics, which are referred to as "embedded activism" (Schifeling & Soderstrom, 2022). Studying the value creation-appropriation dilemma in alliances among competing firms, Chiambaretto et al. (2020) developed a formal model capturing the level of cooperation, the profit of each firm, as well as the respective endowments dedicated to the coopetitive project, and show their optimal level to maximize the profit of each partner. We solicit novel contributions on the following topics:

- The new stakeholders that emerge in innovation ecosystems and the roles they play in relation to sustainability
- The changing role of existing stakeholders or stakeholder groups in innovation ecosystems for sustainability
- Strategies and tactics to engage key stakeholders for developing sustainable innovation ecosystems
- The constraints or enablers in the changing environment for sustainable innovation ecosystems, and how to harness them

7. Legitimacy and Interpretation in Sustainable Innovation Ecosystems

New ecosystems often operate as bridges between existing actors, industries and ecosystems. Gaining legitimacy is essential for the survival of any venture, however, it is even more crucial in the

area of sustainability where alignment between different types of legitimacy shouldn't be taken for granted. We know for instance that sustainability can be accepted as a morally legitimate strategy while being judged as practically irrelevant at an operational level – a hiatus well known for leading to decoupling (Egels-Zanén, 2014). Because new ecosystems operate at the frontier between well-established fields, legitimization is key to their success. This might mean that they need to make sure there is a common understanding, a common base of premises taken for granted that can trigger collaboration. Institutional translation is a useful capability in that context. Claus et al. (2021) developed a process model of high-distance institutional translation that shows how proponents can strategically introduce an idea across highly different contexts by "culturally detaching" it from its institutional origins and played a key role in its subsequent rejection. We would welcome proposals that focus on:

- As a new player, how to gain and achieve legitimacy in sustainable innovation ecosystems?
- As an incumbent, how to protect legitimacy when challenged by ecosystem innovation?
- What are the ethical concerns for individuals and organizations involved in ecosystem innovation for sustainability?
- What are the ethical challenges brought by modern technological advancements to individuals, organizations, and the fields, and how to organize for, and respond to, these challenges?

8. Conceptual and Methodological Advancement

Innovation ecosystems, propelled by the rapid development of AI and Generative AI, and under scrutiny by constant sustainability concerns have brought many opportunities but also challenges to the traditional ways of conceptualization and methodology in management and organization.

- *Conceptual advancement*

To advance the current theories and to align theory with the contemporary realities, contributions proposing and theorizing novel concepts are welcome. For example, prior research has explored the concept of ecological sustainability and applied it to organizations by utilizing a systems framework and multiple levels of analysis at the individual, organizational, political-economic, social-cultural, and ecological environment levels (Starik & Rands, 1995). Hart (1995) proposed a natural-resource-based view of the firm based on the firm's relationship to the natural environment. Papers could also demonstrate the usefulness of an existing theory to the new contexts, outline its boundary conditions, or extend it to adapt to new situations. For example, Jennings & Zandbergen (1995) extend institutional theory by offering hypotheses in four different areas and offer possible modifications to institutional theory that are suggested by the extension to a new area of study.

- The introduction of new concepts or conceptual advancement thanks to innovation ecosystems and modern technologies
- The testing of current theories to align with contemporary realities

- *Methodological advancement*

New context also brings ample opportunities for methodological development. For example, catering to the growing research interests on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Peloza (2009) proposed a measurement for measuring the impacts of Corporate Social Performance (CSP) investment on financial performance; Lewis & Harvey (2001) developed and tested a Perceived Environmental Uncertainty (PEU) measurement scale for the natural environment. The methodology could be quantitative measures, but it could be qualitative as well. For example, building on the recent criticisms that mainstream political corporate social responsibility has failed to effectively address the potential expansion of corporate influence in society, Caulfield & Lynn (2024) introduced a new conceptualization "federated corporate social responsibility" (FCSR). Concerned with the deteriorating environment and the pivotal roles that businesses have to play, Walker et al. (2010) introduced methodology to engage small firm owner-managers in "green" production, in particular adoption of energy saving and waste recycling practices.

- The introduction of new quantitative or qualitative methods that would help to address new topics in sustainable innovation ecosystems or modern technologies

Manuscript Submission Information

About the Journal

M@n@gement is the first open access journal in management, strategy and organization theory. This well-ranked, double-blind peer-reviewed journal has been publishing original research articles improving our understanding of organizational phenomena for more than 20 years.

Submission Guidelines

- All manuscripts should be submitted through the *M@n@gement* Online Submission System, please select the appropriate Special Issue in the "Journal Section" dropdown list
- Submissions must fully follow the Author Guidelines for *M@n@gement*

Questions regarding all aspects of this special issue may be addressed directly to the corresponding guest editor Jingshu Du (jingshu.du@devinci.fr) or Emmanuel Josserand (emmanuel.josserand@devinci.fr).

Important Dates

- Extended Abstracts or full paper for consideration for the PDW (Paper Development Workshop): July 1, 2024. For the Workshop: please send your submission to jingshu.du@devinci.fr with subject title: [M@n@gement Special Issue] + Title of the paper

- Paper Development Workshop (PDW) with manuscript proposals (in person) + Conference on Innovation Ecosystem: Thursday Sept 12, 2024, Paris
- Full manuscript due: November 1, 2024
  (Participation into the PDW is not compulsory and authors can submit a full manuscript directly)
- First round review decision to authors: December 15, 2024
- Publication (Expected): December 2025

The guest editors will manage the editorial and review process of the *M@n@gement* Special Issue submissions. All papers will be subject to the standard referee process of *M@n@gement* and will undergo a final review by the Editorial Board after conditional acceptance by the guest editors.

Submissions must be original, unpublished works that are not concurrently under review for publication elsewhere. All submissions should conform to the *M@n@gement* manuscript submission guidelines.

Extended Abstracts for the PDW should be 5 - 8 pages (double spaced, including references) and should contain:

(1) an abstract

(1) a clear description of the research aim/question and its importance

(2a) the theoretical/conceptual framing for conceptual papers, a description of the logic of the paper and the expected contribution

(2b) for empirical papers, a short review of the literature, data collection strategy/feasibility, methods, expected results and contributions.

- Abstracts should be submitted directly through the *M@n@gement* Online Submission System, please select the appropriate Special Issue at the "Manuscript Type" stage

Specific instructions on how to submit full papers to the special issue will be provided to the authors of abstracts selected for the Paper Development Workshop (PDW).

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