Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat
Review of Entrepreneurship

Call for papers

Towards an Ecosystem Approach of Corporate Entrepreneurship and Start-up–Incumbent Relationships

Guest Editors

Florence Law
Université Paris-Saclay
florence.law@universite-paris-saclay.fr

Hela Chebbi
ESG UQAM
chebbi.hela@uqam.ca

Abdoulkarim Idi Cheffou
ISG International Business School
abdoulkarim.idicheffou@isg.fr

Frédérique Blondel
Université Paris-Saclay
frederique.blondel@universite-paris-saclay.fr

Julie Hermans
UCLouvain
julie.hermans@uclouvain.be

Corporate entrepreneurship is commonly defined as "the process whereby an individual or a group of individuals, in association with an existing organization, create a new organization or instigate renewal or innovation within that organization" (Sharma and Chrisman, 1999, p. 18). It encompasses bottom-up initiatives that are developed within organizations (Pinchot, 1985) to innovate using the firm's resources (Robinson, 2001; Kraus et al., 2019), to renew organizations (Kraus et al., 2019) or to create a new business within the existing company ("corporate venturing") (Hornsby et al., 2009). Corporate entrepreneurship also involves the way established firms and organizations, hereafter incumbents, interact with start-ups to benefit from their entrepreneurial spirit and thinking (Klammer et al., 2023) and to access relevant flows of knowledge as a basis for innovation (Audretsch and Fiedler, 2023). Thus, corporate entrepreneurship appears as a multidimensional phenomenon (Antoncic and Hisrich, 2003; Kraus et al., 2019) based on the adoption of entrepreneurial attitudes, intentions, and behaviors within and between organizations (Bouchard and Fayolle, 2011).

Many researchers (Basso, 2006; Zahra, 1996; Ireland et al., 2009) have underlined the importance for incumbents to have a corporate entrepreneurship strategy for competitiveness and innovation purposes. Among a growing body of literature developing knowledge on corporate entrepreneurship (Urbano et al., 2022), scholars have focused on the factors underlying the emergence of entrepreneurial initiatives within organizations (Kuratko et al., 1990; Carrier, 1994), on the corporate entrepreneurship process (Bartoli and Ewango-Chatelet, 2016; Burgelman, 1983; Hornsby et al., 1993), or on the profile of intrapreneurs/corporate entrepreneurs (Allali, 2005; Hatchuel et al., 2009). Moreover, they have also shown that the implementation of a corporate entrepreneurship strategy depends on an environment that enables risk taking and challenges the status quo (Chebbi et al., 2020). Hence the importance of an organizational context characterized by management support, recognition, autonomy, and tolerance for failure (Brinette et al., 2024; Hornsby et al. 1993; Urbano et al., 2022).

This internal context, despite its importance, may not provide sufficient support for corporate entrepreneurs leading them to mobilize an external network to access additional resources and information. In fact, intrapreneurs, often considered as innovation champions, steer their projects by drawing on both the company's existing and external resources. Partnerships with external actors such as suppliers, start-ups, customers or universities can offer intrapreneurs valuable resources to develop and accelerate their innovative projects (Rigtering and Behrens, 2021).

All these players build an ecosystem that could be a lever for implementing corporate entrepreneurship strategy, offering intrapreneurs unique opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and knowledge acquisition. The ecosystem as a concept is derived from biology and describes how a simple ecological element of the environment and the organisms that live within can co-evolve in a positive relationship (Theodoraki, Dana and Caputo, 2022). It has been used in different disciplines and approaches, including the configurations approaches (Spigel, 2017), network approach (Fernandes and Ferreira, 2021; Neumeyer and Santos, 2018); system approaches (Stam and van de Ven, 2021), process-based approaches (Spigel and Harrison, 2018), institutional approaches (Cloitre et al., 2022) and multi-level approaches (Theodoraki and Messeghem, 2017).

Several types of ecosystems and sub-ecosystems have been studied in the literature. The business ecosystem focuses on how companies can co-evolve their capabilities around a new innovation and collaborate across industry boundaries (Jacobides et al. 2018; Moore, 1993). The innovation ecosystem differs from the business ecosystem as the center of attention is "…the collaborative arrangements through which firms combine their individual offerings into a coherent, customer-facing solution" (Adner, 2006, p. 2). The entrepreneurial ecosystem concentrates on the creation of economic growth by promoting entrepreneurship on different geographical levels (Cobben et al. 2022; Isenberg, 2011) and by mobilizing actors like incubators, start-ups and institutions (Neumeyer et al., 2019; Theodoraki and Messeghem, 2017). For the knowledge ecosystem (Messeghem et al., 2023), the interest is on knowledge interactions between actors, in particular, academic networks and universities (Prokop, 2021) that are closely located to create and develop new knowledge.

Despite a growing interest and its large use in entrepreneurship research, the ecosystem approach remains for the moment absent from research related to incumbents and corporate entrepreneurship. Indeed, scholars have mostly focused on the external interactions of these companies. Dealing with open innovation context, Gutmann, Chochoiek, and Chesbrough (2023) point out that companies running open innovation projects face two major challenges like managing change internally and relationships externally and that corporate venture capital units (CVCs) accelerate innovation by bridging the gap between internal and external knowledge. Lô and Theodoraki (2021) have also analyzed external interactions in the context of Nested Entrepreneurial Ecosystem and ambidexterity. From a corporate entrepreneurship perspective, the importance of the institutional network in obtaining external resources and mentoring has been highlighted (Soltanifar et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023; Chebbi et Laviolette, 2023).

This external approach of ecosystems should be completed with an internal one as corporate entrepreneurship refers both to the adoption of practices and systems within incumbents, and to the extraction of new entities beyond incumbents' boundaries (Blondel and Loubaresse, 2023). In fact, incumbents can use various means and levers to develop their innovation capability such as the creation of Internal Corporate Accelerators (Selig et al., 2018) or the introduction of innovation trophies (Brinette et al., 2024). Moreover, Ferrary (2013) puts forward the idea that the challenge for these companies is to build their own ecosystem ("an intrapreneurial ecosystem") as a space for socialization and exchange between innovation players. Likewise, Klammer et al. (2023) explores, from the point of view of incumbents, how learning and unlearning mechanisms are unfolding when employees collaborate with start-ups. Thus, studying innovation from a corporate entrepreneurship viewpoint prompts scholars to explore new directions for research including internal and external interactions with ecosystems.

This is especially important considering the increasing pressures that incumbents face, stemming from environmental and economic crises. As already suggested by Hockerts and Wüstenhagen (2010), incumbents and new entrants have different, albeit complementary, roles to play for bringing new sustainable innovation to the market. Yet, by collaborating, they can accelerate the transition to more sustainable ecosystems (Klofsten et al, 2024). In the context of the circular economy, for instance, such relationships between incumbents and start-ups are about developing mechanisms by which circularity can be embedded in the extant ecosystems through the flow of relevant knowledge and values (Audretsch and Fiedler, 2023). As suggested by Theodoraki et al. (2023), these interactions are crucial because they provide a channel for the spillover of knowledge, learning, and capacities from one ecosystem element to another. Thus, by taking an ecosystem approach on corporate entrepreneurship and incumbent-start-up relationships, scholars can contribute to a better understanding of the transition towards more resilient and sustainable production systems.

Based on the entrepreneurial ecosystem research (Theodoraki et al., 2023), different perspectives could be adopted to apprehend the connections between corporate entrepreneurship and ecosystems. First, a structural perspective would help understanding the structure and configurations of the ecosystems mobilized by large companies to develop innovative projects, notably when collaborating with other external stakeholders such as start-ups. Second, an interaction perspective could also be considered to analyze the dynamics between the different players that build ecosystems that are more resilient in the face of economic and environmental crises. We also invite scholars to consider the evolution perspective of this ecosystem approach to analyze the development of the ecosystem configuration mobilized by companies and how it evolves over time. Finally, research could also take into account the context in which corporate entrepreneurship actions occur such as the territory, the size of the company (SME, large corporation) or its governance (family business, public/private organizations, etc.).

All these perspectives are very important and can provide a comprehensive understanding of the ecosystem configuration, functioning and impact on the corporate entrepreneurship strategy implementation. The aim of this call is to address these different issues by mobilizing an ecosystem approach to better understand corporate entrepreneurship and innovation within incumbents.

Therefore, our proposal for this special issue of Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat/Review of Entrepreneurship aims to fill this gap in the literature by opening up corporate entrepreneurship and innovation research to the ecosystem concept. Interested scholars are invited to submit their conceptual/theoretical or empirical contributions. We welcome work that mobilizes original approaches from a variety of disciplines. All research methods (systematic reviews, case studies, quantitative studies, meta-analyses, etc.) are welcome.

Some of the topics that may be addressed in this special issue include, but are not limited to:

- Interactions between incumbents and start-ups within ecosystems
- Intrapreneurs, innovation and ecosystems
- Open innovation and corporate entrepreneurship
- Circular economy and corporate entrepreneurship
- Internal ecosystems and corporate entrepreneurship
- External ecosystems and corporate entrepreneurship
- Interactions between internal and external ecosystems and innovation
- Learning within ecosystems for incumbents and start-ups
- Ambidexterity, corporate entrepreneurship and ecosystems
- Corporate Venture Capital (CVC) and corporate entrepreneurship
- Corporate entrepreneurship, corporate venturing and spinoffs
- Corporate entrepreneurship and the evolution of the ecosystems
- Crowdfunding and the financing of corporate entrepreneurship
- Towards the emergence of the corporate entrepreneurship ecosystem?

Submission process and timetable

Authors are invited to submit full papers to the journal through the **dedicated online platform** by **December 15th, 2024.** Full papers should be written in English following **the guidelines for journal.**

The special issue publication, following peer review, is planned for **Spring 2026**.

Contact

To meet the editorial team and other prospective authors, join us for a "pitch my article" session in May 2024. Attendance is optional and does not guarantee publication.

Pitch session date: May 28, 2024 16h00 CEST (Paris time zone)
Send Surname, Name, Institution, Title of the proposal and summary.
To Florence Law: florence.law@universite-paris-saclay.fr
Participation deadline: May 26, 2024.

If you have any other questions about the special issue, please email the editorial team and include all five guest editors as recipients.

References

Adner, R. (2006). Match your innovation strategy to your innovation ecosystem. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(4), 98–107.

Allali, B. (2005). Pour une typologie des comportements organisationnels face à l'innovation. *Gestion*, *29*(4), 23-30.

Antoncic, B., & Hisrich, R. D (2003). Clarifying the intrapreneurship concept. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *10*(1), 7–24.

Audretsch, D. B., & Fiedler, A. (2023). Bringing the knowledge spillover theory of entrepreneurship to circular economies: Knowledge and values in entrepreneurial ecosystems. International Small Business Journal, 0(0).

https://doi.org/10.1177/02662426231218357

Bartoli, A., & Ewango-Chatelet, A. (2016). Quels processus de déploiement des initiatives innovantes dans les organisations éducatives complexes? *Gestion et management public*. 5 / n° 1. 25.

Basso, O. (2006). Peut-on manager les intrapreneurs ? *Revue française de gestion*, 9, 225–242.

Blondel, F., & Loubaresse, E. (2023). « Questionner la fabrique de l'intrapreneuriat », *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat/ Review of Entrepreneurship*, 22 (3), 97-103.

Bouchard, V., & Fayolle, A. (2011). Comment mettre en œuvre l'intrapreneuriat ? *Gestion*. 36. 11.

Brinette, S., Idi Cheffou, A., & Tossan, V. (2024) Management Support and Learning from Innovation Trophies: Insights from a Large French Energy Company, *Journal of Engineering and Technology Management*, 71, 101794.

Burgelman, R. A. (1983). Corporate entrepreneurship and strategic management: Insights from a process study. *Management science*, *29*(12), 1349–1364.

Carrier, C. (1994). Intrapreneurship in large firms and SMEs: a comparative study. International *Small Business Journal*, *12*(3), 54–61.

Chebbi, H., Yahiaoui, D., Sellami, M., Papasolomou, I., & Melanthiou, Y. (2020). Focusing on internal stakeholders to enable the implementation of organizational change towards corporate entrepreneurship: A case study from France. *Journal of Business Research*, vol. 119, 209–217.

Chebbi. H., & Laviolette., E-M. (2023), Mentorat intrapreneurial et pérennité des entreprises familiales : le cas d'initiative intrapreneuriale au Québec, AEI, Strasbourg, 28–30 juin.

Cloitre, A., Dos Santos Paulino, V., & Theodoraki, C. (2022). The quadruple/quintuple helix model in entrepreneurial ecosystems: an institutional perspective on the space case study. *R&D Management. 561-730.*

Cobben, D, Ooms, W, Roijakkers, N, & Radziwon, A. (2022). Ecosystem types: A systematic review on boundaries and goals. *Journal of Business Research*. 142. 138–164.

Fernandes, A. J., & Ferreira, J. J. (2021). Entrepreneurial ecosystems and networks: A literature review and research agenda. *Review of Managerial Science*. 189–247.

Ferrary, M. (2013). Écosystème intrapreneurial et innovation. Le cas Google. *Revue Française de Gestion*, 2013/4 (N° 233), 107–122.

Gutmann, T & Chochoiek, C, & Chesbrough, H. (2023). Extending Open Innovation: Orchestrating Knowledge Flows from Corporate Venture Capital Investments. *California Management Review*. 65 (2).

Hatchuel, A., Garel, G., Le Masson, P., & Weil, B. (2009). L'intrapreneuriat, compétence ou symptôme? *Revue Française de Gestion*, (5), 159–174.

Hockerts, K., & Wüstenhagen, R. (2010). Greening Goliaths versus emerging Davids—Theorizing about the role of incumbents and new entrants in sustainable entrepreneurship. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 25(5), 481–492.

Hornsby, J. S., Kuratko, D. F., Shepherd, D. A., & Bott, J. P. (2009). Managers' corporate entrepreneurial actions: Examining perception and position. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *24*(3), 236–247.

Hornsby, J. S., Naffziger, D. W., Kuratko, D. F., & Montagno, R. V. (1993). An interactive model of the corporate entrepreneurship process. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *17*(2), 29–37.

Ireland, R. D., Covin, J. G., & Kuratko, D. F. (2009). Conceptualizing corporate entrepreneurship strategy.*Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 33(1), 19–46.

Isenberg, D. (2011). The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Strategy as a New Paradigm for Economic Policy: Principles for Cultivating Entrepreneurship. *The Babson Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Project, Babson Global*.

Jacobides, M, Cennamo, C., & Gawer, A. (2018). Towards a Theory of Ecosystems. *Strategic Management Journal*. 39 (8), 2255–2276.

Klammer, A., Hora, W., & Kailer, N. (2023). Opposites attract: How incumbents learn and unlearn in coopetitive relationships with start-ups. *Industrial Marketing Management*, vol. 112, 85–97.

Klofsten, M., Kanda, W., Bienkowska, D., Bocken, N., Mian, S., & Lamine, W. (2024). Start-ups within entrepreneurial ecosystems: Transition towards circular economy. International Small Business Journal, 0(0).

Kraus, S., Breier, M., Jones, P., & Hughes, M. (2019). Individual entrepreneurial orientation and intrapreneurship in the public sector. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, vol. 15 (4), 1247–1268.

Kuratko, D. F., Montagno, R. V., & Hornsby, J. S. (1990). Developing an entrepreneurial assessment instrument for an effective corporate entrepreneurial environment. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol.11 (SP ISS), 49–58.

Lô, A., & Theodoraki, C. (2021). Achieving Interorganizational Ambidexterity Through a Nested Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. *IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT*, VOL. 68, NO. 2, 418–429.

Messeghem, K., Theodoraki, C., & Carayannis, E. (2023). Pour une modélisation de l'écosystème entrepreneurial sous forme de sous-écosystèmes : Apport de l'approche des systèmes complexes adaptatifs, *Management international*, 27. 93-104.

Moore, J. (1993). Predators and Prey: A New Ecology of Competition. Harvard business review. 71. 75–86.

Neumeyer, X., & Santos, S. C. (2018). Sustainable business models, venture typologies, and entrepreneurial ecosystems: A social network perspective. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 172, 4565–4579.

Neumeyer, X., Santos, S. C., Caetano, A., & Kalbfleisch, P. (2019). Entrepreneurship ecosystems and women entrepreneurs: A social capital and network approach. *Small Business Economics*, 53(2), 475–489.

Pinchot, J. (1985). *Intrapreneuring*, Harper and Row. New York.

Prokop, D. (2021). University entrepreneurial ecosystems and spinoff companies: Configurations, developments and outcomes. *Technovation*, 107, 102286.

Rigtering, J., & Behrens, M. (2021). The Effect of Corporate — Start-Up Collaborations on Corporate Entrepreneurship. *Review of Managerial Science*. 15. 10. 2427–2464.

Robinson, M. (2001). The ten commandments of intrapreneurs. *New Zealand Management*, 48(11), 95–98.

Selig, CJ., & Baltes, GH. (2019). Towards an effective management of corporate entrepreneurship activities, IEEE International Conference on Engineering.

Sharma, P., & Chrisman, J.J. (1999), Towards a Reconciliation of the Definitional Issues in the Field of Corporate Entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 24: 11–27.

Soltanifar, M., Hughes, M., O'Connor, G., Covin, J., & Roijakkers, N., (2023). Unlocking the potential of non-managerial employees in corporate entrepreneurship: a systematic review and research agenda. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 29, 206–240.

Spigel, B., & Harrison, R. (2018). Toward a process theory of entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journa*l, 12(1), 151–168.

Spigel, B. (2017). The relational organization of entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 41(1), 49–72.

Stam, E., & Van de Ven, A. (2021). Entrepreneurial ecosystem elements. *Small Business Economics*, 56(2), 809–832.

Theodoraki, C. (2021). Écosystème entrepreneurial académique: vers l'élaboration d'une stratégie écosystémique efficace. *Revue Internationale PME*, 34(3), 16–36.

Theodoraki, C., Audretsch, D. B., & Chabaud, D. (2023). Advances in entrepreneurial ecosystem and places: time, space and context. *Revue de l'Entrepreneuriat / Review of Entrepreneurship*, Hors-Série (HS2), 11–25.

Theodoraki, C, Dana, L.-P., & Caputo A. (2022), Building sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystems: A holistic approach, *Journal of Business Research,* 140, 346–360.

Theodoraki, C., & Messeghem, K. (2017). Exploring the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the field of entrepreneurial support: a multi-level approach. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 31(1), 47–66.

Urbano, D., Turro, A., Wright, M., & Zahra, S. (2022). Corporate entrepreneurship: a systematic literature review and future research agenda. *Small Business Economics*, *59*(4), 1541–1565.

Zahra, S. A. (1996). Governance, ownership, and corporate entrepreneurship: The moderating impact of industry technological opportunities. *Academy of Management Journal*, *39*(6), 1713–1735.

Zhou. F., Li. X., Han. C., Zhang. L, & Gupta. B. (2023). Unpacking the effect of institutional support on international corporate entrepreneurship in entrepreneurial support systems, *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 19:1101–1130.