2025 Main HDR Scholarship Round (Management PhD Research Topic)

Entrepreneurship, innovation, and the emergence of collective enterprise: Shaping ecosystems around local conditions

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Summary

Australian state governments have attempted to emulate the success of Silicon Valley by developing innovation hubs across the country. The primary objective was to build an innovation ecosystem—a collective enterprise where firms, local government, community, entrepreneurs, and educational institutes collaborate to foster innovation. Despite huge investments, these initiatives have not yet met expectations. Global indices reveal that while Australia invests heavily in innovation inputs (ranking between 11th—16th), it lags in innovation outputs (31st—33rd). The significant disparity prompts a reassessment of how best to support the creation of a desired innovation ecosystem.

Project

The Global Innovation Index (GII), the world's leading measurement of innovation across more than 80 indicators, shows that while many countries (including Australia) invest heavily into elements that foster innovation, their innovation output does not match these inputs. Consequently, there is mounting pressure on policymakers and businesses to close the gap. Notably, the success of Silicon Valley stems from its robust innovation ecosystem in which entrepreneurs embrace experimentalism, risk, and failure. There is no doubt that each economy has its own advantages and unique strengths, that if harnessed effectively, can create the required entrepreneurial culture. This would also require modification in the institutional factors that foster local entrepreneurship. This research project explores how institutions, governments, and businesses can use local entrepreneurial strengths and advantages to support the emergence of the desired innovation ecosystem.

Given the breadth that you can take with this project, the investigation aims to address, but is not limited to, answering any of the following research questions:

1) **Leveraging local strengths:** How can business hubs (or innovation districts) leverage local entrepreneurial strength and build ecosystems around local conditions? How to develop resilient innovation districts and clusters that can embrace experimentalism, entrepreneurial risk, and failure.
2) **Localization and globalization:** What strategies can innovation districts employ to leverage global networks as well as their unique local advantages and strengths? How do globalization trends affect the development and competitiveness of innovation districts?
3) **Cross-sector collaboration:** How can innovation districts facilitate effective collaboration among different sectors, including industry, government, universities, and

the non-profit sector? What models/frameworks can support cross-sector partnerships and knowledge exchange?

4) **Equity and inclusion:** How can innovation districts ensure that the benefits of innovation and entrepreneurship are equitably distributed across diverse communities? What interventions can promote inclusion and diversity?

5) **Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** How can innovation districts contribute to CSR and sustainability goals, such as fostering circular economy practices, promoting renewable energy, and reducing carbon emissions? What opportunities exist for green innovation within these ecosystems?

6) **Measurement:** What are the most meaningful metrics and indicators for assessing the impact of innovation districts and ecosystems? How can we measure outcomes related to economic development, job creation, and social inclusion?

7) **Technology and infrastructure:** How the emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and the Internet of Things be employed to shape innovation districts around local conditions? How technology can be used to detect and eradicate the causes of inefficiencies in the innovation ecosystem? What role do digital platforms play in fostering collaboration?

These are some research questions that reflect emerging priorities and ongoing debates in the field. Let's narrow down your PhD interests together. Begin by exploring the suggested journal articles, including those authored by the project supervisors, to build foundational understanding.

The project is well suited for candidates having an interest (or expertise) in mixed-methods research including qualitative and quantitative data analyses. There will be ample opportunities to apply data analytic tools such as NVivo, Leximancer, SPSS, AMOS, and Python / R.

Suggested articles

Katz, B., & Wagner, J. (2014). The rise of urban innovation districts. *Harvard Business Review.*

Adner, R. (2017). Ecosystem as structure: An actionable construct for strategy. *Journal of management, 43*(1), 39-58.

Alam, M. A., Rooney, D., & Taylor, M. (2022) From ego-systems to open innovation ecosystems: A process model of inter-firm openness. *Journal of Product Innovation Management.* 39(2), 177-201.

Alam, M. A., Lundmark, E., Taylor, M., & Rooney, D. (2022). The ethics of sharing: Does generosity erode the competitive advantage of an ecosystem firm? *Journal of Business Ethics.* 187(4), 821-839.

Alam, M. A., Rooney, D., & Taylor, M. (2022). Measuring inter-firm openness in innovation ecosystems. *Journal of Business Research.* 138, 436-456.

Alam, M. A., & Ansari, K. M. (2020). Open innovation ecosystems: Toward low-cost wind energy startups. *International Journal of Energy Sector Management*, 14(5), 853-869.

Baily, M. N., & Montalbano, N. (2018). Clusters and innovation districts: Lessons from the United States experience. *Economic Studies at Brookings Institutions*.

Baldwin, C. Y., Bogers, M. L., Kapoor, R., & West, J. (2024). Focusing the ecosystem lens on innovation studies. *Research Policy, 53*(3), 104949.

Pancholi, S., Yigitcanlar, T., Guaralda, M., Mayere, S., Caldwell, G. A., & Medland, R. (2020). University and innovation district symbiosis in the context of placemaking: Insights from Australian cities. *Land Use Policy, 99*, 105109.