

Regional Science Dialogues for Peace
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Special Session Proposal

Entrepreneurship and the Learning Region

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Abstract

The influence of the entrepreneurial human capital on regional development is a relevant research topic, for scholars, entrepreneurs, and policy makers, attracting considerable attention in the fields of entrepreneurship and regional science (Leitão and Baptista, 2009; Baptista and Leitão, 2015), as well as in policy consulting and decision making processes, seeking to foster entrepreneurial dynamics as a driver of sustainable regional development (Alvedalen and Boschma 2017; Riaz, Leitão, and Cantner, 2022; Dejardin and Levratto, 2022). However, there is still limited understanding in terms of the best practices and enablers of regional embeddedness, dynamics and change in the multidimensional context of global, national, regional, and local ecosystems, which are fuelled through the effective actions coming from the so-called third mission of universities and, more generally, knowledge actors and transmitters.

The holistic construct of an (E)ntrepreneurial, (I)nnovative and (S)ustainable ecosystem, presented by Leitão, Alves, Krueger and Park (2018), is relative to the collective and transversal nature of entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainability. New firms emerge and grow not only because there are entrepreneurs creating and developing them. New ventures emerge also because they are in regions, where coexist a complex network of ecosystems and interfacing structures, such as science and technology parks, incubators, accelerators and

social innovation hubs, made up of private, public, and social stakeholders, which nurture and sustain them, supporting the inventive and innovative action of entrepreneurs (Leitão et al. 2022).

Despite the importance of the institutional and networks approaches explored so far in the literature, much remains unknown regarding the role played by universities, leaderships, interfacing structures, and agencies, in determining economic, innovative, and sustainable performance, at the regional level.

Another gap found in the literature is concerning entrepreneurial and open innovative ecosystems, fuelled through knowledge provided or co-developed by universities.

There is an increasing literature suggesting reasons behind ecosystems emergence, but it fails to examine in detail the exact mechanisms behind it, namely, the role played by local conditions associated with natural, location, historical, cultural, religious, indigenous, and ethnics factors, as well as endogenous productive factors (such as, specific knowledge assets, human capital, social or relational capital, cognitive capital, organizational capital, and institutional capital), in interactions, using a crossed fertilizing approach. This gap may be addressed by linking, for example, coopetition, innovative behaviour, diversified and flexible industrial or services districts, servitized-clusters, co-creation ecosystems, open data hubs, digital platforms, etc. If physical and/or digital agglomeration, and the quality of networks, improve the match among government, firms, universities, citizens, and social entrepreneurs, then will the region ensure enduring productivity and sustainable competitive advantages?

Key topics and research questions of the special session:

- Cognitive capital and learning regions
- Diversification, complexity, embeddedness, and performance of regional ecosystems
- Drivers of innovation, entrepreneurship, embeddedness, and change, at the regional level
- Industrial or services districts, innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity
- Intellectual capital, regional development and growth
- Smart Specialization Strategies for Sustainability (4S) and learning regions
- Universities as levers of sustainable regional development
- University ecosystems and regional spillovers
- Urban entrepreneurship versus rural entrepreneurship

We encourage both theoretical and empirical contributions that address one or more of the listed topics above, using systematic literature reviews, meta-analysis, content analysis, social network analysis, case studies, and econometrics tools. The special session is also open to research addressing other adjacent and related topics. For this track, we particularly welcome the submission of author(s) and working groups that are willing to discuss their work-in-progress.

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