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Article

Editorial: Entrepreneurship and innovation in a global context

New England Journal of Entrepreneurship (NEJE)

Provided in Cooperation with:

College of Business & Technology, Sacred Heart University

Suggested Citation: Guo, Grace Chun; Jiang, Crystal X. (2019) : Editorial: Entrepreneurship and innovation in a global context, New England Journal of Entrepreneurship (NEJE), ISSN 2574-8904, Emerald, Bingley, Vol. 22, Iss. 1, pp. 2-4, <https://doi.org/10.1108/NEJE-05-2019-025>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/238760>

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Entrepreneurship and innovation in a global context

Ever since Sir Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web in 1989, the world is revolutionized in ways of communications and social networking. Now technology advancement drives transformation around the world with fastened speed of globalization, allowing more companies achieving globalization and recognize cross-cultural, cross-national, cross-disciplinary opportunities to create new value-added activities. Technology advancement such as the fourth industrial revolution will inevitably transform the ways in which we live, work and interact with one another. As such, we need to embrace technology changes and examine the evolving domain of international entrepreneurship (IE) research and identify where the gaps are in our current knowledge and suggest directions for future research.

IE research is relatively new in the academic field. The widely adopted definition is “the discovery, enactment, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities – across national borders – to create future goods and services” (Oviatt and McDougall, 2005, p. 540). Since the domain of IE includes numerous dimensions, previous cross-country analyses have included socioeconomic environment, institutions, norms, culture as well as industry clusters and geographic parameters, all of which making IE research highly fragmented with substantial knowledge gaps related to content, theory and methodology (Terjesen *et al.*, 2016).

A recent review article by Terjesen *et al.* (2016) suggested a generalizable pattern with similarities and differences across countries or country groups to develop better theories in exploring IE phenomena. In another review article of IE, Reuber *et al.* (2018) suggested that the assessment of IE research can be done at individual-, firm- and institutional level, by assessing opportunities as an individual-level cognitive activity, the construction of opportunity as a firm-level innovative activity, and the shaping of opportunity as an institutional-level structuring activity (Reuber *et al.*, 2018).

Moreover, advanced technologies create ripple effects on societies, institutions and economies. In particular, technological advancement has speeded up the globalization, facilitated communication and transportation, allowed large and small companies to successfully balance globalization and glocalization, survive and thrive in the global market. Undoubtedly, technology advancement has transformed the ways in which we live, work and interact with one another. Therefore, research on IE needs to adopt a dynamic understanding of businesses and connections, digital domains and offline reality to recognize cross-cultural, cross-country opportunities and innovation in the IE research.

In this broad context, we believe that a special issue on entrepreneurship and innovation in a global context can stimulate more dialogues and add more novel insights for theory and practice. As an initial effort to address this goal, the *New England Journal of Entrepreneurship (NEJE)* proudly collaborated with the 2018 Academy of International Business US Northeast Chapter (AIB-NE) Conference and produced this inaugural special issue. On behalf of the editorial team of *NEJE*, we would like to thank the AIB-NE Chapter



President, Dr Margaret Goralski, Conference Chair, Dr John Cantwell, and Program Chairs, Dr Ram Mudambi and Dr Denise Dunlap, for their support and encouragement. We would also like to thank all the contributing authors who answered our Call for papers and the reviewers who supported us by providing timely and high-quality reviews. This special issue provides a selection of research that contributes to entrepreneurship and innovation in a global context from diverse perspectives. Below we summarize the articles included in this special issue and discuss their contributions to theory and practice.

Demirkan, Yang and Jiang provided a systematic and thorough review of Corporate Entrepreneurship (CE) research of emerging market firms (EMFs) in the last two decades (2000–2019). This is an important contribution to IE because EMFs are making significant contribution to world economy, yet most of the conceptual development in the field of CE has assumed develop market conditions. Although CE can make a big difference in the firm competitiveness of emerging markets (Bruton *et al.*, 2008; Guo *et al.*, 2014), the literature is still lacking in exploring the dynamics of CE in these contexts (e.g. De Clercq *et al.*, 2010; Kiss *et al.*, 2012). Demirkan *et al.* study summarized CE research in emerging markets within macro and micro contexts and facilitated our understanding of how idiosyncratic firm factors, the industry in which EMFs operate and changes in institutional conditions affect CE of EMFs. Given how the changes of government policies may affect CE in different ways (Guo *et al.*, 2017), they incorporated how different governments roles (grabbing hand, helping hand and invisible hand) affect EMFs' CE differently. They encourage future research to consider the stage of evaluation of EMFs and adopt a holistic perspective to examine firm's innovation, strategic renewal and venturing in an interconnected way.

Du and Wang examined the boundary conditions that fostered knowledge transfer within business incubation centers in China. This empirical study examined innovative practices and mechanisms of knowledge transfer across boundary conditions. Based on the qualitative data involving 39 in-depth interviews at three Chinese incubation centers, Du and Wang identified the role of organizational factors and contextual factors in influencing knowledge transfer in China. This study showed that shared values and interests helped build trust among different actors to facilitate the knowledge transfer process across pragmatic boundaries and that entrepreneurship orientation of small- and medium-size enterprises and the use of information rich media positively impacted knowledge transfer. Du and Wang's study contributes to the literature of knowledge transfer and, in particular, to the understanding of the relationship between boundary conditions and knowledge transfer in the context of emerging economies.

One area that is notably absent in the IE research is the link between academia and industry. Part of the reason is that in academia, the research time-to-market may not be aligned to industry requirements and academic research may not always focus on latest industrial trends and interests. This is understandable, given that the speed of current technological breakthroughs has no historical precedent. Firms are exploring and exploiting innovation at an exponential rather than a linear pace. When technologies allow firms to disrupt almost every industry in every country, it has never been more important than today for the higher education institution to emphasize entrepreneurial education in the curriculum. The perspective article by De Carolis and Litzky discussed how traditional views of entrepreneurship limited the potential of entrepreneurial education. They further proposed the importance of building college students' entrepreneurial mindset so that our talents can fill the growing needs of global entrepreneurs.

We believe that the pursuit of research on entrepreneurship and innovation in a global context can generate meaningful contributions to theory and practice. From the theory perspective, we need to synthesize different theoretical lens to better define the boundaries of the domain. In terms of practice, we need to collaborate with industry experts to fully grasp the breadth and the depth of technology changes involved in the transformation of

systems of production, networking, communication and governance and how such changes affect firms' entrepreneurship and innovation activities in a global context. For instance, multinational enterprises (MNEs) are considered the hub in the network of international inter-firm relationships. Thus, MNEs need to integrate entrepreneurial opportunities (new means-ends relationships) and international opportunities (new geographic markets) (Reuber *et al.*, 2018). Yet given the evolution of technologies and their impacts on firms, research on these issues are still lacking. We believe that research on IE and innovation in a global context can evolve by integrating insights from various disciplines and by adopting novel research methods as Demirkan *et al.* (2019) proposed.

In conclusion, we believe that IE has emerged as an emerging field of study and there is a great need to develop theories and promote actionable research agendas with applied and practical focuses to stimulate dialogues and collaboration among academia, businesses, nonprofit and public organizations from around the world. This special issue represents the initial effort to embrace the fast changing and multifaceted challenges we are facing today. After all, we live in a time where technologies are evolving in an exponential way, so we call for more attention to be directed to issues related to entrepreneurship and innovation in a global context.

Grace Chun Chun Guo and Crystal X. Jiang

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