

Call for contributions– Special issue

Intangible economy and innovation management

Guest editors

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Today, the value of both products and companies is derived to the extent of 80% from the intelligence injected into them: we have entered the society of knowledge. The invisible has come to take precedence over the visible. We are clearly experiencing a new scientific and technological revolution on a larger scale than its predecessors. In this emerging “new world”, the intangible has become dominant, for example through the role of the information and knowledge circulating in the networks, generating new uses and products on the market, and consequently leading to renewed organisational practices... This new situation is unsettling production and market systems, and calling into question the behaviours of the actors concerned, particularly in firms and their management methods.

1 – In terms of “products”, although human societies are producing growing quantities of material goods that consume large amounts of physical input – energy, raw materials, agricultural resources – to the point of endangering the ecosystems concerned, they are consuming more and more services of all kinds (finance, culture and leisure, security, etc), intended for a range of users (services for individuals, businesses and communities).

It can be argued that the more developed an economy is, the greater its intangible component compared to the strictly tangible component, as regards both production and consumption.

2 – This (r)evolution has consequences for the industrial dynamics in the sectors concerned. Those sectors consist not only of industries that are directly representative of the digital economy (equipment, software, social networks, etc), even if they have a particularly high intangible share and impressive growth rate. The digital revolution, and the intangible revolution more broadly, concerns more or less the entire production system. Corporate competition is increasingly based on development of knowledge, but also the capacity to capture/manage/store/reuse an ever-increasing mass of information (Big data), as well as the rules in use to apply that knowledge, the influence of the firm’s brands, the quality of its social relations, etc.

3 – Management methods are thus having to evolve, as evolving production systems call for new organisations and new management methods/systems. Taylorism was characteristic of a production model focusing on mass production of tangible goods (cars, textiles, etc). The intangible economy requires major innovations in organisation methods and human resource management in the production groups concerned.

4 – Beyond the dynamics of change at work in productive sectors and the actors who both convey and sometimes support them, beyond the occasionally drastic changes in consumption modes (e.g. the role of social networks), the intangible society needs new game rules. The notion of ownership itself is being called into question: the legal rules which were appropriate for tangible goods (moveable and immovable goods) are more difficult to transpose to intangible items whose usage is more important than their actual ownership. The same applies to the financial valuation rules and the way they are expressed in accounting terms.

In short, this predominance of the intangible is leading to both new “economic models” and upheaval in existing business models. Consequently, we also need to review management and governance methods, as well as the systems for “incorporation” and valuation of the associated assets-flows-performances. It can be considered that analysis of this new intangible economy calls for an entirely new paradigm in a break from the economic, legal and management analysis framework used in the traditional market economy.

This special issue wants to present a collection of research on this question, in a cross-disciplinary perspective. The objective is to show the link between innovation and intangibles. While innovation is a key factor in organisations’ competitiveness and durability, it is inevitably accompanied by intangible input and output.

In terms of input, innovation is built on knowledge, skills and dynamic capacities but also on the creativity of the individuals who make up organisations’ human capital. Innovations are rooted in codified knowledge (warehouses, mapping, procedures...) but also on more tacit knowledge sharing through socialisation mechanisms and more informal meetings. As well as simple “information capital” and its maintenance over time, we need to look at the formation of “social capital” between a firm and its suppliers, clients, advisors, experts, etc.

In terms of output, innovation is expressed through brands, reputation, patents, labels, and so on, which enable the organisation to stand out from its competitors. This results in product innovations based on new uses and modes of consumption, managerial innovations related to new ways of organising groups, etc, which require adjustment of the institutional rules (legal, tax, accounting and financial rules).

The proposed articles can relate to several disciplines (law, economics or management), and must offer an original contribution to bringing out the link between the intangible and innovation. The notable contribution of the research may theoretical, methodological or empirical in nature.

Contributions, which must be in English, should be sent to:

Innovations – Journal of Innovation Economics and Management

<http://www.cairn.info/revue-journal-of-innovation-economics.htm>

Submission dates:

28 March 2014: submission of an abstract (2 to 3 pages) in Word format, Times 12, 1.5pt line spacing, briefly covering the importance of the subject, the primary methods and the expected results.

Abstracts must be sent to: elisabeth.walliser@univ-montp1.fr
(with a copy to sophie.mignon@univ-montp2.fr)

14 April 2014: authors will receive a reply

13 June 2014: deadline for submission of the full articles (on the *innovations* journal platform: <http://innovations.edmgr.com>) – Please include the title of the special issue in your submission

31 July 2014: authors will receive comments

31 October 2014: deadline for submission of the final version

1 December 2014: final acceptance