

Editorial

This issue of *Prometheus* challenges a range of accepted wisdom, which is very much the role of a critical journal. Rebecca Liu looks at cooperation, competition and cooptition in innovation communities. The literature in this area emphasizes the benefits for innovation of firms working together, the closer the better being the lesson for firm strategy. Just how realistic is this rosy win-win approach to innovation? Liu suggests that firm togetherness may actually be driven much more by fear of ending up in a lose-lose situation. Examples from three innovation communities in the UK seem to confirm that cooperation, competition and cooptition are not as simple as we are often led to believe.

Jaakko Paasi, Katri Valkokari and Tuija Rantala are concerned with managing openness in inter-organisational innovation projects. The praises of openness are much sung; less is said about the management challenges inter-organisational openness presents. The concept of openness may seem clear enough, but in practice the variations are huge. The authors examine the characteristics of inter-organisational openness in innovation projects in Finland and Holland. From these, they discern five characteristics of openness, a taxonomy that will deter others from assuming openness to be a single concept, and help them deal with the complexity of reality.

Paul Trott, Patrick Van Der Duin and Dap Hartmann also question accepted wisdom in innovation studies. They look at user-driven innovation, most closely associated with the work of Eric von Hippel. Indeed, a conference at the University of Brighton earlier this year saw some 200 delegates express their satisfaction with open and user innovation. Von Hippel himself was in honoured attendance. Trott, Van Der Duin and Hartmann dissociate themselves from such consensus. Focussing on lead user aspects of the theory, they find that the notion of user-driven innovation has more limitations than its many adherents like to admit.

Our fourth paper also challenges accepted wisdom in innovation, in this case that universities should lay claim to the research their academics produce. Siri Brorstad Borlaug and Merle Jacob examine the situation in Sweden, where individual academics still retain ownership of the intellectual property they create, a situation that used to prevail everywhere. In the rest of the world, the accepted argument is that university ownership of intellectual property rights facilitates the commercialisation of university research. Cambridge University was the last in the UK to accede to this argument (in 2007), perhaps because the huge high technology cluster surrounding Cambridge developed in the absence of university ownership of intellectual property rights. The complementary argument that universities anticipate fat profits from patenting their research is less commonly heard. But in Sweden, a public good approach to university research prevails, which seems to be no impediment to technology transfer. The authors' survey evidence indicates that Swedish academics see themselves as public servants, with a duty towards the public that strikes many of them as in conflict with entrepreneurial ambitions.

We welcome a new book review editor. Bert Sadowski from the School of Innovation Sciences at Eindhoven University of Technology takes on the role and even has his own book review in this issue. The enthusiasm is commendable. Our last book review editor, John Elliott, has taken up a post in Korea, not a location best suited to organising book reviews. We thank him for his efforts and wish him well in the Department of English Language and Literature at Ewha Womans (sic) University in Seoul. It seems important that a journal which purports to be critical publishes a quintessentially critical form of literature and we are anxious to increase the number of books reviews we publish. Would that people were as keen to write them.

Stuart Macdonald
General Editor