



Editorial

There are four research papers in this issue and one research note. Let me start with the research note. William Kingston has updated his *Prometheus* paper of 2015 in the light of the UK's determination to leave the European Union. Of all the EU legislation that must now become UK legislation, that surrounding intellectual property rights is perhaps the most complex. This is not, however, Kingston's central concern: he is much more worried about the impact on UK innovation of legislation conversion. The problem goes deeper than that presented in just about all other areas by the UK's shortage of experienced negotiators. In the case of IPR, the UK has experts galore, just about all of whom view IPR legislation through the lens of the lawyer or – worse still – the economist. Their inclination to forget that IPR is supposed to promote technological innovation rather than protect established interests is likely to be reflected in the shape of whatever IPR legislation is devised for the UK.

Stuart Barnes and Jan Mattsson also look at innovation. Their interest is in collaborative consumption, a phenomenon characteristic of a sharing economy, one in which participants require access to resources rather than ownership of them. Entrepreneurs in these fields must try to develop what Barnes and Mattsson call a 'tribal community' in their efforts to match supply to demand. They must exploit social media to create social capital. In particular, these entrepreneurs must eschew the conventional marketing approach of convincing targets they should buy, and instead encourage the development of trust among users of digital platforms.

Craig Webster deals with complex systems, too, though in a quite different context. He is concerned with the safety of these systems and looks to the nuclear power industry in the United States to see what lessons it might have to share. He finds its reporting of what has gone wrong and its use of milestones to measure safety improvements might be applied elsewhere. In the US healthcare industry, he finds a suitable elsewhere. Like the nuclear power industry, healthcare is characterised by complexity and advanced technology. Like the nuclear power industry, healthcare can do harm, a capacity that is too often realised. Applied to the healthcare industry, the framework Webster constructs can reduce damage to patients. For instance, particular benefits are to be gained by lowering the threshold for reporting incident data.

Aline Coutinho and Nathan Young immerse themselves in Canadian science policy. The recent change of government in Canada has renewed the optimism of those who feel that the benefits of science can best be realised by an effective and enlightened national science policy. Until recently, Canadian science policy seemed to be effective in destroying much of the research strengths of Canadian universities, but enlightened it was not. The research of Coutinho and Young was undertaken before the inauguration of the Trudeau government, performed under a regime that assumed academics were useless unless they could prove otherwise. Enter the world of 'impact' in the UK and 'transformationalism' in Canada with its expectations that scientists form close relations with non-academic bodies (even anti-academic bodies) in order to find answers to the research questions these bodies ask. The answers were expected to be of massive and immediate value to the non-academic partners. Coutinho and Young examine the workings of fourteen Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCEs), each intended to mix recalcitrant academics with those who have seen the light in the real world. They find the government's NCE

scheme strong on the rhetoric of transformationalism, especially in communication between individual centres and central office, but inconsistency and confusion abound in the implementation and assessment of outcomes. Easily quantifiable outputs, such as the commercialization of research findings, were favoured over softer qualitative outcomes, such as public engagement and knowledge sharing. With an admirable gift for litotes, the authors conclude that 'the NCE program is having an observable impact on the rhetoric of science, but any resulting transformations in practice are incremental rather than radical'.

Lastly, we have a paper from Deycy Janeth Sánchez Preciado, Björn Claes and Nicholas Theodorakopoulos, a theoretical piece that aims to fill a gap in the technology transfer literature. The vast majority of this literature focuses on high technology and its transfer within the developed world. There is very little academic concern with the transfer of what can reasonably be called 'low technology' within the developing world, and especially within its rural economy. The paper supplements what can be gleaned from the dominant literature with what the authors have learned from fieldwork in Colombia. The result is a framework that may be of more use than existing understanding of technology transfer to those working with small rural enterprises in the developing world.

And that's about it for this issue, although the issue does contain a minor innovation, one keener readers will notice. At the foot of the first page of each research paper, they will find the name of the editor who accepted the paper. This is given not so that individual editors may be blamed, but so they may receive some individual credit for the considerable effort required to guide a paper from submission to publication. *Prometheus* operates a system of single blind peer review. Helping authors to publish, rather than punishing them with rejection, is basic to the journal's ethos. Your general editor has recently been reminded of the advantages of referees knowing the identity of authors in that several referees have asked editors if they may contact authors directly to offer further assistance. Lastly, we are still in need of a book review editor. It may not be an enviable position, but it is an essential one for *Prometheus* and I will welcome enquiries from anyone interested in taking on the task.

Stuart Macdonald
General Editor