

“Challenges for innovation intermediaries in technology transfer: Forming controls and alliances”

Summary

In this dissertation, the focus lies on intermediaries that connect researchers with industry through multilateral alliances to commercialize (i.e. exploit) the knowledge generated in basic and applied research. Intermediaries have become increasingly important for technology transfer, but less attention has been given to underlying mechanisms affecting their performance. This is important as a high level of dissatisfaction with actual outcomes relative to expectations has been reported, and many intermediaries are not successful. Two main components that are key to intermediary effectiveness but have received little attention in the literature entail (1) organizational design and (2) alliance formation capabilities. The main research question of this dissertation is how intermediaries can cope with organizational design issues and alliance formation processes to improve the success of intermediaries in commercializing outputs from university research. This main question is followed by three sub-questions: (1) how and why does the relationship between organizational control and complexity evolve over time; (2) how can the limits of local search be overcome in a more direct manner and without spending more resources; and (3) what is the influence of intermediary resource contributions to the likelihood that SMEs form alliances. The findings in this dissertation have theoretical implications for literature on partnerships and alliances, technology transfer and open innovation. The findings also have several practical implications that may aid managers and policy makers, especially those that seek to facilitate more efficient and effective technology transfer processes in universities, firms and their innovation intermediaries.

Keywords: innovation intermediaries, organizational design, strategic alliances, organizational control, complexity, system dynamics, feedback loops, innovation search, bounded rationality, power imbalance, resource dependency, SMEs, open innovation.