

Letter from the Editors

Regional innovation ecosystems

The term innovation ecosystem describes a network of companies and other entities through which information and resources flow to create value and is an analogy to natural ecosystems. As natural ecosystems differ, each region provides its own unique conditions for the emergence of innovations. Thus, taking into account the regional conditions is a crucial factor. The articles in the Practitioner's Section deals with the transformation of the Northern Netherlands and Greentech startups in the Rhine-Main-Neckar metropolitan area, addressing the specifics of the respective region. Are you more interested in innovation methodologies? In this case, we recommend starting with this issue's research paper.

The research paper "Innovation methodologies and Design Thinking as supporting instruments in the development of non-assembled products" by Thomas Lager and Anders Fundin assesses the suitability of those methodologies for the innovation process of non-assembled products. The authors' review and theoretical analysis show that aspects important for process-industrial application are missing in Design thinking, that both methodologies differ significantly, and that they are complementary in use. Nevertheless, the authors conclude that companies could profit from an in-depth understanding of both methodologies. To address the question when which methodology should be selected, the authors provide a framework showing the applicability of methodologies during different phases of the innovation work process.

Sebastian Walther's, Renata Dobrucka's and Stephan Haubold's research paper "A review on influence factors promoting or inhibiting the transfer of research from universities into start-ups" summarizes the current state of research and identifies research gaps. Comparing different surveys, the authors formulate the hypotheses that the factors promoting spin-offs from universities are comparable across different countries while the inhibiting factors depend on economic and cultural influence.

Johanna Thomann, André Heeres, and Errit Bekkering explore the transformation from a fossil-based to a biobased economy using a regional example in "The Northern Netherlands: Transformation of a gas-producing region into a forerunner in the biobased circular transition". At first, the characteristics of the region are described and with the help of a SWOT analysis, the initial situation is presented to the reader. In the following, the developments from 2010 until today are discussed and opportunities arising for the region are shown. The authors see economic potential arising from the creative combination of available feedstocks and point out the importance of the framework conditions and close intersectoral collaboration.

The second contribution in our Practitioner's Section comes from Joerg von Hagen. His article "Ecosystem for Greentech start-ups in the Rhine-Main-Neckar metropolitan area requiring dedicated technology infrastructure" deals with the question if the Rhine-Main-Neckar metropolitan area offers sufficient support for Greentech startups from ideation to commercialization. The author concludes that the ecosystem provides good conditions for startups which could and should be improved by a better connection between the stakeholders, e.g., by a cluster.

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