From margins to mainstream: Novel perspectives on outsider innovators

Project summary and plan of activities

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This project aspires to shed light on both the bright and dark sides of outsider innovators. The project will bring together theories and developments in entrepreneurship, innovation management, sociology, and social psychology. We intend to examine such mechanisms through a multi-method, multidisciplinary research design that combines historiographic approaches, experimental design, and big data analytics to yield insights at multiple levels of analysis. What processes allow outsiders to stake out some ground in the insiders' own terrain, especially when their claims to novelty clash with the status quo? Under what conditions do outsiders become successful outliers? What processes lead promising outsiders to slide into morally questionable activities? To address these questions the project has been organized in three interdependent studies.

The first study will focus on outsiders and socio-cognitive mechanisms of evaluation. The objective is to design a series of original experiments to delve into the cognitive mechanisms that guide relevant audiences (e.g., investors) in their evaluative responses when faced with innovations carried out by outsiders. The second study will focus on outsiders and exogenous shocks. The objective is to perform a computational study that explores how exogenous shocks alter the structure of opportunities available to peripheral actors for entering into the field and furthering their novelty claims. The third study will focus on dark side of outsiders. The objective is to generate qualitative insights into the process by which outsiders enact and embrace behaviors that purposefully raise expectations about the novelty they propose in ways that can trigger morally questionable actions as well as misinterpretations from their audiences.

Plan of activities and tasks of the fellow

The research fellow will be included in all studies, with a heavier involvement in the third study. As all studies involve collecting qualitative data, he/she will have the responsibility of collecting the archival and primary sources needed to conduct such studies. He/she will work to recruit interviewees, maximize their participation rate throughout the project, as well as build a database of archival sources including newspaper/press articles, blogs, and social media posts. Data scraping ability will be particularly valuable to assemble a large dataset. We also expect the fellow to co-design and operate the data pipelines supporting the project. It is expected that the fellow will manage the final database of qualitative evidence and analyze the data using computer-aided software for qualitative analysis such as NVivo or Atlas.ti and/or perform topic modeling analysis.

In summary, the selected candidate should have the following characteristics:

- Background in the broader management field (including entrepreneurship, innovation, organization, or strategy), sociology and related fields [required]
- Excellent knowledge of computer-aided for qualitative analysis [required]

- Ambition to publish in highly ranked journals (ABS4/4*) [required]
- Excellent knowledge of English (C1 level and above according to the CEFR scale) [required]
- Good knowledge of programming and data scraping techniques [desirable]
- Being comfortable with the broader literature of the study's project [optional]