Title of Abstract:

Internationalisation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem -
The case of BioInnovate Entrepreneurship Programme

This paper examines the case of an entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) that expands beyond the close geographic proximity of a particular territory and connects international network actors. Entrepreneurial ecosystems can be defined as "combinations of social, political, economic, and cultural elements within a region that support the development and growth of innovative start-ups and encourage nascent entrepreneurs and other actors to take the risks of starting, funding, and otherwise assisting high-risk ventures" (Spigel, 2017, p. 50). As entrepreneurship can originate at local level, the EEs literature emphasises the importance of geographic proximity among actors. Our research extends this view, by examining how local and regional EEs can also be embedded in larger global networks. Our case, BioInnovate Ireland, an innovation-led entrepreneurship education programme, illustrates how a supporting organisation connects various actors across borders to enhance the commercial success of its projects.

Although entrepreneurs lie at the core of EEs, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), such as universities, are the second most common actor in developing entrepreneurial ecosystems. Academic – industry partnerships have become more prominent in recent years, as entrepreneurial universities broaden their role beyond that of knowledge creating institutions to facilitating commercially driven outputs for domestic and global markets. Numerous multi-disciplinary programs have been developed in universities worldwide, aiming to catalyse and drive innovation. Among these, specialised training programmes within the biomedical technology sphere have led the way in entrepreneurship education.

Following the success of Biodesign at Stanford, many universities in Europe have adopted this model and launched programmes aimed to facilitate the development of biomedical technology innovations for global markets. Typically, within these programmes, Fellows in multidisciplinary teams engage in every step of the commercialisation process – from need identification and product design to global business development. The desired results of these programmes: tangible translational outcomes, innovator-entrepreneurs and start-ups which are more attractive for investment. In parallel, industry workshops deliver training to internationally focused companies which aim to progress needs-driven innovation internally.

This paper presents the case of BioInnovate Ireland, which since its inception in 2011, has been a prolific creator of innovation in the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem in the West of Ireland, as well as a nexus across different international actors within the industry. This is achieved through continuous interactions among national, as well as international stakeholders from academia, industry and policy makers (Irish and EU levels).

References

Spigel, B., 2017. The relational organization of entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *41*(1), pp.49-72.

Key words: Entrepreneurial Ecosystems, Entrepreneurship Education, International Networks