

Contributions to Management Science

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# Innovation in Food Ecosystems

Entrepreneurship for a Sustainable  
Future



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# Chapter 3

## Innovation and Entrepreneurial Ecosystems: Structure, Boundaries, and Dynamics



**Abstract** Recognizing the broader dimensions of entrepreneurial and innovation activities, holistic and inclusive networked approaches pave the way to co-creation activities that are essential for achieving sustainability in food systems. Recent studies have started to deepen what are the critical enablers for creating thriving entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems. Networks that include firms, institutions, and several other relevant stakeholders in knowledge spillovers enable to produce more social and economic value through co-creation processes. However, due to the unique complexity within ecosystems, there is no standardized framework or strategy to develop entrepreneurial or innovation ecosystems effectively. In this chapter, a synthesis of the structure, dynamics, and boundaries of innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems is presented. In particular, the main differences between these two concepts and the traditional ecosystem concept are provided and an overview of the more well-established definitions and frameworks present in the business and management literature offered. So, the following questions and many others will be addressed: what are the critical factors that lead some ecosystems to success? What the key actors? What dynamics characterize them? Answering these questions may represent an effective solution to address sustainability in the multi-functionality of food systems collectively. Therefore, how the heterogeneous elements and complexity of entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystems can be applied in food system sustainability initiatives will be finally discussed and critical action points for policy and practice recommended.

**Keywords** Innovation ecosystems · Entrepreneurial ecosystems · Value co-creation · Food systems · Sustainability

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