



Special Issue of the Triple Helix Journal

Call for Papers

Transformative Alliances: Higher Education Institutions and Multi-Stakeholders Collaboration for Regional Innovation

Guest Editors:

Paula Odete Fernandes, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal

João J. Ferreira, Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal

Elias Carayannis, George Washington University, USA

In the face of accelerating technological change, climate challenges, and deepening socioeconomic disparities, regions must reimagine their development strategies. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have undergone a significant transformation, evolving from peripheral actors to central agents of regional innovation and change (OECD, 2022). This shift reflects an increasing imperative for HEIs to collaborate with industry, government, and civil society through multi-actor partnerships (Kopczynska & Ferreira, 2021). Such cooperation represents a paradigm shift in mobilizing collective intelligence for sustainable development (Carayannis & Campbell, 2021).

HEIs have moved beyond the traditional 'ivory tower' model to become entrepreneurial universities integrated within local and regional contexts (Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Benneworth et al., 2017). These institutions now play a crucial role in fostering innovation through research, entrepreneurial education, technology transfer offices, and living labs (Yao et al., 2018; Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020). Such initiatives enhance local innovation capacity, facilitate knowledge spillovers, and support the formation of new businesses (Mascaranhas et al., 2020; Audretsch et al., 2021). University-led innovation hubs and science parks further consolidate this relationship by anchoring regional innovation ecosystems, particularly when aligned with local strengths and competencies (Rodríguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2019; Natário & Oliveira, 2024). Smart Specialisation Strategies (S3) offer a compelling framework for aligning academic and innovation activities with regional priorities, helping to build robust, place-based knowledge ecosystems (McCann & Ortega-Argilés, 2016). In this vein, Triple Helix literature highlights S3 as a cornerstone for collaborative and adaptive regional innovation strategies (Pique et al., 2018).

The Quadruple Helix model, integrating academia, industry, government, and civil society, has gained traction as a dynamic approach to co-creating regional solutions. It underscores the importance of inclusive stakeholder engagement in driving innovation (Cavallini et al., 2016). Regional Innovation Councils and other multi-stakeholder platforms have proven effective in enabling shared visioning, policy co-design, and long-term dialogue (Uyarra et al., 2017), and the participation of diverse actors is crucial for addressing complex regional challenges, especially amid global uncertainty (Pugh, 2016; Cavallini et al., 2016). Inclusive governance has been shown to contribute to more resilient and adaptive regional innovation systems (Ranga & Etzkowitz, 2013). Nevertheless, institutional silos, power imbalances, and a lack of trust often obstruct true collaboration (Laranja et al., 2020).

Despite their potential, many HEIs still face difficulties embedding innovation and regional engagement into their core missions, particularly in underserved regions grappling with infrastructure gaps and brain drain (Pugh, 2016). Looking forward, regional development models must adopt place-based, mission-driven, and digitally enabled approaches. The twin transition, green and digital, highlights the critical role of HEIs as knowledge brokers, institutional anchors, and mediators within their regions (European Commission, 2023). According to recent analyses, these roles are becoming increasingly central to delivering inclusive and sustainable futures, regardless of a region's development level (Carayannis et al., 2022). Equally important is creating lifelong learning and skills ecosystems led by universities. These are essential to preparing regions for disruptions brought about by AI, demographic shifts, and the green economy (OECD, 2023). HEIs' role in developing such ecosystems is vital to strengthening regional resilience amid rapid change, as reflected in recent innovation policy studies (OECD, 2023).

This Special Issue will examine how higher education institutions (HEIs) drive innovation and create impact in the face of local and global challenges and technological change. It will investigate the broader societal role of universities within these dynamics. Accordingly, we invite papers covering, but not limited to, the following topics:

- University Innovation Hubs: Catalysts for Regional Economic Growth
- Universities as Living Labs: Fostering Regional Climate Resilience
- Smart Campus, Smart Region: Universities as Anchors of Digital Innovation
- Green Innovation and Regional Sustainability: Universities Leading the Way
- Building Innovation Capacity: Supporting Underserved and Peripheral Regions
- Lifelong Learning and Regional Transformation: Universities as Skills Hubs
- R&D Partnerships: Creating Value through University-Industry-Government Collaboration
- Regional Innovation Alliances: Facilitating Ongoing Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue
- Global Alliances for Regional Innovation
- Public Policy and Higher Education: Aligning Strategies for Regional Innovation
- Data-Driven Development: Higher Education's Role in Smart Governance

The guest editors invite robust qualitative and quantitative studies on individual HEIs within their regional or innovation contexts. Comparative or multi-context analyses, especially across countries, are also welcome. Papers that utilize innovative methods or focus on under-researched regions are encouraged, including case studies of engaged research or sector-specific innovation. Submissions must be original, clearly stating their research question, theoretical framework, and intended contribution.

- **October 15, 2025:** Expression of interest, abstract (optional) (around 500 words) submission by email to the guest editors for consideration in the special issues.
- **November 15, 2025:** Acceptances/Rejections, Guest editors provide recommendations for further paper development.
- **February 15, 2026:** Submission of the full article manuscript. The final submission will be managed through the standard submission systems for external review of the journal. The finally accepted paper will be first published online.
- **June/July 2026:** Provisional date for the publication of the special issue.

Submission instructions:

Before submitting the manuscript, please ensure you have carefully read the submission instructions for Triple Helix Journal. The full manuscript should be submitted through the journal submission system at <https://www.editorialmanager.com/thj/default.aspx>. Please indicate in your cover letter that you wish your manuscript to be considered as part of the SI “Transformative Alliances: HEI & Stakeholders”. All submissions will undergo double-blind peer-review.

For editorial enquiries, please contact:

Guest Editors:

Paula Odete Fernandes, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal, pof@ipb.pt

João J. Ferreira, Universidade da Beira Interior, Portugal, jimf@ubi.pt

Elias G. Carayannis, George Washington University, USA, caraye@gwu.edu

Supporting Editor: Marcelo Amaral, Fluminense Federal University, marceloamaral@id.uff.br

References

- Audretsch, D. B., Belitski, M., & Desai, S. (2021). National business regulations and city entrepreneurship in Europe: A multilevel nested analysis. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 45(5), 1121–1144.
- Benneworth, P., Pinheiro, R., & Karlsen, J. (2017). Strategic agency and institutional change: Investigating the role of universities in regional innovation systems (RISs). *Regional Studies*, 51(2), 235–248.
- Cai, Y., & Amaral, M. (2024). Enhancing Quality in Triple Helix Dialogue: Navigating Research Frontiers and Submission Excellence. *Triple Helix*, 10(3), 215-224. <https://doi.org/10.1163/21971927-12340017>

- Cai, Y., & Amaral, M. (2021). The Triple Helix Model and the Future of Innovation: A Reflection on the Triple Helix Research Agenda, *Triple Helix*, 8(2), 217-229. <https://doi.org/10.1163/21971927-12340004>
- Carayannis, E. G., & Campbell, D. F. J. (2021). Triple Helix, Quadruple Helix and Quintuple Helix and how do knowledge, innovation and the environment relate to each other? A proposed framework for a trans-disciplinary analysis of sustainable development and social ecology. *International Journal of Social Ecology and Sustainable Development*, 1(1), 41–69.
- Carayannis, E.G., Campbell, D.F.J. & Grigoroudis, E. (2022). Helix Trilogy: the Triple, Quadruple, and Quintuple Innovation Helices from a Theory, Policy, and Practice Set of Perspectives. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 13, 2272–2301.
- Cavallini, S., Soldi, R., Friedl, J., & Volpe, M. (2016). Using the Quadruple Helix Approach to Accelerate the Transfer of Research and Innovation Results to Regional Growth. Committee of the Regions.
- Compagnucci, L., & Spigarelli, F. (2020). The third mission of the university: A systematic literature review on potentials and constraints. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 161, 120284.
- Etzkowitz, H., Webster, A., Gebhardt, C., & Terra, B. R. C. (2000). The future of the university and the university of the future: Evolution of ivory tower to entrepreneurial paradigm. *Research Policy*, 29(2), 313–330.
- European Commission. (2023). *Twin Transition and the Role of Universities in Regional Innovation Ecosystems*. Brussels: EC Publications.
- Kopczynska, E., Ferreira, J. (2021). The role of government measures in university-industry collaboration for economic growth: a comparative study across levels of economic development, *Triple Helix*, 8 (3), 486-533.
- Laranja, M., Uyarra, E., & Flanagan, K. (2020). Policies for science, technology and innovation: Translating rationales into regional policies. *Research Policy*, 49(1), 103871.
- Mascaranhas, C., Marques, C., Ferreira, J. (2020). One for All and All for One: Collaboration and Cooperation in Triple Helix Knowledge Co-creation, *International Regional Science Review*, 43 (4): 316-343.
- McCann, P., & Ortega-Argilés, R. (2016). Smart Specialisation, entrepreneurship and SMEs: Issues and challenges for a results-oriented EU regional policy. *Small Business Economics*, 46(4), 537–552.
- Natário, M. M. S., & Oliveira, P. (2024). How higher education institutions may catalyse regional innovation ecosystems: The case of polytechnics in Portugal. *Industry and Higher Education*, 0(0). <https://doi.org/10.1177/09504222241288488>
- OECD. (2022). *Regions in Industrial Transition: Policies for People and Places*. OECD Publishing.
- OECD. (2023). *Skills Outlook 2023: Lifelong Learning for a Resilient Recovery*. OECD Publishing.
- Pique, J.M., Berbegal-Mirabent, J. & Etzkowitz, H. Triple Helix and the evolution of ecosystems of innovation: the case of Silicon Valley. *Triple Helix* 5, 11 (2018). Pugh, R. (2016). Universities and economic development in lagging regions: 'triple helix' policy in Wales. *Regional Studies*, 51(7), 982–993. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2016.1171306>.
- Ranga, M., & Etzkowitz, H. (2013). Triple Helix Systems: An Analytical Framework for Innovation Policy and Practice in the Knowledge Society. *Industry and Higher Education*, 27(4), 237-262.
- Rodríguez-Pose, A., & Wilkie, C. (2019). Innovating in less developed regions: What drives patenting in the lagging regions of Europe and North America. *Growth and Change*, 50(1), 4–37.
- Uyarra, E., Flanagan, K., Magro, E., Wilson, J. R., & Sotarauta, M. (2017). Understanding regional innovation policy dynamics: Actors, agency and learning. *Environment and Planning C*, 35(4), 559-568. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654417705914>
- Yao, W., Li, H. & Weng, M. (2018). The Role the University Could Play in an Inclusive Regional Innovation System. *Triple Helix* 5, 12.