

Research Policy Paper Development Workshop – Call for Papers
At the Edge of Innovation: Navigating the Centre-Periphery Tension

University of Hong Kong (HKU)

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Workshop chairs and organisers:

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Sponsoring institutions:

Centre for Civil Society and Governance (University of Hong Kong)
HafenCity University Hamburg (HU)
Management Department (University of Bologna)
Stern Business School (New York University)
Department of Politics and Public Administration (University of Hong Kong)

We are excited to invite scholars to a Paper Development Workshop (PDW) in support of the upcoming *Research Policy* special issue, "[*Outside In: Unconventional Pathways to Innovation*](#)". This workshop is intended to help authors develop high-quality submissions through constructive feedback and scholarly exchange, with the goal of strengthening papers for potential inclusion in the special issue.

Innovation is habitually framed as the prerogative of central hubs—major institutions, leading firms, and urban centres that have unique access to resources, expertise and information for the generation and legitimization of novelty. History, though, reveals that some of the most impactful innovations originated from the **edge** – understood as both a relational position (i.e., the outsider) and a geographical location (i.e., the periphery). Rather than an irrelevant marginal position or a deplorable provincial backwater, the edge in fact affords distance from the dominant norms of the mainstream and, hence, inspires fresh perspectives, creative recombinations, and radical experimentation. Yet, novelty from the margins often struggles to be recognized, as it requires connection to central structures to gain legitimacy, secure resources, and scale its impact.

This workshop provides participants with the unique opportunity to receive in-depth feedback from senior scholars and engage in rich discussions on the dynamic interplay between centre and periphery in the innovation process. It will also feature keynotes and round tables on the pursuit of unconventional pathways to innovate in the context of societal grand challenges and climate change.

We particularly welcome contributions that examine how innovation flows across core-periphery boundaries, how outsiders disrupt and reinvigorate core structures, and how central institutions simultaneously enable and constrain novel ideas emerging from the margins. We encourage submissions from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and methodological approaches, including both empirical and conceptual work.

THEMES AND TOPICS

We welcome contributions that engage with, but are not limited to, the following themes:

- **Conceptualizing the Edge: Center-Periphery Entanglements:** Which combinations of relational positions (insider/outsider) and territorial locations (center/periphery) are particularly generative? How do innovations change relational positions of territorial locations?
- **The Geography of Innovation: Centre-Periphery Interactions:** How do established innovation hubs interact with peripheral regions? What conditions allow innovation to travel from the margins to the core, and vice versa?

- **Reassessing the Edge: From Deficiency to Asset:** Which specific cultural, relational and material resources for innovation are only accessible from the position of the outsider and the location of peripheries? Which attributes of central positions and urban centres impede innovation?
- **Recognition and Legitimacy: The Gatekeeping Role of the Centre:** How do dominant institutions assess, validate, and integrate innovations emerging from the periphery? What strategies allow outsiders to secure resources, visibility, and institutional support?
- **Crises as Moments of Reconfiguration:** How do external shocks (e.g., pandemics, financial crises, regulatory shifts) destabilize central structures, creating openings for outsiders to drive change?
- **Peripheral Experimentation and Central Adoption:** When and how do ideas born in unconventional spaces become mainstream? What role do central institutions play in amplifying—or resisting—innovation from the margins?
- **Networks and Intermediaries: Bridging the Centre-Periphery Divide:** How do networks, brokers, and hybrid actors mediate between dominant players and peripheral innovators? What mechanisms enable knowledge exchange across these boundaries?
- **Language and Translation: Making Peripheral Innovations Legible to the Centre:** How do innovators at the margins adapt their language, narratives, and framing to engage central audiences?
- **Harnessing Peripheral Talent in Central Institutions:** How do organizations, firms, and policymakers tap into unconventional sources of knowledge while maintaining coherence and control?

Attending the Workshop does not guarantee inclusion of the paper in the Special Issue, nor is it a prerequisite for publication. However, we expect that this collegial forum will offer valuable guidance, insights, and inspiration to all the participants, maximizing the chances of making it into the Special Issue. There is no workshop fee; however, due to the limited number of available slots, places will be limited to the papers selected by the guest editors.

SUBMISSION AND LOGISTICS DETAILS

Authors who wish to participate in the pre-submission workshop in Hong Kong should send an extended abstract through this [link](#) by **August 31, 2025**. Extended abstracts should be no more than 10 pages double-spaced, excluding tables, figures, and references. Participants will be accepted on a competitive basis. Papers that are already under review at Research Policy (or elsewhere) cannot be submitted to this workshop.

All meals and pre- and post-workshop reception will be provided by the organizing committee. Participants must, however, cover their own travel and accommodation costs.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For any questions or inquiries about the paper development workshop, please do not hesitate to contact the workshop organisers. We look forward to an engaging discussion on how the interplay between centre and periphery shapes the innovation journey, redefining industries, institutions, and intellectual landscapes!