



RNI CONGRESS – INNOVATION FORUM VIII



New organizational modes for innovation processes

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Session : Standards as drivers of innovation

Anne Mione, Université de Montpellier, MRM, anne.mione@umontpellier.fr

The relationship between innovation and standardisation has been widely debated in literature in this domain, scholars in this field challenging the traditional perception of standards restricting innovation due to “freezing technology” and instead developing the idea that standards may in fact open new perspectives and can encourage or “drive” innovation (Zoo, de Vries et al. 2017)). This session seeks to contribute to this debate by presenting the different situations in which innovation and standardisation are intertwined. One can understand “standards” as meaning in the widest sense technical standards, quality signs, rankings, certifications and generally all frames of reference that are shared by the participants in a market. One can understand standardisation as the process during which standards take shape – whether spontaneous (de facto standards) or negotiated within Standardisation Organisations that can be public or private (de jure standards).

Blind (2013) identifies the effect on innovation of the four functions of standards (variety reduction, minimum quality, compatibility and information). Variety reduction standards, by defining specifications of products and services and reducing the production assortment, help firms benefit from economies of scale and for markets to attain a critical mass. Minimum quality standards reduce the uncertainty and the risks that can arise from distributing lower-quality goods in markets, thereby building consumer trust in new, innovative products. Wider distribution leads in turn to reduced transaction costs. Compatibility standards are central to achieving network externalities and avoiding being locked-in to old technologies. Information

¹ Cf. web site <http://www.iut-nimes.fr/acces> for access.

standards, by providing a common understanding of technological and product knowledge among users of such standards, reduce transaction costs and facilitate trade.

In concrete terms, these different types of standards may drive firms to engage in a process of innovation. (Goluchowitz and Blind, 2011; Tasse, 2000). As an illustration, the emission standards (Euronorms) defining the CO₂ maximum rejection rate into the atmosphere that regulate the car industry foster innovation from companies in this sector with the threat, if they do not achieve such breakthroughs, of being excluded from the market. Also, standardisation facilitates the spreading-out of innovation. Indeed, a Standard encapsulates these innovations as an easily transferrable set of technical specifications which fosters a widespread adoption and continual progress in innovation (Allen and Sriram, 2000; Blind, 2002, 2015). Finally, standardisation becomes a driver of innovation in complex contexts requiring interoperability, connectivity and compatibility. This is the case of today's innovations that create value by adding information to things or by offering devices with connectivity and interoperability. Internet of Things, autonomous cars, smart cities, creativity platforms, industry of the future are some of these contexts that require and challenge standardisation.

All these situations bring strategic issues for standards and standardisation : How does a dominant standard emerge ? Does it impose itself spontaneously ? Is it negotiated ? Who selects the dominant standard ? Does the leader adopt a specific role in the standardisation process? Which strategies can a firm develop to shape and support a standard? Which strategies can a firm develop to choose the standard to which it will conform? Does a strong brand require a trademark? Which strategies can a firm implement when rankings and certifications position the firm without it participating actively in the process?

References

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Key dates :

- January 22 2018: Submission of communication proposals (abstract of 3 pages)
- February 16 2018: Answer of the scientific committee
- April 7 2018: Submission of the Final Text (from 10 to 25 pages)
- June 4 and 5 2018 : Innovation Forum

Communications will be selected for publication in the journals of the network (Innovations : REMI/JIEM, TechInn, Marché et Organisation)

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