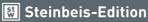
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Fostering innovation through Big Science procurement





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Sonia Utermann

Fostering innovation through Big Science procurement

Dr. rer. nat. Sonia Utermann Fostering innovation through Big Science procurement Submitted to the Wilhelm Büchner University 2020 Faculty of Industrial Engineering and Technology management for the Master of Business Administration to Professor Dr. Ralf Isenmann Revised and updated for publication in 2024

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Sonia Utermann Fostering innovation through Big Science procurement

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Abstract

Big Science infrastructures represent a multi-billion Euro business domain that operates at the margins of what is technically possible. In the next five years, the 11 largest Big Science organisations in Europe plan to spend nearly \notin 40 billion on innovative technologies (BSBF, 2022). Big Science has unique needs as well as the expertise to articulate these needs to potential suppliers. As such, Big Science is well positioned to act as a "lead user" (Von Hippel, 1986), driving innovation from the demand side.

This thesis looks at the innovation impact of Big Science procurement based on peer-reviewed studies and emerging best practice. Qualitative measures of innovation impact are presented, as well as the predictors that a Big Science procurement will result in a positive innovation outcome. The most important mechanisms by which Big Science can foster innovation through procurement are identified: articulating need, engaging with the market early, nurturing relationships, sharing knowledge, providing a consolidated market and mitigating development risk. Emerging best practice on how to exploit these mechanisms is presented. Finally, a roadmap for a comprehensive innovation impact study is presented, along with a critical tool for increasing the innovation impact of Big Science procurement: the Big Science Business Forum.

Contents

In	Introduction9					
1	The history and definition(s) of Big Science					
			cience: history of the term			
		U	cience is big money			
	1.3	0	ience is complex and multidisciplinary			
	1.4	•	cience has many stakeholders and complex mandates			
	1.5	•	cience has a big impact			
	1.6	•	cience is project-based			
	1.7	•	cience in this thesis			
			cience and knowledge transfer			
		1.8.1	Academic knowledge transfer	22		
			Public knowledge transfer			
			Technology transfer – technology push			
			Technology transfer: demand pull			
2	Аp	ortfoli	o of Big Science organisations	25		
			ry source Big Science organisations			
			Facility for Antiproton and Ion Research in Europe (FAIR).			
		2.1.2	Grand Accélérateur National d'Ions Lourds (GANIL)	26		
		2.1.3	European X-ray Free Electron Laser (European XFEL)	27		
		2.1.4	International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER).	28		
			European Spallation Source (ESS)			
	2.2		dary source Big Science organisation			
	2.3	The p	ortfolio of Big Science organisations	30		
3	Big Science procurement					
			Big Science procurement works			
		3.1.1	The legal framework of public procurement	31		
			Example procurement process: FAIR			
			Example procurement process: CERN			
		3.1.4	Competitive Dialogue	35		

	3.2	Procurement in kind	36		
		3.2.1 Fair return			
		3.2.2 Management of knowledge and innovation	38		
		3.2.3 Risk-sharing in innovation	39		
	3.3	Summary			
4	Em	pirical results: the effect of Big Science procurement			
	on innovation				
	4.1	Advantages of supplying Big Science	41		
	4.2	Predictors of innovation potential	43		
	4.3	Procurement of innovation and the Big Science lifecycle	46		
	4.4	Methodology transfer	47		
5	Em	erging best practice: Big Science procurement of innovation	48		
		Primary sources: best practice and lessons learned			
		5.1.1 Measuring "best" practice	50		
		5.1.2 Negative procurement outcomes ("lessons learned")	51		
	5.2	Big Science can act as a lead user			
		5.2.1 Small quantities, unknown transferability			
		5.2.2 The case of the welding company	54		
		5.2.3 An aside: technology transfer programmes	54		
	5.3	Big Science can articulate a need	55		
	5.4	Big Science can mitigate development risks	56		
	5.5	Big Science can share knowledge	57		
		5.5.1 The case of the nano-thermometer	58		
	5.6	Big Science can nurture relationships	59		
	5.7	Big Science can engage the market early	60		
		5.7.1 Engagement through procurement teams	60		
		5.7.2 Engagement through industry liaison			
	5.8	Big Science can provide a consolidated market			
		5.8.1 A positive example: the Netherlands	61		
		5.8.2 Why a consolidated Big Science market is needed	61		
		5.8.3 The Big Science Business Forum (BSBF)	62		
	5.9	Implementation of best practice measures	63		

6	Outlook						
	6.1	Roadmap of a comprehensive analysis: the impact of Big Science					
		procurement on innovation					
		6.1.1 Open questions	65				
		6.1.2 Measuring innovation impact	65				
		6.1.3 Comparison of methodologies	66				
		6.1.4 Suggested impact study methodology	68				
	6.2	ATTRACT	69				
	6.3	Big Science Business Forum (BSBF) Stimulating Big Science procurement of innovation in Germany					
	6.4						
		6.4.1 Added value for Germany	71				
		6.4.2 Unique advantages of Germany	73				
Conclusion							
Aŗ	open	lix: Information sources and benchmarking	77				
Bi	Bibliography						

Introduction

What is matter? Where did it come from? Some of the most fundamental questions that occupy human enquiry are addressed by Big Science: gargantuan pieces of scientific infrastructure that capture the imagination and defy belief; infrastructure like the accelerator complex at the European Laboratory for Particle Physics, CERN (figure 1).



Figure 1: The circle represents the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), one of the most complex and ambitious scientific experiment yet built. It has a circumference of some 26 km. The proposed Future Circular Collider at CERN, if built, will have a circumference of 100 km. Image by Maximilien Brice (CERN) – CERN Document Server, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=29027732.

How can we put a price on knowledge? In the scientific spirit, "the only legitimate yardstick for measuring the importance of a basic-science project is its impact on science itself" (Giudice, 2012). Nevertheless, Big Science projects like the proposed future Circular Collider (FCC) at CERN consume intellectual and financial resources to such a degree that it is reasonable – perhaps even imperative – to justify their existence in terms beyond the creation of mere knowledge. Gastrow and Oppelt warn of the "virtuous circle of capaBig Science infrastructures represent a multi-billion Euro business domain that operates at the margins of what is technically possible. In the next five years, the 11 largest Big Science organisations in Europe plan to spend nearly €40 billion on innovative technologies. Big Science has unique needs as well as the expertise to articulate these needs to industry. As such, Big Science is well positioned to drive innovation from the demand side. This book examines how this position can be exploited to multiply the innovation impact of Big Science beyond the standard mechanisms of technology transfer.

Qualitative measures of innovation impact are presented, as well as the predictors that a Big Science procurement will result in a positive innovation outcome. The most important mechanisms by which Big Science can foster innovation through procurement are identified: articulating need, engaging with the market early, nurturing relationships, sharing knowledge, providing a consolidated market and mitigating development risk.

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