

CALL FOR PAPERS
Special Issue of the Journal of International Business Studies

**STUDYING INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
THROUGH MULTIPLE LEVELS OF ANALYSIS**

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Research Background

The objective of this special issue is to broaden and deepen our understanding of how the acquisition and protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) affects international business, using multiple levels of analysis. Intellectual property is a key aspect of firm-specific advantages (FSAs), and the exploitation and augmentation of such FSAs is often crucial to a firm's competitiveness (Narula, 2014; Verbeke, 2013). At the same time, the attractiveness of countries (or regions and cities within countries) as destinations for MNEs is shaped by their capacity to provide access to relevant location-specific advantages associated with intellectual property (Belderbos, Leten, & Suzuki, 2013; Cantwell, Dunning, & Lundan, 2010). Firms seek to locate their competence-creating activities in close proximity to knowledge infrastructure (Castellani, Jimenez, & Zanfei, 2013). A related key location advantage is country-level institutions associated with adequate IPR protection (Nandkumar & Srikanth, 2016). Equally important are micro-level factors such as access to and retention of human capital, which are key to firm's knowledge-intensive capabilities (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016; Tung, 2016). IPRs matter therefore both for firm strategy and evolution, as well as for policy makers, who are concerned about the optimal level of IPR protection. Insufficient or poorly enforced IPR protection can affect locational attractiveness. Excessive IPR protection can have the same effect, when used as a strategy tool by shelter-seeking firms to raise artificial entry barriers against rivals and potential entrants.

Prior studies have explored international IPR violation and protection at both macro (e.g., national) and micro (e.g., firm or unit) levels of analysis. Macro-level research has paid attention to the drivers of IPR violations and the mechanisms of circumventing IPR protection (e.g., Ginarte & Park, 1997, Maskus, 2014; Mertha, 2007; Saggi, 2002). A recent debate published in JIBS exemplifies this line of research, focusing on institutional factors that facilitate or hinder

IPR protection at the international level (Brander, Cui, & Vertinsky, 2017; Peng, Ahlstrom, Carraher, & Shi, 2017).

At the micro-level, researchers have maintained that knowledge spillovers and misappropriation are prevalent because of inter-firm competition, colocation, alliances, as well as employee mobility (Berry, 2014; Hamel, Doz, & Prahalad, 1989; Inkpen, Minbaeva & Tsang, 2018; Narula & Santangelo, 2009; Shaver & Flyer, 2000). Researchers have studied various mechanisms, such as governance modes (Freitas, Geuna, & Rossi, 2013), strategic location (Zhao, 2006), strategic patenting (Hall & Ziedonis, 2001), and litigation (Lerner, 1995) to protect MNEs' IPRs. Some researchers have also argued that knowledge leakage may even be beneficial for MNEs by developing a reputation for cooperation, which may generate reciprocity (Inkpen, Minbaeva & Tsang, 2018; Sofka, Preto & de Faria, 2014). The structure and organization of MNE networks also matter in shaping their intellectual property-based FSAs, as well as the efficacy of individual R&D units. This includes managing interactions with external partners as well as intra-MNE knowledge flows (Salter et al 2015, Bogers et al 2018).

A number of studies have considered the extent to which direct IPR protection mechanisms and associated institutions shape the propensity of MNE subsidiaries to effectively engage in innovation (Santangelo, Meyer, & Jindra, 2016), both internally and with external partners (Athreya, Batsaki, & Singh, 2016, Martínez-Noya & García-Canal, 2018). Policy issues include determining the optimal level of IPR protection to attract and embed inward FDI (Wu, Ma, & Zhuo, 2017), although it is still a matter of debate whether there is a compatibility between the optimal level of IPR protection needed for development more generally (Fagerberg, Srholec, & Verspagen, 2010; Kim, Lee, Park, & Choo, 2012; Sweet & Maggio, 2015) and promoting MNE activity (Crisuolo & Narula, 2008; Narula, 2003).

While prior studies indicate that IPR protection involves factors at both macro- and micro-levels, most have investigated the phenomenon at a single level. The complexity of interactions across levels calls for more comprehensive frameworks that allow the development of theoretical arguments specifying the underlying mechanisms that act at and connect multiple levels. For example, knowledge protection and acquisition strategies of MNEs may adapt in different ways to differences and changes in IPR policies in various host countries. Similarly, the increased active involvement of some governments, not just as protectors of IPRs of companies and individuals, but as strategic participants in the “knowledge protection and acquisition game” may also affect the IPR strategies of MNEs, as well as undermine international IPR protection institutions. Moreover, MNEs can influence the “knowledge game” through the employment of various “non-market strategies” targeted at different host-country governments and reshape the dynamics of the system. To understand such complex relationships, research is needed to unpack the interactions of factors across levels. Making balanced policy proposals for countries in an era of complex knowledge sharing strategies among networks of different actors also requires a more holistic approach. Multi-level research logic also permits more nuanced refinements to international business theory (Narula & Verbeke, 2015). This special issue aims to encourage a more holistic view. Micro-level studies on IPR explicitly need to take on board the macro-level, beyond cursory observations in the discussion and conclusion section, and vice versa for the more meso- and macro-oriented studies. The objective is to greatly improve precision in the analysis of dynamic contexts in which IPR protection matters and is beneficial for the actors (country, industry, firm, etc.).

This special issue is open to IPR-related IB papers conducted at any level, but where explicit linkages are developed and explored to other levels. We are interested in papers that conceptually develop multi-level explanations and intentionally avoid the use of explanatory shorthand by correlating mono-level variables. We encourage submissions that theoretically accommodate a nested, complex and adaptive system view on MNEs. We welcome empirical papers across a variety of methodologies, including process research, qualitative studies, etc. We welcome papers utilizing formal multi-level modeling which are appropriate to analyze the impact of high-level variables (e.g., various national IPR protection regimes) on low-level variables (e.g., knowledge acquisition and protection strategies of MNEs in these policy environments) (Peterson, Arregle, & Martin, 2012).

Aims and Scope

We are interested in research that examines the joint impact of macro IPR protection regimes and MNEs' knowledge acquisition and protection approaches on key international business decisions and outcomes of MNEs. We particularly welcome multidisciplinary research that expands current themes by incorporating insights from a broader range of disciplines, e.g., political science, sociology, economics, innovation, HRM, and business strategy. Below we offer eight possible themes as examples of the types of topics we would like to include in this special issue. They are by no means exhaustive.

- 1) *Location choices in international expansion for knowledge exploiting and knowledge augmenting FDI.*
Topics may include choices of locations among nations, clusters of nations, or within-nation regions (Zhao, 2006), for FDIs made by emerging market multinationals (EMNEs) or developed country multinationals (DMNEs).
- 2) *Entry mode choices of large MNEs and international new ventures (INVs).*
Example topics may include choices of entry modes, and comparison of entry modes between EMNEs and DMNEs, between different types of INVs, or between established and new firms (Oxley, 1999; Phene & Tallman, 2012).
- 3) *Non-market strategies in home and host environments.*
Topics may include different forms of non-market strategies, e.g., CSR, political activities (Liu, Luo, & Cui, 2018; Mellahi, Frynas, Sun, & Siegel, 2016) that MNEs undertake, both in home and host countries.
- 4) *Strategy adaptation to low IPR protection environments.*
Topics may include, for example, alternative strategies to protect and acquire IPRs, and to obtain data, by EMNEs and DMNEs, as they enter low IPR regimes (Baldwin & Henkel, 2015).
- 5) *Autonomy, roles and corporate governance of MNE subunits.*
Topics could include the intentional and unintentional knowledge leakage from knowledge transfer between MNE units, teams, and individuals (Inkpen, Minbaeva & Tsang, 2018; Minbaeva, Pedersen, Bjorkman, & Fey, 2014), as well as governance mechanisms relevant

for IPR-related processes such as subunits' structure and design, composition of board of directors, top management team, executive compensation, etc.

6) *Alliances, M&A and external network management.*

Possible topics could include MNEs' and subsidiaries' alliance formation and portfolio management, cooptation (Cui, Yang, & Vertinsky, 2018, Wang, Wang, Yang, Jiang, & Cui, 2016), M&A strategies, as well as subunits' and individuals' embeddedness (Meyer, Mudambi, & Narula, 2011) in the alliance and competition networks in host-countries.

7) *Participation in clusters.*

Example topics could include the strategies of international agglomeration (Martin, Salomon, & Wu, 2010), inter-firm interactions in clusters in host countries, and their effects on firm IPR acquisition and protection.

8) *Organization of the R&D function.*

Topics include R&D team composition, compensation (Yanadori & Cui, 2013), talent acquisition, development, and retention (Kehoe & Tzabbar, 2015), as well as global and semi-global R&D configurations (Criscuolo & Narula, 2007).

Workshop and Symposium

To help authors develop their papers, we will organize a paper development workshop in the summer of 2020. Furthermore, we plan to have a symposium at a major academic conference in 2021 for the final selected papers for publication, aiming to increase their visibility and impact.

Submission Process and Deadlines

All manuscripts will be reviewed as a cohort for this Special Issue. Manuscripts must be submitted between November 15 and December 23, 2019, at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jibs>. All submissions will go through the JIBS regular double-blind review process and follow the standard norms and processes. For more information about this Call for Papers, please contact the Special Issue Editors or the JIBS Managing Editor (managing-editor@jibs.net).

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About the Guest Editors

Victor Cui is Associate Professor at the Asper School of Business of the University of Manitoba. His research focuses on knowledge creation, protection, and acquisition within R&D units, in inter-firm collaboration and competition, and under various national IPR protection regimes. He has also studied MNEs' corporate social responsibilities. His research has been published in *Strategic Management Journal* and *Journal of International Business Studies*. He is serving on the editorial board of JIBS.

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