

---

## Building innovation networks in science-based young firms: the selection of knowledge sources

---

Cristina Sousa\*

DINÂMIA'CET-IUL,  
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL),  
Av. das Forças Armadas 1649-026 Lisboa, Portugal  
E-mail: [cristina.sousa@iscte.pt](mailto:cristina.sousa@iscte.pt)  
\*Corresponding author

Margarida Fontes

Laboratório Nacional de Energia e Geologia,  
Estrada do Paço do Lumiar, 22 – Edifício C,  
1649-038 Lisboa, Portugal  
and  
DINÂMIA'CET-IUL,  
Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL),  
Av. das Forças Armadas 1649-026 Lisboa, Portugal  
E-mail: [margarida.fontes@lneg.pt](mailto:margarida.fontes@lneg.pt)

**Abstract:** The paper investigates the strategic choices made by young science-based firms regarding the selection of knowledge sources. Data collected on Portuguese biotechnology firms are analysed with a view to answer to two research questions: whether, to what extent and in which conditions science-based entrepreneurs activate their social capital and/or build new knowledge relationships at start-up; whether and to what extent the knowledge relationships established at start-up persist and/or the firm builds relationships with new organisations. The results confirm the importance attributed to tie persistence but they also show that science-based firms need to search for new knowledge sources from the very early stages. Thus, their start-up behaviour departs from the one often depicted by the entrepreneurship literature, that emphasises the mobilisation of the entrepreneurs' social capital. Results also show that persistence of ties established at start-up is lower than would be expected.

**Keywords:** knowledge network; entrepreneurship; network building strategy; science-based firm.

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Sousa, C. and Fontes, M. (2014) 'Building innovation networks in science-based young firms: the selection of knowledge sources', *Int. J. Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, Vol. 21, No. 3, pp.370–390.

**Biographical notes:** Cristina Sousa is a Research Fellow at DINÂMIA-CET/IUL and an Invited Assistant Professor at ISCTE/IUL. She received her Master's in Economics and Management of Science and Technology and her PhD in Economics, both from ISEG/UTL (Lisbon, Portugal). Her research interests include innovation, creation and circulation of knowledge