



Technological Forecasting & Social Change

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Special Issue on Digital Entrepreneurship: Creating and Doing Business in the Digital Era

Call for Papers:

Background and Context

In the last 5 years, empirical evidence suggests the rise of a new category of Entrepreneurship:

Digital Entrepreneurship,

as a relevant socio-economic and technological phenomenon, which can be considered as the joining of traditional entrepreneurship with an emphasis on leveraging new digital technologies in novel ways, such as social, mobile, analytics, cloud and cyber-solutions, all in order to shift the traditional way of creating and doing business in the digital era.

Consequently, we are witnessing a peak of initiatives across the globe to foster the acceleration of digital entrepreneurial activity related with the creation and development of “digital start-ups”, and more recently with their growth to scaling-up phases.

Digital Entrepreneurship can be defined as embracing “new ventures and the transformation of existing business by creating and using novel digital technologies. Digital Enterprises are characterised by a high intensity of utilisation of new digital technologies (particularly social, mobile, analytics and cloud solutions) to improve business operations, invent new (digital) business models, sharpen business intelligence, and engage with customers and stakeholders through new (digital) channels”¹. However, it is important to stress that there is a difference between ‘digital entrepreneurship’ and ‘digital business’ in general and ‘digital start-ups’ and ‘digital scale-ups’, which we believe provides an additional perspective.

Eric Ries (2011) in his *Lean Start-up Manifesto* stated that, “a start-up is a human institution designed to create a new product or service under conditions of extreme Uncertainty”. This follows Steve Blank’s (2013) famous definition of a start-up as “a temporary organization searching for a repeatable and scalable business model”. These references advocate a nature of high uncertainty and the quest for a repeatable and scalable business model in the core part of the definition.

Moreover, the ‘digital’ component relates to what Parker et al. (2016) refer to as ‘digital platforms’ that “consummate matches among producers and consumers and facilitate the exchange of goods, services or social currency, enabling value creation for all through the digital landscape”. Hence, digital start-ups and scale-ups are ventures that incorporate novel digital technology as a vital component of their business model and which could not feasibly operate without the internet-enabled platforms. This would therefore include businesses working on the ‘Internet of Things (IoT)’, and online retailers such as Amazon, but exclude retailers who have a physical presence on the high street².

¹ “Fuelling Digital Entrepreneurship in Europe”, European Commission.

² Methodology for Constructing the European Digital City Index, NESTA.

Digital scale-ups differ from digital start-ups on its level of maturity and growth pattern, and represent ventures that have stabilized its digital business model and got traction on users and customers, and typically obtained their first round of Series ‘A’ capital, with over 1 million dollars³. Scale-ups have different challenges from start-ups in the sense that they become “Gazelle” companies, they recruit vast numbers of people and need to incorporate new management functions, from operations to marketing, evolving from a unstructured chaotic day-to-day to an evolving structure, mature and still dynamic organization. Founders and their investors aim to make their scale-ups reach valuations that makes attractive to make significant exits, like becoming “Centaurus” - valued more than 100 million dollars - or ultimately “Unicorns” - valued over 1 billion dollars.

Digital start-ups and scale-ups tend to be created and develop in specific urban environments, leveraged by what David Isenberg (2011) defined as start-up and scale ecosystems growth for entrepreneurship, where policies, finance, culture, supports, human capital and markets play a fundamental role. This is aligned with Florida et al. (2016) perspective and on their advocate for the role of cities as the sources of innovation.

Whereas it is unquestionable the empirical evidence of the rise on relevance of digital entrepreneurship on the economy and social environment of some cities, some authors foresee already a new wave of digital start-ups linked to the Industry 4.0 and Internet of Everything, where digital platforms will be coupled and connected with sophisticated infrastructures of sensors, cyber-physical systems and robots (Case, 2016). This new wave of entrepreneurial activity will bring substantial new challenges on how to handle with technology, management, government policies, stakeholders’ engagement, etc., which justifies the call for papers of this special issue.

Scope of this Special Issue

This special issue aims to explore the “technological change and social impact” on “how digital start-ups and scale-ups are changing and will continue changing the technological, economic and social landscape” focus on understanding this socio-economic and technological phenomenon and contribute to empirical and theoretical knowledge by providing new theories, frameworks and models to foster their development.

We acknowledge the complexity and richness of the ‘Digital Entrepreneurship’ topic, and want to understand the phenomenon scientifically from different angles and perspectives, as the nature of entrepreneurship dictates as an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary domain.

This special issue seeks particularly, but not exclusively, contributions on two main threads:

- i. From the perspective of the digital start-up and digital scale-up venture and their entrepreneurs.
- ii. From the creation and development of digital start-ups and their scale-up ecosystems.

With the first thread, we aim at reaching out those working on theories of innovation, entrepreneurship and growth, where the emphasis is on the digital entrepreneur and on the digital start-up or scale-up venture and its (digital) technological, organizational, financial and market development strategies and business models. The focus is on providing a more comprehensive set of knowledge tools to help understand and successfully develop digital start-ups and scale-ups and help them reach to the next level. This should

³ Start-up Genome Report - A New Framework for Understanding why Start-ups Succeed.

address not only the ‘traditional’ digital start-ups and scale-ups, but foresee the emergence of the Internet of Everything type of digital start-ups and scale-ups.

Regarding the second thread, our aim is to follow Richard Florida et al. (2016) advocate of the work of Jane Jacobs that put cities as the key organizing unit for innovation, entrepreneurship and economic growth, and argue about how digital start-ups and digital scale-ups may not simply take in place in cities but in fact require them as an ecosystem that help lever their development, particularly looking at the foreseeable interconnectivity of the Internet of Everything across a myriad of city agents and devices.

References

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- Parker, G., Alstyn, M. and Choudary, S. (2016). *Platform Revolution: How Networked Markets are Transforming the Economy, and How to Make Them Work for You*. W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN-10: 0393249131.
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Submission and Selection Process

Abstracts of 500 words should be sent to all editors by email for a preliminary assessment and selection.

Authors of selected papers will have the opportunity to present their papers at a workshop to be held at the ICE Conference to be held Madeira on 27th to 29th June 2017: <http://www.ice-conference.org/> This participation is not precondition for selection of papers in this special issue.

Submission of papers will be done through journal online submission system (before September 30th, 2017). Authors should follow the Instructions for Authors found on the Journal homepage. The communication of accepted papers is due by December 31, 2017; publication of the special issue is planned for March 2018.

Important Dates

- Submission of abstracts: 30 March 2017
- Submissions full paper: 30 September 2017
- Final decision on accepted papers: 31 December 2017
- Revised versions of accepted papers: March 2018
- Publication: June 2018

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