Call for Papers for a Special Issue

ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEMS
Submission Period: October 1, 2015 – December 1, 2015

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Background and Special Issue Purpose

20 years since it was first coined (Moore, 1993), the term ‘ecosystem’ is increasingly used in the strategy and entrepreneurship literatures. In the strategy literature, the concept usually underpins studies looking at the dynamics of competition and collaboration in co-specialized technology-intensive settings (Adner & Kapoor, 2010; Autio & Thomas, 2014; Iansiti & Levien, 2004). In the entrepreneurship literature, the use of the term is more varied and used by practitioners and researchers in reference to entrepreneurship policy portfolios (Wessner, 2004), regional clusters of entrepreneurs and specialized resources (Kenney & Von Burg, 1999), to innovation ecosystems (Nambisan & Baron, 2013; Zahra & Nambisan, 2011), and even national systems of entrepreneurship (Acs, Autio, & Szerb, 2014). Two major streams can be identified in the study of entrepreneurial ecosystems: an ‘innovation ecosystems’ stream and a ‘regional ecosystems’ stream. Common to both is the idea that entrepreneurial ventures seldom operate in classical markets characterized by arm’s-length transactions and head-to-head competition between substitute firms, but rather, in network structures composed by co-specialized organizations that play complementary roles to advance value co-creation. This implies that the design and implementation of successful entrepreneurial strategies requires attention to not only firm-specific strengths and weaknesses, but also, to the wider context within which the new venture operates.

A recent Web of Science SSCI search using the search string ‘entrepreneur* AND ecosystem*’ confirms that the ecosystem theme in the context of entrepreneurship is both very recent and rapidly increasing in popularity. Five years ago only 14 papers were published under this theme. Now there are a total of 81 papers, with 23 papers published in the last year. This recent rapid increase in ecosystem approaches to entrepreneurship has created conceptual and terminological proliferation and confusion. This hampers both the understanding and design of effective strategies and business models for new ventures to compete effectively and achieve sustained growth in entrepreneurial ecosystems, as well as effective strategies and policies to foster and leverage entrepreneurship ecosystems. Given the rapid growth in this area, more theoretical and empirical work is urgently needed.

The ecosystem concept lends itself for the application of a wide range of different theoretical lenses to understand contextual determinants of new venture creation, strategies, and growth.
Applicable theoretical lenses include, for example, institutional theory (notably, the notion of organizational fields) (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Thomas & Autio, 2014); resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978); industrial organization frameworks (Teece, 2007); network approaches (Basole, 2009; Nambisan & Sawhney, 2011); and firm- and individual-level frameworks such as the business model framework (Zott & Amit, 2010) and cognitive approaches (Nambisan & Baron, 2013). Given the widespread policy interest in entrepreneurial ecosystems (see for instance Drexler et al., 2014; Graham, 2014; Napier et al., 2012), we expect the potential readership for the special issue to extend beyond the usual academic community to policy and entrepreneurship practitioner audiences.

This Special Issue invites both empirical and theoretical work in this area.

Possible Research Questions

We have identified the following questions as being of interest for the Special Issue. The list is not exhaustive. For research questions not listed below, scholars should also consider the extent to which their questions fit with SEJ’s core themes (http://sej.strategicmanagement.net/themes.php).

Theoretical Papers

- **Theorizing the concept(s) of entrepreneurial ecosystems.** How should different kinds of entrepreneurial ecosystems be conceptualized? Can we identify conceptually distinct archetypes of entrepreneurial ecosystems? How do entrepreneurial ecosystems differ from other widely used contextual concepts, such as markets, clusters, industries, value chains, networks, and organizational fields?

Empirical Papers

- **Business models in entrepreneurial ecosystems.** What features characterize successful business models in entrepreneurial ecosystem contexts? What are the business models that new ventures use to connect to entrepreneurial ecosystems? How do the two concepts connect? Do the leaders of successful entrepreneurial ecosystems have similar business models?

- **Ecosystem externalities and disruptive competition.** What are the strategies and business models that entrepreneurial ventures can use to gain entry to markets and unseat established incumbents? How can entrepreneurial ventures build and leverage ecosystem momentum for competitive advantage? What are the most salient ecosystem externalities that new ventures can leverage for rapid growth?

- **Ecosystem creation.** What are the processes that characterize the creation of new entrepreneurial ecosystems? How do the roles of specific participants, such as universities, accelerators and VCs, interact with early stage ventures in ecosystem creation? When can entrepreneurial new firms and industry incumbents create and drive ecosystems for competitive advantage? How important is geographical location? Are there any policy recommendations that can optimize the conditions for entrepreneurial ecosystem creation?

- **Ecosystem dynamics.** What are the best strategies for entrepreneurial ecosystem orchestration? What processes underpin the relationships between different ecosystem participants? Do particular participants, for example universities, always occupy the same network position and role? How does knowledge sharing occur in entrepreneurial ecosystems? How do entrepreneurial ecosystems interact with the wider economy in which they are situated?

Deadlines, Submission and Review Process:

Submissions to this special issue should be prepared in accordance with SEJ’s submission process described at http://sej.strategicmanagement.net. The submission window is from October 1, 2015 to...
December 1, 2015. Please make sure to indicate that your submission is for the special issue on *Entrepreneurship Ecosystems*. Publication of this special issue is planned for early 2019.

To enhance the quality of contributions to the Special Issue, we will hold a focused workshop at Imperial College London for the long short list of papers that successfully pass through the first review stage. Accommodation expenses for participants and travel expenses for one author per paper will be funded.

**Further Information**

For questions regarding the content of this special issue, please contact the guest editors:

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**References**


