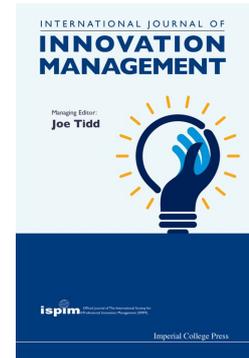


## Special Issue on When David meets Goliath: Start-ups and incumbents collaboration in digital times

### Guest Editors:

**Alexander Brem**, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU), Chair of Technology Management, Nuremberg, Germany, [www.tm.rw.fau.eu](http://www.tm.rw.fau.eu)

**Ferran Giones**, University of Southern Denmark (SDU), Mads Clausen Institute, Sønderborg, Denmark, [www.sdu.dk/en/mci](http://www.sdu.dk/en/mci)



### Background:

Since ever, established firms have to — and want to — collaborate with Start-ups. However, these days, such kinds of collaboration are seen as a key ingredient for successful corporate innovation management. Hence, collaboration between these players is at a new level, since the digitization process has triggered a broader transformation phenomenon across several industries (Loebbecke and Picot, 2015; Butschan *et al.*, 2018).

The digital transformation opens market entry windows for **Start-Ups**. With digital technologies it became much easier to develop, test and launch new products (Nambisan, 2016). Potentially, entrepreneurs can reach millions of customers just through a mouse click, for e.g., on Amazon and Ebay. However, many Start-Ups still struggle to gain market access and traction. Hence, the attractiveness of the option to collaborate with established companies to overcome innovation diffusion challenges (Autio *et al.*, 2018). But how Start-ups can and should work with established companies is not well researched yet (Hogenhuis, Van den Hende and Hultink, 2017). This is a key question, since such collaborations could jeopardize the Start-ups future, for e.g., through unwanted knowledge or personnel transfer to the established player/s (Gans, Scott and Stern, 2018). Hence, the question arises when and how Start-ups should collaborate — and when it is better to work "under the radar" of such companies.

On the other end, the current wave of this digital transformation puts pressure on **established firms** to identify and exploit new innovation opportunities. The challenge is to not only add a digital touch to current innovation practices or products, but to fully exploit its transformative potential (Teece, 2018). The incumbent's internal challenges to respond to digital innovation opportunities has resulted in an often unwelcomed group of digital intermediaries (from Amazon to AirBnB, Uber, or Netflix) that create and/or capture value from existing or new product and services (Kyprianou, 2018). New innovations are not only coming from the established competitors, but also from lead users who become user innovators and entrepreneurs (Brem, Bilgram and Marchuk, 2017; Schweisfurth, 2017). A possible solution for established firms is to further invest in cooperation and collaboration with Start-Ups, for e.g., through Business Incubators (Kreusel, Roth and Brem, 2018). The goal is to be engaged in the construction of the new entrepreneurial ecosystems (Drori and Wright, 2018) and to learn how to create products in these environments and stay relevant in a changing environment.

This is not an isolated problem in the information technologies or media industry. As the digital transformation permeates new industries, the pressure on established firms (for example, large industrial players) to identify new digital business models increases (Richter *et al.*, 2017). At the same time, new entrants (Start-Ups) interested in exploring and exploiting digital technologies applications (Giones and Brem, 2017) are eager to partner with firms that can contribute to build their legitimacy and accelerate their growth (Colombo, Grilli and Piva, 2006; Bjornali, Giones and Billström, 2017). The consequences of such collaborations can go from accelerating a new technology commercialization to triggering the emergence process of a completely new industry (Perks, Gruber and Edvardsson, 2012; Alvarez, Young and Woolley, 2015).

Therefore, a broader question arises: what do we know on the collaboration processes between Start-ups and established firms? How do these collaborations impact on the new products' innovation (of the Start-up or established firm)? To what extent do such dynamics influence firm growth? How do they contribute to new industries' emergence?

**Subject coverage:**

This special issue encourages conceptual and empirical work on the corporate-start-ups relationship in the context of digital transformation. Interdisciplinary research that connects technology innovation management and entrepreneurship are particularly welcomed.

**Suggested topics for this special issue include:**

*The impact of standards, dominant designs, and platforms in the corporate-start-ups collaborations:*

- How do standards and dominant designs foster or constrain innovation between corporate and start-ups in an industry?
- How do digital platforms impact on the innovation dynamics of incumbents and new entrants?

*Exploring the knowledge and geography aspects of corporate-start-up collaborations:*

- To what extent does technological knowledge or industry application determine the geographical location of corporate-start-ups collaborations?
- How do established players attract and retain start-ups to explore and exploit digital innovation opportunities?

*Explore the new processes, organizational structures and designs to respond to the corporate-start-ups relationships:*

- In the context of firm-sponsored incubation programs or corporate accelerators, what are the long-term effects for the incumbent and for the participating start-ups?
- What type of innovation ecosystem arrangements spur and support corporate and start-ups relationships? What new roles do academic and public institutions need to take in the context of the digital transformation to support such collaborations?

*Exploring modes of collaboration and protection in corporate-start-ups-relationships:*

- How do business models look like when both the established company and the Start-up should profit alike?
- What modes new or existent can help to organize Intellectual Property Rights, e.g. with using licenses or trademarks?

**Notes for prospective authors:**

- Please submit papers via the online submission system: <https://www.editorialmanager.com/wspc-ijim/default.aspx>
- Login or Register, and go to "Submit New Manuscript". Under the "Select Article Type", please choose Special Issue Paper. Once you have uploaded your paper and have reached the "Section/Category" page, please select: **Special Issue > When David meets Goliath: Start-ups and incumbents collaboration in digital times**
- Submitted papers must not have been previously published or be currently under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- All papers will be refereed by an international Special Issue Editorial Board through a double-blind peer review process.
- A guide for authors, sample copies and other relevant information is available at: <https://www.worldscientific.com/page/ijim/submission-guidelines>

In addition, selected articles will be invited to be published in a book published by World Scientific.

**Important Dates**

Submission of manuscripts: January 1, 2020

Notification to authors: March 15, 2020

Revisions due: May 15, 2020

Second round decisions: September 15, 2020

Revisions due: December 1, 2020

Final Editorial Decision: January 1, 2021

Journal publication: May 2021

For questions about the special issue, please contact Alexander Brem ([alexander.brem@fau.de](mailto:alexander.brem@fau.de)) and Ferran Giones ([fgiones@mci.sdu.dk](mailto:fgiones@mci.sdu.dk)).

**References:**

- Alvarez, S. a., Young, S. L. and Woolley, J. L. (2015) ‘Opportunities and institutions: A co-creation story of the king crab industry’, *Journal of Business Venturing*. Elsevier B.V., 30(1), pp. 95–112. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusvent.2014.07.011.
- Autio, E. *et al.* (2018) ‘Digital affordances, spatial affordances, and the genesis of entrepreneurial ecosystems’, *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 12(1), pp. 72–95. doi: 10.1002/sej.1266.
- Bjornali, E. S., Giones, F. and Billström, A. (2017) ‘Reveal or Conceal? Signaling Strategies for Building Legitimacy in Cleantech Firms’, *Sustainability*, 9(10), pp. 1–19. doi: 10.3390/su9101815.
- Brem, A., Bilgram, V. and Marchuk, A. (2017) ‘How crowdfunding platforms change the nature of user innovation – from problem solving to entrepreneurship’, *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*. Elsevier, (October). doi: 10.1016/j.techfore.2017.11.020.
- Butschan, J. *et al.* (2018) ‘Tackling hurdles to digital transformation - The role of competencies for succesful Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT) Implementation’, *International Journal of Innovation Management*. doi: 10.1142/S1363919619500361.
- Colombo, M. G., Grilli, L. and Piva, E. (2006) ‘In search of complementary assets: The determinants of alliance formation of high-tech start-ups’, *Research Policy*, 35(8), pp. 1166–1199. doi: 10.1016/j.respol.2006.09.002.
- Drori, I. and Wright, M. (2018) ‘Accelerators: characteristics, trends and the new entrepreneurial ecosystem’, in Wright, M. and Drori, I. (eds) *Accelerators*. Cheltenham, UK.: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 1–20. doi: 10.4337/9781786434098.00005.
- Gans, J. S., Scott, E. L. and Stern, S. (2018) ‘Strategy for start-ups’, *Harvard Business Review*, (May-June), pp. 44–52.
- Giones, F. and Brem, A. (2017) ‘From toys to tools: The co-evolution of technological and entrepreneurial developments in the drone industry’, *Business Horizons*, 60(6), pp. 875–884. doi: 10.1016/j.bushor.2017.08.001.
- Hogenhuis, B. N., Van den Hende, E. A. and Hultink, E. J. (2017) ‘Unlocking the innovation potential in large firms through timely and meaningful interactions with young ventures’, *International Journal of Innovation Management*, 21(01). doi: 10.1142/S1363919617500098.
- Kreusel, N., Roth, N. and Brem, A. (2018) ‘European business venturing in times of digitisation - an analysis of for-profit business incubators in a triple helix context’, *International Journal of Technology Management*, 76(1/2), p. 104. doi: 10.1504/IJTM.2018.088707.
- Kyprianou, C. (2018) ‘Creating Value from the Outside In or Inside Out: How Nascent Intermediaries Build Peer-to-Peer Marketplaces’, *Academy of Management Discoveries*. doi: 10.5465/amd.2017.0081.
- Loebbecke, C. and Picot, A. (2015) ‘Reflections on societal and business model transformation arising from digitization and big data analytics: A research agenda’, *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*. Elsevier B.V., 24(3), pp. 149–157. doi: 10.1016/j.jsis.2015.08.002.
- Nambisan, S. (2016) ‘Digital Entrepreneurship: Toward a Digital Technology Perspective of Entrepreneurship’, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, (414), pp. 1–27. doi: 10.1111/etap.12254.
- Perks, H., Gruber, T. and Edvardsson, B. (2012) ‘Co-creation in Radical Service Innovation: A Systematic Analysis of Microlevel Processes’, *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 29(6), pp. 935–951. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-5885.2012.00971.x.
- Richter, C. *et al.* (2017) ‘Digital entrepreneurship: Innovative business models for the sharing economy’, *Creativity and Innovation Management*, 26(3), pp. 300–310. doi: 10.1111/caim.12227.
- Schweisfurth, T. G. (2017) ‘Comparing internal and external lead users as sources of innovation’, *Research Policy*. Elsevier B.V., 46(1), pp. 238–248. doi: 10.1016/j.respol.2016.11.002.
- Teece, D. J. (2018) ‘Profiting from innovation in the digital economy: Enabling technologies, standards, and licensing models in the wireless world’, *Research Policy*. Elsevier, 47(8), pp. 1367–1387. doi: 10.1016/j.respol.2017.01.015.