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# Entreprendre & Innover

*Thematic issue # 58*

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## **The "startups - large companies" relationship: Critical state of the art and perspectives**

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**Guest Editors: Virginie Corvellec, Valérie Fernandez, Thomas Houy, Frédéric Olive**

It is common to present startups and large companies with antagonistic definitions, by emphasizing what makes them so different. Startups are supposed to be driven by the discovery of new processes, the production of original products/services and the conquest of new markets<sup>1</sup>. These young innovative companies follow an exploratory trajectory, by anchoring their organization on flexible procedures in order to facilitate permanent experimentations<sup>2</sup>. While large companies are known to be guided by the exploitation of their current business models. They seek to optimize what they have in their possession through the development of standards, the creation of routines and a strong attention to the control of their operations<sup>3</sup>.

This habit of opposing startups and large firms, at an organizational, strategic and cultural level, has a major drawback. It ignores the variety of relationships and the intensity of synergies that exist between these two types of players. Many startups have close commercial relationships with large companies, by selling them products and services (and *vice versa*). In addition, startups and large companies regularly collaborate and participate together in open innovation projects<sup>4</sup>. Large companies frequently welcome startups in their incubators/accelerators<sup>5</sup>. They also invest in startups

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<sup>1</sup> Blank S. (2013), "Why the lean startup changes everything?", Harvard Business Review, Vol.91, n°5, pp. 63-72.

<sup>2</sup> Ries E. (2011), The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses, *Crown Business Editions*.

<sup>3</sup> March J. (1991), "Exploration and exploitation in organizational learning", Organization Science, Vol.2, n°1, pp.71-87.

<sup>4</sup> Chesbrough H. (2003), Open innovation, The New Imperative for Creating and Profiting from Technology, *Harvard Business School Press*.

<sup>5</sup> Ben Mahmoud-Jouini S., Duvert C. et Esquirol M. (2018), "Key Factors in Building a Corporate Accelerator Capability", Research-Technology Management, Vol.61, n°4, pp.26-34.

with the help of their own corporate investment funds<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, large companies sometimes buy startups with the ambition to scale up their solutions<sup>7</sup>.

The diversity of the connections that take place between startups and large companies does not prejudge whether these relationships are balanced and mutually profitable. Indeed, there are many testimonies from practitioners which denounce the inefficiency of the association when these two economic actors come and work together. On both sides (*from startups and large companies*), critical voices are expressed to underline the number and the importance of the difficulties encountered before being able to benefit from this alliance.

The objective of this special issue is to critically study the variety of connections that are established between startups and large companies, by trying to identify the conditions that encourage the success of these relationships.

Contributions may shed light on the following questions:

\* Critical analysis of the "startups - large companies" relationship:

- How is the "startups - large companies" relationship perceived by the various departments of the large organization (*R&D department, Innovation department, ...*)?
- How do startups and large companies cooperate in the context of major innovation plans launched at the national or European level?
- What are the objectives of corporate incubators when they choose to support a startup?
- What are the drivers of a corporate VC when he decides to invest in a startup?
- Are "*startup studios*" part of a new way of thinking the relationship between startups and large companies?
- To what extent do intellectual property issues impact the relationship between startups and large companies, especially during the ideation steps?
- What is the legitimacy (and relevance) of the recommendations expressed on both sides of the relationship in order to enrich the collaboration?

\* Works to solve the problems faced by startups and large companies:

- How to facilitate business relationships between startups and large companies?
- To what extent are startups and large companies able to innovate together?
- What are the key variables that can impact the success (*or the failure*) of a startup's acquisition by a large company?
- What roles can third parties (*startup studios, consulting firms, ...*) play in the relationship in order to try to reconcile the interests of both startups and large companies?

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<sup>6</sup> Dushnitsky G. et Yu L. (2022), "*Why Do Incumbents Fund Startups? A Study of the Antecedents of Corporate Venture Capital in China*" Research Policy.

<sup>7</sup> Arora A., Fosfuri A. et Rønde T. (2021), "*Waiting for the Payday? The Market for Startups and the Timing of Entrepreneurial Exit*" Management Science, Vol 67, n°3, pp. 1453-1467.

- Are cultural differences, which are obvious within startups and large companies, likely to explain a large part of the failures in the relationship? Can they be overcome or should we consider dealing with them?

## Contact

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## Key dates to remember

**May 31st, 2023** - Call deadline

**September 30th, 2023** - Decision letters (first round)

**December 31st, 2023** - Decision letters (second round)

**March 2024** - Publication

## Editorial line

"*Entreprendre et Innover*" is a high-level vulgarisation journal in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation published by DeBoeck University. Its ambition is to make original, scientifically sound or innovative articles available to a readership of executives, entrepreneurs, professionals in business creation networks and business leaders. The journal is open to ALL disciplines and to ALL points of view interested in entrepreneurship and innovation.

**As this review is primarily aimed at practitioners, we are careful to ensure that the contributions are concerned with practical applications, business implications and/or policy recommendations.**

With this in mind, contributions should:

- **have a section making explicit reference to these concerns:** the reader should always be able to say at the end of the reading: so, what? how does this article help me to act on or to improve my future actions?

- **adopt more concrete and operational language** than is customary in academic journals: theory should not be absent but popularised, i.e. translated into simple terms. Abstract concepts should be made explicit and/or illustrated with practical examples.

- **not accumulate scientific references:** The aim is to select a few reference authors useful for understanding the subject, not to show the completeness of the academic literature on the subject. Scientific references should be cited exclusively through footnotes.

Please upload your submission on the journal's submission platform:

<https://eeti.manuscriptmanager.net3>

## 1° Editorial line

The *Entreprendre et innover* journal is a high-level popularisation journal in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation. Its vocation is to bring together practitioners and researchers in order to identify the most cutting-edge issues and trends that are topical today: academic researchers are asked to write on fundamental topics linked to current events and in a way that is understood by practitioners. Practitioners, on the other hand, are more than just readers. We are looking for them to bring back experiences, lessons and tools from the field that will enlighten and question the researchers.

The ambition is to make this journal available to a readership of managers, entrepreneurs, professionals in business creation networks and business leaders, with original articles that are scientifically sound or innovative in terms of the ideas they express. The journal is open to ALL disciplines and to ALL points of view interested in entrepreneurship.

As this journal is primarily aimed at practitioners, we remain attentive to the fact that the contributions have a concern for practical applications, entrepreneurial implications and/or policy recommendations.

Each issue has a specific theme that serves as a guideline for the identification of contributors and the selection of articles. But there are also articles in each issue that are not part of the theme, that are topical or circumstantial, and that come from academic colloquia and/or professional meetings.

The contributions sought are of different and complementary kinds:

The contributions sought are of 5 types:

A - Research article (including case studies)

B - Innovative practice: pedagogical (Innovative Pedagogical Practice), or professional (feedback on an experiment or results of an experimentation or an innovative process with an explanation of context, documented assessment and reflective questioning).

C - Professionals speaking out: interview, forum.

D - Book reviews (reader's digest type), studies/reports.

E - UTO (Unidentified Textual Object) articles: essays, tribunes, provocations, interdisciplinarity, in short articles that provoke debate with different points of view.

<p>Authors are specifically asked to conclude their papers with a paragraph of at least 15 lines that presents the practical implications (entrepreneurial, managerial or political) of their contribution. In the absence of implications, it should include, at a minimum, a conclusion or an expression of the author's personal opinion on the subject.</p>
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## **2° Format of the articles**

Texts in Word format, Arial" font or equivalent preferred size 12, double-spaced Numbered pages ("insert/page numbers" function in Word)

## **3° Presentation**

### Title of the article:

Always propose one, even if it may be modified for reasons of balance of the summary  
Five or six words maximum

### Authors:

After the title, indicate your full name(s), your position, the institution or organization to which you belong, your postal and e-mail address as well as the mobile or fixed telephone number where you can be reached.

### Biography:

We ask for a 2–3-line presentation of your background and interests including one or two major publications if applicable.

### Abstract

Authors are required to provide a 5–10-line summary of their paper, presenting the main arguments made, the context and/or method used and the practical and, where appropriate, theoretical implications of their contribution. The style of the abstract should be appealing, and therefore lively and dynamic.

### Notes

Use the "insert/note" function in Word.

In *Entreprendre & Innover*, footnotes/references are presented at the bottom of the page as the text progresses, and not under the text, nor as a long bibliography at the end. Beware of the length of the footnotes: this is a journal for practitioners, and not just for an academic audience. Be concise!

### Diagrams, tables and graphs

- Diagrams, tables and graphs are welcome.
- PowerPoint illustrations should be sent as a separate file, together with the text file.

### Boxes

These make it possible to lighten the text by "taking out" certain elements. They may concern examples, good practices, testimonies that you want to include as a counterpoint to the text.

Text boxes should not exceed 2,000 to 2,500 characters. There can be three or four per article

## Headlines

Headline elements - subheadings, caps, inters, highlights - are the responsibility of the editor-in-chief of the journal. However, there is nothing to stop you from proposing them.

## **4° Calibration**

It is essential to respect the calibration indicated for the accepted version of the article if you do not want to be "cut off at the editing stage". This sizing is understood to be "space included" and covers the entire text, including the boxes.

As an indication, the size of the desired contributions can be summarized as follows:

Editorial: 2,700 characters

Articles: Between 18,000 and 28,000 characters

Interview: Approximately 12,000 characters

Book summary: 12,000 characters.

## **5° Rules of style and readability**

### Footnotes

The code typographique de l'Imprimerie nationale recommends the following rule for works cited in footnotes: Domenach (Jean-Luc) and Richer (Philippe), *La Chine*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2008, p. 175-183.

### Plan announcements

Avoid, if possible, announcements of plans such as: "In the first part we will talk about this, then in the second part we will talk about that"...

Similarly, there is no need to write "introduction" and "conclusion".

If the reasoning is clear, the reader does not need to be taken by the hand.

### Heading levels

Avoid numbering paragraphs such as

1.1.1a

1.1.1.b

Instead, it is strongly recommended that a style sheet be used to highlight reading levels.

For example:

**Title (size 16 bold, centered)**

## **Inter (size 14, bold)**

Inter 2 (size 12, underlined, indented)

- Bullet points

Normally, three levels of reading are sufficient.

- Style of the journal

As it is aimed at professionals, the magazine is intended to be simple, direct and concrete. This should be reflected in the style. Avoid strings of subordinates ("It is customary to think that....But we have found that.... "), avoid convoluted formulas and convoluted words, especially when they are not in the dictionary.

## **6° Submission on the online platform.**

The articles and all the necessary information must be submitted on the submission platform:

<https://eeti.manuscriptmanager.net> 7

## **7° Proofreading and improvement of the style for a practitioner audience.**

The submitted articles are systematically evaluated in double blind by two reviewers recruited by the guest editors of an issue in collaboration with the editors. The editors report back to the authors.

In addition, articles must be in a style suitable for a practitioner readership and are constrained by certain editorial rules (size, layout etc.). They are therefore also systematically proofread by a nonacademic reviewer who checks the readability of the article for practitioners and may suggest revising modifying or shortening certain passages. Any such changes are strictly formal. The substance of the articles will not be modified in any way without the prior agreement of the authors.