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Future-Focused Thinking

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Design-led Entrepreneurship: exploration and systemic mapping of processes and methodologies

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1. Workshop Organiser/s

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2. Context of Workshop

The developed world is rapidly transitioning from an industrialized economy to one powered by startups. This trend, referred to as the "startup movement", harbors a sub-trend that's important to the field of design. Increasingly the strategy entrepreneurs use to manage their startups has embraced the process designers use to develop products and services. Since the convergence is happening naturally, the two processes should have synergies. The main objective of this workshop is to explore those synergies.

The speed at which these entrepreneurs need to navigate is driving the development of new theoretical foundations, practices, methods and tools at a speed that's challenging the ability to understand their implications of academics and seasoned practitioners, in both fields. The main objective of this workshop/research is to try to establish the path of this trend, explore and map the synergies between design and startup-entrepreneurship. Furthermore, knowing that management and design science and disciplines originate from fundamentally different paradigms, but unavoidably cohabit in practice within projects, it is worth exploring this apparent convergence as well as the operationalization of their respective methods and approaches, prescriptive for one and self-organising for the other.

Few studies have emerged on the specific convergence of these two disciplines under the angle of entrepreneurship-innovation / designer-creator. Therefore, the following question guides the present workshop: how can design/creation processes, through innovation, inform entrepreneurial processes, and vice versa?

Moreover, in searching this question, this workshop wishes to address the critical approach and role of mentors/teachers who support and accompany these creative/entrepreneurial endeavors, how they provide immersive professional experiences, how they bridge gaps between disciplines.

Our preliminary observations, case study analysis and our evolving literature review reveals that: (1) the links between theories of entrepreneurship and innovation are well established; (2) the links between design and entrepreneurship, in terms of scientific research output, remain superficial and in need of further inquiry; (3) the trend in startups initiatives suggest a real need in pursuing further inquiry into the synergy of design - innovation - entrepreneurship as a promising field of research.

This workshop engages conference themes 1 and 2:
1. FUTURE-FOCUSED THINKING:
2. KEY CONFERENCE QUESTIONS
How can design research be a creative and active force for rethinking ideas about Design?
How can design research shape our lives in more responsible, meaningful, and open ways?

Additional sub themes are also addressed (4, 7, 11, 12, 13), but more specifically theme 13:
DESIGN THINKING IN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA

The following questions are put forward in order to feed the discussion:

- How design applied to entrepreneurship can lead to social innovation?
- How design processes affect the startup process and adds value to it?
- How design is transforming the entrepreneurial process by replacing the concept of « idea » by « the value proposition », through « framing innovation » ?
- Is the entrepreneurial process a design process? What are the similarities between design and entrepreneurship?
- How is design perceived by entrepreneurs?
- What are the implications, for design, of applying design thinking to entrepreneurial process?
- Is design thinking really designing?
- How principles of systemic theory (through modelling, mapping and visualization) help understand the interrelationships between two apparently different and parallel processes ?

3. Planned Activities and Expected Outcomes

Organisation

Three moderators/mentors will direct the participants through four (4) activities. Two additional aids will assist in assuring that directives are understood and followed, as well as making sure that the workshop material is available.

Activities

1- The first step is comprised of a shot exposé, by the organisers, of eight research case studies that highlight the specifics (the benefits and challenge) of design oriented startup initiatives. The cases are from small startups from Canada, France, Japan, Mexico and the US. Cases are set both in academic settings and real business startups. This exposé also highlights the main theoretical foundations of both fields: design and startup management. Michel de Blois and Xavier Lesage will finally describe two programs/curriculums, from their respective institutions, which focus on integrated design-led startup. These programs offer a novel approach to teaching and experiencing entrepreneurship, by focussing on design approaches and methodologies instead of solely on the business aspects. Potential participants are also welcome to submit their own startup cases. A template will be provided in order to prepare the cases, as well as a table of theories and tools used to conduct our cases. Participants will be briefed about the underlying theories, methods and tools, from each processes.

2- The second step outlines the main phases of the cases. The aim is to highlight the parallel and iterative processes of design and management within the startup developement processes. Participants, divided into groups of 4 to 6 people are invited to map these processes for selected cases.

3- Once mapped, a selected member of each group summarizes their findings. Participants are then invited to cross-pollinate their maps, borrowing from each group in order to generate two other maps: (1) one that focusses mainly on management-led processes; (2) the other that focusses mainly on the design-led processes.

4- Participants are then invited to comment on each map by "populating" each process/phases of these startups. The objective here consists in identifying the "connexion points" and synergies between the two seemingly converging processes.

Outcomes

Participants will leave the workshop understanding the processes and synergies between design and entrepreneurship. A comprehensive map of processes, tools and methods will be summarized and published after the conference. Participants will be given the opportunity to collaborate and provide additional material and input towards assembling the final map and supporting material.

Pedagogy

This particular curriculum asks for novel curriculum and pedagogy innovation. Design has been at the forefront of hybrid and alternative teaching environments. Studies have shown that entrepreneurship is traditionally taught in businesss school and that they are ill prepared (with some notable exceptions) for such alternative pedagogy. This workshop also introduces basic principles of hybrid co-working flexible environments.

4. Intended Audience

The « design-led entrepreneurship » workshop brings together a diverse field of motivated researchers, academics, practitioners, entrepreneurs and graduate students. They are driven by the role and potential of design in building innovative entrepreneurial initiatives. Partners from Higher Education institutions, as well as practitioners from creative industries and interventionist programmes (such as the Atelier de Paris and similar initiatives in other countries) will be involved.

5. Length of Workshop

This wokshop is intended to span for a full day. The activities outlined can nonetheless be conducted within a half day. If possible (schedule permitting), the workshop would be held in a half day format. The core team and available participants would then spend the other half day discussing the results and push further the discussion initiated in the workshop.

6. Space and Equipment Required

Design-led startup workshops are (normally) conducted within a flexible design studio environment, where participants can adapt their environment (equipment, furniture, tools, etc.) according to the activities and the process stage of the startup and design process.

Participants will need to rearrange the space for:

1 - Team work (in groups of 4-5) for discussions, process modelling and mapping (materials: chairs, blackboards- cork for pinning, markers, post its, construction colored paper, scotch tape, pins, etc.)
2 - Group work and presentations: computer, projector, screen
4 - Reporting: cameras, video, computer, projector, screen, access to printer (picture processing
Material for the workshop: (1) Case study briefs, mapping instructions, tool templates; (2) white boards and markers; (3) Easel and large A2 paper pads; (4) Post-its; (5) Projector and screen; (5)Tables and chairs

7. Potential Outputs

Participants will gain fresh insights into the latest developments into design-led startup theory and practices, namely the synergies between design and entrepreneurship processes, theories, tools, academic and popular literature. A mapping of these parallel and systemic processes will be proposed by participants and shared through the conference. The goal is to craft strong value propositions methods, for design-entrepreneurs, by the means of integrated product/service/experience design methodologies towards responsible social innovations. The workshop format is based on multi-tier curriculums (a mix of experience design and startup management), that blends strategic business management and entrepreneurship with product and experience design.

Professors will gain new insights into theories and practices supporting entrepreneurship initiatives, which are more than ever design-driven. Professionals and practitioners will gain insight into how design adds value and coherence to business propositions. Students will be introduced to new and novel curriculums. They will also have the opportunity to contribute their vision into developing innovative approaches to pedagogy.

About the Organisers:

Michel de Blois is a serial entrepreneur. He is the program director of Startup Fuze at ULaval, he teaches product design and design led-entrepreneurship. He has an extensive professional background in product design, design management, strategic design, manufacturing, construction, project management.

Xavier Lesage, associate professor of Strategy, is the head of the Entrepreneurship Master Degree Programme at the Essca School of Management and managing its business incubator. He also works as an international consultant for Japanese national and regional innovation programmes for traditional SMEs.

Françoise Seince is the managing director of Ateliers De Paris, a support program and a place dedicated to the promotion of Arts and crafts, fashion and design founded by the city of Paris in 2005. She has supported over 100 projects into their successful development.