



## Special Session Proposal

### Entrepreneurial Ecosystems in Transformation: Digitalisation, Agency, and Regional Value Creation

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#### Abstract

Entrepreneurial ecosystem (EE) research has evolved rapidly over the past decade, moving beyond static inventories of actors and institutions toward dynamic, system-oriented explanations of how entrepreneurship emerges, scales, and generates value in different regional contexts. Recent advances emphasise entrepreneurial ecosystems as complex adaptive systems shaped by multi-actor agency, institutional alignment, and increasingly by digital technologies and platforms.

This special session aims to capture the **next generation of EE research** by focusing on three interrelated transformations. First, it highlights the shift from individual-centred entrepreneurship to distributed, networked agency, involving entrepreneurs, users, platforms, financiers, and support organisations. Second, it addresses how digitalisation and platform infrastructures reconfigure ecosystem dynamics, governance, and spatial embeddedness—blurring traditional local boundaries while raising new challenges of anchoring value within regions. Third, it expands the notion of ecosystem performance beyond startup formation to broader outputs and outcomes, including scale-up dynamics, the digital transformation of incumbents, social inclusion, sustainability, and individual well-being.

From a regional science perspective, the session seeks to advance understanding of how entrepreneurial ecosystems operate across space, how they evolve over time, and why their trajectories diverge across regions.



Contributions are welcome that develop theory, provide novel empirical evidence, introduce new measurement approaches, or critically reflect on ecosystem-oriented policy interventions.

More specifically, by bringing together scholars working at the frontier of EE and digital entrepreneurship ecosystem research, the session aims to define future research directions and strengthen the integration of ecosystem thinking into regional science.

### Key Themes and Research Directions

Contributions may address (but are not limited to):

- Entrepreneurial ecosystems as complex adaptive systems
  - Evolution, path dependency, and systemic bottlenecks
  - Feedback loops and non-linear dynamics
- Agency, power, and governance in ecosystems
  - Multi-actor and distributed agency
  - The role of platforms, financiers, and institutional actors
  - Entrepreneur-led versus policy-led ecosystems
- Digitalisation and ecosystem transformation
  - Digital infrastructures and multi-sided platforms as ecosystem core elements
  - Digital entrepreneurship ecosystems and hybrid EE–DEE configurations
  - Global connectivity versus local anchoring of value
- Measuring ecosystem performance
  - Beyond startup counts: scaleups, incumbent transformation, inclusion
  - Composite indicators, bottleneck approaches, and systemic diagnostics
  - Linking ecosystem structure to regional outcomes
- Ecosystems, sustainability, and inclusion
  - Social and environmental value creation
  - Digital divides, access, and equity within ecosystems
  - Entrepreneurial ecosystems in peripheral and less developed regions