

Entrepreneurs Club – An eco-system for entrepreneurship and digital social innovation in the North Patagonia region, Argentina

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ABSTRACT

This poster paper presents a research line aiming at defining a framework for the creation, strengthening and institutionalization of an ecosystem that supports and ensures the sustainability of the *Viedma Entrepreneurs Club* for Viedma and the Northern Region of Patagonia in Argentina. The Club aims at promoting and building human and institutional capacities for developing entrepreneurs and digital social innovation, as means to promote digital economy in the region. The paper discusses the motivation for the research line, the guiding research questions and the research methodology. In addition, it explains the direct and indirect application areas of the expected findings.

CCS CONCEPTS

Applied computing → Computers in other domains → Computing in government → E-government

KEYWORDS

Entrepreneurs, Digital Social Innovations, Digital Technologies,

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1 INTRODUCTION

In September 2015, during the United Nations General Assembly, the 193 Member States subscribed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. “The 2030 Agenda is a transforming agenda, focusing on people’s equality and dignity to change our developing model protecting the environment” [1].

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its 169 targets show a new development path including social, economic and environmental dimensions. Three of the objectives (SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, and SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities) include the creation of resilient infrastructures; the development of productive activities based on creativity, innovation and business initiatives; actions to improve technological capabilities and a considerable increase of access to information and communication technologies (ICT), and others.

Although many governments try to empower citizens, especially young people, in order to fulfil such objectives, it is necessary to build actors and institutions capacities. Thus, in this context, the main challenge consists on creating an entrepreneurship ecosystem which empowers individual and community’s capabilities related to digital technologies, as well as on developing creativity and innovation abilities within the region.

This paper introduces a research line aiming at defining a framework for the creation, reinforcement and institutionalization of an ecosystem that supports and ensures the sustainability of the *Viedma Entrepreneurs Club* for Viedma and the Northern Region of Patagonia in Argentina. The Club should encourage entrepreneurship and digital social innovation to promote digital economy in the region. Additionally, it should centralize and coordinate efforts, ensure the availability of financial sources and incorporate a digital dimension in each of the initiatives to be developed, among other actions. Mainly, the main objective of this Club is empowering young people, for them be able to progress in the local knowledge society and, in this way, contribute to diversify the productivity within the region.

This rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 describes the principles of the project. Section 3 introduces the research questions, the research methodology of the project and the expected contributions. Finally, Section 4 illustrates the possible areas of application.

2 BACKGROUND

The research work presented in this paper is based on the need to conduct initiatives aimed at providing jobs and contributing to social inclusion of young people in the North Atlantic Patagonia region. For this reason, the project seeks to promote empowering and social innovation among young people.

Governments, international organizations, NGOs, among others, move forward in developing initiatives that empower entrepreneurial ecosystems with social innovation. In Latin America, in particular, the UNDP1 and the ILO2, analysed the situation and concluded that, although “entrepreneurship is not the principal alternative of labour inclusion”, both are highly related and private companies are highly involved. Likewise, they argue that “the enhancement of ecosystems promoting entrepreneurs,

¹ <http://www.undp.org/>

²² <http://www.ilo.org/global/lang-en/index.htm>

where financial resources are joined with support services, has proven to be a way of innovation, as well as a means to achieve a better cost-effectiveness ratio compared with unidimensional approaches which could rarely be coordinated" [2].

Additionally, it is evident that the region is focused on generating a higher amount of young people able to become entrepreneurs. However, this process should be coordinated with others developing entrepreneurial culture, supported by a staged process and with specific interventions in an entrepreneurial ecosystem.

In Argentina, many of the initiatives intended to promote and consolidate an entrepreneurial culture, are originated among entrepreneurs, NGOs and the Government. The latter promotes a wide variety of actions, from helping the entrepreneur in the process of developing their ideas [3], dealing with non-refundable contributions [4], and even financing collaborative working environments in different cities and regions of the country, in order to encourage both the local talent as well as to promote regional economic development [5]. In the region, the Laboratory of Applied Informatics of the National University of Rio Negro carries out activities related to entrepreneurship and innovation, such as organizing hackathons, developing co-creation activities and collaborative working environments, and promoting actions, so that teachers and students can have access to financial resources to implement their ideas and are able to do technology transfer, among other activities. Some of the activities are described [6], [7], [8], [9]

3 RESEARCH WORK

The following two sections introduce the questions and methodology guiding and underpinning the research project.

3.1 Research Questions

The project aims to answer two research questions: 1) which are the human, organizational and institutional capabilities necessary to develop an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region? and, 2) how can the National University of Rio Negro contribute in developing such capabilities? Indeed, the research projects aims at providing the foundations for the establishment and nurturing of the Club.

3.2 Research Methodology

The following methodology is proposed to address the research questions and to define a framework for the creation, reinforcement and institutionalization of the ecosystem that supports and finances the Entrepreneurial Club and digital social innovation in the Northern Atlantic Region of Patagonia in Argentina:

- 1) *Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation – State of the Art*. Determining the state of research and practice related to promoting entrepreneurship and social innovation.
- 2) *Universities as Agents for Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation – State of the Art*. Assessing the state of research and practice of the role of universities as a local development agent promoting and institutionalizing capabilities to develop entrepreneurship and social innovation.
- 3) *Needs Assessment*. Defining the local ecosystem needs associated to the Entrepreneurial Club and identifying the

main operating requirements, based on recommendations from 1), 2).

- 4) *Prototype Development*. Designing a prototype organization for an ecosystem based on the main requirements identified in item 3).
- 5) *Definition of Processes and Interventions*. Determining a group of necessary processes, stages and interventions that should be developed based on the obtained recommendations from items 1) y 2) and the experience gained in 4).
- 6) *Proof of Concept*. Testing the prototype designed in 4) in a controlled environment with the processes and interventions produced in item 5), and improving the model based on received feedback.
- 7) *Case Study*. Verifying the effectiveness of the model in a real scenario with the participation of the local government and entrepreneurs. It is expected that the previous activities will enable the establishment of the Club and through this activity we would be able to resume lessons learnt and adjust all needed features.
- 8) *Publishing results*. Sharing the lessons learnt from the project by means of scientific publications, policy recommendations, and training activities.

4 APPLICATIONS

The results expected from this research work focus on: 1) generating synergy among different actors leading to entrepreneurial and innovative procedures, 2) increasing participation of young people into entrepreneurial and social innovation activities, 3) promoting the participation of women in technological activities, 4) promoting the role of young people in the creation and design of initiatives and not limiting their participation only to simple recipients, 5) involving the private and the public sector in developing an entrepreneurial environment.

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