

California Management Review (CMR)
Special Issue on
Managing Multi-sided Platforms and the Future of the
Sharing Economy

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Sharing economy multi-sided platforms (MSP) have revolutionized models of many traditional businesses, including in transportation, hospitality, and financial services. MSP have enabled the rapid rise of a significant number of ‘unicorns’ worldwide. In 2015, the global value of sharing economy platforms was US\$15 billion, and this is expected to increase more than twentyfold by 2025. As digitalization continues to evolve, the *potential* of MSP is increasing considerably for both contemporary and future economies.

We define MSP as digital ecosystems for organizing collaboration and control – based on software, hardware, and services – that do not take ownership of the services for which they facilitate exchange through diverse inter-organizational interactions. Digital platforms create new boundaries within which customers, by sharing their own underutilized resources, might help each other to create new value or, in other words, innovations (Reuver et al, 2018). “Sharing economy MSP create strong network effects, as their relative value rises with the number of actors – users and suppliers – joining their ‘ecosystem’” (Acquier, Daudigeos and Pinkse, 2017).

During the past decade many scholars have observed that MSP can reduce transactional costs, improve the accessibility of services, manage consumerism (and thus contribute to sustainability), restructure entire industries, and create business model innovations (Teece, 2017; Cusumano, Gawer and Yoffie, 2019). It is also true that sharing economy MSP have penetrated some industries more than others. Though we can clearly name MSP leaders in transport, hospitality and the financial sector, only a handful of MSP have emerged in healthcare. Why are some sectors, e.g. healthcare, less receptive to sharing economy MSP?

Furthermore, recent developments concerning Uber, Lyft, Airbnb and other platform companies show that MSP tend to generate considerable controversies and paradoxes (Slee, 2016; Srineck, 2016). Behind their professed ideologies that champion sharing, community, flexibility and disintermediation, it is hard to disregard that MSP use power asymmetries to capture most of the value that independent service providers and customers create (Bauwens and Kostakis, 2014). Power asymmetries through strong subordination disclose a lack of legal protection, a lack of security and economic dependency on the platform for platform service providers (Carboni, 2016; Redfearn, 2016). What are the dynamics of power in sharing economy MSP? What is the life-cycle of such platforms?

The public mood seems to be changing. For example, to protect their rights, the Independent Uber Guild (IUG), an association for Uber drivers, was established in 2016 in New York City. Its goal is to collectively bargain on behalf of its members, i.e. self-employed drivers, and to carry out public actions. Rapidly growing, new technological giants such as Airbnb, Uber, and BlaBlaCar seem to be losing their stakeholders' trust and support (Srineck, 2016). What are the capabilities needed by MSP to successfully change with the changing needs of service providers, customers and partners?

At the same time, Mr Tony West, Uber's Chief Legal Officer, has stated (in a press call, September 11, 2019) that "we will continue to defend the innovation that makes that kind of choice, flexibility, and independence a reality for over 200,000 drivers in California." This raises such questions as: how can the MSP model become sustainable? Why are some shared economy MSP more competitive than others?

While the value of sharing economy MSP is evident, companies that own MSP while maturing can struggle to manage the changing needs of MSP stakeholders, including service providers, users, and partners. "Leaders struggle with balancing beliefs and requirements of openness with concerns about competitive advantage and risks" (Altman and Tushman, 2017) when attempting to maintain the growth of a MSP business. In addition, legacy systems are likely to provide significant barriers to maturing digital platforms. The troublesome example of mature MSP discourages sectors relatively less penetrated by MSP, such as healthcare, to invest in MSP despite real need. How can highly regulated and liability-based sectors such as healthcare be encouraged to adopt MSP solutions?

This special issue of the *California Management Review* will shed light on these controversies and barriers. The insights of the selected authors will help to pave the way for future MSP. This special issue will bring together scholars from different disciplines and practitioners who have had success addressing MSP-related issues. Such research will help managers lead their organizations to higher levels of performance in fast-changing and highly competitive global markets.

For this special issue we are looking for contributions that, for example, focus on one (or more) of the following research avenues:

- dynamic capabilities, change management and MSP
- economics of MSP and business model innovations
- life-cycles of MSP and related tensions and controversies

- politics and policies of MSP
- ethics and liability in MSP
- structure, governance and power asymmetries in MSP
- dynamics of organizational boundaries and identities in MSP
- open innovations in MSP
- cooperation, competition and co-opetition in MSP
- knowledge management and organizational learning in multi-sided markets
- complementors, intermediaries, networks and performance orchestration in multi-sided markets
- MSP and digital service ecosystem performance.

The above are only some of the potential research avenues into sharing economy MSP. The purpose of this special issue is to stimulate discussion among researchers and practitioners on the adoption of sharing economy MSP in a more sustainable way. In addition, we encourage scholars to investigate the behavior of MSP in different business sectors, including those that are less penetrated by MSP, such as healthcare. Contributions might be conceptual, case-study-based, quantitative or mixed-methods empirical studies.

Process and timelines for submissions

This is an invitation-only special issue. We will invite a number of experts in the field. **Initial, full papers** must be submitted **no later than September 30, 2020** for the attention of corresponding Guest Editor **Asta Pundziene** (asta.pundziene@ktu.lt).

The paper should be in line with the CMR editorial guidelines, which can be found here: http://cmr.berkeley.edu/submission_guidelines.html. The word count of initial full papers must be 5,000–8,000. It is crucial to understand that the CMR's readership is split between academics and practitioners, so all papers must be both academically sound (well-grounded in the current, relevant literature) and offer novel, prescriptive advice for practicing managers. In your submission email, please clearly state (1) author details, (2) the purpose of the study, (3) how the paper addresses the topic of this special issue and (4) the relevance of the research to the readership of the CMR and what impact you anticipate making with your paper. You are welcome to contact any of the Guest Editors for the further information.

Based on the initial full papers submitted, the Guest Editors will select the (approximately 13) papers that are most likely to result in high-impact publications. Authors of these selected papers **will receive an official invitation to submit their full papers through the CMR online portal** no later than **January 30, 2021** for peer review. The double-blind peer-review process will be rigorously performed in accordance with CMR tradition and guidelines. Papers submitted via the online portal without having received an invitation **will not** be considered for the publication in this special issue.

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