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# Fantastic Ventures and Where to Find Them: Gazelles, Unicorns, and other Evolutionary Entrepreneurial Species

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**Journal:** [Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development](#)

**Guest editor(s):** [Matteo Cristofaro](#), [Johan Kask](#), [Jeffrey Muldoon](#)

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## Introduction

Amazon, Facebook, Uber, Airbnb, Tesla and other extraordinary companies – at least in terms of business’ results – are dominating our economies and have definitively changed our social and professional habits. These ventures achieved lightning-fast growth combined with extraordinary market value, leading them to be considered as exceptional entrepreneurial ‘species’. Indeed, often they are described metaphorically as gazelles, unicorns, narwhals, dedacorns, hectocorns, and more (Parker et al., 2010; Colombelli et al., 2014; Demir et al., 2017). Still other entrepreneurial cases are called zebras (e.g., Patagonia, Etsy), camels (e.g., Grubhub, Zooma) and donkeys (e.g., HelloFresh, ZocDoc) according to their performance and characteristics (e.g., Lazarow, 2020a; 2020b).

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Indeed, entrepreneurial ventures that evolve in radically powerful ways have effects on employment, innovation rates, and the urban politics in the environments where they are embedded (Henrekson and Johansson, 2010; Bos and Stam, 2014; McNeill, 2016; Senderovitz et al., 2016; Anton, 2019; Murphy et al., 2021). Therefore, research on the essence of these entrepreneurial 'species' and the underpinnings of their evolution is warranted.

According to the current literature, the extraordinary impact of these radically unique entrepreneurial ventures is due to: (1) breakouts from traditional life cycle phases and (2) progressive approaches to valuation that do not apply to more traditional businesses (De Massis et al., 2016; DeSantola and Gulati, 2017; Bock and Hackober, 2020; Cowden et al., 2020; Kurtatko et al., 2020; Abatecola et al., 2021). However, current research on these evolved entrepreneurial species is nascent and usually lumped into venture capital conversations (e.g., Kenney and Zysman, 2019) or media articles (Gupta, 2015; Mara and Aniyia, 2016; Rice, 2021).

This Special Issue of the Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development advances the understanding of these 'fantastic' entrepreneurial species. The objective is to clarify whether gazelles, unicorns, zebras, and so on constitute a new paradigm in entrepreneurial thought, or if they are merely a distraction (Aldrich and Ruef, 2018; 2020). In fact, it is worth noting that some scholars think that allocating effort towards the understanding of these kinds of extraordinary ventures would merely mean solving problems for less than 1% of start-ups. This SI promises to determine whether extraordinary entrepreneurial dynamics belong only to this tiny portion or, by contrast, are relevant to a larger population of entrepreneurial ventures worldwide.

We call for submissions that investigate, through qualitative and/or quantitative methodologies and approaches (e.g., evolution, co-evolution, etc.; Paniccia and Leoni, 2019; Abatecola et al., 2020), new entrepreneurial evolutions. We intend for this Special Issue to make a significant impact on the field of entrepreneurship, offer many new implications for entrepreneurs, scholars, and policymakers who have interests in identifying and shepherding these highly novel and evolutionary venture forms.

We offer an online pre-submission Paper Development Workshop on the 11th of November 2022. Please send your expression of interest to this PDW and to the Special Issue to [matteo.cristofaro@uniroma2.it](mailto:matteo.cristofaro@uniroma2.it).

## List of topic areas

- Unicorns
- Gazelles
- High growth start-ups

## Submission information

Submissions are made using ScholarOne Manuscripts. Registration and access are available at: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/jsbed>.

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Submitted articles must not have been previously published, nor should they be under consideration for publication anywhere else, while under review for this journal.

## Key deadlines

Opening date for manuscripts submissions: 14/11/2022

Closing date for manuscripts submission: 14/02/2023

# Guest Editors

Matteo Cristofaro, University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy,

[matteo.cristofaro@uniroma2.it](mailto:matteo.cristofaro@uniroma2.it)

Johan Kask, Örebro University School of Business, Sweden, [johan.kask@oru.se](mailto:johan.kask@oru.se)

Jeffrey Muldoon, Emporia State University, U.S., [jmuldoon@emporia.edu](mailto:jmuldoon@emporia.edu)

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