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Title: **Digital business incubators and development-led entrepreneurship: a focus on entrepreneurial path-creation** (ID: 674)

Status: **Accepted**

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### **Review Comment**

Thank you for your abstract submission to ISBE 2018. The abstract's focus on incubators and the development of entrepreneurship is very relevant. Methodology provides depth to the understanding and the implications for economic development are key. Potential for transformation entrepreneurship is evident. Really looking forward to your submission and reviewing the full paper. Abstract accepted.

### **Citation**

Ngoasong, M.Z., Lamptey, R. O., & Njinyah, S. Z. (2018). Digital business incubators and development-led entrepreneurship: a focus on entrepreneurial path-creation. 41<sup>st</sup> ISBE conference. Birmingham, UK.

## Abstract

### **Applicability to the conference theme – ‘Research, policy and practice: Collaboration in a disparate world’**

Policy-makers in sub-Saharan African countries and elsewhere are looking for more effective ways of using research evidence to understand the proliferation of digitization and digital business incubators over the past decade to support policy-making and to ensure that incubators promote development-led entrepreneurship.

### ***Aim***

This paper critically explores the determinants of development-led entrepreneurship through digital business incubators in Sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on entrepreneurial path-creation. While incubators are not new in Africa, a proliferation of digital business incubators have been witnessed in the past decade, directly financed through partnerships involving international development agencies, private investors and philanthropic donors seeking to promote development through commercially viable small businesses. The main research question being addressed is: How do business incubators influence development-led entrepreneurship?

### ***Methodology***

The paper adopts a qualitative approach consisting of interviews with managers and entrepreneurs drawn from eight business incubators in Kenya, Cameroon and Ghana, selected for their distinctive geographic context commonality and yet notable institutional and technology context differences. The data was analysed using narrative analysis. Narratives are elements of practice captured in the context-specific stories or accounts by interviewees and are analysed to uncover the “what”, “how” and “why” in business incubators. The result of the empirical analysis is the derivation of a theoretical framework from case studies.

### ***Contribution***

First the paper develops and critically explores a theoretical framework for analysing how business incubators influence development-led entrepreneurship through digital businesses. The framework integrates the concepts business incubators, development-led entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial path-creation. Second, we contribute to the literature on business incubation by conceptualizing business incubators as important institutional enablers for entrepreneurs seeking to undertake commercial activities that are capable of transforming the economy.

### ***Implications for policy***

The results reveal how entrepreneurship that focuses on promoting development can be the focus on policy in terms of how the activities of digital entrepreneurs leads to the transformation of the economy. This in turn improves policy makers' understanding and action on the binding constraints to development. Policies to promote business incubators may not produce intended impacts on entrepreneurs and/or their SMEs where there is a risk that business incubators may become excluding organizations that strengthen existing commercial roles in society without addressing local development needs.

### ***Implications for practice:***

The paper identifies the nature of interactions and forms of knowledge that different partners bring to a business incubators and how the embodiment or interplay of these either facilitates entrepreneurial path-creation or creates lock-in effects on entrepreneurs. Managers of incubators and their incubatee entrepreneurs must develop strategies to enhance entrepreneur's path-creation by overcoming the constraining effects of lock-in.

**Key Words:** Development-led entrepreneurship, business incubators, entrepreneurial path-creation, digital business