



# The age of platforms and ecosystems

For new generations of consultants and architects  
of change

# *A new age, a new economy*



# Technology breakthroughs: vehicles for major transformation

Throughout the history of humanity, technological breakthroughs have set the pace of progress in every civilisation. Such as the wheel, iron, printing, steam power, electricity and then the Internet. Those discoveries came with profound changes, transforming social and territorial organisation, institutions, trading arrangements, the economy and industry.

## The industrial age

Stimulated by the emergence of new techniques – associated with electricity and oil – the contemporary industrial age transformed social and territorial structures which had originally been agrarian and craft-based. New trading arrangements and social structures (such as urban centres) emerged, while societies started rolling out new industrial and commercial activities. Meanwhile, the development of the railways transformed territorial and urban organisation just as drastically.

## The digital age

Driven by Internet technology, the digital age is the new economy of the information highway, the immaterial and services. Instant exchanges create a virtual space, without distance or delay, where access to services becomes universal. In a world that has become interconnected, accelerated financial and e-commerce flows cross borders, information channels become global, whole areas of tertiary activity digitise the way they interact and work together. New institutional structures emerge (such as GAFAM and BHATX<sup>1</sup>), transport circuits extend and become global, industrial production territories are redistributed by global value chains.



## The age of ecosystems

Since the beginning of the 21st century, new platforms have been connecting hitherto unseen ecosystems for exchanging services and cooperation. Those networks are organised around centres of common interest. Take for example the social network communities of bitcoin (payment ecosystem), AirBnB (residential letting), or GitHub (software development ecosystem).

Those communities stimulate new behaviours and new collaborations, generally centred on a territory and practical demands e.g.: Allovoisins, LeBonCoin, etc.).

At the same time, faced with unprecedented environmental and social challenges, whole swathes of the population express “dead-end” demands, so called because they receive no response from the institutions. Take, for example, the causes of purchasing power, environmental protection, social protection, employment or social equality. They overflow into a search for answers using any means available.

New autonomous cross-society collectives appear, exploiting these new social platforms where like-minded people can meet, exchange views and exert influence, and mobilised by the search for solutions to their shared desires and needs.

New social, organisational and cultural forms appear, described as being “horizontal” and “organic”. New approaches to development, based on territories and areas of employment, drive shorter, relocalised cycles, collectives are forged around circular economy areas or local currencies, for example.

Dawn of the “age of ecosystems”

*“New platforms connect to unknown ecosystems for exchanging services and cooperation.”*

<sup>1</sup> GAFAM: Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Microsoft  
BHATX: Baidu, Huawei, Alibaba, Tencent and Xiaomi.

# The start of the 21st century, gripped by new needs

At the start of the 21st century, unprecedented historic and social problems are emerging. Everywhere around the world, people are expressing new expectations, new demands for living conditions to be protected: purchasing power, the environment, employment, health, social protection, equality and so on. These overflowing unanswered demands are undermining the consent accorded to institutions whose legitimacy is now being openly challenged.

As a result, over just a few years, a series of unprecedented demands and expectations have appeared: those laid bare by the Covid-19 crisis, by the recent demonstrations in Minneapolis or the #MeToo movement, by Brexit-related demonstrations in the United Kingdom, or the election of Mr Trump in the United States in 2016, the “yellow vest” protests in France, strikes and unrest in India, Hong Kong, Libya, Algeria, Chile, Ecuador or Iraq, the Arab Spring etc.

Explaining those phenomena, the World Economic Forum in Davos, for example, cites the unprecedented extent of social inequalities, magnifying the

seriousness of the new great systemic risks: the health risk and most of all the climate risk (climate and biodiversity).



In response, for its part, the role of the state is changing, becoming more strategic to serve the longer vision and the “plan”. A state which finances infrastructural investments that can no longer be ignored, “whatever it costs”. Giving particular protection to a relocalised economy, its territories, its industrial production sectors and jobs.

## A new social structure: shared value communities

At the same time, new social networks and groups and new collectives are uniting, drawn together by the shared narrative of dead-end demands.

Within ecosystems driven by AI-based platforms, new dynamic collectives are appearing, communities which form freely, held together by their shared needs, expectations or demands. Those collectives, whose shared demands develop into “affinities”, forge new dynamic composite affiliations, new emerging collective identities.



Those dynamic collectives are the pattern for a new social structure, which local but at the same time crosses borders, categories and classes, mobilised by an autonomised sense of usefulness and meaning.

“*Within platform-driven ecosystems, new shared interest collectives appear.*”

In its wake we see so-called “horizontal” (non-hierarchical) and dynamic organisational structures emerging. Ways of interacting and sharing – described as “organic” because they are within self-instituted shared interest networks – and new ways of behaving are developing.

Those new models are the expression of a profound anthropological change affecting all fields of human activity<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> These points summarise the broad outlines of contemporary thinking in social science (see the initial works of F Tönnies / M Weber on communities and society, G Deleuze and F Guattari on rhizome structure, J Habermas / J-F Lyotard on communicating communities, J Baudrillard on signification systems, E Laclau on dynamic social structures and collective identities)

# A new post-digital economy: positive footprint business models

## A new model for exchanges

In tertiary sectors of the economy, “vertical” consumption modes (such as customer / supplier) are giving way to a new model for exchanges. Economic flows are becoming “horizontal”, in that they directly connect communities of offerors with seekers. They thus become “organic” because of their location within ecosystems of actors and/or territories.

“3<sup>rd</sup> generation platform: putting offerors in touch with seekers, to serve one another.”

Companies such as Airbnb, eBay / Leboncoin, Kickstarter, allovoisins etc. were behind the introduction of some aspects of those models, rapidly revolutionising their sector. Those models can be found in initiatives such as Bitcoin (payment), or GitHub (developer community), each one profoundly revolutionising practices in their field, driving extensive, decentralised and distributed communities, in an irresistible movement.

These 3<sup>rd</sup> generation platforms put offerors in contact with seekers, allowing them to serve one another.

## A new customer model: local communities of interest

The new community-based social structures are causing new customer models to appear. The traditional segmentation of market customers, individual segments generally inherited from socioprofessional categories, give way to new models based on affinity-based collectives. Within those collectives, the bond of trust and the resulting recommendation mechanisms endow the act of purchasing with a new dynamic. The exchange of services between its members, the bond of trust, affinity, the search for usefulness or meaning.

“The customer, initially an individual and then a household (with family), becomes a “community of interest”.”

In the banking sector, for example, the customer, initially an individual but later a “banking household” (individual + family), becomes a “community of interest”. Neighbourhood collectives share a common affinity, such as organic farming, the ocean economy or jobs in the timber industry. They are the new circles of trust, influence and also for exchanging services. New banking models, such as online banking, are now redirecting their commercial and relational efforts toward those local economic communities, around a branch which is now central.

In sectors covering such diverse fields as food service, motoring, construction, energy, property, and even sport, education, research and science, affinity-based collectives of customers, users, specialists or citizens can be seen exploiting the power of these new approaches to interacting and cooperating with others.

Take, for example, Eatwith or Mamaz Social Food (food service). Drivy, Turo, or AutoButler (motoring), Buildiz, Homly You, or ClueMe (construction), Sonnenbatterie or Book & Plug (energy), StoreFront (commercial property), NovaTopo or Placr (sport), I Whell Share (disability), LinkedIn (professions), LabCentral or PubPeer (research), ODEM.IO, A Cup Of Teach or Canopé (education), Factio (citizens’ network) and so on.



<sup>3</sup>See Part 1, Chapter 1: “These 3rd generation platforms put offerors in contact with seekers, allowing them to serve one another.”

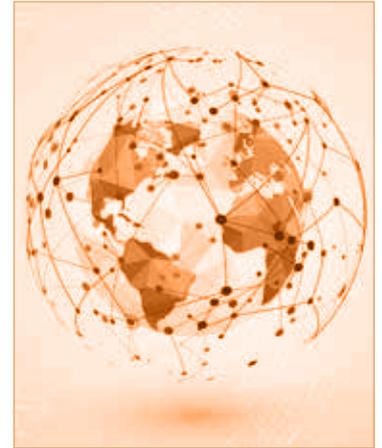


## New markets

And so a new space for exchanges emerges, where the offer and the demand are reconciled. These are ecosystems of communities and territories, where autonomous offerors and seekers exchange their services directly. These are the new “horizontal markets”.

The global, open markets are now being joined by those arising from the new frontiers of community or territory based ecosystems and their short cycles. Communities where people learn, buy, consume, discuss, interact, influence one another.

In response to the demands of the majority, they have been knit together by expectations of usefulness and meaning, and often by the general interest – take, for example, expectations linked to the environment, health, jobs, education, wellbeing.



## The positive footprint business model

The new so-called “positive footprint” activity models are a response to these new demands for usefulness and meaning, be they environmental or social.

“The survival of companies with a negative footprint is no longer guaranteed. Disengagement is accelerating.”

Taking advantage of the new potential of these novel markets and collectives, these models have a positive influence on issues such as the climate, biodiversity, health, education or wellbeing. They have a positive impact on the quality of employment (unlike the “gig economy” and “labour platforms”), respect for private life, or public freedoms.

In the emerging new world, the sustainability of companies which are “negative” on those aspects is no longer guaranteed, and phenomena such as “disengagement” are gaining ground, affecting the major brands too.

In the new economy of ecosystems, positive footprint organisations have the greatest potential and drivers for development and future success. The power of their network effect coupled with their contribution to the public good leads to a new irresistible value equation.

By contrast, “positive footprint” organisations have internalised their positive contribution at the heart of their profitable model. Or else, faced with the risk of rejection, they carefully manage their “footprint”, a new indicator of value (future potential), measured by means of social, environmental, economic and technological “standards”. The Ethics department, which formulates the standard, becomes sovereign, as do its traceability and labelling divisions.

“The combination of the platform model, ecosystems and the positive footprint is the only driver of value.”

# The changing role of consultancy



# | The pathfinder role of consultancy

Consultancy actors have been absent from the new age of ecosystems. The profound transformations led, for example, by bitcoin, GitHub, AirBnB, eBay etc. have not been accompanied by consultants. Consultants who did not anticipate or consider the radical novelties of that economy. Consultancy practices have remained largely focussed on the digital economy, which itself has moved onto the standardisation stage (commodity). Consultancy has not played its pathfinder role.

The role of consultancy is to support economic actors in rolling out best practice, and particularly when paradigm shifts occur. It is with each new economic cycle that an initial stage of “vision / innovation” is required, where new approaches are created.



## | Feature Your Business Future Your Business

It is in these transitions from one age to the next that organisations, including consultancy firms, have to reinvent themselves. This requires the adoption of a model which combines operational excellence (“Feature Your Business”) with winning back new markets (“Future Your Business”).

In this new economy, everything has changed, and everything moves faster. It is not enough to talk about agility. Technological cycles have shrunk from several years to a few months now. There are no longer the same points of reference; ecosystem and community models are disrupting every sector. While the platforms and ecosystems market is growing; it is currently estimated at more than \$7,000bn per year<sup>3</sup>. Meanwhile economic actors are gambling their survival, actively seeking out new catalysts for creating value.

These changes are disrupting professional, operational, organisational and technological models, just as much as cultural ones. That is why the consultancy sector plays a decisive role as pathfinder. It must equip its clients with the new benchmark tools and practices to enable them to get to grips with the changing world.

*“There is an urgent need to equip consultancy with its new tools to help organisations enter the new economy.”*

There is an urgent need to equip consultancy with its new tools to support organisations entering into the age of ecosystems and platforms.

<sup>3</sup>. At the end of 2018, the consultancy.org network / KPMG data valued the global platforms economy at \$7,176bn. That total corresponds to the world's leading 242 platform businesses, with \$4,900bn from “super platform” companies (GAFAM, Alibaba, Tencent), \$1,436bn from “elite unicorn” businesses (valued > \$25bn), and \$794bn from Unicorn+ businesses (> \$1bn) and Scale-Up Platforms (> \$100m).

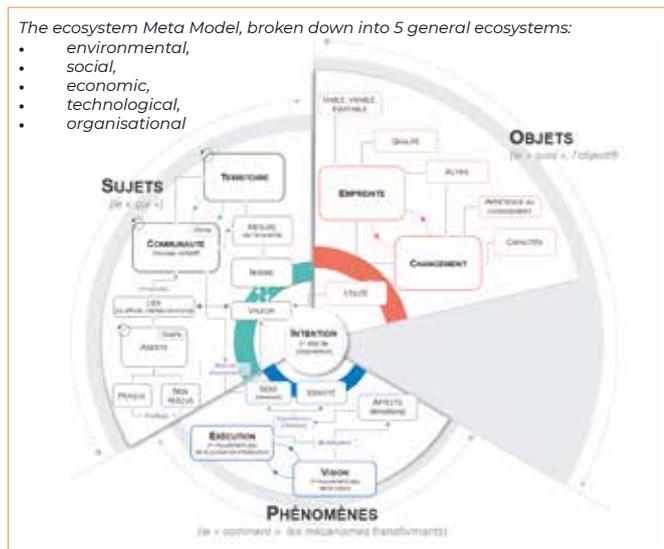


# Platform and ecosystems: new tools, new practices...

This new age, where professional and technological platforms bring ecosystems and communities together, require radically different assessment and execution frameworks.

The way consultancy works must urgently change to help economic actors profit from this new development cycle and capture its value. For that to happen, the professional tools and practices of the consultancy business are being recast. The transformation of consultancy requires new analytical and referential frameworks, modelling tools, design and production methods, and also new architectures and technological capabilities.

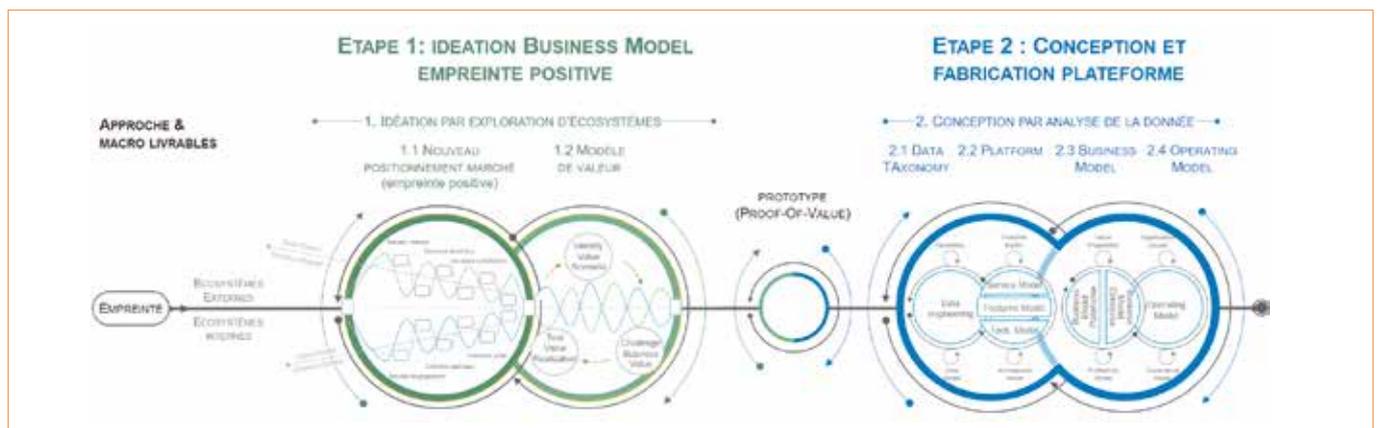
A radically new paradigm: the ecosystem



A services model to meet the major challenges



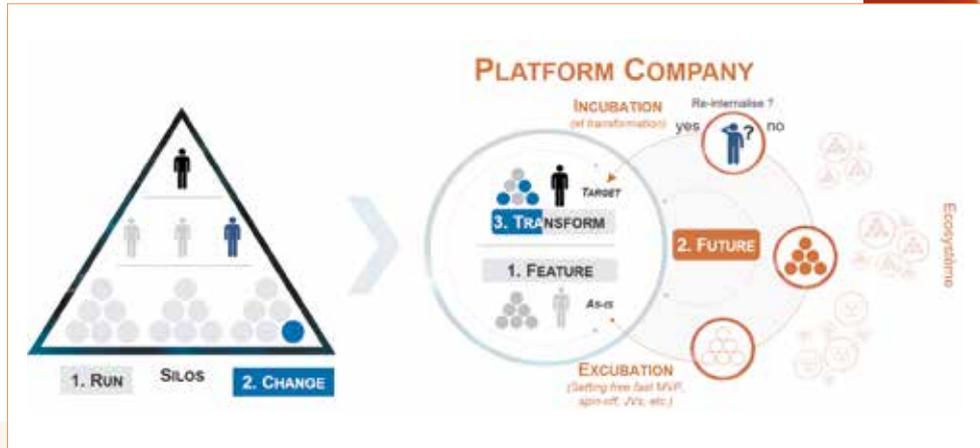
Ecosystem-oriented ideation and production methodologies



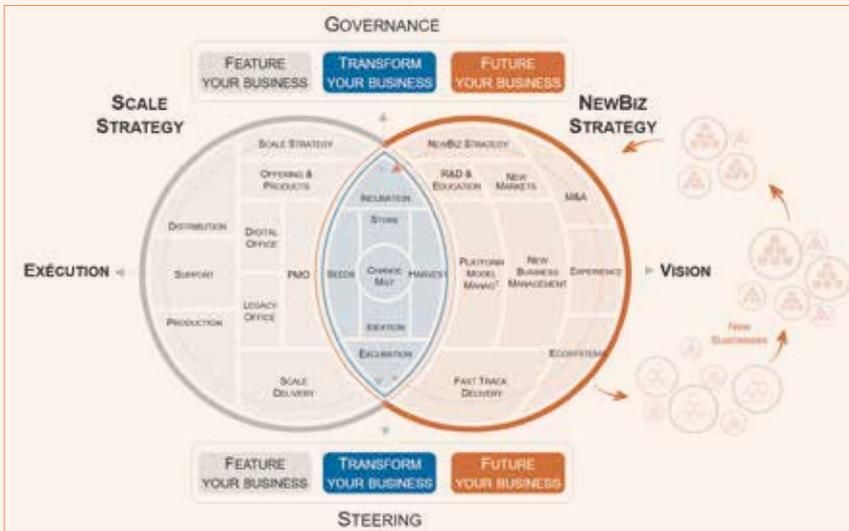
# | ... and a platform-based operating model

*Toward the platform business*

Economic actors themselves: actors in consultancy are tackling the transformation needed in their own way of working. Immersed in a new sociological and economic reality, actors in consultancy must transform the way they work to play their role as “pathfinders” in the new economy.



*Feature Your Business / Future Your Business*



In the first place, that start of a new cycle requires consultancy firms to prioritise the strategic functions of vision and innovation over everything else, working within new offers of fundamental research activities.

Organisation charts become “horizontal” and levels of hierarchy are reduced. Open talent communities interact in an “organic” way.

Meanwhile, the HR model equips itself with a system for recognising and exploiting expertise, a cardinal value in a market where talent is in short supply, to supplement single profiles such as “assembler/non-specialist” arising from the previous cycle.

Team management becomes the process of mobilising collectives, through an outward-rippling effect caused by horizontally recognised skills and vision. The new forms of expertise that are needed are highly technological, but also profoundly multidisciplinary, where each job is decisively enriched by knowledge derived from the social sciences (sociology, ethics and philosophy, psychology, history, economics) and environmental science (ecology, renewable energy, climate, biodiversity).

In addition, that new “platformised” consultancy is boosted by the cumulative approach of value creation through “assets”. In this new approach, the algorithmic innovations of AI, architectural and software innovations arising from intrapreneurial profiles, but also entrepreneurial implementations (spin-offs, JVs, partnerships etc.), become the new assets, to be protected and exploited. Consultancy activities, intrapreneurial performance, new sales methods, value creation and ultimately invoicing are all to be organised around those assets and intellectual property.

Thus the whole value chain of consultancy is being transformed.

## Onepoint and the changing role of the advisor

As the owner of unique assets enabling it to tackle this new economy, onepoint is the first consultancy firm to help organisations enter the era of platforms and ecosystems.

With a wealth of experience acquired from working with its biggest clients, onepoint is overhauling the way advisors work, providing a new generation of consultants with methodologies, architectures, algorithms, operating models and frames of reference, in other words the specialist tools needed for these new value models.

This series of publications, kicked off by this introduction, aims to share those new practices and tools with as many people as possible, thus helping bring consultancy into the age of platforms and ecosystems.

The issues in this series will describe each of the tools and practices listed below in detail, providing guides on how to apply them and some client case studies.



# Forthcoming publications



## **PART 1:**

### **New tools for the consultant and architect of change**

> Receive this part

#### **01**

**Platforms:  
history and characterisation**

#### **02**

**Case study for new consultants  
& architects of change**

#### **03**

**“Platform & ecosystems”  
reference models**

#### **04**

**Positive footprint business  
models**

#### **05**

**Organic operational models**

#### **06**

**New technological models**

#### **07**

**For more information**

## **PART 2:**

### **Construction and management approach**

> Receive this part

## **PART 3:**

### **Ethics & moral code of the new generations of consultants and architects of change**

> Receive this part

“Thank you to Gérard for training us and allowing us to conquer the digital age You left us this compass which we can now use to navigate our way through the age of platforms and ecosystems.

Thank you to David for your vision and for having established the first platform firm, an exceptional seed bed, giving meaning to all the talents engaged in solving the great challenges facing society today and tomorrow.”



**Gérard Naouri**



**David Layani**

## Your Platforms & Ecosystems contacts



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Druaut**



**Jean-Patrick  
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**Benoît  
Heitz**



**Mohamed  
Zrida**



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Hellé**



**Florent  
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**Laurent  
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**Guillaume  
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**onepoint.**  
beyond the obvious