Preface

Stephen Flowers, Martin Meyer and Jari Kuusisto

This book is the result of a project funded by Tekes, Finland’s funding agency for innovation, that explored user-driven service innovation and co-creation. The aim of the project was to develop new insights and novel perspectives to help us better understand how innovation takes place in the 21st century. Within this huge topic the project focused on new business models that were emerging due to forms of innovation often initiated by those outside of traditional producer firms, including users and online communities. From the outset, the project focused on pioneers working at the boundaries of what is possible, rather than the mainstream (often R&D intensive) innovators that are found in many industries. The project was far more interested in the potential disruptors rather than the incumbents, and this book is an exploration of the new models of business that have begun to emerge.

The material contained within this book is the result of collaborative efforts between a large team of international researchers that worked hard to explore new forms and models of innovation across many different types of industry. As the project progressed and our thinking developed it became clear that many of the labels and frameworks we were trying to employ were often a poor fit in the new context we were exploring. The central idea of this book, the Innovation Opportunity Space (IOS), was a result of this mismatch and provided us with a way of understanding the complex events we were examining. The IOS approach also enabled us to begin to recognise the importance of new innovation actors and highlight the need to collect a new generation of metrics that will help us better understand the emerging world of innovation that has grown up around us. In order to undertake this work the research team was able to draw on a range of academic traditions, frameworks and approaches but, once again, found they were often a poor match with the empirical findings. For those with a forensic turn of mind the traces of this conceptual mismatch can be found throughout this book and are evidence of the long struggle we all face when we try and understand a new reality. The challenges of this struggle are not to be underestimated and old ideas often have a far stronger hold on us than we realise.
As the evidence accumulated what emerged was a pattern of innovation activity that went beyond older classifications and involved many different types of actor. Indeed, what emerged was that a phenomenon we had assumed was only confined to innovation had itself morphed and could also be found in the tasks associated with the day-to-day operation of relatively mundane organisations. In some cases entirely new business models were being developed that drew on resources that were far outside the firm’s control. We realised that, in innovation terms, we were privileged to be looking at a Petri dish in which new models and ideas about business were being developed and trialled before our eyes. The many case studies in this book have been carefully selected, and often connected to existing work in the area, in order to provide a series of distinct insights into the new forms of innovation that we have explored. This book provides a new way of thinking about these forms of innovation, the value that is created, and the novel business models that are now being developed.

NOTE

1. We gratefully acknowledge the support of Tekes in undertaking this work. The research was undertaken within the Tekes FiDipro project: ‘User-driven Service Innovation and Co-creation Management (NOMAD)’, project leader: Affiliate Professor Jari Kuusisto, University of Vaasa.