
Introduction

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An entrepreneur works in a social environment comprising a network of relations with others from whom the entrepreneur seeks resources. Through the phases of entrepreneurship – from intending to start, during starting and throughout operation of the enterprise – an important resource is knowledge in the form of advice from others. The entrepreneur's networking for knowledge and advice is social capital that augments entrepreneurial competencies and benefits performance such as innovation, exporting, growth and job creation. These entrepreneurial endeavours are in our vocabulary. The word entrepreneur originates in the French words *entre* and *prendre* as networking in between, taking and combining for advantage; the Danish word is *iværksætter* as the actor creating and implementing action; the Arabic word is a leader of business, *reiatat alamal*; and the Farsi, Urdu and Turkish equivalents for entrepreneurship are *karafarini*, *karobar* and *girişimcilik*, meaning work and job-creation. Networking for social capital is an investment, and some entrepreneurs may gain a competitive advantage compared to other entrepreneurs who may be disadvantaged, e.g., youth, women, poor, untrained and less educated entrepreneurs, in pursuing relations in a work-place, in professions, in the market and in the international environment.

How is an entrepreneur networking in the private environment, in the work-place, in the professions, in the market and in the international environment? How is networking shaped by culture, by organisational characteristics of the firm, by the personal socio-demographic background, and by own competencies? How may networking promote outcomes such as innovation, exporting and growth-expectations? Such effects among network composition, antecedents and consequences are hypothesised here.

Figure 1 Scheme of causes and effects of networks



The research design for investigating entrepreneurs' activities in the context of culture is a survey of entrepreneurs in several cultures. This research design is used in the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), which surveys adults and identifies entrepreneurs (<http://www.gemconsortium.org>). Our focus is here on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) with its traditional culture where the family has authority, in contrast to the secular-rationalistic culture pervading Denmark, for example, where the family has been replaced by professionals as a major source of advice. The GEM-survey was conducted in 2009 to 2011 in 14 MENA-countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, and also in Denmark (and in many more countries around the world). The survey identified a fairly representative sample of 13,599 entrepreneurs in all phases, who reported on their networking and endeavours.

Networking was measured by asking an entrepreneur:

- Various people may give you advice on your new business. Have you received advice from any of the following:
 - Your spouse or life-companion? Your parents? Other family or relatives? Friends?
 - Current work colleagues? A current boss? Somebody who is starting a business?
 - Somebody with much business experience? A lawyer? An accountant? A bank?
 - A possible investor? A researcher or inventor? A public advising services for business? A firm that you collaborate with? A firm that you compete with?
 - A supplier? A customer? Somebody in another country? Somebody who has come from abroad?

These possible advisors are not used randomly by an entrepreneur, typically, but some often occur together in the same network, forming a component of the network, which can be revealed by a cluster analysis (Schøtt, 2013). The possible advisors are clustered as five components of the network:

- a private network of spouse, parents, other family and friends
- a work-place network of co-workers, boss, starter and business mentor
- a professional network of lawyer, accountant, bank, investor, researcher and counsellor
- a market network of collaborator, competitor, supplier and customer
- an international network of someone abroad and someone from abroad.

The compositions, causes and consequences of the networks around the entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa are studied in the following articles.

Networking for advice from several environments, is analysed in the first article, 'Composition of networks around entrepreneurs: cross-national comparisons in the Middle East and North Africa', by Constance Van Horne, Lotfi Belkacem and Taha Al Fusail. They distinguish among several properties of the network around an entrepreneur, notably the size and diversity of the network and its five components: the private, the work-place, the professional, the market and the international network. Networking within the private sphere is prominent in the MENA-countries, while networking in the public spheres is less extensive. Size and diversity of the network around entrepreneurs launching a new enterprise are related to duration of the launch

period in the way that large size and wide diversity are associated with short duration of the launch period. Understanding composition of the network around an entrepreneur is the starting point for the next articles on sources of the network.

Cultural embeddedness of networking is analysed in the article, 'The effect of national culture on entrepreneurs' networks: a comparison of the MENA region and Denmark', by Hadia Fakhreldin, Hazbo Skoko and Maryam Cheraghi. The traditional culture prevailing in the MENA region supports networking within the private sphere, in contrast to the secular-rational culture pervading Denmark which reduces the importance of the family. A culture of high level of trust in other, also outside the private sphere, is especially widespread in Denmark which supports networking in the public sphere.

Organisational effects on networking are analysed in the article, 'Are entrepreneurial networks shaped by firms' organisational characteristics? A cross country comparison of the MENA region', by Yousef Daoud. Networking changes across the phases of the firm, it expands from the intending phase to the starting phase and then shrinks with firm-age during the operating phase, so that, frequently, a firm is a 'born networker' and even a 'conceived networker'. Firms that are large or have several owners tend to have larger networks. Firms providing business services are networking more than firms in other sectors.

Personal background effects on networking are analysed in the article, 'Entrepreneurs' gender, age and education affecting their networks in private and public spheres: Denmark, Middle East and North Africa', by Shayegheh Ashourizadeh and Thomas Schøtt. Gender, age and education affect networking in the way that young educated men have especially extensive networks, especially in the public spheres such as the work-place, the professions, the market, and internationally. Women, less educated and older entrepreneurs are networking more within the private sphere and are less involved in networks in the public sphere. These dynamics are embedded in culture, and moderated by traditional culture in the Middle East and North Africa versus secular-rational culture in Denmark.

Entrepreneurial competencies affecting networking types are analysed in the article, 'How individual competencies shape the entrepreneur's social network structure: evidence from the MENA region', by Sarfraz A. Mian and Hala W. Hattab. Their analysis identifies three types of advisor networks: limited, private, and diverse. It concludes that most of the networking activity in the MENA region is either limited or takes place in the private sphere. Entrepreneurs who are entrepreneurially competent in terms of perceiving opportunities are networking diversely. Conversely, entrepreneurs who are less alert to opportunities have limited networks.

Following these studies of conditions of networks, the last studies focus on consequences of networks.

Innovation affected by networking is analysed in the article, 'Promoting innovation in the MENA region: the role of social norms and individual factors in entrepreneurial networks', by Mohammed Reza Zali, Bettina Lynda Bastian and Muhammad Shahid Qureshi. Innovation of firms is embedded in the network around the entrepreneur in the way that innovation is promoted by networking. Moreover, motivation affects innovation in the way that being motivated by opportunity in contrast to necessity is positively related to innovation.

Exporting affected by networking is analysed in the article, 'Firms' exports promoted by the entrepreneurs' networking: MENA and Denmark', by Mahdokht Sedaghat and

Mohamed Derrabi. Exporting by firms is embedded and supported by the personal advice networks around the entrepreneurs. However, some networks are more conducive than other networks. Specifically, exporting is greatly promoted by the entrepreneurs' international networking, and also facilitated by the professional network, but exporting seems unaffected by networking in the work-place and in the private sphere.

Growth-expectations affected by networking are analysed in the last article, 'Effects of entrepreneurs' networking with national values on job growth expectations: a two-level analysis for the MENA region and Denmark', by Tareq Sadeq and Zakia Setti. Entrepreneurs' expectations for growth of jobs in their firms are affected by their networking in the ways that private sphere networking reduces expectations for growth. Conversely, expectations for growth are enhanced by networking in the public spheres, especially in the professions.

Our collaborative research began at an annual GEM-meeting, when I advocated measuring entrepreneurs' networking in the GEM-survey, and participants from MENA and elsewhere adopted the idea. GEM in MENA was supported by the Canadian agency International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and we analysed the entrepreneurs' networking, pointing out that the entrepreneurs in MENA are getting advice from professional networks less frequently than entrepreneurs elsewhere, presumably entailing a comparative disadvantage hampering their performance [IDRC, (2010), pp.47–49].

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