Working Together: The evolving practices, dynamics and ecologies of networking amongst entrepreneurial economic actors

Proposed Program for the upcoming RGS-IBG Annual International Conference 2014: Geographies of co-production

Session Conveners

Taylor Brydges - Uppsala University
Carol Ekinsmyth - University of Portsmouth
Brian J. Hracs - Uppsala University

Session Abstract

This session will explore the evolving motivations, practices, outcomes and spatial dynamics of networking. It will also consider the impact of digital technologies and market competition by looking 'beyond the firm' to poorly understood entrepreneurial groups, such as independent cultural producers (musicians, fashion designers), 'mumpreneurs', 'youngpreneurs' and 'ethnic entrepreneurs.' The meaning of 'networking' for these economic actors and the formation, organisational structure, purpose, practice, etiology and life-cycle of the 'networks,' 'groups', 'communities' or 'collectives' to which these actors (may) belong will also be considered. In line with a call from Grabher and Ibert (2006), the session will provide a forum to challenge and expand our dominant conceptualisations of 'networks' and their spatial and temporal dynamics. In particular, the papers will explore the extent to which networks are positive or negative, how gender, race, age, class and culture may shape networking behaviour and the relationship between physical and virtual spaces of networking. Ultimately, the session will question whether contemporary networking theory, which focuses on firms and face-to-face interaction, is broad enough to cover the diverse range of practice that is surely arising out of the constellation of new entrepreneurial identities (Ekinsmyth 2011; Hracs and Leslie 2014) and ways of interacting in virtual spaces (Grabher and Ibert 2014).

Schedule Summary

Session 1

Chair: Brian J. Hracs

1) The Fluidity of Networks: Participation in, and failure of, organized networking

Jennifer Johns - University of Liverpool

2) Regional culture and networking techniques amongst Canadian entrepreneurs

Ben Spiegel - University of Edinburgh

3) The role of ethnic Chinese business networks in the regionalization strategy of Singaporean aquaculture firms

Guanie Lim - National University of Singapore

4) Multiplex Networks and Meaningful Places: How cultural entrepreneurs make places while building their networks

Barbara Heebels - University of Amsterdam

5) Group Discussion

Session 2:

Chair: Carol Ekinsmyth

1) Cooperating to Compete: The networking practices of female entrepreneurs in Toronto's fashion community

Taylor Brydges - Uppsala University

2) Dynamic positioning of entrepreneurs in the fashion system of Milan

Marianna d'Ovidio - University of Milan-Bicocca

3) Product Development in Fashion Design: The geography of knowledge networks in a non-traditional fashion city

Ingrid H G Johnsen - Nordic Centre for Spatial Development (Nordregio), Stockholm

4) Group Discussion with comments from Brian J. Hracs and Carol Ekinsmyth

Session 3

Chair: Taylor Brydges

1) "Forget it. No One's Going To Work With You again": Networking, reputation and emotional labour in the recording studio sector of the music industry

Allan Watson - Staffordshire University

2) Between Networks and Community: The role of co-working spaces for internet-enabled entrepreneurship

Janet Merkel - Hertie School of Governance

3) New 'spaces' for innovation and creativity? The co-working space in the entrepreneurial landscape

Anita Fuzi, Nick Clifton, Gareth Loudon - Cardiff Metropolitan University

4) Working Together or Side by Side: Organized networking in co-working environments

Suntje Schmidt - Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS)

5) Group Discussion

Session 4

Chair: Brian J. Hracs

1) Entrepreneurial Networking as Configuration of Proximities: An integrated conceptual framework

Nicolas Friederici - University of Oxford

2) Challenging Gender Structures and Creative Practice Through Networking: A case study of a female cartoonist network in Malmö, Sweden

Gabriela Barruylle Voglio - Uppsala University

3) Locating artistic networks in Bushwick, Brooklyn, NYC.

Chiara Valli - Uppsala University

4) Group Discussion

Abstracts

Session 1

Chair: Brian J. Hracs

The Fluidity of Networks: Participation in, and failure of, organized networking

Jennifer Johns - University of Liverpool

Using empirical observation of the media industry in the north west of England, this paper interrogates notions of 'formal' and 'informal' networks. It questions the typologies of networks used in existing conceptualizations of networks, such as Granovetter's (1992) 'weak' and 'strong ties'. In the context of a project-based industry, networks show great adaptability and fluidity in time and space. This raises questions about how we conceptualise, observe networks and understand the environments in which networking occurs. The paper presents an example of organized networking observed through fieldwork. It traces the formation, development and demise of an institutionally driven network initiative in the film and television industry. It highlights the complex interplay of institutions, firms and individuals in networking and demonstrates how outcomes can be exclusionary and success dependent upon the life cycles of both the networks themselves and the clusters in which they are embedded.

Regional culture and networking techniques amongst Canadian entrepreneurs

Ben Spiegel - University of Edinburgh

While networking is a critical component in the entrepreneurship process, it is also a distinctly personal activity dependent on an entrepreneur's own personal outlooks and local community norms. This paper examines how regional cultural outlooks inform the networking and socializing practices of technology

entrepreneurs in Calgary, Waterloo, and Ottawa, Canada to better understand the interface between local cultural structures and individual practices. Entrepreneurs have the choice to socialize with other entrepreneurs, advisors, and investors or to spend that time either working on their business or on family and personal activities. The choices of how to spend the limited time an entrepreneur has available are made within local cultural contexts, which can either prioritize entrepreneurial networking or place more emphasis on spending time with family and friends. Interviews with entrepreneurs in the three cities reveal that cultural context plays a significant role in both the proclivity of entrepreneurs to actively network as well as the networking practices they employ and their ability to form dense information sharing networks with their local entrepreneurial community. Waterloo's entrepreneurial culture promotes intensive networking amongst entrepreneurs, while the cultures of Ottawa and Calgary create social barriers to this kind of networking if it is perceived to come at the expense of either a firm's revenues or taking away time spent with family and friends. The entrepreneurial networks in a community can therefore be seen as a material manifestation of local cultural outlooks.

The role of ethnic Chinese business networks in the regionalization strategy of Singaporean aquaculture firms

Guanie Lim - National University of Singapore

This paper examines the Singaporean aquaculture firms that have expanded their activities into the regions surrounding Singapore. Based on research and qualitative personal interviews with a group of Singaporean firms that have invested across national borders, the paper unpacks the rationale behind their expansion out of Singapore. This paper argues that such outward investments are embedded in historically- and geographically-specific social and intra-ethnic ties, which connect them with the ethnic Chinese firms of the surrounding regions, and especially the southern Malaysian state of Johor. To this end, there is a tendency for these firms to rely on informal ties and non-market institutions in the form of the ethnic Chinese business networks. The paper concludes with some implications for policymaking and future research.

Multiplex Networks and Meaningful Places: How cultural entrepreneurs make places while building their networks

Barbara Heebels - University of Amsterdam

Interpersonal networks and urban sites as places for knowledge exchange and meeting 'the right people for the job' are important in cultural industries. But despite an abundance of studies, there is still a lack of insight in the emotions and strategies involved in these networks and the role of place is often looked at just in terms of meeting sites. This paper contributes to the debate on the role of urban place for cultural production by making a distinction between the different

motives of cultural entrepreneurs to participate in personal networks, and connect these motives to the meaning of place. Building on empirical work on book publishers, it is argued that cultural entrepreneurs *employ* and *create* places while building networks. Network ties cannot simply be categorized as formal or informal, as they are often based on emotions and at the same time involve strategic action. The type of network tie (degree of multiplexity) influences which and how particular urban places are employed. Place here does not only involve geographical proximity and static meeting sites, but also includes dynamic, temporary and even virtual sites which have symbolic meanings and are socially constructed.

Session 2:

Chair: Carol Ekinsmyth

Cooperating to Compete: The networking practices of female entrepreneurs in Toronto's fashion community

Taylor Brydges - Uppsala University

The fashion industry, and fashion retail in particular, is notoriously competitive. Fighting for a finite amount of consumer dollars, retailers of all sizes are continuing to develop creative new strategies to lure consumers to their stores and brands, and away from competitors. In Toronto, there is evidence that some retail communities are developing retail strategies based on cooperation, rather than competition. This presentation will draw on interviews with entrepreneurs in the Dundas West community to demonstrate how this exclusive network of specialized fashion retailers has exchanged rivalry for cooperation. By working together to strategically offer distinct, yet complementary aesthetics and product lines, these entrepreneurs promote their community as a unique, alternative retail experience in the city. Driven by alternative motivations, entrepreneurs in Dundas West practice networking in unconventional ways, which has led to the formation of a unique entrepreneurial identity (Ekinsmyth, 2011; Hracs and Leslie, 2014). For these young, female, first-time entrepreneurs, networking is also a key source of business learning and a strategy for mediating the challenges of being a new business owner. By incorporating a gender and generational perspective, this presentation will nuance our understanding of entrepreneurship, networking and creative labour more broadly.

Dynamic positioning of entrepreneurs in the fashion system of Milan

Marianna d'Ovidio - University of Milan-Bicocca

The paper looks at the fashion industry in Milan, an economic segment where, as in other cultural industries, entrepreneurs rely on their networks for the exchange

of information, the building of reputation capital, accessing critical resources and many other crucial activities.

Accessing the network is thus necessary for the surviving within the system, but it is not enough for achieving (economic) success. Recently, research has been done about how actors access networks, emphasising the role of social and cultural capital, stressing how inequalities are reproduced and highlighting dynamics of exclusion. What is less explored are actors' strategies to exploit the potential of networking.

The paper investigates the dynamic positioning of fashion entrepreneurs in the fashion system of Milan, using Bourdieu's concept of field of cultural production. Key questions concern actors' strategy in using and combining their social, cultural and economic capital in order to better positioning in the system and therefore gaining (economic) success. In depth interviews and histories of professional life of fashion designers constitute the basis of the empirical investigation.

The paper offers also a theoretical discussion on the opportunity of using the concept of field of cultural production vis-à-vis the concept of network when actors' strategies and positioning have to be tackled.

Product Development in Fashion Design: The geography of knowledge networks in a non-traditional fashion city

Ingrid H G Johnsen - Nordic Centre for Spatial Development (Nordregio), Stockholm

Cultural industries like fashion are key drivers of the economic development in contemporary cities. Increasingly fashion has become an important driver for growth also outside of the fashion mega cities like London, Paris and New York. In this paper I focus on the networks that fashion design firms based in a peripheral fashion city like Oslo use in innovation processes. I focus on the type of the interactions, their main characteristics and their geography.

The empirical findings derive from a case study of fashion design firms in Oslo. The study illustrates that in innovation processes the firms rely on a mix between informal, local networks and formal global relations. First, the firms mainly rely on informal networks of knowledge and designers engage frequently in face-to-face interaction with actors in the industry in order to build their reputation and nurture their creativity. However, there is little direct collaboration between the fashion design firms. Second, the firms have a set of formal and stable network relations to manufacturers and suppliers abroad.

Other studies of non-traditional fashion locations demonstrate the importance of being part of global networks in order to gain high value-added competitive

advantage. One implication of the findings from Oslo is that because the firms are closely tied to the local networks, this creates a barrier in order to reach out to global markets. Furthermore, stronger and more formalized network ties between local firms could possibly strengthen the industry by making it more competitive.

Session 3

Chair: Taylor Brydges

"Forget it. No One's Going To Work With You again": Networking, reputation and emotional labour in the recording studio sector of the music industry

Allan Watson - Staffordshire University

This paper reports a case study of networking in the recording studio sector of the musical economy, examining the networking practices of producers and engineers as they attempt to develop their reputation and maintain employment in an increasingly precarious industry. The aim of the paper is to expose the little-recognised importance of *emotional labour* (Hochschild, 1983) in building reputation within networks. Informal, 'softer' personality characteristics and symbolic attributes, it is suggested, are an important part of reputation, being a means by which clients legitimate studio producers and engineers, and thus play an important role in obtaining work. The recording studio acts as a key space for the performance of emotional labour and for the development of emotive trust (Ettlinger, 2003). Yet its importance extends beyond this space in two important ways. First, a producer's ability to perform emotional labour is a crucial part of their 'networked reputation' (Glückler, 2007), where new contacts learn about each other's reputation through joint trusted contacts within their social network. Second, as virtual creative working becomes more prevalent in the recording industry, the need to build and maintain strong relationships with clients at distance and to perform 'distanciated emotional labour' (Bryson, 2007) becomes increasingly important.

Between Networks and Community: The role of co-working spaces for internet-enabled entrepreneurship

Janet Merkel - Hertie School of Governance

Co-working spaces represent a contemporary, and rather urban, phenomenon that is mostly associated with freelance, self-employed work and entrepreneurial activities in knowledge-intensive service sectors. It's the effects on a particular type of entrepreneurial activities I want to put my focus on. While co-working spaces started out as community-oriented, flexible workspaces for creative

freelancers they now seem to play a significant role in coordinating start-ups in the technology sector and facilitating start-up ecosystems. More and more, co-working spaces operate as socio-material infrastructures for young entrepreneurs in these industries by facilitating and mediating interaction, enabling exchange and collaboration, forming entrepreneurial identities, providing access to networks and resources, and facilitating mutual learning in order to enhance entrepreneurial skills. Furthermore, co-working spaces are not just the context in which activities happen or provide the stage on which entrepreneurial activity is performed — co-working spaces are an opportunity structure where entrepreneurial opportunities can emerge.

From a sociological perspective, my presentation will explore the meaning of "networking" and "community" for young digital start-ups through the particular practice of co-working, despite of being in a highly competitive environment in the emerging start-up hub Berlin. The evidence included is part of an ongoing research project on "Curating innovation through co-working" that scrutinizes the social and material practices and strategies of co-working spaces in order to enhance interaction and creativity among co-workers.

New 'spaces' for innovation and creativity? The co-working space in the entrepreneurial landscape

Anita Fuzi, Nick Clifton, Gareth Loudon - Cardiff Metropolitan University

In recent years co-working spaces have developed in places such as New York, London, Berlin, encouraging collaboration, idea sharing, mentoring, networking, socializing and generating new business opportunities (as well as keeping costs to a minimum) for small firms, startup companies and freelancers who typically lack the resources of large organisations. However little is known about how these spaces actually work (or not) to improve innovation and creativity- as things stand they are essentially a 'black box'. They are also typically less developed outside of major urban centres. By employing the space (physical, virtual, the combination thereof) as the central unit of analysis rather than the organisation, this paper aims to explore the co-working phenomena and its evolution within the modern entrepreneurial landscape. In this way co-working can be seen as the 'canary in the coal mine' for new ways of working, interaction and socialisation.

Employing a combined methodology of secondary data gathering, site visits and semi-structured interviews along with action research within our project partner Indycube (http://indycube.com/), early empirical work highlights that all co-working spaces are not the same. Developing this idea we seek to produce a typology or continuum of spaces in relation to the core 'co-working values' (collaboration, community, sustainability, openness and accessibility). This in turn has implications for how we understand the function of different

spaces - physical space (design) virtual space (networks), psychology (individual), and culture (group).

Finally, we speculate on how the co-working model might be successfully transferred into new contexts; for example within large organsations seeking to boost their own creativity and innovation, or a 'soft-landing' space for new graduates in the landscape between alumni groups and university spin-outs or incubators.

Working Together or Side by Side: Organized networking in co-working environments

Suntje Schmidt - Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS)

Recently we observe an increasing number of co-working environments, such as co-working spaces, 'fablabs' or 'makerlabs', the latter two comprising coproduction sites (Olma 2012, Anderson 2013, Walter-Herrmann und Büching 2013). Such places are usually associated with innovativeness, creativity, and a new freedom in terms of work. But, little is known about co-working practices within these new working environments. Reasons for choosing co-working environments may vary. Co-working e.g. avoids the disadvantages of freelancers' home offices, such as isolation, limited access to networking, trust-building opportunities or infrastructures (Spinuzzi 2012). Thought networking among coworkers is already questioned (Spinuzzi 2012, Brinks 2013), we can still observe diverse forms of organized networking for attracting creative freelancers, entrepreneurs or start-ups to co-working facilities.

The paper presents results from a desktop research that compiled an inventory and typology of co-working environments that were defined as innovation and creativity labs in Berlin (SenWTF und Landesinitiative Projekt Zukunft 2013). In this case study we can observe divers networking objectives within the innovation and creativity labs such as establishing learning networks in grassroots labs, assembling collaboration networks in enterprise driven labs or offering access to partnership and marketing networks of large multinational enterprises in incubators or accelerators. As some forms of organized networking practices are accompanied by uncertainties for entrepreneurs and freelancers, e.g. in terms of intellectual property rights, the presentation will also tentatively address some of the drawbacks and ambiguities of networking.

Session 4

Chair: Brian J. Hracs

Entrepreneurial Networking as Configuration of Proximities: An integrated conceptual framework

Nicolas Friederici - University of Oxford

Current theory on entrepreneurial networking surprisingly fails to sufficiently consider the very concept of a network and to integrate perspectives from network science. This paper offers an integrated conceptual framework on entrepreneurial networking that is broader than current perspectives, based on observations of networking by technologists and entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa, who, more than their developed country counterparts, have self-organized around technology innovation hubs (Friederici 2014).

Several ideas from the networking and economic geography literature are in need for integration. First, Boschma's (2005) five-dimensional proximity framework and follow-on studies (Letaifa & Rabeau 2013, Ter Wal 2013) contextualized the role of geographic proximity. Second, the weak and strong tie dichotomy (Granovetter 1973) has usefully been applied to international and local links (Bathelt, Malmberg, & Maskell 2004, Storper & Venables 2004, Grabher & Ibert 2006). Third, studies on Dunbar's (1998) Social Brain hypothesis have shown that humans' tie building faces cognitive and time limitations, which leads to idiosyncratic patterns of weak vs. strong tie tradeoffs (Hill & Dunbar 2003, Miritello et al. 2013, Roberts et al. 2009, Saramaki et al. 2014).

The paper argues that entrepreneurial networking can be understood as the entrepreneur's dynamic reconfiguration of social and cognitive proximities (individual-level), with consequences for organizational (firm-level) and institutional proximities (system-level). Proximities to links (weak vs. strong ties) can be shifted within boundaries of link access, geographical proximity, time and cognitive constraints, as well as personal style. Depending on local and idiosyncratic needs, entrepreneurs seek brokers of different types of proximity to new links. Ultimately, this work will demonstrate that we need to rethink the assumption that more networking is always better, and that entrepreneurs benefit from very different networking strategies depending on their a priori distance to relevant links.

Challenging Gender Structures and Creative Practice Through Networking: A case study of a female cartoonist network in Malmö, Sweden

Gabriela Barruylle Voglio - Uppsala University

In the creative industries employees, freelancers and entrepreneurs rely on networks to access buzz, information about jobs, feedback and support. Although

recent research (Hanson & Blake, 2009) suggests that men and women practice networking in different ways, little is known about how gender influences the motivations, structures and outcomes of networking. Indeed, Smith-Doerr (2010) has recently called for more research on the role of female networks and how their activities transform structures and places.

To address this gap, this presentation will draw on research on a female cartoonist network in Malmö, Sweden. In 2005, a group of five female cartoonists decided to start a professional network based on collaboration rather than competition. Today, their network includes over 80 female members. Based on findings from interviews and observation, this presentation will explore the structure of this network. It will also demonstrate how its members organise themselves to increase their visibility and recognition in a male dominated and highly competitive industry.

This presentation aims to broaden our understanding of networking and specifically how practices and outcomes are shaped by the composition and gender dynamics of its members. It will address question raised by the call and contribute to expand our knowledge on gendered networks and their functions.

Locating artistic networks in Bushwick, Brooklyn, NYC.

Chiara Valli - Uppsala University

The importance of networks as ´survival nets´ for precarious entrepreneurial groups such as artists and ´creatives´ is well documented. However, exactly how and where these networks are forged and practiced is still poorly understood. In this presentation I will contribute to this gap by sharing some findings from my ethnographic research in Bushwick, Brooklyn, NYC.
Bushwick is an emerging 'creative district' and gentrifying neighbourhood. The group of people who have moved to Bushwick in the past few years is composed mostly of artists who are trying to make it in the art world despite precarious and uncertain conditions. These artists benefit from physical proximity in different ways and have created a tight network for sharing information about their activities and events.

I will explore the spatiality of this network by showing that: (1) it is embodied in the physical spaces of the neighbourhood, i.e. galleries, studios, cafés and living spaces; (2) it is created virtually through blogs, media and social networks; (3) it is triggered and sustained through temporary spaces of encounter such as events, art festivals and parties.

Furthermore, following Christopherson (2011), who questions how positive networks really are, I will introduce critical questions about the inclusive and exclusive nature of networks in Bushwick. In particular, I will demonstrate that by locating this ´creative´ network *socially* in the neighbourhood, it includes only

those involved into artistic activities, i.e. new residents and visitors, and bypasses long-term and low-income residents who make up the rest of the population in Bushwick.