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# Social Networks of Entrepreneurs: Causes, Variations and Consequences

Veronique Schutjens\*<sup>†1,2</sup> and Giacomo Solano\*<sup>‡3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Urban and Regional Centre of Utrecht (URU), Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University – Netherlands

<sup>2</sup>Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), University of Amsterdam – Netherlands

<sup>3</sup>School of Innovation Sciences, Eindhoven University of Technology – Netherlands

## Abstract

Over the last two decades, social networks received increasing attention in research on entrepreneurial activities. Studies indicated, for example, that the creation and success of firms are significantly affected by entrepreneurs' social networks. Access to relevant information, brokerage opportunities, financial support as well as social and emotional support are important for opportunity identification and opportunity seizing – the necessary ingredients of business success. Other studies revealed that small and medium-sized firms' practices are influenced by inter-firm and inter-entrepreneurial relations, albeit differently for strong and weak ties, and for local and more geographically dispersed contacts. Furthermore, it has been found that entrepreneurial networks and their effect on business success appear to vary substantially among different types of entrepreneurs (e.g., native/immigrant entrepreneurs; male/female entrepreneurs), types of firms (e.g. domestic/international businesses) and types of contexts (local, urban or regional contexts; market and institutional contexts).

Although most research on the interface of social networks and entrepreneurship focused on inter-firm relationships, relatively little is known about a) how entrepreneurial networks vary, come about and change over time and b) the interrelation between personal, social, and professional supportive relationships of entrepreneurs and its effect on firm creation and success.

For the session, we welcome original and innovative contributions on the interface of social networks and entrepreneurial activities. Questions to be addressed may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What are specific compositional and structural characteristics of entrepreneurial social networks and to what extent do these characteristics differ between types of entrepreneurs, firms, and contexts?
- How do the composition and structure of entrepreneurial social networks affect both the start-up and success of firms – and to what extent is this a recursive relationship?

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\*Speaker

†Corresponding author: v.a.j.m.schutjens@uu.nl

‡Corresponding author: giacomo.solano@gmail.com

- To what extent and how (and why) do social networks of entrepreneurs evolve over time, and does this affect entrepreneur's and firm's development?

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Veronique Schutjens, Utrecht University & University of Amsterdam  
Giacomo Solano, Eindhoven University of Technology

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