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SUMMARY

ENTREPRENEURS’ NETWORK OF NETWORKS: STUDYING ENTREPRENEURS’ SOCIAL NETWORK STRUCTURE USING SMART-PHONE DATA

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Principal Topic

Entrepreneurs are embedded in multiple networks, from which they seek opportunities and resources to start-up businesses. Adopting a network perspective to study entrepreneurship may contribute to our understanding of why some entrepreneurs succeed while others fail. However, as most social network analysis data is self-reported data rather than behavioural data (Eagle and Pentland, 2009) and, much of the research is static and concerned with temporal mapping of the networks, the empirical study of entrepreneurial network dynamics has been limited by a lack of longitudinal data and process oriented data. Therefore, it neither addresses the emergence and dynamics of the network over time nor the link to entrepreneurial performance.

Mobile phone networks provide new insights into the structure and dynamics of entrepreneurial networks given that mobile phones represent one of the most important ways for entrepreneurs to interact with other contacts (Candia et al., 2007). It is possible for us to analyse entrepreneurs’ behavioural and longitudinal data by collecting records saved inside mobile phones, particularly smart-phones. These devices support automatic data collection hence the study of social networks.

Method

We attempt to infer the social network structure and dynamics of entrepreneurs through mobile phone network data. We develop a theoretical framework linking the dynamics of entrepreneurs’ mobile phone network to entrepreneurial outcome. In order to identify relationships and social networks within mobile phone data we apply the betweenness algorithm. A future exploratory study will be conducted to test our theoretical framework.

Results and Implications

Our approach contributes to the fields of entrepreneurship and social network analysis. Firstly, our findings will contribute to an understanding of how network structure and dynamics influence entrepreneurial processes and their performance. Understanding the emergence, structure and dynamics of entrepreneurial networks can offer new insights for designing entrepreneurial business strategies and new ways of propagating new ventures, products, services and technologies. Secondly, we can infer human dynamics and social network structure from mobile phone network data. Finally, our findings contribute to research by using mobile (smart) phone as a research tool for longitudinal data collection on user’s social network(s), which can be potentially applied in other research areas.

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