



Insights from a systematic review of literature on social enterprise and networks: Where, how and what next?

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Insights from a systematic review of literature on social enterprise and networks: Where, how and what next?

Abstract

Purpose: This paper aims to contribute to better understanding of where and how network concepts, theories and perspectives, organisational networks, and networking practices, are being studied and deployed in social enterprise research. We do this through a systematic review of social enterprise and networks literature in business and management journals. We identify key trends and developments in this literature, and identify gaps and limitations, culminating in discussion of what next for social enterprise and networks research. We also introduce the papers in this special issue on “Social Enterprise and Networks”.

Methodology: A systematic review was undertaken of social enterprise and networks literature in business and management journals. Journals sampled included all those in the Entrepreneurship and Small Business subject area of the Association of Business Schools (ABS) Academic Journal Guide 2018, the journals in the *Financial Times* 50 research ranking, and selected wider business and society, non-profit management and public administration journals.

Findings: Analysis of publishing patterns of social enterprise and networks research finds that such research is growing, and that varied network perspectives, concepts and theories are being deployed. Social enterprise and networks are also being studied globally, using different methodologies. Nevertheless, there remains scope for deeper theoretical engagement, and for a wider range of network theories to be utilised. More even geographic coverage is also needed, and further insights can be gained through use of alternative methodologies.

Research Implications: Discussions in this paper have implications for research through outlining systematically the state of current scholarship on social enterprise and networks. In so doing, we provide insight on what we know about social enterprise and networks. But also what we don't know and where further enquiry is needed. Direction is thus provided for future social enterprise and networks scholarship.

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3 **Practical Implications:** In this paper we consider how, and the extent to which, social enterprise
4 and networks scholarship offers implications for practice and policy.
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7 **Value:** This paper makes a valuable contribution to social enterprise scholarship. It outlines the
8 state of current knowledge and research on social enterprise and networks, identifying where and
9 how relationships between social enterprise and networks have been studied, whilst also
10 providing insights for what next in future social enterprise and networks research.
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14 **Keywords:** Social Enterprise; Social Entrepreneurship; Social Entrepreneur; Social Innovation;
15 Networks; Social Capital; Embeddedness; Actor-Network Theory.
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21 **Introduction**

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23 This paper, and the wider special issue it introduces, address the subject of social enterprise and
24 networks. As will be shown in this paper, through a systematic literature review, this is a
25 burgeoning area of scholarship, but also one in which there also remains significant scope for
26 further enquiry.
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31 The Oxford English Dictionary defines a network as “*a group or system of interconnected*
32 *people or things*” (Oxford Dictionary, 2018). However, the term network can also be used to
33 describe an activity of connecting or linking with others. Indeed, when used in this way, network
34 may be extended to networking. Individuals and organisations may furthermore be strongly
35 networked, with such a status widely considered to be beneficial in an entrepreneurial context
36 (see Birley, 1985; Bruderl & Preisendo, 1998; Chell & Baines, 2000; Witt, 2004; Leyden et al
37 2014). The role of networks in entrepreneurship has been the subject of substantial academic
38 study. For reviews of the state of the field in entrepreneurship and networks research see
39 O’Donnell et al (2001), Hoang & Bostjan (2003), and Slotte-Kock & Coviello (2010) amongst
40 others. Scholars have examined the compositions of entrepreneurs’ networks (Baum, 2000),
41 explored the role networks play in entrepreneurial start-up (Butler & Hansen, 1991; Witt, 2004),
42 in growth (Ostgaard & Birley, 1996; Hite & Hesterly, 2001), in resource acquisition (Elfring &
43 Hulsink, 2000; Witt et al, 2008), and for venture performance and survival (Littunen, 2000; Witt,
44 2004). A range of network approaches and theories have also been deployed, including social
45 network approaches (Greve & Salaff, 2003), often drawing upon related concepts of strong and
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3 weak ties (Jack, 2005), social capital (Casson & Della Giusta, 2007), and embeddedness (Jack &
4 Anderson, 2002), as well as Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Korsgaard, 2011), and network
5 perspectives in institutional theory (Aidis et al, 2008), amongst others.
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9 Over (at least) the last 20 years, the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship has risen to
10 prominence, both in practice and as an evolving subject of academic enquiry. Social
11 entrepreneurship can be understood as a process involving the “*innovative use and combination*
12 *of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyse social change and/or address social needs*”
13 (Mair & Marti, 2006:37). In social entrepreneurship, profit is a means to an end rather than an
14 end in itself. Profits, or ‘surpluses’, are used for the creation of social value, and for the
15 addressing of a social need. Social entrepreneurs, are the individuals (or groups of individuals)
16 who identify, evaluate and exploit opportunities for social value creation through commercial
17 activity, and using a range of resources at their disposal (Bacq & Jansen, 2011). Social
18 enterprises meanwhile, are the ventures established by social entrepreneurs and which act as
19 vehicles for addressing social and/or environmental needs (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). Amongst
20 scholars and in practice there remains a lack of consensus about what constitutes a social
21 enterprise. Nevertheless, key characteristics often noted, include: the centrality of a social or
22 ethical mission, with primacy given to social over economic value creation (Dees, 2003;
23 Defourny & Nyssens, 2006a); income generation through commercial activity (Langdon &
24 Burkett, 2004; Smallbone et al, 2001); stakeholder participation in governance (Defourny &
25 Nyssens, 2006; Thompson & Doherty, 2006); limited profit distribution (Langdon & Burkett,
26 2004); and innovation in addressing social problems (Dees, 2003). However, in some extant
27 literature the term social enterprise is also deployed more conceptually, and given a broader
28 meaning. It is used as an overarching label for social entrepreneurial/social enterprise activity
29 (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006b). In this paper we embrace this broader notion of social enterprise
30 as not just an organisation but also an activity.
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47 Networks were identified as an area of promise for future social enterprise scholarship by Dacin
48 et al (2011: 1207). They called for a “*greater focus on networks and social entrepreneurship*”
49 (Dacin et al (2011: 1207), as part of a wider critique of existing social enterprise scholarship
50 which they argued was hitherto often descriptive and atheoretical. Dacin et al (2011) suggested
51 that social enterprise researchers should attend to those network theories and perspectives being
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3 deployed in conventional entrepreneurship research. They also saw particular potential for the
4 engagement with social network approaches, for the deployment of concepts of embeddedness
5 and social capital, and for consideration of virtual networks, as well as power in networks,
6 particularly in relation to issues of social enterprise scaling. In a more recent review of social
7 enterprise and network literature, Dufays & Huybrechts (2014) similarly highlight the insights
8 traditional (commercial) entrepreneurship literature provides for developing theoretical
9 arguments relating to the role of social networks in social entrepreneurship. They also make
10 proposals for future research using social network theory to examine the emergence of social
11 enterprise, whilst critiquing that “*social networks are little used so far to explain the emergence*
12 *of social entrepreneurship*” (Dufays & Huybrechts, 2014: 231). Finally, further calls for social
13 enterprise scholars to engage more with network theories and perspectives are made by Dacin et
14 al (2010), and Steyaert & Dey (2010), amongst others.

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25 In this paper we examine the extent to which social enterprise scholars have responded to these
26 calls from authors like Dacin et al (2011), Dufays & Huybrechts (2014) etc. for more social
27 enterprise and networks research. We assess how far, and in what ways, social enterprise
28 scholars have embraced network perspectives, concepts and theory, to explore relationships
29 between social enterprise and networks. The aim of this paper is therefore to provide insight on
30 the state of the field in research on social enterprise and networks, as well as offering direction
31 for future scholarship in this area. We do this through a systematic review of social enterprise
32 and networks literature in business and management journals. Journals sampled included all
33 those in the Entrepreneurship and Small Business subject area of the Association of Business
34 Schools (ABS) Academic Journal Guide 2018, the journals in the *Financial Times 50* research
35 ranking, and selected wider social enterprise and business and society journals – further detail is
36 provided in the method section.

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46 This paper contributes to social enterprise literature by providing a much needed summary of the
47 state of play in social enterprise and networks research. Through systematic review it identifies
48 where debates about social enterprise and networks are occurring, signposting this for
49 researchers, as well as where such work has focussed geographically. It further identifies how
50 social enterprise and networks are being researched, the theories being deployed and in what
51 ways, as well as the methodologies that are being utilised, and how contributions to knowledge
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3 and theory and implications for practice are being addressed. Informed by gaps and limitations in
4 the literature identified through the preceding review, we also provide insights on what next for
5 social enterprise and networks research. Finally, in light of these discussions, we introduce the
6 papers in this special issue on “Social Enterprise and Networks”.
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10 The paper’s structured broadly follows that mentioned above. In the next section we explain the
11 methodology used in our systematic review. The findings of this review are then presented. We
12 then discuss future directions for social enterprise and networks research. Finally, the papers in
13 this special issue are introduced.
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18 **Method**

19 *Sample and time period*

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21 To better understand the state of current research on social enterprise and networks, a systematic
22 literature review was undertaken. We conducted a review of 77 top business and management
23 journals – with a particular focus on the entrepreneurship field. The sample included journals in
24 the Entrepreneurship and Small Business subject area of the Association of Business Schools
25 Academic Journal Guide 2018 (ABS 2018), those in the *Financial Times 50* (FT50) research
26 ranking, and selected wider business and society, and non-profit management and public
27 administration journals - these were: *Business & Society*, *Business Ethics a European Review*,
28 *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Nonprofit and voluntary sector quarterly*; and *VOLUNTAS*:
29 *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*.
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39 The ABS 2018 sample (30 journals) was selected so that our systematic review captured how
40 social enterprise and networks were being examined and discussed in top entrepreneurship and
41 small business management journals. The FT50 journals (50 journals) were included in the
42 search reflecting their significant use globally in business and management schools for
43 promotion and tenure decisions, as well as for the awarding of research time and/or incentives
44 (after Kolk & Rivera-Santos, 2018). These journals are some of the leading outlets in their
45 respective sub-fields, they are often where key debates are occurring, and making it important
46 capture how, if at all, social and networks are being considered within them. Finally, wider
47 business and society, and non-profit management and public administration journals, were
48 included (five journals) as it was thought possible that the subject of social enterprise and
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3 networks were being considered within them. In respect of these journals, an approach was
4 adopted to focus on a limited set of recognised top-tier journals (after Aguinis & Glavas, 2012,
5 and Kolk & Rivera-Santos et al, 2018). These were selected on the basis of criteria like their
6 inclusion on Social Science Citation Index (SCCI), their relatively high impact factors, their
7 longevity, and their association with prominent and relevant research communities e.g. *Voluntas*
8 is the official journal of the International Society for Third-Sector Research, whilst *Business &*
9 *Society* is associated with the International Association for Business and Society.

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There was some overlap between the ABS2018 and FT50 sample. As will be further discussed,
the Web of Science database was also used in this systematic review, and five journals:
International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business; *International Journal of*
Globalisation and Small Business; *Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship*;
Manufacturing and Service Operations Management; *World Review of Entrepreneurship,*
Management and Sustainable Development, were found not to be present in this database and
were therefore removed, leaving us with 77 journals in total. The search was also restricted by
year. We searched for articles on social enterprise and networks since January 2005, which was
the first year in which the *Social Enterprise Journal* was published. The *Social Enterprise*
Journal was the first specialist journal focusing on social enterprise. Its founding was a landmark
in social enterprise scholarship, and we thus considered it a fitting starting point for our review.

Analysis

The sample of 77 business and management journals were subjected to an ‘Advanced Search’
using the Web of Science database. This search was refined by document type to exclude book
reviews. The ‘Topic search’ option was selected, which searches the following fields within
records: Title; Abstract; Author Keywords; Keywords Plus®¹. The ‘Topic Search’ option was
used with the aim of increasing the potential for social enterprise and networks literature to be
detected. Boolean operations were used in the search which was based on the following key
word string:

¹ Keywords Plus® is an additional feature of Web of Science whereby all titles are reviewed, and additional relevant but overlooked keywords that were not listed by the author or publisher, are highlighted. This potentially enables the discovery of more relevant papers in a search.

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3 *TS=("Social Enterprise" OR "Social Entrepreneurship" OR "Social Entrepreneur" OR "Social*
4 *Innovation") AND TS=("Network" OR "Networks" OR "Networking" OR "Relationship" OR*
5 *"Relationships" OR "Connection" OR "Connected" OR "Social Capital" OR "Embeddedness")*
6 *AND SO=(Academy of Management Journal OR Academy of Management Review OR*
7 *Accounting Organizations OR Administrative Science Quarterly OR American Economic Review*
8 *OR Business Society OR Business Ethics A European Review OR Business Ethics Quarterly OR*
9 *Contemporary Accounting Research OR Econometrica OR Entrepreneurship "AND" Regional*
10 *Development OR Entrepreneurship Research Journal OR Entrepreneurship Theory "AND"*
11 *Practice OR Family Business Review OR Harvard Business Review OR Human Relations OR*
12 *Human Resource Management OR Information Systems Research OR International*
13 *Entrepreneurship "AND" Management Journal OR International Journal of Entrepreneurial*
14 *Behaviour Research OR International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing OR International*
15 *Journal of Entrepreneurship "AND" Innovation OR International Review of Entrepreneurship*
16 *OR International Small Business Journal OR Journal of Accounting Research OR Journal of*
17 *Applied Psychology OR Journal of Business Ethics OR Journal of Business Venturing OR*
18 *Journal of Consumer Psychology OR Journal of Consumer Research OR Journal of Enterprising*
19 *Communities People "AND" Places in the Global Economy OR Journal of Enterprising Culture*
20 *OR Journal OF Entrepreneurship OR Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies OR*
21 *Journal of Family Business Strategy OR Journal of Finance OR Journal of Financial "AND"*
22 *Quantitative Analysis OR Journal of Financial Economics OR Journal of International Business*
23 *Studies OR Journal of International Entrepreneurship OR Journal of Management OR Journal*
24 *of Management Information Systems OR Journal of Management Studies OR Journal of*
25 *Marketing OR Journal of Marketing Research OR Journal of Operations Management OR*
26 *Journal of Political Economy OR Journal of Small Business "AND" Enterprise Development OR*
27 *Journal of Small Business Management OR Journal of Social Entrepreneurship OR Journal of*
28 *the Academy of Marketing Science OR Management Science OR Marketing Science OR MIS*
29 *Quarterly OR Nonprofit "AND" Voluntary Sector Quarterly OR Operations Research OR*
30 *Organization Science OR Organization Studies OR Organizational Behaviour "AND" Human*
31 *Decision Processes OR Production "AND" Operations Management OR Quarterly Journal of*
32 *Economics OR Research Policy OR Review of Accounting Studies OR Review of Economic*
33 *Studies OR Review of Finance OR Review of Financial Studies OR Sloan Management Review*
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3 *OR Small Business Economics OR Small Enterprise Research OR Social Enterprise Journal OR*
4 *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal OR Strategic Management Journal OR Accounting Review*
5 *OR Journal of Entrepreneurship "AND" Public Policy OR Venture Capital OR Voluntas OR*
6 *Journal of Accounting "AND" Economics OR Journal of Accounting "AND" Economics)*
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11 As can be seen in the keyword string we searched for instances where, in the sample of 77
12 journals, "Social Enterprise", "Social Entrepreneurship", "Social Entrepreneur", or "Social
13 Innovation" were present alongside "Network", "Networks", "Networking", "Relationship" OR
14 "Relationships" OR "Connection" OR "Connected" OR "Social Capital" OR "Embeddedness".
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16 Our initial search resulted in a total of 155 articles. The 155 articles were then each reviewed to
17 determine whether or not social enterprise and networks were significantly addressed. To assess
18 whether or not an article was included in our sample we used the following criteria: did the
19 article significantly focus on social enterprise, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs or innovation;
20 was there an empirical focus on a social enterprise network, on social enterprises or
21 entrepreneurs networking, or on networking in processes of social entrepreneurship or
22 innovation; were network theories being deployed to examine social enterprises,
23 entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs or innovation. On the basis of these criteria our sample was
24 further reduced. Additionally whilst reviewing each paper we used a snowball approach to
25 identify any further potential social enterprise and network articles, within the 77 journals, with
26 these then also reviewed according to the criteria above. Through following this process we were
27 left with 105 articles, in which by our assessment there was some meaningful engagement with
28 the topic of social enterprise and networks. These 105 articles were then coded according to the
29 following dimensions: *journal*; *year*; *geographic focus*; *how networks featured in the paper*;
30 *network theories deployed – if any*; *methods used*; and *contribution and implications*.
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44 Limitations in our methodology are acknowledged. First, it is recognized that some may disagree
45 with our choice of journals and selection criteria. For instance, on the basis of the criteria chosen
46 it was not possible to include relatively new journals like *Social Business*, which does not appear
47 on the ABS2018 list, and is also not currently searchable through the Web of Science database.
48 Even though it may be that relevant papers on social enterprise and networks have been
49 published in this journal. Similarly, the exclusion of journals like the *California Management*
50 *Review*, *Journal of World Business*, *Journal of Business Research*, and other similarly well
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3 regarded business and management journals that are not FT50, and in which social enterprise
4 research – including special issues - has been published, may also result in some significant
5 works not being recorded. This review is also focused on business and management journals, yet
6 social enterprises are studied in numerous disciplines with research often a cross-disciplinary
7 endeavour. This again my result in significant works and perspectives not being included in our
8 review. However, whilst we recognize these limitations, boundaries for the review were
9 necessary, and we feel that our study as it is contributes significantly to understanding of how
10 social enterprise and networks have been examined in business and management scholarship.
11 Nevertheless, it is our hope that our review not only provides insights for business and
12 management social enterprise scholars, but also wider interested parties.

21 Findings

23 *'Where' and 'when' in social enterprise and networks research*

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26 Table 1 shows where within our sample of 77 journals social enterprise and network research has
27 been published. As can be seen, social enterprise and network research is concentrated in a
28 relatively small proportion of the journals (26 journals). The top four journals – the *Social*
29 *Enterprise Journal* (15.2%); *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development* (13.3%); *Journal of*
30 *Social Entrepreneurship* (12.4%); *Journal of Business Ethics* (10.5%) also account for 51.4% of
31 the total. This suggests that a significant proportion of academic conversation about social
32 enterprise and networks is occurring in these specialist social enterprise and nonprofit
33 management journals, which is perhaps hardly surprising. Nevertheless, these results highlight
34 that aspiring social enterprise and networks scholars would do well to turn to these journals early
35 on when first approaching this topic.

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38 Something else that can be taken away from these results is the relative paucity of social
39 enterprise and networks research in top entrepreneurship, and wider business and management,
40 journals. This perhaps represents an opportunity for social enterprise scholars, but maybe also
41 suggests that, at least in respect of network theories and approaches, that social enterprise
42 scholars have hitherto struggled to overcome Dacin et al's (2011) criticism of social enterprise
43 research as relatively atheoretical. One challenge here may lie in articulating how social
44 enterprise network research provides fresh insights of relevance to the study and understanding
45 of relationships between networks and more conventional entrepreneurship.

Insert Table 1 about here

We turn next, to the examine trends in the number of articles being published on social enterprise and networks. As can be seen in Figure 1, since 2005 we have seen a growth in such work. This proliferation of research on social and networks perhaps reflects the wider growth we have seen in social enterprise and social entrepreneurship scholarship (see recent reviews by Choi & Majumdar, 2014; and Saebi et al, 2018), as well as rapid developments and expansions in its practice.

Insert Figure 1 about here

In our systematic review, one of the first papers we found to be meaningfully addressing issues of social enterprise and networks was that by Todres et al (2006). This paper was published in the Social Enterprise Journal, and focused on the development of social enterprise through capacity building. From a networks perspective, the empirical focus of the paper was a social enterprise network organization - the West London corridor-based 'WestFocus' Partnership. However, the authors also engaged with notions of strategic networking, and recognized the significance of social capital for wider development of the social venture, as well as the benefits of fostering social capital development in communities for social impact. In this first paper, implications for practice were strongly evident, but the depth of theoretical engagement was more limited.

We can contrast Todres et al's (2006) study, with one of the most recent works found in our literature search by Barinaga (2017). In her study, Barinaga examines nascent organising in social entrepreneurial ventures through a framework of, and using an approach inspired by, Actor Network Theory (ANT). Barinaga's (2017) richly theoretical work offers insights for

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3 social entrepreneurship research but also wider organizational scholarship. Although, contrasting
4 with the work of Todres et al (2006), its discussion of implications for practice is more limited.
5 These two examples suggest that alongside the recent proliferation of work on social enterprise
6 and networks as previously noted, that there has been an evolution in such work, with growing
7 conceptual and theoretical sophistication evident.
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12 Later in this review we shall explore how contributions and implications are framed in social
13 enterprise and networks scholarship, and whether and how we have seen a change in this over
14 time. However, before that, we will persist in considering the issue of where, but this time in
15 relation to the geographical focus of extant social enterprise and networks studies. Table 2 shows
16 the geographical focus of social enterprise and network articles, identifying whether they focus
17 on developed economies, emerging economies, developing economies, are cross country studies,
18 or have no explicit geographical focus - for instance if they are purely theoretical, or are
19 literature reviews.
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Insert Table 2 about here

These statistics show that social enterprise and network studies have, to date, particularly
focused on developed economies (33.3%), for examples see Vestrum (2014), Christopoulos &
Vogl (2015), Pret, & Carter (2017) etc. This percentage rises still further if the data for multiple
country studies is included, as many of these focus on multiple developed economies, e.g. Jenner
(2016) who examines social enterprise sustainability comparing Australia and Scotland. Fewer
studies have been conducted focusing on social enterprise and networks in emerging/transition
economies (10.5 %), see Easter & Conway (2015), Qureshi et al (2016), Bhatt & Ahmad (2017).
Fewer still examine them in developing economies (7.6%). Multiple country studies and studies
with no explicit geographical focus comprise 28.6% and 20.6% respectively. These results
highlight the uneven geographical coverage of existing social enterprise and networks research
across developed, emerging and developing economies. There is, therefore, a need for further
research on social enterprise and networks in institutional complex transition economies, and in

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3 developing economies, where the nature and significance of networks in social enterprise may
4 differ, and where network theories may work differently and need to be extended, or else new
5 theories devised, reflecting local contextual factors.
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9 Within these categories certain countries have received much more attention than others. For
10 instance, in the developed economies category, the UK has been the subject of significant
11 academic attention, see for example Christopoulos & Vogl (2015), Ko & Liu (2015) Tasavori et
12 al (2018) etc. Meanwhile India has most often been the focus of social enterprise and networks
13 research amongst the emerging economies (Bhatt & Ahmad, 2017; Jammulamadaka &
14 Chakraborty, 2018). In research on social enterprise and networks in developing economies,
15 Kenya has most frequently been the setting e.g. Bradley et al (2012). Future social enterprise and
16 networks research may go outside of these better studied country contexts. It might also
17 undertake further comparison of networks across developed, emerging and developing
18 economies, something which has hitherto been quite rare.
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26 27 *'How' in social enterprise and networks research*

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29 In this section we further explore the 'how' of social enterprise and networks research. We
30 examine how networks are positioned within social enterprise scholarship, as well as how this
31 work is engaging with network theories. We furthermore examine how different methodologies
32 are being deployed in social enterprise and networks research. Finally, we consider how social
33 enterprise and network research contributes to knowledge and theory, its implications for
34 practice, and how these are being framed.
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40 Beginning with the positioning of networks in the social enterprise literature, we find four
41 principal ways in which networks feature in such work: (1) the empirical focus is a social
42 enterprise network organisation; (2) the work addresses the networking activities of social
43 entrepreneurs, with skills in this respect regarded as a key characteristics of successful social
44 entrepreneurs; (3) the focus is on the composition of social enterprises' networks, and
45 implications of this for organisational growth, social impact etc.; and (4) network perspectives
46 and theories are deployed to understand processes of social enterprise/social entrepreneurship
47 more broadly. It should be stressed that these network positionings are not mutually exclusive or
48 exhaustive. For example, an empirical focus on a social enterprise network organisation does not
49 preclude examination of the networking activities of social entrepreneurs in this organisation, or
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3 of network composition, or indeed the deployment of network perspectives and theories (or
4 indeed non-network theories) to understand processes of social enterprise/entrepreneurship.
5 Some articles also do not fit strongly within any of these positionings, suggesting a need for
6 further conceptual development. Nevertheless, we find numerous examples of each of these
7 positions across the articles reviewed. Table 3 shows these four uses of networks, including
8 references and illustrative examples. Lastly, it is worth highlighting that in our analysis we do
9 see somewhat of a shift in the literature. Initially, engagement with networks in social enterprise
10 scholarship often came in the form of an empirical focus on say a social enterprise network
11 organisation, or else recognition of the importance of networking for social entrepreneurs.
12 However, more recently we find more instances of deeper engagement with network
13 perspectives and theory to understand social enterprise/social entrepreneurship processes, this
14 suggests to us a growing maturity of work on this subject.
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32 In the previous discussions we explored different ways in which networks feature in social
33 enterprise literature. We turn next to consider how, and in particular which, network perspectives
34 and theories, have hitherto been applied in social enterprise scholarship. Our analysis finds, quite
35 significant engagement with social networks perspectives, and concepts of social capital
36 (Bourdieu, 1980; Lin, 1999; Portes, 1999), and embeddedness (Granovetter, 1995) and strong
37 and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). For example, Richards & Reed (2015) explore social capital
38 development in third sectors organisations in the North West of the UK, whilst Easter & Conway
39 (2015) examine the leveraging of social capital and social ties in a social enterprise in a very
40 different context of Vietnam. Embeddedness meanwhile, is a central concept in studies by
41 Kistruck & Beamish (2010), Maclean et al (2013), and Pret & Carter (2017) amongst others.
42 Nevertheless, there remains significant scope for further research engaging more deeply and in
43 different ways with these perspectives and concepts, as will be expanded upon in the next
44 section.
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3 Looking beyond social network perspectives, engagement in social enterprise literature with
4 other network theories remains relatively modest. We found a few scholars applying ANT -
5 Actor Network Theory (Latour, 20005) to the study of social enterprise/entrepreneurship - see
6 Barinaga (2017) and Petitgand (2018). Interestingly, in a different review paper aimed at
7 reimagining the social entrepreneurship research agenda, Steyaert & Dey (2010: 247) identified
8 ANT as a perspective that “*could offer an effective approach to studying social entrepreneurial*
9 *projects which are often based on innovations and bricolage*”. Whilst it seems that their
10 suggestion has not yet been significantly taken up by social enterprise scholars, this does not
11 make it a bad one, and we therefor feel there is potential for future social enterprise research to
12 deploy ANT perspectives.
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21 Use of other network based theories was also found to be still quite limited, although this did
22 seem to be growing. For instance, recent work was found deploying concepts of network
23 bricolage (Tasavori, 2018), as well as stakeholder networks and ecosystems perspectives
24 (Hazenberg et al, 2016). Works combining network perspectives and theory with other theories
25 e.g. institutional theories, resource-based theories etc. were also found (see for instance Stephan
26 et al 2015; Slimane & Wadid, 2017), suggesting evolution in, and the growing sophistication of,
27 research on social enterprise and networks.
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34 We move next to consider how social enterprise and networks have been researched, focussing
35 on questions of methodology. In general, we find a preponderance of work deploying qualitative
36 methods, and often case studies e.g. Lehner (2014), Easter & Conway (2015), Bhatt & Ahmad
37 (2017). Quantitative studies are still relatively few in number, as remains the case in wider social
38 entrepreneurship scholarship (see Rivera-Santos et al, 2015). Instances are found of research
39 deploying alternative and more creative methodologies. For example, Friedman & Desivilya
40 (2010) adopt an action research approach in their work on social entrepreneurship and
41 development in a conflict affected region, meanwhile Barinaga (2017) deploys an ANT inspired
42 processual qualitative approach in her study. Studies deploying mixed methods were also found
43 e.g. Todres et al (2006), Jenner (2017), and Scott & Laine (2012). Longitudinal work was quite
44 limited. Interestingly, work applying rigorous detailed social network analysis methods
45 (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) was also somewhat limited.
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3 Finally, we examine how contributions and implications are addressed and framed in extant
4 social enterprise and networks literature. We first find that in a significant number of papers in
5 our sample, contributions for research are not explicitly identified, with this particularly the case
6 in early social enterprise and networks scholarship. Whilst over time such explicit identification
7 of research contributions has become more common, often these contributions are more
8 empirical than conceptual and theoretical. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the predominance we
9 found of qualitative social enterprise and networks studies, theory building in relation to social
10 enterprise and networks was more common than theory testing. It was also relatively rare for
11 authors to link their research contributions to the conventional entrepreneurship field, and wider
12 business and management scholarship, or to explain how (if at all) their work contributed to
13 general theory development.
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17 Regarding treatment of implications for policy and practice, in general we found this rather
18 limited. Discussions were often – although not always, see for instance Meyskens et al (2010),
19 Estrin et al (2013) etc. - woven into conclusions sections rather than being given full attention on
20 their own. Such discussions were also frequently rather short, framed at a high level, intangible,
21 and at times somewhat of an afterthought. Therefore, we feel that in general, there is scope for
22 social enterprise and network scholars to consider further, and convey more effectively, the real
23 work implications of their research.
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26 *'What next?' in social enterprise and networks research*

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28 In the preceding review, we have explored trends in publishing on social enterprise and
29 networks, discussed where such work has been has appeared, and its geographical focus. We
30 have also examined how networks are positioned in the literature, how theory is being engaged
31 with, the methodologies being used, and how contributions and implications are considered and
32 framed. In so doing we have provided an overview of the state of the field, as well as identifying
33 various limitations and gaps in extant literature and research. Building upon this we turn now to
34 consider 'what next' for social enterprise and networks scholarship.
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38 We address first the role and use of theory in social enterprise and network scholarship. As
39 outlined previously, social network perspectives, and related concepts of embeddedness, social
40 capital, strong and weak ties, are prevalent in the literature. However, frequently, the depth of
41 engagement in literature with these concepts is shallow, and they have been deployed rather
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3 unevenly in examining different facets and types of social entrepreneurial activity. For example,
4 future research might consider a phenomena like social enterprise internationalisation drawing
5 upon these concepts and perspectives. Alternatively, they might be deployed in explaining the
6 relative performance (social and/or economic) of social enterprises. Social enterprises are also
7 heterogeneous, working in diverse ways to address varied social needs. Therefore, although
8 some social enterprise models and social enterprising activities may have been considered
9 through a lens of these concepts, others have not. These concepts are also multi-dimensional, for
10 instance social capital has been described as an '*umbrella concept*' (Adler & Kwon, 2002: 34),
11 with multiple variants of social capital identified in extant literature e.g. bridging social capital,
12 bonding social capital, linking social capital, structural social capital, relational social capital,
13 cognitive social capital etc. (see Putnam, 2000; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). There is therefore
14 potential for further social enterprise scholarship unpacking and deploying these concepts in
15 more fine-grained ways. The related concept of trust, itself also multifaceted, and its relationship
16 with social capital and these wider concepts could also receive further attention, as could the
17 concept of 'structural holes' (Burt, 1992). Finally, these concepts could be deployed in
18 understanding processes of social enterprise/entrepreneurship in more varied geographies and
19 contexts.
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33 The aforementioned perspectives and concepts have at least received some attention in the
34 literature. Some other network perspectives, concepts and theories have hitherto been engaged
35 with much less. We see promise in more widespread application of ANT, especially given the
36 growing prominence of more processual understandings of, and approaches to studying (social)
37 entrepreneurship/ social entrepreneuring. Similarly, we see scope for further application of
38 concepts like network bricolage (Baker et al, 2003), effectual networks/networking (Sarasvathy,
39 2001), and stakeholder networks (Roloff, 2008), amongst others. If a network is understood as a
40 group or system of interconnected things, then this might also lead to the (further) application of
41 concepts like systems of innovation (Lundvall, 1992), entrepreneurial ecosystems (Isenberg,
42 2010), and indeed wider systems perspectives, in social enterprise scholarship. Finally, from a
43 theoretical perspective we would encourage scholars to explore opportunities to further combine
44 network concepts, theories and perspectives with wider theories e.g. institutional theories,
45 resource based perspectives, motivational theories, social movement theory etc. to better
46 understand social enterprise phenomena.
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3 We identify next some promising topics for future social enterprise and networks research,
4 potentially deploying some of the theories and concepts previously mentioned. In recent times
5 we have seen the emergence of new digital technologies e.g. blockchain, of cryptocurrencies, the
6 rise of social media, and the growing reach and significance of virtual communities. Technology
7 is also transforming the way people work, for instance enabling more remote and virtual
8 working, as well as work in the so called 'gig' economy. We have also seen the emergence of
9 innovative financial technologies e.g. crowdfunding, personal money transfer systems like M-
10 Pesa etc. These developments create both threats and opportunities for social enterprises. On the
11 one hand, these new technologies may provide solutions to intractable sustainable development
12 challenges. Social enterprise may emerge, or existing ventures may begin leveraging these new
13 technologies to achieve their social missions. On the other hand there may be unanticipated
14 consequences of the emergence of these new technologies, for instance displacement of jobs, the
15 rise of more precarious working, the phenomenon of 'fake news' etc. We believe that network
16 perspectives and theories provide a useful lens to examine the emergence and application of
17 these new technologies, and as part of understanding the consequences of them, for good and ill.

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20 Following on from the above comments, in general there is a need for the adoption of more
21 critical perspectives in social enterprise scholarship, including in network studies. Network
22 perspectives and theories may be deployed in exploring negative aspects of social enterprise and
23 innovation. For example, whether and how social entrepreneurs might exploit or abuse their
24 network positions. A significant literature exists examining the "dark side" of social capital
25 across varied settings (see for example Di Falco & Bulte, 2011). Future research might examine
26 such a dark side in a social enterprise context. Questions of power within and between network
27 actors are also critical, and future scholarship could both examine this, and should remain
28 cognisant of it, as part of developing a more critical and reflexive social enterprise and networks
29 research agenda.

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32 Power is also a central consideration for any future research on flows of knowledge, as well as of
33 more tangible resources, between actors in global social enterprise and innovation networks. In
34 recent times we have seen a growth in organisations aiming to support social enterprises and
35 entrepreneurs, foster social entrepreneurial activity globally, and shape the wider field of social
36 enterprise e.g. Ashoka, UnLtd, the Skoll Foundation, the Social Enterprise Alliance etc.

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3 (Nicholls, 2010). As yet, these network organisations and the work they undertake remain little
4 studied. Future research could therefore develop a typology of these organisations, could
5 examine the role they play in building global social enterprise networks, we well as the personal
6 networks/ social capital of social entrepreneurs. However, critical perspectives might also be
7 applied to the work of such organisations, questioning for example issues of power, the
8 dominance of particular discourses, and the nature of knowledge exchange. Similarly critical
9 questions might also be asked in future research on networks of financial flows e.g. impact
10 investing in social enterprise, big philanthropy etc.

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12 Comparison of social enterprises with traditional business ventures, or even other organisational
13 forms e.g. charities, from a networks perspective and drawing upon network theories, is a further
14 possible area for future scholarship. Differences in network composition might be explored, or
15 variation in the action of strong and weak ties, institutional influences, social capital etc. There is
16 also scope for social enterprise and network studies to be conducted focusing on more diverse
17 geographies. As identified in the literature review, such work focussing on developing and
18 emerging economies remains limited. Social enterprise and networks studies in such settings
19 might also draw upon context specific network concepts, for instance '*Ubuntu*' (Lutz, 2009) if
20 the focus of the research is Africa. Future social enterprise and networks scholarship might also
21 focus in on particular population segments and demographic groups. For example, examining
22 how women social entrepreneurs utilise their social networks, deploy social capital, and
23 assessing whether this is different from male social entrepreneurs.

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25 We turn last to methodology. As noted in the literature review much existing social enterprise
26 and networks research is qualitative, case study based, and deploys fairly standard methods e.g.
27 semi structured interviews. There remains a need for more quantitative, theory testing research,
28 which is also now more possible as the field has matured. In designing such work we would
29 encourage scholars to look to exiting quantitative social enterprise and networks studies, but also
30 quantitative network studies in traditional entrepreneurship research. Opportunities should be
31 explored for the adoption of more innovative and alternate methodologies, for example
32 longitudinal studies, processual approaches, mixed-methods, in-depth ethnographic studies, and
33 action research, amongst others. Finally, there is scope for more rigorous and concerted
34 application of social network analysis techniques in social enterprise and network studies.

The Articles in this Special Issue

In the previous review we have explored questions of ‘where, how and what next?’ for social enterprise and networks scholarship. In the context of this review we now introduce the papers in this special issue on “Social enterprise and networks”. However, before we do, we would like to thank the reviewers who helped us in this endeavour, and without whose dedication, hard work, and constructive feedback, it would not have been possible. Following a workshop at the International Social Innovation Research Conference 2018, and a rigorous and selective review process, four articles were accepted for publication in this special issue.

In the first article, Kokko (2018) considers how the embeddedness of stakeholders in different institutional logics shapes the creation of social value in a social enterprise. She draws upon concepts of institutional logics, structural holes, and strong and weak ties, in exploring the empirical case of Peepoople, a social enterprise which provides biodegradable, self-sanitizing, one-use toilet bags to people lacking sanitation infrastructure. Kokko’s (2018) work contributes to understanding of social value creation by social enterprises and how this may occur through the bridging of structural holes. Linking Kokko’s (2018) work to our literature review we especially welcome her use of structural holes concepts, the developing economy focus of her study, and her rigorous network analysis.

The second article in the special issue by Spiegler & Halberstadt (2018) also has a developing/emerging economy setting. They examine networks and the idea-fruiting process of female social entrepreneurs in South Africa. In so doing they provide insights on women’s social entrepreneurship, and explore how this is shaped by sociocultural context and embeddedness, leading to female entrepreneurs developing particular kinds of networks, which ultimately facilitate idea fruiting. Spiegler & Halberstadt (2018) deploy a mixed method approach, including social network analysis. In so doing they align with our call in the literature review for the adoption of alternative methodologies. Their focus on female social entrepreneurs also chimes with our suggestion for more social enterprise and networks research attending to particular demographic groups and population segments.

The third paper in the special issue has quite a different focus. In it, De Beer (2018) examines social value creation by neighbourhood-based entrepreneurs, drawing upon social networks perspectives and the concept of embeddedness. Her work contributes to debates on the social

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3 value of entrepreneurship. She also provides insights on neighbourhood-based entrepreneurs as a
4 relatively understudied type of entrepreneur. In the context of our review, De Beer's (2018)
5 study speaks particularly to questions of new forms of technology enabled entrepreneurship and
6 ways of working, including in residential neighbourhoods.
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11 In the fourth article, Folmer et al (2018) explore the importance of networks for the emergence
12 and growth of social enterprise, how social enterprises use their networks throughout their life
13 courses, and compare and contrast social enterprise use of networks to obtain resources and
14 legitimacy with that of conventional commercial enterprises. Similarities are found in relation to
15 the importance of networks for both social and commercial enterprises, but also divergences in
16 how networks are used. This paper aligns strongly with our call for further research comparing
17 social and commercial enterprises and deploying network perspectives, concepts and theories.
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23 **Conclusion**

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26 To conclude, in this review we have explored systematically the state of the field in social
27 enterprise and networks research. We have addressed questions of 'where', 'how' and 'what
28 next' for social enterprise and networks scholarship. Whilst we have found burgeoning social
29 enterprise research examining network organisations and networking practices, as well as studies
30 engaging with networks concepts, theories and perspectives, we have also identified a significant
31 number of gaps and limitations, and areas for further future scholarly attention. The papers in
32 this special issue on "Social Enterprise and Networks" provide a platform for addressing some of
33 these gaps. It is our hope that they, and this special issue, will spur further interest and scholarly
34 activity on this important subject.
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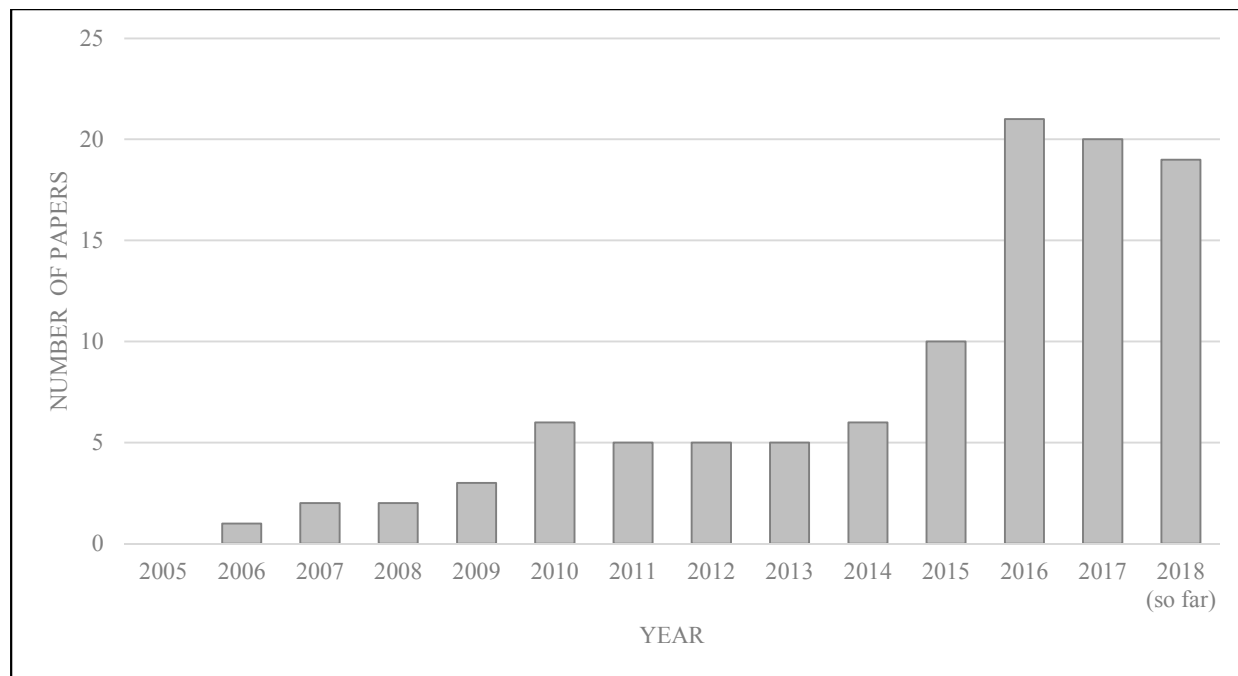


Figure 1: Number of Articles by Year

Journal Name	Number of Articles
Social Enterprise Journal	16
Entrepreneurship and Regional Development	14
Journal of Social Entrepreneurship	13
Journal of Business Ethics	11
Voluntas	10
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	6
Journal of Management Studies; Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly	4
Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice; International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation; International Small Business Journal; Journal of Business Venturing; Journal of Enterprising Culture; Journal of Small Business Management; Organization Studies	2
Administrative Science Quarterly; International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal; Journal of Enterprising Communities –People and Places in the Global Economy; Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development; Journal of International Business Studies; MIS Quarterly; Organization Science; Research Policy; Small business economics; Small Enterprise Research; Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal	1
All other journals in sample	0

Table 1: Number of Social Enterprise and Networks Articles by Journal

Geographical Focus	Number of Articles
Developed economies	35
Emerging/Transition economies	11
Developing economies	8
Multiple country studies	30
No explicit geographical focus	21

Table 2: Geographical Focus of Social Enterprise and Network Studies

Social Enterprise Journal

Network as the empirical focus	Social entrepreneur networking activities	Social enterprise network compositions and implications	Networks and social enterprise/social entrepreneurship processes
<p>Todres et al (2006); Seanor & Meaton (2007; 2008); Squazzoni (2009); Scott & Laine (2011); McKague & Tinsley (2012); Tallontire & Nelson (2013); Toivonen (2016).</p>	<p>Todres et al (2006); Chell (2007); Seanor & Meaton (2007; 2008); Ryzin et al (2009) Ghalwash et al (2017); Rakic, et al (2017); Grohs et al (2017); Jammulamadaka et al (2018).</p>	<p>Smith & Stevens (2010); Bradley et al (2012); Meyskens, et al (2009; 2013); Jenner (2016); Jenner & Oprescu (2016); Scheuerle & Schmitz (2016); Tasavori, et al (2018)</p>	<p>Somerville & McElwee (2011); Lehner (2014); Christopoulos & Vogl (2014); Qureshi, et al (2016); Hazenberg et al (2016); Pret & Carter (2017); Barinaga (2017);.</p>
<p>Examples: Seanor & Meaton (2007) examine what they describe as a social enterprise network in Bradford, West Yorkshire. They explore sense-making by various actors within this network. Interestingly in this case this network is not formalised. This contrasts with the earlier work of Todres et al (2006) where the network ‘WestFocus’ Partnership was formalised. Finally, more recent work by Tallontire & Nelson (2013), examine developments in the global fair trade movement/network.</p>	<p>Examples: Early work by Todres et al (2006) highlighted the importance of “strategic networking” in developing emerging social enterprises. More recent work by Ghalwash et al (2017) identifies the significance of social entrepreneur’s networks in motivating their activity, but also the important role networking activity and domestic and international networks can play for social entrepreneurs to acquire resources, achieve legitimacy and in social value creation.</p>	<p>Examples: Smith & Stevens (2010) argue that the embeddedness of the social entrepreneur and social enterprise, which is in turn affected by geographic factors, has implications for their selection of social entrepreneurial pursuits. They also suggest that degree of structural embeddedness influence processes of measuring and scaling social value creation. In a second example, Jenner & Oprescu (2016) examine the social capital of social enterprise and the opportunities stemming from this for collaboration and sustainability</p>	<p>Examples: Hazenberg et al (2016) examine the emergence of social enterprise ecosystems drawing upon stakeholder network perspectives and biological evolutionary theory. Barinaga (2017) explores through a framework of ANT the nascent organising of social entrepreneurial ventures.</p>

Table 3: Positions of Networks in Social Enterprise Literature