The Link Between Entrepreneurial Attributes And Ecosystem Orchestration:

The Case Of Q-Search

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the internal dynamics of entrepreneurial ecosystems and the entrepreneur's role in creating and orchestrating a framework for shared value creation by means of qualitative data capturing 15 years of development of an HR services ecosystem in The Netherlands. Specifically, the focus rests on the complex interplay between ecosystem goals, entrepreneurial attributes, orchestration actions, value creation for the ecosystem partners, and ecosystem outcomes over time. Our findings suggest that a focus on the psychology of entrepreneurs can help us more thoroughly understand the complex dynamics of the ecosystems they build and sustain.

Keywords: Ecosystems, entrepreneurship, attributes, orchestration, services, value creation

INTRODUCTION

Advancing the discussion around entrepreneurial (service) firms embedded in ecosystems (Autio, Kenney, Mustar, Siegel, & Wright, 2014), this paper explores the relation between entrepreneurial attributes, orchestration actions, and ecosystem value and outcomes in the context of a Dutch human resource (HR) services ecosystem. Specifically, we study ecosystem evolution over a period of 15 years and aim to depict how the ecosystem is mirrored by the entrepreneurial attributes and how the entrepreneur, in turn, is influenced, by the ecosystem's feedback on her orchestration actions. Collaboration has been a widely used strategy in high-tech industries, such as pharmaceutical biotechnology, already since the 1970s (Roijakkers and Hagedoorn, 2006). Indeed, since the 1980s, strategic alliance researchers have generated a wealth of publications by predominantly studying these inter-firm relations at a dyadic level. Their main goal has been to identify a number of factors (within the firm and with respect to the relationship between partners) that could explain superior alliance performance. Firms with higher alliance performance were expected to have a stronger competitive position in end markets than firms with weaker alliance performance (Rothaermel, 2001). As firms in many industries (also in service-based industries and low-to medium-tech sectors) began to engage in increasing numbers of alliances, collaboration started to evolve from dyadic relations to dense networked structures. Social network theorists, for example, have explored these networks to gain insights on the role/behavior of network leaders/orchestrators and the most optimal network positions for information access (Dhanaraj and Parkhe, 2006; Jones, Hesterly, & Borgatti, 1997; Lorenzoni and Baden-Fuller, 1995; Muller-Seitz, 2012). Recently, collaboration seems to have progressed to yet another organizational form – namely, from dyads, to networks, to ecosystems.

Several interesting publications on ecosystems have emerged so far. Many of these have dealt with drawing up definitions of these new organizational forms, specifically

focusing on whether (and how) ecosystems differ from alliance networks (see Autio et al., 2014; Barett, Davidson, Prabhu and Vargo, 2015; Lusch and Vargo, 2014 on entrepreneurial (service) ecosystems; Zahra and Nambisan, 2012 on different types of ecosystems). Whereas alliance networks have generally been found to have one central orchestrator leading the network, ecosystems seem to function on the basis of several central parties that activate and connect partners. Although there may be one party initiating the ecosystem, the organizational structure typically evolves over time to a state of shared leadership and a sustainable social community where several partners can take the lead on initiatives pursued by the ecosystem (Letaifa, 2014; Sweetman, 2010; WEF, 2014). Furthermore, while alliance networks and leadership positions herein are usually associated with superior performance and enhanced competitive positions of individual firms, many ecosystems that have come into existence, so far, seem to be about creating societal value with the competitive position of individual partners being of lesser importance (Ritala, Hyötylä, Blomqvist, & Kosonen, 2013; WEF, 2014). Autio et al. (2014), for example, have pointed out that entrepreneurial ecosystems go as far as shaping the types of organizational forms that are embraced by society.

Another important research stream within the context of entrepreneurial (service) ecosystems has focused on the role of the entrepreneur/orchestrator[1] (Nambisan and Baron, 2013). Orchestrators typically take several actions to discretely influence partners and create the necessary premises for the occurrence of value creation/capturing by all ecosystem partners, other stakeholders, and society at large (Nambisan and Sawhney, 2011; Ritala, Agouridas, Assimakopoulos, & Gies, 2013). To this end, they typically create visions where each partner plays a distinctive role, market the ecosystem to outside parties, set up partner selection mechanisms, and create a resource network around the ecosystem from which partners can draw. In addition, they set rules, establish norms and create an atmosphere of

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[1] In this paper, we use the terms entrepreneur and orchestrator interchangeably.

information sharing, trust, reciprocity, and effective communication (Leten, Vanhaverbeke,

Roijakkers, Clerix, & Van Helleputte, 2013; Lorenzoni and Baden-Fuller, 1995; Nätti,

Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, & Johnston, 2014).

In entrepreneurial ecosystems, orchestration actions are very specifically tailored to

the ecosystem in question, reflecting the attributes and goals of the entrepreneur (Gausdal and

Nilsen, 2011; Ucbasaran, Westhead, & Wright, 2001). Depending on the needs of the

ecosystem and their personal attributes, entrepreneurial orchestrators can act as visionaries,

leaders, facilitators, change agents, cooperation stimulators, branding specialists, value

creators, etc. These different roles may be related to various underlying personal attributes of

the entrepreneur, such as the ability to garner support around a shared vision, high levels of

passion/personal initiative, strong social skills, persistence to succeed, and self-reflection

leading to learning and corrective actions (Frese and Gielnik, 2014; Rauch and Frese, 2007).

The evolution of entrepreneurial ecosystems and their outcomes can, therefore, not be fully

understood without considering the psychology of the orchestrator, the effects certain

personal attributes have on orchestration actions, and the influence of ecosystem dynamics on

the entrepreneur (Frese and Gielniek, 2014; Nambisan and Baron, 2012). Given that

entrepreneurial (service) ecosystems are considered to be crucial for societal development

(Miles, 1995), we follow Autio et al., (2014), Nambisan and Baron (2012), Ritala et al.,

(2013), and others in studying the relation between entrepreneurial traits/goals, ecosystem

orchestration, and outcomes with the aim of generating some generalizable lessons for both

theory and practice.

We study this relation in the context of Q-Search, a Dutch entrepreneurial HR services

ecosystem that was founded by the orchestrator, an HR expert and independent policy

advisor, in 2000. The HR services industry in the Netherlands is a sector characterized by a

conservative nature and a slow pace of change. While authorities and the main market players

have engineered some changes, they have systematically neglected the fundamental aspects of cooperation and sharing. To this end, Q-Search was founded to proactively transform HR practices and to help likeminded entities change for the better by doing business on the basis of trust, cooperation, and sharing. The entrepreneur aims for the ecosystem to generate value for its recruitment partners (specialized in searching for temporary and permanent personnel), management partners (specialized in project management, change management, interim management, project assistance), and development partners (specialized in training, coaching, career counseling, mediation, personnel assessments). This value is defined in terms of creating a sense of connectedness and community, providing unrestricted knowledge access, serving as a source of inspiration, challenge, and reflection, and becoming a vehicle to improve society, thereby, lacking an explicit market orientation.

Since its inception, Q-Search has evolved through a number of distinct evolutionary phases that resemble the development phases of single firms and even those of biological ecosystems: initiation, growth, and maturity (see Figure 1). The initiation phase takes place between 2000–2001 and is characterized by the orchestrator's drive to bring about change, fuelled by her disappointing experience working as a manager for a large Dutch auto lease company. For one year she searches for likeminded people willing to join her networked organization and ultimately starts off with a core group of around 10 partners. During this first phase the ecosystem is not profit driven. An increase in the number of partners joining shifts the ecosystem into its second phase: growth. This phase spans the period 2001–2011 and is characterized by formalization and centralization. The orchestrator introduces a fee-based system and platform to connect all members. Here she provides member services (marketing collateral, newsletters, guest lectures and meetings, leads, etc.) in exchange for a yearly contribution. Furthermore, she commits values and ways of working to paper. As partners increasingly expect the entrepreneur to take the lead, a fact that is reinforced by the

financial crisis, she decides to abandon all formal administration and to collaborate on demand, leading the ecosystem to evolve to its current phase: maturity (2011–present). This phase is characterized by several spin-offs, which maintain the spirit of Q-Search and work towards the orchestrator's initial purpose (e.g. The Future of Work whose philosophy is to lay a new foundation for the way people work, which is actively communicated to the Dutch government).

Insert Figure 1 about here.

Q-Search offers a unique opportunity to study the link between entrepreneurial attributes, orchestration actions, and outcomes over the course of 15 years. Such an in-depth, single case study enables us to conduct a thorough analysis of these relations over time and to draw some valuable lessons for various stakeholders (Bennett and Elman, 2010; Eisenhardt, 1989; Siggelkow, 2007; Yin, 2014). We have ensured the quality of the research by taking several measures. First, we have tapped into multiple sources of evidence (see Table 1) during April–October 2015. These include in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the orchestrator and Q-Search partners active at various stages of the ecosystem's evolution, public and privately available information drawn from websites, brochures, internal documents, as well as the commissioning of an event (MIG meeting) with Q-Search partners to receive feedback on the analysis and validate the milestones in the ecosystem's evolution. Second, we have conducted our analysis independently according to our own areas of expertise (strategy/innovation management and psychology), periodically comparing and contrasting results until consensus was reached. Third, we have used a case study protocol and have drawn up a database where all information was stored.

Insert Table 1 about here.

The paper is organized as follows. First, we present the results of our analysis for each of the ecosystem phases outlined above. For each phase, we examine the link between entrepreneurial attributes, goals, orchestration actions, and ecosystem outcomes and value. Finally, we present a number of important lessons from our findings for both academics studying entrepreneurial ecosystems as well as for entrepreneurs initiating and managing these organizational structures.

PHASE I: INITIATION

The first phase of the Q-Search ecosystem's development, initiation, takes place between 2000 and 2001 and is marked by the entrepreneur's decision to abandon her position as finance manager at a large, hierarchical organization in favor of a more meaningful, impactful pursuit: to increase job satisfaction in The Netherlands by challenging the mentalities and structures that have led to its drastic deterioration over time ('To change [workplace] politics without going into politics'). This decision is not only fueled by her discontent with the prevalent ways of structuring organizations and their effects on worker engagement but also grounded in the realization that changing customer demands can only be met by the 'ultimate advisory, consultancy bureau […] not in the old form but the new network form'.

While the central goal—i.e., changing workplace policies and politics without going into politics, remains unchanged throughout all three phases of the Q-Search ecosystem's development, the phase-specific goals (or 'ecosystem goals' during initiation, growth, and maturity) and related orchestration approaches (or 'key entrepreneurial actions' influenced by the 'key attributes of the entrepreneur') vary considerably over time. Hence, the entrepreneur's original vision provides the red thread guiding the ecosystem's development, whereas her choice of actions in the specific developmental phases mirrors her personal growth. In this context, Paquin and Howard-Grenville's (2013) approach to analyzing

orchestrated[2] network (ecosystem) assembly and growth, in its original form, is useful but not fully adequate to explain the Q-Search ecosystem's development. A full, nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between ecosystem goals, key entrepreneurial actions, outcomes and ecosystem value[3] within Q-Search, is only possible by adding the orchestrator's personal attributes – e.g. vision, authenticity, passion, self-efficacy, self-reflection to the list of core aspects (see Tables 2, 3, and 4 for a full overview). Consequently, when describing the Q-Search ecosystem's evolution from initiation throughout maturity, Paquin and Howard-Grenville's (2013) framework has been adapted to incorporate entrepreneurial personal attributes. Below, we include a first overview of the core aspects observed during phase I.

Insert Table 2 about here.

At Q-Search, initiation is synonymous with laying the groundwork for sustained long-term value creation and includes three main goals: 1) establishing ecosystem legitimacy; 2) fostering a knowledge-sharing culture; and 3) creating space for continued development. The driving force across this phase is the entrepreneur's vision, an ideal and unique image of the future that represents the shared values to which the ecosystem should aspire (cf. House and Shamir, 1993). The three core elements of this vision (embodied in the ecosystem goals) are: creating a strong community that can serve as a hub for knowledge exchange and capability building, taking a more humane approach to business based on mutual trust and respect, and taking a long-term perspective that allows for continued development. As such, the vision serves as a motivating factor for the entrepreneur's actions as well as an inspirational function for prospective and actual ecosystem members (see House and Shamir, 1993).

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[2] Orchestration is understood here as a set of evolving actions, as opposed to a static, structural position.

[3] The core aspects of the Q-Search ecosystem's development in each phase are understood as follows: *ecosystem goals* are objectives that the entrepreneur sets for her ecosystem; *key attributes of the entrepreneur* are characteristics that influence goals and actions; *key entrepreneurial actions* are initiatives the entrepreneur takes with respect to orchestration; *ecosystem value* includes the benefits of being part of the ecosystem (from the partners' perspective); *outcomes* are the results of the orchestration process.

The first goal during this phase, establishing both broad and pragmatic legitimacy for the envisioned community, or what the entrepreneur *initially seeks from a larger audience* (getting her message about workforce policies and job satisfaction across to the broad pool of HR services professionals in her network) versus the *utility of an activity for a particular set of constituents* (what her first followers, the recruiting partners, see as meaningful in light of joining Q-Search), is the first dilemma (Paquin and Howard-Greenville, 2013) the entrepreneur faces when assembling her ecosystem. In light of this dilemma, the entrepreneur resorts to communication as a first key action to reaching her goals. The creation of broad-based legitimacy is facilitated by igniting numerous and widespread conversations around prevalent work ethics (and corresponding concerns), best practices, and new leadership models as well as by promoting the concept of 'the consultancy firm in the network organization form'. In other words, the entrepreneur communicates part of her vision—i.e., creating a strong community ('small society') that can serve as a hub for knowledge exchange and capability building in an informal, ad-hoc, continuous fashion via individual and small-group conversations, speeches, and presentations (see Tichy and Devanna, 1986), inspiring and attracting those whose values are aligned with the espoused vision (Baum and Locke, 2004). In terms of establishing pragmatic legitimacy, the entrepreneur organizes meetings with a core group of 10 supporters that have progressively been inspired by and have clustered around her vision. These frequent, informal meetings are the communication channels that serve to first rally recruitment, and later management and consulting partners around the same common vision, identify potential synergies, and establish the basis for future collaboration.

The second goal during initiation is fostering a knowledge-sharing culture, and is strongly linked to the entrepreneur's conviction that taking a more humane approach to business ('If we succeed in putting our human heart and soul in our way of doing business we

will succeed') will help create a community based on trust and collaboration, responsibility, openness, and experimentation. To realize this goal, the entrepreneur spends time deepening the conversations around better HR practices and increasing job satisfaction, consolidates prospective partners' points of view, and performs a careful selection of core members based on a fit with her own personal values and vision. For instance, prospective members are vetted based on their agreement with statements such as: 'I firmly believe that by working together within Q-Search I can serve more customers than I could on my own' (see Table 1). This pursuit of creating the right environment for sharing, collaborating, establishing mutual trust, and shared responsibility is a direct reflection of the entrepreneur's personal belief system and exhibited behaviors. The other ecosystem partners see her as a warm-hearted, sincere person that puts the interests of the ecosystem first, openly shares her knowledge and network, is prepared to be vulnerable, actively asks for feedback, and pro-actively facilitates the creation of personal connections. This inspires trust, which in turn, sets the tone for some of the partners to pursue the interests of the ecosystem, to be open and honest, to start helping each other, and to share their knowledge and contacts. This approach is consistent with Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone's (2007) findings regarding the factors likely to influence the development of shared leadership, namely, the existence of shared purpose, social support, and voice.

The third and final goal during initiation relates to creating space for continued development or an environment which can help partners co-evolve, withstand environmental contingencies, and safeguard the exchanges among them (see Jones et al., 1997). Taking a long-term perspective, the entrepreneur supports the formation of Q-Search with her own resources, thereby communicating through her behavior that she believes in the long-term viability of the venture and modeling the type of group-oriented behavior desirable in the ecosystem (see also Bandura, 1986; Yukl, 2010). As one core partner mentioned in the

interview: 'She is a reference point for a lot of people. And reference point not just solely in terms of business.' Furthermore, the entrepreneur creates the first ecosystem coordination mechanisms by encouraging more personal relationships among the different types of partners, promoting the value of face-to-face meetings, experimenting with diverse types of communication, and taking a lead in safeguarding and distributing key information as well as in mitigating potential conflicts (also observed by Batterink et al., 2010). Interestingly, her proactive actions lead to the other partners clustering around her as a person and expecting her to take the lead, which sets the stage for a potential misalignment between her view of what her role should be (an equal partner) and their view of her role (a leader).

The outcome of phase 1 is the creation of an HR service community, wherein HR service professionals enthusiastic about the same principles, ideas, and philosophies are connected with each other. At this stage, the main value of the ecosystem for the partners (at first, a core group of 10 partners in recruiting[4]) is the prospect of co-creating a community of like-minded individuals under the premise of generating win-win scenarios by working together instead of alone—i.e., 'erkenning en herkenning' or getting recognition for what you do and recognizing you are not alone with your network issues. Importantly, partners do not only join because of their alignment with the entrepreneur's ideas, values, and philosophies but also because of the entrepreneur herself. In line with previous research, her enthusiasm, passion, and zeal served as a strong initial attractor (see also Baum and Locke, 2004; Timmons, 2000). Interestingly, a few other personal characteristics, so far largely ignored in entrepreneurship research, also stimulated partners to join. Specifically, these were her authenticity, honesty, willingness to be vulnerable, and propensity to trust others, which not only instilled trust in the partners, but also helped create the foundation for future collaboration.

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[4] The Q-Search core group comprises recruitment partners only as the entrepreneur's prior experience had been in recruitment too. Hence, this network was readily available to her.

As the communication efforts (including word-of-mouth) regarding Q-Search's raison d'être begin to attract a significant number of new members, the entrepreneur starts to take a set of deliberate steps in order to facilitate this growth and accommodate the desired deepening of connections among partners. Consistent with previous research, the personal characteristics most strongly driving the entrepreneur are entrepreneurial passion (Baum and Locke, 2004) and personal initiative (Frese and Gielnik, 2014). Entrepreneurial passion is manifested in her strong emotional attachment to the vision, the long hours spent on spreading the message, and the tendency to see the successes and failures in garnering others' support as personal events. Personal initiative is manifested in the self-starting nature of her communication-related actions and in her proactive search for new potential partners.

All in all, the key entrepreneurial actions taken during initiation – non-systematized communication to establish legitimacy, member self-selection, singlehandedly supporting the ecosystem to create a small society, and creating coordination mechanisms in support of the long-term perspective – are synonymous with laying the groundwork for sustained value creation within Q-Search. As Q-Search transitions towards phase II, growth, finding a systematic way of addressing the evolving needs of the community becomes a priority and prompts for an entirely different approach.

PHASE II: GROWTH

The second phase of the Q-Search ecosystem's development, growth, takes place between 2001 and 2011 and is marked by the gradual formalization of relationships between the entrepreneur and her partners (see Table 3). Given the quick expansion of and increasing diversity within Q-Search, the entrepreneur sees a clear need to cement current partners' understanding of the ecosystem's goals and norms as well as to facilitate potential future partners' swift integration into the ecosystem. To this end, the ad-hoc conversations in phase I

are replaced with the practice of storing, refining, and re-broadcasting the principles created and decisions taken during initiation—i.e., the Q-Search 'groundwork', with the help of a contract, an IT platform, as well as a wholly new approach to facilitation (service package for a fee). Hence, having laid the groundwork for sustained value creation in phase I, the entrepreneur's focus now shifts towards: 1) deepening the connection among ecosystem partners; 2) changing and aligning their behavior, and more broadly 3) creating a values community that transcends a singular focus on monetary benefits. These three inter-connected goals are reached through a series of carefully synchronized actions and reveal a new palette of key attributes of the entrepreneur as will be explained below.

Insert Table 3 about here.

The first goal of the Q-Search ecosystem during growth, deepening the connection among ecosystem partners, is realized through two nearly simultaneous actions. First, the entrepreneur and core recruitment partners draft and distribute a unique[5] three-page vision and legal document (collaboration contract) in 2001 geared at reinforcing the Q-Search vision, clarifying the engagement rules between the entrepreneur and her partners, outlining the resources and facilities available to the partners, and highlighting the ecosystem's legal provisions. A year later, in 2002, the entrepreneur commissions an external company (OTYS) to develop and implement an IT platform to facilitate knowledge creation and sharing, develop the basis for learning processes to take place, and strengthen the ties between al three categories of partners – recruitment, management, and development.

The decision to create a hybrid collaboration contract stems from the entrepreneur's strong belief that successful collaboration can only happen if everyone adheres to the underlying value principles and that the best way to get people on the same page is to rehearse

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[5] Incorporating values and norms of conduct within a legal collaboration contract was not common practice at the time.

the principles of working together. Originally confusing—i.e., some partners felt vision and legal aspects cannot mix, the document eventually becomes the keystone of collaboration within Q-Search, enabling high quality exchanges and transparency. Hence, on the one hand, the introduction of contracts creates a framework for safe collaboration with explicitly stated cooperation rules, while on the other it enables efficient resource exchange and sparks better and faster integration between the different types of partners. For example, drafting a contract between a recruiter and a management partner means the latter could help coach a potential candidate for the former, resulting in a positive outcome for both.

The creation of an IT platform as a means to strengthen the ties between all three types of partners (management and development partners can now share their vacancies with the recruiters), blend routines (old and new), and gradually accumulate a broader pool of complementary skills (the latter two are typical IT goals of knowledge intensive business service firms – see Consoli and Elche-Hortelano, 2010), is a pioneering initiative for HR services professionals in The Netherlands at the time, albeit one that is consistent with the entrepreneur's initial vision of the future: a networked organization that can sustain long-term value creation. A clear sign that the entrepreneur's vision was ahead of its time and that collaborative working was still a practice in its infancy is also found in some partners' mixed reactions to the concurrent launch of the Q-Search website: 'And 10 years ago, there was a partner in my [the entrepreneur's] network that said: You really have to change the website because nobody understands it. Well, I see that, because I am talking about what is going to happen in the future, in 10–15 years from now'. Last but not least, as a testament to the entrepreneur's passion and dedication to making her vision work, she initially carries the full costs of developing and maintaining this IT platform, hoping to attract more likeminded HR professionals to Q-Search.

The second and third goals of this phase, changing and aligning partners' behavior and creating a values community that transcends a singular focus on monetary benefits are also realized, to a limited extent, by the introduction of the IT platform, but largely by the entrepreneur's decision to assume full ecosystem facilitation for a yearly fee by 2003.

In terms of aligning partners' behavior, the IT system serves as an effective social adhesive in phase II and is employed until partner connections are established without the need for formal facilitation ('The formal issue was more necessary when the personal connection was not there'). The entrepreneur's decision to temporarily centralize efforts via the IT system reflects her belief that change happens gradually and that formal structures are only meaningful up to a certain extent[6]. The potential value of this type of collaboration between different partner categories is, however, not necessarily self-evident to all ecosystem partners and requires concerted action on the part of the entrepreneur; namely, the introduction of a formal orchestration fee (750 euros per year per partner) for full ecosystem facilitation in 2003[7].

The fee is designed as an 'all-inclusive' package for Q-Search members and covers an impressive array of elements such as group communications (OTYS user manual or guide to the IT platform, monthly newsletters about new members, co-working tips, guest lectures, facilitated ecosystem meetings), marketing collateral (Q-search website, logos, banners, brochures, badges, personalized email signatures), access to various facilities or discounts (shared meeting rooms for Q-Search partners), and personal coaching and feedback. In an attempt to iron out disparities between the different types of partners, the entrepreneur organizes a large number of group meetings, sometimes including only individual partner categories, and at other times bringing all types of partners together. During these meetings,

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[6] The entrepreneur's decision to temporarily centralize all orchestration activity in this phase lies in stark contrast to the dominant logic in the strategy literature (see, for example, Müller-Seitz 2012) where effective ecosystem orchestration is viewed as a task that should be taken on by a sole partner on a *continuous* basis.

[7] At this point we observe the first major triage in Q-Search as partners not in favor of the fee leave. What remains are partners committed to the entrepreneur's vision.

her social skills (see Baron and Tang, 2009), especially her ability to perceive others' interests and needs accurately, her propensity to express her own reactions and feelings openly and her skill in adapting her behaviors to the situation at hand, enable her to build trust ('she is a trust builder'), to bridge various points of views ('she is a bridger'), and to make peace ('she is a peace-maker') by ironing out the disparities between the various categories of partners whenever possible ('We have to be patient and take everyone with us'). Furthermore, her passion for making the ecosystem work, for sharing and helping others, as well as her persistence/grit (see also Nambisan and Baron, 2013) and dedication to her partners, help create a climate of psychological safety, trust and cooperation (trust is used as social lubricant; see, for example, Dyer and Nobeoka, 2000), as well as a sense of shared purpose, mutual support and voice – all prerequisites of shared leadership creation (Carson, Tesluk, and Marrone 2007).

All in all, the deliberate transition from loose to rigorous orchestration to create a values community occurs naturally and reveals the entrepreneur's systematic approach to creating win-win situations – an aspect which ties in well with what Grant and Baden-Fuller (2004) call the knowledge accessing motivation, rather than the knowledge acquisition motivation. Hence, as the diversity of partners and resources within Q-Search increases, so does the need for an infrastructure that can accommodate a broader range of knowledge integration and social coordination mechanisms. The entrepreneur's actions up to this point (contracts, IT platform, and subscription fee) aim not only to enhance socialization and increase knowledge mobility (Dhanaraj and Parkhe, 2006), but also to solve a common dilemma in an ecosystem's growth: *enabling serendipity versus directing ties* (Paquin and Howard-Grenville, 2013) between partners. More precisely, the entrepreneur (as the formal orchestrator) attempts to balance effort spent towards enabling each type of value-creating activity by offering partners plenty of freedom within the boundaries of the community—e.g.,

partners are encouraged to meet without her. This attitude is consistent with the entrepreneur's original vision of creating a self-sustaining community. Hence, vision remains a key component underlying her actions. However, during the growth stage a number of other attributes play a more proximal role in driving her behaviors, namely social skill, entrepreneurial passion, persistence, and self-reflection. Interestingly, some of these attributes have previously been related to entrepreneurial success (see Baron and Tang, 2009; Baum, Locke, & Smith, 2001; Frese and Gielnik, 2014) and could be seen as being prerequisites for developing a successful, self-sustaining organization that would take a life of its own.

Whereas drafting a standard contract, launching a state-of-the-art multi-functional IT platform, and introducing an orchestration fee could potentially signal an increased business-orientation, the true intention of the entrepreneur is quite the opposite ('she really believes there is a better world'). In contrast to the informal approach taken during initiation, formal ecosystem orchestration in phase II allows for the creation, testing, and implementation of more effective social mechanisms, notably mechanisms to enhance coordination, safeguard exchanges, and influence exchange behavior between partners. In line with work by Jones et al. (1997), we do find evidence of a number of such social mechanisms being employed. First, restricted access is achieved by the introduction of a subscription fee, which triggers many Q-search partners to exit the ecosystem leaving behind a smaller group of highly committed HR services professionals. Second, the establishment of a macroculture, which creates convergence of expectations and establishes a common language for conveying complex information across the ecosystem, is supported by the IT platform, individual coaching of partners by the entrepreneur, as well as frequent face-to-face group meetings. Third, a focus on reputation as a social mechanism can be seen in the information about partner behavior being shared in the monthly newsletters and meetings as well as in the use of word-of-mouth to communicate partner misbehavior. The fourth social mechanism mentioned by Jones et al.

(1997), collective sanctions, is the only one for which we find no evidence in the case, possibly tying into the entrepreneur's own belief that partners should take responsibility for policing themselves.

In addition to diverse actions and complex orchestration mechanisms, the growth phase also reveals the increasingly nuanced roles of the entrepreneur as she manages Q-Search's bumpy transition to becoming a self-sustaining community of HR professionals. Initially, the entrepreneur is a collector, translator, and disseminator of information (similar to the *innovation broker* described by Batterink et al., 2010), regularly communicating with partners through newsletters, personal meetings, and individual coaching with the goal of spreading the collaborative/ecosystem mindset. Her ability to listen to others and understand their needs combined with her strong networking capabilities help her successfully fulfill this role (see also Baron, 2000; Baron and Tang, 2009). In addition, the entrepreneur understands that she needs to serve as a source of inspiration to partners if she wants to establish a values community and any real behavioral alignment to occur. To this end, she engages in a number of actions that clearly signal that she is committed to the ecosystem and that she places the interests of the ecosystem above her own (see Nambisan and Baron, 2013 for a discussion of balancing ecosystem and individual interests). For instance, her decision to give Q-Search her undivided attention and spend her time fully on ecosystem facilitation, also meant foregoing the opportunity to earn money as a recruiter, which factually came down to a 33 per cent salary cut. This clearly signaled to others her strong group-orientation. Moreover, her constant quest to serve as an enabler by trying to help partners reach their goals, by mitigating conflicts, and by asking 'What can I do for the whole group to create a better community?' helped in creating a climate of psychological safety and equality (Batterink et al., 2010). In addition to supporting knowledge mobility and serving as an enabler and a source of inspiration, the entrepreneur also gravitates towards relinquishing ownership and control

(Thomas, Autio, & Gann, 2015) in several ways. For example, by letting more skilled partners take over some of her main tasks ('I am good at attracting new people, building a concept, testing new partners, writing a newsletter. But if someone else wants to take over one of the steps it's OK with me'), democratizing the partner selection criteria ('All the selections, I made them myself and then suddenly after three years or so I asked also partners to look [for] new partners, because I thought otherwise it's not a really democratic process'), and encouraging partners to meet and collaborate without her direct involvement ('We were always pushing towards cooperating. Find each other without me').

Summing up, the outcomes of the growth phase are a formalized orchestration process, a more diversified and visibly strengthened community, yet one in which tensions between the idea-oriented (management and development partners) and business-oriented partners (recruiters) intensify dramatically towards the end. The main value of the ecosystem derived from formal facilitation lies in ongoing member triage, increased resource diversity, increased connectedness among partners, and improved knowledge creation and sharing. However, value extracted from the ecosystem becomes more polarized, where the recruitment partners focus on extracting financial benefits, whereas the management and development partners focus more on extracting non-financial benefits such as a sense of community, giving and receiving help, inspiration, and support.

Despite the entrepreneur's ongoing effort to reconcile expectations and iron out disparities between partners, the global financial crisis, whose effects are first felt in the Netherlands in 2008/2009[8], inevitably takes its toll and triggers the shift towards the last phase: maturity. In the light of financial pressures many Q-Search partners had become dependent on the entrepreneur's assistance, non-collaborative ('The crisis came and what you see then is that everybody started to become a human'), and unwilling to assume

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[8] http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/publication16339_en.pdf

responsibility for their own survival.Partners' inability to act independently in the face of hardship triggers the entrepreneur to engage in a cycle of self-reflection and reconsider her own journey with Q-Search. During this process she realizes that her vision for the ecosystem and some of the partners' expectations are misaligned. Moreover, she feels imprisoned by the responsibility they have placed on her shoulders and acknowledges that this is not the type of ecosystem she had originally envisioned. Hence, in 2011, the entrepreneur performs the ultimate, liberating act and dismantles the formalized structure underlying Q-Search ('So I quit after 11 years with the forms'), ending growth and beginning the maturity phase.

PHASE III: MATURITY

The third and final phase of the Q-Search ecosystem's development, maturity, begins in late 2011 and continues at the present time (2015) (see Table 4). The transition towards this phase brings another round of structural changes to the ecosystem, much like the transition from initiation to growth had previously done through the establishment of the collaboration contract, the IT platform, and the subscription fee. The profound misalignment between the entrepreneur's personal aspirations and her role within the ecosystem at the end of growth in conjunction with the growing divide between profit and inspiration-seeking partners, prompt her to dismantle the formal structure that had governed the ecosystem's functioning from 2003 throughout 2011 ('The idea of Q-Search being an organization, an organized organization is really gone'). What remains is a borderless community whose partners represent seeds for new ecosystem initiation and growth.

Insert Table 4 about here.

The main goal during maturity – pursuing the ecosystem's initial vision and continuing inter-personal support – is borne from the entrepreneur's personal development

and renewed need to align her vision with her actions. This includes, for instance, a conscious liberation from allowing herself to be bogged down by operational issues ('I think 70–80 per cent of her time she was busy, busy, busy with operational issues') and instead choosing to focus on matters closer to her heart, such as larger societal issues of change and deeper transformation ('She was more and more interested in issues of transformation, transition, culture change'). To reach her goals, the entrepreneur devises yet another set of deliberate, impactful actions, including the abandonment of the formal orchestration role and closer collaboration with policy-makers for broader impact creation.

The decision to stop the formal orchestration role and through this, decentralize the Q-Search ecosystem, is borne to a large extent from the fact that the entrepreneur felt imprisoned within her own community and longed for greater freedom and flexibility in pursuing her initial vision. Practically, abandoning the formal orchestration role entails that the subscription fee and the collaboration contracts are dropped, while the IT platform, previously the main instrument of orchestration, remains in place[9]. On a personal level, the choice to decentralize the ecosystem coincides to a large extent with the entrepreneur's personal development and increased self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1986; Rauch and Frese, 2007). After a period of self-reflection triggered by the increasing conflicts at the end of the growth stage, she realizes that her work within Q-Search is valuable but that she has to pursue it on her own terms. While, over time, the entrepreneur has changed in a number of respects, such as becoming more confident, being less vulnerable to manipulation, becoming more resilient, learning to be more relaxed, and letting go of ideas, some things do remain constant. For instance, throughout the three ecosystem development phases, her vision, her entrepreneurial passion, and persistence in pursuit of her vision never really waver (see also Frese and

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[9] At the time this paper is written, the Q-Search website is used exclusively for marketing purposes (advertising new projects/spin-offs), evidence of the Q-Feeling being kept alive.

Gielnik, 2014; Nambisan and Baron, 2013 on the importance of grit/persistence for entrepreneurial success).

After decentralization, the entrepreneur's role is best described as an enabler and sustainer of transformation (Gastaldi, 2015) for those partners that have fully embraced the Q-Search vision (ideology) and are prepared to take this vision forward in their own professional environments. Hence, the mature ecosystem retains a *special subset* of the partners acquired throughout the first two phases; specifically, those partners whose level of independence and responsibility matches that of the entrepreneur and who are now free in the forms they adopt for resource exchanges, value creation, and co-evolution.

The closer collaboration with policy-makers for broader impact creation during maturity bears testimony to the more general trend towards increased collaboration, flexibility, and a renewed focus on societally relevant issues. To this end, the new MIG meetings give rise to a more condensed and effective means of interaction. As alternatives to the *orchestration service package* (ecosystem meetings with facilitation, concept building, newsletters, partner selection, and personal coaching) created and delivered by the entrepreneur during growth, MIG meetings take interaction to an entirely new level by enabling participants—i.e., Q-Search partners and other experts keen on broadening their personal and professional horizons, to reflect more deeply on their own ideas, limitations, and concerns, and even perform role-play in order to solve conflicts, as we could observe directly during data collection. The fluid membership of these meetings also reflects the entrepreneur's strong belief that issues are best solved by bringing the right combination of people together, namely individuals with complementary skills that are passionate about the issue at hand and open to new ideas and possibilities. Also worth noting is the fundamental importance of trust in sustaining the new means of communication and, more broadly, the building of an effective knowledge-sharing network (Dyer and Nobeoka, 2000).

Some examples of on-demand projects[10] created during phase III and inspired by working with policy makers include: The Future of Work, a project whose aim is to lay the foundations for the workplace and work practices of the future, The Source of Feminine Leadership program, and the The Art of Letting Go training. At the time the final interview was recorded, the entrepreneur was working closely with the Ministry of Internal Affairs in The Netherlands to achieve impact in society through new leadership and flexible forms of organization (networks). These new projects and collaborations are to a large extent the result of the entrepreneur's newly found self-efficacy as well as of the fit between her vision and the preferred way of working with others, that is, in an exploratory, collaborative, open manner. Interestingly, this notion of fit between entrepreneurial characteristics and the entrepreneurial environment as being relevant to entrepreneurial success is in line with previous entrepreneurship research (see Rauch and Frese, 2007 for a meta-analysis; Ucbasaran et al., 2001).

Without doubt, the most important change during maturity occurs internally, as the entrepreneur succeeds in aligning her internal values and beliefs with those of her creation (the ecosystem). In a reflection on her 15 years of activity the entrepreneur mentions (visibly amused) the shift from naivety during initiation, to control/ organizing (even dictatorship) during growth, and finally onto maintaining a 'functional ego' during maturity whereby personal and professional aspirations are aligned. This change could not have happened, however, without engaging in self-reflection, being open to learning from different situations, being honest with herself, and actively trying to develop ('But then, what I also discovered during those 15 years was the hardest work I had to do was on myself.'). In terms of Q-Search partners' decisions as a result of decentralization, idea-driven individuals and firms stay close to the entrepreneur, profit-driven partners seek other businesses and projects, while new

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[10] During maturity all initiatives take place on request. Partners are no longer 'forced' to work together.

partners, who had previously considered the fee system too constraining, are now free to join. As such, the entrepreneur elegantly solves a final important dilemma in an ecosystem's development called the *replication versus reinvigoration* dilemma—i.e., deciding how closed or open her new ecosystem should be as it continues its expansion (see Paquin and Howard-Grenville, 2013) by allowing the ecosystem to adjust naturally to new circumstances, without intervention.

All in all, maturity is a time of renewal for everyone involved in the Q-Search ecosystem's development—i.e., entrepreneur, partners, emergent stakeholders, and elicits the reintroduction of some of the successful practices undertaken during phase I. For example, the informal conversations carried out extensively during initiation re-emerge in a new format ('What we are doing now with the intervention group is that we have a case, on which we share our wisdom so that [everybody] can go home with much more information and work on that'). Similarly, mutual sharing and responsibility for one's learning are once again decentralized, as is the entrepreneur's role in the facilitation of connection making—i.e., partners now connect independently, with or without her participation.

The outcomes of the maturity phase can best be described as falling into two categories: concrete, hard outcomes as well as more abstract, soft outcomes. In terms of concrete outcomes, a number of idea-driven partners remain informally connected, whereas others leave the ecosystem. Furthermore, new products and services are created, boundaries dissolve, and several projects take a life of their own by means of spinning off into new, sometimes overlapping ecosystems with porous boundaries that model themselves on the Q-Search principles. In terms of more abstract outcomes, partners' self-sufficiency and ability to bring new ecosystems to life coupled with the entrepreneur's influence on stabilizing existing capabilities, enriching current capabilities, and pioneering new ecosystem capabilities (Hitt,

Ireland, Sirmon, & Trahms, 2011) play a key role in helping Q-Search become the societal impact generating vehicle it was originally designed to be.

For the partners, the main value of the ecosystem lies in unrestricted sharing and helping, the shared ideal of working for a better society, as well as feeling inspired, appreciated, and supported in their own endeavors. Additionally, having a sense of procedural justice (even in an informal setting, partners trust the co-development processes) and joint asset ownership (the new projects created) help the entrepreneur and partners ensure equitable distribution of value (Dhanaraj and Parkhe, 2006) within the new Q-Search, which, in turn, strengthens its stability and prospects for further development. Phase III places the emphasis back on safeguarding and realizing the initial vision (increasing job satisfaction in The Netherlands) within a community of dedicated partners, who have fully embraced the Q-Search vision and who choose to collaborate and support each other unencumbered by any formal agreements.

Following French nobleman and chemist Antoine Lavoisier's quote, 'Dans la nature rien ne se crée, rien ne se perd, tout change' [In nature nothing is created, nothing is lost, everything changes], in Q-Search too, the foundational elements endure during maturity, serving as seeds for new initiation and growth.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Following Autio et al.(2014), Nambisan and Baron (2012), Ritala et al.(2013), and others, this paper has illustrated the complex interplay between goals, attributes, actions, as well as outcomes and value creation within an entrepreneurial ecosystem. Using Paquin and Howard-Grenville's (2013) framework as inspiration, our analysis has combined different streams of literature – i.e., entrepreneurship, strategy/innovation management, and psychology – to visualize, scrutinize, compare and contrast both the entrepreneur's and the ecosystem's

unique development throughout initiation, growth, and maturity. Figure 2 captures the

dynamic process that is set in motion once the entrepreneur decides to create an ecosystem to

reach her goal ('to change workplace policies and politics without going into politics') and

that has been described in this paper.

Insert Figure 2 about here.

Over time, the development of the Q-Search ecosystem has essentially mirrored the

development of the entrepreneur where she has pursued several orchestration actions

throughout different phases to realize her vision, has carefully taken onboard the feedback she

received from the ecosystem partners in response to these actions, and purposefully changed

her behavior accordingly. In her pursuit to create the 'ultimate consultancy bureau but not in

the old form, in the new network form' (essentially, a hybrid organization[11] where

collaboration is not just a means to an end but an end in itself), the entrepreneur has

established ecosystem legitimacy, promoted a knowledge-sharing culture, and created a space

for continued development during 2000–2001. In addition, she has deepened connections

among partners via an IT platform, changed and aligned partners' behaviors, and created a

valued community during 2001–2011; and she has provided informal support from 2011

onwards. During the whole process she has carefully examined and digested the feedback she

received from the ecosystem and has used these responses as input for her personal growth

and new orchestration actions. Examples of phase-specific orchestration actions (Ritala et al.,

2012) that we have identified in Q-Search are: organizing informal get-togethers (currently

through the MIGs), clear vision communication, clarifying partners' expectations vis-à-vis

collaboration, carrying out partner selection, stimulating openness and trust, setting up

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[11] Hybrid organizations are aimed at creating shared value by initiating change to alleviate a particular social
issue (here, low job satisfaction) and treating economical viability as a secondary concern (Haigh et al., 2015).

common guidelines, developing (on-demand) contractual frameworks, implementing an IT platform, and purposefully facilitating exit routes (van der Borgh, Cloodt, & Romme, 2012). Over the course of 15 years and several feedback loops, Q-Search has developed into a self-sustaining ecosystem where like-minded partners interact informally, produce spin-offs, and are equally 'powerful' and likely to take the lead. In its current form, Q-Search closely resembles the impact-generating organizational form grounded in open sharing and trust among partners, that the entrepreneur had in mind from the onset.

In the traditional alliance and network literature, collaboration has, for the most part, been studied in light of the (increasing) competitive power of the central coordinating party and the partners involved. In this context, cooperation is largely viewed as a means to an end; partners join forces on a temporary basis to complement each others' weaknesses and strengthen their individual competitive positions, after which, they part to pursue their own strategic goals (see among others Faems, Janssens, & van Looy, 2010; Gimeno, 2004; Hagedoorn and Schakenraad, 1994; Hamel, 1991; Lavie, 2007; Soh, 2010). In an industrial setting where companies compete with each other to attract customers, gain market share, and increase their individual piece of the pie, collaboration may indeed serve a very instrumental purpose: it is a means to an end, a strategic option that helps firms reach corporate goals when they cannot obtain the resources they need on their own. However, in an entrepreneurial ecosystem aimed at creating widespread sustainable societal value (which takes precedence over the generation of profits) the different partners need to be empowered to learn how to set up and sustain such an ecosystem. Hence, orchestration actions leading to increasing the power of the entrepreneur, and thus increasing partners' dependence on the orchestrator, may be counterproductive. The very way in which the ecosystem functions in its current state, including the manner in which partners interact with each other and take initiative can be considered as an end in itself; a new way of doing (more humane, trustful) business in HR

services that the entrepreneur envisioned to see duplicated on a larger scale (now taking effect through spin-offs).

In this paper, we have shown that it takes a specific type of entrepreneur or leader to set up ecosystems that are ultimately self-sustaining and can thus create value for society on a long-term basis: an entrepreneur who has a strong vision of changing society for the better and who is able to communicate this vision to her partners (Grant, 2012); who is willing to forego her own interests for the benefit of the greater good (passion) and who is capable of cultivating this attitude in others through her authenticity; who leads by example by helping others to empower themselves and take the lead instead of building up her power position as an ecosystem orchestrator and making herself irreplaceable (Conger, Kanungo, & Menon, 2000; Davis and Eisenhardt, 2011; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). It takes an orchestrator who is passionate about her cause and, by extension, shows the persistence that is necessary to take her ecosystem through the learning phases of chaos, structure, and ultimately structured chaos (Baum and Locke, 2004); who is willing to show her vulnerability; who is able to use the ecosystem's feedback to her actions as input for self-reflection and personal development (use the mirror function of the ecosystem), and is willing to change her behavior to accommodate the ecosystem's needs.

Entrepreneurial ecosystems aimed at creating societal value are deemed to be of crucial importance. Hence, many governments try to actively stimulate the initiation of these organizational forms. In this context, it is of paramount importance to study the dynamics of these ecosystems and clarify how entrepreneurial goals and attributes, orchestration actions, and value creation interact with each other. Our study covering 15 years of ecosystem dynamics, albeit based on a single case in the Dutch HR service sector and drawn up with hindsight, suggests that notions of competition and power that are traditionally associated with orchestration positions in alliance networks may not hold when the goal is to change

attitudes and develop new ways of interaction. When the aim of the entrepreneur is to create a new organizational form that can sustain and reproduce itself and, as such, generate continuous societal impact, the orchestrator may need to strive for a self-regulating community of like-minded partners, whose values and objectives are aligned, thus making active orchestration obsolete in the long run. Our study also suggests that a certain type of entrepreneur (who is not seeking a powerful position and has a long-term orientation) is necessary to set up and cultivate these kinds of ecosystems. Governments and other policy-making institutions involved in stimulating ecosystem development may stand to gain from learning more about the type of entrepreneur who is most likely to create ecosystems with sustainable societal impact. As such, we stimulate fellow researchers in different disciplines to conduct more in-depth, multi-disciplinary explorations of entrepreneurial ecosystems aiming for social gain, their internal dynamics, and the interactions between the psychology of the orchestrating entrepreneur and the partners.

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TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1: Data source overview

Data source	Title and interviewers/ authors	Description
Interviews	Interview with entrepreneur Interviewers: all authors	In-depth, semi-structured personal interview with entrepreneur – Q-Search founder and orchestrator
	Interview with partner Interviewers: all authors	In-depth, semi-structured telephone interview with one Q-Search management partner in Stage II
	Interview with partners Interviewers: all authors	In-depth, semi-structured personal interview with two Q-Search partners: one development partner in Stages I, II and III and member of The Future of Work project, and one development partner in Stages II and III, and member of The Future of Work Project (a Q-Search spin-off)
Documents	Doc1 Partner selection criteria (in Dutch) Author: entrepreneur	Document outlining rules and attitudes prospective Q-Search partners adhered to prior to being granted membership - e.g. 'I am aware that working successfully in a networked organization means that I take other people's business as seriously as my own'.
	Doc2 Q-Search values + partner input (in Dutch) Author: Q-Search partners	Document outlining values Q-Search members shared and/or developed while in the network - e.g. [Q-Search partners are]: 'interested in others, informal, communicative, empathetic, respectful, have a sense of humor, helpful, and provide pleasant company'; professionally, Q-Searchers know what they're talking about, know their trade (via experience and skills), and are professional (you are in good hands with them). The document also includes partner testimonials.
	Doc3 Services provided by orchestrator (in Dutch) Author: entrepreneur	Document outlining benefits received in exchange for Q-Search membership fee in Stage II – e.g. network book, marketing collateral (Q-Search logos, banners, personalized signature in e-mails), OTYS user manual (the IT infrastructure), newsletters, direct weekly info, list of leads, access to shared meeting rooms etc.
	Doc4 Sample vision document (in Dutch) Author: entrepreneur	Document outlining input for new tax plan in The Netherlands. There is reference to The Future of Work project in an endnote.
	Doc5 Sample vision document (in Dutch) Author: entrepreneur	PowerPoint presentation for the Ministry of Internal Affairs in The Netherlands on achieving societal impact through new leadership and flexible forms of organization (networks, ecosystems).
	Doc6 The Future of Work project (in Dutch) Authors: project members (Q-Search partners)	Document outlining The Future of Work project's philosophy.
Direct observation	Maatschappelijke Intervisie Groep (MIG) Meeting	Interactive discussion with Q-Search entrepreneur and partners (management, development and recruitment). The discussion helped clarify essential aspects of the Q-Search case and enabled participants to reflect on the lessons learned.

Table 2: Overview of Phase I: Initiation

The Q-Search ecosystem's development. Phase I: Initiation (2000–2001)		
Core aspects		Evidence from data
Ecosystem goals	Establish ecosystem legitimacy	Entrepreneur: *So first we were a recruitment network but I was also taking about [...] the ultimate advisory, consultancy bureau but not in the old form but the new network form.*
	Foster knowledge sharing culture	Entrepreneur: *Q-Search is nothing more than a little society for me*
	Create space for continued development	Partner: *Making business in a more humane way on the basis of equality, respect, warm-heartedness, and sincerity*
Key attributes of the entrepreneur	Vision	Entrepreneur: *I was an entrepreneur and I started talking about the concept of... well, the consultancy firm in the network organization form.* Partner: *She said: I want to change [workplace] politics without going into politics. I want to increase [workers' joy]*
	Authenticity/honesty	Partner: *She is a reference point for a lot of people. And a reference point not solely in terms of business.* Partner: *A person in her authenticity, in her genuine being. Being herself.* Doc1 Partner selection criteria
	Entrepreneurial passion	Entrepreneur: *I worked in companies and I saw that we were not cooperating easily or not even cooperating with each other [at all] although we were working on the same products or services. And I thought: This is strange, but you know, I am not going to change them*
	Personal initiative	Partner: *She initiates a lot* Partner: *She facilitates. She is always there. If [she] is not there, there is no group*
Key entrepreneurial actions	Non-systematized communication	Entrepreneur: *The first model was: Everything for free, just being happy that people were even interested in me and came there*
	Member self-selection	Partner: *She picked out the persons she liked to join in the first stage. And she had, of course, her own reasons and her own assessment, for that* Entrepreneur: *[The selections] I made them myself*
	Singlehandedly supporting the ecosystem	Entrepreneur: *At the beginning I paid everything myself but then I earned my money with recruitment.*
	Coordination mechanisms creation	Partner: *We had a starting meeting with, I think around 10-15 people*
Ecosystem value	Connecting likeminded HR service professionals	Partner: *So yes, we were all, you can say in a major part in alignment with the values, ideas, philosophies that [the entrepreneur] exhibited*
Outcomes	Ecosystem takes shape with help from core partners in recruitment.	Partner: *It all started up with I think, maybe, 10 people who were active in recruitment* Entrepreneur: *Everyone was enthusiastic and I started with recruitment professionals* Entrepreneur: *I realized that I think I have to write down all the rules we made up already with each other*

Table 3: Overview of Phase II: Growth

The Q-Search ecosystem's development. Phase II: Growth (2001–2011)		
Core aspects		Evidence from data
Ecosystem goals	Deepening connection among partners (via IT platform)	Entrepreneur: *What is also very interesting is that you can use ICT to change behavior.* Partner: *She was asking: What can I do for the whole group to create a better community?* Entrepreneur: *We were always pushing towards cooperation. Find each other without me.*
	Changing/ Aligning partner behavior	*Partner: She was more like: OK, if you go in that direction, what do you need to go in that direction? How can I help you with that?* Entrepreneur: *The formal issue was more necessary when the personal connection was not there*
	Creation of a values community	Partner: *I think she was trying more to build, develop the values community more than the business community. And that's what a lot of partners didn't understand.* Entrepreneur: *All the selections, I made them myself. And after 3 years or so I also asked partners to look for new partners because I though otherwise it's not a really democratic process*
Key attributes of the entrepreneur	Vision	Entrepreneur: *And 10 years ago, there was a partner in my network that said: You really have to change the website because nobody understands it. Well, I see that because I am talking about what will happen in the future, in 10-15 years from now*
	Social skill	Partner: *She is a trust builder.* Partner: *She is a 'bridger', she is a strong networker, and she knows quite a lot of people, and she is also a peacemaker, a world-changer, she is very strong and very quick and she is taking care.* Entrepreneur: *I am good at attracting new people, building a concept, testing new partners, writing a newsletter. But if someone else wants to take over some of these steps it's OK with me*
	Entrepreneurial passion (strong group-orientation)	*Partner: She was asking: What can I do for the whole group to create a better community?* Doc2 Q-Search values Entrepreneur: *We have to be patient and take everyone with us*
	Persistence/Grit	Partner: *She is very strong at that [drive, persistence]. She really believes there is a better world.* MIG meeting: Partners confirmed this trait
	Self-reflection	Entrepreneur: *I was constantly working on my inner self. I was so anxious to create this that I was constantly working on myself. It was a lot of hard work.* MIG meeting: Partners confirmed this trait
Key entrepreneurial actions	Vision and mission document drafted	*Entrepreneur: The contract was this intention, the vision, 1½-page, and then a 1½-page simple [outline of] rules; I delivered a few services, I organized meetings for the partners every month and I wrote a newspaper/ newsletter every month in which I told them about each other because they were not always at the meetings.* Doc2 Q-Search values + partner input
	IT platform commissioned and implemented	*Entrepreneur: All the partners were connected to the IT system, which OTYS built with me for recruitment.* Doc3 Services provided by orchestrator

	Full ecosystem facilitation for yearly fee (subscription model)	*Entrepreneur: At the beginning I paid everything myself but then I earned my money with recruitment. After 3 years they paid 750 euros a year and therefore I did all the work but I quit recruitment.*
Ecosystem value	Ongoing triage/ Self-organizing system	Entrepreneur: *The network kind of organized itself also because the partners that did not share your vision, they leave. And the contract is not necessary. It's like a true biological ecosystem.*
	Connectedness, resource diversity	Entrepreneur: *I really let people connect their brains in a different way.* Partner: *The main value is the diversity and the sharing in that diversity.*
Outcomes	Orchestration is formalized and partners polarize in the wake of a depending financial crisis Entrepreneur formally quits Q-Search	Partner: *It was kind of a culture split between the recruitment partners and some of the consulting business, counseling business, and trainers. (...) The values that Marjolein embraced were more in the consulting, counseling side. The recruiters were the moneymakers and they were real goal getters.* Partner: *The crisis came and what you see is that everybody started acting like a human* Entrepreneur: *What people do a lot is to think that Q-Search is the ship [they] can go on, and they will help me survive. No, you have to survive yourself.* Entrepreneur: *So I quit after 11 years with the forms.*

Table 4: Overview of Phase III – Maturity

| The Q-Search ecosystem's development. Phase III: Maturity (2011–Today)		
Core aspects		Evidence from data
Ecosystem goals	Pursue vision and continue support	Entrepreneur: *The only thing that we have to do is to interact on a deeper lever with each other and then we don't need all the rules*
Key attributes of the entrepreneur	Re-alignment between vision decisions	Partner: *The development of Q-Search is nothing other than the mirror of her personal development. What she's doing now with and in Q-Search is very much more aligned with her deeper soul and attitudes.* Partner: *She was more and more interested in issues of transformation, transition, culture change.*
	Self-efficacy and persistence	Entrepreneur: *My enthusiasm [remained constant] because I discovered that [what I had started was working] and I was more convinced that I have to continue with it.* Entrepreneur: *It takes time and effort and resilience to continue in doing [what you do]. Sometimes you take two steps forward and three back.*
	Self-reflection/personal development	Entrepreneur: *During those 15 years was the hardest work I had to do was on myself.* Entrepreneur: *All the phases were necessary for my development and for my partners and for our surroundings.* Entrepreneur: *I have ego myself. I've had to let go a lot of it and I still have it. [...] But it's functional ego.* Partner: *Now she is very much more relaxed. She initiates and looks what happens.*
Key entrepreneurial actions	Quitting network as formal orchestrator	Partner: *I think 70-80 per cent of her time she was busy, busy, busy with operational issues. So the [Phase] III was, in fact, her liberating act.* Entrepreneur: *What we are doing now with the intervention group is that we have a case, on which we share our wisdom so that [everybody] can go home with much more information and work on that.* Doc5 Sample vision document (The Art of Impact) Doc6 The Future of Work project
	Collaboration with policy–makers	Entrepreneur: *My focus now is policies, the Hague, ministries, institutions.* Doc4 Sample vision document (Input for new tax plan for self-employed)
Ecosystem value	Freedom in pursuit of vision, inspiration, connectedness	Entrepreneur: *We [serve more] as inspiration to each other than we [focus] on getting assignments with companies.* MIG Meeting
Outcomes	Boundaries disappear	Entrepreneur: *The idea of Q-Search being an organization, an organized organization is really gone* Entrepreneur: *With me there are no more boundaries anymore. (...) I don't have official partners anymore* Partner: *I left at the same time as the entrepreneur said: I will change the system of Q-Search. I though OK, that is for me also a good time to change now.*
	New ecosystems take shape	Entrepreneur: *Q-Search now, it's the entrepreneur's which is a good networker, but also this partner has his network around him. So we are building a whole new ecosystem.*
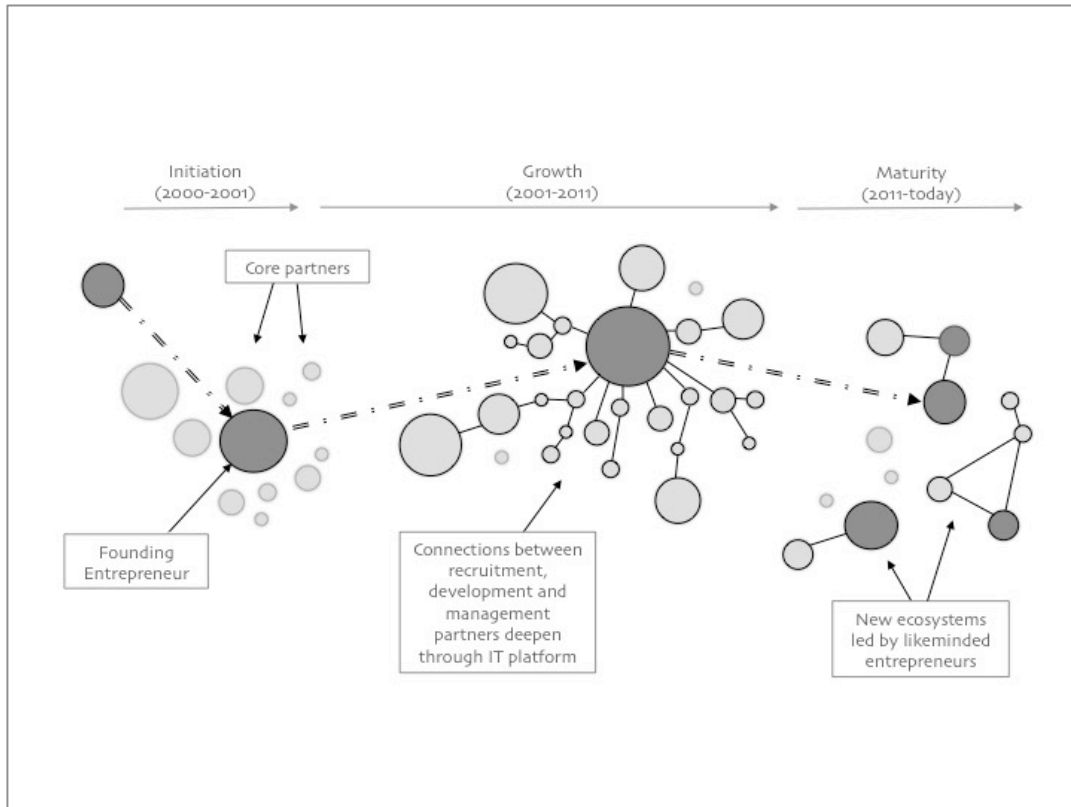
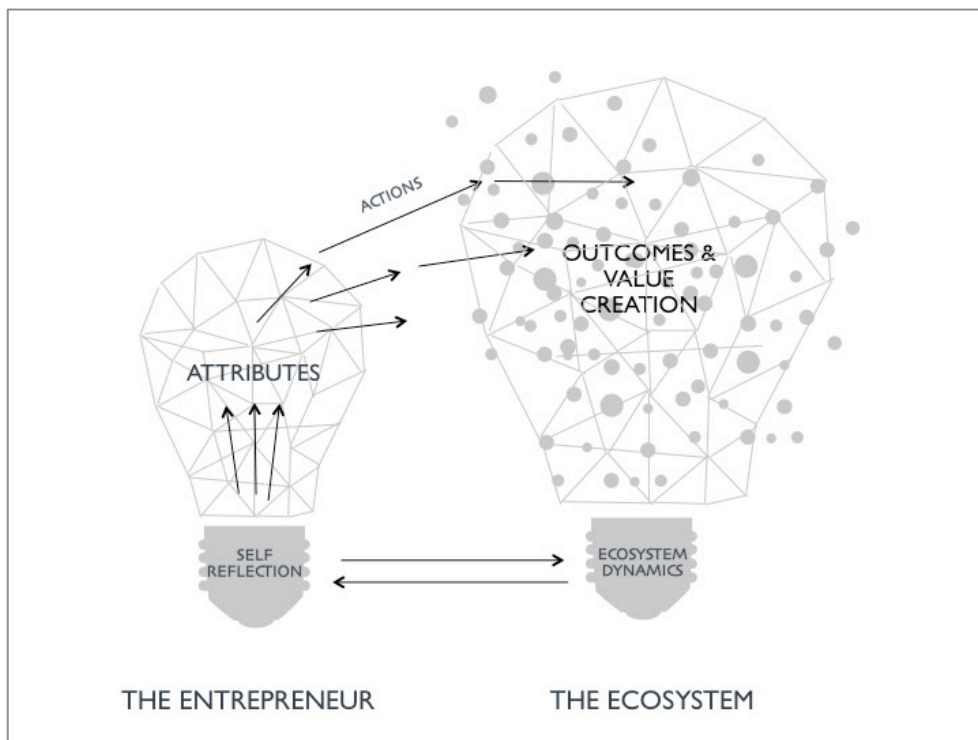Figure 1: The Q-Search ecosystem's evolutionary path from 2000 to 2015

Figure 2: The Q-Search ecosystem as a mirror of the entrepreneur