HOW THE ENTREPRENEUR MAKES THE ECOSYSTEM AND VICE-VERSA: TRANSFORMATIVE SERVICES CREATION AT Q-SEARCH

Original title: The Link Between Entrepreneurial Attributes and Ecosystem Orchestration: The Case of Q-Search

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About the study

Broad research theme

Entrepreneurial ecosystems – "unframed research domain"
- Origins (new architectures of collaboration)
- Distinctive features (entrepreneur as centerpiece, shared institutional logic)
- Life-cycle aspects (evolutionary phases)
- *Purpose (Value-co creation – How? What are the outcomes?)*

Narrowed down to...

What is the interplay between the Q-Search ecosystem's goals at various points in time, the founding entrepreneur's attributes and actions, the role of the partners, and the ecosystem's impact on society at large? (the complexities of transformative services creation)

Approach

Single case study – interviews, archival data, direct observation (group meetings with partners)

Inspired by

Marjolein Hins' story (16 years in the making)
Evolution and internal dynamics at Q-Search - a Dutch human resources (HR) service ecosystem in the Netherlands whose aim is to increase "workers' joy [job satisfaction]".

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Some "disambiguation": key terms used in the study

Service ecosystems (entrepreneurial ecosystems)
- "relatively self-contained, self-adjusting systems of resource integrating actors connected by shared institutional logics and mutual value creation through service exchange" (Lusch and Vargo, 2014)
- Self-interests of the various partners are of lesser importance than the overall wellbeing of the ecosystem
- Unite many different types of partners for prolonged periods of time
- Explicit (end) customer focus

Value creation
- Benefits accruing from collaboration (wellbeing)– e.g., joint learning, knowledge sharing, risk sharing, trust building, better products/ services, more compelling value proposition etc.

Transformative services
- Services that aim to create positive change and improve the lives of individuals (customers and/or employees), communities (families, local communities, ethnic groups, cities) and even society at large – i.e., improved health (physical, mental), quality of life and work, access to services (financial, social, etc.), participation in the labour market, better decision-making, social support, and even individual and collective happiness.

Examples:
HitRecord (community-powered production company)
BeMyEyes (app for the visually impaired)
Boundless (customizable courseware)

About the ecosystem

Background
Founded by entrepreneur and human resource expert Marjolein Hins in 2000, Q-Search is a human resource (HR) services ecosystem that offers "refreshingly sustainable solutions in the field of humanities, organizational and community development"

Entrepreneur's long-term vision: creating "the ultimate advisory, consultancy bureau but not in the old form but the new network form".

Projects
The Future of Work - foundations for the workplace and work practices of the future
Development Vouchers Project - national platform for lifelong vocational development; enabling all participants to fully participate in the workforce and lead active lives

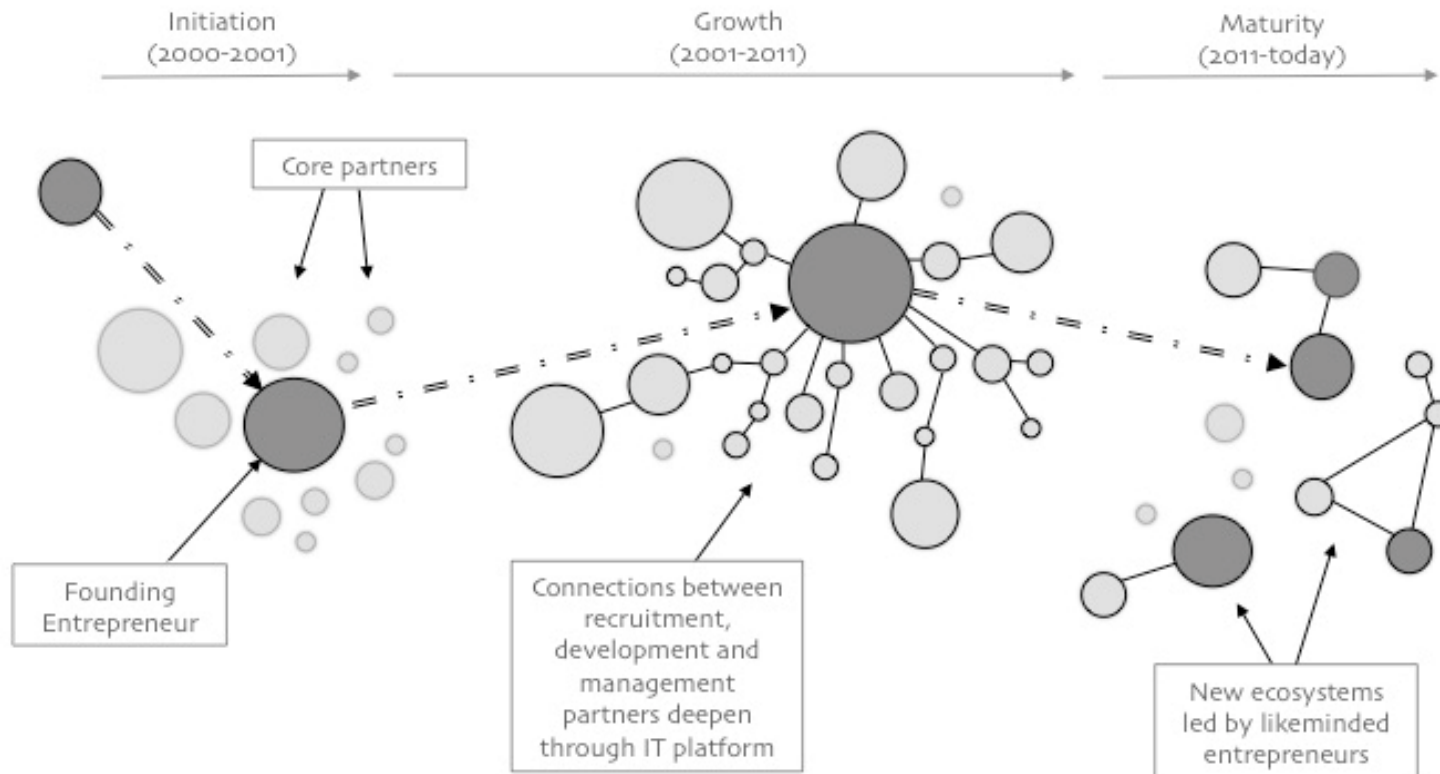Additionally: Courses, workshops, individual coaching etc.

Marjolein's challenge
How can Q-Search sustain and replicate itself successfully?
How can it continue to offer transformative services?

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Stages of development

Initiation (2000-2001) → Growth (2001-2011) → Maturity (2011-today)

Core partners

Founding Entrepreneur

Connections between recruitment, development and management partners deepen through IT platform

New ecosystems led by likeminded entrepreneurs

The interplay between goals, attributes, actions, value and impact for transformative services creation

	PHASE 1: INITIATION	PHASE II: GROWTH	PHASE III: MATURITY
GOALS	Establish ecosystem legitimacy Foster knowledge sharing culture Create space for continued development	Deepening connection among partners (via IT platform) Changing/ Aligning partner behavior Creation of a values community	Pursue vision Continue support
ATTRIBUTES	Vision Authenticity/honesty Entrepreneurial passion Personal initiative	Vision, Social skill, Persistence/ grit Entrepreneurial Passion Self-reflection	Re-alignment between vision decisions Self-efficacy and persistence Self-reflection/personal development
ACTIONS	Non-systematized communication Member self-selection Self-sustaining the ecosystem Coordination mechanisms creation	Vision and mission document drafted IT platform commissioned and implemented Full ecosystem facilitation for yearly fee	Quitting network as formal orchestrator Collaboration with policy-makers
VALUE (FOR PARTNERS)	Connecting likeminded HR service professionals	On-going triage/ Self-organizing system; Connectedness, resource diversity	Freedom in pursuit of vision, inspiration, connectedness
OUTCOMES (IMPACT)	Ecosystem takes shape with help from core partners in recruitment.	Orchestration is formalized and partners polarize in the wake of a depending financial crisis Entrepreneur formally quits Q-Search	Boundaries disappear New ecosystems take shape

Key success factors

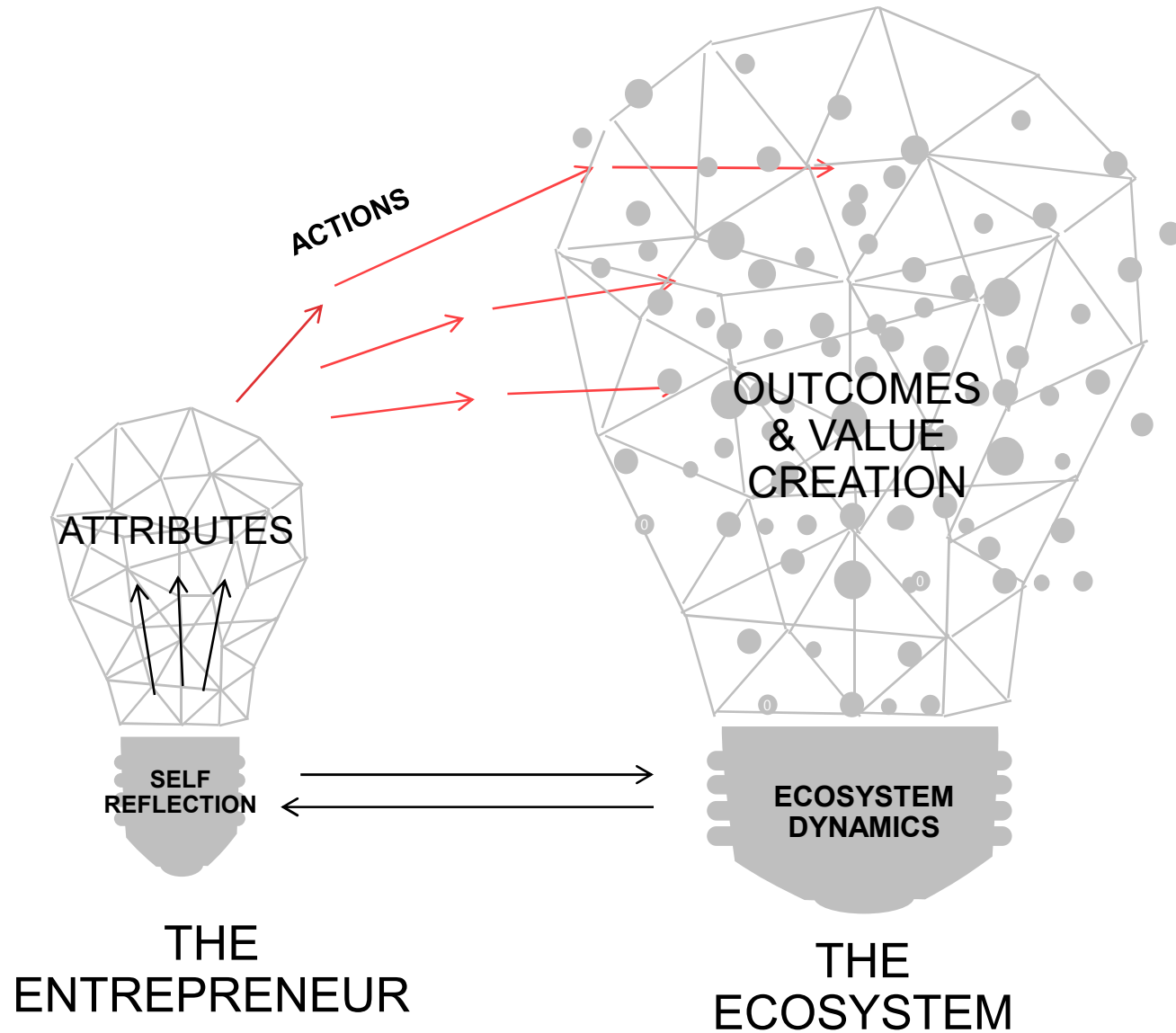Successful transformative services building hinges on:

- Strong profile of entrepreneur
    - Persistent vision, grit
    - Communication skills
    - Puts others' interests before one's own (cultivates this attitude)
    - Authenticity
    - Makes oneself replaceable
- Orchestration actions
    - Feedback loops - e.g., clarifying expectations via regular dialogue
    - Mechanisms to lessen tensions - e.g., facilitating exit routes, member triage based on complementarity
    - Crafting hybrid contract (vision + legal document)
    - Promoting shared leadership (decentralized orchestration)

In traditional alliance and network literature, collaboration is a means to an end – i.e., exploit weaknesses, strengthen competitive position, pursue strategic goals etc.
The ecosystem (a new collaboration architecture) can be an end in itself.

How the entrepreneur makes the ecosystem and vice-versa

ACTIONS

ATTRIBUTES

OUTCOMES
& VALUE
CREATION

SELF
REFLECTION

ECOSYSTEM
DYNAMICS

THE
ENTREPRENEUR

THE
ECOSYSTEM

Contribution

Understanding how transformative services 'are made' – i.e., the typical evolution of the environments (entrepreneurial ecosystems) that create and support them as well as the profile of the founding entrepreneurs, is important for several reasons.

For theory
Advancing existing knowledge on entrepreneurial ecosystems
- "stewardship of the ecosystem" (orchestration processes)
- platforms for value co-creation (how they are constructed and sustained)
- defining success and failure in entrepreneurial ecosystems
- profiling the entrepreneur - passion, grit, endurance, tireless pursuit of change

For practitioners & policy makers
Governments/ policy-makers: understand the type of entrepreneur most likely to create ecosystems with sustainable societal impact; provide adequate support

Social entrepreneurs: engineer new organizational forms that can sustain and reproduce themselves (generate new ventures/ societal impact continuously)

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Q search

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Thank you for your kind attention!

Comments, questions, suggestions?
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