

Israeli Sociology

A Journal for the Study of Society in Israel

Special Issue

**Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the
Start-Up Nation – Sociological Perspectives**

Guest Editors: Gili S. Drori and Amalya L. Oliver

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Israeli Sociology

Founded in 1998, Israeli Sociology is published in Hebrew twice a year. The journal serves as a platform for local research that maintains a dialogue with sociological scholarship around the world. The journal invites manuscripts from a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, in line with the heterogeneity of the discipline, as well as review essays and research notes, all subject to a peer review process. The journal also includes an extensive book-review section that offers a wide-range view of the Israeli social science scene. Israeli Sociology was founded by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel-Aviv University and is supported by the Institute for Social Research (established by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University), by the David Horowitz Institute for Social and Economic Research and by the Israeli Sociological Society.

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- The journal uses an anonymous peer review process.
- Manuscripts should include a cover page with the title of the manuscript in Hebrew and English, authors' name in Hebrew and English, address, phone number, e-mail address, and their academic or professional affiliation.
- Submissions should not exceed 9,000 words in length, including footnotes and bibliography and should include a 150-word abstract in Hebrew and English detailing the research question, method, findings and contribution.
- Manuscripts will be submitted in Word, font David, size 12, double space.
- Tables and graphs should be attached in the body of the manuscript where they should appear, and in an editable format. Pictures that appear in the body of the manuscript should also be attached in a separate image format.
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English Abstracts

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From Pedagogical Vision to Hi-Tech Industry: How Israeli Non-Profit Entrepreneurs Created a New Technological Industry

Assaf Amit

Abstract. The importance of new industries to economic growth and innovation has naturally attracted research attention. There are new calls to focus on the earliest stages of the industry, especially on the “incubation stage”, the period preceding the first commercial product launch. The study examines emergence of the Ed-tech industry in Israel, through the perspective offered by the first seven Israeli non-commercial ventures that operated between 1977–1983, and focuses on those actors (organizations and founders) that define the incubation stage. Based on 12 semi-structured interviews with founders of these non-profit ventures and other key actors in the field the findings show the way individuals and organizations with non-commercial goals, led the technological entrepreneurship process in the field, including technological development, manufacturing, and distribution of software products. The study offers a unique perspective on the importance of non-commercial activities preceding the emergence of new industries.

Keywords: industry emergence, incubation stage, entrepreneurship

Technological Entrepreneurship in the Southern Periphery: Motivations for Founding Technological Ventures Far from the Technological Core in Israel

Efrat Asulin and Amalya L. Oliver

Abstract. Research on technological entrepreneurship focus on the importance of clusters of knowledge-intensive technological ventures in central geographical areas and large urban centers. The emergence of such centrally located clusters is explained by the availability of critical resources in densely populated populations. We examine the founding of technological start-ups in the southern periphery in Israel. Based on semi-structured interviews with 34 technological entrepreneurs,

also combining qualitative methods with statistical analysis, our study aims to understand the main motivation of entrepreneurs for establishing their ventures in the geographical periphery. Our findings unveil two main motivations, one based on economic and knowledge resources for the venture and another based on the benefits for the entrepreneur, including quality of life, values, and ideology. We also found a motivation of benefits realized after the move to the periphery for founding the venture. We discuss the paradox of technological entrepreneurship in the periphery as both a constraint and an opportunity that differ from those in the core.

Keywords: technological entrepreneurship, periphery, entrepreneurial motivation, ecological and institutional approaches to entrepreneurship

Enterprises in Knowledge-Intensive Industries in Israel: Unifying Clusters versus Differentiating Clusters

Muhammed Abu Nasra

Abstract. The study examine the types of enterprises in knowledge-intensive industries in Israel based on features of the founders' human and social capital, and the effect of the industry type and ethnicity on the establishment of these ventures. Based on the configuration approach, I conducted cluster analysis on 1,217 technological firms in two knowledge-intensive industries: life sciences (426) and information technologies (791) that were active in Israel between 1996 and 2015. The findings revealed three types of ventures in life sciences: business ventures that were lacking human and social (technological and research) capital; academic ventures; and ventures established by former academics with low social-technological capital. In the information technologies industry, I found the following types of ventures: business ventures that were lacking human and social (technological and research) capital; enterprises established by former academics with low human and social (technological and research) capital; and enterprises established by former academics with high social-research capital and low social-technological capital. In addition, the study found that ethnicity only

affects the establishment of enterprises in the life sciences industry. I conclude with implications and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: configuration approach, knowledge-intensive industries, ethnicity, human capital, social capital, cluster analysis, Jews and Arabs

Professional Fluidity of Corporate Innovation Experts in Israel

Rotem Rittblat

Abstract. This paper examines the professional status of organizational innovation experts in Israel's innovation-management ecosystem. Dualistically, innovation management contains both ambiguous knowledge and organizational expectations to motivate innovation. Balancing the two aspects is relevant for modern sociological approaches that explore new forms of expertise and occupations. The main research question is: How can such organizational innovation experts establish professional legitimacy? Based on 33 interviews with innovation experts in Israel, the qualitative study shows that wishing to legitimize their professional status, innovation experts rely on fluid professionalism, a new conceptualization of professionalism, to address constraints with flexibility, and to establish extensive collaborations in Israel's innovation-management ecosystem. This paper makes two main contributions by describing the complexity of institutionalizing a new field of knowledge and expertise in Israel's literature on innovation research, and analyzing the professionalization of innovation applying the literature about professions.

Keywords: innovation experts, innovation management, profession, professional fluidity, legitimacy

“Being a Light unto the Nations in Entrepreneurship”: The Ideal of the Zionist High-Tech Professional in Israeli Public Education

Sari R. Alfi-Nissan, Limor Gabay-Egozi and Michal Pagis

Abstract. In Israel, the “start-up nation”, entrepreneurial discourse is broadly used within the national education system. The global entrepreneurial discourse highlights personal autonomy while promoting individualistic and neoliberal values. The manifestation of the entrepreneurial discourse in Israeli public education which echoes ethno-nationalistic and collectivist discourses presents a paradox. This paradox has been magnified in recent years as the Israeli education system promotes unified ethno-nationalistic values. We followed the entrepreneurial discourse in a multi-focal qualitative study among policymakers and in public schools, examining how this paradox is resolved in the context of Israeli education. The study shows how the Zionist high-tech professional is presented within national education as an ideal of a hybrid nationalistic-entrepreneurial self. Through this ideal, the entrepreneurial spirit and the Zionist narrative are weaved together in a way that complements both and makes them accessible. The local entrepreneurial discourse is a unique conjunction in which ethno-nationalistic values are recruited to strengthen the entrepreneurial ethos, while neoliberal values and narratives are used to strengthen an ethno-nationalistic identity. Thus, in the Israeli context, entrepreneurial language challenges the binary distinction between the individual and the collective and reflects the dialectics between neoliberalism and nationalism.

Keywords: education, entrepreneurship, nationalism, neoliberalism

Contending with Paradox in an Academic Entrepreneurship Education Program among Socially Underprivileged Students in the Israeli Periphery

Shani Kuna and Ronit Nadiv

Abstract. The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of students in a novel academic entrepreneurship education program in a college in the southern Israeli periphery, where many students represent socially underprivileged groups. We have conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of 44 students from 11 laboratories in the entrepreneurship program. Our findings indicate that students in this program experience a paradox given their conception of two contradictory yet interrelated learning modes. These modes demand differential skills: a typical student mode and an entrepreneurial mode. The students utilize two opposing strategies to contend with this paradox. Our study contributes to the discipline of entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: academia, entrepreneurship education, periphery, paradox

Made in the USA? Glocalization Processes in Adopting an Innovation Model in Israel

Sharone April

Abstract. Worldwide-accelerated urbanization processes raise the need to implement models of innovation at the urban level. In 2015, the innovation team model by Bloomberg Philanthropies was imported to Israel and two teams were established in Tel Aviv and in Jerusalem, and in 2017 another team was established in Be'er Sheva. Data from in-depth interviews with the innovation team-leaders integrated with a range of secondary sources was qualitatively analyzed. The results indicate that the Israeli teams displayed a range of possible patterns of action when adopting the global innovation model. The global model was influenced by the local context and a variance was noticed between the teams themselves. The results extend the analytical glocalization model and create new intersections and

encounters. The study provides possible explanations for the differences found in the implementation of the model between the various cities in Israel in the context of the center and the periphery.

Keywords: glocalization, innovation teams, urban innovation model, local variance

What Do We Talk about When We Talk about Algorithmic Ethics? The Case of Israeli Data Scientists

Netta Avnoon, Dan Kotliar and Shira Rivnai-Bahir

Abstract. Literature on AI ethics tends to examine the subject through philosophical, legal, or technocratic perspectives, largely neglecting the socio-cultural one. This literature also overwhelmingly focuses on the US. Aiming to fill these gaps, this article explores how Israeli data scientists understand, interpret, and depict algorithmic ethics. Based on a pragmatist sociological analysis of 60 semi-structured interviews, we ask: which ideologies, discourses and worldviews construct algorithmic ethics? Our findings point to three dominant moral logics: A) ethics as a personal endeavor; B) ethics as hindering progress; and C) ethics as a commodity. We show that while data science is a nascent profession, these moral logics originate from the techno-libertarian culture of its parent-profession – engineering, and they accordingly prevent the institutionalization of an agreed-upon moral regime. Thus, this paper offers to see algorithmic ethics in a contextualized perspective and explore how data scientists practically see and construct their ethics.

Keywords: AI ethics, moral regimes, data science, algorithms, professions