

**Strong ties, weak ties and communities :
The evolving networks of entrepreneurs
- A case study**

**Christian Lechner
ESC Toulouse**

How do networks evolve? While current research on social networks is focused on the benefits of social networks, it implicitly assumes that the networks an entrepreneur uses, is already in place. A central issue for entrepreneurs, however, is to develop their networks and transform existing relationship into functioning business relationships.

This research is an in-depth longitudinal case study of one immigrant entrepreneur in France. We followed the entrepreneur from the day the project started over 18 months. We met the entrepreneur basically every week and traced all the contacts she had during the week: the contacts derived from previous contacts, new contacts made (and under what circumstances) and successful sales. Overall, we met the entrepreneur about 70 times. In this way, we were able to trace the network evolution over time and to understand how personal contacts were transformed into functional business relations.

The results should be particular interesting since they will increase our understanding of how entrepreneurial networks are born, how they evolve and how they are transformed. It will help us to untangle the multiplexity of networks and addresses one of the current weaknesses in network research: how do networks evolve,