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Beyond Homogeneity: Redefining Social Entrepreneurship in Authoritarian Contexts

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on how social entrepreneurship and its role in civil society can be understood in the context of authoritarian regimes in developing countries. Through the case study of Jordan, the article demonstrates that there are two types of social enterprises, distinguished by their objectives and functions: structural transformation-based social enterprises and product- and service-oriented social enterprises. Their ability to be self-sustainable, community-responsive organizations is evaluated in the context of the country's political landscape. The research findings apply to the study of social enterprises across the Middle East and in other developing regions.

KEYWORDS

Social entrepreneurship; civil society; authoritarianism; liberalization; Middle East; Jordan

Introduction

Social entrepreneurship, as a subfield of entrepreneurship, is multifaceted but can be briefly defined as the application of business practices to achieve primarily social objectives. This article explores the factors leading to the success of social entrepreneurship in developing countries under authoritarian rule, with a specific focus on the Middle East and the Kingdom of Jordan as a case study. In so doing, the article identifies two different types of social enterprises and discusses their differing approaches, and other factors, that influence their ability to be self-sustainable. Previous studies of social entrepreneurship in the Middle East assume overly inclusive definitions of the concept, owing partly to the fact that the concept itself remains open to multiple interpretations (Martin and Osberg 2007). Despite this, foreign actors funding social entrepreneurship in the region seem to adopt one unclear, and unstated, definition: that a social enterprise is a small, scalable business that will lead to economic empowerment and political participation in the target population. As such, social enterprises should be self-sustainable; many, however, are not. Therefore, the social entrepreneurship landscape in the Middle East is more complex than foreign actors believe it to be. This article intends to provide a more nuanced understanding of social entrepreneurship and its function, with a particular focus on its role in Jordan's

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civil society. The theoretical approach utilizes aspects of political science, political economy, and entrepreneurship studies to offer a comprehensive view of social enterprises in this context. The resulting analysis may apply to countries across the Middle East and other developing regions in similar political and economic situations.

In recent years, foreign actors such as the United States of America, the World Bank, the United Nations, and the European Union have hailed social entrepreneurship as a vehicle for solving social and economic issues across the Middle East (Jamali and Lanteri 2015; Abdou et al. 2010). This is because government control restricts much of civil society's efforts in this region, and social entrepreneurship is seen as a viable alternative to civil society organizations (Barari 2015). Thus, foreign governments and international organizations invest in social entrepreneurship in Jordan with a view to boosting its ability to act as an agent for regional stability (Al Nasser 2016).

This paper begins with a brief overview of the classical literature on social entrepreneurship, followed by an outline of the methods used. The paper then identifies the two types of social enterprises found in Jordan and offers comprehensive and concise definitions of both. The conclusion comments on the potential versus actual roles of social enterprises in Jordan's civil society and outlines the ways social entrepreneurs are restricted by the country's political and economic structures.

Overview of social entrepreneurship

Due to the many varied definitions of social entrepreneurship throughout the academic literature (e.g. Gartner 1988; Koppl and Minniti 2003; Alvarez 2005) it is essential to outline the characteristics of the concept. In the seminal works of classical entrepreneurship scholars, some overarching qualities of social entrepreneurship become apparent, despite the lack of a common theoretical framework. Purely business-oriented entrepreneurship comprises the important aspects of innovation, assumption of risk and/or uncertainty, autonomy in leadership and decision-making, and management and investment of capital (e.g. Schumpeter 1934; Baudeau 1910; von Thünen 1960; Kirzner 1985; Knight 1921; Cantillon 1931; Quesnay 1888; Say 1840; Turgot 1977; Wieser 1927). Innovation, in particular, distinguishes enterprises from other businesses and organizations. In the mid-1950s Cyril Belshaw first identified entrepreneurs' ability to influence society, explaining that their 'values and methods are a reflection of the synthesis between old and new that is the developing culture' (Belshaw 1955, 146). Today, the social entrepreneurship literature has identified that social enterprises distinguish themselves from business enterprises through their emphasis on social objectives, the use of social capital, and social value creation (Tauber 2019, 59–63).

A social mission must constitute a part of the social enterprise's objectives. Despite various innovations addressing social needs, only social enterprises ensure that their innovations lead to a 'distribution of financial and social value [that is] tilted toward society' (Phills, Jr., Deiglmeier, and Miller 2008, 39). Social enterprises, therefore, assess opportunities differently than their business enterprise counterparts, because they value mission-related impact more than wealth creation. For social entrepreneurs, 'social impact is the gauge' of value creation (Dees 2001, 5). Social enterprises also rely on social capital, a term which refers to the actual or potential resources available

through a network of social connections (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Kim and Aldrich 2005; Portes 1998). An abundance of social capital facilitates community organization and action towards common goals (Portes 1998; Fukuyama 2001; Putnam 1993). If social enterprises manage and invest in social capital well, it can be a powerful resource. Finally, social enterprises emphasize social value creation, which they achieve through 'creative destruction', or the breaking down of resistors to change. In this way, social entrepreneurs' work 'extends to the structure and the very foundations of ... society' (Schumpeter 1947, 158). Social enterprises establish innovations which replace old norms with new norms in basic social processes (Barth 1963). In times of great change, the opportunities for social enterprises are even greater, as they exploit challenges as opportunities for social value creation (Drucker 2010). Theoretically, social entrepreneurs are well situated to purposefully and gradually direct and control change, as opposed to the abrupt methods of revolution or civil war, for example. Thus, the theoretical approach social entrepreneurship takes makes it an attractive avenue for international actors who wish to support economic growth and increased political participation in the Middle East. Presumably, the advantages that social enterprises have over other civil society organizations underpin the motivations for international actors to support social enterprises in the region through financial and training means.

Methods

The goals of this research are threefold: firstly, to identify the characteristics of social enterprises in Jordan; secondly, to evaluate how these social enterprises compare to the Western concept of social enterprises; and thirdly, to examine how social enterprises function within the context of an authoritarian regime in a developing country.

The first goal was achieved by conducting forty-three semi-structured interviews in Jordan from January through April 2015. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed interviewees to comment on aspects of social entrepreneurship which were not covered by the prepared interview questions, a quality which is necessary for this type of exploratory research. Interviews were conducted with social entrepreneurs themselves; with Jordanian government officials; and with foreign and domestic incubators, trainers, and funding bodies. This allows for a comprehensive review of social entrepreneurship from a variety of angles, creating a more complete picture of the characteristics of social enterprises. Although many interview participants agreed to the use of direct quotes, some preferred anonymity. For this reason, each interviewee was assigned a randomly generated number-letter identity which is used to cite anonymously given statements. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed with NVivo software (QSR International, Melbourne, Australia), a recognized tool for qualitative analysis.

The second goal required an openness to the fact that Western-based theory of social entrepreneurship may not apply directly to social entrepreneurship in a non-Western context. This was necessary to avoid imposing 'theory blindness' onto a situation quite unlike from the one generally analyzed for studies of social entrepreneurship: as opposed to being democratic and fully immersed in the market economy, the Kingdom of Jordan is authoritarian with a developing economy and relies heavily

on international aid. As such, the context for social entrepreneurship is very different, and it was necessary to recognize that the concept may manifest itself contrary to expectations derived from classical entrepreneurship theory (Tauber 2019, 63).

Achieving the third goal requires a thorough understanding of the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. The 'entrepreneurship ecosystem' is defined as 'a set of interdependent actors and factors coordinated in such a way that they enable productive entrepreneurship within a particular territory' (Stam and Spigel 2016, 1). It is thus understood to be the 'environment' in which an enterprise operates. Entrepreneurship ecosystems comprise a myriad of domains, which are usually grouped into six categories: government policies, private- and public-sector support, access to human capital, access to financial capital, the market, and the culture which influence an enterprise's function and success. For example, this could consist of incubators and training programs; support from the government, the monarchy, government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGOs), international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and international organizations; and private, public, and international funding in the forms of grants and loans (Isenberg 2011). Jordan's developing economy and authoritarian government type create diverse challenges for social entrepreneurs, because both of these severely impact the development of the entrepreneurship ecosystem and therefore, the way in which social enterprises can work.

Persons or organizations that self-identify as social entrepreneurs or social enterprises, as well as persons or organizations that appeared to be social entrepreneurs or social enterprises, were interviewed to identify social entrepreneurs in Jordan. In addition, persons familiar with social enterprises, such as those involved with funding, training, and/or mentoring social enterprises, were interviewed. The method of interviewing was in-person, semi-structured interviews. Following the initial identification of entrepreneurs and enterprises, additional interviews were held through the process of snowball sampling. Through the interviews, it was possible to determine whether the person or organization meets the criteria for social entrepreneurship. It quickly became apparent that there are not one, but two types of social entrepreneurs in Jordan, with differing functions and objectives, who face varying obstacles within the same entrepreneurship ecosystem. Following the fieldwork and the transcription of the interviews, NVivo software was used to categorize and analyze the information gathered. This allowed for a thorough review of all trends discovered in the interviews and enabled the establishment of two robust social entrepreneurship categories.

Results and discussion

Jordan's social entrepreneurs are socio-economically and geographically diverse and comprise men and women of varying ages from Jordan's major cities. Social entrepreneurs are also educationally diverse, ranging from an orphaned refugee of Palestinian descent who dropped out of school in the eighth grade to an Ammani from an upper-class family with a doctoral degree. Their initiatives are equally varied as they address issues in society regarding race, class, poverty, gender equality, education, refugees and rural communities; environmental issues, especially as related to water, health, and sanitation; and politically-related topics such as governmental

accountability, tackling corruption, dialogue between citizens, and general civic participation. Their commonality is a desire to provide a social service to their community and country.

In Jordan, there are two types of social enterprises, distinguished primarily by their objectives and function. Structural transformation-based social enterprises (STSEs) focus on addressing structural social issues and rely on social capital to succeed. Product- and service-oriented social enterprises (PSSEs), on the other hand, provide specific goods or services to address a certain social need and tend to rely on external grants and loans. The distinction between the two types is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of social entrepreneurship's emerging role in a developing country and in an authoritarian context.

The paper proceeds with sections outlining the two types of social enterprises, beginning with STSEs and their methods of sustainability, particularly regarding their funding tactics. The sub-section then analyses STSEs' use of targeted creative reorganization (TCR) to achieve their objectives. Finally, it describes the challenges STSEs face and how they overcome them. The discussion then turns to PSSEs and outlines their formation processes and reliance on the Jordanian 'entrepreneurship ecosystem.' The section concludes by analyzing the PSSE business model and how this poses certain challenges to becoming established as a self-sustainable social enterprise.

STSEs

STSEs address ways of thinking and doing. Their missions focus on changing mindsets between and among communities, towards the government, and about social responsibility. They recognize that they are working on long-term goals and that any sustainable change is gradual. They focus on what they perceive to be deeply rooted structural issues and emphasize social impact and social investment throughout the community. Due to these enterprises' strong belief in their social mission and drive to be sustainable and independent of outside influence, they generally adopt an independent funding model and rely primarily on social capital. STSEs strive to be community-responsive and use targeted creative reorganization to achieve their objectives.

Sustainability, continuity and alternative funding models

Jordan's structural transformation-based social entrepreneurs are acutely aware that the country and region face a myriad of challenges, and that the solutions provided come mostly from the government, public institutions, or international donors (interview with Aline Bussmann 2018). They also view existing civil society organizations (CSOs) as flawed in various ways: Jordanian CSOs' ability to function is impeded by an over-reliance on foreign aid which affects their sustainability, determines program content, and restricts the political space. STSEs provide localized solutions that strive to be self-sustainable, continuous, and independent of external influence.

STSEs criticized the way the international donor community operates in Jordan. They recognize that foreign aid can help to promote growth and address issues the government can, or will not, address. They expressed considerable concerns regarding the international community's effect on Jordan's civil society. STSEs view CSOs as

overly dependent on international aid and believe that this weakens the ability of civil society to create community-responsive solutions. They noted that the international organizations' involvement changes local CSOs' goals to the goals of the international community, with not enough regard for or perspective of the local community (interview with Ahmad El Zubi 2018). These CSOs are therefore not necessarily representative of the Jordanian people but rather of the topics that are driven internationally and for which funding is provided in any given time. In such a donor-driven and donor-dependent environment, the political space in Jordan is conditioned not only by the government but also by international donors. Another problem that structural transformation-based social entrepreneurs described is that international organizations drive the programs and initiatives they perceive as important in the community. In and of itself, this was not perceived as problematic, but social entrepreneurs are frustrated that in connection to this, locals' own expressions of their problems are not addressed (interview with Saeed Abu AlHassan 2018; interview with Samar Dudin 2018; and other interviews). This suggests a paternalistic approach on the part of the international community.

STSEs also pointed out that CSOs' project implementation is generally restricted to just a few years with limited funding if they rely on funding from international sources. To break this cycle, STSEs devised two funding models, the independent and hybrid models, which make them self-sustainable and more independent. When fiscally possible, STSEs prefer the independent model, in which the enterprises use only their own capital from product sales, sponsorship from local businesses, banks, and telecommunication companies, and members' direct contributions (Tauber 2019). STSEs using this model also rely on the community's cooperation and involvement and reject foreign funding entirely in favour of being more sustainable and politically independent. Rabee Zureikat, of the Zikra Initiative, said, 'our model is to give people hope, that yes, you can work and have an organization that is independent and still exist' (interview with Rabee Zureikat 2018). STSEs prefer not to apply for grants because they value consistency over 'going with what is fashionable in grant industry' (interview with Amir Shihadeh 2018). In the hybrid model, STSEs sustain themselves with their own capital but receive foreign funds for specific projects. This allows them to work with donors and receive grants which reflect the STSEs' core missions and ideals, rather than adapting their projects to fit donors' objectives. For example, Sami Hourani, founder of Leaders of Tomorrow, explained the way he adapted the funding model of his enterprise to be more sustainable with the hybrid model: 'We were heavily aid dependent. The initiatives that were sustained by foreign aid were difficult to keep going. ... We now have some income generating units. ... We sell some services. So, it is a hybrid model of funding' (interview with Sami Hourani 2018). Both of these funding models allow STSEs to protect the integrity of their mission and projects so that they are not influenced by external actors. They are thus better positioned to reflect the needs of the communities they serve and can provide more long-term solutions than other civil society actors because they are not constrained by the various issues that arise from dependence on international funds.

STSEs face many of the domestic issues affecting civil society in Jordan, such as bureaucratic obstacles and occasional harassment by security forces. Adopting more

independent funding models through business-like practices is one of the demonstrable ways that these social enterprises are more flexible and adaptable than their CSO counterparts. In this way, they also provide an alternative to dependence on foreign aid, which they view as one of the most fundamental issues facing civil society in the country. STSEs' adaptability in this regard allows them to be more directly responsive to the communities they serve, as well as ensure the continuity of their programs and the self-sustainability of their enterprises.

STSE objectives and targeted creative reorganization methods

STSEs seek to transform communities through comprehensive mobilization tactics and extensive use of social capital, which allows them to become not only self-sustainable but also self-perpetuating. STSEs' substantial reliance on social capital in ensuring the success of the enterprise matches their desire to be independent of governmental and international resources. This social capital manifests itself in collaboration and cooperation with the community in which the STSE works. Since a large part of STSEs' work focuses on creating positive social impact and social investment in the community, the use of social capital not only allows the STSEs to function but also serves to achieve their greater objectives. STSEs have two layers of objectives: the first is publicly stated while the other is the deeper, unstated objective. The publicly stated objective tends to be superficial, though it is still a cause that is important to the STSE and relates to providing a good or service to the community. The unstated objective is meant to address what the STSE views as social or political structural issues. The publicly stated objective is the vehicle through which the STSE 'creatively reorganizes' existing community norms and replaces them with new social values that are more closely aligned with the social entrepreneur's vision of what is necessary for the community and the country to progress.

STSEs achieve their objectives and become self-sustainable and self-perpetuating through Targeted Creative Reorganization (TCR). This process generally follows similar steps from one STSE to another. Initially, the STSE determines its objectives based on a need it has found in society. This need could be social, political, economic, or even environmental. Then, the STSE identifies various sectors of society whose needs and capabilities fit into the STSE's plan to achieve its objectives. These sectors of society become the pillars on which the STSE's work and, indeed, success, rest. In the next stage, the STSE reorganizes the interaction between these pillars and inserts itself into their activities to create a symbiotic relationship. It does this by assigning new roles, beneficial to the STSE's work, to the chosen sectors of society and by simultaneously addressing the need(s) of these same sectors. Consequently, the acceptance of revised social norms into society occurs as the new work of the sectors of society becomes routine. STSEs often choose sectors of society which are well-established and which the community trusts, which consequently aids in the community's acceptance of their work; the STSE faces less resistance to change in this way. As this occurs, individual members of society take on new roles, and the community collectively normalizes new values. Through this process, the STSE ensures that its work is self-sustainable and self-perpetuating, but also that its greater objectives are achieved through systematic integration of its values into society.

The phenomenon of the targeted creative reorganization of existing social norms is best illustrated with an example. Saddam Sayyaleh, founder of the STSE ILearn Jordan, has successfully employed this tactic in several communities in Jordan. His personal experiences allowed him to identify issues in his community, Jerash and Souf refugee camp, that he felt should be resolved so that future generations of children can have access to improved educational possibilities. As stated on the organization's web page, 'ILearn started by mobilizing youth volunteers to work with children and provide them with access to non-traditional learning opportunities and access to safe spaces where they can interact, express themselves freely, and acquire the skills, attitudes and behaviours necessary in life' (ILearn, 2018). Mr. Sayyaleh created 'a model that works on disruption, mobilization, and then organization' (interview with Saddam Sayyaleh 2018). ILearn operates in eight communities in four of Jordan's municipalities and targets the 'three pillars', university students, school teachers, and existing community organizations, that provide the components necessary for ILearn to make new educational solutions available to underprivileged children. Each of these three pillars also gains an advantage in exchange for their participation in ILearn's initiative.

Mr. Sayyaleh examined each of the sectors. He noted that university students' main concern is unemployment, particularly for students who come from rural villages and do not have connections in Amman or access to training that could prepare them for the job market. Mr. Sayyaleh arranged for local start-ups to give these university students the necessary training and, in return, the students volunteer for ILearn. They also help ILearn reach school dropouts and unemployed youth. The second pillar, schoolteachers, often need to show evidence of community service or training from professional academies to be given promotions or awards for their schools. ILearn helps teachers receive this training and they gain community service hours by volunteering their time to teach ILearn's children. The teachers also work with ILearn to create a dropout prevention program. The local organizations benefit from donating their training services to the university students and schoolteachers as well because they can network and build their infrastructure in this way. Additionally, they can list their cooperation with ILearn as corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity, which improves the local community's trust in the organization. The local organizations also allow ILearn to use their spaces for free, and the community's trust in ILearn grows with its trust in the local organization. These organizations are often charities and are well situated to identify poverty pockets and find children who are working instead of attending school. In this model, therefore, three different sectors of the local community mobilize and work towards ILearn's objectives, while at the same time benefiting themselves, and no financial capital is exchanged.

Mr. Sayyaleh calls the process of convincing the 'three pillars' to participate in the 'mobilization' stage. The 'disruption' phase occurs at the same time because when Mr. Sayyaleh successfully convinces a university student, schoolteacher, or local organization to participate in ILearn, he has already disrupted their norm. He explained, 'we create a routine, so our old lifestyle that the university students are just doing whatever they want, the teacher whatever they want, this no longer exists. Now you have social pressure and responsibility to come to this space and offer something' (interview with Saddam Sayyaleh 2018).

Mr. Sayyaleh's initiative has consequences beyond providing better education opportunities for children. The university students, more equipped for the job market, receive better employment opportunities but also acquire a sense of personal responsibility and commitment to their community. Schoolteachers are better equipped to teach and with the incentive of awards or promotions potentially work harder in their professions, while also learning how to identify and aid at-risk children. Finally, the local organizations have a strong incentive to continue their involvement in the community. Notably, this pattern became ingrained in the communities where ILearn works and Mr. Sayyaleh noticed that community members began creating their own initiatives, and not contributing to the community became a taboo. The new mindset led to new understandings of being a productive community member: 'the way they perceived their community is no longer the way it is' (interview with Saddam Sayyaleh, 2018). People accepted ILearn's targeted creative reorganization of the previous norm and now actively participate in perpetuating the new norm.

This is significant in multiple ways. First, ILearn's publicly stated objective, to provide better educational opportunities for underprivileged children, can be achieved. Second, ILearn does this without using external resources, relying instead on the resources of the communities in which it operates; the STSE is thereby an initiative both for and by, local community members. Therefore, it can be directly reflective of and efficiently responsive to community needs. Finally, ILearn's successful targeted creative reorganization created a powerful ripple effect throughout the communities, going beyond education to addressing deeply rooted issues by normalizing social responsibility, reciprocity within the community, and active citizenship.

Other STSEs in Jordan employ similar methods to achieve their objectives. Crucially, they all work directly with the community members they aim to serve, use only limited, if any, financial capital, and primarily seek to address structural challenges on a localized scale rather than simply providing a good or service. In this way they hope to make tangible changes in Jordan's civil society because their initiatives deal with citizenship, government accountability, civic participation and responsibility, and dialogue among citizens. The use of social capital, or directly engaging community members in the STSEs' work, ensures that the changes they wish to create are achieved from within rather than being externally imposed. This makes STSEs influential in civil society, and perhaps they can be more effective, albeit on a smaller, more confined scale, than other sectors of Jordanian civil society.

STSE challenges and adaptations

Due to STSEs' underlying objectives, which address Jordan's structural social and political issues, they are at risk of facing serious challenges. One of the greatest challenges is repression by the government through intimidation by the security forces or even being shut down because civil society organizations in Jordan are only rarely permitted to truly address political issues, and social issues are contentious as well. Additionally, STSEs operating outside Amman and the larger cities that focus on rural communities can be subject to more oversight because these communities are viewed as areas where popular uprisings and radicalization can occur more easily. Normally, STSEs state only their superficial objectives publicly, i.e. on websites and social media

platforms and in their official registration papers. STSEs' structural objectives often seek to change social and political norms, and they fear repercussions from Jordan's legal system and security forces if they express and advocate these objectives openly.

Several STSEs discussed being harassed by security forces and government employees and reported that there were multiple occasions when their programs or events were shut down or compulsorily changed. One of these STSEs stated that after legally registering the organization with the Ministry of Social Development they felt that the government and intelligence services were always suspicious of them. The interviewee said that officials required them to communicate all their activities with the ministry, 'because they need to tell the intelligence about our work' (interview with 'R34' 2018). Constant government observation negatively impacted their day-to-day operations. This particular STSE encountered issues due to their openness about their political objectives because the government views political activity as 'threatening' (interview with 'R34' 2018). The STSE reported that police presence almost always accompanies its activities in rural areas. The attendance of members of Zamzam, a centre-right Islamist political party, at one of the STSEs' events created a particularly tense occasion. The interviewee recalled that the government repeatedly called to inquire who would be attending and why, and even contacted people in the rural community to intimidate them. This occurs because the government views any movement in rural areas or areas known to be loyal to the government to be risky (interview with 'R34' 2018). Most STSEs had similar experiences. Interviewee 'HY3' also founded a politically oriented STSE and stated that a major challenge was dealing with the government and security services. The organization's activism caused problems when they held large public debates in the open, in Rainbow Street and Wasadt al Balad,¹ during which they tried to hold officials accountable. The STSE invited government officials and ministers to these events, who later 'made trouble for [them]' (interview with 'HY3' 2018). This enterprise has 250,000 users on its online platform and reaches around a million people every week. The scope of this STSE was likely an additional concern for the government, besides its political messages. The founder explained that the STSE also experienced significant pressure from the security services, but that the pressure was on him personally, rather than the enterprise, and that this was debilitating (interview with 'HY3' 2018). The STSE persevered and changed its tactic; it is now registered as a business, not as an NGO, and reports fewer current issues with the government. Unfortunately, organizations that address social or political issues, in particular, are subject to government oversight, involvement, and intimidation practices (interview with 'HY3' 2018; interview with Saddam Sayyaleh 2018; interview with Sami Hourani 2018).

The STSEs explained that this type of harassment occurred until they changed their strategies. Several enterprises that had had originally been legally registered as a non-governmental organization with the Ministry of Social Development are now registered as not-for-profit companies with the Ministry of Trade and Finance. This move from one legal registration to another has afforded STSEs substantial freedom to operate as they wish because it reduces government involvement to the standard taxation procedures, so harassment by the security forces rarely occurs: 'they are more relaxed. Now the issues are only bureaucratic' (interview with 'R34' 2018). Registered as a

not-for-profit company, STSEs can operate much the same way as they did when registered as an NGO, except without the restrictive intimidation and oversight measures.

An experienced official working for the USAID Civic Initiative to Support (CIS) program, which works to promote and support civil society organizations in Jordan through training and grants, commented on the challenges that any politically-oriented organization faces. The official explained that the government rarely approves anything related to politics or religion and that 'avoiding the sensitive issues will be welcomed by the government' (interview with 'VG4' 2018). Some STSEs were aware of this issue when they founded their organization; others only realized the full extent of government and security forces' oversight, and the consequences of this, when they began to operate. Each STSE, however, has adapted to the situation and made its operations more covert by hiding their true objectives behind superficial objectives. A few avoid detection by not registering their organization with the government and operating out of their homes. Others have chosen to keep their true objectives clear but have changed their legal registration from NGO-status (in the Ministry of Social Development, which exercises extensive oversight) to business-status (in the Ministry of Trade and Finance, which only oversees organizations' financial matters). This has allowed the STSEs to continue to operate throughout politically unstable periods without compromising their ability to function.

PSSEs

PSSEs address specific problems and focus on quicker solutions to effect short- and medium-term improvements. They address issues such as: women's and refugees' employment; providing specific services to the disabled; introducing services in the water, sanitation, and health sector; and developing technological advances in medicine or pharmacy. The emphasis is on improving one aspect of a specific community sector. PSSEs are usually not financially self-sustainable because they rely on national or international donor funding to operate, which leaves them vulnerable to the changing needs of donors.

PSSE formation processes and reliance on the Jordanian 'entrepreneurship ecosystem'

The formation process of PSSEs generally follows that of any other start-up or small enterprise in Jordan, and they are therefore heavily dependent on what is known in economics and business terms as the 'entrepreneurship ecosystem', described previously. Economic development plans in many cities and countries cite fostering entrepreneurship as a core component to the answer for high unemployment rates, especially among youth. In its 2015 report examining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations and outlining a framework to achieve these goals, Jordan lists the creation of 'an enabling environment for entrepreneurship' as the main objective (Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan 2015).

In Jordan, the general entrepreneurship ecosystem is expanding, but the social entrepreneurship ecosystem is barely emerging. Since 2010, and especially in the last 4-7 years, the word 'entrepreneurship' has become trendy in Jordan and in this period,

the entrepreneurship ecosystem truly emerged. The term 'social entrepreneurship' has become more popular only in the last 2-4 years. There are just a few organizations which specifically support social enterprises. All the others support enterprises in general, and although some are socially oriented, most focus on entrepreneurship in technology, water, sanitation, health, and environmental issues. Social enterprises, and the few organizations which support them, both report that a lack of awareness in every sector about social enterprises has hindered the growth of existing social enterprises and affects the ability of new ones to form.

Among the main supporting organisations of entrepreneurs in Jordan, which also work with socially-oriented enterprises, are the major telecommunication companies; international governmental and intergovernmental entities such as embassies, the World Bank, and the European Union; several of Jordan's royal NGOs (RONGOs); the Ministry of Youth and the Ministry of Social Development; several Jordanian universities; and various Jordanian training, mentoring, investment, and consulting companies.² Support for PSSEs coming from royal NGOs and international organizations has received a lukewarm response. In recent years, RONGOs have become interested in supporting entrepreneurship in Jordan through direct investments, in the form of grant awards and entrepreneurship training. The response of PSSEs to these RONGOs' involvement is somewhat divided. Some PSSEs appreciate the recognition and exposure that working with RONGOs gives them and view royal involvement in the issue as a positive development for the country, hoping that royal 'patronage' of entrepreneurship will bring about positive developments in official government policies. Other PSSEs are wary and, in some cases, even suspicious of these royal initiatives. They believe that royal NGOs are just another extension of the security state monitoring and interfering with private citizens' initiatives. There is a similar attitude towards grants, loans, and training offered by foreign entities. Some PSSEs appreciate the aid while others categorically oppose it, explaining that international organizations or foreign governments cannot sufficiently understand Jordan's needs or that these foreign entities have ulterior motives that do not serve Jordanians' interests but rather support their neoliberal foreign policy objectives (interview with 'RT5' 2018; interview with '0H6' 2018; interview with 'E67' 2018; and others).

It is in this environment that PSSEs progress through the various stages of development. Generally, the initial step for the founder of a PSSE is to create a vision for a profitable business and to attend entrepreneurship or innovation training programs, often called bootcamps. There, they learn business practices and network with organisations offering financial investment for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This investment can take the form of grants, loans, free office space, free web hosting platforms, or a combination thereof. Various organisations also offer competitions which consist of several days' training, at the end of which participants present their ideas to a panel of judges who then decide which participants should receive financial aid. Other organisations offer 'incubation' for enterprises. In this model, the enterprise founders apply to the organisation with their business idea, and if accepted, they receive desk space and IT support in an office shared with other start-ups, networking support, legal support, and attend workshops and conferences. The enterprises also receive financial aid in the form of 'seed funds', usually a few thousand Jordanian

Dinars, intended to cover enterprises' expenses until they become formally established, registered with the government, and earn enough profits to sustain themselves. After that it is up to the PSSE founder to decide whether the enterprise should 'scale up', or grow.

The PSSE 'business model' and challenges to establishment

Unfortunately, most PSSEs in Jordan struggle to reach the self-sustainability stage and continuously rely on grants and loans from national and international sources to operate. PSSEs generally follow the dependent funding model, in which the enterprise uses external funds and resources and depends on their renewal or acquisition of funds from other sources. They choose sponsors to match their ideals but must sometimes adapt their missions or programs to fit existing funding programs, which change focus frequently. This is somewhat surprising because most PSSEs' founders participate in many training periods, workshops, and certification programs offered by local and international organizations specifically designed to help them learn sustainable business strategies. Some of these programs provide extended periods of mentorship as well, to help start-ups ingrain these strategies into their operations. This means that PSSEs should have established methods for financial self-sustainability in which they are not reliant on external funding sources and patterns. Whether it is the program content, method of teaching, issues in the 'entrepreneurship ecosystem' or a combination of these factors that prevents entrepreneurship training organizations from being effective and producing robust enterprises is unclear. Regardless, there are undoubtedly several structural issues in Jordan which prevent PSSEs from reaching their initial goals. As mentioned previously, every PSSE interviewee and organization working with PSSEs spoke of deficiencies in the entrepreneurship ecosystem as a major hindrance to the success of PSSEs in Jordan. The areas in which the Jordanian ecosystem is lacking most, according to their reports, are in governmental policies, issues related to the prerequisite of *wasta* (the Arabic term for having powerful connections), and securing sustainable financial income.

One of the issues in Jordan for PSSEs is that there is no designated legal registration option for enterprises as there is in other countries. Jordanian enterprises register either with the Ministry of Trade and Finance as for-profit companies or not-for-profit companies or with the Ministry of Social Development as non-governmental organizations. Founders choose the registration type depending on which has the greatest financial advantages. Increasingly, PSSEs also choose to officially register their enterprises abroad in a country that has a specific registration for enterprises and associated financial and legal advantages, such as the United Arab Emirates or Saudi Arabia. They then benefit from tax breaks and other favourable market legislation, while still working on the ground in Jordan. Others decide to move the entire enterprise abroad (interview with Nour Saeed 2018). These strategies are encouraged among entrepreneurs (interview with Esraa Alsanie 2018; interview with Ayad Al-Ashram 2018), and although moving abroad is advantageous for the PSSEs, neither tactic of moving enterprises abroad aids the Jordanian economy as tax revenues are collected from a foreign country and human talent is also exported.

Most entrepreneurs explained that besides Jordan lacking legal registration for enterprises that could encourage their formation and retention, it is difficult to go through the registration process. Those who experienced fewer issues had hired a lawyer, but not every PSSE founder can afford to do this and most navigate the web of rules, regulations, and ministry employees alone. PSSEs also reported that working with government officials during the registration process was discouraging and frustrating, and thus several of their peers gave up on founding their PSSE. Several entrepreneurs said that various officials in different ministries they interacted with were unwilling to help and lacked a basic understanding of entrepreneurship in general. Other entrepreneurs had to bribe government employees before receiving permission to register. Those entrepreneurs with well-positioned personal connections were able to register their enterprises more easily and swiftly. The almost necessary reliance on personal connections, however, is another weakness in Jordan's entrepreneurship ecosystem.

When trying to establish a PSSE, most entrepreneurs learned that *wasta*, or personal connections, are an implicit requirement for success. This is a structural issue throughout Jordan, and findings from this research correspond to previous analysis (e.g. Loewe, Blume, and Speer 2008). However, in addition to the other challenges PSSEs face, it can be truly debilitating, especially in the earliest stages (interview with Ayman Arandi 2018). Many resources are only accessible to privileged and well-connected Jordanians. Even being able to contact banks or telecommunication companies, who could provide essential funding opportunities, is out of reach for most Jordanians (interview with Saddam Sayyaleh 2018). This makes social entrepreneurship and the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Jordan quite elitist, even though those with the best solutions to deep-rooted problems are potentially those who are facing those problems themselves, but who cannot attend workshops or do not have the necessary connections (interview with Reem Khouri 2018). The PSSE founders who do manage to overcome various challenges are from privileged more PSSE backgrounds, and are well-intentioned, but possibly not as aware of the specific needs of society's most vulnerable sectors.

Each PSSE and organization working with them identified the inability of enterprises to secure financial income as one of the greatest challenges to their success. Accessing finances such as seed money or other types of capital is difficult for all entrepreneurs in Jordan due to the developing entrepreneurial ecosystem. Banks and telecommunications companies are some of the greatest investors in entrepreneurship, but they support primarily technology-oriented start-ups. It is difficult to find an investor interested in the social entrepreneurship sector (interview with Ayman Arandi 2018; interview with Saja Jaber 2018). If a social enterprise happens to also be technology-oriented it can secure funding in this way, but if not, there are few options. Private sector companies often do not understand the main purposes of social entrepreneurship or are unable to justify working with a social enterprise, where the return on investment is difficult to measure. The companies that do invest in social enterprises often award their grants or loans to their personal connections, rather than following a fair process, because they feel it reduces their risk (interview with Husam Tarawneh 2018). Similarly, bank loans are not a realistic option for PSSEs, because they

require a collateral, which entrepreneurs usually cannot provide (interview with Dina Toukan, 2018). Additionally, most investors only give between five and twenty thousand Jordanian Dinars, which is not enough to start a business, and various interviewees argued that it is also not enough to have a real impact on the economy (interview with Batool Dabbass 2018). Apart from the private sector, international organizations invest in development, but PSSEs criticize this source's inconsistency and unsustainability, just as STSEs had commented (interview with Nour Saeed, 2018).

For many PSSEs, the help they receive from family members, friends, and external funding sources only helps in the beginning, and as their enterprises grow, access to funds becomes more and more elusive. The director of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Centre at the University of Jordan, Dr. Ashraf Bany Mohammed, stated that 'more than 95 percent, if not more, up to almost 99%, of these social initiatives, ... die after just one or two months, because they are not sustainable at all' (interview with Dr. Ashraf Bany Mohammed, 2018). Even those enterprises which do survive beyond the first stages struggle to continue generating funds, and some are forced to become opportunistic in this regard. Instead of being able to secure funds from organizations that align with their objectives and needs, many PSSEs must instead match their enterprise's aims with those of the funding body (interview with 'VG4' 2018). This, of course, does not allow them to work consistently or in a manner true to their objectives.

Conclusions

Jordan's social enterprises, comprising STSEs and PSSEs, are an expanding civil society sector that is timely, innovative and attempting to develop a sustainable bottom-up approach. Their emergence over the past decade demonstrates that citizens are beginning to personally address the country's numerous social and political issues, having witnessed the failure of their government, international organizations, and existing CSOs to do so. It is important to clearly define and elucidate the attributes of both types of social entrepreneurs in Jordan, but it is insufficient to rely on their legal registration type to do so. As outlined previously, both STSE and PSSE founders choose the registration type based on whichever category they feel will best suit their goals and be most advantageous for them financially. This means that it is impossible to determine the type of social enterprise based on whether it is officially registered as a non-governmental organization, a for-profit company, or a not-for-profit company. Instead, it is necessary to closely examine the following defining characteristics of STSEs and PSSEs: objectives, function, and sustainability models. Based on this, an STSE is defined as a self-sustainable and self-perpetuating organization which seeks to address structural issues and change social norms through targeted creative reorganization of society, relying primarily on social capital and community resources. In contrast, a PSSE is a business-oriented organization that seeks to ameliorate a specific social issue by providing a product or service, using business strategies to reinvest profits into the community by offering additional products and services. PSSEs have the potential to be self-sustainable if the business becomes profitable; in Jordan, this is rare due to the restrictions of the entrepreneurship ecosystem, and most PSSEs currently rely on external funding.

Due to these social enterprises' dissimilar functions, they take on divergent roles. STSEs, with their purposeful reorganization of society and goal of addressing structural issues, have a greater role in civil society. They are actively responsive to community needs and wish to solve the deeply rooted issues they feel are at the heart of their communities' problems. As independent organizations they can minimize pressure from the government and international organizations; therefore, they may formulate their objectives and implement their plans more freely and have a powerful influence on the communities in which they work. STSEs wish to be an alternative to existing civil society organizations, whose model they view as flawed. At present, however, there are only very few STSEs in Jordan. PSSEs, which comprise the majority of Jordan's social enterprises, contribute more to the realm of political economy. They could potentially advance small-business creation if Jordan's entrepreneurship ecosystem continues to grow. Then, more PSSEs could transcend reliance on external financial capital and become profitable and self-sustainable. They could also counter high rates of unemployment, especially among youth. PSSEs are an alternative to regular profit-centred businesses because they focus on addressing social needs.

In evaluating the role of social enterprises in Jordan's civil society, however, it is not the theoretical potential of social entrepreneurs that matters, but rather their actual, current ability to achieve their goals as autonomous, community-responsive actors. PSSEs are often established in response to support or encouragement from international organizations, foreign governments, or the national government. Thus, they are not independent because their function depends on external support and their agendas are heavily influenced by, if not directly controlled or managed by, external actors. They rely on both material and immaterial support from these actors and are necessarily more responsive to their agendas than the needs of their communities. PSSEs constitute a controlled and managed mode of participation, and simultaneously they are being denied the agency they should have. True social enterprises are independent and self-sustainable, and rather than being influenced, are the influencers of society, because they can effectively implement bottom-up agendas. This is not to say that Jordan's PSSEs cannot carry out important projects; in fact, they are able to impact communities in meaningful ways. However, in most cases, they can only do so within a narrow framework. In this way, they differ from social enterprises working in non-authoritarian, developed countries. This also challenges the fundamental assumptions about social entrepreneurship which, according to the Western concept, should be self-sustainable and independent.

In general, social enterprises' chances of achieving their objectives without external interference and functioning as truly community-responsive civil society organizations, rather than being beholden to the demands of the regime and the international community, are slim. Most Jordanian social enterprises (PSSEs) are ultimately extensions of the regime's neo-patrimonial rule and only select few (STSEs) function independently. Future research on social enterprises in authoritarian and developing contexts should, therefore, focus on what factors might lead to an increase in the establishment of STSEs. This would additionally enhance our understanding of how social entrepreneurship is shaped by external factors in the entrepreneurship ecosystem functioning under authoritarian regimes in developing countries. The benefit would be to

recognize how the influence of these factors can potentially be minimized, or how social entrepreneurs in these areas can be better supported by both local and international sources.

Notes

1. The areas around Rainbow Street and Wasadt al Balad are in the centre of Amman and are often considered the heart of the capital's social and cultural scene.
2. While this list mentions the most prominent actors in the entrepreneurship ecosystem of Jordan, it is not exhaustive. TTI created a more comprehensive 'map' of the ecosystem detailing the roles of organizations known to work with entrepreneurs, available at <http://ttinnovation.org/entrepreneurship-ecosystem-map-in-jordan/>

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Interviews Quoted

- Interview by the author with 'OH6', Product- and Service-oriented Social Entrepreneur. Amman, Jordan. January 2018.
- Interview by the author with 'E67', Product- and Service-oriented Social Entrepreneur. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with 'HY3', Structural Transformation-based Social Entrepreneur. Amman, Jordan. March 2018.
- Interview by the author with 'R34', Structural Transformation-based Social Entrepreneur. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with 'RT5', Product- and Service-oriented Social Entrepreneur. Amman, Jordan. March 2018.
- Interview by the author with 'VG4', United States Agency for International Development Civic Initiative to Support (USAID CIS) employee. Amman, Jordan. April 2018.
- Interview by the author with Ahmad El Zubi, founder of Naua. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with Aline Bussmann, CEWAS project manager. Amman, Jordan. March 2018.
- Interview by the author with Amir Shihadeh, founder of YARA. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with Ayad Al-Ashram, Int@j employee. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with Ayman Arandi, Head of National Directors of the Hult Prize Foundation and co-founder of Iris Solutions. Amman, Jordan. April 2018.
- Interview by the author with Batool Dabbass, founder of Sahha Tech. Amman, Jordan. March 2018.
- Interview by the author with Dina Toukan, Seven Circles Consulting employee. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with Dr. Ashraf Bany Mohammed, Director of the University of Jordan Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center. Amman, Jordan. April 2018.
- Interview by the author with Esraa Alsanie, founder of Enva Techs. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with Husam Tarawneh, founder of Creative Club. Amman, Jordan. March 2018.
- Interview by the author with Lama Zawawi, Injaz operations manager. Amman, Jordan. February 2018.
- Interview by the author with Nour Saeed, Crown Prince Foundation employee. Amman, Jordan. March 2018.
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- Interview by the author with Sami Hourani, founder of Leaders of Tomorrow/For9a. Amman, Jordan. March 2018.