



ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SUSTAINABILITY OF KNOWLEDGE

René Jorna, Laura Maruster, Niels Faber and Kristian Peters

Faculty of Management and Organization, University of Groningen

Email: r.j.m.jorna@rug.nl

ABSTRACT

Sustainability is often related to environmental or ecological issues. This is true, but also incomplete. Waste, emissions and various kinds of pollutions may be physical or environmental, but they are the result of individual and collective human behavior. In issues of sustainability we would like to focus on new and better ways of organization human behavior. The topic of sustainability introduces notions of equilibrium, dynamics and offloading into discussions on organizations and entrepreneurship. It enhances the knowledge of sustainability in new contexts.

An entrepreneur is as every human being an information processing system. Whether entrepreneurs have special skills is a topic of debate. From a classical cognitive perspective, entrepreneurs are problem solvers which do not avoid risks and are open to changes and challenges. Various studies have been conducted with regard to the specific characteristics of the learning styles, decision making styles and problem solving styles of entrepreneurs. None of these studies gives conclusive evidence of causal relations between characteristics and performance. An entrepreneur also is a decision maker. This means that with knowledge of various kinds an entrepreneur a) gathers information, b) looks at alternatives and c) makes a decision. Simon (1964) called these phases: intelligence, design and choice, respectively. Because of non-conclusive outcomes on "styles" we suggest to also look at entrepreneurs from a knowledge management perspective

Every entrepreneur has to deal with knowledge. This knowledge concerns the primary (what the entrepreneur is an "expert" in) and the secondary (how the "small" (SME) organization is run) activities of a small firm. This knowledge has various forms. With knowledge various things can be done: storage, sharing, reuse, creation and transfer. Not every form and not every activity is suitable in every situation. It can be argued that what makes someone an entrepreneur is that he or she can adjust the content, forms and functions of knowledge in an adequate or attuned way. In this way an entrepreneur, as a problem solver or a decision maker, is able to realize what we would like to call: sustainability of knowledge.