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SUMMARY

ENTREPRENEURIAL ARCHETYPES IN MAKING SENSE OF THE STRUCTURAL HOLES

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Principal Topic

Entrepreneurial qualities have been discussed for over twenty years, but there is no consensus about how much the personality differences vary between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (Gartner 1989; Delmar 2006; Busenitz & Barney 1997 see Kirzner 1997; Gaglio & Katz 2001). The entrepreneurial activities, processes, networks, events, and structural holes are widely discussed, but the problem of the mythic entrepreneur has remained an unsolved matter (Obgor 2000; Bruni, Gherardi & Poggio 2004; Mirchandani 1999). Nevertheless, social ties in particular are seen to be different between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs (Burt 1992; Venkataraman 1997; Sarasvathy 2001 see Granovetter 1973).

Approaches considering social ties and structural holes neglect the fundamental nature of the phenomenon of entrepreneurship, as the actors are separated from their context (Sarasvathy 2004; Gartner 1989). In this study, we used a sense-making approach in investigating the context-dependent phenomenon of the subjective creation of the structural holes (see Burt 1992; Burt, Hogarth & Michaud 2000; Burt 2004). We argue that the entrepreneurs are no different than other people as persons, but instead they are different as sense-makers in the creation of structural holes (see Weick 1995; Berger & Luckmann 1966). Therefore, it is more meaningful to discuss the entrepreneurial archetypes rather than personality differences.

Method

In this study, we interviewed 14 entrepreneurs in the ICT-sector in Finland. The interviews covered the following topics: (1) The starting phase of the business and entrepreneurship, (2) Management and growth of the company, (3) The entrepreneur's attitude to change in the surrounding environment and the recognized ways of reacting to those changes, and (4) The entrepreneur's personal memoir. The semi-structural interviews were interpretative in their nature.

Results and Implications

This paper criticizes the approaches emphasizing entrepreneurial qualities (e.g. trait approach) by showing that the entrepreneurs do not vary in terms of their personality differences, but instead in terms of their entrepreneurial archetypes (i.e. the subjective ways to create structural holes). We discovered the four different entrepreneurial archetypes: opportunity (1) creators, (2) killers, (3) believers, and (4) hopelesses. Each archetype illustrates the bundle of meanings considering the interpersonal bridges that are collections of social ties in the subjective creation of structural holes.

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