

Entrepreneurial Decision-making in Cooperative Organizations – Theoretical Implications of a Case Study Research*

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EMNet 2007, 30 June 2007

1. Problem

The functions of entrepreneurship are not limited to a single firm but are divided into different parts within the cooperative network. Thus, divided entrepreneurship leads to additional requirements on knowledge transfer and decision-making between members and the cooperative.

Hypothesis 1 *These processes of knowledge transfer and in particular the participation of the members within the process of decision-making does play a central role for entrepreneurial impulses.*

2. Methodology

In contrast to pure quantitative research our methodical approach is related to the idea of theorizing by means of case study research in order to respect the dynamic aspects and the complexity of the object of investigation. Additionally, the theory-building of the communication of knowledge in cooperative organisations is not yet completed. However, case study research allows explorative insights into a new field of research.

Hypothesis 2 *The methodology of case study research provides an appropriate analytical framework for processes of communication of knowledge and processes of decision-making.*

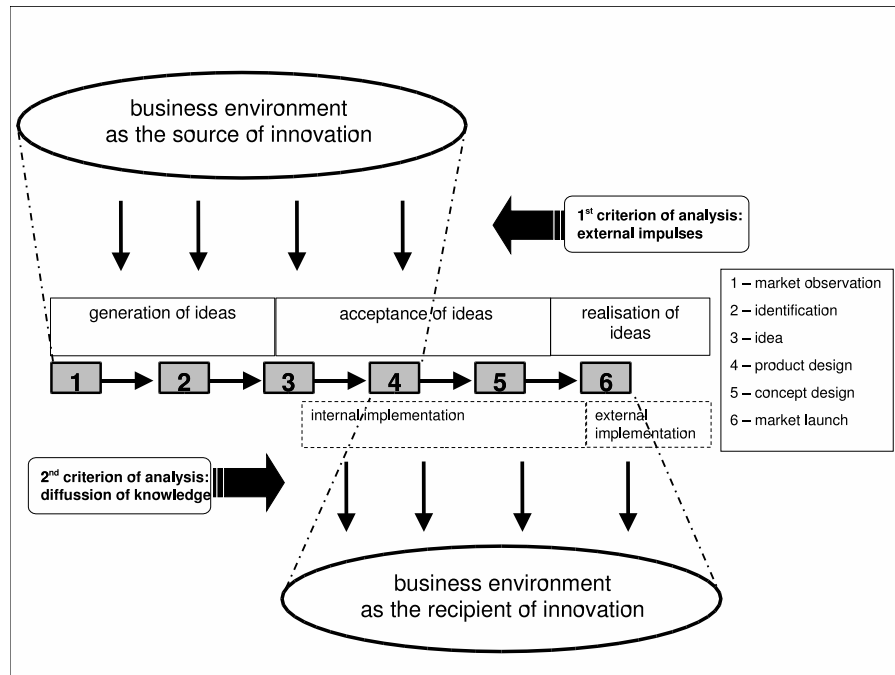
3. The Idealized Innovation Process

Common concepts of innovation processes assume a linear-sequential pattern of single phases and neglect the chance of involving of the firms' environment (impulses and diffusion).

Hypothesis 3 *The popular view of processes of innovation should be modified in order to emphasize the cooperatives' environment as source and recipient of innovation.*

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4. Results

As a conclusion of the three practical examples (snack, organic and coffee) we state:

Hypothesis 4 *The processes of communication of knowledge are changeable and institutionally flexible depending on the characteristics of the underlying object of innovation.*

Hypothesis 5 *Decision-making does not follow a fixed dominant pattern within the cooperative network but depends on the type of innovation and the division of entrepreneurial capabilities.*

Hypothesis 6 *The institutions and mechanisms for the regulation of conflicts are rather appropriate for product and process innovations but less developed with regard to systemic innovations.*

5. Theoretical Implications

Hypothesis 7 *The selection of the appropriate channel is primarily driven by the dynamics of the concerned markets.*

Our paper is a shortened version of a more detailed German working paper which is available at <http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/2892/>.