

Propositions

Attached to the thesis

Critical Learning Episodes in the Evolution of Business start-ups: Business Incubators in South-Eastern Brazil

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1. Business start-ups are a part of the private sector that deserve specific theorization and require empirical testing of hypotheses to strengthen the explanatory power of current theories of the firm.
2. Critical learning episodes are a key analytical tool to investigate the evolution of business start-ups because they show how the resource-base of these firms is formed through turning points in their trajectories. *(my thesis)*
3. Entrepreneurial learning is central to understanding innovation in business start-ups, since innovation implies cognitive and practical investments to create new resources. This makes innovation processes cognitively more costly than the acquisition of external resources.
4. The dynamics of business start-ups' pathways can be explained through principles of network organization, in which critical learning episodes are the nodes and the relationships for resource exchange are the ties.
5. The stronger the resource-base of a business start-up, the bigger the constraints to path-breaking activities, if these activities demand drastic changes in the existing routines. *(my thesis)*
6. There are no pre-set paths from which entrepreneurs can choose; pathways are a constant 'work in progress,' shaped by a multitude of factors. *(my thesis)*
7. Typical pathways for business start-ups may change as the business grows larger, due to further diversification, market dynamics, business opportunities, and changing institutional frameworks.
8. A paradigm that assumes the unlimited growth of individual firms is not suitable for all business start-ups, since entrepreneurial ambitions and firm characteristics may lead to alternative pathways (i.e., spin-offs, acquisition by bigger firms).
9. Business incubators are a secure place to deal with uncertainty. They reduce the degree of uncertainty in business start-ups' settings by providing access to critical information about the environment, networking with resourceful actors, and knowledge that supports alternative decision-making. *(my thesis)*
10. Business incubators are learning settings and should combine formal *and* informal learning opportunities for entrepreneurs. *(my thesis)*
11. Learning, rather than knowing, is the coolest thing there is.