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Entrepreneurial Careers of the Future, Self-Space and Spin-Offs

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ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREERS OF THE FUTURE, SELF-SPACE AND SPIN-OFFS

Summary

This paper was written mainly for a group of educators who had come together at a conference to think about possible ways of improving entrepreneurial education for high school level students. It is divided into three sections. The first examines the environmental trends that may explain why Canada is one of the developed countries with the largest proportion of self-employed, and why the number of micro-enterprises is growing steadily. The second contains an overview of some possible entrepreneurial careers of the future, and the third proposes the concept of self-space as an approach that could be used to help young people prepare to play a more entrepreneurial role in the future. The concept is illustrated through a spin-off application.

Résumé

Cette conférence s'adresse principalement à des éducateurs réunis dans un colloque pour réfléchir à des façons d'améliorer l'éducation entrepreneuriale des jeunes du niveau secondaire. Elle comprend trois parties : 1. Les tendances de l'environnement qui peuvent expliquer pourquoi le Canada est le pays qui compte la plus forte proportion de travailleurs autonomes parmi les pays développés et pourquoi nous avons de plus en plus de micro entreprises; 2. Un survol de ce que pourront être les carrières entrepreneuriales de l'avenir; 3. Le concept d'espace de soi est suggéré comme approche pour mieux préparer à jouer un rôle entrepreneurial. Une application de ce concept à l'essaimage est illustrée.

ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREERS OF THE FUTURE, SELF-SPACE AND SPIN-OFFS

Introduction

Is there such a thing as an entrepreneurial career? So far, the main term used has been entrepreneurial paths (Filion, 1999c). I believe we are currently moving towards new ways of understanding careers, and that the “entrepreneurial” aspect will become much more important in the future. Today, I will be talking first about the environmental trends that explain why our organizations are shrinking, and why Canada has a larger percentage of self-employed than any other developed country. I will then address what I see not as entrepreneurial paths but as entrepreneurial careers of the future. In closing, I will look briefly at the concept of self-space, which is an important factor in preparing for a more entrepreneurial role in professional life. I will be illustrating this concept by linking it to spin-offs.

How soon do you think we will be able to use the term *entrepreneurial career*? Entrepreneurship is flourishing, but its importance in modern life is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the last century, the term “entrepreneur” was used to describe a handful of industry leaders. Today, however, entrepreneurship has become a career available to everyone.

Thirty years ago, people were still skeptical when researchers predicted that the proportion of entrepreneurs in society would be as high as 10%. Yet, in 1990, Orser and Foster (1992) showed that 25% of all Canadian families operated some kind of business activity from their homes. In the year 2000, nearly 20% of the Canadian workforce – one in every five workers - is self-employed, and it is reasonable to think that as many as 50% - or one in every two workers – will be called upon to play an entrepreneurial role in society and its organizations in the next 20 years. Why is this so, and how will it be achieved?

ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREERS OF THE FUTURE

Don't worry – I'm not going to bombard you with statistics! However, it is useful to look briefly at some more general figures to illustrate the extent of the phenomenon. As early as the 1970s, David Birch (1983), an organizational demographer, proposed three main categories of enterprises: elephants (large enterprises, mainly multinationals, that move very slowly), gazelles (fast-growth enterprises) and mice (small enterprises employing less than 20 people). Even then, it was clear that careers would differ significantly, depending on the type of enterprise in which a person chose to work.

Strong trend towards micro-enterprises and self-employment

While the number of enterprises in modern society is increasing, their size is decreasing. In Canada, more than 98% of all firms employ less than 100 people, and 75% employ less than five people. There are some slight variations between the provinces. For example, 80% of firms in Newfoundland have less than five employees, compared with 75% in Prince Edward Island and

74% in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Québec (Légaré, Simard and Filion, 1999). We need to ask ourselves why there are so many micro-enterprises and self-employed in Canada. The situation is a complex one, since there are several reasons that explain this trend, at least in part. Ten of these reasons are shown in Table 1 below, and explained in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Table 1
Causes of the trend towards micro-enterprises and self-employment

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Technologies2. Organizational change3. Security4. Ageing and expertise5. Self-space6. People living alone7. Being one's own boss8. Cocooning9. Personal ecology10. Nostalgia for the "good old days" |
|--|

1. Technologies

New technology has enhanced the importance of the time factor in inter-company, interpersonal and general business relations. Some organizations have had to increase their pace, while others experience peaks and troughs in their production cycles. Both types are turning increasingly to subcontractors, in the former case so that they can keep up with the pack, and in the latter case to deal with periodic surpluses of work.

2. Organizational change

Organizations now need to be extremely flexible, and must often consult highly skilled people. Here again, subcontracting is an excellent way for them to meet these needs. The competitive pressure coming mainly from Asia is likely to increase rather than decrease in the future.

3. Security

In recent years, organizations have forced large numbers of people to take early retirement. The result has been a general loss of confidence in businesses, private and public employers, governments and every other form of organization in society. Growing numbers of individuals have come to realize that true security means working for themselves or creating a small business of their own.

4. Ageing and expertise

The pool of educated, experienced and skilled people in society is growing, and has become a major source of entrepreneurs and self-employed. For example, the probability of becoming self-employed increases with age. Many highly experienced and skilled people are forced into retirement at an age when they can still contribute and remain active by going into business for themselves.

5. Self-space

More people are now better educated, have continued to learn, have travelled or lived in other countries, and have developed an open-minded approach to the world. As a result, they find their organizational roles restrictive and unfulfilling. They need more self-space, and more freedom. Their jobs no longer provide them with the opportunity to grow and achieve their ambitions.

6. People living alone

We live in a society where people are tending increasingly to live alone. The number of single-parent families and childless couples is growing continually. Self-employment is simply another expression of this trend towards smaller social units and the atomization of both social and organizational life.

7. Being one's own boss

Self-fulfillment is becoming increasingly important for many individuals, and a high percentage of those who go into business for themselves do so because they want to concentrate their energies on a trade or profession they enjoy, without the power struggles and back-stabbing that has become the norm in some organizations. Many entrepreneurs and self-employed gave up their jobs because they were tired of being controlled, or of having to control others. When questioned, people who have gone into business for themselves in the last ten years often give the same reason: "I left my employer because I was sick of all the conflicts and arguments. I just wanted to be left alone to do my job in peace".

8. Cocooning

Today, it is common for homes to have offices with computers. Some people have adopted a teleworking lifestyle. They feel it is better to work at home, with less stress, even if they earn less money. The fact of controlling the working environment is a significant element in stress reduction – for example, being able to open a window, turn down the heat, avoid sitting next to a colleague who does not wash as often as he should, and most importantly, not having to waste two hours a day in the morning and evening rush hour traffic.

9. Personal ecology

As the world becomes less stable and society becomes more violent, individuals are tending to search for more balance and equilibrium in their personal and professional lives.

10. Nostalgia for the “Good Old Days”

Fifty years ago, Canada was essentially a rural country where much of the population earned a living from agriculture. Today, many city-dwellers look back on the lives of their grandparents and great-grandparents with a certain amount of nostalgia. On the farm, they had freedom, fewer constraints and plenty of relatives or close friends. People have begun to regret these lost values and would like to restore them, even if it means earning less.

All these factors have contributed to the trend towards smaller and more fragmented organizations. And paradoxically, while enterprises are now smaller and more regional in nature, they are also involved increasingly in globalization, strategic alliances and everything connected with international markets.

The growth of entrepreneurship and careers of the future

In the next few years, our understanding of the term *career* will change radically, and many careers will become much more entrepreneurial. Indeed, the concept of entrepreneurship will be built into school curricula from elementary level onwards. Societies that do not do this may well find themselves unable to keep up with the development and standard of living of their neighbours. The reason is simple – the more entrepreneurial players a society has, the more creative and innovative it becomes, and the more added value it creates. Table 2 presents a summary of some entrepreneurial careers of the future.

Table 2
Entrepreneurial careers of the future

Careers	Activities	Learning
Intrapreneurs	Creation, change management	Conception, relations and support systems, vision
Extrapreneurs	Creation, management	Conception, relations and support systems, vision
Entrepreneurs	Creation, development	Conception, differentiation of risk, relations and support systems, vision
Spin-offs	Creation, management	Conception, relations and support systems, vision
Small business owner-managers	Management	Management
Micro-enterprise operators	Management	Management, especially marketing and operations
Self-employed	Management	Self-management, personal ecology
Supportpreneurs	Networking, advice	Networks, interpersonal relations, public relations
Interpreneurs	Financing, alliances	Networks, negotiation, finance, strategic management
Networkpreneurs	Networks	Networks, social systems, interpersonal relations
Nego-preneurs	Networks	Negotiation, recovery
Familypreneurs	Management, succession	Social systems, management
Technopreneurs	Creation, invention, innovation	Conception, vision, strategic management, teamwork, networks, globalization
Ecopreneurs	Creation	Environment
Gerontopreneurs	Creation	Gerontology, service sectors
Coopreneurs	Management	Negotiation, group work and organization
Grouppreneurs	Management	Group communications
Sociopreneurs	Volunteer work	Social mobilization
Netpreneurs	Creation, invention, innovation	Conception, vision, networks
Webpreneurs	Creation, innovation, management	Conception, vision, networks, globalization, marketing

There are many different entrepreneurial career paths (Lavoie, 1988). In the years to come, individuals will be better able to select the right path for themselves, or change from one path to another. However, it is important to remember that an entrepreneurial career is something that is grafted onto an existing field of expertise or career. It involves going into business in a field with which the individual is already familiar. The best predictor of business success is the person's level of expertise in the sector. It is more difficult to succeed in business if you choose a field you do not know. The entrepreneurial facet of a career is therefore based on a combination of know-how, self-awareness and vision of the future.

In the past, an entrepreneurial career usually meant working in or around a small business. Today, however, there are many new forms of entrepreneurship, including family business, micro-enterprises, self-employment, ecopreneurship, technopreneurship, cooperative and group entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, as well as other types of entrepreneurship in the big business sector, such as spin-offs, which are becoming increasingly common. The following paragraphs describe some of these potential new careers.

1. Intrapreneurs

Everyone, at some point in their lives, has the opportunity to be an intrapreneur. Intrapreneurs are agents of change. They act entrepreneurially in organizations they do not own, but for which they work (Carrier, 1997). They are creative people who design and do new things and innovate in the workplace. To do this, they need support and must build a good relations system.

Logically, there are two categories of intrapreneurs. The first category includes people who share someone else's vision and work actively to realize it - for example, they may design and implement visions that complement the central vision of a business owner. I refer to them as facilitators. The second category includes people who design and implement emerging visions that modify the central vision of the business owner. I have called them visioners (Filion, 1990; 1999a).

Intrapreneurs need to learn to design visions, prepare their projects and create a framework to enhance the consistency of their achievements. They take risks for which they are not paid. On the other hand, they are the ones who allow organizations to progress, learning about leadership and "extrapreneurship" in the process.

They can go on to become business, social or political leaders, or they may go into business for themselves. Whatever path they choose, one thing is certain: the demand for intrapreneurial behaviour in organizations is growing, and the intrapreneurs themselves are the first to benefit, since their intrapreneurial behaviour is an excellent way of preparing for entrepreneurial practice outside the organization. Learning about intrapreneurial behaviour should become an inherent part of future school curricula, since it provides a good basis for general entrepreneurial learning.

2. Extrapreneurs

Extrapreneurs are people who launch businesses that are an extension of the work they used to do for their employers. The chances of someone who has been an intrapreneur, designing and managing projects involving change, eventually becoming an extrapreneur and going into

business for himself or herself are very high. Extrapreneurs continue to apply the behaviours they have learned over the years from their employer organization, but this time for their own benefit. The transformation from intrapreneur to extrapreneur is often more gradual and involves less risk than the transformation from employee to entrepreneur.

Extrapreneurs need the same type of learning as intrapreneurs – in other words, learning that involves both the left and right sides of the brain, relating to the design of activities and projects and the design, implementation and maintenance of relations and support systems. Almost every entrepreneurial activity demands a minimum level of visionary design: identifying a space to be occupied in the market and designing a form of organization to occupy that space, using as few resources as possible.

3. Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs are people who focus their energies on innovation and growth. They create enterprises or develop new things in existing enterprises (new products, new markets, new methods). Entrepreneurs generally aim for growth, both personal and organizational. They need to learn continuously, because their job is a complex one with many different facets, and is in constant evolution. As they learn, they need to concentrate on the conception and design of projects and visions. Their visions will become guiding threads and form the basis of their activities and future learning.

Entrepreneurs must also be able to develop good monitoring and control systems for the projects they design and implement. They will have to make choices about the sector in which they will be working, since they need several years of experience before they know a sector sufficiently well to identify available niches. Past business experience and a minimum level of experience in the sector are the best guarantees of success. Entrepreneurs must also learn to minimize risk and differentiate themselves and their products.

4. Spin-offs

As a society, we invest billions of dollars every year to support research, especially in the technology field, but our higher education institutions and research centres have done very little so far to transform the results of all this research into marketable products. In the next few years, we are likely to see a significant trend towards support for new spin-off technology firms. This is very important if we are to preserve our international competitiveness.

The number of venture support organizations should increase in the future, and not just in the technology sector. The term “spin-off” refers to a process in which a person wishing to create a new business receives support from another organization or business - from the person’s employer organization, for example. It is a way of reducing risk, and is also a form of venture creation that is likely to become more popular in the next few years. I will talk about it in more detail later.

5. Small business owner-managers

Small business owner-managers must be versatile. They must be able to solve problems and make decisions quickly. They need to master all the basic elements of management, and should be able to incorporate effective management practices into their everyday activities. They need highly consistent management systems. For example, they can establish parameters for marketing and selection criteria for hiring the people they need to implement their visions. Above all, they need stable personalities because, as the captains of their ships, they will often have to navigate stormy waters.

6. Micro-enterprise operators

Micro-enterprise operators must be very familiar with their basic trade. In fact, they, along with the self-employed, must master two trades, namely their specialty trade and the trade of business practice. They must learn to monitor their cost-price ratio carefully and direct everything they do on the basis of customer needs.

Their work is not unlike that of the small business owner-manager, except on a smaller scale. They have very few resources to achieve their goals, and their main resources are often their knowledge of the field and their time. The best way of reducing expenses and not being too vulnerable to market fluctuations is obviously to grow. However, it is also possible to reduce risk by diversifying the customer base so as not to be overly dependent on a single customer, and by using subcontractors for added flexibility. Generally, a micro-enterprise is one that employs no more than four people in addition to its owner.

7. The self-employed

Self-employment is not unlike the work of a micro-enterprise operator, except that a self-employed person works essentially alone and only occasionally with others. Some people become self-employed by choice, and prepare themselves accordingly, while others are forced into it when they are unable to find jobs (Filion, 2000b). This difference can affect the type of learning required. However, all self-employed must learn to manage themselves and their time, and find ways of recharging their batteries.

Research has shown that the most successful self-employed are extremely flexible. The self-employed, like micro-enterprise operators, must give priority to customer relations. A balanced lifestyle and personal ecology are important in ensuring that they maintain both their motivation and their productivity.

8. Supportpreneurs

A whole new sector is currently developing around the provision of support to new ventures and existing businesses. Examples of possible careers include consulting, support services for new businesspeople, assistance with the preparation of business plans, tutoring, the creation of advisory boards, family boards and boards of directors, and so on. It is even possible that small business and self-employment management consultants will need to obtain accreditation in the next 5 to 10 years.

9. Interpreneurs

All kinds of specialty careers are now emerging in the field of inter-business relations, including small business alliances. These intermediary roles used to be played by accountants and lawyers, many of whom have since specialized in inter-business negotiations, creating a new niche with benefits for both parties. Such alliances often require funding. Interpreneurs must be skilled negotiators, familiar with the various funding sources, and able to prepare and update strategic management plans.

10. Networkpreneurs

Faced with globalization and large free trade markets, growing numbers of small businesses are joining networks, either to improve their power of negotiation with suppliers, or to enhance their export capacity. Such networks are often created around one or a handful of small businesses, and are becoming more common. However, someone has to manage and maintain them. It is not unusual, nowadays, for individuals to initiate a network, bring the players together and then create a career for themselves as they continue to manage and develop it.

11. Negopreneurs

These are people who buy and sell enterprises. Most are specialists in enterprise recovery. They keep some enterprises longer than others, but always sell them in the end. They proceed by buying bankrupt or almost-bankrupt firms, negotiating agreements with suppliers and initiating a recovery by rationalizing operations, often by reducing the number of lines and concentrating on the more profitable products. They are also skilled at negotiating asset purchases from creditors after bankruptcy. In all cases, they have few start-up costs and make substantial profits when they sell the business.

12. Familypreneurs

More than half of all businesses are family businesses, where management is controlled by family members who are co-owners or close relatives of the main owner.

Succession is often a major concern in such businesses. In terms of learning, family entrepreneurs, like small business owner-managers, must learn the trade of owner and manager. They must also think about continuity and promote the next generation. This requires good long-term and short-term planning skills. A family business provides young people with an excellent opportunity to demonstrate their entrepreneurial skills and learn about management. One thing that all family entrepreneurs must do is to assess about instrumentality – in other words, is the family at the service of the enterprise, or vice-versa?

It is also useful to learn how social and organizational systems work, so that lessons about the circulation of information, decision-making and the exercise of power can be applied in the family business.

13. Technopreneurs

Growing numbers of technological entrepreneurs and inventors are now choosing to market their products themselves. This type of entrepreneur often looks for partners or forms a team to manage the enterprise. Their activities resemble those of classical growth entrepreneurs, but are generally more complex, in terms of product development, production, funding and marketing. Technopreneurs usually market their products on the world market, since in many cases their customers are in tiny, highly specialized sectors.

New technology research and marketing has increased the rate of change. New technologies have an impact not only on their own sector, but on organizational methods and individual lifestyles too. They continually provide new tools to facilitate globalization.

14. Ecopreneurs

The notion of environmental protection and balance is developing continually, and we are currently witnessing the emergence of a whole new industrial sector devoted to environmental and ecological issues. This is a huge sector, and entrepreneurs considering a career in this area will need to be able to identify specific niches and differentiate themselves and their products.

15. Gerontopreneurs

As the world's population ages, services for the elderly are becoming increasingly important. When we look at statistics on the age structure in Canada, we see that the percentage of elderly people is growing, creating a booming market. Many self-employed and micro-enterprises now work in this sector.

16. Coopreneurs

Cooperative enterprises are becoming more common, especially in provinces such as Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Québec, and in the Atlantic Provinces, with fishery cooperatives. Cooperatives are already part of the tradition of some regions and groups. A good example is the Desjardins movement in Québec.

A cooperative enterprise provides an alternative way of creating, managing and developing an organization. The benefits of the cooperative method can encourage groups of individuals and enterprises to come together around a common project. For example, small businesses often come together to form export cooperatives for their products or services. Individually, these firms are too small to cope with competition from multinationals on foreign markets, but together they become formidable competitors.

The humanist aspect is very important in the cooperative philosophy (Conseil de la coopération, 1999, Filion, 2000a). A cooperative considers education, training and personal development to be primordial, and generally invests a large percentage of its resources in these elements. The decision-making process is based on equal participation, since every member has one vote. The creators of cooperative enterprises must learn to manage differences.

17. Grouppreneurs

These are people who join forces to form a collective or group enterprise that is not a cooperative. They introduce group operating rules. In some cases, the enterprise demands a group lifestyle, while in others it involves additional activities over and above the members' regular working activities. Many such organizations exist in the leisure sector, and groups of self-employed and micro-enterprises are also becoming more common.

18. Sociopreneurs

Growing numbers of people are involved in volunteer activities, and many people now play entrepreneurial roles either by creating a volunteer activity or by innovating in an existing volunteer activity. The numbers of people creating not-for-profit organizations is also increasing.

This category includes a significant number of people in difficulty who have decided to take charge of their lives and create their own businesses rather than relying on government assistance. Disabled people are particularly active in this respect. As a result, there is a need for people to provide advice and support for the new business activity.

All this has generated a new form of volunteer work that can be described as social entrepreneurship. Almost all of us will be asked to contribute in one way or another, some day. And if we are going to do this, why not do it entrepreneurially? Why not initiate something new, to meet a new need? This is an excellent, low-risk way of learning about entrepreneurship and making a useful contribution at the same time.

19. Netpreneurs

Netpreneurs are technological entrepreneurs, but in a category that is becoming increasingly separate. Information technology is developing at an unprecedented rate, and the development is not just being driven by existing enterprises. Indeed, the number of new enterprises launched on the basis of a new information technology product is growing every year. This is a trend that will become stronger in the future. Today, animation software such as that designed by Softimage is just one of many possibilities, since software applications are required for an increasingly broad range of human and multi-media activities. These innovations and new products are not produced exclusively by computer graduates, but by people of all ages and from all backgrounds – and even by people with little prior training in computers.

20. Webpreneurs

The number of Internet transactions is growing exponentially, and both existing and new companies are developing Web sites and organizing Web-based marketing activities. To do this, they often turn to small firms specialized in the design, monitoring, development and, increasingly, the management of Web sites. These new webpreneurs now offer a range of highly differentiated approaches and methods.

At the same time, a whole new Web-based industry is appearing, and webpreneurs are launching products designed specially to be marketed on the Internet, or becoming brokers or marketing retailers for all kinds of products and services. Amazon.com is one well-known and successful example, and similar companies are also appearing in a wide range of sectors.

Comments on entrepreneurial careers of the future

Before concluding this section, I will just say a few words about entrepreneurial ethics and the social responsibility of entrepreneurs. In terms of ethics, it is clear that entrepreneurs who succeed are those who concentrate on their goals, uphold their values and avoid cheating. You always reap what you sow, and the results you obtain depend on the energy you invest. Cheats only cheat themselves.

In recent years, society has slowly become aware of the limits on its natural and government resources, and is keen to eradicate the excesses of the past. Generations of men and women have spent their lives creating a society that supports people who want to go into business. If this is to continue, present and future entrepreneurs must also play a role in their respective communities, participating in and contributing to the development of society to a much greater extent than their predecessors.

Our era is conducive to individual fulfilment, thanks to the large number of motivated individuals and entrepreneurs who are willing to take charge of their own lives and commit their energies to the future of their communities. This is particularly true in the more isolated regions. We expect many of you to do this when your turn comes. We all have an important role to play as motors of development in our communities and societies of the future.

SELF-SPACE

In the last 20 years, I have made a certain number of predictions for the field of entrepreneurship, and they have proved to be accurate. The first – and I was not alone in saying this – was concerned with the place of entrepreneurship in our societies. Entrepreneurs are the people who create wealth, and a society must be able to identify, acknowledge and support them. They are the true motors of development. We have made a lot of progress in this respect, but much still remains to be done, especially in education.

My second prediction was concerned with the concepts and models required to think and act like entrepreneurs. I predicted that the concept of “vision” would become important, and was one of the pioneers in its development (Filion, 1991a and 1991b). I am glad to see that the organizers of this conference selected it as one of their themes.

In the early 1980s, when I first began using this term, I was told it to go and talk to the religious communities about it! This is no longer the case today, of course, and while it is a good thing in many ways, it is also unfortunate to some extent, since people now use the term in all sorts of situations, and its original meaning – a forward-looking, self-learning process constituting the guiding thread for a set of activities – has become diluted.

I would like to make another prediction today, concerning a concept that I believe will become a central element in the field of entrepreneurship in the next decade. This is the concept of self-space, which is likely to become fundamental in explaining entrepreneurial development.

Over the last 20 years I have studied several hundred entrepreneurs in more than 40 different countries, and one of the things I discovered is that this particular concept, self-space, really does explain who entrepreneurs are and what they do. Entrepreneurs identify spaces to be occupied on the market, and then learn how to occupy them by creating a business.

The entrepreneurs who succeed best at what they do are those who have already learned to create, preserve and develop their own space in the family and social systems in which they grew up. Logically, this also suggests that, to succeed, entrepreneurs need to learn how to master the creation and management of space not only for themselves but for other people too.

I would like to say a few words about this concept, based on my past publications on the subject (Filion, 1993; 1994; 1999 b and d).

Self-space, a basic systemic concept of the management of the self

There is a growing trend to associate the concepts of organizational actor and learning. In the field of entrepreneurship, the pioneering work was done by Collins and Moore (1970) in their empirical field study of entrepreneurs. Senge (1990), like other researchers before and since, proposed models to improve the articulation of learning in general, and organizational learning in particular. Our interest in the phenomenon has arisen mainly through empirical studies of various categories of entrepreneurial actors (Filion, 1991a and b; 1996).

Research led to the identification of the concept of vision as a structural basis for the design and organization of activity systems. It also allows the learning needed to perform the projected activities to be specified, but is unable to explain why certain actors are more successful than others. Various other notions, including self-concept and self-space, can help to explain the evolution of a visionary system and the learning that makes it possible.

Self-concept, learning and vision

In the following sections, we will examine what this learning involves. Without analyzing learning as such, we will discuss certain elements that trigger and support the learning mechanism. Figure 1 below sets out some of the elements involved in the process.

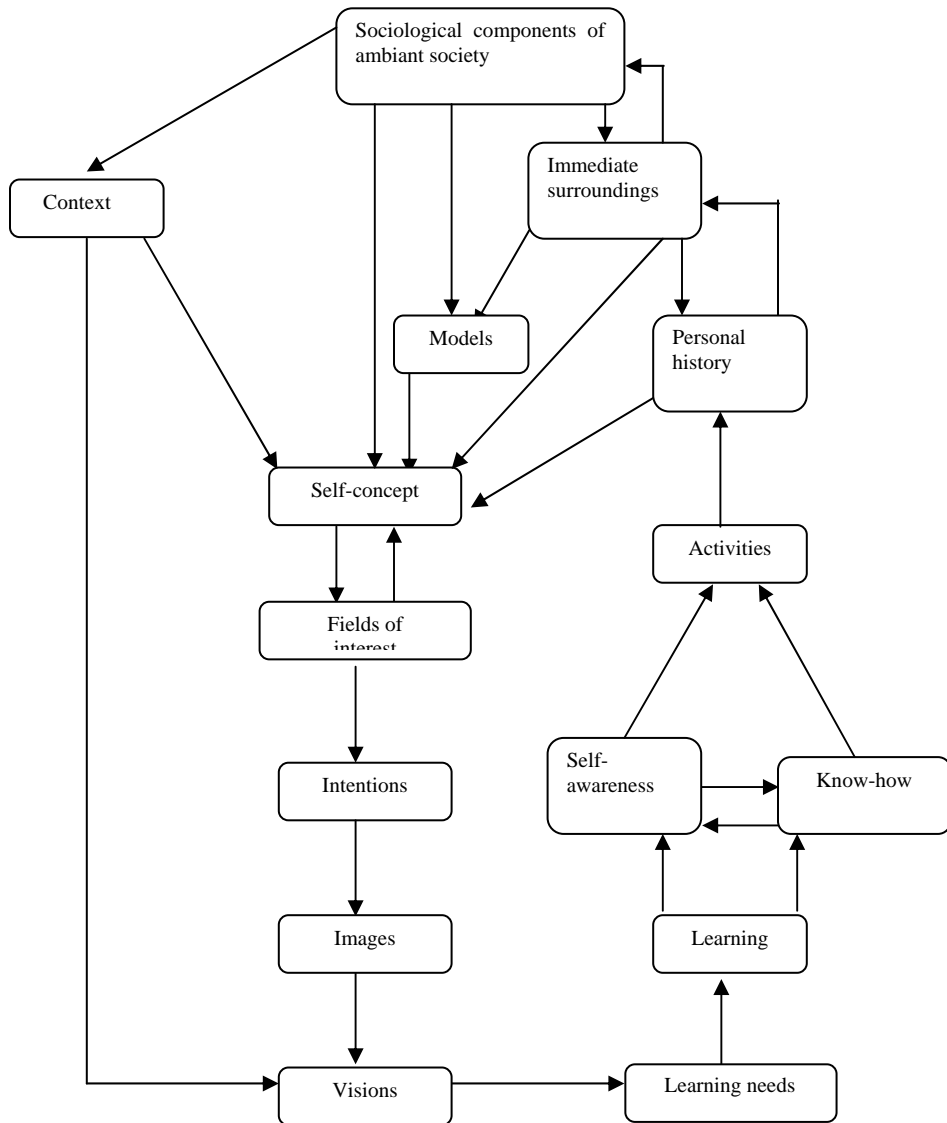


Figure 1. Self-concept and learning

A central, even capital element at the heart of the process is known as "self-concept" (Taylor, 1989). It refers to the way in which individuals perceive themselves, and their self-esteem (Maslow, 1970), and to the understanding individuals have of their own abilities that constitute the underlying foundation on which knowledge and the visionary process are based.

The self-concept is conditioned by certain other elements: the economic and social context in which the actor operates, the immediate surroundings and the models encountered by the actor, and the actor's personal history, including his or her education and life experience. All these elements are influenced by the sociological components of the social surroundings, which contain values, standards, working methods and ways of directing energy that influence self-awareness, behaviour and actions.

Certain societies, surroundings and families provide models that focus on certain activities, tending to produce self-concepts that also focus on those activities. Obviously, the nature of a given individual, and his or her characteristics, physical abilities and mental capacity will also condition the perception of what is possible or accessible.

The way in which the self-concept is organized seems to be strongly linked to the interests that guide the individual's intentions, engendering a selection process for the perception and retention of the images that initiate the visionary process. It is only when the individual's intentions have crystallized into visions, in other words genuine projects for the future, that learning needs can be defined. This is the trigger that spurs the future actor to learn. However, it is the self-concept that conditions the scope of the developing vision and of the learning process that the individual will be willing to undertake.

The skills and proficiencies developed will enable the individual to achieve the levels of self-awareness, know-how, managerial capacity and self-direction needed to perform the activities relating to the selected organizational role. Performance of the activities will, in turn, influence the individual process adopted by each individual actor, and consequently the overall social process as well. In short, it can be advanced that the self-concept constitutes a central concept from which the visionary process emerges, and onto which the learning process is grafted. Several elements provide support for the construction of a self-concept, including self-space, which is discussed in the next section.

Self-space and entrepreneurship

In every society, self-space develops under the influence of the society's history, social class structure, sociological characteristics, level of development and population density. The number of self-space alternatives will be directly proportional to the social, ethnic and religious diversity of the society itself, and to its educational levels.

Self-space can perhaps best be defined as the place where the self is found, the psychological space occupied by each individual; it corresponds to the space in which the self-concept develops and operates. The self-space is the spatial, systemic configuration surrounding the self-concept. Its boundaries determine the space available to the self-concept for development and deployment.

Very few researchers have focused on the concept of self-space (Filion, 1993; Latane and Liu, 1996; Hall, 1959; 1966; 1976). To understand the concept of self-space, it is necessary to refer to various concepts including freedom and the extension of freedom. Freedom requires the existence of an area where mutual respect will prevent the anarchy that leads to dictatorship and a

curtailment of freedom. Conventions, laws and rules are established, and must be complied with to guarantee the continued exercise of freedom.

For example, motorists are free to drive their cars where they like as long as they follow the rules and, for example, obey traffic signals. Traffic lights impose a restriction on the freedom to drive a car, but allow that freedom to be extended to a greater number of people. Custom and convention also have a role to play, for instance when it is stated that references to the masculine gender include the feminine. Many women would probably agree that this convention does not provide them with enough self-space to support the full development of the feminine self-concept with its specific attributes.

Self-space implies that a psychological distance both separates us from, and joins us to, other people. It reflects the space that usage and custom have established as being reserved for each individual; it results from the social compromises and the set of formal and informal conventions that govern relations between human beings in a given society. For instance, two grammatical forms, "vous" and "tu", are used in French as in many other languages to express the distance existing between individuals and, by extension, to define the self-space we keep for ourselves and the self-space we assign to others in a relationship. The boundary of our self-space corresponds to the outer edge of our aura.

The notion of psychological space is an element that has received very little attention in studies of management, but one that we have observed attentively in our empirical studies of organizational actors. Figure 2 provides an outline, in model form, of the process by which an individual psychological space, or self-space, is established.

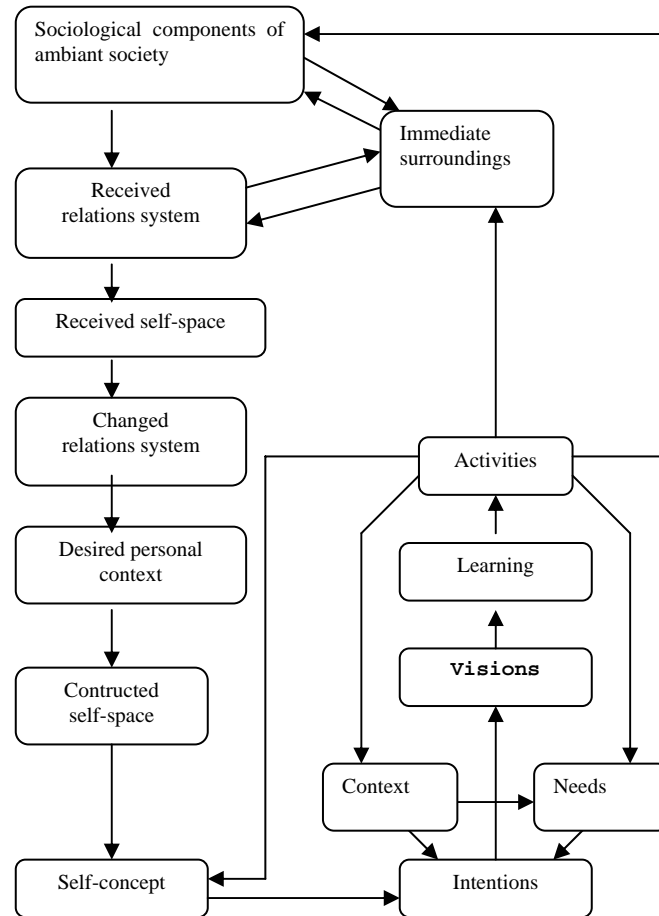


Figure 2. Self-space, self-concept, vision and learning.

It can be seen that each individual develops within a received self-space, based on the characteristics of the sociological components of the social surroundings. However, it is especially influenced by the relations system and by the immediate surroundings in which the person lives: culture, ethnic group, religion.

Next, the individual psychological space is gradually transformed to reflect the individual's personal desires. Many people leave behind their families, move to a new region, or even emigrate in order to establish a self-space that will allow them to develop on their own terms. This is extremely important in explaining how individuals go about conquering a space in which the self-concept can develop. For example, future leaders need a minimum space in which to grow, and if the space is not available in the immediate surroundings, they will seek it elsewhere.

In most societies, people from other cultures seem to be granted more space than individuals from within the society concerned. The eventual scope of the self-concept will be determined by the self-space constructed in this way; the individual's intentions, dependent on need and context, will condition possible visions and the learning required to take action. The activities performed will, in turn, influence the process by which the self-space and self-concept are constructed and their future development.

A reverse correlation seems to exist between the geographical space available and the self-space established in a given society. Many long-standing cultures, mostly in Asia and Europe, seem to provide for a better defined, broader self-space than in other cultures. The higher the population density, the greater the degree of respect shown for the psychological space of each individual which is, in fact, governed by a large number of standards and rules.

Self-space also seems to vary according to social class. Clear rules impose courtesy and respect for others, for the elderly, and for those in a certain social rank or position. Signs of deference, and even reverence, can be detected, and the degree of respect found in interpersonal relations is striking. This is clearly observable in organizations, if only on the basis of the physical attitudes between various individuals, and is especially true in the case of social superiors and the elderly. Table 3 shows some of the determinants for the extension of self-space within a given society.

Table 3
Determinants of self-space

- The possibilities for survival in a given environment
- The ways in which power is exercised
- The historical approach to freedom and individual rights within the society concerned
- The social maturity and educational level of the surroundings
- The social conventions governing respect between individuals
- The consensus established on the standards governing social and interpersonal relationships

Reflexions on the place of self-space

Every human activity seems to involve a certain number of prerequisite conditions. Learning is closely linked to self-concept, which is expressed within the psychological space of each individual, in other words the self-space that is first received and then constructed. This is also the place where intentions can be expressed, where the image individuals have of themselves, for both the present and the future, is reflected. All these elements nourish the underlying basis of the actor's system, expressed in the form of visions of varying degrees of ambitiousness. The way in

which the self-space is constructed will often be a key factor not only for the initial and on-going development of the self-concept, but also for self-fulfilment.

Spin-offs and preparation for entrepreneurial practice

One way of learning to manage self-space is to undertake a spin-off process. Such a process provides higher levels of guidance, thus facilitating self-space learning, and is also likely to be more gradual and more natural than a basic entrepreneurial process.

In the coming years, we are likely to witness the appearance of new forms of support for entrepreneurs, both inside and outside organizations. We will also see the development and introduction of renewed entrepreneurial cultures. At the same time, it is important to reduce risk at the venture start-up stage, by providing more guidance for business owners.

We need to reduce the individual and social costs of start-ups and subsequent failures. This can be done by providing more protective supervision at the start-up stage, for example by introducing spin-off programs or increasing the involvement of existing firms, research centres and educational institutions. My definition of spin-off is *the creation of a new enterprise with support from an organization that plays a supervisory and, if possible, a guidance role*. Supervision and guidance can take different forms, including tutoring.

Table 4 below shows some of the benefits of the spin-off process. It is based on Kadji-Youaleu, Filion, (2000).

Table 4
Some potential benefits of the spin-off process

Source organization	Recipient	Society
Gains in productivity and competitiveness from shared work	Access to skilled resources when preparing for venture start-up	Creation of new ventures, jobs and wealth at a lower cost for venture creation support bodies
Better organizational flexibility	Access to assets at lower cost	
Use of sleeping products, processes and other organizational assets	Access to a support market for start-up	Reduction in the number of failed start-ups, hence reduction in the individual and social costs of venture start-up
Staff rotation	Access to strategic information	
More power to negotiate with suppliers	Gains from method and technology transfers	Better protection for the environment
Resources concentrated on the enterprise's main activity	Financial gains: loans and payment arrangements	
Image enhancement	Logistical support	Access to a wider range of entrepreneurial models
Contribution to job creation	Access to training	
Contribution to the creation of an entrepreneurial culture both inside and outside the organization	Reduction of risk	Local and regional economic dynamism
Improved network and better sources of information on the environment	Partnership as supplier during critical years following start-up	More purchasing opportunities for consumers thanks to a more diversified supply
Broader long-term strategic support	Halo effects from the source organization's image	
Fairer distribution of tax burdens among a larger number of economic actors	Reduction of personal risk with the possibility of getting old job back in case of problems	Creation of stronger social links between economic development agents
	Advantage of belonging to an enterprise network	
	Reduction of stress related to venture creation and start-up	

The spin-off process should be seen as a better way of supporting the growth of entrepreneurship in a society, at a lower cost.

While I will not go into detail here about the various forms of spin-offs, or their advantages and disadvantages, it is important to understand that spin-offs offer a different way of managing entrepreneurial careers in the future. Through spin-offs, individuals will no longer have to find jobs in order to earn a living, but will simply evolve from one business to the next, first by receiving support from a spin-off program, and later by supporting others who want to spin-off their own businesses. The process provides gradual and well-articulated learning about the creation, development and management of self-space.

CONCLUSION

What I have tried to do in this conference is to present some thoughts on the trends that I believe will emerge in entrepreneurship in the next decade. I have looked at some of the features of our environment that explain the importance of self-employment and micro-enterprises in modern society, and have reviewed some entrepreneurial careers of the future. Lastly, I talked briefly about a concept that is likely to become a central element in entrepreneurial education and preparation in the coming years, namely self-space. I also mentioned the spin-off process as a good way of learning about it.

Together, these various elements should help us to understand and exercise the supporting roles we will all be called upon to play in order to develop entrepreneurship in our respective communities. One of the lessons to be drawn from what we have seen today is that we need to become more tolerant, more open and more attentive to the space required by other people. Entrepreneurs often have ideas and projects that do not fit easily into existing mental categories. We need to be able to recognize and support them, by adjusting our own mental models and continuing to learn.

In closing, I would like to congratulate the conference organizers for their work, and thank them for inviting me to talk to you today.

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