An Examination of Firm-Founders’ Careers & Entrepreneurial Decision-Making Under Uncertainty

When starting-up, entrepreneurs venture into the unknown as they take decisions on critically uncertain issues such as investment, market analysis, and partnership formation. Does their past – a mosaic juncture of accumulated career experiences – change the ways in which they reason and act? Can it also condition their futures, taking their newly-born ventures on a path towards success or failure? What are some of the mechanisms that may enable entrepreneurs to better deal with uncertainty as it arises on their journey? Given the immense potential of entrepreneurship to create value for individuals, organizations and society, these aspects of the entrepreneurial journey demand investigation and call for more research attention. Hence, the four studies that make up this dissertation examine how entrepreneurs use their careers when engaging in decision-making and action under uncertainty, thus shaping the performance of their ventures. Taken together, these studies make several contributions that speak to current discussions on careers, uncertainty, entrepreneurship, and the relationship between them. Indeed, the findings demonstrate that careers have an impact on venture performance and even more so on the entrepreneurial mechanisms that herald it. The results further reveal important mechanisms linking experience to decision-making and make some conceptual headway in better understanding how uncertainty shapes entrepreneurial action.

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Yuval Engel is currently working as Assistant Professor of Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the University of Amsterdam (UVA) and the Amsterdam Business School. He received his MSc in Business Administration (Cum-Laude) from the VU University Amsterdam, where he also completed his BSc in International Business Administration (Cum-Laude) and participated in the interdisciplinary VU Honors Program. His PhD research at the Amsterdam Business Research Institute (ABRI) was supported by a prestigious grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). Yuval’s main research interests are entrepreneurial decision-making under uncertainty, entrepreneurial networking, career management, and mindfulness meditation in the workplace. He also has experience teaching topics such as entrepreneurial action, leadership, and cross-cultural management at both undergraduate and graduate levels.