Inside Academic Startups: The 4th L3S Entrepreneurship Talk took a closer look towards academic entrepreneurs

In the first and scientific part of the Entrepreneurship Talk, Professor Rolf Sternberg and Dr Nora Hesse from the Institute of Economic and Cultural Geography showed the intentions, motivations, and types of academic entrepreneurs. As the leader of the German team of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), Professor Sternberg presented the results of the survey of students at the universities in Hannover and Göttingen concerning their entrepreneurial intentions. A promising fact: At the Leibniz Universität 80% of the engineering and science students think at least sketchily about starting their own business. One third of all students intend to be self-employed five years after graduation. The results show the importance of supporting entrepreneurship at university through sensitization and qualification.

In her research work “University spin-offs in Lower Saxony and their regional impact: empirical evidence from Hannover and Göttingen” Dr Nora Hesse interviewed 87 academic entrepreneurs regarding their careers, their entrepreneurial motivations, realization and development. She found out that for different reasons many academic startups remain small. Apart from ambitious spin-offs with high growth rates she identified unwilling or impeded spin-offs who stopped growing quite early. These are not necessarily choked spin-offs or survival artists but also “lifestyle spin-offs” or entrepreneurial academics who wants to remain flexible and close to scientific work.

Dr Hesse concludes that small innovative spin-offs are valuable for economic diversity in the region. There is also an intensive exchange of knowledge between small university spin-offs and the parent university.

In the second part of the Entrepreneurship Talk, Moritz Rahlfs from praemandum GmbH showed how a successful academic startup can be organized in a rather democratic way. Praemandum is a consulting firm for the protection and implementation of data privacy. It was founded in 2008 by Peter Leppelt, at that time postgraduate at the Leibniz Universität Hannover. The company has grown to 28 members of staff today. Like many IT startups praemandum tries new forms of work organization, but hardly any company is more democratically structured than Praemandum or as Moritz Rahlfs puts it: Freedom vs. Anarchy - Balancing Profit and the Pursuit of Happiness.

The next Entrepreneurship Talk will take place on Friday, 26 June 2015, 14:00, at L3S Multimedia Room, Appelstr. 9a, 15th floor.