COLLECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH (SUMMARY)

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COLLECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

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Principal Topic

Actors in institutional fields are often subject to differing assumptions, discrete logics, and pressures that may cause them to respond in a variety of ways (innovatively, locally, reflexively, etc.). Further, physical network dispersion and competing individual agendas compounds the situation. Nonetheless, these heterogeneous actors are sometimes able to collectively engage in institutional entrepreneurship. Hence, our main research question is: How do dispersed actors engage in collective institutional entrepreneurship?

Scholars suggest that a focus on the processes of institutional emergence and distributed agency would be of great value in institutional entrepreneurship research, as it would provide a more holistic account of institutional action (Lawrence et al., 2011). The paper takes a holistic approach by considering the unique conditions (institutions and actors) and collaborative relationships in the insurance and ambulance industries that resulted in the emergence of a new proto institution.

Method

A qualitative case based methodology was used to understand how embedded agents engaged in entrepreneurial collaboration and change. The chosen setting was an Ambulance Captive, the first successful ambulance group captive insurance company. A naturalistic grounded inquiry was used to examine the relationship between observed events and theory, with the intention of extending existing knowledge (Locke, 2001). Following prior guidelines (i.e. Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001), four primary stages were used to collect and analyze data; a narrative account (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988) that chronicled the events, identification of key actors, analysis of the new proto institutional form, identifying themes in the data, comparison with theory, reduction to categories (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and systematically examining new categories (Yin, 2009). Data collection included both primary and secondary sources from interviews, industry newsletters, brochures, mission statements, press releases, presentations, handouts, website information and industry annual reports.

Results and Implications

We use grounded theory and qualitative methodology to enhance our understanding of collective institutional entrepreneurship. Notwithstanding the dispersed structure of their network position, actors consciously responded to a hostile insurance industry environment. Results indicate that information asymmetries, persistence, network positions and altruistic motivations are important factors that explain the emergence of proto institutions via distributed agency and collaboration.

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