COLLECTIVE PRO-SOCIAL VENTURING: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS (SUMMARY)

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COLLECTIVE PRO-SOCIAL VENTURING: THE ROLE OF EMOTIONS

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Principal Topic

The emergence of pro-social ventures—such as social, community and sustainable businesses—is substantially motivated by the compassion of the founders and involved organizational members to support the well-being of others. Thus, a critical challenge for pro-social ventures is to incorporate joining members’ pro-social motivation—a common, temporal psychological state promoting the welfare of others (Grant, 2007)—to energize and maintain members’ commitment to collectively engage in achieving the venture’s multiple objectives, such as environmental stewardship, social responsibility and wealth creation. Within this context, our study builds on positive psychology and the theory of emotions in social movements to approach and question how do entrepreneurs manage member’s attachment to and engagement in pro-social business venturing?

Method

We chose an inductive, multiple-case analysis to focus on the pro-social entrepreneurs’ management of organisational tensions as the main unit of analysis. Empirically we examine four community enterprises, an ideal-typical form of collective pro-social ventures: Kartoffelkombinat in Germany, The People’s Supermarket in England, Retenergy in Italy and Som Energia in Spain. We collected data from 36 interviews, 46 days of participant observation and a variety of secondary sources. Our analysis follows inductive, theory-building research, by recursively going back and forth between the data and emerging theoretical accounts.

Results and Implication

First, at the individual level, we explain how pro-social motivations unfold and merge in a collective venturing context. As an antecedent for engagement, pro-social motivation is strengthened/weakened depending on the individual’s continuous emotional appraisal of the non-economic gains created through his/her venture engagement. Second, at the collective level, we identify how entrepreneurs’ management of critical internal tensions influences the emotional attachment and affective loyalty between members and the venture. In developing a pro-social venture, resolving internal tensions can generate a continuous emotional attachment of members to the venture, which enables pro-social entrepreneurs to work towards making a wider pro-social difference. In turn, a positive appraisal of wider outreach activities energizes and creates affective loyalty, a deeper emotional bond of members with the venture’s generation of attractive non-economic gains in the long-term.

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