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SUMMARY

EFFECTUATION AND INSTITUTIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: EVIDENCE FROM RUSSIA

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Principal Topic

How do institutional entrepreneurs (IEs) change institutions? To answer that question, most literature has focused on the IE as an object responding to a wide variety of antecedent conditions. Recent work has suggested that IEs are also subjects with agency. What is missing from the literature, however, is a more complete understanding of the mechanisms IEs employ to initiate and implement institutional change. Actors’ social positions are a significant influence on the institutional entrepreneurship process (Battilana, Leca, and Boxenbaum, 2009) and represent a means of integrating the institutional entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship literatures. Entrepreneurship theory can contribute to understanding the institutional entrepreneurship process by incorporating mechanisms of entrepreneurial action (Venkataraman, Sarasvathy, Dew, and Forster, 2012) such as effectuation (Sarasvathy, 2001,2008) into the study of institutional entrepreneurship (Pacheco, York, Dean,, and Sarasvathy, 2010). In this study, we ask: how do IEs employ one mechanism of entrepreneurial action: effectuation?

Method

We employed an alternate templates research strategy to evaluate the relative presence of effectuation and its contrasting mechanism, causation, in institutional entrepreneurship. Our data was drawn from eight cases of institutional entrepreneurship (four effective and four ineffective) in one understudied and extreme context: post-communist Russia. Such contexts are a useful laboratory in which to explore the relationship between entrepreneurship and institutional change (Smallbone and Welter, 2012). These cases were selected from a population of 65 IEs in this context to include equal numbers of cases from core and peripheral social positions. Data was collected from 1997 to 1999 and 2012 to 2016 from archival and participant observation sources, then analyzed following exemplary qualitative methods, e.g. Plowman, Baker, Beck, Kulkarni, Solansky, and Travis, 2007; Fisher, 2012.

Results and Implications

We found strong support for the following propositions. First, high levels of effectuation are closely associated with IEs who are effective peripheral actors, while low levels are associated with effective core IEs. Second, peripheral IEs are more likely to employ effectuation than those originating from a core social position. Third, IEs who employ both effectuation and causation are more likely to be ineffective. Fourth, pre-commitment is the most likely mechanism to be utilized by IEs. One implication is that IEs’ initial social positions influence the mechanisms of entrepreneurial action they utilize.

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