COLLECTIVE EFFERVESCENCES: HOW SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EMERGED AND EVOLVED IN A MINORITY COMMUNITY (INTERACTIVE PAPER)

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INTERACTIVE PAPER

COLLECTIVE EFFERVESCENCES: HOW SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP EMERGED AND EVOLVED IN A MINORITY COMMUNITY

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Principal Topic

Gerschenkron’s institutional factors and Schumpeter’s key Caruso are pre-requisites to Durkheim’s collective effervescence in a community. In a community of high anomie, or of great disadvantage and peripherality, it may take more than one generation for new movements and new institutions to emerge; for new enterprises to emerge and evolve; for the community itself to become more entrepreneurial. Research on the emergence of entrepreneurship in a particular community can benefit from a long-term view over a number of generations, to trace back to particular key events and contributing factors. This paper traces the origins of entrepreneurship in general, and social entrepreneurship in particular, in a peripheral rural minority community back to its emergence in the 1960s / 1970s. The paper traces the community’s history, back to the late 19th century, to explain why organization-forming (rather than multi-income source self-employment) entrepreneurship was so late in emerging.

Method

All forms of entrepreneurship in one key region in which the minority community lives were extensively researched based on historical documents, national archives, published quantitative data on new organization start-ups, and interviews with entrepreneurs, community leaders and policy makers, covering a period of more than one century. This exploratory research revealed how social entrepreneurship in the form of co-operatives and community groups preceded private for-profit individual entrepreneur-led new firm foundation. Similar qualitative data on three other regions have been collated, illustrating a number of regional similarities and differences.

Results and Implications

Entrepreneurship requires a supportive environment; Schumpeter’s key ‘Carusos’ cannot achieve without the support of the orchestra; the choir; the music hall or the audience. This paper takes a broader view of entrepreneurship compared to the more commonly used, more immediate, managerially-focused view, in order to challenge conventional wisdom, such as the common perception that the state ‘interferes’ with successful entrepreneurship through its policies and regulations. In a peripheral disadvantaged area the scale of the development challenge is so enormous that state intervention is required. Yet, while infrastructural and institutional supports such as roads, advance factories and education and training may be required, psychological factors may also need particular attention. Given the historical distrust of entrepreneurs, public and social entrepreneurship preceded the legitimacy of private entrepreneurship, and developed the skills, networks and assets required to engage in private organization-building entrepreneurship. This was essentially a state-led and state-supported strategic preparation for private entrepreneurship, and development of the community itself. This finding has implications for academics, policy makers and private entrepreneurs.

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