Towards a Theory of Social Entrepreneurial Opportunity Change: Disaster Recovery as Context

A Research Proposal by:

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Research Abstract:

How do social entrepreneurial opportunities (SEOs) change over time? Extant studies have explored the phenomenon of opportunity recognition as a way to explain how individuals identify opportunities that generate social impact and earn income at the same time. Latent in the findings of these researches is the phenomenon of opportunity change, that is, the refinement and revision of opportunities over time. Our knowledge of this process of change, however, is pre-theoretical, at best marginal in the literature. Yet, it is central to the experience of start-ups or early-stage social enterprises, as they try to manage the difficult balance between their two missions of social value creation and income generation. Some opportunities may entail greater social impact but might compromise sustainability, while others may generate more income but might be detrimental to welfare impact. How these forks in the road are resolved drives the change; yet we know little about how this actually happens. As such, I argue for a shift in theory-building research from SEO recognition to opportunity refinement and revision. Furthermore, I embed this study in the context of post-disaster recovery where social enterprises are increasingly relevant. Methodologically, I propose a longitudinal observation of 8 cases of social enterprises working in Haiyan-devastated communities in Leyte, Philippines.