Social Enterprise Research Colloquium Australasia 2016

Theme: What organisational and environmental factors enable social enterprises to scale their social impacts?

Examining organizational features of long-term survival social enterprises: Findings from Vietnam

Anh Truong, Jo Barraket.

Abstract

What organizational factors enable social enterprises (SEs) to maintain their nature and to grow? This paper presents findings from research examining SEs in Vietnam - a developing country where the SE phenomenon has emerged recently (Smith & Darko 2014). This is a response to the pressing call for further research on the role of organizational factors in different contexts of social enterprise (SE) in preventing the risk of mission drift, while being sustainable (Battilana & Dorado 2010).

Employing a multiple-case study design, we examine four prominent and well-established SEs in Vietnam. Among these SEs, the youngest was founded in 2007, and the oldest was established in 1995. They operate in different fields, although each has a focus on children or young people in their mission.

The research is based on 27 semi-structured interviews with founders, managers, employees including both volunteers and paid staff, other stakeholders; observational notes; and archival documents relating to each case. Data were analysed using thematic analysis due to its advantages of theoretical freedom and flexibility (Braun & Clarke 2006) to examine shared organizational characteristics among those SEs. The findings reveal that, self-motivated social entrepreneurs, mission loyalty, continuous learning environment, product/service quality orientation, and democratic and family environment are the important organizational factors that contribute to the sustainability of prominent SEs in Vietnam.

The paper may benefit the social enterprise community in Vietnam as well as other developing countries, which still struggle to build strong internal environments. It also responds to the lack of empirical research on SE in general (Zahra, Newey & Li 2014), and in diverse world contexts in particular (Granados et al. 2011).

References


Social Enterprise Research Colloquium Australasia 2016

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The Organizational Economics of Social Enterprises

Word count: 495

Paper’s aim

This paper constitutes an attempt at cross-fertilization between organizational economics and management scholarship, in a bid to lay a basis for the organizational economics of social entrepreneurship. A solution-focused strategy of knowledge production is adopted, addressing the gaps of both disciplinary perspectives in their account of patrons such as stakeholders and disadvantaged customers. The aim is to produce a theoretical synthesis with a distinctive organizational economics imprint. The preliminary outcome is that the more proprietary-centered the creation of value, the lower the governance costs of economizing on bounded rationality to protect patrons from the hazard of opportunism. Since not all productive activities can be organized within the range of the lowest governance costs, a discrete structural analysis will be developed, with different ranges of governance costs suitable for different purposes depending on the kinds of value creation intended and the class of patrons to be protected. Thus, accepting higher governance costs is justified by preventing the exploitation of informational advantage at the expense of selected classes of patrons, subject to what is feasible (i.e. O. Williamson’s remediableness standard).

Expected findings and contributions
Organizational economics developed a discrete structural analysis which avoids supporting a one-size-fits-all solution to organizing efficiently. Just as each governance mechanism (hierarchies, markets and hybrids) is suitable for different purposes depending on the degree of asset specificity involved, this research agenda proposes a novel framework to analyze social-purpose hierarchies (e.g. benefit corporations, low-profit limited liability companies, social enterprises, social businesses and commercial nonprofits) suitable for different objective functions depending on the kind of value creation intended and the class of patrons to be protected. Higher governance costs are justified in social-purpose hierarchies because of the chance of exploiting informational advantage at the expense of vulnerable patrons. The blend is brought about neither by the combination of hierarchy and market nor different institutional logics only, but by the combination of selected classes of patrons and the governance costs incurred to tackle the hazard of opportunism.

In a kernel, it is expected that this research’s findings show that the lower governance costs which come with proprietary enterprises are due to better enfranchisement and alignment of interest among shareholders, and this is evident in the case of a sole proprietor. When attention shifts toward stakeholder enterprises epitomized by benefit corporations, aligning the interests of a wide array of stakeholders is more costly. Some stakeholders (such as customers and communities) would be best served if they accepted the higher cost of increasing quality and internalizing negative externalities, which can be achieved at the expense of resources that serve the interest of internal stakeholders: employees and proprietors. Building consensus among all these different patrons also consumes resources. Should the nominal control of the firm be only granted to disadvantaged customers interested in higher quality and affordability, costs come with the disenfranchisement of this class of patrons (who are poor and concerned with making ends meet) and hence difficulties in enforcing effective control over the firm arise.
Social Enterprises in Regional Innovation – A View from Rural Tasmania
A/Prof Robyn Eversole, Institute for Regional Development, University of Tasmania

While policymakers seek in vain to harness the drivers of national innovation, the literature on regional innovation systems (RIS) argues that they may in fact be looking for innovation in the wrong places. This literature proposes that innovation is ultimately driven not at the national level, but at the subnational or regional level (European Commission 2006, Cooke 2001). At regional scale, localised interactions among people and organisations in on-the-ground social and institutional contexts create the knowledge spillovers that spark innovation (Storper 1995, Harmaakorpi & Pekkarinen, 2003a; Harmaakori et al., 2011).

The literature on RIS suggests three propositions that are directly relevant to understanding the innovation role of social enterprises. First, it proposes that innovation – universally hailed as a key driver of economic growth, as well as a potential way forward for social challenges – is ultimately a social process (Cooke et al. 2000). Next, it proposes that innovation can be intentionally catalysed by social actors, by intentionally working together across boundaries to share knowledge and ‘construct’ sources of regional advantage (Harmaakorpi & Pekkarinen, 2003b, Eversole and McCall 2014). Finally, it proposes that these social processes work best where there are opportunities for regular interactions among social actors – that is, interactions ‘in place’ (Storper 1995 and others).

Work conducted with rural social enterprises in Tasmania suggests that social enterprises can be understood through a RIS lens as a manifestation of place-based innovation processes. First, this work suggests that Tasmanian social enterprises are a response by particular social actors to meeting unmet needs in new ways (Eversole, Barraket and Luke 2013, Eversole 2013, Duniam and Eversole in press). Social enterprises thus arise from processes of social problem solving. Further, work in Tasmania suggests that they solve problems by taking an explicitly cross-sectoral, cross-boundary approach: intentionally leveraging multiple resources from multiple sectors to generate development outcomes (ibid). Finally, studies to date highlight that rural enterprises in Tasmania have a strong place-based focus, with a clear focus on leveraging local resources and meeting local needs (ibid.).

It is encouraging to observe these processes of place-based, cross-boundary social problem solving at work. At the same time, it is instructive to consider cases where social enterprises have not emerged in response to needs and gaps. This paper presents two cases of recent projects that documented a failure of innovative social solutions to emerge organically at the local or regional level in rural Tasmania, despite clear evidence of both need and existing resources. One case involved cross-sectoral workforce development initiatives on the West Coast of Tasmania; the other, local government council responses to housing issues for older Tasmanians.

The failure of local social actors to generate enterprising solutions to social problems in these cases is theorised with reference to the concept of connectivity deficits in RIS (European Commission 2006, Eversole and McCall 2014). In each of the two cases, the ingredients (resources) for innovative solutions were present, but not mobilised. In each case, the key limiting factor was identified as a lack of knowledge spillovers across sectors and localities: expertise and other resources were present, but not visible to key local actors. Following Eversole and McCall (2014), this suggests that it may be necessary to actively facilitate knowledge spillovers, particularly in isolated rural settings, in order to catalyse the emergence of enterprising local solutions.
References


Legal Professionals as Intermediaries Supporting Sustainable and Resilient Social Enterprise Initiatives

Bronwen Morgan, Joanne McNeill and Isobel Blomfield

This paper explores the question: what role does legal professional advice play in enabling or constraining the creation of small-scale sustainable economy initiatives? It draws on a mix of data sources: primary research conducted by Bronwen Morgan and Declan Kuch from 2013-2015 into community-based sustainability initiatives and grass-roots innovations responding to climate change challenges, across a continuum from social activism to social enterprise; the Australian component of the International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) project; the Social Enterprise Legal Models Working Group (LMWG) report; a review of eight existing cognate sources of legal professional advice supporting SSEIs; a review of law firm websites; and targeted discussions with nine social-enterprise-related capacity-building programs around Australia.

The first of the above data sources focused in broad measure on the legal and regulatory frameworks that helped or hindered these innovative small-scale sustainable economy initiatives (SSEIs). SSEIs were viewed as socially innovative insofar as they reconfigured economies and established alternatives to unsustainable practices. Their capacity to make a positive contribution to the overall social fabric and to the building of resilient communities depends in important ways on how they negotiate shifts from vision to early experimentation and then to stable operation.

These shifts are shaped in important ways by law and regulation. One of the key indirect findings of the first data source was that features of legal professional advice mattered as much, if not perhaps even more than, the content and design of legal and regulatory frameworks. This finding highlights the way in which effective innovation supporting SSEIs is constrained by the current structural relationship between commercial law and legal professional services. Conceptually, this means that enabling rather than constraining innovation in this sphere requires us to move away from an inherently regulatory response that effectively bolts social (and environmental) goals onto the edifice of commercial exchange as a protective afterthought. A more productive approach is to rework the tacit legal underpinnings of commercial activities. Creative use of commercial and transactional legal strategies has the potential to weave social and ecological values ‘from the inside out’ into the heart of exchange.

This conceptual finding has three major practical implications for developing an effective eco-system of professional legal support for SSEIs, which this paper develops by drawing on the other data sources listed above. First, it is important to cultivate innovative hybrid legal entity models that transcend not-for-profit/profit dichotomies. Secondly, significant gaps in legal professional services exist related to i) issues of culture and values, ii) specific technical skills sets, and iii) the cost and accessibility of commercial advice for small-scale organisations. Thirdly, even if these gaps are filled, the systematic inclusion of non-legal personnel, strategies and organisations that help to soften bright lines between ‘legal’ and ‘non-legal’ dimensions of the broader ecosystem will nourish the exciting possibilities presented by SSEIs.

The literature focusing specifically on legal services and social enterprise is extremely thin but we aim to contribute to and bolster the following:


Reflexivity in social enterprise through Polanyian applications.

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Amid increased interest in social enterprise, entrepreneurship and innovation in Australasia we are now seeing new and emerging forms of organisation, and increasingly public policy that may (or may not) facilitate further development of both social enterprise concepts and practice. The call for papers for this Colloquium encourages us to consider the role of social innovation within broader innovation agendas, and the implications for establishing supportive social enterprise ecosystems.

Our response to this call is to encourage greater reflexivity of the way(s) in which social enterprise is conceptualised, encouraging scholars, practitioners and policy makers to exercise reflexivity in their research, practice and policy. Reflexivity encompasses critical, hermeneutic and post modern orientations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000), so that we might be more aware of influences such as power and politics. With public policy in Australia and New Zealand firmly entrenched in the ideology of neoliberalism (see for example Boston, Martin, Pallot, & Walsh, 1991; Kelsey, 1997, 2002), the risk of uncritically accepting market based approaches to SE is very real. To do so may constrain the emancipatory potential of social enterprise and innovations. To facilitate such critical consideration, we present conceptual tools based on the work of Karl Polanyi (1944, 1957, 1992) to extend the contributions of SE scholars such as Humphries and Grant (2005), Curtis (2008), Seenan and Meaton (2007), Parkinson and Howorth (2008), Dey and Steyaert (2010, 2012), Mason (2012), Dey and Teasdale (2013, 2015) and Teasdale (2012).

We begin this conceptual paper by introducing the three dominant schools of thought recognised by scholars as shaping SE scholarship; the ‘earned income’ and ‘social innovation’ schools (Dees, 2012; Dees & Anderson, 2003) which both project a strong Anglo-American influence and the EMES conceptualisation which is based on European communitarian traditions (Defourny & Nyssens, 2006, 2010). We then present three of Polanyi’s (1944, 1957) key concepts – the ‘substantive economy’, the ‘double movement’ thesis and the notion of ‘embeddedness’ and consider how critical consideration of these SE frameworks informed by each Polanyian concept might help us better understand the influences at play in SE. In this instance our applications highlight the normative potential for both the earned income and social innovation schools of thought to promote and further entrench the neoliberal mindset, whilst these same applications within an EMES framework might help challenge dominant market assumptions. Overall however, applications such as those demonstrated here provide another tool in a critical tool box, further enabling scholars and practitioners to be reflexive; alert to and conscious of political and/or normative forces which shape our understanding of SE and associated concepts - including the frameworks themselves!
References


Insights on building social entrepreneurial ecosystems

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Abstract

Background

Entrepreneurial ecosystems have become a buzz phrase. They are frequently referred to in policy and practitioner circles, however, as a theoretical concept have not been explored in any depth though this appears to be now changing. Most recently, Spigel (2015) sets out the attributes of a regional ecosystem to highlight their complex interconnected and complex relationships and demonstrates the different configurations possible with case studies of two successful ecosystems in Canada.

Reference to the ecosystem increasingly features in the social enterprise and entrepreneurship discourse too. Despite this popular usage of ecosystem terminology there is no clarity on what it all means. The purpose of this paper is to add conceptual clarity by identifying the key elements of a social entrepreneurial ecosystem (SEE). Bloom and Dees (2008: 49) urge social entrepreneurs to ‘create a map of their ecosystem that identifies all of the players and environmental conditions along with the relationships between them’. Their ecosystem notion mainly pertains to the organizational level. In this paper we take a more macro level stance to examine SEEs. We examine different paths and patterns in the development SEEs at the national level. We focus on the efforts in New Zealand to design the ecosystem to grow and support its budding social enterprise sector. We compare and contrast the evolving New Zealand experience and emerging SEE with other national SEEs.

Our first research question is: What are the key elements of SEEs? To frame our answer to this question we engage with place- and resource-based perspectives. Under resources we also include symbolic capital which we show is important to growing the legitimacy of the social enterprise sector. As a corollary we will also answer: what are the interdependencies and the means of coordination in SEEs?

Our second research question is: What are the trajectories in the emergence and development of SEEs? In answering this question we discuss a SEE typology in relation to contrived versus organic development paths.

We conclude with policy implications and future research recommendations.

Method

Our paper is mainly conceptual. It is informed by the extant literature on business entrepreneurial ecosystems and innovation systems. We draw on our ‘feel’ for the SEE process and especially the second author’s reflective practitioner and observation stance (Schön 1983). We engage with formative and knowledge generation evaluation
of New Zealand’s SEE (Patton 1996, 2011). Participation in conversations with key informants also enriches our discussion.

References
Abstract
Social enterprises are key actors in the already existing circular economy yet new governance initiatives such as the co-regulated product stewardship for computers and televisions in Australia assume commercial businesses as the source of innovation, and focus on technologies for end-of-life destructive materials recycling as the main strategy for promoting a circular economy. However there are many other circuits taken by products and materials in the existing circular economy, and social enterprises are involved in many of these. This paper draws on the example of used electronics to advance two key arguments: 1) that diversity is critical if non-technical innovations are to flourish, and 2) that more attention is needed to the issue of labour and livelihoods in the circular economy.
Experimentation from the Eye of the Beholder: Evolutionary Processes within Social Enterprise Ecosystems

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Just like beauty, what is considered innovative, experimental, or novel lies in the eye of the beholder. Yet for social enterprises, there is no single pair of eyes (such as those of consumers) evaluating the innovativeness of what they achieve. Instead, social enterprises operate in multiple contexts, with multiple goals, seeking to achieve outcomes of value to multiple stakeholders. To understand how social enterprises innovate within their ecosystems, the current paper adopts a theoretical perspective based on organizational ecology and, more specifically, Lamarckian evolution to study the processes of variation, selection, and retention (VSR) (Campbell, Baum, and McKelvey, 1999). My central arguments are that experimentation – which is sometimes equated with variation alone – is central to all three VSR processes for social enterprises and that these processes should be considered from the ecosystem level, instead of the organization level. The paper also discusses the practical implications for managing innovation and change in social enterprises.

The central arguments derive from the unique circumstances of social enterprises. Their collage-like qualities, with market-based revenues funding the pursuit of social missions (Austin, Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern, 2006), lead to social enterprises straddling more than one ecological niche. In addition, the environments associated with social enterprises’ multiple niches often vary dramatically, from cut-throat competitive marketplaces to more cooperative social sectors. Finally, embeddedness in communities breaks down boundaries between social enterprises and other organizations, institutions, and actors, making the frontiers between organizations and their environments permeable and indistinct.

These characteristics influence the nature of VSR processes in social enterprises. Variations are introduced as a result of pressures to experiment within, and adapt to, multiple ecological environments. Variations will originate from both inside and outside of social enterprises. Ecological selection must be done with an eye toward the achievement of multiple objectives across multiple stakeholders, and experimentation is a systematic means of assessment (J-Pal Europe, 2011). Finally, retention processes require the sharing of successful variations across multiple ecological environments and across diverse types of actors, often requiring experimentation to develop new types of boundary-spanning processes that diffuse innovations broadly.

To ground these arguments, this paper briefly reviews extant applied research on experimentation within social enterprises, which highlights the reluctance of the social sector
to embrace experimentation as necessary for its survival and vitality. While encouraged by advances in applying techniques such as lean (or quick) innovation to the social sector (Murray and Ma, 2015), I argue for further adaptation of these techniques to the unique circumstances of social enterprises, with specific suggestions offered. In addition, experimentation is likely to take multiple and diverse forms in social enterprises, including techniques for rapid experimentation, systematic experimental assessment to observe longer-term outcomes, and experimentation around processes that aid in the diffusion and consumption of new ideas. Throughout the paper, examples of innovations such as the One-for-One business model and recent variations on this model (Knowledge@Wharton, 2015) are offered as illustrations.

References


Manager-Employee Dynamics in Social Enterprises: 
The Influence of Leadership on Work Outcomes

Presentation based on a study by Cristina Neesham (Swinburne), Alex Newman (Deakin) and Graham Manville (East Anglia)

Abstract

Over the last decade, social entrepreneurship has emerged as an important cultural and economic phenomenon (Dacin et al, 2010; Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011). Despite the growth of the social enterprise sector in both developed and emerging economies, there is increasing recognition that much more needs to be done to support its development. In particular, leadership has been cited as a critical factor which determines the success of social enterprises more specifically (Prabhu, 1999), and entrepreneurial ventures more generally (Kuratko, 2007). However, there is a lack of research on what constitutes effective leadership in social enterprises, given their unique mix of social and commercial objectives.

Using data from 163 employees in 42 social enterprises across three countries, the present study makes examines the relative influence of two distinctive but complementary styles of leadership on employees’ innovative behaviour and organizational commitment. More specifically, it focuses on entrepreneurial leadership, i.e. a leadership style which influences and directs followers towards the achievement of organizational goals that involve identifying and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities (Renko et al, 2015), and servant leadership, i.e. a leadership style which focuses on the development of followers and stresses to them the importance of serving others (Greenleaf, 2002). We have selected these two leadership styles given the dual mission of social enterprises to serve the community and, at the same time, develop innovative products and services that will allow them to be economically self-sustainable.

Our findings indicate that, although both styles of leadership were positively related to employees’ organizational commitment, servant leadership was more so than entrepreneurial leadership. In contrast, whilst we found evidence that entrepreneurial leadership was positively related to employees’ innovative behaviour, the relationship between servant leadership and employees’ innovative behaviour was insignificant. The data suggests that desire to serve a social purpose is a better predictor of a social enterprise employee’s commitment to their organisation, and innovative behaviour can be predicted to a significant extent in employees exhibiting entrepreneurial leadership but not in employees engaging in servant leadership. These findings are consistent with both social exchange and social learning theories, and provide us with a detailed understanding as to which styles of leadership are effective in promoting employees’ work attitudes and behaviours, be they related to an entrepreneurial orientation or a service orientation, in the social enterprise sector.
By examining these issues, our research makes two theoretical contributions. First, it provides an insight into the relative effectiveness of different leadership styles in promoting follower work attitudes and behaviours in social enterprises. Secondly, it demonstrates the importance of leadership over and above followers’ pro-social motivation or creative self-efficacy (Grant et al., 2008; Tierney & Farmer, 2002).

The practical implications of the present findings are also being considered in this study. By better understanding which styles of leadership are more effective in promoting followers’ work attitudes and behaviours in social enterprises, social entrepreneurs will be better able to both retain committed employees and enhance their engagement in innovative behaviour in the workplace. In turn, commitment and innovative behaviour outcomes are likely to improve the sustainability of social enterprises.

**Keywords:** social entreprise, entrepreneurial leadership, servant leadership, innovative behaviour, organizational commitment

**References**


Untangling policy discourse: a discursive institutional analysis of social enterprise policy in England and Australia

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Abstract

This paper applies Discursive Institutional (DI) theory to the case of social enterprise policy-making in England and Australia. Our study is premised on the fact that DI is an under-used theoretical and analytical framework, compared with other institutional theories. Using a comparative case study approach, we explain the discursive trajectories of two social enterprise policy-making discourses. Successive English governments have dedicated significant resources to social enterprise – when measured by public investment, enabling policy and legislation as well as by its place in the social policy narrative of influential policy-makers (Nicholls, 2010; Teasdale, 2012). By contrast, Australian governments, particularly at the Federal level, were late to engage with social enterprise, with substantive interventions occurring from around 2008, several years after England.

These differential levels of interest between England and Australia with respect to social enterprise policy are perceived to set these countries uncommonly apart with respect to public policy (Lyons and Passey, 2006). Both countries have followed a broadly similar trajectory with respect to engagement with welfare reform as ‘liberal regimes’ (Epsing-Anderson, 1990), chiefly influenced by a paradigm shift from Keynesianism to neo-liberalism. The ‘third sector’ – non-profit, voluntary sector and community organisations and in official definitions of English policy-makers, social enterprise (OTS, 2006, 10) – has played a large part in these reform processes.

Given this perceived divergence we begin by asking: has the differential level of investment manifested in distinctive social enterprise policy discourses? Furthermore, how does social enterprise, when analysed as a policy idea, travel between different institutional contexts? Do governments interpret policy ideas through processes of policy learning that leads to divergent or convergent policy discourses?
In an attempt to understand why the respective governments have attempted social enterprise development in distinctive ways we begin by reviewing the four major strands of new institutional theory as they relate to social enterprise: rational choice, historical, sociological, and discursive (Schmidt, 2008). To further unpack this we frame our two case studies with an overview of DI, followed by a detailed account of the two case studies, England and Australia, according to engagement with Schmidt’s (2008) three-level analytical framework – philosophies, programmes and policies. We interpret and compare key government publications, to explore the presence and effect of cognitive and normative discourses, and how foreground discursive and background ideational abilities are enacted by policy actors. Exploring the presence and contestation of ideas in policy discourses helps to unravel the role of policy actors in shaping discourses.

We propose two ideational terms to classify the discrepancies in policy transfer, polythetic and monothetic. Furthermore, we show how coordinative and communicative discourses have been enacted at different levels to shape social enterprise discourses. Thus we contribute to developing DI as an important institutional analytical approach, through a novel analysis of policy transfer in an important context, social enterprise policy-making. We conclude that actors’ foreground discursive and background ideational abilities require more nuanced analysis to further advance knowledge on policy transfer.
Multiple Microfinance Institution Memberships and Corporate Social Responsibility Outreach Activities

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ABSTRACT
For many, corporate social responsibility in the context of microfinance means acting ethically and sustainability and in the best interests of clients within financial intermediation activities. This study goes beyond this type of social obligation to examine other financial benefits (e.g. death benefits) provided by a microfinance association besides microcredit. Access to these financial benefits is likely to be of great benefit to the vulnerable poor and the temptation to be eligible for access, especially in the context of multiple borrowings from other financial institutions is likely to be strong. This study examines whether members of a microfinance institution who are concurrently members of at least one other such institution disproportionately access financial benefits offered by the microfinance institution besides access to microcredit. Consistent with Schick (2013) who finds that multiple microfinance institution membership is not a material problem in relation to client overindebtedness, this study finds a significant association between take-up of incremental financial benefits and membership of only the institution offering these benefits. This finding attests to both the internal governance practices of the microfinance institution concerned plus the non-opportunistic nature of the microfinance clients.
The paper will present material developed through a doctorate study that is exploring relationships between public sector policymaking, social innovation and social procurement. The paper will not attempt to summarise the complete thesis, nor to delve into the case studies included in the study, but will rather focus on presenting the overarching conceptual framework for the project.

Social procurement: A new public governance approach to enabling social innovation

Abstract

Policy interest in social innovation continues to accelerate at a rapid rate globally (Moulaert, MacCallum, Mehmood & Hamdouch 2013; Murray, Caulier-Grice & Mulgan 2010; Mulgan 2012; Puttick et al. n.d.; Tiesinga & Berkhout 2014), and in this context there is urgency growing around the need for finer grained understandings of its dimensions, opportunities and limitations (Howaldt et al. 2014). In particular, locating its most useful place in policymaking frameworks is critical if it is not to become dominated by a ‘grand narrative’ that presents its processes and practices monologically (Dey & Steyaert 2010) and dilutes its potential through representation as a panacea for a wide range of complex social issues (Moulaert, MacCallum & Hillier 2013; Klein 2013).

To this end, I extend the recent work of Barraket, Keast & Furneaux (2016) on social procurement to also locate social innovation within the new public governance framework they develop. I build on their characterisation, which identifies the technical practice of social procurement as inherently hybrid, and focus on direct forms (Furneaux & Barraket 2014) - which I suggest best exemplify new public governance in action through the diverse assemblies of entities involved. The attention to both process and outcome central to designing and implementing effective direct social procurement strategies are also characteristic of these two intertwined dimensions of social innovation (Moulaert, MacCallum, Mehmood & Hamdouch 2013; Defourney & Nyssens 2013; Nicholls & Murdock 2012; Mulgan 2012). I suggest that it is through stepping out the linkages between these three domains of
policymaking that the iterative and complex nature of social procurement policy and practice can be normalised within a broader policy framework.

The study on which the paper is based is qualitative, exploratory and descriptive in nature. The initial research question formulated to guide the process at the outset was: How do public policy and programs enable social innovation activity that contributes to more sustainable forms of local and regional development? The inductive analysis process used the Diverse Economies Framework (Gibson-Graham 2006; Gibson-Graham, Cameron & Healy 2013) as a ‘thinking tool’ that helped to narrow this broad topic over the course of the candidature, and resulted in a clear focus on the three domains outlined above. Through the process some implications for local and regional development policies and programs, particularly around alternative organisation concepts (Parker & Lightfoot 2014; Pike et al. 2011), have also been identified and will be included in the final thesis.

The research motivation and design are grounded in professional and personal experience (Corbin & Strauss 2008), and are premised on an interest in ‘learning rather than judging’, in ‘experimenting rather than confirming what is already known (Gibson-Graham 2008; Gibson-Graham & Roelvink 2009). The study design therefore focuses on shedding light on the ‘little narratives’ (Dey & Steyaert 2010) that contribute to social innovation activity and reflects an intentionally generative focus (Law & Urry 2004; Babbie 2013). To this end, the final thesis aims to assist with positioning social innovation enabling policy generally, and social procurement strategies specifically, more effectively within broader policy frameworks and thereby strengthen and legitimate these efforts.

References (abstract)


Understanding institutional complexity in the Australian impact investment market: 
Mapping market-level activity and performance

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This paper examines the nature of institutional complexity in the emerging Australian impact investment ecosystem.

Context
Impact investment is an emerging field of investment activity with origins in three traditionally separate sectors. The field has roots in the social economy (focused on mutuality, civil society, and gift-giving), distributive government policies (focused on welfare through state spending), and mainstream notions of investment (focused on financial markets and asset management) (Nicholls, 2010). Leading practitioners and academics differentiate the field from both traditional investing and philanthropy by emphasising the explicit focus on creating measurable impact for society (social, economic, cultural, environmental) alongside the desire to achieve some level of financial return for investors (Addis et al., 2013; Höchstädt & Scheck, 2014; Nicholls, 2010; O'Donohoe et al., 2010). This paper seeks to understand how impact investment is shaped by its origins in these diverse sectors by examining how practitioners measure and track their social and financial returns.

Research questions
The following questions guide the research:
(i) How are diverse institutional origins shaping the institutional logics of impact investment?
(ii) How do practitioners cope with institutional complexity in impact investment?
   a. How do impact investors measure and track their social and financial returns?
   b. What do these measurement practices reveal about the way impact investors are responding to institutional complexity?

Theory
This paper adopts theories of institutional complexity and hybridity to understand the institutional logics of impact investment. ‘Institutional complexity’ refers to situations where organisations face multiple institutional logics that are in conflict (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Greenwood et al., 2011), requiring them to play “two or more games at the same time” (Kraatz & Block, 2008, p. 2). Emerging fields such as impact investment are more likely to experience institutional complexity as various social actors compete to define the dominant logics, whereas more established fields generally experience greater stability in logics (Greenwood et al., 2011). Impact investment could be defined by the relative incoherence of the competing logics of mainstream investment, philanthropy, and government spending. These multiple logics guide action potentially conflicting ways as the logics of maximising private financial returns compete with the logics of achieving measurable improvements in social welfare and public benefit.

Enfolding the notion of ‘hybridity’ can help explain the potential for some level of compatibility between logics (Pache & Santos, 2013). This paper seeks to explore whether impact investment could be described as having a hybrid logic of its own that combines the logics of mainstream investment, philanthropy, and government spending (Nicholls, 2010). Examining how impact investment practitioners are measuring their social and financial returns should shed light of the nature of institutional logics in this complex, hybrid field.

Method
This paper utilises a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) that combines semi-structured interviews with a survey of impact investment funds. Our sample is
comprised of all known impact investing funds, climate bonds and social impact bonds (n~20) in the Australian market as of early 2016.

Semi-structured interviews are currently being conducted with approximately 20 leading practitioners within the Australian impact investment ecosystem. A follow-up survey is being conducted with these 20 identified impact investment funds and bonds to establish detailed aggregate market-level activity and performance data on how practitioners are measuring and tracking their social and financial returns.

Findings
Data collection for this paper is being carried out in April 2016. Preliminary findings from the interviews and survey will be presented at the conference.

Contributions to theory and practice
This paper enhances theoretical understandings of impact investment by illuminating the nature of institutional complexity within this emerging field. This research is relevant for practitioners as a quantitative survey of this scale and detail on aggregated market-level data impact investment has yet to be produced in Australia.

References
Award Ceremonies as Prized Tools for Institutional Work: Field configuring processes of social enterprise

This study explores the underlying field configuring processes at play as the field of social enterprise works to establish itself. This process of field establishment is not simply a matter of biding time. Organisation theorists posit that highly institutionalised fields typically have important supportive features such as professional associations (Lounsbury & Crumley, 2007), clearly defined categories (Garud, Hardy & Maguire, 2007), and standards of practice (Brunsson & Jacobsson, 2000). However, little is known about how such features are established in emerging fields. The lens of institutional work offers the idea of institutional entrepreneur, a central actor in the processes of creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). This actor centric focus provides a valuable starting point to understand processes of field establishment and configuration.

Another valuable tool recently recognised for its critical importance in field structuration is the Field Configuring Event (FCE). FCEs such as conventions, award ceremonies, trade shows and conferences, are often convened by institutional entrepreneurs (or intermediaries), and can have significant effects such as: shaping categories, norms (Lampel & Meyer, 2008) as well as the overall direction of a field’s evolution (Garud, 2008). Despite advances in these areas, little is known about the field configuring processes that underlie award ceremonies, nor how they produce the idea of best practice. Practically, we know that intermediary organisations, such as Social Traders (host of the Australian Social Enterprise Awards) play an important role in stimulating new ideas and enabling innovations in the field of social enterprise. In order to better
understand the role of intermediaries and award ceremonies in field configuration this study focuses on the Social Enterprise Awards (SEA) and how the idea of best practice is produced, asking two research questions: i) What institutional work processes do award ceremonies entail? ii) How do these award ceremonies produce the idea of best practice in the field of social enterprise?

This study draws selectively from a body of data collected as part of a 2½ year ethnography engaging the field of social enterprise (2014-2016). This immersive approach enabled getting ‘close’ to the data (Smith, 2005) and enriched the inductive analysis. Analysed data includes: field notes and audio recordings of the 2015 SEA judges’ deliberations, judging criteria, field notes and digital recordings collected while attending the 2014 and 2015 awards ceremony, SEA media coverage, and SEA applications 2013-2015 as secondary data. Initial findings suggest that award ceremonies entail field configuring processes of: collaboration, distillation, adjudication, presentation, celebration and reification. To drill down into how the SEA produces ideas of best practice this study focuses on the institutional work entailed in these processes. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of the emergence and establishment of the social enterprise field, also to our understanding of the role award ceremonies play in the institutional work of field configuration.
Reference List


Digital Social Innovation in Australia

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It is a time of challenge and change. Increasingly social innovation has gained popularity as a way forward to address ‘wicked problems’ in a more “effective, efficient sustainable and fair” way (Phills, Deigimieir et al. 2008). Parallel is the increasing role of technology in addressing societies needs in health or education or in complex areas of preventing domestic violence. Digital solutions leverage data, networks and connectivity to improve policy and program outcomes. Understanding innovation and impact at the intersection of technology and social change is timely.

This emerging phenomena is known as digital social innovation (DSI) which sees “collaborative innovation between user communities via digital platforms to produce solutions at a scale that was unimaginable before the rise of Internet” (Bria, Almirall et al. 2014). A European Commission funded project by Nesta UK (Baeck and Bria 2014), crowdmapped DSI in Europe. The resultant typology of six areas and four criteria characterised DSI projects as community focused, digitally disruptive, generate a collaborative network effect and create a positive social impact. By applying the existing DSI criteria and typology to the Australian context this project builds on the EU study to extend our understanding of the role of DSI in contributing to social development.

Although DSI is an emergent field it can be contextualised in the current literature as a response to the Vienna Declaration on Social Innovation Research (Franz, Hochgernner et al. 2012). In particular, two priority topics of “value of social innovation” and assessing the “social impact of technology” [P.382]. Through building on current European DSI research this project aims to contribute both methodologically and empirically to the field in these globally agreed areas of research priority in social innovation ecosystem.

This Australian study has developed a literature-based, DSI Impact Model, made up of indicators drawn out of the DSI-EU typology and relevant literature. This model responds to research-identified weaknesses in the current DSI-EU typology, in particular, developing further indicators to broaden the measurement of social impact. The study constructs a novel conceptual framework for DSI impact to examine in more depth certain characteristics that may contribute to a deeper understanding of how technology contributes to social impact – namely public good; appropriate; open and viable.

This new DSI impact model was developed to examine stakeholders’ – developers, funders and user communities – perceptions of the role of digital social innovation in the communities they seek to help: in particular, what social impact is sought and how success is measured. The model will be applied to selected in-depth qualitative case studies with a small number of select leaders in Australian DS to test the conceptual framework. This paper focuses on one case study, the social enterprise Infoxchange as a developer of DSI in Australia and their Ask Izzy app for homeless services. This is augmented by mapping Australia’s digital changemakers via an online database provides a baseline to examine the perception, activity and impact of digital social innovation in Australia @dsi4au.