

Adnane Maalouoi and Séverine Leloarne

Adnane Maalouoi is based at Ipag Business School, Paris, France.

Séverine Leloarne is based at LEMAIRE, Grenoble Ecole de Management, University Grenoble Alpes ComUE, Grenoble, France.

Knowledge creation in the context of social entrepreneurship

Over the past 20 years, social entrepreneurship has been considered as an emergent field of research and has intended to erase some misconceptions about business dominance in terms of enterprise creation. Several researchers have attempted to understand and define social entrepreneurship (Hoogendoorn, 2016; Mair and Marti, 2006; Rawhouser *et al.*, 2019) and propose various definitions and acceptations, depending on the context: While Alford *et al.* (2004) as well as Rey-Martí *et al.* (2016) define social entrepreneurship as “a process that creates innovative solutions to immediate social problems and mobilizes the ideas, capacities, resources, and social agreements required for this sustainable social transformation”, others refer to social entrepreneurship as an innovative process of resource combination in order to address social needs and to catalyze social change (Desa and Basu, 2013).

Beyond these divergences of acceptation, all scholars converge towards the idea that social entrepreneurship raise two main issues: resource and knowledge (Alford *et al.*, 2004; Rey-Martí *et al.*, 2016). However, so far, scholars from the field of entrepreneurship failed at focusing on these two notions and need to help of other research fields: While Bacq and Eddleston (2018) adapted the resource-based view of firms to the context of social entrepreneurship. Indeed, both notions of knowledge and capabilities (Paarup Nielsen, 2006; Spanos and Prastacos, 2004; Zheng *et al.*, 2011) have been widely emphasized in such an approach (Uit Beijerse, 1999).

Zahra and Wright (2016) claim that crucial knowledge is fundamental to the social enterprise creation process. They also argue that crucial knowledge is even important for social enterprise performance: social entrepreneurs' ability to create, develop and transform knowledge on key resources is considered as a strategic challenge. Zahra *et al.* (2014) emphasize that “social ventures also differ from both for-profits and not-for-profits by their deliberate investments in social impact and social system change capabilities. Social impact capabilities are the bundle of knowledge, skills, and routines necessary for achieving measurable social impact on a target client”. This point has led scholars to wonder about the impact of knowledge on stakeholders and on social innovation (McMullen and Bergman, 2017). Based on recent research on social entrepreneurship (Dacin *et al.*, 2011; Felício *et al.*, 2013), Muñoz and Kibler (2016: p. 1314) “stresses the need to advance the knowledge on the institutional complexity that influences how social entrepreneurs think and behave”.

Therefore, this special issue on “Knowledge creation in the context of Social entrepreneurship” aims at bringing new insights investigating the relationship between social entrepreneurship and knowledge research. Four complementary papers compose this Special Issue. They all refer to the necessary competencies and abilities social entrepreneurs have to develop for greater performance, impact or sustainability of their businesses.

The first two papers take profit from the field of knowledge management (KM) to enrich and nourish the literature in Entrepreneurship and, moreover, in Social Entrepreneurship. The first paper, written by Halberstadt, Timm, Kraus and Gundolf, insists on the impact of service learning and Knowledge Management (KM), as a core competence of Social

Entrepreneurship. Thanks to the literature on these two concepts, they elaborate a specific and singular model of Social Entrepreneurship Competence. If this first paper refers to KM and its contribution for theorizing Social Entrepreneurship, the second paper, "Effectuation as KM tool in social entrepreneurial projects", reconsiders the concept of Effectuation as theorized by [Sarasvathy \(2001\)](#) and that is widely diffused in the theory of Social Entrepreneurship ([Fisher, 2012](#)).

The second set of papers focus, thus, on social entrepreneurship but also praise the role of the study of the field of social entrepreneurship, as research object, for better considering the generation of new knowledge. "Entrepreneurs' Ingenuity and Self-Imposed Ethical Constraints: Creating Sustainability-Oriented New Ventures and Knowledge", praises the role of ethics, that oblige the entrepreneur to develop his ingenuity. These both characteristics play a key role for generating any sustainable business AND knowledge that is transferable to the environment, and therefore that benefits to any member from this environment. Finally, the last paper, proposed by Solomon, Ramani & Ravi, show how the field of KM can enrich the notion of social entrepreneurship, especially on how to educate students on social entrepreneurship and reverse, especially in the education process.

Combined, these four papers are opening avenues for future researches that are at the crossroad between the fields of social entrepreneurship and knowledge management: The new model of social entrepreneurship that is based on learning services and KM can be enlarged and discussed to more contexts of social entrepreneurship. In the same vein, these papers mostly question the place of Education and, the role of KM Education, for developing more sustainable social ventures and are calling for experimentations. Last but not least, the contexts of the various social entrepreneurship, in Canada, USA and Germany, that are explored in these four papers show that the study of social entrepreneurship is a rich object of investigation for KM scholars.

References

- Alford, S.H., Brown, L.D. and Letts, C.W. (2004), "Social entrepreneurship: leadership that facilitates societal transformation", Working paper. Center for Public Leadership, Kennedy School of Government.
- Bacq, S. and Eddleston, K.A. (2018), "A resource-based view of social entrepreneurship: how stewardship culture benefits scale of social impact", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 152 No. 3, pp. 589-611.
- Dacin, M.T., Dacin, P.A. and Tracey, P. (2011), "Social entrepreneurship: a critique and future directions", *Organization Science*, Vol. 22 No. 5, pp. 1203-1213.
- Felício, J.A., Gonçalves, H.M. and da Conceição Gonçalves, V. (2013), "Social value and organizational performance in non-profit social organizations: social entrepreneurship, leadership, and socioeconomic context effects", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 66 No. 10, pp. 2139-2146.
- Fisher, G. (2012), "Effectuation, causation, and bricolage: a behavioral comparison of emerging theories in entrepreneurship research", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 36 No. 5, pp. 1019-1051.
- McMullen, J.S. and Bergman, B.J. Jr, (2017), "Social entrepreneurship and the development paradox of prosocial motivation: a cautionary tale", *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 243-270.
- Muñoz, P. and Kibler, E. (2016), "Institutional complexity and social entrepreneurship: a fuzzy-set approach", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 4, pp. 1314-1318.
- Paarup Nielsen, A. (2006), "Understanding dynamic capabilities through knowledge management", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 59-71.
- Rey-Martí, A., Ribeiro-Soriano, D. and Palacios-Marqués, D. (2016), "A bibliometric analysis of social entrepreneurship", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 69 No. 5, pp. 1651-1655.
- Sarasvathy, S.D. (2001), "Causation and effectuation: toward a theoretical shift from economic inevitability to entrepreneurial contingency", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 26 No. 2, pp. 243-263.

Spanos, Y.E. and Prastacos, G. (2004), "Understanding organizational capabilities: towards a conceptual framework", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 31-43.

Uit Beijerse, R.P. (1999), "Questions in knowledge management: defining and conceptualising a phenomenon", *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 94-110.

Zahra, S.A. and Wright, M. (2016), "Understanding the social role of entrepreneurship", *Journal of Management Studies*, Vol. 53 No. 4, pp. 610-629.

Zahra, S.A., Newey, L.R. and Li, Y. (2014), "On the frontiers: the implications of social entrepreneurship for international entrepreneurship", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 137-158.

Further reading

Desa, G. and Basu, S. (2013), "Optimization or bricolage? Overcoming resource constraints in global social entrepreneurship", *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 26-49.

Hoogendoorn, B. (2016), "The prevalence and determinants of social entrepreneurship at the macro level", *Journal of Small Business Management*, Vol. 54, pp. 278-296.

Rawhouser, H., Cummings, M. and Newbert, S.L. (2019), "Social impact measurement: current approaches and future directions for social entrepreneurship research", *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 43 No. 1, pp. 82-115.

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com