

The Practice of Social Entrepreneurship: Theory and the Swedish Experience

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Abstract

The paper outlines a perspective on social entrepreneurship that is based on a Schumpeterian view of entrepreneurship as the creation of new combinations of resources, and focuses on the nature of actors engaging in the pursuit, and the nature of resources mobilized. So as to highlight less familiar aspects of social entrepreneurship, analysis is primarily illustrated by applications of a resource-based approach to the study of grassroots enterprising in Sweden. The presentation proceeds from rudimentary cases (that are organized around a single process of resource conversion) to more complex ones. Social entrepreneurship is viewed as a category of entrepreneurship that primarily (1) is engaged in by collective actors, and (2) involves, in a central role in the undertaking's resource mix, socially embedded resources. Social entrepreneurship involves the tapping of socially embedded resources and their conversion into (market-) convertible resources, and vice-versa. In doing so, it spans the boundaries between different property-rights regimes that define resources and their utilization. To ensure the undertaking's (or enterprise's) survival over time, it would also be expected to contribute to the replenishment of such resources, reconvert market resources into social capital, and reproducing the context that makes such transactions possible.