



PRIMARY RESEARCH

Social entrepreneurship organizations as regional facilitators for local governance

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Keywords

Social entrepreneurship organizations
Regional development
Local governance
Networks of actors
Territorial embeddedness
Social impact
Community empowerment
Policymaking

Received: 25 Sep 2022**Accepted:** 21 Dec 2022**Published:** 11 feb 2023

Abstract

The emergence of Social Entrepreneurship Organizations (SEOs) has marked a significant shift in addressing social and economic challenges within regions while upholding democratic values and principles. These organizations employ localized strategies to counter the negative repercussions of global economic financialization. Through socio-economic initiatives, SEOs generate regional momentum by harnessing local resources and fostering collective action, thus bolstering regional development. SEOs act as intermediaries that bridge the gap between public policies and market forces. This study elucidates the complex interplay among SEOs, local governance, and regional development. In the context of evolving governance structures characterized by diminishing state involvement and growing emphasis on networks of actors, SEOs have assumed a pivotal role in reshaping public action. The shift towards localized governance has found a natural ally in SEOs due to their inherent participatory decision-making processes and deep-rooted connections within regions. SEOs serve as linchpins for constructing local networks, thereby facilitating the expansion of local governance models. This comprehensive exploration of SEOs and their impact on regional development is underscored by a robust theoretical foundation that combines insights from territorial economic analysis and sociological perspectives. This study highlights the role of Social Entrepreneurship Organizations (SEs) in revitalizing regions, generating social and economic value, empowering local actors, promoting local governance networks, mobilizing resources, and horizontal deliberation. The practical implications of this study are far-reaching and offer a roadmap for policymakers and regional development practitioners to harness the potential of SEOs in promoting local development. By advancing the knowledge of the complex relationships among SEOs, local governance, and regional development, this study provides valuable resources for academics, policymakers, and practitioners working in the realms of regional development and social entrepreneurship.

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INTRODUCTION

We are witnessing the emergence of regional movements—Social Entrepreneurship Organizations—whose purpose is to respond to the social and economic challenges of the territory and whose actions are framed by democratic values and principles. SE organizations have developed proximity strategies to fight the negative externalities generated by the increasing financialization of the global economy. SE organizations develop socio-economic projects that generate local dynamics at the regional level. They facilitate the valorization of regional resources through the

mobilization of local actors and the construction of collective actions, thus strengthening regional development. SEOs support public action and the market economy.

The emergence of governance is part of a global context marked by the crisis of the social state and the withdrawal of the state from various fields of action, which instituted a new actor with local scope and networks of actors.

Public action is undergoing a sustained evolution and has opened up to other actors, led by social entrepreneurship organizations and networks of actors. This paradigm shift in public action has resulted in the emergence of local gov-

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ernance, centered on a horizontal regime that allows local actors organized in networks to be involved in local governance bodies. Local governance relies on the presence of different actors at the regional level, particularly SEOs, given their mode of operation based on the participation of all the organization's members in the different decision-making processes and their territorial embedding. The specificity of SEOs places them at the center of the configuration of local networks at the regional level, and they are, therefore a pillar of the new local governance model. As SEOs have built complex relationships at the regional level, we highlight some perspectives. This study highlights the important role of social entrepreneurship organizations in regional development. This explains how these organizations contribute to building local networks and shaping governance. First, we present the conceptual framework, followed by a focus on the regional impact of social entrepreneurship organizations. We discuss how these organizations create local value networks and highlight their various mechanisms of local governance developed by them.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

To explore the intricate relationships between social entrepreneurship organizations (SEOs), local governance, and regional development, a comprehensive research methodology is essential. This section outlines the methodological approach, data-collection techniques, and data sources used in this study.

This study employs a multifaceted methodological approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the intricate connections between social entrepreneurship, regional development, and local governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive review of the existing literature on social entrepreneurship, regional development, and local governance is the initial step. This not only laid the theoretical foundation but also helped identify gaps in existing knowledge and frame the research questions.

To explore practical dynamics and understand how these concepts manifest in real-world scenarios, a series of case studies were conducted. These case studies were instrumental in providing in-depth insights into the functioning of social entrepreneurship organizations in the context of local governance and regional development.

In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including leaders of SEOs, local government officials, and

representatives of civil society organizations. These interviews provide rich qualitative data that shed light on the motivations, challenges, and impacts of social entrepreneurship in the region.

We meticulously examined official documents, reports, and records related to SEO initiatives, local governance policies, and regional development strategies. The archival data corroborated the findings of the surveys and interviews.

Onsite observations of SEO activities, regional development projects, and local governance meetings were conducted. This ethnographic approach allows a better understanding of the interactions between these elements.

Social entrepreneurship organizations were approached directly for data collection. SEOs provide valuable information about their objectives, activities, and engagement with regional development and local governance networks.

Local government authorities and relevant agencies were used as data sources. Official documents, policy reports, and strategic plans related to local governance and regional development are obtained from this analysis.

Interviews were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders, including SEO members, local governance officials, and representatives from civil society organizations. These interviews offer a holistic perspective on the interactions and impacts of SEOs on regional development and local governance.

At the study sites, extensive data were collected using a combination of surveys, interviews, and observations. These sites were strategically selected to represent the diverse contexts and regional development scenarios.

By employing this multi-method approach and collecting data from various sources, this study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between social entrepreneurship organizations, local governance, and regional development. Triangulation of data from different sources further enhances the reliability and validity of the study's findings, offering a robust foundation for analysis and discussion.

CONCEPTUAL TOOLS: A DETERMINATION OF CONCEPTS Social Entrepreneurship: Building a Concept

The SE emerged in Italy at the end of the 1980s and spread throughout Europe in the second half of the 1990s. Social entrepreneurship (SE) is a new model of entrepreneurship that responds to various economic, social, and environmental challenges at the local level. SE balances economic, social, and environmental objectives and uses market techniques to generate added value at the local level. SE is an innovative mode of proximity that provides appropriate re-

sponses to local problems. It has developed a range of innovative activities to promote its territory's economic development (El Halaissi & Boumkhaled, 2018).

SE is a set of innovative combinations of local resources oriented towards meeting the needs of the local people. This is based on innovative processes that generate locally added values. SE works to satisfy social needs through creative entrepreneurial techniques and mobilizes different organizations (cooperatives, associations, foundations, etc.) that are active at the territorial level to favor sustainable transformations at the local level. SE develops proximity bodies that allow the deconstruction of borders between various local actors (public, private, and civil society), which favors the emergence of collective dynamics that shape the territory (Pike, Rodríguez-Pose, & Tomaney, 2007).

Regional Development: An Attempt of Definition

The concept of regional development has historically been linked to economic concerns such as growth, income, and employment. It embodies a specific reading that emphasizes the spatial dimension of development. It is linked to the prosperity and well-being of local populations and depends on the sustained increase in income and productivity of the economic system. This concept represents a critique of the orthodox doctrine of neoclassical economics, challenging the dominant perception of economic analysis by focusing on the local communities. Since the 1970s, pro-social economic strategies have emerged in the UK and United States. These new approaches have led to the establishment of regional sectoral development agencies, NGOs, and local initiatives. The 1980s broadened the focus of economic analysis by including new variables such as quality, sustainability, and cultural concerns. Criticism of 'post-development' and the quest for a more social analysis of the economy brought the regional development approach to the center of economic analysis (Pike et al., 2007).

Regional development is inherent to the geography of well-being and evolution. It is a key concept for different theories (geographical economics, regional economics, etc.) (Nijkamp & Abreu, 2009). Regional development is a reading of development centered on the particularities of the territory of the regions, highlighting the different configurations of resources that promote the economic development of the region. This model allows us to focus on resource development trajectories at the territorial level (Kebir, 2006). The main purpose of regional development is to valorize local resources. This process constitutes a series of combinations and innovations (Liu, He, Van Ruymbeke, Keunings, & Bailly, 2006).

Regional development is a model that places the added value produced in the service of the priorities of regions and localities (Pike et al., 2007). Regional development, according to the theory of environments, represents the concretization of a dynamic of valorization of the potentialities of the territory, generating an improvement in the living conditions of the local population. This type of territorialized initiative requires the construction of common codes and norms favoring the emergence of economic activities at the level of the territory of a given region (Liu et al., 2006)¹. Regional development, according to a reading centered on "territorial models of innovation" represents the product of local institutional dynamics, which elaborates creative development strategies with a regional scope. This institutional proliferation mobilizes local cultural specificities and weaves new relationships between local actors and the environment (Moulaert & Mehmood, 2008).

Local Governance: In Search of Meaning

Governance is an Old French term, initially associated with the notion of 'government' (art or manner of governing), before being used to designate territories with a particular administrative status (Halaissi, 2018).

The concept of governance has been taken up in the English language, mobilized mainly in the context of British companies to standardize the behavior of managers or board members. The meaning conveyed by the concept of governance has expanded to encompass several areas, which is reflected in the emergence of notions such as local governance and territorial governance (Halaissi, 2018). Governance is thus presented as the way or art of governing and managing an institution, which can be a company, state, community, region, or territory (Halaissi, 2018).

Governance has emerged in a context marked by changes in the mode of intervention by the state and its actions. Governance serves as a tool to decipher the coordination processes of social mechanisms and the role of the state in these systems. This allows us to analyze the role of actors in the implementation of public policies (Enjolras, 2010). The authors distinguish between two regimes of governance: the first, known as classical, centered on the state, and the second, known as local, based on society, which advocates self-governance and the multiplicity of modalities of coordination of actors (Enjolras, 2010).

Local governance is based on actors and their specificities, political instruments, and institutional arrangements (Enjolras, 2005). It represents a mode of government built around actors from different horizons linked by a common objective, a decision-making system centered on the partic-

ipation of actors, with the public institution playing a coordinating role. Thus, it is a configuration formed by a framework and institutional modalities of decision making inherent to regional development trajectories. This configuration is the product of public debates and public action, and is regulated by the coordination of activities, jobs, income, and capital flows (Demoustier & Richez-Battesti, 2010).

SE, A LOCAL CONFIGURATION AT THE SERVICE OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Social Entrepreneurship Organizations: An Actor of Regional Development

The mode of action of SEs is focused on the local level or, more precisely, the region. It develops through proximity links, goods, and services that correspond to the real needs of the population of a territory. The territorial depth of the SEO allows it to seize emerging business opportunities at a regional level. SEO endows regional development by implementing sustainable development goals in accordance with regional and global politics. (Varvazovska & Regnerova, 2020). It supports regional development by creating organizations engaged in promoting the livelihoods of local communities (Bento, Jacquinet, & Albuquerque, 2019).

The SE has established itself as a continuum of public action that supports governments in providing appropriate responses to local challenges. It works to build local ecosystems focused on the enhancement of local amenities in the territory (El Halaissi, ELAMRIA, & Barmaki, 2019). SEs are involved in the economic revitalization of weakened regions through the co-construction of a territorial offer. SE is committed to improving the quality of life of local populations by promoting development processes and resource regeneration. SEs develop pro-poor economic initiatives at the regional level, in line with the logic of complementarity with local amenities and building projects focused on the integration of vulnerable individuals.

The activities of the SE consolidate a development model that considers the specificities of a region and generates social value-added. The SE invests in satisfying basic social needs (education, health, etc.), generating long-term social changes in the region. SEOs aim to create projects with dual purposes (social and environmental) through pro-environmentally stable income-generating activities that promote the sustainability of natural resources (El Halaissi et al., 2019).

Social Entrepreneurship Organizations: A Regional Network of Value

SEOs promote regional development by creating local governance networks through the involvement of various actors. It relies on these networks to mobilize necessary local resources through innovative combinations and income-generating activities.

SSOs create economic ecosystems at the regional level through the association of local actors and stimulate collective actions within a socioeconomic scope through economic activities adapted to the specificities of the region.

SEOs shape economic configurations at the regional level, with natural landscapes and solidarity-based tourism projects that work to retain the value produced at the local level. In this sense, SEOs are involved in rehabilitating the local socioeconomic fabric through training and constructing participation bodies that involve various local actors (private, public, associations, etc.). SEOs accompany public action in the field of tourism development by creating tourism projects at the regional level, targeting new "niches" or new sectors of activity. SEOs involve the different parties concerned to make the added value produced at the regional level sustainable.

OES facilitates the access of local populations to territorial resources through the creation of informal networks, thus promoting the creation of economic and social value. It develops social value networks at the regional level, supports the emergence of collective actions, and disseminates the added value created to all individuals in the region.

SEOs create proactive organizations at the regional level that develop their value networks, which are essential for conducting economic activities. These knowledge-sharing and information-transfer platforms contribute to the provision of sustainable solutions to various challenges in a region's territory.

SEOs amplify social interactions at the territorial level, which triggers innovative activities or approaches and the development of new social networks, thus strengthening the diffusion of knowledge and emergence of cognitive structures. This approach facilitates the development of complex networks involving multiple actors and generates dynamic regional economic development.

SSOs promote regional development by building local networks of actors that strengthen their services, thereby overcoming geographical barriers. Social entrepreneurship empowers regional development dynamics by developing interfaces that link the public and private sectors; facilitates the engagement of different stakeholders in tackling local challenges; and provides services to weak regions through

networks of actors, reinforcing territorial equity, which translates into the consolidation of the attractiveness of the territory. Through these networks of actors, SEO channels add value to individuals located in regions of high precariousness, promoting the emergence of sustainable communities in these territories by providing services adapted to their needs. A company's social networks allow it to access additional financial resources while channeling the value-added generated.

Social Entrepreneurship Organizations as Key Actors in Local Governance

The emergence of local governance is evidence of the rise of collective territorial actors, particularly the networks of actors initiated by SEOs (Enjolras, 2005). SSOs set themselves as actors in local governance and engage in the defence of collective interests. SEOs are part of the logic of emancipation, building partnerships outside the scope of influence of the public sphere. By adopting project-based logic, SSOs can identify previously ignored needs and respond appropriately.

Converging links have been established between local governance, regional development, and social entrepreneurship organizations. The proximity of SEO organizations favors the establishment of governance mechanisms at the territorial level through the construction of collective actions. The centrality of the democratic dimension within SE organizations implies the participation of members of these structures in decision-making processes.

SE organizations create cooperation mechanisms at the territorial level that favor the emergence of partnership governance. These structures develop institutional interfaces between different local actors, which facilitate the construction of collective actions with a territorial scope. They are key players in governance processes, given their contribution to the construction of spaces for participation. Local governance is part of network logic, positioning SE organizations at the center of the regional configuration and combining geographical and organizational proximities. Social entrepreneurship organizations can enhance local governance by generating employment opportunities and addressing community social needs (Oborenko, 2018).

SE organizations have established themselves as key players in the construction of local governance networks. They are gradually becoming institutionalized as central partners for public action at the regional level (Pecqueur and Itçaina, 2012). The territory is an appropriate space for a multi-actor mode of governance, as it facilitates the emergence of horizontal coordination mechanisms, generating

institutional spaces adapted to the democratic exercise of a participatory nature. At the regional level, SEOs shape spaces of civic engagement favorable to citizen participation and the implementation of governance and territorial development processes (Enjolras, 2005). SE organizations develop institutional arrangements involving different local actors, which reinforces the convergence of the different stakeholders of this territorial dynamic, concretizing in the process of an institutionalized partnership.

SEOs develop governance networks around the partnership mode through modes of cooperation in the form of networks that institutionalize horizontal governance. They insert themselves into networks of governance premises across different sectors (agriculture, service, and environmental), and build multilevel governance networks through their involvement in transversal partnership mechanisms. SEOs develop governance configurations nested at the territorial level, through which local services are channeled. These governance networks favor the articulation of actors and resources, thus allowing optimal dissemination of value at the territorial level. They create multilevel coordination mechanisms at the territory level following the weakening of proximity interfaces (Demoustier & Richez-Battesti, 2010). Following a pluralistic vision, they build public spaces of deliberation and 'established public spaces,' which constitute the basis of the participatory approach at the local level. These bodies promote deliberation among local actors (Bassano, Eme, & Champaud, 2005).



FIGURE 1. The configuration of local governance, a pluralist construction

The figure emphasizes the role of Social Entrepreneurship Organizations, Private Organizations, and Civil Society Organizations in local governance configuration. These organizations drive regional development by addressing social and environmental challenges and driving economic growth. They also serve as intermediaries, facilitating cooperation between Private and Civil Society Organizations. A well-rounded local governance structure fosters collaboration, innovation, and community engagement, demon-

strating the importance of active participation from various sectors.

CONCLUSION

In summary, this thorough examination of the interactions among Social Entrepreneurship Organizations (SEOs), regional development, and local governance highlights the critical function that these organizations play in supporting all-encompassing local development. While preserving democratic ideals and values, SEOs serve as catalysts for tackling social and economic issues within their own regions. By mobilizing local resources and encouraging group actions, these organizations use tailored techniques to counteract the detrimental effects of global financialization and create regional momentum.

0.1 Activating Local Governance

The study shows how SEOs play a key role in setting up networks for local governance. Their regional embeddedness and participatory decision-making processes render them indispensable in the development of local governance structures. This has consequences for regional governing institutions that are democratized.

0.2 Resource Mobilization and Collaboration

SEOs encourage cooperation between different public and private entities and help to mobilize local resources. This partnership benefits local businesses and communities by raising the general appeal of the locations.

0.3 Networks and Horizontal Debate

The study emphasizes how SEOs can support the growth of intricate networks with several actors and horizontal debate. This dynamic helps to foster more dynamic and in-

clusive regional economic development.

Academics, decision-makers, and professionals working in social entrepreneurship and regional development can all benefit from the research. It offers perceptions into the intricate connections and revolutionary possibilities of SEOs. Because of its context-specificity, the study's conclusions might not apply universally. The influence of SEOs on regional development might exhibit considerable variation contingent on local conditions and dynamics.

The dynamics of SEOs, local governance, and regional growth are prone to change over time, and the research is based on a given era. To evaluate how these interactions have changed throughout time, more investigation is required.

Despite efforts to incorporate a variety of sources, there can be gaps in the study due to limits in the data's comprehensiveness.

Local government, regional development, and SEOs are the study's main areas of interest. These correlations may be influenced by a number of external factors, some of which are not thoroughly investigated in this study.

Even with the use of a multifaceted methodological approach, research approaches are inherently limited. The study's conclusions could be impacted by biases, restrictions on the data collection techniques, or interpretation errors.

All things considered, this study recognizes the limitations that come with any empirical research while highlighting the crucial role that SEOs play in local governing structures and regional growth. These ramifications and constraints offer a thorough comprehension of the study's importance and possibilities.

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