
The Emergence of Social Entrepreneurial Activities

**An explanatory framework of social entrepreneurship
based on an embedded-process viewpoint**

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Summary

This thesis is inspired by an empirical case. A group of actors concerned with environmental and sustainable development in the eastern part of the Netherlands are starting to apply organizational forms and practices which are traditionally characteristic of for-profit business. They pursue social benefits by integrating economic and social value creation. These kind of actors are typified as so-called 'social entrepreneurs'. They have been playing an increasingly important and prominent role in our society. Therefore the field of social entrepreneurship has received more attention from scholars. Researchers have focused their efforts on clarifying the concept and the definition of social entrepreneurship. However, no major advances have been made which enhance our understanding of this phenomenon. Consensus on this phenomenon is lacking. This discrepancy between the researchers is obstructing progress in this field.

In an attempt to shake up this field, we do not focus our effort on clarifying the concept or definition of this phenomenon. We focus on the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. Based on a process-oriented perspective we introduce an explanatory framework. This is composed of elements from contingency theory, social network theory, institutional theory and entrepreneurship theory. It describes the relationship between contingencies, embeddedness, and temporal orientation, leading to the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities.

The explanatory framework is used to analyze the data obtained from the case study. We found that change in the task environment (contingencies) and change in the network (embeddedness) of the actors influence the (temporal) orientation of the involved actors. The orientation shifts under influence of these changes, which leads to the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities.

We also found that contingencies have a greater influence on changing the orientation of the involved actors than the degree of embeddedness. Secondly, a relationship between change in the contingencies and change in the embeddedness was found. And, thirdly a relationship between changes in the orientation and the embeddedness was discovered.

The results of this study should be seen as a complementary attempt to enhance our understanding of the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. We contribute to this field by explaining the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities, based on an embedded-process viewpoint. This offers researchers and practitioners in the field of social entrepreneurship a better understanding of this interesting topic.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Recently, researchers at the University of Twente have become involved with an interesting case. They have started to become involved with a project called “Heat from Local Wood” (HLW). A project in which actors concerned with environmental and sustainable development in the eastern part of the Netherlands are starting to apply organizational forms and practices which are traditionally characteristic of for-profit business. They pursue social benefits by integrating economic and social value creation.

Organizations of actors that apply business practices to achieve social goal(s), are typified as so-called ‘social entrepreneurs’ (Mair & Martí, 2006; Ritvala & Salmi, 2011). Basically, these are entrepreneurs who operate a business not aimed to make profit, but to address a specific societal issue. The revenue their business creates is used to continue and/or to expand their social activities. The goal is not economic wealth creation, but social value creation (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Boschee, 1995). They make significant and diverse contributions to their communities and societies, adopting business models (i.e. industrialization or services business models) to offer creative solutions to complex and persistent social problems.

This thesis represents a complementary attempt to enhance our understanding of the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship. We want to explain the *emergence* of social entrepreneurship. Whereas other researchers have focused their efforts on clarifying the concept (Mair & Martí, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006) and the definition (Mair & Martí, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Dees, 1998) of social entrepreneurship. We believe focussing on the *process* of actors becoming social entrepreneurs will be a valuable contribution to this field of research.

1.2. Goal and research questions

We will start with introducing and briefly discussing the research goal and research questions. The research goal is the main drive for this thesis. This goal is translated in a problem statement with a number of research questions. These research questions will enable us to reach our goal.

The research goal of this thesis is, to contribute to the theoretical and empirical understanding of social entrepreneurship, in particular the factors explaining the emergence-process of this phenomenon. This research goal has been translated in the following problem statement: ‘What explains the emergence of social entrepreneurship?’ This problem statement is the central issue of our research.

To approach this problem, and to be able to answer this question, we have formulated the following three research questions:

- i. What is social entrepreneurship?
- ii. What factors theoretically explain the emergence of social entrepreneurship according to the relevant academic literature?
- iii. What factors empirically explain the emergence of social entrepreneurship in the case of “Heat from Local Wood”?
- iv.

1.3. Research methods & data

1.3.1. Research methods

The research involved with solving the problem statement and answering the research questions consists of four parts: (1) a theoretical part; (2) an empirical part; (3) an analytical part, and; (4) a concluding part. The first part of the research, answers the research questions i and ii. This theoretical part (chapter 2) focuses on becoming more knowledgeable about the key topics of this thesis. This is done by reviewing relevant academic literature on the topics related to the emergence of social entrepreneurship. Building on the review of academic literature provides a theoretical base and for the framework that has been developed for this thesis. This framework enables us to analyze the emergence of social entrepreneurship as a temporally embedded process.

The second part of the research, the empirical part, will be addressed in chapter 3 of this thesis. For this research interviews have been conducted with actors involved with the project “Heat from Local Wood” (HLW). During these interviews, relevant elements, placed in the framework that emerged from the literature review have been discussed.

The analytical part of the research will be addressed in chapter 4. Data gathered during the interviews and collected related information, will be applied in the framework discussed in the theoretical part of this thesis. The findings discussed in this part of the research will allow us to answer research question iii. In this chapter, the interview outcomes will be described, analyzed and interpreted according to the theoretical framework.

Conclusions are drawn and the research questions and the overall problem statement are answered in chapter 4. This is the fourth, concluding part, of the research.

1.3.2. Data

Information (data) is required to answer the problem statement and research questions. Quantitative and qualitative data are the two main types of data (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). Quantitative data are a numerical expression; anything else is characterized as qualitative data. In accordance with the qualitative nature of the research, this thesis uses qualitative data to answer the research questions and problem statement.

The first step of the research is becoming more knowledgeable about the emergence of social entrepreneurship. This is done by reviewing scientific literature and examining project-related documentation. Babbie (2004) defines this type of data sources as secondary data sources. Secondary data sources are all kinds of written information such as: scientific articles, books, reports, newspaper articles and information obtained from websites. In fact, all information that can be referred to classifies as secondary data (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

Next to secondary data, the research outcomes also rely on data obtained through conducting the interviews. This type of data is also referred to as empirical data because of the way it is obtained, through performing empirical research (Cooper & Schindler, 2011).

This part of the research is performed through conducting interviews with actors involved with the project “Heat from Local Wood” (HLW). They can be defined as qualitative field research using in-depth interviews. These in-depth interviews are a common method of empirical investigation in qualitative descriptive research (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). More detailed information considering methods and data collection will be addressed in chapter 3 of this thesis.

2. Social entrepreneurship

2.1. The concept of social entrepreneurship

Despite increased interest in social entrepreneurship, scholarly research has been challenging (Short, Moss, & Lumpkin, 2009). Underlying cause of this challenge is that the concept of social entrepreneurship means different things to different people and social entrepreneurship scholars (Dees, 1998). Most literature on social entrepreneurship refers to an ability to leverage resources that address social problems (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009). However the phenomenon is still poorly defined, and its boundaries with other fields of study remain fuzzy (Mair & Martí, 2006).

Nevertheless, two different more dominant streams of literature can be recognized within the field of social entrepreneurship. One stream considers the social entrepreneur as a “heroic” individual/organization (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009; Dees, 1998; Reis, 1999; Brinkerhoff, 2001), another considers social entrepreneurship as emerging from embedded and collective processes (Mair & Martí, 2006; Smith & Stevens, 2010; Peredo & McLean, 2006).

The later stream is more in line with the case which initiated the research for this thesis. As it is our goal the explain the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities, we adopt to this idea. This stream of literature considers actions of an individual actor or dyad not as an isolated event but results from many other reciprocal relationships (Mair & Martí, 2006; Smith & Stevens, 2010; Peredo & McLean, 2006). Central in this line of thinking is that social reality is not a steady state, it is a dynamic process. It occurs rather than merely exists (Sztompka, 1991). Or as Pettigrew (1997, p. 338) puts it “human conduct is perpetually in a process of becoming”.

We adopt the definition of social entrepreneurship of Mair & Martí (2006, p. 37); a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs.”

2.2. An explanatory framework of social entrepreneurship

In the following section we will present the framework which has been developed for this thesis to explain the emergence of social entrepreneurship. First, the framework will be introduced and the line of thought behind this model will be discussed briefly. Hereafter, the main idea behind the framework and all elements in the framework will be discussed in more detail. This will provide the background information needed to comprehend this model.

2.2.1. Emergence of Social Entrepreneurship framework

Based on a process orientation perspective, in line with our case, we believe four elements play a role in the process of actors becoming social entrepreneurs: (1) social entrepreneurial activities; (2) task environment; (3) network; and (4) temporal orientation.

We see social entrepreneurship as a process resulting from the continuous interaction between actors (becoming social entrepreneurs) and the task environment in which they and their activities are temporally embedded. This way we bring the definition of social entrepreneurship provided by Mair & Martí (2006, p. 37) and the definition of process by Van de Ven (1992, p. 169) together. This approach leads to the design of our explanatory framework, which enables us to analyze the emergence of social entrepreneurship as a temporally embedded process.

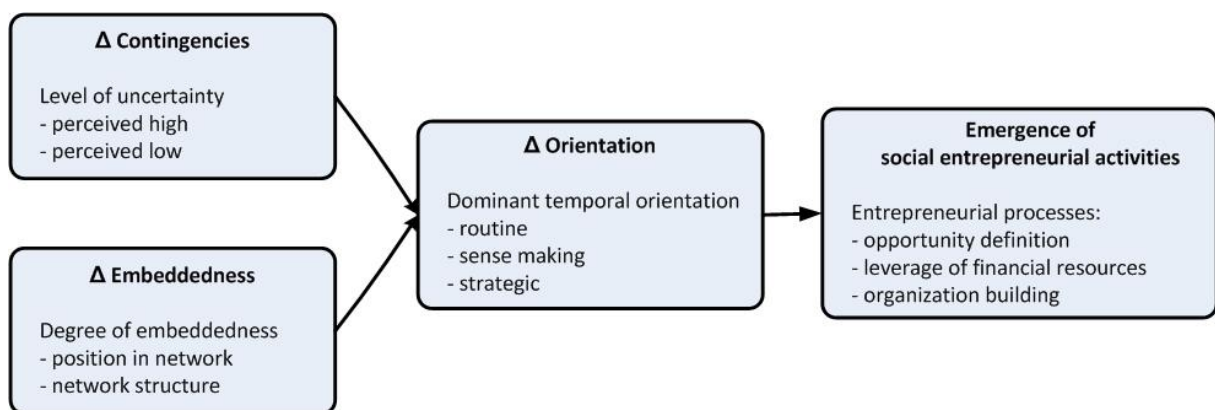


Figure 1, Explanatory framework of the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities

The following line of thought describes the idea behind the explanatory framework (figure 1). Change in the task environment (contingencies) and change in the network (embeddedness) of the actors influence the (temporal) orientation of the involved actors. The orientation shifts under influence of these changes, which leads to the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. If the changes in contingencies and embeddedness do not change the orientation of the actors, than social entrepreneurial activities will not emerge. In this explanatory framework the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities is highly depended on the changes in the orientation of the involved actors towards entrepreneuring.

This line of thought is partially based on the field of business network theory. The interconnectedness of context, actions and time is an important aspect in this field of research (Håkansson, Ford, Gadde, Snehota, & Waluszewski, 2009).

2.2.2. A process orientation

The framework introduced in the above section is based on a process orientation perspective. Van de Ven (1992, p. 169) has offered an instructive formal definition of process. We will discuss this definition to explain our line of thought. He argues that “process is often used in three ways in literature: (1) as a logic used to explain a causal relationship in a variance theory; (2) as a category of concepts that refer to activities of individuals or organizations; and (3) as a sequence of events that describes how things change over time.” Of these three approaches only the third explicitly and directly observes the process in action and thereby is able to describe and account for how some entity or issue develops and changes over time. Therefore the definition of process applied in this thesis will be: ‘a sequence of individual and collective events, actions, and activities unfolding over time in context’.

We emphasize the influence this definition of process has for this thesis. All elements mentioned in the definition are related to each other, they are entwined. Pettigrew (1997, pp. 338-339) has described the implications of this relationship between these elements: “Actions drive processes but processes cannot be explained just by reference to individual or collective agency. Actions are embedded in contexts which limit their information, insight and influence. But the dual quality of agents and contexts must always be recognized: contexts are shaping actions of actors but are also shaped by them (Giddens, 1984; Sztompka, 1991). Crucially for any processual analysis, this interchange between agents and contexts occurs over time and is cumulative. The legacy of the past is always shaping the emerging future.” What happens, how it happens, why it happens, what results it brings about dependent on when it happens, the location in the processual sequence, the place in the rhythm of events is characteristic for a given process. The process itself is recursive, as Meyer, Boli & Thomas (1987) point out: whereas actors perform actions, actions create actors (or rather their identities) within the task environment of a narrative, which is created, in turn, by actions and actors.

2.2.3. Social entrepreneurial activities

In this thesis we focus on the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. However, as mentioned before, although the field of social entrepreneurship continuous to attract scholarly attention, the concept itself is rather ambiguous. Various researchers have developed and advocated various views on social entrepreneurial activities (Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010). Which has led to the development of various typologies (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009) and views (van den Broek, Ehrenhard, & Langley, 2012) of this phenomenon.

In order to better understand the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities, we review the closely related field of business entrepreneurship. The main difference between social entrepreneurship and business entrepreneurship is the focus on respectively value creation and wealth creation. The goal of social entrepreneurship is not economic wealth creation, but social value creation (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Boschee, 1995).

The motives of business entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs are different, but their essential activities are basically the same. Both social and business entrepreneurs apply organizational forms and practices. In understanding the differences in approaches and types of entrepreneurship, we first take a look at the field of business entrepreneurship.

In the (business) entrepreneurship field, scholars prefer to reserve the term to describe a specific set of activities related to the introduction of new products and services into the marketplace.” (Dorado, 2006, p. 2) However, there is disagreement on what this set of activities actually involves. Various researchers have developed and advocated diverse perspectives. All with their own view on this phenomenon. Nevertheless, we recognize various different perspectives within the field of entrepreneurship. For example, one considers entrepreneurial activities as those leading to the discovery, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities to create future goods and services (Venkataraman, 1997; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Eckhardt & Shane, 2003; Stevenson & Gumpert, 1985).

Another perspective that is most in line with our case, decentres opportunities and defines entrepreneurship as the process of creating new organizations (Gartner, 1988; Katz & Gartner, 1988), which occurs as a context-dependent, social and economic process (Aldrich, 2005; Thornton, 1999). Actions of an individual actor are not considered to be isolated events, but result from many other reciprocal relationships. (Mair & Martí, 2006; Smith & Stevens, 2010). Scholars in this stream of literature emphasize the linkage between entrepreneurship and organization creation.

Building on this perspective, we believe the entrepreneurial process involves numerous activities, such as the identification of a business opportunity, researching its potential market, filling for a patent and/or attracting investors (Bhave, 1994; Gartner, 1985; Vesper, 1980). Dorado (2006) has clustered these activities around three analytically distinct processes: (1) opportunity definition, (2) leverage of financial resources and (3) organizational building. These processes, of course, do not follow each other linearly but overlap each other and feed on one another.

The process of opportunity identification is inherently cognitive. Entrepreneurs intentionally (Katz & Gartner, 1988) identify a solution to a specific problem or need because of diverse motivations, building on the information available to them (Shane, 2000) through their backgrounds (Shane & Khurana, 2003; Jones, 2001) and/or their networks of relations (Eckhardt & Shane, 2003; Aldrich, 2005). Leverage of financial resources clusters all activities connected with the mobilization of financial support. Research states that most entrepreneurs launch new ventures using their own funds (Aldrich, 2005). Finally, organization building involves those tasks usually attached to organization founding, such as obtaining permits, incorporating, etc. (Katz & Gartner, 1988; Gartner, 1985). Frequently, it may simply involve including business income on the organization's balance sheet. However, the process might be rather complex and involve permits and filings with multiple government bodies (De Soto, 1989). Most interestingly, the process may involve identifying and engaging individual actors as organization members.

2.2.4. Task environment

As part of the process of actors becoming social entrepreneurs, we consider the task environment to have a great (indirect) influence on the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. The task environment includes sectors with which (an organization of) actors interact directly, and that have a direct impact on the actors' ability to achieve their goals. It typically includes the industry, competitors, customers, techniques of production, suppliers, stock market, raw materials, and market sectors. The various elements in the task environment of the involved actors create uncertainties, or contingencies, that influence their behaviour. Vergne and Durand (2010) define 'contingency' as an event that is 'unpredictable, non-purposive, and somewhat random'.

Contingency theory is a class of behavioural theory that claims that there is no best way to organize a corporation, to lead a company, or to make decisions. Instead, the optimal course of action is contingent (dependent) upon the internal and external situation. Within this theory Thompson (1967) focuses on the uncertainty which these two environmental factors create for an organization. He sees the organization's major problem as coping with uncertainty (technological and environmental) and argues that organizations will reduce uncertainty by creating requisite structures to deal with it. The complexity of an organization's structure is at least in part a reflection of the uncertainty in the task environment. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), like Thompson, considered environmental uncertainty to be a key variable. Much of the theoretical and empirical work in the field of contingency theory has focused on the uncertainty element (Duncan, 1972; Miles, Snow, & Pfeffer, 1974; Osborn & Hunt, 1974).

To analyze the changes in the task environment we focus on changes in the contingencies. In the framework suggested in this thesis, we follow the uncertainty-based line of thought as advocated by many contingency scholars (Duncan, 1972; Miles, Snow, & Pfeffer, 1974; Osborn & Hunt, 1974; Thompson, 1967). In our research of the empirical case we will assess the level of uncertainty experienced by the involved actors during the various moments in the process. We will also review if there occurred significant changes in the task environment that would raise the uncertainty level. The premise is that when the contingencies of the task environment change, the experienced uncertainty level of the involved actor rises. This will influence the orientation of the actors. The changes in the contingencies will force the actors to alter their perception on their position and their actions. The involved actors can no longer maintain their original orientation and if they want to continue to pursue their social goal, they have to start entrepreneuring.

2.2.5. Network

Another element in our framework is the network in which the (organizations of) actors are embedded. The logic of embeddedness suggests that ongoing social ties shape actor's expectations, motives and decision-making processes (Uzzi & Gillespie, 1999). Social ties of the actors play a role and may stimulate or withhold them to start (social) entrepreneuring.

The primary argument of embeddedness is that actor's purposeful actions are embedded in concrete and enduring relationships that affect their motives, behaviours and decision making (Granovetter, 1985; Dacin, Ventresca, & Beal, 1999; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001). "Embeddedness is, at its heart, an argument against the isolated dyadic relationships often portrayed by classical economic theory, where decisions are made in isolation; it is instead an argument that a more interconnected resource and social system governs organizational actions (Baker, 1990)." (Smith & Stevens, 2010, p. 582) In this thesis we approach the relationships of the involved actors by looking at the networks they are part of.

A network consists of a set of actors or nodes along with a set of ties with specified types (such as friendship) that link them. "The ties interconnect through shared end points to form paths that indirectly link nodes that are not directly tied. The pattern of ties in a network yields a particular structure, and nodes occupy positions within this structure. Much of the theoretical wealth of network analysis consists of characterizing network structures (e.g. small-worldness) and node positions (e.g. centrality) and relating to these group and node outcomes." (Borgatti & Halgin, 2011, p. 1169)

Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) see networks as event-based structures in context. They indicate that event-based marketing and event network analysis in particular is a fruitful way to approach the embedded and temporal nature of (business) networks. Event networks highlight one important reality of business networks and their change in the context of time-space. Events are the engines for network development and are proposed to be specific types that add to our understanding of networks. So events, changes in contingencies, directly influence the development of networks, changes in the embeddedness.

The network approach is sensitive to developments over time; it assumes that network actors transform resources to carry out transactions linked by relationships and that the cumulative effect of the developments in relationships influences both the position and the network structure in which the actors find themselves. (Mouzas & Naudé, 2007)

In this thesis we will follow the line of thought discussed by Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) and Mouzas and Naudé (2007). We believe these notions are in line with our process-based and context-based approach to the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. We will focus on the formation and development of the network ties of the involved actors, in light of the process of them becoming social entrepreneurs.

We consider changes in the network position of the actors to be changes in the degree of embeddedness of the involved actors. As discussed before, actor's purposeful actions are embedded in concrete and enduring relationships (networks) that affect their cognitive perspective, which alters their motives, behaviours and decision making (Granovetter, 1985; Dacin, Ventresca, & Beal, 1999; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001). Our premise is that changes in the level of embeddedness influence the cognitive perspective of the actors. Their orientation is altered. In our empirical research we will assess how changes in the network, measured as changes in the level of embeddedness influence the orientation of the involved actors. The level of embeddedness will be perceived as the intensity of the relationships, by analyzing both the position and the network structure in which the actors find themselves.

2.2.6. Orientation

We believe the task environment and the network influence the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. The task environment and network influence the perceptions, or orientation, of the involved actors. The influenced temporal orientation of the actors leads to actions (behaviour) which are social entrepreneurial activities in our model. To analyze this aspect of the social entrepreneurial process, we turn to the field of institutional change.

Institutional theories of organizations provide a rich, complex view of organizations (Zucker, 1987). In these theories, organizations are influenced by normative pressures, sometimes arising from external sources such as the state, other times arising from within the organization itself. “It considers the processes by which structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behaviour. It inquires into how these elements are created, diffused, adopted, and adapted over space and time; and how they fall into decline and disuse.” (Scott, 2004, p. 2)

A growing body of research aims at understanding how actors change institutions (e.g., Czarniawska, 2009; Scott, 2004) – understood in this thesis as social systems which, once established, tend to perpetuate themselves (Giddens, 1984).

In short, scholars agree that institutional change responds to actor’s will and creativity (agency), requires resources, and depends on the availability of opportunities (DiMaggio, 1988; Barley & Tolbert, 1997). For this thesis, we are interested in the agency of the involved actor(s).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) define agency as “a temporally embedded process of social engagement” (Dorado, 2005, p. 388) and suggest that it reproduces and transforms the world through the interplay of the habits, imagination, and judgement of actors. The emphasis is on its temporal embeddedness, which defines how actors may reproduce or transform institutions. An orientation towards the past encourages the selective reactivation of past patterns of thought and action. An orientation towards the present is common when actors make practical and normative judgements among alternate trajectories of action in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of evolving situations. Finally, an orientation towards the future enables the imaginative generation of possible future trajectories of action defined by actors’ hopes, fears, and desires.

These three temporal orientations operate in conjunction: all three are simultaneously involved in human agency but one will dominate. This thesis suggests that actors adopt one of three forms of agency depending on which one is the dominant temporal orientation: routine (Giddens, 1984) when the past is dominant; sense making (Weick K. , 1995; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) when the present is dominant; and strategic (DiMaggio, 1988) when the future is the dominant temporal orientation held by the actors.

Routine behaviours are common when the focus on the past is dominant. Actors are likely to re-enact past patterns of behaviour and thus bring stability to institutional fields. Sense making behaviours are probable when the present is the dominant temporal orientation. These behaviours are likely to be connected to processes of change occurring in conditions of uncertainty (Milliken, 1987; Weick, 1995; 1998). Finally, strategic behaviours encompass a future temporal orientation compatible with the imaginative generation of trajectories of action defined by actors' hopes, fears, and desires for the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). These behaviours take account of choice as well as cause-effect calculations (Alexander, 1992). This form of agency involves actors defining their valued interests and deciding on a particular course of action to serve them.

The three forms of agency are not independent. Routine behaviours are always, present even when the dominant orientation is the present or the future. Sense making is crucial in deciding among alternative paths when adopting a strategic plan of action (Dorado, 2005).

As mentioned before, we believe that changes in the task environment (contingencies) and the changes in the network (embeddedness) lead to changes in the temporal orientation of the involved actors. We have discussed the three forms of temporal orientations (routine, sense making, and strategic) which determine whether or not actors start entrepreneuring. Based on our review of the academic literature, the premise in this thesis is that a dominant 'strategic' temporal orientation leads to the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. We believe that this type of orientation is more future oriented, focused on continuing to reach the social objective.

We will analyze which temporal orientation is dominant, at which moment of the process, by reflecting with the actors on their orientation.

3. Method

3.1. Case-study

The theoretical background provides the starting point for the empirical research for this thesis. A case-study has been executed to collect data related to the subject of this thesis. "A case-study is an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and context are not clearly evident." (Yin, 2003, p. 18) "The power of a case study is to illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what results." (Schramm, 1971; cited in Yin, 2003, p.17) The interaction with people involved and making practically use of the findings secures not only theoretical implications but also a solid empirical foundation.

The empirical case-study for this thesis draws on a longitudinal single case-study. We have analyzed the process of members of Agricultural Nature Associations (ANA's) becoming social entrepreneurs. The members of the ANA's are concerned with the management, maintenance and development of natural, environmental and landscape values in an Eastern region of the Netherlands. Their main objective is to maintain and enhance the culturally unique landscape of their region. Due to changes in contingencies, embeddedness which made the involved actors change their orientation, they became involved with the 'Heat from Local Wood'(HLW)-project. The goal of this project is to initiate a market for biomaterial to be used for heating purposes. Eventually this has led to the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities.

3.2. Research methods & sources

The involvement of researchers at the University of Twente with the ANA's, lasted from September 2009 until January 2012. During this period a variety of data collection techniques were used to obtain data about the processes involving these actors becoming social entrepreneurs.

"Process data collected in real organizational context have several characteristics that make them difficult to analyze and manipulate. First, they deal mainly with sequences of 'events': conceptual entities that researchers are less familiar with. Second, they often involve multiple levels and units of analysis whose boundaries are ambiguous. Third, their temporal embeddedness often varies in terms of precision, duration, and relevance. Finally, despite the primary focus on events, process data tend to be eclectic, drawing in phenomena such as changing relationships, thoughts, feelings, and interpretations." (Langley, 1999, p. 692)

Moving from a shapeless 'data spaghetti' toward some kind of theoretical understanding that does not betray the richness, dynamism, and complexity of the data but is understandable and potentially useful to others, required strategy for sense making. Langley (1999) has described and compared a number of alternative generic strategies for the analysis of process data. For the analysis of the research we have combined elements for the generic strategies Langley (1999) discussed. But the main strategy which is applied in this thesis is 'temporal bracketing strategy'. This strategy allows us to decompose the entire process of actors becoming entrepreneurs into successive "periods". These periods do not have any particular theoretical significance. They are not "phases" in the sense of a predictable sequential process, but a way of structuring the description of events. These labels have been chosen, because there is a certain continuity in the activities within each period and there are certain discontinuities at its frontiers (Langley & Truax, 1994).

The main source of data of the case was in-depth interviews with several key members of the involved (organizations of) actors. This data was complemented with HLW-project related documentation, information on websites from involved organizations, a rapport on the role of the involved ANA's (Centrum voor Landbouw en Milieu, 2004), and the observation of a number of project related meetings.

The focus during data collection was on actions and interactions, why and how actors became involved. The chronological order of the actions and interactions was emphasized during the interviews.

The obtained data was used for categorization by using coding techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The outcomes were discussed by the author of this thesis and his supervisors from the University of Twente. This discussion allowed us to qualify essential information based on a consensus method. The criterion was that all involved researchers must have found consensus about the relevance of the information. This procedure allowed us for further analyzing and interpretation (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Twelve in-depth interview were conducted with the equivalent number of involved actors, in the region of the 'Achterhoek' (an agricultural area in the east of the Netherlands) in the period of November 22th to December 1th 2011. The respondents all represented organizations which had been (closely) involved with the HLW-project from the beginning. This allowed us to discuss all changes in contingencies, embeddedness and orientation, during the entire process of actors becoming social entrepreneurs, in the interviews.

The respondents were visited at their office or work location. Other possible actors related to the project were excluded. The reason for this limitation was the fact these actors did not participate in the project committee so there were no formal contact lines with these actors, and because of the limited amount of time available for the research for this thesis. However, for the analysis of the case-study this limited group of respondents is considered sufficient, taking into account their intense and (almost) constant involvement with the project and their diverse backgrounds.

One single semi-structured interview protocol was used for all interviews. The protocol allowed respondents to elaborate about their specific role and perspective considering the project and the interviewer to direct the focus to interesting issues that came up during the conversation. The focus within these interviews was on action(s) and chronologic sequence (temporal orientation) of actions and events. The interviews lasted about one hour each. The language of the interviews was Dutch, the native language of most respondents.

4. Findings

4.1. Case findings

Based on the obtained information, the following overview (figure 2) has been designed to summarize the findings of the case.

For analytical purposes we distinguish three different phases (Langley, 1999) in the process of the emergence of social entrepreneurial (S.E.) activities. We perceive the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities to be the result of a process. It is not a static step-by-step program. But for analytical purposes we have identified these three phases, in which we believe specific characteristics of the elements (contingencies, embeddedness, orientation, S.E. activities) are recognizable.

The phases are illustrated in the overview (figure 2). For each of these phases the elements of the suggested framework will be analyzed. We will analyze the changes in task environment and the changes in network and if these changes have influence on the temporal orientation of the involved actors. Also it is discussed whether changes in the orientation lead to the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities.

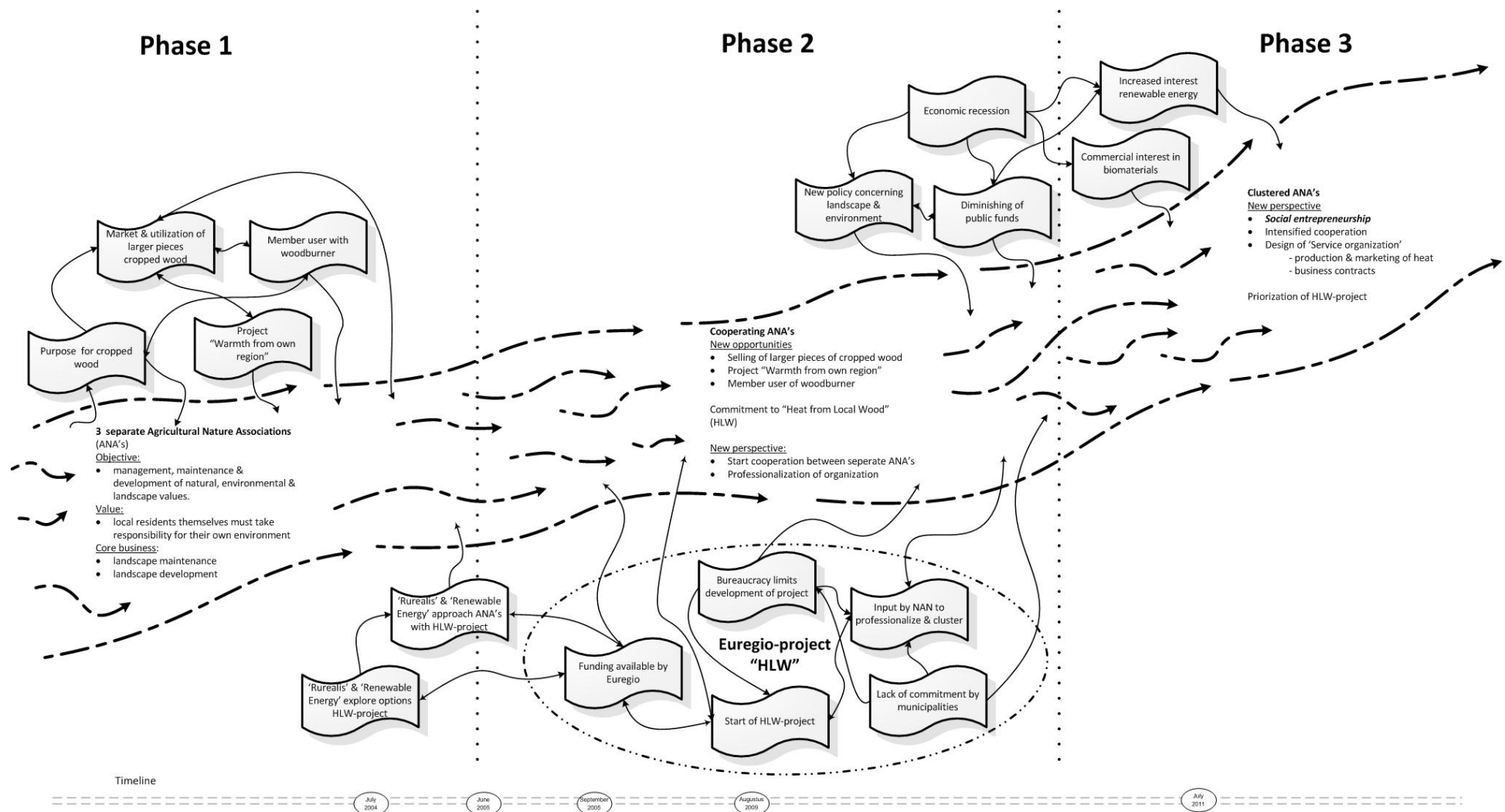


Figure 2: The emergence of social entrepreneurial activities.

Phase 1

- Contingencies: *The overall characteristic related to the contingencies for this phase is a **low level of uncertainty**. The members of the ANA's do not perceive a rise in the level of uncertainty during this phase. The market in which they operate might not be stable, especially related to their income, but the actors are used to fluctuations in 'market' conditions and do not see any reason to worry. Their activities are not under any particular threat.*
- Embeddedness: *The **level of embeddedness is low** during this phase. The position of the members of the individual ANA's in their networks and the structure of these networks is stable. The individual ANA's can be described as isolated networks, related to their activities, most of their ties are within their own ANA.*
- Orientation: *In this phase the dominant temporal orientation is **routine**. The members of the ANA's are conducting operations as usual and there is no direct need perceived to change the way how they do things. Their focus is on the past, and how they have used to do things always.*
- S.E. Activities: *In this phase the **emergence new entrepreneurial activities is negligible**. The ANA's are conducting business-as-usual. They are not actively looking for new opportunities, mobilizing resources or building an organization. They do seek alternative applications for cropped wood. The reason for this is that simply because they feel it is a waste of resources to burn the cropped wood. However, these efforts can be seen as experiments. The support for these is limited and now structural steps are made to exploit these initiatives.*

This phase of the process, no worth mentioning social entrepreneurial activities emerge. This is in line with the suggested framework. No drastic changes occur in the contingencies or the embeddedness, only small incremental changes. Therefore the orientation of the involved actors is not influenced, let alone changed.

The members of the ANA's simply conducted operations as usual. Their focus was on the management, maintenance and development of the natural environmental landscape. They believed that local residents (the members themselves) must take responsibility of their own environment. The involved actors were united in the ANA's to be the main contact with the government and other public bodies considering the local landscape in their region. They were solely concerned with effectively organizing public funding. With that funding, the members could execute their tasks, for a fitting return.

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

“In 2000 you could apply for public funding to execute landscape maintenance. Some of our members decided to combine their applications, for efficiency reasons. Nowadays, the ANA has a central role in applying for these funds for our members. We have trained a number of farmers (red. ANA members) as professional landscape managers. We, as ANA, hire them to execute the maintenance for all our members.”

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

“We, as ANA, bring in the commission from municipalities and other government bodies, to execute the landscape maintenance. We take care of the permits and put our people to work. All commissions are publicly funded. Applying for these funds is quite a job, you need to know where to look and how to get them.”

Building on their network ties the individual ANA's evolved into effective organizations during this phase. They gained a lot of experience and knowhow considering the management and development of the landscape. The core business remained the maintenance and plantation of landscape elements, such as hedgerows, coppices, ditches and ditch banks, fences, orchards and farmyard vegetation. But gradually the project portfolio was expanding. Forest maintenance, construction of new forests and, occasionally park maintenance, the construction of oak poles field barriers, construction of small bridges for hikers, placing signs and even taking part of data collection for research purposes. This expansion of the portfolio was in line with the dominant 'routine' orientation. The ANA's have always been involved with the management, development and maintenance of the local landscape. These activities were in line with this goal.

With their landscape maintenance activities the ANA's produced waste in the form of cropped wood. This wood had no use to the ANA's, therefore it was torched in remote fields. In line with their orientation some members considered this a waste of resources. So they started to look for other ways to utilize this material.

As one of the member of an ANA told us:

“The wood was burned near the element (red. landscape object, i.e. a hedge). That made me thinking: we are burning this wood for the birds, while I could use the heat in my stables. This made me look for wood-burners fuelled with cropped wood, to heat my stable.”

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

“There was a time that wood had an economical value for each agricultural business. You used the wood you cropped to make tools, as building material, as fuel. This good habit disappeared over the years. We wanted to restore some of the purposes cropped wood had, as timber or fuel instead of burning good wood in remote fields.”

At the moment the members started looking for, and trying, new ways to utilize the cropped wood, the ANA's were approached by two project bureaus to set-up a project to apply the cropped wood as chips to fuel wood burners. The goal was to initiate a market for renewable heat energy based on wood chips. This moment was the start of phase two in the process.

As one agent of a project bureau told us:

“Together with Petra (red. agent partner project bureau) I came up with the plan to initiate a market for biomaterial to be used for heating purposes. Our main goal was the maintain the characteristic landscape and to apply renewable energy. One of our first steps was to contact the owners of the landscape elements and the people involved with distribution/production of wood. Not much later we were talking with the coordinators of the ANA's to discuss our plans.”

Phase 2

Contingencies: *The level of perceived **uncertainty is increasing** in this phase of the process. The task environment of the ANA's is changing. The most prominent indicator for the increased uncertainty is anxiety among the members of the ANA's because of the announcement by the national government to reduce or perhaps even stop the funding for landscape maintenance, which is the main source of income for the ANA's. The contingencies start to shift and there is a growing need for the actors to reconsider their situation.*

- Embeddedness: *The **level of embeddedness is rising** during this phase. The position of the members of the individual ANA's in their networks and the structure of these networks is changing. The individual ANA's start to make new ties with each other. They start looking for ways to co-operate and coordinate their activities more efficiently. New networks are formed, for instance, with buyers of cropped wood and wood chips, and with the project bureaus promoting the idea of a market for renewable heat energy.*
- Orientation: *In this phase the dominant orientation is **sense making**. The members of the ANA's are trying to cope with the changing contingencies and how to perceive their new network (position). There is a growing need perceived to change the way how they do things but during this phase the ANA's are simply coping, struggling to get a grip on the changing circumstances.*
- S.E. Activities: *In this phase **social entrepreneurial activities start to emerge**. The ANA's are forced by the changing contingencies to change their orientation and their new network position and connections (ties) offer them new possibilities. They are forced to look actively for new opportunities. Meanwhile they start mobilizing resources to gain leverage over other players in their task-environment. The ANA's are putting financial resources together, to invest in shared tools and equipment. By co-operating, the ANA's form one united producer of cropped wood and wood chips. This way they try to gain full control over the essential resource for the slowly emerging market for biomaterial. The co-operation is also the start of building a network organization.*

This phase of the process, social entrepreneurial activities start to emerge. Changes in the contingencies and the embeddedness are becoming apparent. These are affecting the orientations of the involved actors.

Due to the announcement of the government that public funding for landscape activities could be cut or even be stopped completely, the ANA's became more eager to look for alternatives to fund their activities. This change in the task environment had a major influence on the orientation of the involved actors.

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

“Suppose we have seen the end of public funding for landscape maintenance, than we have to focus on cost recovery, which means we’ll be depended on revenues from wood exploitation.”

The new network connections the ANA’s started to develop with other ANA’s, other organizations and government bodies, provided the ANA’s with new perspectives on how they could accomplish their social goal of managing, developing and maintaining the local landscape.

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

“Working together with the other ANA’s has worked out very positively. We can coordinate our projects and even invest in expensive tools like a project management system. For our small ANA this would have been too expensive, combined with the other ANA’s we can effort to use this system.”

A market for wood-chips would create a possible way to dispose of the excess cropped wood. Utilization of the chips for renewable energy, locally produced and applied, was also in line with the ecological mission of the ANA’s.

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

“All of our activities are publicly funded. If you could realize other sources of revenue, you could reduce your costs. This allows the ANA to purchase new landscape elements. That is favorable.”

The foundation for the “Heat from Local Wood”-project (HLW) was founded. The project bureaus started to approach public and government organizations to get funding for this project. Dutch government bodies were not interested. Finally, the international funding bureau ‘Euregio’, showed interest. But, despite the growing enthusiasm on the side of the ANA’s, the start-up of the project did not go smooth.

The first steps in the HLW-project was to research the feasibility of a wood-chip market. In the meanwhile the ANA's were developing tools to further professionalize their operational tasks of 'harvesting' wood and distributing it among buyers. During this phase possible users were contacted to consider a wood burner to heat their buildings. The feasibility research showed a decent market for wood-chips could be supported by the collective ANA's. And some pioneers started to be interested in wood burners to heat their buildings.

As one of the early user told us:

"I was looking for alternative ways to heat my stables. The convention gas-burners I was using had negative side-effects on my chickens. During my search I was approached by one of the ANA member with the question if I possibly could be interested on heating my stables with wood-chips. I had a good feeling about the total idea of landscape maintenance and this way of heating my stables. So eventually I went for it, and this has had major positive effects on my business."

At a certain moment the Dutch national government announced public funding for landscape maintenance would indeed be cut drastically. Without additional funding the ANA's would no longer be able to perform their tasks. The wood-chip market was considered the new main source of revenue for the ANA's. But the market was not developing rapidly enough. This is the moment we go to phase three of the process.

Phase 3

Contingencies: *The **level of uncertainty is high** in this phase of the process. The task environment is rapidly undergoing various changes. The traditional source of funding of the activities of the ANA's is cancelled, external commercially oriented actors are moving in on the operational area of the ANA's and the economy is in a recession. This is raising the level of perceived uncertainty. The task environment is unstable and the actors need to reconsider their situation.*

Embeddedness: *The **level of embeddedness is high** during this phase. The position of the members of the individual ANA's in their networks and the structure of these networks is well-developed, growing and under constant change. The individual ANA's are intensifying their ties with the other ANA's and all of their newly established ties.*

- Orientation: *The **orientation of the actors is highly influenced** by changes in the contingencies and the embeddedness. The changes in contingencies force the actors to change their orientation and the changes in embeddedness lead to new perceptions which facilitate the needed change in their orientation. The dominant orientation, is strategic. The actors are future orientated.*
- S.E. Activities: *In this phase **social entrepreneurial activities emerge**. The ANA's are forced by pressing changes in the contingencies to change their orientation and new network increases the level of embeddedness. They are forced to exploit new opportunities. Resources (e.g., new public funding to initiate a market for biomaterial) are mobilized to be able to engage into new activities related to these opportunities. The ANA's start to form one united cluster organization.*

This phase of the process, social entrepreneurial activities emerge. Changes in the contingencies and the embeddedness are apparent. These are altering the orientation of the involved actors, which drive them to initiate social entrepreneurial activities.

The wood-chip market is considered the new main source of revenue for the ANA's. But the market is not developing rapidly enough. The wood burners are considered too expensive for some candidates and the municipalities never truly committed to support the project.

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

"Too few people are using wood-chips burners. They consider them to be too expensive. This is severely limiting the demand for wood chips."

To make matters even worse, other actors, commercial business entrepreneurs, started to show interest in biomaterial. They were threatening the revenue which the ANA's needed to continue their social tasks.

These changes in the contingencies and the negative associations the members of the ANA's had with the bureaucracy involved with the HLW-project, forced the ANA's to alter their orientation. The ANA's became strategically oriented and start to cluster and formed a business-type organization. The main idea was to become a strong powerful group, capable of directing the wood-chip market. Not simply selling wood chips, but offering heat as a product. This way the high initial investment of buying a wood burner is reduced and a steady demand is established.

As one of the coordinators of an ANA told us:

“The idea is to realize a so-called service bureau. We will offer our customers to provide them with all the heat they need for a fixed price under the current gas price. All troubles will be taken care of by our service bureau. The purchase, maintenance and fuelling of the wood burner etc. This will reduce the threshold to switch to wood chips as fuel. That way we create a healthy and steady revenue to do our work.”

4.2. Case reflection

Based on the perspectives discussed in the theoretical part of the thesis (see chapter 2), the case of the ANA's developing social entrepreneurial activities has been analyzed. This case allowed us to test the formulated premises. They have all been confirmed in this specific case.

The collected data provides evidence to support the suggested framework to explain the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. However, we have come across some findings we did not anticipate. The first is that the case provided us indications that the contingencies have a greater influence on changing the orientation of the actors than we originally anticipated. This becomes particularly clear when comparing the influence of contingencies with embeddedness. Secondly, on top of this unanticipated finding, a relationship between change in contingencies and change in embeddedness was found. And third, a relationship was found between changes in orientation and embeddedness.

4.2.1. Greater influence of contingencies

At the beginning of the process, phase 1 in the overview of the findings, ANA's were already involved with projects and activities closely related to the social entrepreneurial activities which started to emerge in phase 3. Small scale projects and initiatives of members of the individual ANA's were being executed. However, the uncertainty level (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Thompson, 1967) of the contingencies was not high (enough). This meant there was no direct need for the ANA's to start exploiting these activities on a more professional, entrepreneurial, scale. The ANA's were not triggered (yet) to become social entrepreneurs. When the uncertainty level rose, in phase 2 and especially phase 3 in the overview, then the necessity of the social entrepreneurial activities became prominent. That stimulated the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities.

We found a stronger relationship between change in contingencies and change in orientation, than we had anticipated originally. Within the field of contingency theory this relation has been discussed often before (Duncan, 1972; Miles, Snow, & Pfeffer, 1974; Osborn & Hunt, 1974). As we described in our framework we did expect a relationship between change in contingencies and change in orientation. However, the level of influence was higher than we anticipated. Our case suggests that, in our framework, change in contingencies is the main trigger for actors to start considering to initiate social entrepreneurial activities (change in orientation).

If we consider embeddedness of the ANA's at the same time, we did not find such a strong link between change in embeddedness and change in cognitive perspective (orientation) of the actors. In our case apparently, the degree of embeddedness has not such a strong influence as we anticipated. In our case we found that comprehension is not enough for actors to alter their orientation, and jump into action (S.E. activities). The realization that something has to, or could be changed, does not per se initiate that change. In our case we found this change had to be 'triggered', had to become more urgent, before actors changed their orientation.

Weick et al. (2005, p. 409) provide a possible explanation for this. They reason that "sense making involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing. Viewed as a significant process of organizing, sense making unfolds as a sequence in which people concerned with identity in the social context of other actors engage ongoing circumstances from which they extract cues and make plausible sense retrospectively, while enacting more or less order into those ongoing circumstances." It might be possible in our case that the actors are too focused on 'business as usual' and 'who we are as an ANA' (identity), that they are not open for other perspectives. They cling to their identity, unless they are forced by contingencies to change their way of operation.

4.2.2. Relationship between contingencies & embeddedness

In our case we found that the level of uncertainty has an influence on the degree of embeddedness. The level of uncertainty is part of change in contingencies in our framework. Therefore we found that there is a relationship between change in contingencies and change in embeddedness. The individual ANA's start to cooperate with each other at the moment their source of funding becomes unsecure. In other words their embeddedness changes when the level of uncertainty rises. The ongoing social ties that shape actor's expectations, motives and decision-making processes (Uzzi & Gillespie, 1999) are influenced by the change in contingencies. So a change in contingencies (rise of uncertainty level) triggered a change in embeddedness (new network ties). Originally we did not anticipate this relationship.

The business network theory (Hedaa & Törnroos, 2008) provides us a possible explanation for this. According to this, networks may be seen as event-based structures in context. In this we consider events to be an outcome of various external and internal elements at a moment in time. Hedaa and Törnroos (2008) indicate that event-based marketing and event network analysis in particular is a fruitful way to approach the embedded and temporal nature of (business) networks. Event networks highlight one important reality of business networks and their change in the context of time-space. Events are the engines for network development and are proposed to be specific types that add to our understanding of networks. If we relate this to our case, we focus on the external elements that contribute to occurring event. So events, changes in contingencies, directly influence the development of networks, in our framework change in embeddedness.

4.2.3. Relationship between orientation & embeddedness

The final unanticipated finding in our case, is the relationship between change in orientation and change in embeddedness. In phase 2 the ANA's started to review their own social position; their identity (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005). The members were discontent regarding the progress made in the HLW-project. This cognitive perspective (orientation) influenced the cooperation with the involved ANA's and the other partners in the HLW-project. The ANA's started to cluster, and form one united group in the network (degree of embeddedness). This altered the ties with the other actors in the HLW-project. Change in the orientation led to a change in embeddedness.

The field of business network provides a possible explanation for this. Within the business network approach, the interaction in a business relationship is strongly connected within time (Håkansson, Ford, Gadde, Snehota, & Waluszewski, 2009). Related to the dominant temporal orientation in our case, we can clearly see the relationship between time and changes in relationships (degree of embeddedness) of the involved actors.

Research on the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities, events as discussed in business networks and event network theory, offers an interesting perspective on our topic.

4.3. Discussion

The research goal of this thesis is to contribute to the theoretical and empirical understanding of social entrepreneurship. However, during our research we have limited our scope. The starting point for our research has been the empirical case of the members of the ANA's becoming social entrepreneurs. This has implications throughout the entire research of this thesis. Based on this case we have made considerations which stream of literature would be utilized in our framework.

We approached the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship as a temporally embedded process. If we had perceived the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities from another viewpoint, such as the “heroic” viewpoint (Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009; Dees, 1998; Reis, 1999; Brinkerhoff, 2001), than our framework would be completely different. In the field of social entrepreneurship there is an ongoing discussion which of these viewpoints is correct (Mair & Martí, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006).

The framework as discussed is founded on the embedded viewpoint. The other elements of the framework have been put in place in line of this reasoning. What if we did not make this decision the start with? That would have had major implications for the entire research as well as our findings. We believe we would never have found an explanatory framework such as we did. In other words, we could not be able to explain the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities.

The close link between empirics and our framework is what makes our framework valuable for this field of research. Our contribution to the field of social entrepreneurship is that we have found an explanation for the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities, based on the embedded viewpoint. This contribution has two important elements. The first is that we have designed an explanatory framework which was successfully used to explain the case. This enhances our comprehension of this phenomenon. The second is that we found this explanation based on the embedded viewpoint. This is in line with the stream of literature that considers actions of an individual actor or dyad not as an isolated event but results from many other reciprocal relationships (Mair & Martí, 2006; Smith & Stevens, 2010; Peredo & McLean, 2006). This finding supports this viewpoint on social entrepreneurship and contributes to solving the ongoing discussion in this field of research.

This finding also could have implications for other fields of research. We focused our research on social entrepreneurship. But our framework might also be applicable in other fields. It might be suitable for research in other fields, for example business entrepreneurship. Or the field of organization theory. These are closely related to the phenomenon we have investigated. Our framework could also explain the emergence of business entrepreneurs and the development of organizations. However, further research is necessary to support this notion.

4.4. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to solve the following problem statement: ‘What explains the emergence of social entrepreneurship?’. An embedded process-based perspective (van de Ven, 1992; Mair & Martí, 2006) was applied to formulate an explanatory framework consisting of three elements: change in contingencies, change in embeddedness and change in orientation.

To examine these elements we respectively used contingency theory (Scott, 1981; Thompson, 1967; Burns & Stalker, 1961), embeddedness theory (Granovetter, 1985; Dacin, Ventresca, & Beal, 1999; Gnyawali & Madhavan, 2001) and institutional theory (Dorado, 2005; Emirbayer & Mische, 1998) to examine the process of actors becoming social entrepreneurs.

The emergence of social entrepreneurial activities have been analyzed by applying entrepreneurship theory (Aldrich, 2005; Dorado, 2006).

We contribute to this field by showing social entrepreneurship as emerging from embedded and collective processes. This supports the line of thought in the work of Mair & Martí (2006) and Smith & Stevens (2010). Our research also shows the complexity of this process and which elements influence this process and especially how they do so.

In our research we have focused our efforts on an empirical case in which social entrepreneurial activities started to emergence. Our research has led to the design of a framework which explains the process of actors becoming social entrepreneurs. This is our contribution to this field. Explaining the process of the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities allows us to better comprehend this phenomenon.

The reflection provides us with new insights by applying perspectives from institutional theory and business network theory, on how social entrepreneurial activities emerge. Our most important finding is that contingencies have a greater influence on the process than embeddedness. We found that the degree of embeddedness is related to the cognitive process of the actors. It turns out comprehension is not enough for actors to alter their orientation, and jump into action (S.E. activities). In our case the actors held on to their identity (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005) until they were forced by change in contingencies to change. Their cognitive perspective needed to change before the actors could change their standpoint and become social entrepreneurs.

We found a number of interesting topics for further research. Some of these topics are related to enhancing/strengthening our framework. Other topics are taking our framework to other fields of research. The specific role of identity on change in embeddedness might be an interesting topic to enhance our framework. We have come across this relationship. It is an interesting issue how this cognitive process can affect the orientation related to the level of embeddedness. It appears to have quite an influence on this element in our framework. How does identity relate to embeddedness? If we can explain this relationship in detail, this might be a plausible extension of our framework. In the same category we find the topic of the connection between contingencies and embeddedness. How does this relationship develop? What can we learn about this relationship? It affects the process of the emergence of social entrepreneurial activities. We would like to understand this relationship better.

An interesting topic to take our framework to another level is to see if it can be applied in other fields such as business entrepreneurship and/or organization theory. We have discussed this possibility in the paragraph 4.3. It would be interesting to see if our framework could make a contribution to these fields. This fields are related to the field of social entrepreneurship. If you modify the framework to make it suitable to analyze the emergence of entrepreneurial activities or the emergence of organizational activities, it might explain those processes as well. If so, this would be a contribution to those fields and to the stream of literature which advocates the embedded-process orientation.

The limitation to our framework is that we have applied it only on one case. At this moment our data is too limited to be able to generalize our findings or to make any statements whether it is applicable in all cases of emerging social entrepreneurial activities. This would require more research.

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