The support function of social entrepreneurial ecosystems

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Abstract

Despite the clear contribution of ecosystem actors to the success of entrepreneurial ventures, only a few studies have elaborated on the support function of entrepreneurial ecosystems. We use the theoretical lens of pro-social behavior (Batson & Powell, 2003) and Adner’s (2017) “Ecosystem as Structure” theory to argue that there are three archetypes of support in ecosystems, i.e. altruistic support, designed support, and commercial support. Using a qualitative research of 74 semi-structured interviews and 10 focus groups conducted in Bolivia and Ecuador, we illustrate each archetype with insights from our respondents. We elaborate in-depth the three support function archetypes, describing the distinct activities, actors, positions and links. Without a clear understanding of the different archetypes of support, it would be difficult for both scholars and practitioners to design vibrant ecosystems in support of entrepreneurs.

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