

Constraints and Facilitators of Social Entrepreneurship Development in Mountainous Areas: The Case of Pyli in Greece

Papadopoulos Ioannis¹, Karagouni Glykeria¹, Trigkas Marios², Nakos Christos³, Bekou Konstantina³

¹Department of Wood & Furniture Design and Technology, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaly, Greece, ²Department of Forestry & Natural Environment, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki, Greece, ³Municipality of Pyli, Trikala Prefecture, Greece

ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship (SE) has been lately established as a potential strategy for the development of disadvantaged areas. However, in spite the fact that SE seems to be well suited to the crisis framework -especially the one in Greece nowadays- it is highly questionable if and how it can be implemented in rural mountainous areas where there is usually a low level of awareness and a number of weaknesses due to remoteness from the central governmental authorities. The present research purports to explore certain macro-level and contextual factors that stimulate or impede social entrepreneurship development and sustenance in the Municipality of Pyli, a mountainous area in Central Greece. It builds on a well-structured questionnaire using 1-5 Likert scale for the majority of the questions. The data were recorded, processed and analyzed via the statistical package SPSSWIN ver 20.0 and the appropriate tests needed. Such areas are quite common in Europe and constitute the most vulnerable entrepreneurial environments especially in times of recession. Results confirm the view that average people are not aware of the benefits of social entrepreneurship and indicate that women are more likely to be attracted. The role of local and central governmental authorities seems to be of core importance while education and training appears to be needed in order to stimulate and sustain SE. The study contributes mainly empirically to SE literature while it may add to the relevant theory regarding facilitators and constraints within the environmental context.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneur, Mountainous Areas, Constraints, Facilitators, Environmental Connect. AITHIKOS Project

INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship (SE) is a phenomenon that attracts the growing interest of practitioners, theorists and policy makers since it may offer solutions to socio-economic, environmental as well as cultural problems (e.g. Chell et al., 2016; Seelos, and Mair, 2005). Although it became popular due its non-profit and co-operative nature, today it is more known as the process of using market-based methods in order to address social problems (Grimes et al., 2013). Therefore, its principal focus seems to be its ability to address social needs, create social value and stimulate social change by generating jobs and permitting the creation or acquisition of goods and services (Borgaza et al., 2011). Theoretically, such models might be embraced by people to function and to be supported to work effectively. Especially when economies lie within recession, these types of entrepreneurship form a vehicle to “provide ready solutions to economic woes” (Chell, 2007).

A stream of SE literature focuses on the environmental context that may enhance or hinder the development of social entrepreneurship. This may regard political, social, economic, technological and cultural factors which, in turn, may be local, regional or national. Environmental factors constitute a quite extensive issue for general entrepreneurship research; however, relevant theoretical and empirical research appears to be rather scarce in the case of social entrepreneurship (Urbano et al., 2010).

The present research purports to shed light into this specific area of interest; i.e. to highlight factors that may stimulate social entrepreneurship and spot those that may put SE efforts in danger, in the very specific case of a mountainous area. Such areas are quite common in Europe and constitute the most vulnerable entrepreneurial environments especially in times of recession. The study contributes mainly empirically to SE literature while it may add to the relevant theory regarding facilitators and constraints within the environmental context.

The next section of this work attempts a short description of relevant theoretical considerations on social entrepreneurship; a brief reference in categories and criteria will establish the theoretical background of the research. The empirical part will outline the perceptions and views regarding constraints and facilitators of social entrepreneurship in a specific Greek mountainous area in Greece (Pyli, Region of Thessaly) within the current and long-lasting crisis framework. Statistical data will be discussed in order to produce useful insights about the evaluation of factors regarding the phenomenon under investigation. The concluding section includes implications for future research, limitations and some policy recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social entrepreneurship appears to confuse people even after many decades. Trexler (2008) had stated that it is a “simple term with a complex range of meanings”; his saying is still very popular among both theorists and practitioners. So far, it appears that research has focused on defining the phenomenon, set it apart from regular entrepreneurship (e.g. Arend, 2013; Mair and Marti´ 2006, Zahra et al., 2009) or add criteria such as the role of innovation (e.g. Mair and Marti´ 2006). On the other hand, empirical efforts are still scarce (Yiu et al., 2014) with case studies to dominate the empirical research (a review in Short et al., 2009). Furthermore, the empirical efforts focus mainly on SE outcomes while it appears that there is scarce empirical analysis on the individual drivers, pros and contras of the antecedents of social entrepreneurship (Lepoutre et al., 2013).

Definitions of social entrepreneurship have evolved over the years. Back in 1998, Dees described the “ideal social entrepreneur” as the change agent in the social sector with a mission to create and sustain social value by engaging innovation in the pursuit of new opportunities. With this definition, the SE concept turned from nonprofit and volunteering organizations to the pursuit of entrepreneurial activities with social goals (e.g. Miller et al., 2012). After an extensive review of SE definitions, Zahra et al. (2009) defined SE as *the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner*. The definition allows for a wide area of social entrepreneurial action. Actually, according to Lepoutre et al. (2013), there are three main social entrepreneurship categories: for profit, hybrid and NGOs. Hybrid enterprises combine both market-based and social logics and for-profit social enterprises exhibit high attention to social and environmental objectives. NGOs may be the traditional ones or a new type that combines their social mission with an innovative approach in achieving their goals.

In all cases, social entrepreneurs interact continuously with the context “in which they and their activities are embedded” (Mair and Marti´ 2006, p. 40). Social entrepreneurship has not evolved in a vacuum, but rather within a complex framework of political, economic, and social changes occurring at the global and local levels (Harding 2006; Urban, 2013). Therefore, it appears that the environment plays a significant role both in the decision to start a social enterprise as well as its sustenance (Urban, 2013). Within the entrepreneurship literature in general, macro-environment analysis is considered mandatory for “understanding market growth or decline, business position, potential and direction for operations” (Kotler, 1998). The identification of the several political, socio-economic and technological factors (Porter’s PEST analysis) and their impact on the business can clarify opportunities and support the creation of strategic plans. In the same line, this analysis regards the institutional framework of a society which comprises the fundamental political, social, and legal ground rules that establish the basis for strategic entrepreneurial choices (North, 1990). Accordingly, the investigation of the environmental context of specific areas may define, create or set limits to SE opportunities, affecting the scope, width and speed of the creation and development of social enterprises.

Within the SE literature and the role of the environment, Urbano et al (2010) have studied the impact of the institutional environment on SE in Catalonia, Spain using a case study methodology. Urban (2013) explored social entrepreneurship with in the emerging economy in South Africa in relation to three types of context (following Busenitz, Gomez, and Spencer, 2000): the regulatory environment which refers to the formally codified, enacted, and enforced structure of laws in a community, society, or nation; the normative dimension which determines the degree to which agents embrace creative entrepreneurial activity; and the cognitive dimension that reflects the knowledge and skills of potential entrepreneurs. The author concluded that favorable perceptions of the regulatory and normative dimensions are essential to increase social business practices. Griffiths et al., (2013) investigate the macro-level influences and factors that can stimulate or impede the emergence of social entrepreneurship.

A small stream of research has also focused on the role of national contexts and formal institutions in SE (Estrin, Mickiewicz, & Stephan, 2013; Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, & Shulman, 2009). As used here, the institutional configuration perspective recognizes the significant role of formal and informal institutions; this view has been discussed in extant research but has rarely been empirically tested. Stephan et al. (2015) consider that institutions may influence individual behavior, both as stimulants of motivation.

The Research Objective

Hence, based on the underlying ideas of the role and impact of the environment in fostering social entrepreneurship, the present study tries to outline the perceptions and views regarding constraints and facilitators of social entrepreneurship in a specific Greek mountainous area in Greece (Pyli, Region of Thessaly) within the current and long-lasting crisis framework.

Despite the importance of social entrepreneurship, it is still questionable whether the phenomenon has reached individuals mainly in remote and problematic areas. Are the average people aware of social entrepreneurship? Are they attracted by the SE alternative? What are the worst barriers to overcome? What could facilitate the creation of a social enterprise? What do people in disadvantaged areas need to start a social business? What are the major initiatives the State or Regional authorities should implement to create a promising environment for the efficient development of social entrepreneurship?

The research purports to offer insight on the nature of some dimensions of the institutional environment and its potential influence on social entrepreneurship, in terms of Greece's current socio-economic milieu. SE constraints and facilitators may delineate the right canvas enhancing the 'can-do' of potential social entrepreneurs in disadvantaged areas like the mountainous area of the Municipality of Pyli in Greece and changing the common belief that governments or big multinationals are the only job creators in such areas while self-employment cannot support sustainable entrepreneurship in a small market heavily hit by long-lasting socio-economic crisis.

METHODOLOGY

The research followed the quantitative research approach under the positivistic research philosophy. Research was conducted in 2016 i.e. the seventh year of the severe socio-economic crisis. The area of investigation hosts around 300 enterprises as registered by the relevant authorities. The sample was chosen to include respondents of different background. In order to collect the necessary data, a structured questionnaire was prepared and random sampling was engaged. Questions are short, precise and easy to be understood by the majority of respondents. Likert scale was used for the majority of the questions.

At the beginning of the research, the researchers performed content validity of the questionnaire; this regarded an extensive literature review and several conversations with experts on the social entrepreneurship issue. A pilot research included a sample of 10 respondents. It actually led to gaps and needs for further specification of the questions. Thus, the final questionnaire was improved (Dillman, 2000).

The research was conducted by skilled researchers who addressed the entrepreneurs or executive members of the firms by personal face-to-face interviews. The questionnaire consisted of three groups and a total of 28 questions. The first group consisted of eight questions regarding the level of familiarization and information of respondents regarding the concepts of social economy and social entrepreneurship. The second group of seven questions investigated the factors that impact development and existence of social entrepreneurship in the mountainous area of Pyli. The third group of questions offered information about the respondents' profile such as age, sex, educational level, type of business and profession, income etc. This profile is presented in Table 1.

The data were recorded, processed and analyzed via the statistical package SPSSWIN ver 20.0 and the appropriate tests for frequency (Frequencies), descriptive statistics (Descriptives), variable comparison analysis (Crosstabs), Factor Analysis and Correlation analysis (Person correlation) were conducted, in order to derive critical conclusions in regard of the issue under investigation.

The Area Under Investigation

This paper reports a quantitative research in the Municipality of Pyli, at Trikala Prefecture in the Region of Thessaly, Greece. Municipality of Pyli lies on a "geographical zone" in the southwestern part of Trikala Prefecture. The area includes highlands and lowlands (dynamic) local districts, according to Directive 75/268/EEC. In total, the area includes 43 out of 146 local and community districts of Trikala Prefecture, while 33 of them are characterized as highlands and 10 are characterized as dynamic (lowlands).

According to the data of the 2001 and 2011 census of the Hellenic Statistical Service (EL.STAT), a depopulation of the area by 10.55% is observed over the last decade. The high dependency ratio (0.61) is considered to be evidence of unsatisfactory

economic development perspective in the area. Furthermore, in regard of the ageing index in the area of 2001, the ratio is 1.65 (165 elderly for every 100 children) while the economically active population in 2001 is amounted to be 5.880 people, with 5.290 employed people (percentage 89.97%) and 590 unemployed people (percentage 10.03%). According to the data of EL.STAT., the percentage of the unemployed people by 18.17% and 34.17% in the last 10 and 20 years respectively.

Local economy and employment are mainly based in agriculture and it's interdependence with the livestock production in the mountainous areas of the region, by creating a strong relationship for the productive sector of local economy. Forest exploitation in the area is limited to the production of forest products, especially timber and forage production. The manufacturing activity in the area focuses on the exploitation, processing and the utilization of the products of the primary sector, mainly with the production of dairy and wood-furniture products. There are a few small enterprises in the area, most of which are family enterprises. Because of their small size, the enterprises cannot achieve economies of scale which would make their products competitive not only among products from countries with low labor costs, but also among products from developed countries.

Tertiary sector constitutes the 43.8% of the employment in the Municipality of Pyli. There is a significant increase in tourist accommodation units in the last few years in the study area. Since 1992, there has been an increase (about 60%) in tourist accommodation units in the area.

RESULTS

The results indicate that the majority of the residents of the Pyli area are rather unfamiliar with the concepts of social entrepreneurship and social economy (Papadopoulos et al., 2016). However, the 96.9% of the respondents stated at the end of the interview that the issues got their interest. More precisely, a 44.6% stated that social enterprises could definitely support the effort to confront the problems caused by the severe socio-economic crisis. The same percentage indicated their will to participate in a social enterprise targeting social benefit at least for the local community. Regarding the gender, it is quite interesting that all females were positive although somewhat hesitant in participating in the creation of a social enterprise. Consequently, the negative answers belonged only to males. The female predominance is in line with relevant literature (e.g. Haugh, 2005). According to Levie and Hart (2011), child-rearing duties increase the awareness of women to pressing social issues in the community.

Age appeared to play its role as well; crosstabs correlation indicated a statistically significant relationship between the intention to participate in a social enterprise and age (Cramer's $V=0.301$ for a significance level $>95\%$ Approx. Sig= 0.019). Older respondents were keener to participate. This is also in line with literature on entrepreneurship in general and social entrepreneurship in particular. Levie et al. (2006) related the tendency to SE in older ages, while they claim that middle-agers tend more to become active entrepreneurs than turn to social entrepreneurship. In the same vein, according to Ladeira et al., (2013), in Israel 58% of the SE founders were women, and a 90% were over 40 years of age.

Table 1: The profile of the respondents in the mountainous area of pyli

Sex	Percentage	Studies	Percentage	Profession	Percentage
Male	69.7	Postgraduate	4.7	Civil Servant	37.5
Female	30.3	Bachelor	34.4	Forest-worker	28.1
Age		IEK	7.8	Freelancer	12.5
21-40 years	35.	Secondary school	35.9	Stock-breeded	7.8
41-60 years	58.5	Primary school	17.2	Unemployed	6.3
>60 years	6.2			Farmer	3.1
					???
Income (€/year)		Population of place of residence (persons)		Private employee	1.6
<5,000 €	33.9	<100	21.9	Entrepreneurs	1.6
5-10,000 €	27.4	101-500	20.3	Housekeeping	1.6
10-15,000 €	21.0	501-1,000	14.1		
15-20,000 €	12.9	1,000-2,000	4.7		
>20,000 €	4,8	2,000-5,000	12.5		
		>5,000	26.6		

On the other hand, it appeared that neither the educational level nor the family income affected this intention of the surveyed sample. However, this is not questionable, since there is no consensus in literature so far in regard of these two parameters. For instance, according to GEM (2004), the social entrepreneur is someone who “is older, usually a woman, with high levels of education and income” while in Denmark those involved in social entrepreneurship are of higher incomes and levels of education GEM (2009); on the contrary, Yiu et al. (2014) claim that lower educational background spur agents to engage in more social entrepreneurial activities.

The present paper focuses on the perceptions of the respondents regarding the environmental context; i.e. the political-structural, economic, social, and cultural trends that might influence the development of social entrepreneurship in their area.

Accordingly, bureaucracy has been rated as the most significant constrain in regard of the creation of a new enterprise as well as during its operation especially under the quite novel and unknown to public servants form of social entrepreneurship (1.64). The inadequate education regarding social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills in general for the locals was rated as the second barrier (1.67), while the rather high production costs (1.73) seemed to be a further constraint of the development of social entrepreneurship (Table 2).

The constraints that are presented in Table 2 are correlated; actually, the relevant analysis using the Pearson correlation coefficient (Pcc) indicated the following positive or negative relations:

- Bureaucracy and all kind of administrative difficulties that appear when agents try to create or run a business seem to affect to a significant level:
 - a) The ability of the businesses to adapt to the new market trends and demands which are changing very fast and in unexpected ways (Pcc = 0.444 for significant level=0.01);
 - b) The level of technical and organizational support of the business agents since they consume their time and money in non-production bureaucratic processes (Pcc = 0.383 for significant level=0.01);
 - c) In deepening the gap between the entrepreneurial world and the institutions at local or national level due to the increase of mis-trust and even negative feelings for the public sector (Pcc = 0.381 for significant level=0.01); and
 - d) The maintenance of inadequate expert knowledge, training and development of skills due to the need to focus on their every-day practical problems and the increasing mistrust in relevant offers by the state or state-supported institutes (Pcc = 0.361 for significant level=0.01).
- The difficulty to confront the competition of similar business at national level seems to be due to:
 - a) Inadequate expert knowledge, training and development of skills (Pcc = 0.264 for significant level=0.05), and

Table 2: Barriers of social entrepreneurship development in the mountainous area of Pyli (Likert scale: 1-5; 1 = very important)

Barriers	Mean	Standard deviation
Bureaucracy	1.64	1.07
Inadequate education regarding social entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial skills in general	1.67	1.19
High production costs	1.73	0.99
Lack of links among the institutions and enterprises of the area	1.95	1.03
Severe environmental legislation	1.98	1.02
Small size of enterprises	2.00	1.10
Weaknesses in the organization and operation of cooperative associations	2.10	1.10
Low-level technical and organizational support of producers	2.15	1.30
Inability to exploit the opportunities due to the various subsidy projects	2.21	1.09
Inability of existing enterprises to adapt to the new market conditions	2.23	1.09
Problems due to the exclusion of certain population groups of mountainous areas in regards of entrepreneurial opportunities	2.29	1.14
A significant number of non-patented or protected products	2.31	1.24
Low level of competitiveness and use of the area's competitive advantages	2.31	1.14
Inadequate supply of expertise, relevant education/training and skills	2.31	1.40
Geographical exclusion	2.45	1.37
Introversion and inability to form extrovert strategies	2.66	1.31
Significant competition from other relevant business in Greece	2.92	1.18

- b) The local introversion and the inability to form satisfactory and efficient extrovert strategies (Pcc = 0.259 for significant level=0.05) which in turn seems to enhance the inability of the businesses a) to adapt to the new market trends and demands (Pcc = 0.501 for significant level=0.01) and b) to exploit the various subsidy projects in Greece (Pcc = 0.501 for significant level=0.01).
- The weaknesses in the organization and operation of the co-operative associations create significant problems regarding a) the exclusion of certain population groups of mountainous areas in regard of entrepreneurial opportunities (Pcc = 0.477 for significant level=0.01) and b) the inability of the businesses to adapt to the new market trends and demands (Pcc = 0.369 for significant level=0.01).
- The low-level technical and organizational support of producers appears to affect a) the level of competition and the exploitation of the physical and other competitive advantages of the area (Pcc = 0.488 for significant level=0.01) and b) the ability of the enterprises to co-operate with local and national institutes (Pcc = 0.469 for significant level=0.01).

Reflecting the hesitation of the respondents that were in favor of the development of social entrepreneurship but also conscious of the significant constraints of the environmental context as evident above, Figure 1 presents the major areas of SE support according to the results. Subsidies of the initial business plans seem to be the most important issue (1.70) indicating both the lack of investment funds within the crisis framework as well as their familiarization with the EU or State support in former entrepreneurial undertakings; b) the creation of specific funding mechanisms which should focus on SE (1.73) indicating a wish and tendency for continuation of the SE phenomenon in a crisis-hit nation; c) the development of collaborations at local level (1.80); d) education / training of public servants regarding social economy and entrepreneurship (1.81) and e) the counseling support by Academia and other expertise (1.82), (Likert scale 1-5, 1= very important).

In regard of the socio-cultural level of the environmental context for the development of social entrepreneurship, education and training appear to be of significant importance. More specifically, 87.9% of the respondents state that further education on production technologies (wood and food processing, farming, livestock etc.) related with the main business activities should be vital for SE development. Besides this type of knowledge, training is needed in regard of SE funding mechanisms (84.4%); entrepreneurship and innovation principles in general (83.9%) and business planning processes (79.7%). A special interest in renewable energy sources brings this educational need in the fifth position (78.7) (Table 3).

According to the results, local self-government authorities can support the SE development in the area under research mainly by providing motives to locals to develop social entrepreneurship (1.56) and by promoting the concept in order to make it more familiar through seminars and workshops (1.76). Collaborations with neighboring municipalities and the regional authorities (1.90), the creation of incubators (1.97) and the development of a five-year business plan (1.98) could further facilitate SE development in the area regarding always the results analysis. (Table 4).

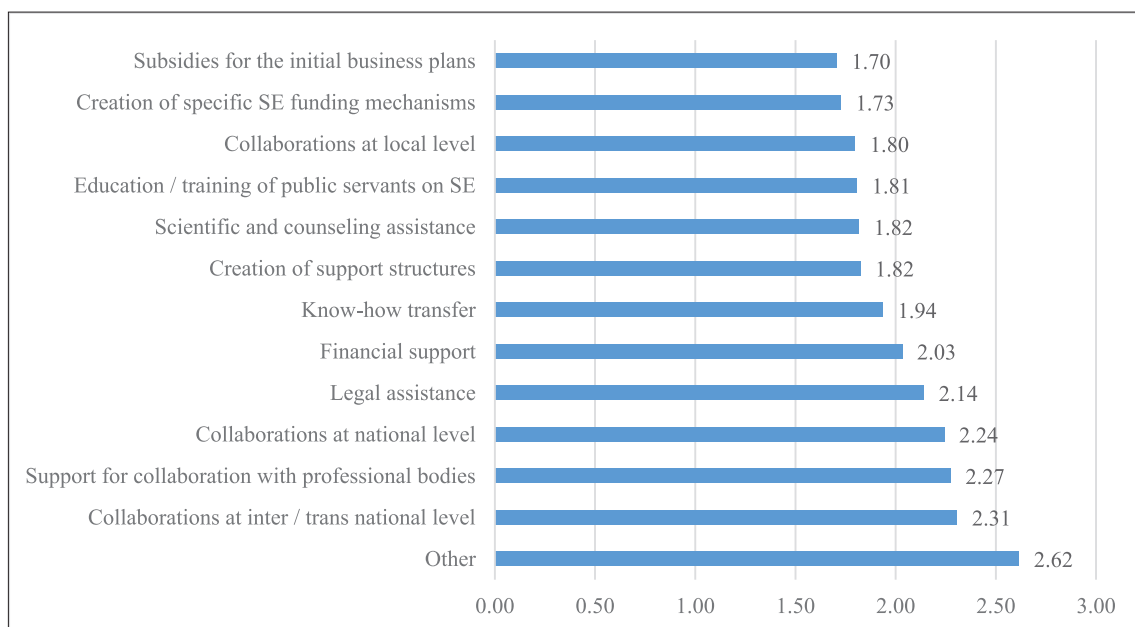


Figure 1: Major areas for the support of social entrepreneurship development in the mountainous area of Pyli (Likert scale: 1-5; 1= very important)

Table 3: Suggested subjects of education/training/counseling support in regard of SE development in the mountainous area of Pyli (Likert scale: 1-5; 1 = extremely important)

Rate subjects of education	Means	(1) Extremely important	(2) Very important	(3) Quite important	(4) Somewhat important	(4) Unimportant	(1)+(2)
Production technologies	1.43	75.9	12.1	6.9	3.4	1.7	87.9
SE funding mechanisms	1.56	70.3	14.1	7.8	4.7	3.1	84.4
Entrepreneurship and innovation principles	1.62	59.7	24.2	12.9	0.0	3.2	83.9
Business planning	1.72	57.8	21.9	14.1	3.1	3.1	79.7
Renewable energy sources	1.75	59.0	19.7	13.1	3.3	4.9	78.7
Protection and management of the natural environment	1.78	65.1	9.5	11.1	11.1	3.2	74.6
Institution framework for the SE creation and development	1.80	53.3	20.0	20.0	6.7		73.3
Product certification and patenting	1.82	52.5	21.3	21.3	1.6	3.3	73.8
Tourism and agro-tourism as SE	1.85	52.5	23.0	18.0		6.6	75.4
SE marketing	2.08	43.5	27.4	11.3	12.9	4.8	71.0
Circulareconomyissues	2.08	45.0	21.7	18.3	10.0	5.0	66.7
Development of co-operatives	2.31	36.1	21.3	21.3	18.0	3.3	57.4
Cultural issues	2.41	36.5	25.4	12.7	11.1	14.3	61.9
ICT application	2.79	29.5	19.7	14.8	14.8	21.3	49.2
Other	2.89	21.4	17.9	28.6	14.3	17.9	39.3

Table 4: SE development facilitating initiatives for the local authorities (Likert scale: 1-5; 1 = very important)

id	Facilitating initiatives of municipality	Mean	Standard deviation
1.	SE creation motivational initiatives	1.56	1.07
2.	Workshops/seminars	1.76	1.07
3.	Cooperation with neighboring municipalities and the regional authorities	1.90	1.20
4.	Development of SE incubators	1.97	1.05
5.	Development of a five-year action plan for the local SE development	1.98	1.36
6.	Constant information on SE issues/creation of specific SE portal at the Municipality's webpage	2.02	1.32
7.	Co-operation with the central government	2.09	1.34
8.	Organization/participation in trade shows	2.15	1.29
9.	Promotion of networking/creation of SE clusters	2.26	1.30
10.	Organization of B2B meetings	2.28	1.14
11.	Other	2.50	1.27

Cronbach's Alpha (= 0.906) indicates that the deterministic variables of the research constitute compact and reliable structures, able to contribute to the measurement of the agent to which they belong. The high communalities produced by the Factor Analysis indicating the amount of variance in each variable of the first column (Table 4) that is accounted for, indicate that all variables co-relate with some other agent. The Total Variance Explained of Factor Analysis indicates that the calculated eigenvalues are also quite high only for two groups that contain the factors of the first column in Table 4. These two groups are then included in the analysis, since they actually explain a satisfactory 67.3% of the total variation (bigger than 50%; Siomkos and Vasilikopoulou 2005).

Furthermore, factor analysis indicated, after matrix rotation, that all ten variables of Table 4 appear in two groups; the first group regards the variables (2, 7, 3, 4, 8 and 1) and the second one the rest (9, 5, 10, 6). The first group reflects facilitating initiatives to support the preparation of SE creation while the second one to support the actual creation and sustenance of established social enterprises or a cluster of social businesses (Table 5).

The two groups actually explain the 77.6% of the total variation (Eigenvalues).

Table 5: Rotated component matrix of SE development facilitating initiatives for the local authorities

id	Facilitating initiatives of municipality	Component	
		1	2
1.	Workshops/seminars	0.900	
2.	Co-operation with the central government	0.859	
3.	Cooperation with neighboring municipalities and the regional authorities	0.727	
4.	Development of SE incubators	0.716	
5.	Organization/participation in trade shows	0.677	
6.	SE creation/motivational initiatives	0.473	
7.	Promotion of networking/creation of SE clusters		
8.	Development of a five-year action plan for the local SE development		0.852
9.	Organization of B2B meetings		0.828
			0.603
10.	Constant information on SE issues/creation of specific SE portal at the Municipality's webpage		0.598

DISCUSSION

After the global crisis in 2008, social problems are dominant in both developed and developing countries. Social entrepreneurship seems to be able to confront them by the generation of social value especially in highly disadvantaged areas. In this context, specific environmental factors that affect the emergence and implementation of social enterprises become of core importance; however they remain unexplored. This research tries to outline the perceptions and views regarding constraints and facilitators of social entrepreneurship in a specific Greek mountainous area in Greece (Pyli, Region of Thessaly) within the current and long-lasting crisis framework.

According to the findings, social entrepreneurship seems to be rather unknown to most Greeks while its nature and benefits are quite ambiguous. However, when explained, it seems to attract interest mainly among women.

A core conclusion of the research is that social entrepreneurship, similar to usual entrepreneurship, is driven by combinations of factors. Bureaucracy appears to be the core hindering factor for any entrepreneurial activity, social or not especially when combined with mistrust of the public sector and the estimations that the SE framework is a new area for the public decision-makers. The deep antipathy to bureaucracy constitutes one of the central critiques of the public sector been considered as source of unreasonable waste of time and money as well as a sample of inefficiency. It is also claimed to be responsible for the inability of Greek SMEs to follow the global market trends or become extrovert. Therefore, it appears that the elimination of unnecessary bureaucracy is a key concept in encouraging people to try social entrepreneurship.

One of the key external factors in order to develop the necessary infrastructure to support social is according to the findings, the emphasis on entrepreneurship education and training. This ranges from basic knowledge on entrepreneurial issues and skills' development to specific knowledge on SE funding mechanisms and business management. It is quite interesting that respondents are aware of weaknesses in their current businesses' basic knowledge. This is in line with relevant literature; for instance, Piasecki and Rogut (2004) suggest paying special attention to education and training provision besides market institutions and the banking system.

Such knowledge provision and training demands sufficient physical and social infrastructure as well as a certain quality level of local institutions. The weaknesses as highlighted by the research indicate that an efficient SE development in the mountainous area of Pyli demands significant policies and measures aimed at overcoming barriers to social enterprise development. Institutional development is unanimously central to the successful implementation of all these suggestions and should go hand in hand with greater local self- governance.

How can social entrepreneurship be encouraged in disadvantaged mountainous areas? According to the respondents, local authorities and communities together with the regional and state governance have to create and implement appropriate policy priorities in such regions emphasizing their applicability to the specific needs of the local economies. This issue highlights the importance of local development partnerships that include representatives of government, local authorities, agencies,

professional associations and community organizations extending collaboration with neighboring areas as well. Indicative activities could be awareness campaigns to support the new SE phenomenon and to strengthen entrepreneurial culture and spirit as well as appropriate motivation initiating a long term learning process; for example, the EU's Leader+ programs or similar ones could extend to establish local action groups, raising awareness for SE development action and representing a strong „bottom-up“ community-based approach to SE development. In practical terms, support can also regard subsidy initiatives and relevant projects and the creation of specific funding mechanisms

The findings seem to provide strong implications for both practice and theory. From a practical point of view, agents aspiring to start a social enterprise should be well aware of the unstable institutional framework, the non-existent relevant legislation and the unfavorable conditions in Greece at least. A number of conflicting pressures and constraints may hinder even well-prepared business plans and aspirations.

The study also contributes to the provision of a potentially transferable set of policy principles that may be used to guide social entrepreneurship policy development in disadvantaged areas.

Public policy makers need to outline an appropriate institutional framework in order to encourage the development and support the sustenance of social entrepreneurship by developing and promoting positive SE models to influence social attitudes towards social entrepreneurship. They have to take into consideration that there is no SE background and therefore they have to curve the way to this new entrepreneurial mode; social entrepreneurship has to be portrayed as an alternative process explaining that it catalyzes socio-economic change and that it varies according to the different environments (Mair and Marti, 2006). The policy principles can be further elaborated to suit the local needs; for example, in cases of little or no entrepreneurial culture, emphasis may be given to links with educational institution and other advisers, while a separate part of policies could focus on institutions and self-government authorities' role. Indicatively, it is highly questionable whether people of these organizations are really aware of the benefits provided by social entrepreneurship or the ways to implement it and promote collective well-being serving the community. Moreover, the use of formal and informal collaborations and the creation of networks can facilitate financial support mechanisms, learning and training, extroversion and SE sustenance.

In terms of academic relevance, the study contributes adding to the SE theory in regard of the analysis of the impact of certain contextual variables and more precisely a number of constraints and facilitators. Social entrepreneurship cannot flourish in all environments; instead the existence of an enabling environment is quite critical. This means that there are certain preconditions to be fulfilled such as central authorities' commitment, elimination of bureaucratic obstacles, knowledge on entrepreneurship, development of collaborations, and active involvement of private and public institutions. Therefore, there are certain factors that shape specific social entrepreneurial goals, behaviors, and intentions. The study further adds to empirical research on social entrepreneurship.

CONCLUSIONS

The present research purported to explore certain macro-level and contextual factors that stimulate or impede social entrepreneurship development and sustenance in the Municipality of Pyli, a mountainous area in Central Greece. Results confirmed the view that average people are not aware of the benefits of social entrepreneurship and indicated the core role of women in encouraging SE development in the area. The role of local and central governmental authorities seems to be of core importance in order to eliminate the negative impact of constraints such as bureaucracy and to foster institutional support for SE development. This denotes the significant role of active governments confirming former relevant theories. Education and training regarding entrepreneurship itself as well as more specific business subjects such as production technologies appears to be needed in order to stimulate and sustain SE. Furthermore, collaborations and networking enhance the possibility for success in SE efforts. The study contributes mainly empirically to SE literature in terms of policy making, while it may add to the relevant theory regarding facilitators and constraints within the environmental context.

The results of the research bear certain limitations. Firstly, the size of the sample and the lack of sample diversity are significant drawbacks; the field study was limited to only one geographically bounded sample limiting the generalizability of the findings. However, this choice increased the internal validity and provided the main contribution of the study highlighting the significance of bottom-up approach of every single area of interest when regarding social entrepreneurship and policy making. Furthermore, the questionnaire focused on very specific variables.

Researchers are welcomed to extend the questionnaire including the institutional and environmental context as offered in the general entrepreneurship literature. Further research could also attempt to replicate similar analyses in bigger samples, different geographic, sectoral and territorial contexts, exploring further the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research leading to these results has received funding from the EEA Mechanism 2009-2014, under Project Contract n° 3580 and under the title “Establishment of a Supporting Mechanism for the Development and Promotion of Social Entrepreneurship for Populations of Mountainous Areas”.

REFERENCES

- Arend, R. (2013). ‘Commentary on: Venturing for Others with Heart and Head: How Compassion Encourages Social Entrepreneurship’. *Academy of Management Review*, 38(2), 313-315.
- Borzaga C, Depedri S, Tortia E (2011) “Organisational variety in market economies and the role of co-operative and social enterprises: a plea for economic pluralism”. *J Co-op Stud* 44(1):19–30
- Busenitz, L.W., C. Gomez, and J.W. Spencer. 2000. ‘Country Institutional Profiles: Unlocking Entrepreneurial Phenomena.’ *Academy of Management Journal* 43 (5): 994–1003.
- Chell, E., Spence, L. J., Perrini, F., & Harris, J. D. (2016). “Social entrepreneurship and business ethics: does social equal ethical?”. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 133(4), 619-625.
- Chell, E., (2007). “Social enterprise and entrepreneurship. Towards a convergent theory of the entrepreneurial process”. *International small business journal*, 25 (1), 5–26.
- Dees, J. G. (1998). The meaning of social entrepreneurship, Available at: <http://www.redalmarza.cl/ing/pdf/TheMeaningofsocialEntrepreneurship.pdf> (Accessed at 7 August 2016)
- Dillman, D. A. (2000). Mail and internet surveys: The tailored design method (Vol. 2). New York: Wiley.
- Estrin, S., Mickiewicz, T., & Stephan, U. (2013). “Entrepreneurship, social capital, and institutions: Social and commercial entrepreneurship across nations”. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 37(3): 479–504.
- GEM (2004), Acs, Z. J., Arenius, P., Hay, M., & Minniti, M. (2004). Global entrepreneurship monitor
- GEM (2009), Bosma, N. S., & Levie, J. (2010). Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2009 Executive Report.
- Grimes, M. G., McMullen, J. S., Vogus, T. J., & Miller, T. L. (2013). ‘Studying the origins of social entrepreneurship: compassion and the role of embedded agency’. *Academy of management review*, 38(3), 460-463
- Griffiths Mark D., Lisa K. Gundry, Jill R. Kickul, (2013) “The socio-political, economic, and cultural determinants of social entrepreneurship activity: An empirical examination”, *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, Vol. 20 Iss: 2, pp.341 - 357
- Harding, R., 2006. Social entrepreneurship monitor. London: London Business School. Available from: http://www.london.edu/assets/documents/PDF/Gem_Soc_Ent_web.pdf [Accessed 8 January 2008].
- Haug, Helen. (2005). A research agenda for social entrepreneurship. *Social Enterprise Journal*, Volume Number 1, Issue 1. March 2005, pp.1-13.
- Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL. STAT.).Pireus: EL. STAT. [Accessed 26 April 2016]. Available from: <http://www.statistics.gr/>
- Ioannidis, St., Tsakanikas, A., and Xatzixristou St., 2010. The entrepreneurship in Greece 2009- 2010: Looking out of the crisis, GEM.
- Kotler, P. (1998). Marketing management—Analysis, planning, implementation, and control (9th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Ladeira, B., Martins, F., & Vier Machado, H. (2013). “Social entrepreneurship: A reflection for adopting public policies that support the third sector in Brazil”. *Journal of technology management & innovation*, 8, 17-17.
- Lepoutre, J., Justo, R., Terjesen, S., & Bosma, N. (2013). Designing a global standardized methodology for measuring social entrepreneurship activity: the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor social entrepreneurship study. *Small Business Economics*, 40(3), 693-714
- Levie, J., & Hart, M. (2011). “Business and social entrepreneurs in the UK: Gender, context and commitment. International” *Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship*, 3(3), 200-217.
- Levie, J., Harding, R., Brooksbank, D., Hart, M., Jones-Evans, D., and O’Reilly, M. (2006). Measuring Social Entrepreneurship: Lessons from Three Years of Experimentation by the UK GEM team. Paper presented at the Babson-Kauffman Entrepreneurship Research Conference, Madrid, June
- Mair, J., & Marti, I. (2006). “Social entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction, and delight”. *Journal of World Business*, 41(1), 36–44.
- Miller, T. L., Grimes, M. G., McMullen, J. S., & Vogus, T. (2012). “Venturing for Others with Heart and Head: How Compassion Encourages Social Entrepreneurship”. *Academy of Management Review*, 37(4), 616-640
- North, D. 1990. Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance. New York: Norton.
- Piasecki B., Rogut A. (2004) Poland: the Zary and Bialystock regions. In: Labrianidis L. (ed.): The Future of Europe’s Rural Peripheries. Ashgate, Aldershot and Burlington
- Porter, M. E. (1980). Industry structure and competitive strategy: Keys to profitability. *Financial Analysts Journal*, 36(4), 30-41.
- Seelos, C., & Mair, J. (2005). “Social entrepreneurship: Creating new business models to serve the poor”. *Business horizons*, 48(3), 241-246
- Siomkos, G. & Vasilikopoulou, K. (2005). Application of analysis methods at the market research. Publications: Ath. Stamoulis. (In Greek)

- Stephan, U., Uhlaner, L. M., & Stride, C. (2015). "Institutions and social entrepreneurship: The role of institutional voids, institutional support, and institutional configurations". *Journal of International Business Studies*, 46(3), 308-331.
- Trexler, J. (2008). "Social entrepreneurship as an algorithm: Issocial enterprise sustainable? Emergence"*Complexity and Organization*, 3(10), 65-85.
- Urban, B. (2013). Social entrepreneurship in an emerging economy: A focus on the institutional environment and social entrepreneurial self-efficacy. *Managing Global Transitions*, 11(1), 3.
- Urbano, D., Toledano, N., & Soriano, D. R. (2010). "Analyzing social entrepreneurship from an institutional perspective: evidence from Spain". *Journal of social entrepreneurship*, 1(1), 54-69.
- Yiu, D. W., Wan, W. P., Ng, F. W., Chen, X., & Su, J. (2014). "Sentimental Drivers of Social Entrepreneurship: A Study of China's Guangeai (Glorious) Program. 社会创业与情操驱动力：中国光彩事业研究." *Management and Organization Review*, 10(1), 55-80.
- Zahra, S. A., Gedajlovic, E., Neubaum, D. O., & Shulman, J. M. (2009)." A typology of social entrepreneurs: Motives, search processes and ethical challenges". *Journal of business venturing*, 24(5), 519-532