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The Nonprofit Business Models: A Bourdieusian Perspective

This thesis aims to understand the business models of NPOs using a paradigm shift that acknowledges their societal purpose. More specifically, the objective is to propose a conceptualization of NPO business models in order to understand the mechanisms underlying the creation and capture of societal value. The general problem is the following: what are the fundamental mechanisms underlying NPO business models? To answer this central question, the thesis develops an innovative theoretical framework through Bourdieu's theory of forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Based on three articles, this work proposes to transpose Bourdieu's theory of forms of capital to the organizational level in order to understand and map out the specific nature of NPO business models. At the theoretical level, this thesis contributes to the literature on business models and the nonprofit sector by demonstrating the existence of distinct NPO business models characterized by differentiated mechanisms of value creation and capture. A central finding is that the sustainability of NPO business models is closely linked to their ability to accumulate and convert complementary forms of capital. At the methodological level, this thesis proposes a first operationalization of the concept of symbolic capital at the organizational level. Finally, it leads to useful recommendations for NGOs and American nonprofit universities to help them realize their mission over time.

Composition du jury

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