Social Entrepreneurship against Depopulation: Network Analysis within the Theoretical Framework of the Quadruple Helix

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Abstract : Social entrepreneurship represents an innovation of traditional business models. During the last decade, its important role in contributing to rural and regional development has been widely recognized, due to its capacity to combat the problem of depopulation through the creation of employment. However, the success of this type of innovative business initiatives depends to a large extent on the existence of an adequate ecosystem of support resources. Based on the theoretical framework of the quadruple helix (QH), which highlights the need for collaboration between different interest groups - university, industry, government and civil society- for the development of regional innovations, in this work the network analysis is applied to study the ecosystem of resources to support social entrepreneurship in the rural area of the province of Zaragoza (Spain). It is a quantitative analysis that can be used to measure the interactions between the different actors that make up the quadruple helix, as well as the networks created between the different institutions and support organizations, through the study of the complex networks they form. The results show the importance of the involvement of local governments and the university, as key elements in the development process, but also allow identifying other issues that are susceptible to improvement.

Keywords : ecosystem of support resources, network analysis, quadruple helix, social entrepreneurship