13 Critical Reflections on Social Entrepreneurship

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Learning goals
Upon completing this chapter, you should be able to accomplish the following:

- Understand that the euphoria surrounding social entrepreneurship marks a severe hindrance for the advancement of knowledge.
- Comprehend that critique represents an affirmative means for extending the knowledge of social entrepreneurship beyond the confines imposed by common sense and ideology.
- Recognize the difference inherent in critical approaches of social entrepreneurship.
- Understand the distinct paradigmatic and theoretical contribution each type of critique makes to the field of social entrepreneurship.
- Acknowledge that the critique of social entrepreneurship is never completed and that retaining the imaginative and radical potential of social entrepreneurship presupposes institutionalising critique as an on-going task.
- Draw from linguistic approaches to get immersed in critically reflecting iconic texts of social entrepreneurship.

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13.1 Introduction

Critique of Social Entrepreneurship: An Impossible Act?

On the face of it, 'social entrepreneurship' represents a concept whose meaning cannot be exhausted by a single definition. Where its various interpretations have been conceived by some as a hindrance to the unfolding of its full potential (e.g. Martin and Osberg, 2007), the worrying point, in our estimate, is not that 'social entrepreneurship' encompasses too many meanings but that the term's potential richness, inventiveness and radicalness has been narrowed down by dominant, politically-shaped understandings of the word 'social'. Given that social entrepreneurship has not been properly understood in its relation to power, ideology and the rendition of the social as governable terrain (Carmel and Harlock, 2008), our contribution departs from the conviction that prevailing understandings of social entrepreneurship are limited as a result of being aligned with elites' comprehension of the good life and society *propre*. Many possible understandings of social entrepreneurship become unthinkable, precisely because they are made to appear to be unreasonable, odd or illegitimate by prevailing standards of truth.

We should critically reconsider the limitations to which social entrepreneurship is currently subjected, so as to instigate more imaginative articulations. However, the point is that a critique of the social entrepreneurship canon is highly unlikely. But why exactly is this the case? There are many reasons for the current paucity of critical engagement with social entrepreneurship, however, a case can be made that the widespread belief in the redemptive power of management, combined with an unshakable belief in the market as leverage for 'making a difference', makes social entrepreneurship appear to be good, reasonable, and necessary. Partly due to social entrepreneurship's taintless evaluative reputation, it has, in fact, become easier to celebrate the most far-reaching utopia than to express even the most marginal point of discontent. In other words, any provocative, counter-intuitive or anachronistic enactment of social entrepreneurship is neutralized a priori because this would direct attention away from the ostensible "real-life" pressures of the day, thus delaying the immediate involvement with today's most pressing social problems. Where dominant narratives of social entrepreneurship promote harmonious social change based on instrumental business-case logic (Arthur et al, 2010), this leaves little space for a substantial critique of social entrepreneurship, for the simple reason that the canon suggests that the solution is already there. Anyone who raises concerns is immediately looked at suspiciously, because social entrepreneurship is overwhelmingly perceived to have already passed the test of critical scrutiny.

Whilst the costs related to the current normalisation of social entrepreneurship are manifold, one of the pre-eminent problems is that social entrepreneurship has been envisioned as a de-politicised blueprint for dealing with social problems. In extremis, social entrepreneurship has been appointed the role of tackling the symptoms of the capitalist system rather than its root causes (Edwards, 2008), thus reinforcing a system that has lately revealed its full toxicity (Noys, 2011). Because social entrepreneurship appears to be beyond question, this paper wants to reclaim the space of critique, for, as we will argue, critique is

the pivotal quality that must be fostered to overcome social entrepreneurship's current stasis and to unlock its potential. Given that the academic treatment of social entrepreneurship has played a crucial role in mainstreaming logics of problem-fixing, linear progression, and social equilibrium, we will start by analysing academia's immanent critical potential.[30] The first objective of this paper will be to develop a typology of critical approaches that maps how critique of social entrepreneurship is currently being done. As we make clear that scholarly mechanisms of censorship and control are not fully effective in averting critical activity, the second objective of this contribution will be to go beyond current possibilities and to consider ways to expand the range of critical approaches and, in particular, to describe ways for radicalising, both conceptually and pragmatically, the critique of social entrepreneurship. Overall, critique is viewed as a means for problematising 'social entrepreneurship' with the aim of releasing some of its suppressed possibilities (Sandberg and Alvesson, 2011). By implication, critique is never an end in itself, but rather serves as a means for creating solutions (both imaginative and real) which are not possible within the matrix of the present. Thus, by critically examining social entrepreneurship we will, in the end, be able to implement social entrepreneurship differently.

To develop our contributions, we will proceed in the following manner. After a short exposition of the emergence of critical approaches in social entrepreneurship, we will identify, based on a review of the extant academic literature, four types of critique, called 'myth busting', 'critique of power effects', 'normative critique' and 'critique of transgression', all of which will be presented and discussed in terms of how they question and add a different, if not fresh, view to some of social entrepreneurship's most powerful assumptions. Each type of critique is illustrated through a particularly demonstrative study. Thereafter, we will discuss new possibilities by focusing on the kinds of critique that elicit the radical cause of social entrepreneurship. Emphasis will be placed on fostering the view of critique as intervention (Steyaert, 2011), for interventions clearly show that social entrepreneurship, the way we know it, does not exhaust what social entrepreneurship might become. The paper will close with a short introduction to critical thinking, based on the merits of language-based inquiry.

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[30] As will become evident in this paper, critical research on social entrepreneurship derives primarily from non-profit, voluntary or third-sector scholars. Scholars in this realm have been sceptical towards the logic of the market (which represents an important aspect of social entrepreneurship). Though a more elaborate treatise of why other threads of research in social entrepreneurship have not engaged in critical reflection exceeds our ambitions, we believe that the maturity of critical thinking in the realm of non-profit, voluntary or third-sector research justifies rendering it an explicit focus of this present contribution.

13.2 Problematising Social Entrepreneurship: Typology of Critical Endeavours

To critique is a research area that is slowly gaining legitimacy in entrepreneurship studies. While the field of entrepreneurship is no longer the paradigmatic monolith it used to be, calls for more 'critical' applications to study entrepreneurship have been of more recent date (Ogbor, 2000; Armstrong, 2005, Jones and Spicer, 2010; Weiskopf and Steyaert, 2009). These critical approaches are not homogeneous, as they draw from quite different understandings of critique. What these various approaches have in common is that they question the representation of entrepreneurship as dominantly being 'treated', as always stimulating and worth being pursued, as not requiring any reflection or change of established ways of research and method (Steyaert, 2011). Critical approaches thus emphasise practices of problematisation which impact the research questions we want to ask. Problematisation consists of examining and challenging assumptions that guide a certain way of doing research (Sandberg & Alvesson, 2011), with the aim to confront the particular logics a field uses to formulate research questions, to legitimise certain methods and to claim theoretical or practical implications. Critical research of entrepreneurship thus focuses on "what the scholar is doing, for whom, and for what as he or she does entrepreneurship theory and research" (Calás et al., 2009, p. 554).

As pleas for a more critical engagement with social entrepreneurship have been growing (e.g. Cho, 2006; Steyaert and Hjorth, 2006; Steyaert and Dey, 2010), we will start by addressing and endorsing some critical issues which scholars have stipulated as urgent. While considering the conundrums and voids of social entrepreneurship research, we will analyse current critical research and create different concepts to capture their critical potential. This will lead into a typology that provides a variety of possible anchor points to engage with critique, rather than a neat plan of strict categorisations. Though our selection is not exhaustive, it gives some direction for how critical research can be employed to advance our understanding of social entrepreneurship.

The first issue, 'myth busting', concerns the paucity of empirical knowledge and the problem of truth. This concept will be used to deliberate how empirical 'reality tests' can put our understanding of social entrepreneurship on a more solid knowledge basis. The second issue, 'critique of power effects', concerns the fact that social entrepreneurship research has mainly ignored the political effects it creates and of which it is a part. Such critique of power effects, as practiced in 'critical sociology', is thus suggested as a way to raise awareness that social entrepreneurship is invested with particular political worldviews that shape reality according to an image of "goodness". The third issue, 'normative critique', addresses the fact that very few studies have reflected social entrepreneurship in terms of its normative foundations. 'Normative critique' is presented as a means for emphasising the moral limitations of those interpretations which envision social entrepreneurship merely from the perspective of market dogmatism and economic self-sufficiency. The fourth issue, 'critique of transgression' deals with the fact that the views of practicing social entrepreneurs have not received enough attention from the research community. 'Critique of transgression'

thus inquires how practitioners' narratives differ from academic or political discourse respectively, and how these instances of micro-resistance and -emancipation open up new paths of understanding. In each case, illustrations will be used to demonstrate how critical inquiry reveals the self-evidence of social entrepreneurship and, in doing so, prepares the ground for novel articulations.

13.3 Myth Busting: Testing Popular Ideas and their Assumptions

"So long as an illusion is not recognized as an error, it has a value precisely equivalent to reality." (Jean Baudrillard, 2008, p. 53; quoted in Gilman-Opalsky, 2011, p. 52)

A first form of critique examines how the field is based on unchallenged assumptions which might take mythological form as they become naturalised as established truths. Many ideas in the field of social entrepreneurship, developed in other disciplines (notably management and business entrepreneurship studies) seem to be applied to social entrepreneurship in a rather flippant manner. Such casual, unelaborated associations risk basing social entrepreneurship on false premises (e.g. Cook et al., 2003), and it can be observed that after some time, such assumptions tend to take on an existence of their own. How ideas about social entrepreneurship come to be viewed as knowledge or truth may have little to do with their actual truthfulness. That is, much of what is said and known about social entrepreneurship is mythological in the sense of being perceived as true rather than being effectively true. As a result of myths' self-reinforcing and -reifying tendencies, social entrepreneurship scholarship has in many areas come to rely on untested assumptions pertaining to, for instance, the nature of the social entrepreneur, the reasons for social entrepreneurship's emergence or the prevalence of social entrepreneurship. Because the theorising on social entrepreneurship often relies on impression or instinct rather than on empirical evidence, this makes it necessary to inquire whether statements about social entrepreneurship actually correspond with reality. A first task of critique would hence entail demystifying social entrepreneurship by subjecting its unchallenged assumptions to empirical scrutiny. What we henceforth refer to as 'myth busting' encompasses empirical endeavours that inquire as to whether popular ideas about social entrepreneurship are actually true or merely tall tales.

To illustrate the critique of myth busting, an academic article written by Janelle Kerlin and Tom Pollak (2010) will be analysed. It examines one of the most popular and powerful myths of the third sector: resource dependency theory (RDT). Briefly, RDT implies a causal relationship between the emergence of social entrepreneurship in the nonprofit sector and cutbacks in public spending. As the authors state, a "number of nonprofit scholars have held that nonprofit commercial activity increased significantly during the 1980s and 1990s. […] they suggest that nonprofits use commercial income as a replacement for lost government grant […]" (p. 1). RDT explores the idea that traditional nonprofit organisations were experiencing financial pressure as governments became less able to finance their services.

As a result, nonprofits had no other option than to accept that "they must increasingly depend on themselves to ensure their survival [...] and that has led them naturally to the world of entrepreneurship" (Boschee and McClurg, 2003, p. 3). Evidently, RDT positions nonprofit organisations in a Darwinistic scenario, as only the most flexible and entrepreneurial organisations are deemed fit enough to evolve into social entrepreneurship, thus averting their looming demise. One of the most pervasive assumptions of RDT is that nonprofits immediately and rationally adapt to changing financial circumstances. Commercial activity becomes something which nonprofits can willingly and spontaneously switch on and off, depending on the availability of public money (and private donations). If the theory is correct, nonprofits' economic behaviour is purely opportunistic: during prosperous years, they rely on public grants (and public donations); in less prosperous ones, they look for earned-income possibilities to fill the financial gap.

Though RDT is in no way absurd (indeed, it appears reasonable to assume that nonprofit organisations turn towards commercial activities to become self-sufficient), its claims were often not tested or its tests were based on weak empirical data. As Kerlin and Pollak (2010) explain, "scholars have largely lacked the data to substantiate claims that government cuts directly resulted in increased nonprofit commercialization" (p. 2).

Kerlin and Pollak's inquiry represents one of the first tests of RDT that meets the standards of academic rigour. Using the IRS Statistics of Income (which provide reliable financial information on charitable organisations in the United States) allowed for an unambiguous identification of nonprofits' revenue streams over an extended period of time. Kerlin and Pollak thus analyse their data, containing financial information between 1982 and 2002, in two ways. First, they carry out a trend analysis to check whether nonprofits' "commercial revenue rises in response to declines in private contributions and government grants" (p. 5). Second, they perform a panel analysis to see if "growth in commercial revenue is a function of gain or loss in government grants and private contributions over six-year periods" (ibid.). On an aggregate level, the results indicate that the rise of commercial revenue of nonprofits, though more or less steady throughout the investigated period, has actually been smaller than assumed: "commercial income as a percentage of total nonprofit revenue rose from 48.1% in 1982 to 57.6% in 2002" (pp. 7-8). Additionally, and more importantly, the results suggest that "commercial revenue was not a factor in "filling in" for losses in government grants and private contributions" (p. 8). Bluntly expressed, Kerlin and Pollak disqualify RDT's assumption that increases in nonprofit commercial revenue is causally linked with cuts in government grants (as well as private contributions). Even though Kerlin and Pollak's inquiry cannot be imputed to established traditions of critical thought, nor do they claim so, their work can, nevertheless, be regarded as a highly critical contribution, as it creates a sense that something is fundamentally wrong with how social entrepreneurship had previously been understood. Kerlin and Pollak's contribution should thus be conceived as affirmative, as it impels scholars and practitioners alike to find better explanations for the reality of social entrepreneurship. Kerlin and Pollak themselves take the dismantling of RDT as myth as a point of departure to probe alternative theoretical explanations.

Kerlin and Pollak end their contribution by discussing whether institutional theory might not offer a better frame for explaining changes in nonprofits' commercial activities. In doing so, they conclude that their results support such a theoretical shift as the increase in nonprofit commercial activity can be interpreted as a passive acceptance of the broader environment and a response to outside pressures "rather than a deliberate effort to subsidise declining revenue from discreet sources" (p. 3). Kerlin and Pollak, whose study epitomises a strong scepticism vis-à-vis over-confident truth claims, are willing to sacrifice beloved myths for a clearer understanding of social entrepreneurship. In alignment with the enlightenment ideal, they open up social construction to its own flaws and errors, so as to create space for whatever lies behind the myth (read: the truth).

In the following section, we will deal with a form of critique that is interested not so much in the truthfulness of given statements than in its relationship to power, knowledge and ideology.

13.4 Critique of Power Effects: Denormalising Discourses, Ideologies and Symbols

"[…] we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc." (Michel Foucault, 1978, p. 97)

In many instances, the validity of a given statement might be less a function of its correspondence with reality than of its normalisation through dominant discourses and technologies of power. This imposes limitations on myth busting, for prevailing systems of power are not necessarily alterable through objective truths. Hence, where myth busting's main opportunity lies in opposing prejudice and established errors vis-à-vis an audience which acknowledges its flaws while being willing to endorse the truth (Gasché, 2007), what we refer to here as 'critique of power effects' takes a more political stance towards knowledge. In particular, such inquiry into power effects has been undertaken in the realm of 'critical sociology' (Boltanski, 2011), which encompasses accounts that are interested in understanding power in its relationship with shaping, controlling and even dominating individuals, groups, and organisations. As an umbrella term that captures a broad array of theoretical perspectives on the making of political effects, critical sociology might take the form of governmental studies (Foucault, 1991) which investigate how people rely on expert knowledge (e.g. guidebooks on nonprofit management) to govern themselves according to the stipulations of post-welfare societies, and how such a process implies a transformation of untaught/non-responsible into responsible subjects. Alternatively, it would be possible to use Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) theory of ideology to inquire how entrepreneurial reforms in the third sector are justified as necessary, and how social entrepreneurship is presented to the individual as offering "attractive, exciting life prospects, while supplying guarantees of security and moral reasons for people to do what they do" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005, pp. 24-25). Or, one might look at social entrepreneurship as an indication of symbolic violence (Žižek, 2008) so as to inquire how it preserves the social order, includ-

ing instances of inequality, domination or suppression. The pre-eminent aim of these approaches is to develop an understanding of how power conditions the contours of truth, which in turn, renders individuals (and organisations) amenable to political forms of (self-)control. The essential difference between myth busting and critique of power effects is that the former inquires if popular (but untested) ideas stand the test of reality, whereas the latter approaches such ideas as political truths which enable processes of cultural reproduction or self-imposed control to occur. The shift of perspective entailed in the analyses of power along the approaches of critical sociology is that given statements are not examined in terms of "right or wrong", but in terms of the kind of political reality the respective statement prioritises or normalises (including the consequences which derive from this normalisation). The critical inquiry of social entrepreneurship requires a meticulous analysis of the material, historical, economic, discursive or linguistic structures and practices that constitute the conditions of possibility of social entrepreneurship and of which social entrepreneurship is an effect.

Using the above as a starting point, we shall deepen our engagement with the critique of power effects through a revealing study by Sarah Dempsey and Matthew Sanders (2010). There the authors show how iconic representations of social entrepreneurship normalise a particular understanding of meaningful work. Analysing autobiographies of famous US-based social entrepreneurs John Wood, Greg Mortenson and Wendy Kopp, Dempsey and Sanders demonstrate that those accounts provide people in the nonprofit sector with a deeply moralised style of existence which engenders a rather problematic understanding of work-life balance. For instance, the autobiographies instigate a "complete dissolution of a work-life boundary" (Dempsey and Sanders, 2010, p. 449), promoting a standard of meaningful work based on self-sacrifice. Showing that the autobiographies are replete with notions of sleep deprivation, lack of spare time, inexistent personal life, long working hours, in short, frail emotional, social and physical well-being, Dempsey and Sanders conclude that social entrepreneurship is a double-edged sword as it, on the one hand, offers "alternatives to traditional corporate career paths" (p. 438) while, on the other hand, delineating meaningful work as presupposing "stressful working conditions, significant personal sacrifice and low wages" (ibid.).

The important point to note here is that the downsides and exploitative nature of nonprofit careers is not ideologically concealed. Rather, the autobiographies normalise the idea that meaningful work in the nonprofit sector must necessarily be arduous, which is evidenced from the authors portraying "themselves as willingly trading a work/life boundary in return for being able to engage in work that they find truly meaningful" (p. 451). Arguably one of the most serious problems with such representations of social entrepreneurship is, as Dempsey and Sanders rightly contend, that people accept that a higher calling, and social and moral meaning at large, presupposes significant personal sacrifices. The further consequences of this normalisation is that people who are involved in social entrepreneurship might not even try to protect their private lives as popular images of social entrepreneurship propagate that the sense of satisfaction and meaningfulness one gains from working in the nonprofit sector will (or indeed must) compensate for the social and personal costs related with this kind of work.

On the other hand, it has also been suggested that ideas such as the ones discussed by Dempsey and Sanders might weaken the cause of social entrepreneurship by making it less likely that people will identify with a professional career in the nonprofit sector. Once people are fully able to grasp the inevitable disenchantment associated with social entrepreneurship, they might, as Dempsey and Sanders warn us, conclude that the entry barriers for working in the nonprofit sector are simply too high. Though the autobiographies analysed might fuel "lack of understanding, conflict, misallocation of resources and loss to the sector" (Parkinson and Howorth, 2008, p. 286), we should not ignore the possibility that people submit to a career in social entrepreneurship despite full awareness of the high social costs related with such a move. The reason why people might be willing to tolerate being exploited, to the point where they actively endorse their own subjection, is that they have come to accept that there will be no remedy without sacrifice. Practicing individuals should thus be seen not merely as ideologically misguided subjects, but as reflective beings who more or less willingly sacrifice their personal desires for a higher cause. In any case, the question remains as to whether people who are subjected to or subject themselves to dominant conditions of power or knowledge actually reproduce or resist, respectively, the ideological climate of which they are part (Jones et al., 2009).

13.5 Normative Critique: Marking Moral Foundations

"Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust." (John Rawls, 1999, p. 3)

What myth busting and critiques of power effects from critical sociology have in common is that they both reveal the problems of social entrepreneurship without giving clear indications as to what it should be instead. In contrast, normative critique is explicit about the kind of trajectory social entrepreneurship must endorse. Such an investigation might begin with a thorough survey of mainstream accounts of social entrepreneurship, however, the ultimate objective is to perform a moral judgement of social entrepreneurship, not least pertaining to its role in society. This might sound easy. Contrary to traditional business entrepreneurship, whose normative foundations mark a highly debated issue, social entrepreneurs and enterprises are usually regarded as a priori good. Though the meaning of 'social entrepreneurship' varies from author to author, it is usually said to alleviate social problems, to catalyse social transformation, or to make conventional businesses more socially responsible (Mair and Marti, 2006). Yet, where scholars have mostly remained positive about the redemptive qualities of social entrepreneurship (Yunus, 2008), seeing the market as the means for solving the problems which neither the state nor the nonprofit sector were able to solve, a normative check is worthwhile, as the assumed synergies between the social and the economic aspects might be more controversial than the literature suggests.

As a cursory look into scholarly texts reveals, one of the most pressing domains of normative reflection concerns the idea that the link-up of the two terms 'social' and 'entrepreneurship' necessarily engenders a uncontested win-win situation. Initially seen by many as an oxymoron (e.g. Hervieux et al., 2010), more normatively inclined objections held that social entrepreneurship forms a euphemism for undermining the social mission, heritage or identity of nonprofit or voluntary sector organisations. Instead of taking the 'social' for granted, including suggestions that it is easy to balance social and economic objectives, scholars quickly raised the question of social entrepreneurship's antidemocratic trends. Trading or earned-income strategies were thus less regarded as merely technical or instrumental-rational matters than as organising metaphors that exert a distinct influence on social entrepreneurship's normative foundation.

One of the main concerns was related to the belief that markets would be able to tackle social and environmental problems (Humphries and Grant, 2005), a view which becomes questionable as it suggests that the single best way of solving the ills of the market is through the market. Such a proposal is not just contestable logically (e.g. circularity), it also raises normative issues related with the potential totalitarianism of economic thinking. Dey and Steyaert (2010) have touched upon this problem, using academic texts to probe the normative foundation of the 'social' of social entrepreneurship. The authors' analysis thus revealed that social entrepreneurship is often embedded in discourses stressing rationality, utility, progress and individualism. These discursive significations delineate social entrepreneurship as a "societal actor that confirms the modernist, Western notion of order and control, while contributing to the impression that social change can be achieved without causing debate, tensions or social disharmony" (p. 88). Dey and Steyaert point out that such alignments are problematic because social entrepreneurship is conceived as worthwhile if (and only if) it bears immediately measurable, economic results. Seeing social entrepreneurship primarily as a means for compensating for ostensible state and market failures hence transforms the subject matter into a de-politicised, quasi-economic entity. Dey and Steyaert's reflection takes issue with the view that social entrepreneurship is univocally good, for it is often embedded in functionalist, instrumental and economic logics.

Where normative critique generally calls for elaborating precisely the sort of common good social entrepreneurship seeks to offer, we would like to illustrate this point based on an eloquent treatise by Angela Eikenberry (2009). In her article, Eikenberry contends that the nonprofit and voluntary sector is currently witnessing a shift towards "a normative ideology surrounding market-based solutions and business-like models" (p. 586; cf. also Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). Social entrepreneurship is conceived to be an inherent part of this normative shift, as it propounds that nonprofit organisations should take on more market-based approaches to gain funding. In Eikenberry's estimate, what is problematic about social entrepreneurship from a normative perspective is that by creating earned-income strategies to meet their financial needs, nonprofits risk weakening "their appeal to donors because individuals think their donations are not needed" (p. 587). Apart from obscuring the validity of their nonprofit status, there is also evidence that social entrepreneurial nonprofits draw attention and resources away from their social mission: "marketisation is problematic for the potential democratic contributions of nonprofit and voluntary organisa-

tions. Although these institutions have long been admired for their democratic effects, a market discourse appears to compromise the contributions that nonprofit and voluntary organisations might make to democracy" (p. 588). As a way of counteracting the "colonialisation" of nonprofits by the market logic in general and social entrepreneurial funding strategies specifically , Eikenberry recommends setting "up spaces for citizen participation and deliberation" (p. 583). Such participatory spaces are construed as a corrective for dealing with the antisocial effects of the market. In particular, involving diverse stakeholders of nonprofit organisations in organisational and societal governance, agenda setting, deliberation and decision making will allow for "a more just, humane, and socially cooperative future", Eikenberry believes (p. 593).

To conclude, Eikenberry's (2009) treatise is testament to the urgency of further investigating the moral role of social entrepreneurship in today's society. In a very important way, it offers an analytical perspective for disentangling social entrepreneurship from its economic and managerial over-codification, and for rendering it a matter of society once again (Hjorth, 2009). In the next chapter, we will present a fourth type of critique that focuses on the perspective of practitioners.

13.6 Critique of Transgression: Resisting and Re-appropriating Prescribed Routes

"[…] to attempt explanations without reference to the meanings […] held by actors, and without regard to their underpinning symbolic codes, is to provide a very thin account of reality." (Richard Freeman and Michael Rustin, 1999, p. 18)

To flesh out the intention and merits of the critique of transgression, we would like to begin by pointing out the immanent limits of both normative critique and critical analysis of power. As discussed above, normative critique is mainly about analysing and taking issue with moral justifications of social entrepreneurship and, if expedient, about prescribing a more worthwhile moral foundation. The innate danger of such a gesture is that the critic might replace one ideology (e.g., marketisation) with another (e.g., participative democratisation). Though Eikenberry (2009) seems aware of this trap, writing that she does not "intend to create another hegemonic discourse" (p. 593), it is hardly possible to repudiate that her decision reflects her own perspective. Normative critique will always be ideological, for the simple reason that there is no space beyond ideology (Boje et al., 2001). There is a second, related limitation associated with normative critique: it reflects the views of social scientists over, for instance, those of the subjects being researched. This objection also holds true for critical approaches from critical sociology, which has been accused of denying the people being studied any critical competences with regard to their own situation. As Boltanski and Thévenot (1999) have argued in this respect, if "we want to take seriously the claims of actors when they denounce social injustice, criticise power relationships or unveil their foes' hidden motives, we must conceive of them as endowed with an ability to differentiate legitimate and illegitimate ways of rendering criticisms and justifications" (p. 364).

By extension, unlike both these forms of critique which maintain a certain distance towards their subject of inquiry, the critique of transgression takes people's perspectives, utterances and stories into account. People, less than being construed as ideologically blinded or dominated by intangible forces, are treated as reflexive beings who are very well able to reflect on and criticise the social reality they live in. Where the main task deriving from the critique of transgression is to concentrate on what people say and do, this is largely in accordance with recent pleas to better understand how social entrepreneurs themselves perceive and experience their everyday work, including the motives and ideologies they endorse (Boddice, 2009). Revealing what practitioners do and say offers fresh insights into how they resist their potential domination (e.g., by the market discourse; cf. Eikenberry, 2009), and "how they navigate the resulting work/life tensions" (Dempsey and Sanders, 2010, p. 454). In regard to resistance, this term does not imply a space beyond power (i.e., a sacred space of the authentic individual). Instead, and in accordance with Foucault (1978), critique of transgression concedes that "resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power", (p. 95). The concept 'transgression' hence entails "emancipatory" practices through which individuals appropriate authoritative discourses and technologies of power to their own ends (Foucault, 1998). Though individuals are never beyond power, they might punctuate, breach and creatively reassemble that which is given and taken for granted, thus creating the conditions of possibility of 'becoming other'.

Such transgressive moves can be illustrated through empirical inquiries which investigate how social entrepreneurs react in and towards the ideological climate in which they operate. Caroline Parkinson and Carole Howorth's (2008) study appears particular fitting, as it was conducted in the United Kingdom, a context in which social enterprise has "been heavily promoted and supported as a site of policy intervention" (Teasdale, 2011, p. 1), and thus has been used to promote an efficiency logic of "more for less" (Hogg and Baines, 2011). Addressing how social entrepreneurs view the dominant understanding of social enterprise (as produced and disseminated by UK policy-makers, funders and support agencies), Parkinson and Howorth use a linguistic approach to study the disjuncture between official reasoning and practitioners' ability to make sense of their work. Where the analysis reveals that official discourse of social enterprise places great emphasis on individual capabilities as well as on a managerially defined model of community service delivery, the authors used discourse analysis to probe the extent to which social entrepreneurs' language mimics or transgresses respectively, notions of problem fixing, individualism and managerialism. The analysis revealed that business terms were, in fact, used by social entrepreneurs, though mostly in conjunction with negative attributes such "as 'dirty', 'ruthless', 'ogres', 'exploiting the black economy', 'wealth and empire building' and 'treating people as second class'" (pp. 300-301). Importantly, being asked whether they saw themselves as social entrepreneurs, interviewees often dismissed the concept, claiming that "'it's amusing!', 'it's ridiculous!', 'too posh […] I'm working class'" (p. 301). Parkinson and Howorth provide ample evidence that social entrepreneurs' articulations are at odds with UK social enterprise policies, which chiefly promote efficiency, business discipline and financial independence. At the same time, however, their analysis also indicates that social entrepreneurs' talk does partially echo the ideological context in which they work (notably what concerns the framing of local problems and their respective solutions).

As follows from Parkinson and Howorth, critique of transgression acknowledges that resistance is often transient and partial, as social entrepreneurs are never fully outside the influence of power (though never completely infiltrated by it, either). The obvious merit of such a view is that it offers a more nuanced understanding of how prevailing ideologies are contested at the level of practice, while raising awareness that this contestation must not necessarily take the form of rational, deliberate, or even conscious opposition.

To sum up, putting a spotlight on social entrepreneurial practitioners is important as this offers "a better understanding of how social entrepreneurs define themselves" while shedding light on "whether the discourses of social entrepreneurs are consistent with those of the actors that study, fund and teach them" (Hervieux et al., 2010, p. 61). The ideological voids and disjuncture which necessarily emanate from such empirical journeys might in turn be used not only for opposing dominant formations of knowledge but also, importantly, for redefining the conditions under which something new can be produced.

13.7 Interventionist Critique: Opening More Radical Trajectories

In view of the seemingly infinite possibility of critique, it must be borne in mind that there is a danger that critique remains an intellectual undertaking which has no real effects on the level of practice. It is for this reason that we will deepen our initial elaboration (cf. Chapter 13.1) on the social dynamics that might diminish critique, in order to suggest 'interventionist critique' as a promising way forward.

Regarding the relationship between critique and change, there are insightful theoretical and empirical studies which have pointed out how ruling systems of power are able to absorb, incarnate and neutralise critique (e.g. Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Instead of overthrowing its object or adversary, critique itself often is instrumentalised in such a way as to maintain prevailing hierarchies, relations of domination and social segregation (Willig, 2009). Concerning social entrepreneurship, there are rather clear indications that the more critical potentials of the concepts are being sidelined by political, business, and academic discourses. Instead of conceiving social entrepreneurship as an instrument for unsettling ruling conventions, paradigms or dominant (economic) systems (Edwards, 2008), it is mostly envisioned as a pragmatic instrument for expanding entrepreneurial forms to the social, for saving tax-money or simply for rendering people and organisations in the nonprofit sector more responsible and accountable. The integration of social entrepreneurship into business schools seems to have accelerated this diminishment, as dominant approaches mainly envision social and ecological problems and solutions in line with conservative images of 'progress'. Using Cukier et al.'s (2011) study as an example, we understand that the academic representation of social entrepreneurs strongly relies on well-known cases such as Bill Drayton, Fazle Abed, Herry Greenfield and Ben Cohen, Muhammad Yunus or Ibrahim Abouleish. Though these references are not problematic per se, they become problematic once they prevent us from understanding that this group of iconic individuals, including

the societal blueprints they produce, and the institutions that award and support them, collectively produce a rather selective understanding of what is good for society as a whole. If this is taken to its logical conclusion, we must address whether the kind of critique previously discussed has any chance of changing the 'standard language' of social entrepreneurship.

Where it might be true that spectacular representations have already normalised a biased understanding of social entrepreneurship, this makes it even more urgent to create the conditions of critique under which new scenarios (both ideologically and materially) become possible. This entails uncovering and confronting the conservatism inherent in the everyday activities of policy-makers, academics, think thanks and incubators. In addition, it entails 'tuning into' the work of conservative imagination and actively producing the space in which the unexpected can take flight. According to Nealon (2008), the task is to find ways to intensify the sort of tensions and struggles discussed in conjunction with the critique of transgression. This makes it necessary to conceptualise the nexus between critical thinking and intervention (Steyaert, 2011).

To begin with, we would like to use the concept 'intervention' to signal a rethinking of the conventional, academic understandings of critical research. Interventionist research sees the researcher not in a state of external reflection to the research objects, but in a state of active and internal alliance with them. Being allied is conceived by interventionist research as a precondition for re-modelling social entrepreneurship in inventive ways. Interventionist research relies on participatory modes of interaction to co-produce new knowledge while simultaneously enacting new realities (Steyaert and Dey, 2010). Writing with social entrepreneurs and not about them, interventionist research represents a political stance, as it is primarily interested in acts of world-making (Beyes and Steyaert, 2011). Such ontological processes cannot be but critical as they bring new issues to our attention (i.e. those which are not imaginable in the parameters of academic reason) and clearly question shared assumptions (Beaulieu and Wouters, 2009). Characterised by an interest in intervening in the enactment of societal and community issues, interventionist critique's yardstick is less representation and understanding (though this might play a role) but the extent to which research is able to "reconfigure what is sayable and visible in a specific social space" (Beyes and Steyaert, 2011, p. 112). Fostering dissensus and antagonism instead of consensus and agreement, interventionist research disrupts the taken-for-granted knowledge about social entrepreneurship by mobilising the immanence of the people on the ground (Willig, 2009; cf. also part 6). Shaking up the self-content of elitist imagination, interventionist research becomes, as Steyaert (2011) tells us, parrhesia: an event that speaks out against authority and creates reality in the name of another truth. For such a novel critique of social entrepreneurship, which intervenes in order to invent (Steyaert, 2011), the task is to try to change the canonical organisation of experience by sensing and amplifying the "not-yet" (Bloch, 1986) that manifests itself in ephemeral pulses of the social. Therefore, by reflecting and amplifying practitioners' spontaneous ideas and inspirations, interventionist critique might support social entrepreneurs in releasing society's always present (yet thoroughly contained) emancipatory promises.

Granted, it might have been helpful for the reader to have had an illustration of what interventionist critique looks like exactly, and what the inventive intervention into societal or community issues actually means. Yet, telling readers precisely what is expected from them would have run counter to our conviction that any overtly prescriptive account can hamper instead of enable the re-invention of social entrepreneurship critique. Consequently, the void being produced here is deemed instrumental for calling upon scholars' curiosity and imagination, and to enlist them as inventive and interventionist participants in tomorrow's critical research agenda of social entrepreneurship.

13.8 Introduction to Critical Reflection

The following remarks are primarily directed towards readers who are new to critical thinking and who are keen to engage critically with the subject of social entrepreneurship. As an entry point into critiquing social entrepreneurship, we recommend being immersed in "deep readings"[31] of popular social entrepreneurship texts. The first step towards this end comprises gathering adequate textual material. As a rule of thumb, the more well-known and socially authorised the texts being analysed are, the more likely it is that the analysis will yield significant results, not least by raising questions about social entrepreneurship's dominant modes of signification. One could start by collecting definitions of social entrepreneurship as produced by promotion agencies such as Ashoka (cf. www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur) or the Schwab Foundation (cf. www.schwabfound.org/sf/SocialEntrepreneurs/Whatisasocialentrepreneur/index.htm). Alternatively, texts comprising political speeches and programmes on social entrepreneurship could be analysed (e.g. www.socialenterprise.org.uk/pages/quotes-about-social-enterprises.html). Lastly, it might be useful to study practitioner guidebooks which seek to equip nonprofit managers with knowledge that enables them to become more effective and efficient as social entrepreneurs (e.g. Dees, Emerson and Economy, 2001; 2002).

Once the analytic material has been collected, the next step is to analyse how a particular text is set up to make social entrepreneurship appear in a determinate way (e.g. useful, necessary, non-ideological, spectacular, etc.). At the most elementary level, the textual analysis, which might broadly be defined as iconoclastic, aims at raising awareness that there is nothing inherently 'natural' about social entrepreneurship and that what we commonly accept as its very essence is, in fact, contingent on language. We thus recommend reading texts in two steps. In the first reading, texts should be approached in a casual manner (e.g., as one would read the newspaper). In the second reading, which is unfaithful to the texts' surface logic, the critic takes a step back from the texts, cultivating the view that all we can know about social entrepreneurship, its promises, dreams, and utopias, ultimately depends on the use of language. Hence, acknowledging that the "truth" of social entrepreneurship depends on how the latter is dealt with through language, the critic approaches the texts by asking who is talking, based on what language conventions, to what audience, and with what intention. A good way to reveal how the dominant meaning of a text on social entrepreneurship is linguistically constructed, and how it depends on what the text excludes, is to imagine what the text emphasises and what it ignores, or how it could have been shaped differently altogether. As linguistic readings are anything but trivial, we have put together some guiding questions (cf. below).

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[31] Though the kind of readings I am promoting here are not inspired by one particular school of critical thinking, probably the most accurate way of describing their analytic heritage is linguistics.

The list is not exhaustive and the questions should support nascent critical analysts in becoming acquainted with the basic principles of language-based analysis.

- **Genre:** what is the function/purpose of the text (e.g., to persuade, to inform, to explain, to prescribe, to sell, to compare, etc.)?
- **Audience:** who is the imagined audience of the text?
- **Framing:** how is the issue of social entrepreneurship presented, from which perspective (theoretical angle, discipline, world-view) is it depicted?
- **Foregrounding/backgrounding:** which parts of social entrepreneurship are emphasised, marginalised or even omitted (in other words, what is said and what is not said)?
- **Style:** what sort of language is used (e.g., objective, scientific language versus colourful, expressive, emotional language)?
- **Lexicon:** does the text make frequent use of particular words, concepts?
- **Ideological dimension:** how does the text try to convince the reader that social entrepreneurship is attractive, necessary, even representing a potential career option for her/him?

13.9 Further Reading

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