

Conceptualizing social entrepreneurship: perspectives from the literature

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Abstract Social entrepreneurship is an emerging trend that has attracted the interest of the most diverse researchers whether due to the characteristics of the social entrepreneur or the type of surrounding environments that prove most propitious to the emergence of this particular type of entrepreneurship. This study attempts to identify the main theoretical characteristics of social entrepreneurship through recourse to bibliometric analysis based on co-citations. The results enable the aggregation of the state of the art in social entrepreneurship across four perspectives: social value, well-being embeddedness, internationalization and institutional.

Keywords Social entrepreneurship · Social entrepreneur · Bibliometric analysis · Co-citations · Intellectual structure

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1 Introduction

Social entrepreneurship has thus emerged as an active area in research undertaken in recent decades (Choi and Majundar 2014). Lead organizations in this field such as Ashoka, the Skoll and the Schwab Foundations have actively fostered social entrepreneurship through their interests in the characteristics and profiles of social entrepreneurs (Dacin et al. 2011). Furthermore, governments have also stepped up support for social entrepreneurship with the establishment of new organizations, new working models and encouraging new initiatives within the scope of social entrepreneurship. In recent decades, to a greater or lesser extent worldwide, university rooted entrepreneurship initiatives have flourished alongside the interest shown in them by researchers and reflecting in the profile attributed the theme in international journals (Choi and Majundar 2014). Furthermore, some researchers (Gawell 2013; Andersson and Self 2014) encourage scholars to more explicitly problematize the social entrepreneurship research for building a better understanding of this phenomenon. For Bacq et al. (2011) social entrepreneurship pursues a double bottom line, attempting to achieve both financial and social performance. The role of governance has been shown to be critical for company performance. However, this issue has been neglected in the literature on social entrepreneurship. These authors proposed a mediational model between governance behavior, financial performance and social impact. They found these to be good predictors both of financial performance and social impact, while opportunistic behavior from actors has a negative influence on the development of these organizational capabilities. According to Mort et al. (2006), the dialogue in marketing paradigm and strategy illustrates the need for further research in entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship—the business spirit that led to new social businesses and continuing innovation in existing companies—is discussed thoroughly, but not well understood. Given the growing importance of such organizations, these topics should be addressed in research. Mort et al. (2006) believes social entrepreneurship is a multidimensional construct, involving virtuous entrepreneurial behavior with a view to accomplish a social mission. It is a coherent unity, having purpose and action in the face of moral complexity; it is the ability to recognize value-creating opportunities, the features of key decision-making in innovation, proactivity and risk-taking. Short et al. (2009) state that social entrepreneurship has been a topic in academic research for nearly 20 years, but there is still little academic evidence. These authors found that there is a greater number of conceptual articles than empirical studies, and empirical studies rarely present formal hypotheses and rigorous methods. This is an indication that research on social entrepreneurship is still in its early stages. They also argue that future research could benefit from incorporating multivariate methods to complement the case study techniques that have been used in previous efforts. And finally, they suggest that the state of social entrepreneurship seems to be associated with common areas of interest for management researchers, such as the business spirit, public and nonprofit management, and social issues, which represent fertile ground for future research efforts. That being the case, researchers should focus on key topics in strategic entrepreneurship, and frame their research within established theories, such as contingency theory, creation theory, discovery theory, innovation diffusion theory, resource dependence theory, and other relevant theoretical bases.

Despite recent progress in social entrepreneurship research, and the valuable contributions by several authors, there are still gaps in the literature when it comes to systematization through the use of bibliometric tools, namely through the co-citation approach.

Hence, with the objective of studying the intellectual structure to social entrepreneurship and identifying the geographic location of the authors studying this field in terms of both countries and institutions, we undertook this bibliometric analysis. The methodology adopted by this study enables us to tighten the focus of analysis still further on the academic orientations within the social entrepreneurship field and correspondingly identifying the main theoretical traditions to this approach while setting out how the different conceptions of this construct have evolved out of the traditional theories.

Following this introduction, we then portray the theoretical framework around social entrepreneurship before detailing the methodology implemented by this study. Fourthly, we put forward our results before closing with some final considerations.

2 Theoretical background

Dees (1998) affirms that the social entrepreneurship stems from a singular species of genes of which the entrepreneur is a carrier. According to Mair and Marti (2006), social entrepreneurship represents a practice that integrates the generation of economic and social values and that holds a long and global heritage. As a phenomenon, entrepreneurship has come in for widespread consideration whether by research or by academics and in conjunction with entrepreneurship as a driver of social progress having become an attractive field of research (Dees and Elias 1998; Alvord et al. 2004). Hence, and deriving from the global reach of entrepreneurship, some researchers have focused special attention on social entrepreneurship (Dees 1998; Eikenberry and Kluser 2004; Austin et al. 2006; Mair and Marti 2006), questioning the very nature of social entrepreneurship (Peredo and McLean 2006). According to Reis (1999) and Wallace (1999), social entrepreneurship only represents a genre of the business activities specifically engaged in by non-profit organizations. In turn, Johnson (2000) perceives the sector in a more radical fashion and defines it as somewhat innovative and emerging to deal with the more complex social needs. We would then observe the difficulty of actually defining the very scope of entrepreneurship as Venkataraman (1997) identifies in arguing how attempting to define these practices may indeed turn out impossible and seeking to define social entrepreneurship an even more ambitious goal given its still relatively incipient status (Mair and Marti 2006).

Social entrepreneurship is closely bound up with undertaking initiatives that identify and explore viable and sustainable opportunities to provide solutions to leading social problems (Wallace 1999). The viability of these initiatives gets evaluated according to the terms of their catalytic impact on the positive transformation of society (Dees 1998). Within social learning processes (Masgoret and Ward 2006; Bhawuk 2008), entrepreneurial and leadership capacities prove particularly intriguing in terms of their capacity to bring about the sustainable development that transforms the lives of marginalized peoples in lesser developed countries worldwide (Alvord et al. 2004).

Thus, the concept of social entrepreneurship holds different meanings to different researchers (Dees 1998). One group of researchers refers to social entrepreneurship as nonprofit based initiatives that strive to enact alternative strategies and business models to create social value (Boschee 1998; Austin et al. 2003). Another group of researchers, in turn, perceives this type of entrepreneurship as the inter-sectorial commercialization of social responsibility practices (Waddock 1998; Sagawa and Segal 2000). Furthermore, yet another group of researchers grasps social entrepreneurship as something capable of alleviating social problems while at the same time serving as a catalyst for social transformation (Alvord et al. 2004). Despite the differences in the definitions, social entrepreneurship typically refers to a process or a behavior; whilst the understanding of the social entrepreneur focuses on the founder/creator of the initiative along with the definition of social companies incorporating a tangible social entrepreneurship output (Mair and Marti 2006).

Hence and broadly speaking worldwide, socially aware individuals have introduced and applied innovative business models to resolve social problems previously overlooked by companies, governmental and nongovernmental organizations (Zahra et al. 2009). These entrepreneurs have played a crucial role in improving adverse social conditions, especially in underdeveloped and emerging economies where the shortage of resources and corruption in the state structure and even in nongovernmental organizations seriously impact on the attention otherwise paid to serious social needs (Prahalad 2005; Zahra et al. 2009). Social entrepreneurs also prove highly visible agents of change in developed economies where they apply innovative and low cost methods and strategies to resolve the most fracturing social problems (thus, poverty or gender inequality, for example) that challenge traditional solutions (Cox and Healey 1998). In various countries, the movement towards opening the social service sector up to “market practices” (Salamon 1999) has also fostered the desire to draw upon the efficiency of competitive markets to improve social performance (Zahra et al., 2000; Goerke 2003). Different governments, faced by needs to drastically cut public expenditure on social services such as education and community development (Lasprogata and Cotten 2003), have turned to this type of business activity in order to attempt to meet social needs.

Entrepreneurs, including those with a social based vocabulary, generally hold the ambitions to strive for multiple objectives and that inevitably include a diversified set of personal ambitions (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Baker et al. 2005). Traditional entrepreneurs are in large part driven by profit (Knight 1921; Schumpeter 1934; Kirzner 1973) and their performance is normally measured according to their financial performance (Austin et al. 2006). Social entrepreneurs, however, very often strive after both social and economic objectives within the framework of achieving a unique opportunity (Dorado 2006; Thompson and Doherty 2006).

Table 1 evidences the main definitions and contributions of social entrepreneurship from previous literature.

3 Methodology and data

Bibliometric analysis involves the application of quantitative and statistical analysis to publications such as journal articles and their respective citations and serves to evaluate

Table 1 Social entrepreneurship descriptions/contributions

Authors	Description / contribution
Berger and Luckmann (1966)	Berger and Luckmann's work introduces the notion of social construction into the social sciences. It was strongly influenced by the work of Alfred Schütz. The main idea of the social construction of reality is that people and groups interacting in a social system will create concepts or mental representations of actions over time. These concepts eventually become reciprocal roles, played by the actors in relation to one another.
Wallace (1999)	Wallace analyze the role of social and political cohesion within community economic development, focusing on the emergence and dynamics of social purpose businesses in facilitating community development and revitalization efforts. Wallace argues that community economic development is crucial and describes ways of promoting that development within communities.
Lasprogata and Cotten (2003)	Social entrepreneurship is the social service of non-profit organizations, commonly called "charitable organizations". These are the nonprofit organizations that are devoted to solving the biggest social problems.
Eikenberry and Kluver (2004)	Eikenberry and Kluver analyze the issues surrounding the approaches and values of the private sector market that non-profit organizations are adopting, and consider whether they might be prejudicial to democracy and citizenship due to their impact on the ability of non-profit organizations to nurture and foster a strong civil society.
Christie and Honig (2006); Weerawardena and Mort (2006)	Social entrepreneurship encompasses nongovernmental organizations, nonprofit organizations, entrepreneurial enterprises. The authors see the importance of strategic social entrepreneurship for the competitive development of services on a global scale.
Peredo and McLean (2006)	The authors offer an explanation of the concept that is sufficiently flexible: social entrepreneurship is exercised by one of more persons who 1) have the sole or main purpose of creating social value of any kind, 2) recognize and explore opportunities to create that value, 3) are innovative, 4) have a tolerance for risk, and 5) refuse to accept limitations in available resources.
Peredo and Chrisman (2006)	These authors have developed the concept of community-based enterprise, combining elements of commercial entrepreneurship, anthropology, theory and social networking to demonstrate how community-based enterprises can be different from the common notion of entrepreneurship.
Mort et al. (2006)	These authors define social entrepreneurship as a multidimensional construct, involving virtuous entrepreneurial behavior with a view to accomplish a social mission. It is a coherent unity, having purpose and action in the face of moral complexity; it is the ability to recognize value-creating opportunities, the features of key decision-making in innovation, proactivity and risk-taking.
Austin et al. (2006)	These authors provide a comparative analysis of private and social entrepreneurship using the predominant model of private and commercial entrepreneurship. The analysis highlights both the main similarities and the key differences between these two forms of entrepreneurship, and presents a conceptual framework as a means of approaching social entrepreneurial processes more systematically and effectively.
Mair and Marti (2006)	These authors put forward a view of social entrepreneurship as a process driving social transformations and meeting important social needs in a manner that is not subject to the direct financial benefit of the entrepreneurs.
Zahra et al. (2009)	Social entrepreneurship is shown as very important to the resolution of social problems and to the enrichment of communities and societies. The authors discuss the contributions made to the creation of social wealth, putting forward a typology of the entrepreneurial demand processes leading to the discovery of opportunities for setting up social entrepreneurial projects, and setting out the main ethical concerns of social entrepreneurship.

the performance of research given that the methodology returns data on all of the activities taking place within a scientific field before summarizing these data to provide a broad ranging perspective on the activities and impacts of research outputs broken down by researchers, journals, countries and universities (Osareh 1996; Thomsom Reuters 2008).

Co-citation analysis represents one of the most frequently applied methodologies for defining in detail the relations ongoing within a particular scientific field and identifying the leading scientific articles in this same field (Small 1973; Zitt and Bassecoulard 1994; Pilkington and Liston-Heyes 1999). Two articles are defined as co-cited when they are jointly cited in one or more other published article (Smith 1981), with the number of joint citations a way of congregating a representative cross-section of the literature for any field of knowledge whilst also identifying the most influential authors and displaying their interrelationships (White and McCain 1998). According to Verbeck et al. (2002), the co-citation approach assumes that: i) citation implies usage; ii) citation reflects excellence, meaning and impact; iii) citations are made in order to improve research; iv) a document cited is related to the document citing it; and v) all citations are equal. Various studies have demonstrated the validity of co-citation analysis for grasping an understanding of the intellectual structure of a field of research (Di Guardo and Harrigan 2012).

This research carried out the analysis of article co-citation both upstream and downstream of the articles resulting from the research, thus analyzing the co-citations of references integrated into articles resulting from research as well as the co-citations of articles based upon the articles cited. This approach to co-citation analysis enables the identification of two networks of articles that network spanning articles about social entrepreneurship and that referring to articles underpinning the articles resulting from research as well as determining the grouping of articles through analyzing their clusters.

Similarly, this involves analysis of the co-citations of not only authors but also those journals publishing articles on social entrepreneurship and thereby depicting the networks of authors and of journals and their respective clustering.

Analysis of the geographic location of article authors in terms of both country and institution took place according to the number of articles published.

Every analytical procedure made recourse to VOSviewer version 1.5.7 software for constructing and visualizing the bibliometric maps that combine the VOS mapping technique with an effective visual component (Van Eck and Waltman 2009, 2010), as well as the statistical analysis software Stata version 12.0 (StataCorp, College Station, Texas, USA). The determining of the clusters and the respective networks of references was carried out in accordance with the methodologies adopted by Waltman et al. (2010).

We gathered data from the following indexes: Science Citation Index Expanded (1900-present), Social Sciences Citation Index (1956-present), Arts & Humanities Citation Index (1975-present), Conference Proceedings Citation Index- Science (1990-present), Conference Proceedings Citation Index- Social Science & Humanities (1990-present), compiled into online Thomson/Reuters-ISI databases that contain thousand upon thousand of academic publications and bibliographic details about their authors, affiliations and citations. The research took place on the Web of ScienceTM

Core Collection database and incorporated articles published without any chronological filter and including the term “social entrepreneurship” in the article title, abstract or key words. 204 articles resulted from this data collection process and published between 1994 (1 article) and 2014 (10 articles).

4 Results

4.1 Chronological evolution and co-citation network

Figure 1 portrays the annual evolution in the number of articles published. The average year of publication is 2010.5 ± 2.5 and thereby demonstrating how we are dealing with a new field of research. Through to 2000, only two articles were published on this theme whereas from 2001 onwards, there were articles published every year even if with only a low level of incidence. The only years in which there were more significant levels of publication were 2010, 2012 and 2013, with 2012 seeing the peak in publication (49 articles).

As regards the citations, the 204 articles return an average of 10.0 ± 20.1 citations, within the scope of which 60 articles contain no citation and 90 articles (44.1 %) were cited between one and five times (29.4 %). Table 1 sets out the 30 articles with the greatest number of citations resulting from this analysis.

The five articles that gain the largest number of citations respectively are:

1. Austin, J., Stevenson, H., & Wei-Skillern, J. (2006). Social and commercial entrepreneurship: Same, different, or both? *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 30(1), 1–22. (221 Citations)
2. Mair, J., & Marti, I. (2006). Social entrepreneurship research: A source of explanation, prediction, and delight. *Journal of World Business*, 41(1), 36–44. (206 Citations)

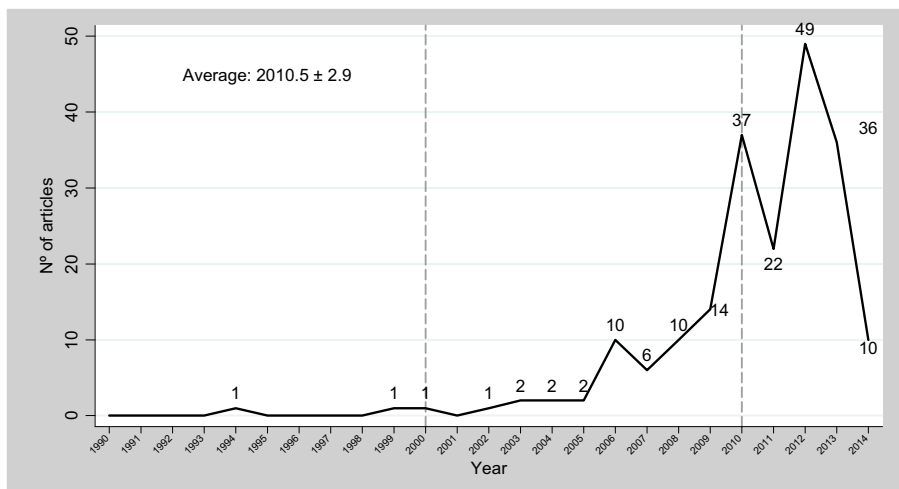


Fig. 1 Number of articles by year of publication

3. Eikenberry, A. M., & Kluver, J. D. (2004). The marketization of the nonprofit sector: Civil society at risk? *Public Administration Review*, 64(2), 132–140. (122 Citations)
4. Peredo, A. M., & McLean, M. (2006). Social entrepreneurship: A critical review of the concept. *Journal of World Business*, 41(1), 56–65. (119 Citations)
5. 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, SI), 519–532. (90 Citations)

The most cited article, Austin et al. (2006), provides a comparative analysis of private and social entrepreneurship making recourse to the predominant model of private and commercial entrepreneurship. The analysis highlights both the main similarities and the key differences between these two forms of entrepreneurship and presenting a conceptual framework as a means of approaching social entrepreneurial processes more systematically and effectively.

Mair and Marti (2006) put forward a vision of social entrepreneurship as a process driving social transformations and meeting important social needs in a manner that is not subject to the direct financial benefit of the entrepreneurs. According to these authors, social entrepreneurship differs from other forms of entrepreneurship in placing greater priority on the promotion of social values and development counterbalancing the extraction of economic value and introducing the concept of embeddedness as a bond between the theoretical perspectives for studying social entrepreneurship.

Eikenberry and Kluver (2004), in turn, analyze the questions surrounding the approaches and the values of the private sector market that these non profit organizations are adopting and consider whether they might be prejudicial to democracy and citizenship due to their impact on the capacity of non profit organizations to nurture and foster a strong civil society. These authors analyze the main commercial trends and the competition taking place at non profits over generating revenue streams and influencing donors.

Peredo and Chrisman (2006) study social entrepreneurship from the perspective of both the concept of “social” and that of “entrepreneurship”. In both concepts, there is a variety of distinct utilizations such as the prominence of the social objectives that are deemed among the main characteristics of this entrepreneurship type. The authors present a sufficiently flexible explanatory proposal for the concept in which social entrepreneurship is exercised whenever a person or persons seek exclusively or partially to create some type of social value, recognizing and exploring the opportunities for fostering this value, applying innovation, tolerating risk and refusing to accept the limitations imposed by the resources available.

According to Zahra et al. (2009), social entrepreneurship proves highly important to the resolution of social problems and enriching communities and societies. The authors discuss the contribution made towards creating social wealth, putting forward a typology of the entrepreneurial demand processes leading to the discovery of opportunities for setting up social entrepreneurial projects as well as setting out the main ethical concerns of social entrepreneurship.

The initial sample of 204 articles was then reduced to those articles with at least ten citations, resulting in 43 articles. This set of 43 articles with at least 10 citations was cited in a total of 876 articles. Based on these articles, we carried out analysis of the co-

citations in these 43 articles. The sample size was then trimmed back to 30 articles given that 13 articles did not contain any co-citation of any of the others. The co-citation analysis served to build the resulting co-citation network (Fig. 2) and group the 30 articles into clusters (Table 2). Correspondingly, we find; cluster 1: social value, cluster 2: well-being embeddedness, cluster 3: internationalization and cluster 4: institutional.

With the objective of understanding the theoretically based references made by the 204 research articles, we undertook the analysis of all the bibliographic references made by the respective interlinking network (Fig. 3). We obtained a total of 9172 bibliographic reference of which 56 were referenced by at least five citations. The articles with the greatest number of citations were the following: Mair and Marti (2006) with 67 citations, Austin et al. (2006) with 56 citations, Peredo and McLean (2006) with 45 citations, Alvord (2004) with 37 citations, and Weerawardena and Mort (2006) with 36 citations. With the exception of the article by Alvord (2004), published in a journal not included on the ISI Web of Science list of publications, all the remaining articles, in addition to being the most cited in the field of social entrepreneurship, are the most cited by articles in this field.

As regards the authors considered by these 204 research articles, the results return a total of 420 authors behind these publications. In Table 3, we set out the ten most cited authors as well as the number of articles published and the average of citations per article. Standing out among the most cited are Mair (272 citations) and Marti (267 citations). As regards the total number of articles published, this list is headed by Mair

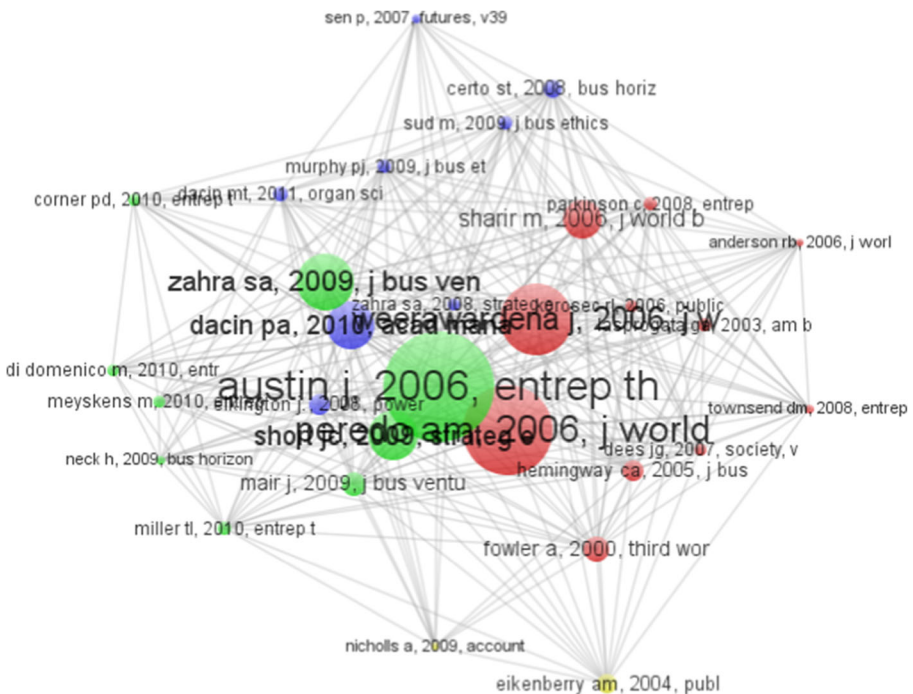


Fig. 2 Network of co-citations and the respective clusters

Table 2 Articles most cited in the field of social entrepreneurship

		Total citations			Total citations
1	Austin et al. (2006)	221	16	Zahra et al. (2008)	26
2	Mair and Marti (2006)	206	17	Parkinson and Howorth (2008)	26
3	Eikenberry and Kluver (2004)	122	18	Certo and Miller (2008)	22
4	Peredo and McLean (2006)	119	19	Neck et al. (2009)	21
5	Zahra et al. (2009)	90	20	Di Domenico et al. (2010)	20
6	Weerawardena and Mort (2006)	86	21	Elkington (2006)	20
7	Short et al. (2009)	71	22	Anderson et al. (2006)	20
8	Mair and Marti (2009)	61	23	Dees (2007)	19
9	Sharir and Lerner (2006)	58	24	Korosec and Berman (2006)	19
10	Hemingway (2005)	55	25	Murphy and Coombes (2009)	18
11	Fowler (2000)	51	26	Lasprogata and Cotten (2003)	18
12	P. A. Dacin et al. (2010)	50	27	M. T. Dacin et al. (2011)	16
13	Baron (2007)	50	28	Dempsey and Sanders (2010)	16
14	Tracey et al. (2011)	32	29	Townsend and Hart (2008)	16
15	De Leeuw (1999)	28	30	Comer and Ho (2010)	15

(4 articles), Zahra (3 articles), Weerawardena (3 articles), Mort (3 articles) Carsrud, AL, (3 articles) Dacin, MT (3 articles), Dacin, PA (3 articles), Meyskens, M (3 articles) and Tracey (3 articles).

4.2 Analysis of the journals and sources cited

As regards their sources, our findings show that the 204 articles resulted from research published in a total of 110 journals. Table 4 presents the journals that contain citations. Standing out within this overall group are the following: Journal of World Business (499 citations), Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice (304 citations) and Journal of Business Venturing (158 citations). As regards the number of articles published, the leading journals are: Journal of Business Ethics (20 articles), Entrepreneurship and Regional Development (14 articles) and Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice (12 articles).

As regards the 4989 journals cited by the 204 articles resulting from the research selection process, 26 receive at least 50 citations with the following journals recording the largest number of citations: Academy of Management Review (318 citations), Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice (277 citations), Journal of Business Venturing (208 citations), Journal of World Business (186 citations) and Academy of Management Journal (175 citations). Co-citation analysis of the 26 journals with at least 50 citations returns a grouping of three clusters (Table 5) and identically delineated in the respective interlinking network (Fig. 4).

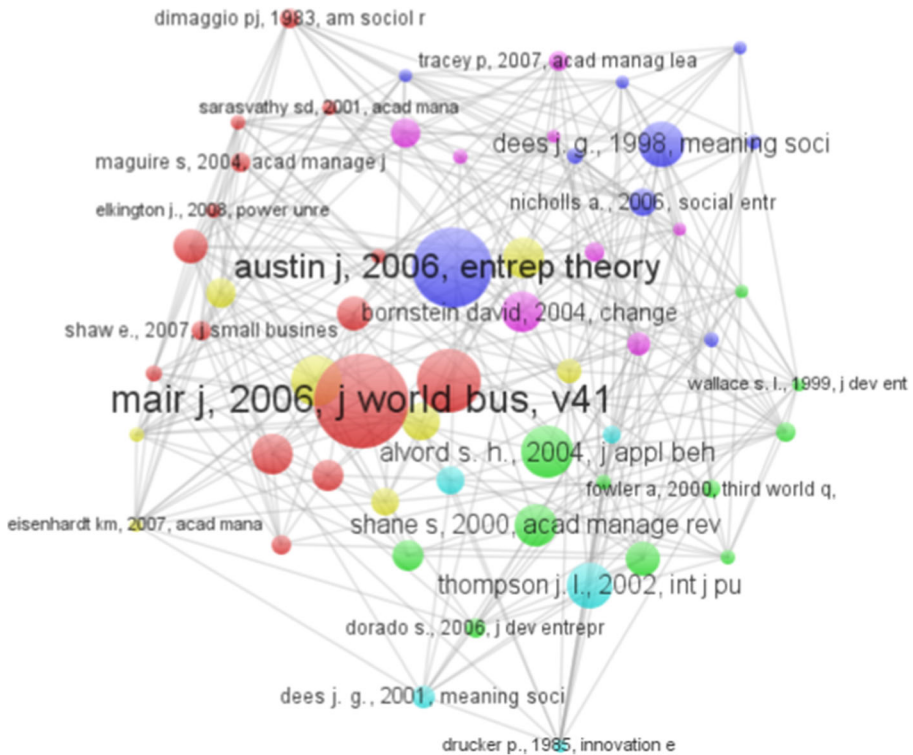


Fig. 3 Citation reference network for the 204 articles and their respective clusters

4.3 Affiliation

Following analysis of the data of the 255 institutions referenced by the 204 articles published in the field of social entrepreneurship, we may report that there is a very strong Anglo-Saxon presence to the list with the universities returning the highest number of publications located in Australia (University of Queensland – 5 articles), England (University of Oxford – 5 articles), the United States (University of Minnesota – 5 articles and Duke University – 4 articles).

The main countries with research track records in the field of social entrepreneurship featuring the largest number of publications are (Table 6): the United States, England, Canada and Australia. The United States accounts for 78 of the 204 articles in this research sample and substantially ahead of the next country on the list, England with 28 articles on this field. Canada and Australia have 21 and 20 articles, respectively (Table 7).

5 Discussion

In this article, we sought to set out the conceptual structure of social entrepreneurship. Whilst “entrepreneurship” remains difficult to define, social entrepreneurship proves correspondingly distant from attaining any consensually based definition. On the one

Table 3 Groupings resulting from cluster analysis of the co-citations of articles citing the 30 most cited articles

Cluster 1 – Social value

- Fowler (2000)
- Lasprogata and Cotten (2003)
- Hemingway (2005)
- Peredo and McLean (2006)
- Korosec and Berman (2006)
- Anderson et al. (2006)
- Sharir and Lerner (2006)
- Weerawardena and Mort (2006)
- Dees (2007)
- Townsend and Hart (2008)
- Parkinson and Howorth (2008)
- The social entrepreneur holds particular values in the sense of creating social value whilst may also have personally experienced certain social needs.
 - The social entrepreneur is an individual that sees needs in society and strives to solve them through the creation of value for this same society.
 - Through innovation, the social entrepreneur observes the latent needs in society and creates value for them.
 - The success of social entrepreneurs relates to whatever the networks they have.

Cluster 2 - Well-being Embeddedness

- Austin et al. (2006)
- Mair and Marti (2009)
- Neck et al. (2009)
- Short et al. (2009)
- Zahra et al. (2009)
- Di Domenico et al. (2010)
- Corner and Ho (2010)
- Meyskens et al. (2010)
- Miller et al. (2012)
- The social entrepreneur has principles embedded in citizenship and social wellbeing.
 - The social entrepreneur experiences a constant need to search out new social projects.
 - The social entrepreneur holds conscience based concerns over ethics and social responsibility.
 - The social entrepreneur is distinct to other types of entrepreneur as the unique focus is on social wellbeing.

Cluster 3 – Internationalization

- Elkington (2006)
- Sen (2007)
- Certo and Miller (2008)
- Zahra et al. (2008)
- Murphy and Coombes (2009)
- Sud et al.(2009)
- Dacin et al. (2010)
- Dacin et al. (2011)
- Currently, it is not only important to observe the social and personal characteristics of the social entrepreneur. Currently, it is also important to observe how globalization may drive new social organizations and new social needs.
 - Globalization may bring about new solutions to social problems, however, the needs of individuals also become different.

Cluster 4 –Institutional

- Eikenberry and Kløver (2004)
- The role of government and other institutions prove fundamental to solving social problems.
 - Governments should be the first to back and support social entrepreneurship initiatives.

Nicholls (2010)

hand, there are the intrinsic characteristics of the social entrepreneur and, on the other hand, there is the constant comparison with “commercial, profit motivated entrepreneurship” as well as the additional specific social contingencies that may trigger this type of entrepreneurship.

Within this framework, entrepreneurship has been identified not only as the motor driving economic growth but also the motive force behind swift growth in the most diverse sectors of activity. Through the bibliometric study carried out by this research, we strive to contribute towards a better understanding of the theoretical bases to the concept of “social entrepreneurship” as well as detailing the lead authors and the countries paying greatest attention to the efforts to construct an increasingly solid understanding of this emerging concept. We verify that social entrepreneurship may be grouped into four distinct approaches: i) social value: social entrepreneurs hold particular values in the sense that they create social value, and may also have personally experienced certain social needs; ii) well-being embeddedness: the social entrepreneur is different from other types of entrepreneur, having social wellbeing as the single focus; iii) internationalization: it is important to observe how globalization may drive new social organizations and new social needs; and iv) institutional: the role of institutions proves to be fundamental in solving social problems.

Broader and more extensive analysis of social entrepreneurship necessarily has to incorporate these four major perspectives. This thus becomes a work involving significant complexity even down to the perspectives of the actual research as regards a concept as intangible as social entrepreneurship. We may also report that the greatest interest in this concept arises out of Anglo-Saxon countries with the universities

Table 4 Most cited authors in the field of social entrepreneurship

Author	No. of articles	Total of citations	Mean citation by article
Mair, J	4	272	68.0
Marti, I	2	267	133.5
Wei-Skillern, J	2	222	111.0
Austin, J	1	221	221.0
Stevenson, H	1	221	221.0
Peredo, AM	2	122	61.0
Eikenberry, AM	1	122	122.0
Kluver, JD	1	122	122.0
McLean, M	1	119	119.0
Zahra, SA	3	116	38.7
Neubaum, DO	2	116	58.0
Mort, GS	3	97	32.3
Weerawardena, J	3	96	32.0
Gedajlovic, E	1	90	90.0
Shulman, JM	1	90	90.0
Moss, TW	2	72	36.0
Lumpkin, GT	2	72	36.0
Short, JC	1	71	71.0

Table 5 Most cited sources in the field of social entrepreneurship

Journal	No. of articles	Total citations	Mean citations by article
JOURNAL OF WORLD BUSINESS	6	499	83.17
ENTREPRENEURSHIP THEORY AND PRACTICE	12	304	25.33
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS VENTURING	8	158	19.75
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	20	144	7.20
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REVIEW	2	141	70.50
STRATEGIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP JOURNAL	2	97	48.50
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT	14	65	4.64
ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES	2	51	25.50
THIRD WORLD QUARTERLY	1	51	51.00
JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	1	50	50.00
ORGANIZATION SCIENCE	2	48	24.00
BUSINESS HORIZONS	2	43	21.50
HEALTH PROMOTION INTERNATIONAL	1	28	28.00
ECOLOGY AND SOCIETY	2	27	13.50
CORPORATE GOVERNANCE-AN INTERNATIONAL REVIEW	1	20	20.00
SOCIETY	1	19	19.00
JOURNAL OF PUBLIC POLICY & MARKETING	6	19	3.17
AMERICAN BUSINESS LAW JOURNAL	1	18	18.00
ORGANIZATION	2	17	8.50
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	1	14	14.00
ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT REVIEW	1	12	12.00
JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF RADIOLOGY	1	12	12.00
SOCIAL SCIENCE & MEDICINE	1	12	12.00
ACCOUNTING ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIETY	1	10	10.00
FUTURES	1	10	10.00
REVISTA DE CERCETARE SI INTERVENTIE SOCIALE	3	9	3.00
ADMINISTRATION & SOCIETY	1	8	8.00
SMALL BUSINESS ECONOMICS	6	8	1.33
AUSTRALASIAN JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT	1	6	6.00
INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS-POLITICS LAW AND ECONOMICS	1	6	6.00
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING EDUCATION	1	6	6.00
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH	1	6	6.00
ORGANIZATION STUDIES	1	6	6.00
PACIFIC AFFAIRS	1	6	6.00
INTERNATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	1	5	5.00
JOURNAL OF SPORT MANAGEMENT	1	5	5.00
LANDSCAPE AND URBAN PLANNING	1	5	5.00
DISABILITY & SOCIETY	1	4	4.00

Table 5 (continued)

Journal	No. of articles	Total citations	Mean citations by article
ENVIRONMENT AND URBANIZATION	1	4	4.00
ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT LEARNING & EDUCATION	7	4	0.57
ADMINISTRATION IN SOCIAL WORK	3	4	1.33
HUMAN RELATIONS	1	4	4.00
VOLUNTAS	4	4	1.00
LEADERSHIP QUARTERLY	1	4	4.00
NONPROFIT AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR QUARTERLY	1	4	4.00
NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP	2	4	2.00
TECHNOLOGY ANALYSIS & STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	1	4	4.00
ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE	1	3	3.00
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS	1	3	3.00
HEALTH AFFAIRS	1	3	3.00
HOUSING STUDIES	1	3	3.00
INNOVAR-REVISTA DE CIENCIAS ADMINISTRATIVAS Y SOCIALES	1	3	3.00
ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS	1	3	3.00
RESOURCES CONSERVATION AND RECYCLING	1	3	3.00
SOCIOLOGIA	1	3	3.00
SUSTAINABILITY SCIENCE	1	3	3.00
ARCHITECTURAL THEORY REVIEW	1	2	2.00
JOURNAL OF BUSINESS RESEARCH	2	2	1.00
CULTURE AND ORGANIZATION	1	2	2.00
HIGHER EDUCATION	1	2	2.00
INDIAN JOURNAL OF OPHTHALMOLOGY	1	2	2.00
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT	1	2	2.00
JOURNAL OF NURSING CARE QUALITY	1	2	2.00
NURSE EDUCATION TODAY	1	2	2.00
STUDIES IN CONFLICT & TERRORISM	1	2	2.00
AFRICAN JOURNAL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	1	1	1.00
AMFITEATRU ECONOMIC	1	1	1.00
CANADIAN JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES-REVUE CANADIENNE D ETUDES DU DEVELOPPEMENT	1	1	1.00
EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT REVIEW	1	1	1.00
GENDER PLACE AND CULTURE	1	1	1.00
JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT	1	1	1.00
JOURNAL OF MATERIAL CULTURE	1	1	1.00
INTERNATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS JOURNAL	4	1	0.25
JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY	1	1	1.00
MALARIA JOURNAL	1	1	1.00

Table 5 (continued)

Journal	No. of articles	Total citations	Mean citations by article
POLITICKA EKONOMIE	1	1	1.00
PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE	1	1	1.00
TECHNOLOGICAL FORECASTING AND SOCIAL CHANGE	1	1	1.00

recording the largest number of publication still concentrated in just a few countries such as the United States, England, Canada and Australia.

6 Conclusion

This study attempted to identify the main theoretical characteristics of social entrepreneurship using bibliometric analysis based on co-citations. The results allow for the aggregation of the state of the art in social entrepreneurship across four perspectives: social value, well-being embeddedness, internationalization, and the institutional perspective. We have identified a number of areas that need further research. The main gap seems to be the lack of a detailed understanding of how social entrepreneurship differs from other forms of entrepreneurship. We find that entrepreneurship does address societal matters. Many studies argue that the success of social entrepreneurship is a result of the social system that an entrepreneur operates. As Wallace (1999) states, social entrepreneurship is directly related to develop

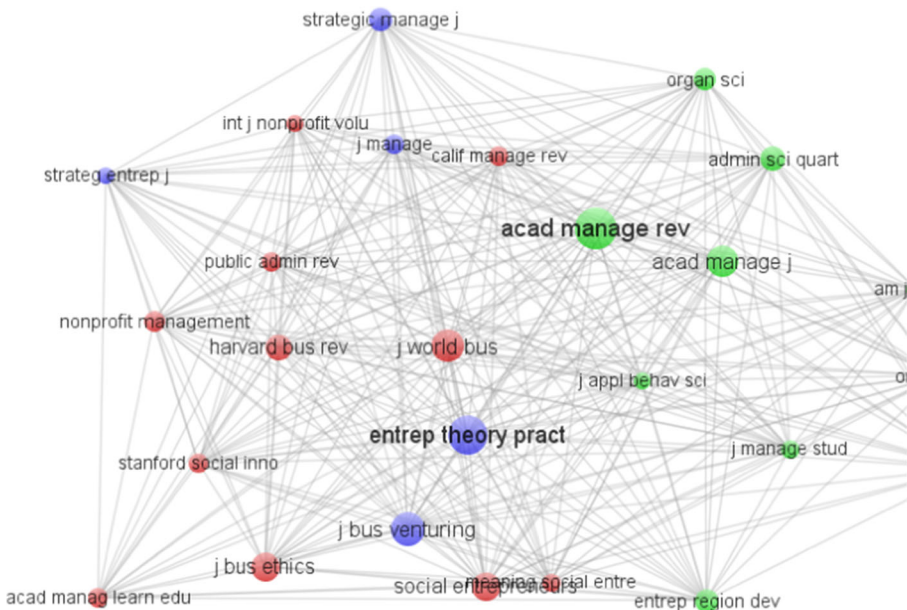


Fig. 4 Networks of co-cited sources in the 204 articles and their respective clusters

Table 6 Clusters resulting from the most quoted sources (number of citations between parenthesis)

Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
J. World Bus (186)	Acad Manage Rev (318)	Entrep Theory Pract (277)
Social Entrepreneurs (157)	Acad Manage J. (175)	J. Bus Venturing (208)
J. Bus Ethics (154)	Admin Sci Quart (108)	Strategic Manage J. (105)
Harvard Bus Rrev (126)	Entrep Region Dev (100)	J. Manage (76)
Nonprofit Management (80)	Organ Stud (91)	Strateg Entrep J. (56)
Stanford Docial Inno (75)	Organ Sci (89)	
Public Admin Rev (72)	Am J. Sociol (68)	
Acad Manag Learn Edu (69)	J. Manage Stud (62)	
Calif Manage Rev (69)	Organization (55)	
Meaning Social Entre (61)	J. Appl Behav Sci (54)	
Int j Nonprofit Volu (54)		

initiatives which are explored in a sustainable way in order to provide solutions to major social problems.

This leads on the challenge our current understanding of social entrepreneurship. Is social entrepreneurship merely the preservation of social ventures, or should we focus on the process of entrepreneurship and its impact on society? Admittedly, that there is a growing pressure to do things differently, and therefore there is an urgent need to understand how we can add and undertake a social component or well-being embeddedness in any kind of business, whether public or private.

The next area requiring significant research is internationalization, given that its importance in supporting social entrepreneurship has not been significantly studied. It appears to be an emergent necessity to understand the type and nature of internationalization that is essential in successful social entrepreneurship.

Finally, our study suggests that social entrepreneurship is not mostly undertaken in individual terms by sole entrepreneurs, but rather shaped by a varied range of institutions whose influence advances in order to meet a social need or to promote social

Table 7 Countries with five or more published articles

Country	No. of articles
USA	78
England	28
Canada	21
Australia	20
Spain	11
Netherlands	8
Scotland	6
Germany	6
Romania	5
New Zealand	5
Italy	5

development. Further research is necessary to better determine the configuration of institutions and mechanisms which establish this ‘social ecosystem’. This social ecosystem could provide strong theoretical foundations for future research into social entrepreneurship, combining knowledge from various formal and informal institutions. Basically, this approach will help to appreciate the role of institutions in modeling the future direction of social entrepreneurship.

7 Limitations

Any research incurs its own limitations and this represents no exception as our sample only extended to entrepreneurship studies included in the Thomson/Reuters-ISI index and had we made recourse to other databases, our results would be wider reaching.

Nevertheless, we believe that this study holds important implications for the field of social entrepreneurship given its examination of co-citation data and recourse to a quantitative approach mapping the scientific publications, the intellectual structures and portraying the research trends within the scope of theories on social entrepreneurship.

8 Future research

Clearly, there are various dimensions open to analysis in the future. There would be particular interest deriving from examining the more recent and lesser quoted publications that ended up thereby excluded from our study. This would therefore report on and/or identify alternative theoretical clusters. Putting alternative methodologies into practice would also complement the results reported here. Correspondingly, future studies might also consider the analytical alternatives, for example, articles published exclusively in journals dedicated to entrepreneurship and integrating specific analysis on the most recent works. These and other alternative methodological approaches may enrich our research understanding on the approaches making up social entrepreneurship and the connections existing between the various universities, academics and theoretical perspectives and positions.

Never overlooking economic reality, the social entrepreneurship approach should serve as a bridge between the economy and science. This integration into the social sciences might be based on the principles of rational actions always taking into consideration how rationality itself gets constructed out of and held up by beliefs, cultures and social values. Institutions, networks and their histories play a necessarily fundamental role in the integration of these theories.

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