

**THE LEGITIMIZATION OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

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## **THE LEGITIMIZATION OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **Abstract**

Social entrepreneurs pursue missions to create social value while maintaining economic sustainability. Thus social entrepreneurship (SE) entails a synthesis of two seemingly contradictory “world views” or dominant logics: on the one hand, a "civic" logic pertaining to co-operation and a concern with the common good and, on the other, a "market" logic pertaining to competition and individual benefits. This dichotomy may raise important legitimacy issues for such entrepreneurs because their initiatives place them at the intersection of two opposing institutional domains: the social (traditionally non-profit) domain and the commercial domain - two domains whose legitimacy norms are also fundamentally opposed and contradictory. We find traces of these legitimacy issues in the literature on non-profits and, based on this, argue that a new institutional domain is being constructed. We conclude that in this new domain not only is the use of market-based initiatives seen as a legitimate means of funding a social mission, but it has now become the normative way and one that is promoted by consultants and foundations concerned with social entrepreneurs and their initiatives.

## Introduction

In the last decades there has been a proliferation of concepts associated with entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship (SE) and environmental entrepreneurship are but two among many types of initiatives that now challenge the premises of entrepreneurship. The economic focus of entrepreneurship is shifting:

entrepreneurship in the last quarter of the twentieth century became a model for introducing innovative thinking, reorganizing the established and crafting the new across a broad range of settings and spaces and for a range of goals such as social change and transformation far beyond those of simple commerce and economic drive (Steyaert & Katz, 2004: 182).

In this paper we focus on one of its new forms - SE - and, more specifically, on its emergence as a field and its constitutive logics. Yet, what is SE? For many, SE “remains [...] an ill-defined concept” (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006: 21). Ongoing debates in the field have yet to bring consensus on what SE is and whether the concept is applicable only to non-profits or to all types of organizations, regardless of their legal form. We feel that this debate is a matter of conceptual choices and we have chosen to include both for-profits and non-profits in our definition of SE. Yet another debate concerns the adoption of commercial and business practices by SE organizations. Some support this move by social purpose organizations towards more business-like ways and/or commercial means, stating that these initiatives have the potential to bring important changes to society and the economy (Alvord & al. 2002; Mair & Noboa, 2003). Others question it, seeing SE as yet another area where the managerial and business discourses have penetrated the civil and public domains (Paton 2003, Steyaert and Katz 2004). In this paper, we see discourses such as these as the building blocks that will construct the legitimacy norms of an emerging SE institutional domain.

SE can be understood as the pursuit of a social mission or the creation of a “total wealth” – a concept first used by Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum and Shulman (2008) to refer to various combinations of both social and economic wealth generation (which involves revenue generation to sustain itself) (Boschee & McClurg, 2003; Emerson & Twersky, 1996; Reis, 1999; Thompson, 2002). These SE initiatives face important tensions as they aim at two main types of value creation, that is the social and the economical. This move by social purpose organizations towards more commercial means represents an important shift in this domain, one that raises legitimacy challenges for social entrepreneurs. Legitimacy has been defined by Suchman (1995: 574) as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.” In this paper, we argue that while attempting to address those legitimacy challenges and through their discourse on the nature and relevance of SE, the actors, academics, consultants and foundations, are contributing to the emergence of an institutional domain characterized by a dual logic.

Yet the question of legitimacy is rarely addressed in SE research. To date, the literature on SE has been largely limited to descriptive case studies focused mainly on definitional aspects, and has had a clear lack of theory building (Harding, 2004). In trying to define SE, many previous studies have used classical entrepreneurship theories to

frame these definitions, with a focus on such aspects as understanding opportunity recognition or action in the face of uncertainty. However, we contend that these frames of reference are incomplete when it comes to understanding SE because they do not address the question of how the legitimacy of SE as an organizational field is being constructed.

This is a particularly interesting and important issue since social entrepreneurs who find themselves at the intersection of two fields (Cooney, 2006) with opposed legitimacy norms must find legitimacy in a new field - one that legitimizes the joining of these opposing logics. While a field is under construction, “in the short run, institutionalization processes may actually increase environmental uncertainty as conflicting social values and norms create ambiguity in the entrepreneur’s mind as to the appropriate course of action” (Townsend & Hart, 2008: 687). One thus needs to ask if the field of SE is coming to terms with a convergent understanding of what is to be accepted as SE. In our analysis of discourses on SE, we will show that despite what has been described as a lack of consensus on the definition of SE (Zahra et al. 2008), there is convergence of the discourses held by consultants, foundations and academics: most would agree that an organization adopting both a social mission and commercial or business means would qualify as being SE (Emerson & Twersky, 1996; Dart, 2004). Convergence in discourses at this level of the SE field is important as it legitimizes dual logic entrepreneurial forms.

Yet what is the source of legitimacy? Institutional theory informs us that legitimacy comes from conforming to norms, rituals and symbols (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991). Until recently, institutional theory had focused on factors contributing to inertia (Hoffman, 2001; Hoffman, 1999) and the reinforcement of existing norms. However, in recent years, neoinstitutionalists have shown that institutional change is possible (Hoffman, 1999, 2001; Lawrence and Philips, 2004) and have pointed to the role of change agents, who have been termed institutional entrepreneurs (IE). IE refers to individuals or organizations that contribute toward structuring the norms of a new field of activities (Child, Lu and Tasi, 2007; Lawrence and Philips, 2004; Déjean, Gond and Leca, 2004) or to transforming existing ones (Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004) in order to serve an interest or an ideal they value highly (Dorado, 2005; Garud, Hardy and Maguire, 2007; Maguire and Hardy, 2006). As the actions of social entrepreneurs take them away from the existing norms of entrepreneurship, as well as from the existing norms of not-for-profit organizations, new norms have to be defined. Various actors - including individual actors, such as academic researchers, and collective actors, including consulting firms and foundations such as Ashoka and Schwab foundation - have become institutional entrepreneurs and are co-constructing the SE field.

Why are these actors important in the SE field? How are these actors tracing the boundaries of SE? How do they justify SE as an important and legitimate form of social purpose organizations? These are the questions our paper will answer in order to highlight the developing norms of SE and, thus, the legitimization of SE. In our research we chose to first focus on the various previously-mentioned actors' definitions of SE, for in defining SE they are contributing to the tracing of the boundaries of what we have argued is an emerging institutional domain. Secondly, we will identify the arguments for the importance of SE put forward by the various actors. Both these elements are indispensable to the search for legitimacy in this new domain. In order to legitimize an innovation, actors need to justify its importance (Greenwood et al., 2002; Maguire et al.,

2004). Finding evidence of replication or adoption of a similar discourse will highlight the process of institutionalization for “institutionalization occurs whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors” (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 72). We argue that the replication of discourses serves as an important means to typify action that can lead to their normative institutionalization.

This study will first present a brief synthesis of Boltanski & Thévenot’s (1991) convention theory (CT) and the two logics, which we argue are important to the understanding the legitimacy problem of SE. We begin by explaining how CT adds to institutional perspectives, bringing important meso level logics that expose the reasons for conflicts between institutional domains. We continue by showing how SE raises legitimacy issues for traditional non-profits and how this results in the need for a redefinition of existing norms for those organizations that adopt both social and commercial goals. We then present our methodology and the reasons behind our choice of discourse analysis - this is where we contend that evidence of IE actions can be found in the co-construction of this new domain. In the next section we show how various actors trace the boundaries of SE, and outline eight concepts that form the key elements of this domain. In this analysis we find strong evidence of theorization (Strang & Meyer, 1993) and therefore of institutionalization of the SE field. We conclude by considering the contributions of this study, as well as its implications for future research.

#### **CIVIC AND MARKET LOGICS – AN OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FROM CONVENTION THEORY**

According to Boltanski & Thévenot (1991), behaviors are determined by logics that are used to justify action. The "Economies of Worth" model proposed by Boltanski & Thévenot (1991) is based on six justification logics: inspired - the logic of creativity; domestic – the logic of tradition; fame – the logic of opinion; civic – the logic of collective good; industrial- the logic of efficiency; and market – the logic of competition and individualism. It is from these logics that actors form their arguments in situations of conflict or controversy. These logics manifest themselves in different sectors of activity. In each sector, the conventions and justification principles are taken to be universal and accepted by all as legitimate (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991). Yet at the same time, logics in each sector oppose each other, causing tensions and conflicts. It is in these situations of conflict that logics become visible in the justification discourses used by individuals.

These logics therefore represent a cognitive framework that guides the actions of individuals. Each logic has its own ideal, its own system of justice and legitimacy. These cognitive frameworks are linked to the concept of dominant logic (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986) in that like dominant logic, they are seen as legitimate and have a determinant effect on the actions of individuals. Yet Boltanski & Thévenot’s (1991) framework differs from Prahalad & Bettis (1986) dominant logic concept in that the conventions they describe exist outside of organizations and are presumed by the actors of the domain to be universal, implicit frameworks. How they are joined together in the organization determines the organization’s dominant logic. The logics of Boltanski & Thévenot are thus supra-logics that form the domain’s dominant logic. Boltanski and Thévenot’s (1991) framework can thus also be linked to institutional theory as both are concerned with cognitive norms that guide and legitimize the actions of individuals and

organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The Economy of Worth's framework is focused on the domain level, thus its contribution to institutional theory are the logics that may be used to analyze the discourses of actors and thus expose the logic under which they legitimize their actions. Because SE finds its place at the intersection of social and economic traditions, it is a particularly appropriate phenomenon to study these tensions. While these tensions are present in every organization, they are magnified in SE because of the priority placed on social value creation above that of economic value (Mair & Marti, 2006).

We contend that such tensions and their management represent a useful analytical framework that sheds new light on the concept and practice of SE as well as the justification logics used by institutional entrepreneurs in search of legitimacy. As a focal point in our analysis, we use Boltanski & Thévenot's (1991) concepts of "civic" and "market" logics in order to illustrate the legitimacy challenges faced by SE organizations. Other logics of the Economies of Worth framework could be useful in understanding particular cases of SE but, as we aim for a generalized understanding of SE, we thus focus our attention on those logics that are most relevant for the majority of SE initiatives. The two logics, civic and market, represented in SE, operate under very different sets of justice (See table 1). Whereas the civic logic finds justice in the predominance of social conscience for the collective good, the market logic justice is more concerned with the principle of competition for the benefit of the individual (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991). Furthermore, legitimacy under the civic logic is found in collective representation, the renunciation of individualism, and in democratic representation as the ultimate form of governance (ibid). Opposed to this logic is the market logic that claims legitimacy in self-interest, opportunism and governance by the market as the ultimate form of justice. These two logics are therefore in perfect opposition; what is legitimate in one is illegitimate in the other. This opposition is a potential source of tensions between the day-to-day operation of a profitable commercial business and the management of a social organization whose priorities lie more in the resolution of social problems than in profitable earned income strategies.

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### **SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE LEGITIMACY ISSUE**

Whereas entrepreneurship theories seek to explain how, why and to what effect entrepreneurs act upon opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000), institutional theory seeks to explain and predict how institutionalized norms and beliefs influence, facilitate and restrict action (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Entrepreneurship theory has furthermore focused on uncertainty and how it also constrains action (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006). Uncertainty in entrepreneurship theory is mainly perceived as pertaining to the unpredictable success or failure of an entrepreneur's initiative. Yet, since "action is central to most theories of entrepreneurship" (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006: 133), it follows that entrepreneurial action is not totally constrained by uncertainty. For McMullen & Shepherd, (2006), knowledge and motivation are two aspects that make entrepreneurial action possible and that limit the constraining aspect of uncertainty. Yet,

the main determinant of success or failure is legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The legitimacy issue has also been identified as an important aspect for entrepreneurial initiatives:

among the many problems facing innovating entrepreneurs, their relative lack of legitimacy is especially critical, as both entrepreneurs and crucial stakeholders may not fully understand the nature of the new ventures, and their conformity to established institutional rules may still be in question (Aldrich & Fiol, 1995: 645).

When acting in new or still-forming fields, entrepreneurs are faced with considerable uncertainty for these fields lack legitimacy bases consisting of taken for granted norms, cultural rules and values (Aldrich & Martinez, 2001). Acquiring legitimacy and establishing norms in a new developing field is thus of prime importance. The definitions that SE actors develop for their field of activity will impact the choices made by social entrepreneurs for “how social entrepreneurs perceive the likely acceptability of privatizing certain social services (e.g., basic research, welfare, and human services, etc.) will inevitably shape how they choose to organize their ventures” (Townsend & Hart, 2008: 694). Increased perception of the legitimacy of SE will thus decrease perceived uncertainty and as such make entrepreneurial action more likely (McMullen & Shepherd, 2006).

We thus propose that for SE, an important source of uncertainty originates in the legitimacy issue. By bringing together two conflicting and contradictory logics, SE faces considerable uncertainty as to the legitimacy of its actions, because SE ‘runs against the grain of the traditional nonprofit mentality’ (Boschee, 1998: 3). In our analysis of the legitimacy issues facing social entrepreneurs, we will focus on the adoption of commercial and business means by a social purpose organization and its potential negative impact on the social mission. While it has been argued that for-profits see SE activities as unfair competition if the SE initiative chooses a non-profit legal status, this due to the tax advantage they enjoy (Salamon, 1993), the fact is that “there are very few distinct circumstances under which distinct competition between non-profits and for-profits can be detected” (Borzaga & Santuari, 2003: 46). As for the ongoing debate about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the [in]compatibility for a for-profit to also pursue social goals (Campbell, 2007, Carroll, 2007) this debate is not present in the SE literature; in our view, this absence may be explained by the fact that an SE initiative’s objective is first and foremost about social value creation rather than about profit creation (Mair & Marti, 2006). SE’s legitimacy debate thus seems to run in the opposite direction then the CSR legitimacy debate, in which the concern is that social goals might be endangering profits. Thus proponents of CSR have tried to show that the pursuit of economical and social goals might be compatible (Pava & Krausz, 2004; Campbell, 2007, Kurucz et al., 2008). In the SE legitimacy debate, the concern is that the pursuit of profits might come at the cost of a possible social mission displacement (Weisbrod, 2004). In itself, this is an important concern that should be studied further in future research.

This question of legitimacy is sometimes addressed in terms of compatibility. Arguments present in the non-profit and SE literature question the mix of social mission, business practices and commercial goals (Laville & Nyssens, 2001; Perlmutter & Adams, 1990). As SE increases its presence, so do the concerns expressed over the possible

displacement of the social mission by the adoption of more business-like ways and more commercial means (Tuckman, 1998; Dees & Anderson, 2003; Weisbrod, 2004). Business ways are perceived as being contrary to the fundamental redistributive function of traditional non-profits, because “in so far as social service provision has a redistributive function and should be planned and delivered in accordance with notions of equity and need, it is difficult to accept a central role for business in the provision of social support” (Grey et al., 2003: 150).

Adopting earned income strategies by using the market is also perceived as endangering the values promoted by organizations pursuing a social mission because the market erodes the values they are built on (Boettke & Rathbone, 2002). In the case of traditional non-profits, those that have relied previously on government funding, private foundations and donations for the majority of their income, this then represents a radical shift (Weisbrod, 2004). Legitimacy will thus become a fundamental issue and the challenge will lie in framing arguments using the proper legitimate discourse. This is where the civic and market logics can help in understanding what is legitimate and how arguments should be framed.

Under the civic logic, the dominant view is that putting in place a commercial initiative by a non-profit endangers the social mission (Tuckman, 1998; Weisbrod, 2004). This has been referred to as the “marketization” of the non-profit sector (Salamon, 1993) and is seen as potentially having negative long-term impact on non-profit organizations' capacity to build and maintain a strong civil society (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). Some even see SE as endangering the political nature of the social sector stating that “there is a danger in social entrepreneurship highlighting the business aspects of entrepreneurial approaches in contrast to voluntary and public sector approaches, and not placing enough emphasis on the inherently political nature of bringing about social change” (Grenier, 2002: 1). Under a purist civic logic, non-profit initiatives adopting earned income strategies and a market-like discourse are thus facing criticism and the threat of being perceived as illegitimate. Opposed to this purist approach is the discourse of the “new philanthropy” or “venture philanthropy”. These investment funds demand a return on their investment, be it a ROI (return on investment) or a SROI (Social return on investment) (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004). As their discourse on SE is based on the market logic, it is clashing with the traditional discourse in the non-profit organizational field based on a pure civic logic, thus jeopardizing the legitimacy of SE.

It is to gain this much-needed legitimacy that we now see SE actors co-constructing a new institutional domain and “legitimizing an organizational form that does not fit a prevailing logic involves modifying or displacing that logic in order to establish new legitimacy criteria” (Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005: 36-37). We argue that institutional actors supporting SE do so by “theorizing” on the SE concept. Theorizing is defined as “[...] the self-conscious development and specification of abstract categories and the formulation of patterned relationships” (Strang & Meyer, 1993: 492). In order to better understand and see the ongoing theorization, we chose to examine the content of the definitions and descriptions proposed by key stakeholders of the SE domain, particularly academics, consultants and foundations. In finding similarities in the content of their discourses, we thus provide “[...] evidence for theoretically mediated diffusion” (Strang & Meyer, 1993: 505) happening in the SE domain.

## METHODOLOGY

As stated in our introduction, we aim to answer how the important institutional actors mentioned above are tracing the boundaries of SE and how they justify SE as a legitimate form of social purpose organization. It is by answering these questions that we aim to attain the leading objective of our paper, that is to show the developing norms in SE and, thus, its legitimization.

In our research, we chose to use a discourse analysis methodology. Let us first define discourse. For Watson (1994: 113) discourse is “a connected set of statements, concepts, terms and expressions which constitutes a way of talking and writing about a particular issue, thus framing the way people understand and act with respect to that issue”. We agree with the position that sees discourse “as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity” (Weedon, 1987: 41). Alvesson & Kärreman (2000: 1126) state that there are “[...] two major and quite different approaches to ‘discourse’ in organization studies: the study of the social text (talk and written text in its social action contexts) and the study of social reality as discursively constructed and maintained (the shaping of social reality through language)”. Our own methodological position is that written social texts are representations of underlying discourses in social domains. Thus in studying texts that analyze and describe SE we seek to find evidence of the underlying discourses which shape this emergent domain. We also see these texts as influencing the development of future discourses in this domain. Thus we are interested in written discourses on SE, seeking to understand how they are shaping the domain and in turn how and if the analysis of this discourse shows evidence of normative institutionalization in SE.

We aim to analyze SE actors' discourses to better understand the field of SE for it has been argued that discourses form the premises and support for institutions (Selsky et al. 2003; Phillips et al. 2004). Discourse analysis brings the researcher to focus “on the production of texts as a fundamental part of the construction of organizational reality” (Phillips et al., 2008: 771), and can help shed light on the social construction of norms by actors, and on their institutionalization (Phillips et al., 2008).

Rather than studying actions, or verbal discourse, we chose to examine written texts. Like Phillips et al., (2004: 637), we believe

that there is a mutually constitutive relationship among discourse, text, and action: the meanings of discourses are shared and social, emanating out of actors' actions in producing texts; at the same time, discourse gives meaning to these actions, thereby constituting the social world” Furthermore, “Actions do not easily allow for the multiple readings by multiple individuals that are necessary if ideas for organizing are to be transmitted across time and space (Phillips et al., 2004: 638).

Written text does allow for such multiple readings, especially those texts that are available on the Internet. Texts, or written discourses, are thus important because “institutions are constituted by the structured collections of texts that exist in a particular field and that produce the social categories and norms that shape the understandings and behaviors of actors” (Phillips et al., 2004: 638). It is also by their discourse that actors negotiate institutional domains, thus in seeking to understand how an institution is being

constructed, it is of primary importance to study the discourse of important actors (Reed, 2004).

### **Selection of actors to study for our research**

In choosing whose written discourses we were to study in the SE field, we first turned to institutional theory and previous research to better understand which types of actors have been identified as influential. We also searched for links in the SE field since each field has a dynamic of its own that must be taken into account.

We chose to study the discourses of foundations for they have been previously identified as having potential impact on a non-profit organization's mission, its professionalization (DiMaggio, 1986; Dart, 2004) and its structure (Dart, 2004). Furthermore, in entrepreneurship studies, funding providers have been identified as "perhaps the dominant source of selection shaping the environment within which new ventures evolve" (Baum & Silverman, 2004:411). We thus argue that how foundations in the SE domain define what is to be considered a legitimate SE initiative is of primary importance.

We next decided to study the discourses of consultants for they have been identified as actors who have the potential to be institutional entrepreneurs by introducing new organizational models (Dorado, 2005). Furthermore, consultant firms impact on organizations by promoting their business models and therefore are part of the institutional isomorphic pressures placed on organizations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Finally, we chose to analyze the discourses of academics. While it can be argued that social entrepreneurs do not in fact read academic texts, we argue that academics in the field of SE have an important role in defining the boundaries and norms of the field. First, one must take into consideration the links established between universities' teaching and research programs with various SE networks. To name but a few, there is the *University Network for Social Entrepreneurship* that brings together academics, practitioners, and students, among others; not least are two of the actors (other than academics) we include in our research: the Skoll foundation and Ashoka; there is also the *Oxford Said business school* that houses the *Skoll Center for Social Entrepreneurship*, which is linked to the Skoll foundation; these groups also come together at conferences such as the *Social Enterprise Conference*, held at Harvard Business School and that includes as panelists Ashoka and the Schwab foundation among others. Furthermore, one cannot neglect the many research and MBA programs focused on SE, such as *The Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE)*, *Pace University's, Wilson Center for Social Entrepreneurship*, *The Indiana university social entrepreneurship program*, and *Stanford University Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship Program*, to name but a few.

Thus foundations, consultants, academics and, of course, the networks that bring these actors together, all have the potential to influence the development of the SE field and its constitutive logics. Our analysis thus aims to show convergence in the discourses of these actors in how they define SE, whereas it has previously been argued that no consensus exists on what is to be understood as SE (Zahra et al., 2008). While this is true, we will show that a consensus does exist with respect to one aspect of SE: that an organization pursuing a social mission while adopting business/commercial means to sustain itself is to be considered SE.

## **Data collection**

To gather the data needed for our analysis we proceeded to identify and collect literature on SE (Academic texts, documents from consultants, foundations, associations and others.) . To begin, we used key words like: social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneur, social venture and social enterprise in the databases of AbiInform Global and also Google Scholar. Since published academic literature is limited, we used Google Scholar to collect unpublished works in progress and conference papers, because we aim to show that the field is under construction and it is in these works that the construction discourse is to be found. In the end, our search produced 123 documents. We then extracted the definitions contained in these documents, producing 32 original definitions: 27 from academic texts and 5 from actors involved in foundations or consultant firms. We added to these definitions those of Ashoka, the Schwab foundation and the Skoll foundation because these actors, the former a consultant firm and the latter's foundations, are often cited in the literature on SE as influential actors in the field. Finally, we added the Social Alliance Network's definition of SE as this organization is a network that links many SE actors, including the three mentioned above, and thus has an important impact on the SE domain. In total, we collected 36 distinct definitions of SE. W

As such, we contend that this information represents a useful and legitimate base on which to ground our analysis, for it originates in the available official written discourses of the stakeholders who are co-constructing the norms of the SE domain.

## **Data analysis**

### ***Preliminary coding***

To organize the data, we began by a phase of inductive coding, using each distinct author's terminology to produce sections of texts representative of their discourse. The objective of this phase was to identify important elements in the definitions and to produce the first set of codes. This produced a large quantity of codes that while very representative of the actors' discourse, needed to be further reduced and synthesized to produce constructs more amenable to theory building.

### ***Step 1 codes***

In this phase, we proceeded to regroup the codes of the preliminary analysis into more generalized codes. In grouping and coding the data we still paid particular attention to the terms most representative of the authors' discourse. We also isolated terms used by authors to organize and define previous definitions such as broad, narrow or minimalist, which we interpreted as representing the authors' position towards previous attempts to define SE.

### ***Step 2 coding***

In this phase we further synthesized our codes, grouping them into generalized families, aiming here to produce more general concepts that may be used for empirical case studies. These concepts are presented in tables 2 and 3. We identified eight concepts: Social mission, Socio-economic, Innovation, Sustainability, Social change, opportunities, Autonomy and Risk.

### ***Step 3***

Using the more general codes produced in step 2, we next reanalyzed the texts and articles from which we had gathered the definitions, this time proceeding with a process of deductive coding. The aim of this phase was to look for discourses contained in these texts that, while not included in the definitions, still represented instances of

convergent discourses. In this phase we also verified that the concepts associated with each author in step 2 were representative of their discourse. We also further analyzed the texts in order to identify the different ways in which the actors qualified the concepts of social mission and socio-economic organization. This produced four sub-concepts: social value, empowerment, and commercial and business means.

**Step 4**

In this final phase we separated the discourses of academic authors (group 1) from the discourses of actors supporting SE that we have identified as consultants, foundations and networks (group 2) who support SE organizations. The aim of this final analysis was to determine whether SE is portrayed differently by the two groups.

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**FINDINGS**

**THEORIZATION: DISCOURSES DEFINING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

Analysis of the discourses of our sample reveals that definitions of SE are many and varied. While this is true, the analysis and coding of how academics, consultants and foundations perceive SE shows a high degree of theorization. Our analysis showed that, to varying degrees, these actors' perceptions of SE are characterized by eight concepts: social mission, socio-economic organization, innovation, sustainability, social change, opportunities, autonomy, and risk. Of these, we further develop the concepts which stand out as most representative: social mission, socio-economic organization, social change, innovation and sustainability as shown in figure 1 which presents the results of our codification. This figure shows how the discourses and concepts used by both academics (group 1) and consultants, foundations and networks (group 2) converge towards a domain that includes all these concepts in equal measure. This is significant as it indicates a high level of theorization in the field, a high level of convergence in content is “[...] evidence for theoretically mediated diffusion” (Strang & Meyer, 1993: 505). This high degree of theorization (convergence) in turn reveals normative institutionalization of the discourses in the SE domain. But what does each of these concepts stand for? This is what we will now look at while examining their link to four sub concepts: social value, empowerment, commercial and business means. These particular relationships established by the stakeholders in between the sub concepts reveal what is meant by social mission and socio-economic organization.

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**Creating social value**

SE is frequently stated to be first and foremost fundamentally about *pursuing a social mission*, the most convergent concept found in the SE literature. Yet what does the pursuit of a social mission entail? First, this concept is associated with the sub-concept of *social value creation*. As Austin et al. (2006:2) point out: “common across all definitions of social entrepreneurship is the fact that the underlying drive for social entrepreneurship is to create social value, rather than personal and shareholder wealth”. Our analysis of the discourses on SE clearly supports this statement as we found that the actors in groups 1 and 2 agree that the aim of SE is to create social value. Yet here one needs to ask what is meant by social value, for it could be argued that commercial entrepreneurship also creates social value - for example, through job creation.

Certain SE initiatives create social value through the “empowerment” of marginalized populations. The social entrepreneurs behind these initiatives have been shown to create “networks in which their target groups could take responsibility for their own fate, and that facilitated the development of individuals and the community” (Mair & Schoen, 2005: 15). In studying this type of SE initiatives, Alvord et al. (2002: 9), found three ways in which they help local communities: by “building local capacity, disseminating a package, or building a movement”. More generally, SE is described as creating social value by instigating *social change* - a concept found in the discourses of both group of actors, but more so in the discourse of consultants, foundations and networks (group 2). While 37% of the academic (group 1) literature mentions the importance for social change that SE brings, in group 2 this number rises to 55.6%.

Group 2 actors hold that SE “actions change existing perceptions, actions and values. They are radical and are able to bring about substantial and dramatic change through incremental focused initiatives” (Thake & Zadek, 1997: 20). For Ashoka, social entrepreneurs are change agents as “rather than leaving societal needs to the government or business sectors, social entrepreneurs find what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps”<sup>i</sup>. This discourse converges with that of the Skoll Foundation, which states that “just as entrepreneurs change the face of business, social entrepreneurs act as the change agents for society”<sup>ii</sup>, and also with the discourse of the Schwab foundation, in whose opinion a social entrepreneur is “a pragmatic visionary who achieves large scale, systemic and sustainable social change”<sup>iii</sup>. In this discourse, one can see that consultants and foundations who work with social entrepreneurs, see them as important institutional actors and initiators of change.

This perception of social entrepreneurs is reflected in academic literature and has been categorized as a type of SE that has the potential to “catalyze social transformation well beyond the solutions of the social problems that are the initial focus of concern” (Alvord et al., 2002: 4). These social entrepreneurs are said to be “Social Engineers [who] identify systemic problems within the social systems and structures and address them by bringing about revolutionary change” (Zahra et al., 2008: 22).

Thus when social entrepreneurs are defined as *social change agents*, there is convergence of the discourses held by both groups 1 and 2 in that social entrepreneurs are perceived as “able to bring about substantial and dramatic change through incremental focused initiatives” (Thake & Zadek, 1997: 20).

## **Finding ways to pursue the social mission**

We have seen that SE is perceived to have the potential of bringing fundamental change to society. We will now examine the means used by social entrepreneurs to deliver on their social mission. Our findings highlight the importance of the concept of *socio-economic* orientation for SE. It is the second most convergent concept to be found in SE literature: 72% of all actors studied perceive a socio-economic organization as being SE. However, this is not the same as stating that only a socio-economic organization is SE; some actors situate SE initiatives on a continuum, placing socio-economic initiatives at one pole. Yet convergence of the discourses of both groups supporting the socio-economic model is of significant importance. As discussed above, initiatives adopting business and commercial ways to answer a social mission have come under criticism, which endangers their legitimacy. Convergent discourses - on the appropriateness of socio-economic ways in SE and the presence of foundations and consultants lending their support - strengthen the legitimacy of these socio-economic SE initiatives.

Academic authors have categorized the definitions as broad and narrow. What is termed as the narrow definition “[...] refers to the phenomenon of applying business expertise and market-based skills in the nonprofit sector such as when nonprofit organizations develop innovative approaches to earn income” (Austin, 2006: 2) or to “nonprofit organizations engaged in earned income strategies to bring in additional revenue to support mission” (Lasprogata & Cotton 2003: 69). For actors of group 2, consultants and foundations, the narrow view describes a social entrepreneur as

A non-profit manager with a background in social work, community development, or business, who pursues a vision of economic empowerment through the creation of social purpose businesses intended to provide expanded opportunity for those on the margins of our nation’s economic mainstream (Emerson & Twersky, 1996: 8).

An initiative is said to be SE, rather than a traditional non-profit, when “a nonprofit organization is generating *earned* revenue from its activities” (Boschee & McClurg, 2003). Also important to the socio-economic discourse of consultants and foundations is that the organization has to be commercially viable (Emerson and Twersky, 1996), prompting Toepler (2004) to see it as commercialization in the non-profit sector.

Definitions of SE termed as broad include the concepts of *innovation* and *socio-economic organization* and see SE as possible in both the for-profit and non-profit domains. Innovation is the third most convergent discourse as, overall, 61% of all discourses analyzed state that innovation is an important aspect of SE. Thus “broader definitions include businesses organized as for-profit entities and hybrid organizations mixing nonprofit and for-profit elements” Lasprogata & Cotton (2003: 69).

Analysis of the discourses of academics shows that they consider SE to generate social value through innovation and “the creation of viable (socio-) economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield and sustain social benefits” (Fowler, 2000: 645). SE initiatives are described as “social enterprises, social ventures, and double bottom line organizations [...] [which are] terms used to describe organizations that blend business principles and social goals” (Dorado & Haettich, 2001: 2). SE is seen as “[...] combining commercial enterprises with social impacts” (Alvord &

al. 2002) and a social entrepreneur as an “[...] individual who approach a social problem with entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen” (Barendson & Gardner, 2004: 43).

Discourses by consultants and foundations adopting this perspective also see SE as an *innovative* socio-economic initiative, that is one that uses commercial and business ways to attain its social objectives. What stands out is that whether the definition is “broad” or “narrow”, a socio-economic phenomenon is seen as representative of SE and one that forces the social entrepreneur “to live within a dynamic tension of what makes good business sense and what fulfills the organization’s social mission” (Emerson & Twersky, 1996: 8).

### **The importance of SE**

One last question needs to be asked here: why adopt an SE structure to answer a social mission? Again, analysis of discourses provides us with an answer: to gain sustainability for the organization and, thereafter, for the initiatives put in place to resolve social problems. Following the socio-economic argument, adopting commercial initiatives is seen as important by consultants and foundations because “only earned income will ever allow a nonprofit to become sustainable or self-sufficient” (Boschee & McClurg, 2003: 1). This view is supported by the academic discourse, which states that in the “current political and economic environment, the reality for many nonprofit organizations is that sustainability means contemplating some level of commercial enterprise” (Lasprogata & Cotton, 2003: 74). An organization that does not seek to be sustainable is perceived as failing to answer its social mission, for

the role of social mission goes hand in hand with the sustainability of the organization. Sustainability resulting from a balance of the entrepreneurial drivers of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk management is not seen as an end in itself, but sustainability is focused on ensuring the continuation of the organization because of its social mission (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006: 30).

Finding sustainable solutions to social problems is linked to those SE initiatives that lead to significant social change (Alvord et al., 2002) and SE is thus perceived by both groups as the means to put in place lasting solutions to today’s important social problems.

### **DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION**

Arguing the importance of the legitimacy issue for entrepreneurial initiatives, we proceeded by using Boltanski & Thévenot’s (1991) Economies of Worth model to analyze the legitimacy issues faced by traditional non-profits that choose to make the move towards SE. This analysis showed that the discourse they adopt can be perceived as illegitimate depending on whom they address and under which logic they justify their actions.

Previous work on SE proposed that there was no consensus on a definition of SE. We chose to test this lack of consensus. What our research shows is that while there are many definitions of SE, there is a consensus that an organization adopting a social mission and using commercial and/or business means to sustain itself is, indeed, SE. Consensus on this point thus grants legitimacy within the SE field to these dual logic initiatives.

Analysis of the data first lead us to propose that SE has been defined mainly using eight concepts, among which we identified five as those on which the examined discourses showed the most frequent convergence social mission, socio-economic, social change, innovation and sustainability.. We then linked these concepts to four sub concepts: social value, empowerment, and commercial and business means. The five concepts represent the main categories used in the examined discourses and the sub concepts further clarify and define the various ways that actors categorize SE.

Below, we present these concepts and sub concepts in what we consider to be the main contribution of our paper: a conceptual model presenting the results of our analysis which shows how each concept is linked to the others (see figure 2). In analyzing the discourses found among the SE field, we see that the two opposed logics that create legitimacy issues for social entrepreneurs can be examined in relation to each other. While the priority of SE (its social mission) is based on the civic logic, the means used by SE organizations follow the directly opposite, market logic (Hervieux et al., 2007). Discourses on SE thus legitimize the use of means that operate under what was previously seen as a contradictory logic - by seeing market and business means not exclusively as aimed at generating profits in the traditional sense, but more as generating profits for the social mission and autonomy for the organization.

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This conclusion is of importance as it signals an institutional change brought about by the actions and discourses of SE domain actors: consultants, foundations and academics. By their discourses, these actors have legitimized the dual logic form of SE. Now that these SE initiatives are perceived as ‘desirable, proper, and appropriate’ and thus legitimate (Suchman, 1995: 574), the perceived ambiguity concerning their actions is reduced and their access to much needed resources is increased (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). As institutional theory informs us, social institutions reduce uncertainty by providing norms and rules concerning acceptable organizational forms and activities (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The search for legitimacy by dual logic SE initiatives may involve the need for compromise: SE initiatives may now find an institutional domain in which they are perceived as legitimate, but this implies that they accept to define their legitimacy within the constraints of the rules and norms of that domain. The identification of these rules and norms is beyond the scope of this paper, as the aim we pursued was to bring to the forefront the existence of discourse convergence in the SE domain. Further research is still needed to better understand these rules and norms and their impact on SE initiatives.

Furthermore, empirical studies of SE initiatives may serve to verify that the concepts presented in our model and their relations to each other are also representative of social entrepreneurs' discourses and, if that is not the case, to demonstrate how they differ. Indeed, the concepts we present here need to be further tested before they can be said definitively to be representative of SE. At this time, our findings can be seen as representing the discourse of academics, consultants and foundations. We argue that this discourse legitimizes one important type of SE, that is socio-economic social initiatives.

More research is needed to see whether SE is more likely to be a socio-economic initiative, or if SE is more about social change and answering a social mission this regardless of if the social entrepreneur adopts market means or not.

A limitation of our research is that it analyzed the discourses of actors at the domain level of SE exclusively. Further research is needed in order to gather data on micro discourses in SE, those of social entrepreneurs. Such research will provide a better understanding of how social entrepreneurs define themselves and will show whether the discourses of social entrepreneurs are consistent with those of the actors that study, fund and teach them. Furthermore, empirical research is needed to study how these discourses, those of consultants, foundations and academics, are then translated and put in place by social entrepreneurs and also to see what impact this has on SE organizations. As these socio-economic organizations gain legitimacy, it remains to be seen what long-term impacts this will have on their capacity to deliver on their social mission and on how social problems are addressed. Longitudinal studies of these organizations need to be carried out in order to better understand what changes to the social domain the new SE domain will bring, if any. It remains to be seen, also, whether the co-construction of an SE institutional domain based on values taken from both the market and the civic domain will, in fact, improve the capacity of social purpose organizations to deliver on their social mission - regardless of the claims made by those constructing this domain.

**Table 1**  
**Civic and market logics according to Boltanski & Thévenot (1991)**

	<b>Perceived as legitimate</b>	<b>Perceived as just</b>
<b>Civic</b>	Collective good, social conscience	Democracy, renouncement of individualism
<b>Market</b>	Competition	Self interest, opportunism

**Table 2****Social entrepreneurship definitions and codes – Group 1 – Academic texts**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Step 2 - Level 2 codes</b>	<b>Step 3</b>
(Alvord & al., 2002: 4)	“innovating for social impact ... attention is focused on innovations and social arrangements that have consequences for social problems, often with relatively little attention to economic viability by ordinary business criteria.”	Innovation Social mission	Sustainable Social change agents
Austin et al. (2006: 2)	“We define social entrepreneurship as innovative, social value creating activity that can occur within or across the nonprofit, business, or government sectors.”	Innovation Social mission	Sustainable (financially) Opportunities
(Barendson & Gardner, 2004: 43)	“Social entrepreneurs are individual who approach a social problem with entrepreneurial spirit and business acumen”	Socio-economic Social mission	Social change agent
(Bhawe et al., 2006: 3).	“ ... create new, viable socio-economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield and sustain social benefits”	Socio-economic Social mission Sustainable	Social change agents
(Boettke & Rathbone, n/d: 7).	“ ... innovation in the philanthropic sector to fill in the gaps left by both the market sector and the state sector”	Innovation	Social mission

<p>Borzaga &amp; Santuari, (2000: 14-15).</p>	<p>“... entrepreneurial side, ... 1) a continuous activity producing goods and/or services; 2) a high degree of autonomy; 3) a significant level of economic risk; and 4) the presence of paid work. A possible fifth parameter might be added: a market orientation ... the social dimension of these organizations: 1) an initiative undertaken by a group of citizen; 2) direct participation by the persons affected by the activity; 3) power not based on capital ownership; 4) limited profit distribution; 5) an explicit aim to benefit the community”</p>	<p>Socio-economic Social mission Autonomy Risk</p>	<p>Innovation</p>
<p>Dees (1998: 4)</p>	<p>“Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by:          -Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value).          -Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission.          -Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning.          -Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand. and          -Exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created”</p>	<p>Sustainable Social change agents Opportunities Innovation Social mission</p>	<p>Risk</p>

Dorado and Haettich, (2001: 5)	“consider interorganizational, nonprofit, and double bottom line as separate but related types of SEV <sup>1</sup> s. It suggests SEVs are initiatives that blend business principles and social goals. They may involve more or less formal arrangements and disappear when the goals they were set to achieve are accomplished. As in the case of microfinance, they may also evolved and form a resilient industry, capable of solving social problems which were considered untreatable before, such as the lack of access to working capital for microentrepreneurs”.	Socio-economic Social mission	Sustainable Opportunities
Fowler (2000: 645)	“Social entrepreneurship is the creation of viable (socio-) economic structures, relations, institutions, organizations and practices that yield and sustain social benefits”.	Socio-economic Social mission Sustainable	
(Gerlach, 2006: 2).	“Social entrepreneurs are defined as important source of innovation, as actors who – by combining a social mission with business skills – identify under-utilised resources and create new welfare services”	Innovation Socio-economic Social mission	
Harding (2004: 41)	“They are entrepreneurs with a social mission so any attempt to capture levels of social entrepreneurial activity must be able to distinguish between those individuals who participate in community or social groups and those who are actually motivated by social objectives to <i>instigate</i> some form of new activity or venture”.	Social mission Social change agents	Socio-economic

<sup>1</sup> SEV: Social Entrepreneurial Ventures

(Haugh, 2006: 5)	“ ... those activities associated with the perception of opportunities to create social value and the creation of social purpose organisations to pursue them. Social enterprises adopt financially sustainable strategies to pursue social aims, and address a wide a range of social problems”	Socio-economic Social mission Sustainable Opportunities	Autonomy Innovation
(Hibbert et al., 2001: 288).	“Social entrepreneurship can be loosely defined as the use of entrepreneurial behaviour for social ends rather than for profit objectives, or alternatively, that the profits generated are used for the benefit of a specific disadvantaged group”	Socio-economic Social mission	Sustainable
(Kolakavic & Sisek, 2007: 183)	“ ... collective entrepreneurship aspects, on the entrepreneurship in not-for-profit and public sector, as well as ways of creating responsible and sustainable business. That has lead to social movements, individual incentives and organizational structures which are known under the term social entrepreneurship”	Social mission Sustainable	
(Lasprogata & Cotton, 2003: 69)	“nonprofit organizations that apply entrepreneurial strategies to sustain themselves financially while having a greater impact on their social mission (i.e., the “double bottom line”)”	Socio-economic Social mission Sustainable	

Mair and Marti (2006: 37)	<p>“First, we view social entrepreneurship as a process of creating value by combining resources in new ways. Second, these resource combinations are intended primarily to explore and exploit opportunities to create social value by stimulating social change or meeting social needs. And third, when viewed as a process, social entrepreneurship involves the offering of services and products but can also refer to the creation of new organizations.”</p> <p>“Can occur equally well in a new organization or in an established organization, where it may be labeled ‘social intrapreneurship’</p>	<p>Social mission  Opportunities  Social change agents</p>	<p>Autonomy  Sustainability  Socio-economic  Innovation</p>
(Mair & Schoen, 2007: 54)	<p>“ ... combining a social purpose with a for-profit mindset”</p>	<p>Socio-economic  Social mission</p>	<p>Innovation  Social change agent  Autonomy/self-sustaining</p>
Pomerantz (2003 : 25)	<p>“Social entrepreneurship can be defined as the development of innovative, mission-supporting, earned income, job creating or licensing, ventures undertaken by individual social entrepreneurs, nonprofit organizations, or nonprofits in association with for profits”.</p>	<p>Innovation  Socio-economic  Social mission</p>	

Peredo and McLean (2006: 64)	“Social entrepreneurship is exercised where some person or group: (1) aim(s)at creating social value, either exclusively or at least in some prominent way; (2) show(s) a capacity to recognize and take advantage of opportunities to create that value (“envision”); (3) employ(s) innovation, ranging from outright invention to adapting someone else’s novelty, in creating and/or distributing social value; (4) is/are willing to accept an above-average degree of risk in creating and disseminating social value; and (5) is/are unusually resourceful in being relatively undaunted by scarce assets in pursuing their social venture.”	Innovation Social mission Risk Opportunities	Socio-economic
(Sharir & Lerner, 2006: 9 & 16).	“ ... acting as a change agent to create and sustain social value without being limited to resources currently in hand”. “ ... attempts to apply business strategies for the purpose of more effective confrontatio n with complex social problems”	Socio-economic Social mission Sustainable Social change agent	Opportunity Innovation
Shaw (2004: 195)	“The work of community, voluntary and public organizations as well as private firms working for social rather than only profit objectives”	Social mission	Autonomy Socio-economic Opportunity Innovation
Tan, William and Tan (2005: 360)	“Making profits by innovation in the face of risk with the involvement of a segment of society and where all or part of the benefits accrue to that same segment of society”.	Innovation Socio-economic Risk Social mission	
(Toepler, 2004)	Commercialization in the non-profit sector	Socio-economic	

(Vasakarla, 2008: 32).	“Social entrepreneurship involves activities relating to philanthropy and social responsibility. It is a combination of business acumen, innovation, and determination”	Innovation Social mission	Risk
Weerawardena et Mort (2006 : 25)	“A behavioral phenomenon expressed in a NFP organization context aimed at delivering social value through the exploitation of perceived opportunities”	Social mission Opportunities	Sustainability Innovation Socio-economic Opportunity
Waddock et Post (1991 : 393)	“Social entrepreneurs are private sector citizens who play critical roles in bringing about “catalytic changes” in the public sector agenda and the perception of certain social issues”.	Social mission Social change agents	
(Zahra et al., 2008: 2)	“encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner”.	Innovation Social mission opportunity	Social change agents Socio-economic Risk

**Table 3**

**Social entrepreneurship definitions and codes – Group 2 – Consultants, foundations and networks**

<b>Author/ actor</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Step 2 - Level 2 codes</b>	<b>Step 3</b>
Boschee & McClurg, 2003: 1)	“ ... a nonprofit organization ... generating <i>earned</i> revenue from its activities”	Socio-economic	Autonomy Sustainable Social mission

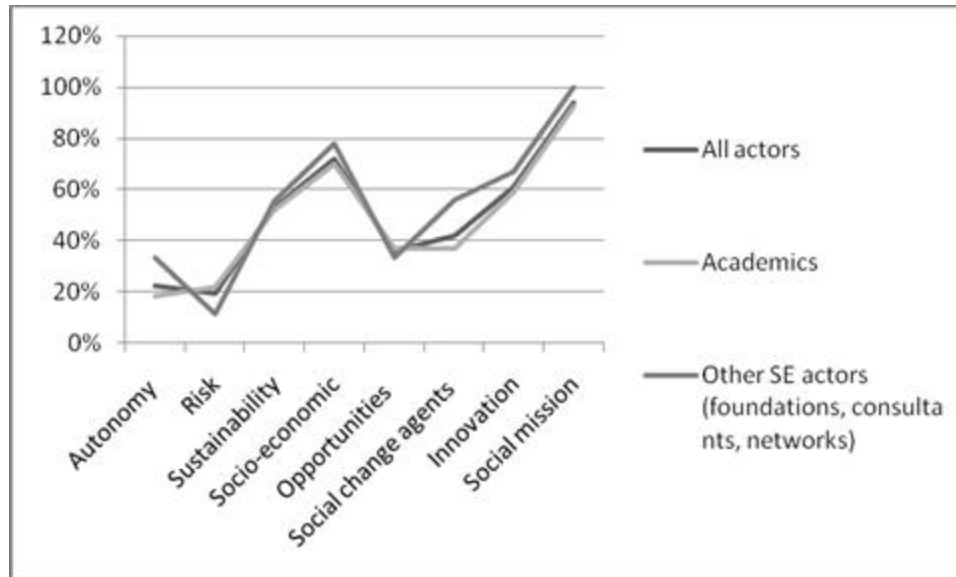
Emerson & Twersky (1996: 8)	<p>“New Social Entrepreneur— A non-profit manager with a background in social work, community development, or business, who pursues a vision of economic empowerment through the creation of social purpose businesses intended to provide expanded opportunity for those on the margins of our nation’s economic mainstream. Commitment to a “double bottom-line” is at the heart of the New Social Entrepreneur. It forces the non-profit manager to live within a dynamic tension of what makes good business sense and what fulfills the organization’s social mission”.</p>	Socio-economic Social mission	
(Horsnell & Pepin., 2002: 1)	<p>“Social entrepreneurship is about starting and growing business ventures that simultaneously contribute to your organizational capacity, mission impact and financial bottom line”</p>	Socio-economic Social mission	Sustainable Risk (management) Opportunities
Reis (1999: 3)	<p>“Social Entrepreneurship – Social entrepreneurs create social value through innovation and leveraging financial resources – regardless of source – for social, economic, and community development. The expectations for nonprofits to provide services and achieve social change at a larger scale while also diversifying funding resources are motivating social entrepreneurs to invent organizations that are hybrids of nonprofit and for-profit structures. The innovations of social entrepreneurs and the organizational models they are creating require new perspectives and responses from traditional philanthropy”.</p>	Innovation Socio-economic Social mission Social change agents	Autonomy Sustainability

<p>Thake &amp; Zadek (1997: 20)</p>	<p>“Social entrepreneurs are driven by a desire for social justice. Social entrepreneurs do not create personal wealth for themselves they create common wealth for the wider community. They build social capital in order to promote social cohesion. They seek a direct link between their actions and an improvement in the quality of life for the people with whom they work and those that they seek to serve. They aim to produce solutions which are sustainable financially, organisationally, socially and environmentally”.</p>	<p>Socio-economic Social mission Sustainable</p>	<p>Autonomy Opportunity Social change agent Innovation</p>
<p>Social Enterprise Alliance</p>	<p>“Social entrepreneurs are pioneering individuals who generate innovations that benefit humanity. Such innovations may come from the fields of technology, finance, philanthropy, medicine, or any other kind of field.</p> <p>Social enterprise has generally referred to mission-based commercial activity by nonprofits, which may include for-profit subsidiaries of these organizations. Increasingly, it also encompasses new forms of for-profit businesses launched to serve a social purpose. Either of these arenas may be fertile ground for social entrepreneurs to realize their innovations. SEA welcomes social entrepreneurs into our community to learn about business models currently generating social value, to share their ideas and passion, and to develop mentorships and partnerships for translating their ideas into impact”.</p> <p><a href="http://www.se-alliance.org/about_leading.cfm">http://www.se-alliance.org/about_leading.cfm</a></p>	<p>Innovation Social mission Socio-economic</p>	

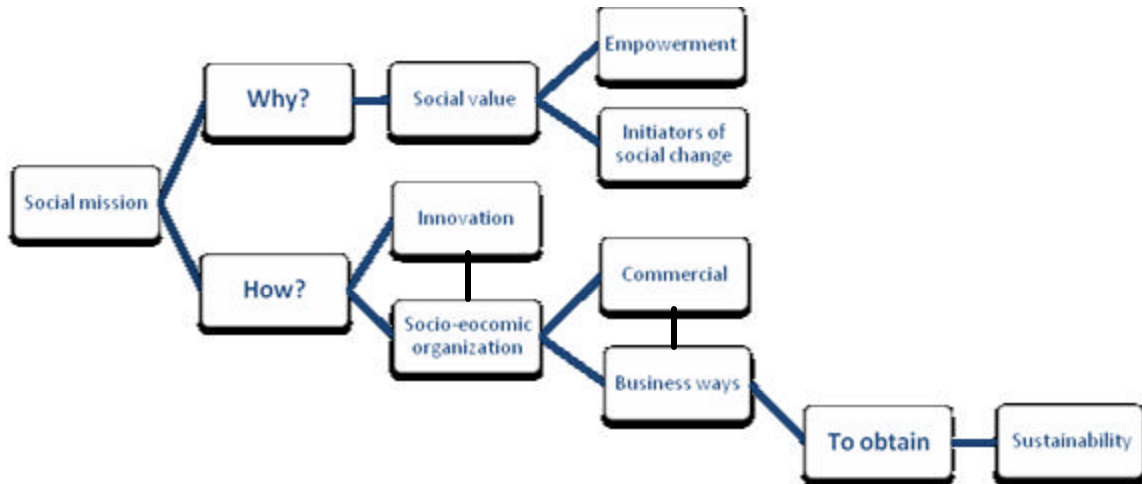
Schwab Foundation	<p>“Social entrepreneurship is about applying practical, innovative and sustainable approaches to benefit society in general, with an emphasis on those who are marginalized and poor ... a term that captures a unique approach to economic and social problems, an approach that cuts across sectors and disciplines ... grounded in certain values and processes that are common to each social entrepreneur, independent of whether his/ her area of focus has been education, health, welfare reform, human rights, workers' rights, environment, economic development, agriculture, etc., or whether the organizations they set up are non-profit or for-profit entities”.</p> <p><a href="http://www.schwabfound.org/whatis.htm">http://www.schwabfound.org/whatis.htm</a></p>	<p>Innovation Sustainability Social mission Socio-economic</p>	Social change agent
Ashoka	<p>“Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change.</p> <p>Rather than leaving societal needs to the government or business sectors, social entrepreneurs find what is not working and solve the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution, and persuading entire societies to take new leaps”</p> <p><a href="http://www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur">http://www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur</a></p>	<p>Innovation Social mission Social change agent</p>	

<p>Skoll foundation</p>	<p>“Entrepreneurs are essential drivers of innovation and progress. In the business world, they act as engines of growth, harnessing opportunity and innovation to fuel economic advancement. Social entrepreneurs act similarly, tapping inspiration and creativity, courage and fortitude, to seize opportunities that challenge and forever change established, but fundamentally inequitable systems.</p> <p>Distinct from a business entrepreneur who sees value in the creation of new markets, the social entrepreneur aims for value in the form of transformational change that will benefit disadvantaged communities and ultimately society at large. Social entrepreneurs pioneer innovative and systemic approaches for meeting the needs of the marginalized, the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised – populations that lack the financial means or political clout to achieve lasting benefit on their own”.</p>	<p>Innovation Opportunity Social change agent Social mission</p>	
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**Figure 1**  
**Evidence of high level of theorizing in the SE domain**



**Figure 2**  
**Social entrepreneurship - conceptual model**



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<sup>i</sup> Ashoka website, [http://www.ashoka.org/social\\_entrepreneur](http://www.ashoka.org/social_entrepreneur), last visited April 30<sup>th</sup> 2008.

<sup>ii</sup> Skoll Foundation, <http://www.skollfoundation.org/aboutsocialentrepreneurship/index.asp>, last visited April 30<sup>th</sup> 2008.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.schwabfound.org/whatis.htm>, last visited May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008.