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**Research on social entrepreneurship: analysis of
methodological approaches and assumptions**

Obregon, Juan Antonio

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**RESEARCH ON SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP:
ANALYSIS OF METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES
AND ASSUMPTIONS**

Juan Antonio OBREGON

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in the Faculty of Humanities of the University of the Witwatersrand,
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EXPLICATIO

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the evolution of the research on social entrepreneurship. This approach is unusual in the Sociology department and requires a justification *upfront*. The main reason behind the adoption of this meta-theoretical approach was the difficulties relating to the conventional empirical approach.

Obstacles for empirical research

The conceptual and terminological confusion that prevails in the field is a major obstacle for empirical research. There are different conceptualizations of the phenomenon and there is still no consensus about the main object of research. The review of the literature reveals also a great variety of approaches and methods that point, in some cases, to opposing assumptions about its nature.

This research has been conceived as a critical exploration of the literature from a broader (multidisciplinary) and deeper (philosophical) perspective. The research explores the connections with related social and economic phenomena and the evolution of other academic fields. The main objective is to uncover the assumptions implicit in the different conceptualizations of the phenomena in order to identify any underlying patterns that could shed some light into the apparent confusion. The research is conceived as preparatory work for further research on the topic.

There are many sources of inspiration for this project but three ideas have been particularly influential. They are expanded upon below to justify the research approach:

Paradigm as new unit of rational evaluation

According to Matheson (2011), the key contribution of Kuhn to the philosophy of science was the introduction of a new “unit of rational evaluation”. Kuhn’s “meta-methodological” analysis of scientific rationality is not focused on the examination of theories but on the analysis of an underlying set of assumptions or beliefs that

constitutes a “paradigm” across theories and discipline boundaries. The concept of paradigm has never been defined with precision. Even the terminology varies. Lakatos adopted the term research programme and Laudan introduced the notion of research tradition.

The term paradigm is used in this research in the sense suggested by Matheson, as the set of assumptions that are explicit or implicit in the research on social entrepreneurship. Greater emphasis has been placed particularly on the beliefs around individualism, materialism and the epistemological and methodological assumptions.

Nicholls (2010) suggested that the field of social entrepreneurship was at a pre-paradigmatic status characterized by the lack of consensus on the epistemology. But this idea has not been explored further.

Given the diversity of approaches, the only way to make sense of such a variety was to search for the implicit assumptions that might explain the conceptual divergences. The findings could eventually provide common grounds for the construction of the field.

Understanding theory and language

The second idea that influenced the adoption of a meta-theoretical approach was the concept of theory. The literature on social entrepreneurship is very rich in attempts to provide a definition but the ultimate purpose of the definition and the role of theory are rarely clear.

Weick introduced the **analogy of cartography** to explain his idea of theory as a **map used to make sense** of reality. Theory is more than just puzzle-solving but rather converting 'a world of experience into an intelligible world' (Weick, 2001:9). Defining theory as a “coherent and plausible” story is very close to a constructionist paradigm. But for Weick, theory was not just a product of “unrestricted” human creativity. Certain conditions define “coherence and plausibility” that is required for consensus.

Hatch and Cunliffe defined the main purpose of abstract theory as the identification of **appropriate questions** rather than to provide solutions for specific problems. Theory provides partial solutions based on the evidence available, and more importantly, it should make very clear what is still not known (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). The

economist Raiffa had suggested a new type of error in statistical reasoning (Type III) that he defined as asking the wrong question or “falling into the trap of working on the wrong problem” (Raiffa, 1968:264).

Hatch and Cunliffe understood alternative theoretical perspectives in organisation studies not as contradictions but as complementary ways of thinking.

Lohmann’s description of theory as “expressive vocabulary” provided another interesting perspective. In his view, theory should be aimed at developing a “broad framework of shared terms, understandings, nominal and operational definitions, assumptions and conventional approaches within which discrete but related issues can be formulated and research questions can be addressed” (Lohmann, 1992:4).

These ideas of theory, combined with Matheson’s notion of paradigm were particularly inspiring when designing this research. Identifying the assumptions was considered the most productive approach to make sense of the terminological, conceptual and methodological variety found in the research on social entrepreneurship.

Critical realism

The third set of ideas from which this research emerged provided the framework to articulate all the previous thoughts. They came from the critical realist perspective in the philosophy of science whose principles have been adopted for this research.

The basic belief of critical realism is that reality is objective, or in Bashkar’s terminology “intransitive”, that is, independent of our beliefs and perceptions. It consists of “material, mental and emergent products” (Van de Ven, 2007:37). It is plural and complex but it is ordered and structured because all things possess inherent characteristics or tendencies to interact in particular ways. The interactions are not invariant because the nature is an open system. They should be understood as tendencies rather than immutable scientific laws (Lopez & Potter, 2001).

Realist epistemology accepts the fallibility of human knowledge (Van de Ven, 2007), but it does not deny the possibility of objectivity. Despite the “social constructed nature of scientific knowledge”, there are “good rational grounds for the preference of

one theory over another, rational grounds that go beyond human interest” (Lopez & Potter, 2001:7). Critical realism refuses to reduce knowledge to its sociological determinants of production. Even in the cases of “ideological errors” or “social distortion of knowledge” it is possible to provide an objective scientific explanation (Lopez & Potter, 2001:14). However it requires greater transparency about researcher interests and assumptions (Van de Ven, 2007).

To achieve this transparency critical realism emphasizes the need for interparadigmatic dialogue (Lopez & Potter, 2001), the main characteristic of meta-theory and philosophy of science, and “methodological pluralism” (Van de Ven, 2007:37).

Application to social entrepreneurship

The purpose of this research is directly inspired by these ideas. The research on social entrepreneurship is characterized by the confusing use of terminology, alternative theoretical approaches adopted, and various methodologies tentatively applied. The only way of “making sense” of such diversity was to go deeper into the exploration of the underlying assumptions of the authors. The research is aimed at unveiling common assumptions across different conceptualizations and theoretical approaches, as suggested by Matheson. This approach is useful to discard false problems and shed some light about the “inner tendencies” in the “reality” of social entrepreneurship.

The researcher embraced the idea of plurality as a desirable strategy. The process of building theory should be first oriented to unveiling the meaning embedded in the different uses of the terminology. The analysis of terminology is used as entry point for the examination of the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind the alternative conceptualizations and the methodological choices. The method of discourse analysis has generated interesting insights.

The principles of critical realism have also determined the writing style. The use of the third person was discarded because sometimes it could be understood as pretence of objectivity.

Any research is a very personal exercise of self-reflection. It is necessarily subjective and is never completely value free. The transparency in the process, the interests and assumptions recommended by van de Ven (2007) makes the researcher's subjectivity accessible to the reader. The conditions for plausibility and consensus are created through intersubjective interaction.

There is room to accommodate subjectivity and intuition in science if it is conceived as the "pre-analytic cognitive act that supplies the raw material for the analytical effort" (Schumpeter, 1954:41).

But for the research to be relevant, the other requirement is the priority given to factual data or 'Wertfreiheit' as defined by Weber in his Methodology of social sciences (Poggi, 2006).

Early declaration of assumptions

Consequently, and to comply with these requirements, the researcher has included in this explication an early declaration of his own assumptions. The beliefs that guided this research can be summarized as follows:

Social entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon that cannot be understood in isolation from other economic, social and political trends. The label of social enterprise could be applied to several specific forms of entrepreneurship but there are some common principles and values. There are indications also that the emergence of these new forms is changing the conventional understanding of entrepreneurial activities. This analysis goes far beyond the scope of this research. The background includes a brief description of the trends that have been identified as more directly relevant.

The **evolution of the social reality influences the validity of theories and concepts.** The emergence of social entrepreneurship could respond to new realities that challenge the traditional distinctions between profit and nonprofit, public and private. This is part of what Galbraith defined as "*the conventional wisdom*" (1958). The role of the state, business and nonprofit sector might require a new reinterpretation. Social

entrepreneurship could be understood as one example of Kuhn's "anomaly" that has triggered a "period of revolutionary science".

This might be one of those moments when the traditional assumptions are systematically questioned, opening space for a new "normal science". The "revolutionary" characteristic of the phenomenon also requires a **revision of the epistemological foundations** of the research as Nicholls suggests.

The analysis in depth of all the issues evoked here is beyond the scope of this research. The objective is a comprehensive exploration of the literature aimed at establishing sound foundations for future research on the topic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is the product of two years of observation and reflection on the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship in South Africa.

The process started in 2010 at GIBS when I joined the Social Enterprise Certificate Programme. The discussions inside and outside the classroom inspired many of the ideas that are reflected in this report. I thank all the people at GIBS that make possible that programme every year. I am particularly grateful for my classmates for the impulse they provided for this research through their work and enthusiasm.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own, unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

(Signature of candidate)

Johannesburg, 10th day of June 2013.

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ABSTRACT

Since the emergence of social entrepreneurship in the late 1970s, public and academic attention given to the topic has grown steadily, but there is still little consensus on the concept and the research programme.

This research assumes that social entrepreneurship is not just a particular type of organisation or activity. It is one symptom of a broader process of transformation of the beliefs around entrepreneurial activities.

The research on social entrepreneurship requires an understanding of the origin of this process and the connections to other aspects of reality that are also affected. This research is a first step in that direction. It is conceived as an exploration of the terminology, the conceptualizations and the ontological and epistemological assumptions. The objective is to provide a preliminary dynamic map of the process.

The research applies the methods of contents- and discourse analysis to a sample of articles selected according to the criteria of maximum variation. The sample covers a wide variety of theoretical frameworks and methodologies that have been tested to explore the topic so far.

The research purpose is exploratory, aimed at the preparation for future research on the topic. The exploration identified some indications of a possible correlation between certain terms and concepts and particular modalities of social entrepreneurship. It also identified a convergence of assumptions in the theoretical frameworks applied in the field. This convergence points to the acceptance of the basic assumptions of the paradigm of critical realism.

Several major shortcomings have been identified particularly with respect to the lack of clear definition of ontological and epistemological statements. Based on these knowledge gaps, the conclusion proposes three avenues for future research.

INTRODUCTION

&

BACKGROUND

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of social entrepreneurship emerged in the late 1970s and has received increasing public and academic attention, particularly since 2006. However, despite more than 30 years of research on the topic, there is still no consensus on the concept and its epistemology (Nicholls, 2010).

This problem is broken down here into three interrelated aspects: lack of precise terminology, conceptual confusion, and the absence of epistemological clarity.

The research focuses on the exploration of the use of terminology and the identification of ontological and epistemological assumptions. The aim is to unveil any possible correlation between the conceptualization of the phenomenon, the terminology, and methodological choices. It also explores the practical implications of these assumptions for the design and implementation of the appropriate policies.

The purpose is exploratory, aimed at the preparation for future research in the field.

It is conceived as a meta-analysis of the research in the domain. It applies the methods of contents and discourse analysis to provide a map of the key assumptions in a selected sample of scholarly articles.

The research is relevant not only for the sake of theoretical clarification required for future research; it also has practical implications for the development of the public policies.

Social entrepreneurship is often proposed as an innovative solution to the intractable problems of poverty and public service delivery (Dees, 2001; Haugh, 2005; Johnson, 2000; Mair, 2008; Nicholls, 2008). It has even been explored as an alternative for the delivery of public services particularly in developing countries (Mair & Marti, 2009; Partzsch & Ziegler, 2011; Seelos & Mair, 2005, 2007). The connections between entrepreneurship and development have been explored in general, but the analysis of policies required to promote this role in the social domain is still underdeveloped as this research has confirmed.

The research report begins with an historical overview that explores the interconnections of the phenomenon within the broader social, political and ideological background. The second block contains the review of the literature that describes the evolution of the research to date and identifies the knowledge gaps that justify the research purpose, questions and methodology. The final block includes the key findings and the conclusions.

2. BACKGROUND

In his seminal article published for the first time in 1998, Dees suggested that social entrepreneurship is **not a new phenomenon but a new language** (Dees, 2001). This is a recurrent issue in the literature (Mair & Marti, 2006; Nicholls, 2008; CASE, 2008; Chand, 2009; Kerlin, 2010). But the reasons **why this “old phenomenon” has become so prominent** requires an explanation.

My contention is that social entrepreneurship is **not just a new language**. There have been many simplistic attempts to explain the emergence of social entrepreneurship based on purely economic factors, more precisely the demise of the Welfare State and the dominance of neoliberalism. In my view, social entrepreneurship is one symptom of a complex process of economic, social, political and cultural transformation that requires a new transdisciplinary perspective.

In this chapter I briefly describe some elements of this process that are necessary to understand the significance of the phenomenon from a broader perspective.

The chapter includes firstly a historical overview of the emergence of social entrepreneurship in different regions, and secondly it describes the trends that have been selected as being more relevant to the purpose of this research.

2.1. Historical overview

The historical background describes the four different contexts in which different conceptions of social entrepreneurship have emerged.

The emergence of social enterprise in the USA

During the 1970s, nonprofit organisations in the USA started to look for alternative sources of revenue to complement private donations and government grants. The revenue generated through commercial activities and other innovative forms of sponsorship was termed “earned income”.

Many nonprofit organisations had experience in selling products (Bradach & Foster, 2005). But the extension of this practice, the generalisation of management techniques, and the systematic exploration of innovative mechanisms for cooperation with companies, such as cause related marketing, was certainly an innovation that justified a new label.

The Institute of Social Entrepreneurs places the “official birth” of the movement in 1982 with the celebration of the first international conference organised by Jerr Boschee and sponsored by Control Data Corporation, whose chairman, Bill Norris, was a key actor in the emergence of the movement.

The following year, the first national survey on social enterprise was launched in the USA (Crimmins & Keil, 1983) and Edward Skloot published the first article on the topic in the Harvard Business Review (Skloot, 1983). It was the first article about nonprofits ever published by the magazine (ISE, 2008). It set an important precedent.

Several American business schools introduced social enterprise programmes in the 1990s. Harvard was the pioneer in 1993 with the Social Enterprise Initiative (SEI) (Nicholls, 2008), followed by Stanford in 1998 and other North American Universities (Alberta, Duke, Columbia, and New York). Most programmes were initially focused on the application of business methods to nonprofits but the contents gradually became more diversified.

The commercialization of the nonprofit sector

The social enterprise movement in the USA, at least in the early years, was mainly a nonprofit phenomenon.

The emergence of social entrepreneurship triggered an interesting reflection on the “*commercialization*” or “*marketization*” of nonprofit organisations that influenced the general perception of the sector.

Hansmann (1989) pointed to two distinct “nonprofit sectors” that were emerging, one based on fees and the other on donations. In 1994, Herman elaborated further on this distinction, suggesting that the nonprofit sector could evolve to become an industry, rather than a community (Farrugia, 2007).

The improvement of statistical information accompanied this reflection. The Centre for Civil Society Studies (CCSS) at the Johns Hopkins University launched in 1991 the Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. The research debunked certain myths. The data confirmed that by the mid-1990s, more than 50% of the revenue of nonprofit organisations was obtained from fees and charges (Salamon, 1995). Salamon also argued that public funding in the post-war period, particularly through the “Great Society” programme under Johnson’s presidency, was the main cause for the growth of the sector.

In 1995, the CCSS started compiling information about other countries that confirmed the dependence on fees. The rate was higher in developing countries (61.3%), than in developed countries (44.6%). Germany (32.3%) and France (34.6%) were the two countries where the dependence was lower (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004).

The role and structure of the nonprofit sector varies considerably in each country and the statistics should be considered with caution. But the comparative analysis provided new elements to understand the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship around the world.

Social enterprise in Europe

In Europe, its origin was also associated to the economic crisis of the 1970s, but the responses evolved in a different context. The role of the nonprofit sector and the relations with the State varied in each country but the majority of organisations defined as social enterprises or social firms, focused on the mitigation of structural

unemployment. The intervention of governments was also a common characteristic across Europe. The emergence of social enterprise was defined by the direct involvement of government in the regulation of the phenomenon from the outset (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Galera & Borzaga, 2009).

The term social enterprise (*“Impresa sociale”*) appeared for the first time in 1991 when the Italian Government adopted a law regulating a new type of **“social cooperative”** that had appeared to provide employment to disabled people. In the years that followed, other countries passed similar laws to regulate social enterprises. The term employed was different in each case: community interest cooperatives in France, social solidarity cooperatives in Portugal, social initiative cooperatives in Spain. Belgium, and the second regulation approved in Italy, did not limit the type to the cooperative model (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010).

The dominant type of social enterprise was the “work integration model” that promoted employment among disadvantaged groups. The concept was very close to the “affirmative business” pioneered by John Durand in the USA (Boschee, 1995).

Another significant difference in Europe was the early creation of a research network, EMES, among nine universities that led to a common position on the definition of social enterprise in the early 2000s.

The collective and participatory dimension was emphasized in the characterization proposed as “ideal type” by the network, but the definition was broad and included a wide range of organisations, including not only cooperatives, but also nonprofits and for-profit entities guided by an explicit social mission (Galera & Borzaga, 2009).

It should be noted that the phenomenon was insignificant in Germany, where the economic model, known as “social market economy”, is defined by a strong participation of workers in the regulation of economic activities (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010).

The case of the United Kingdom: Third Way

The UK was a particular case in Europe. The regulation of the charitable sector could be traced back to 1601 (Mulgan & Landry, 1995) and there was a long experience of collaboration between Government and charities. But the dominant liberal tradition had determined a higher reliance on the voluntary sector. The neoliberal policies adopted under Margaret Thatcher's government from the late 1970s to the early 1980s stressed the reliance on "quasi-market mechanisms" for the provision of public services (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010).

Tony Blair's endorsement of the concept of social enterprise in 1997 accelerated the debate in Europe and changed the political profile of the construct. Blair emphasized the role of social enterprises in the Third Way strategy, defined as a "more flexible and adaptive government closer to the community and achieving better results with less resources" (ISE, 2008). Between 1997 and 2004, the Blair administration developed the institutional and regulatory structure. A new legal form, the 'community interest company' (CIC) was introduced in 2004 (Nyseen, 2006).

The adoption of the institutional framework was not straightforward. The process was shaped by the competing discourses of three main groups: cooperative and community organisations, nonprofit organisations and "business with social conscience". The debate among these groups resulted in an open and vague definition, namely, "trading for a social purpose", that was the only loose connection among them (Teasdale, 2010).

Social entrepreneurship in developing countries

The significance of the phenomenon outside western countries is not well documented but it is also relevant to this research.

In fact, it was from Vinoba Bhave's land gift movement in India that Bill Drayton, the founder of Ashoka, was inspired (Sen, 2010). Ashoka is in fact the name of an ancient Indian emperor. Drayton adopted the term social entrepreneurship, differentiated from social enterprise, in the early 1980s (Sen, 2010), and pioneered a very restrictive definition of the concept of social entrepreneurs as individuals leading a process of

radical innovation in the social sector and characterized by a strong ethical fibre (Drayton, 2002). His foundation is devoted to identifying and supporting these individuals around the world, the Ashoka fellows.

Among the most cited case studies in the literature of social entrepreneurship, the majority are examples of the phenomenon in developing countries such as Grameen Bank, BRAC, Fabio Rosa and, Sekem (Cukier, Trenholm, Carl, and Gekas 2011). The best known social entrepreneur is Mohamed Yunus who has recently exported his microcredit model to the USA.

It is not clear whether most of the examples proposed are isolated cases of success that cannot be replicated. Chand (2009) suggests that the idea of social enterprise is driven by external actors in India. The rise of nongovernmental organisations earlier was accompanied by an “unnecessary glorification of civil society” that eclipsed the role of the business community in addressing social problems (Chand, 2009:147). He suggests that the same forces might be again at work in the literature on social entrepreneurship.

The emergence of the phenomenon in South East Asia, Latin America and Africa has only recently started to be explored (Kerlin, 2010). More in-depth and systematic research will be required in the years to come.

Multiple meanings of social entrepreneurship

This brief historic overview confirms that social entrepreneurship is not a well-defined concept. It is used to designate different organisations and activities that evolve in very different contexts.

The explanation for the emergence of the phenomenon as a reaction to the economic downturn of the 1970s is not satisfactory, not only for developing countries but even for Western countries. The growth of nonprofit organisations might have been fuelled by government support, but the market and government failure theories do not explain the growth beyond the dramatic reduction of public funds since the late 1970s. Something is missing in this narrow picture.

2.2. Broader economic and political context

The main assumption underpinning this research is that social entrepreneurship cannot be reduced to one type of organisation or activity. It is a complex phenomenon. The vague notion of social entrepreneurship points to certain beliefs and principles that are common to a specific category of institution, but that are not exclusive to them. They are also part of a much broader process of ideological and social transformation that is changing the traditional understanding of economic and entrepreneurial activities.

This section describes some interconnected ideas and trends that have been selected on the basis of the relevance for the purpose of the research. The selection is not exhaustive and the treatment of each subject evokes just a few issues. Each of these issues is a research topic on its own.

The section is organized in five parts. The first part includes a description of the evolution of the image of the three sectors of society that is critical to understanding the meaning of social entrepreneurship. Other aspects of the transformation of contemporary societies have been grouped in three subsections: ideology, technology and theoretical implications. The final part concludes with some suggestions for a new image of society that could be useful to interpret some of the findings of this research.

The application of the method of discourse analysis requires this overview of the context in which the texts are produced, interpreted and explained.

2.2.1. The three sectors of the economy

The emergence of social entrepreneurship challenges the traditional division of society into three sectors that has become part of conventional wisdom.

The idea that the phenomenon is “blurring boundaries” is one of the most recurrent themes in the early literature on social entrepreneurship (Dacin, Dacin and Matear , 2010; Light, 2008; Nicholls, 2008; Mair & Marti, 2006).

In my view, social entrepreneurship cannot be understood as an exogenous factor. It is part of the evolution of the three sectors that have resulted in a new situation that requires a redefinition of the old classification. This evolution is deconstructed below into a few key elements.

The nonprofit sector in perspective

The economic significance that the nonprofit sector has gained over the past 50 years is a key element to understanding the meaning of social entrepreneurship (Nicholls, 2008).

Hall (2006) notes that from 1940 to the late 1990s, the number of tax-exempt registered companies in the USA increased from less than 13,000 to more than 1.5 million.

In the USA, where this process is best documented, the contribution of the nonprofit community to the American economy in 2011 amounted to approximately 5.5% of the nation's entire GDP, according to the National Center for Charitable Statistics. According to the same sources, the employment in the sector in 2009 represented approximately 10% of the country's workforce, higher than the whole finance industry, including insurance and real estate. This figure did not take into account voluntary work that is estimated at more than 8 billion hours of service by 62 million volunteers (NCCS, 2012).

The information compiled by the Centre for Civil Society Studies at Johns Hopkins University confirms that the contribution to employment is more than 5% in all developed countries analysed. It goes up to 14% in the Netherlands (Salamon & Sokolowski, 2004).

Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) point out that the growth of nonprofit organisations between 1987 and 1997 (31%) exceeded the rate of growth of conventional business.

In this context, the perception of nonprofit institutions has changed, and it makes perfect sense nowadays to define the nonprofit sector as an industry as suggested by Herman (Farrugia, 2007).

But the introduction of such an analogy has far reaching implications. With the introduction of the new label and the application of management and marketing techniques developed for business, came also an unconscious adoption of business values and principles without due consideration to the social context in which they were applied.

As a result, the traditional division of roles between profit and nonprofit institutions was increasingly questioned.

The delivery of public services and the crisis of the Welfare State

The second major trend that has accompanied the phenomenon refers to the evolution of the delivery of social services by the public administration. I cannot go into the details of the abundant literature on the crisis of the Welfare State but there are a few facts that have influenced the perception of public services that should be mentioned here.

First of all, the quantity and variety of social services provided through private nonprofit institutions has grown, particularly in the USA (Hall, 1996). Secondly, as a result of the privatisation of public services, nonprofit institutions compete not only with public administrations, but with conventional business in many of these sectors. And thirdly, with the growth of the demand for social services and the increasing sense of entitlement, the evolution of delivery performance, based on the criteria of effectiveness and efficiency, has been generalised.

These facts are frequently used against the defense of the public nature of social services. The boundaries between public, nonprofits and business activities have become blurred.

According to Hansmann (1996), initially the separation of profit and nonprofit worlds was reinforced by the perception of nonprofits as an extension of the public “sphere”, as opposed to business and commercial. In the cases where it was difficult to assess the quantity and the quality required of certain goods and services, the nonprofit form of organisation was generally more adequate. The absence of profit motivation was

enough to generate trust and build a stronger reputation. With the “commercialization” of nonprofit institutions, this criterion is not useful anymore.

We should also keep in mind that the conditions under which the Welfare State was conceived have changed. Pierson and Castles highlight that the welfare system emerged in a context of Keynesian policies where the State was in control of the economy. The main objective was the protection of workers, and it was funded through taxes that were paid to a great extent by workers. Nowadays, poverty does not affect so much the workers, as those unemployed. The basic problem is not economic anymore, but social, and the solution might only be “found outside the productive system” (Pierson & Castles, 2006).

The research on the role of social enterprises in the provision of social services traditionally provided by the State is still at a very early stage (Seelos & Mair, 2005, 2007; Partzsch & Ziegler, 2011). But the literature confirms that the ideological prejudices about the “public” or “private” character of these services, are gradually disappearing. The consequences on general wellbeing, and the progress of inequalities and the ability of social entrepreneurs to address those problems, have not been analysed in depth.

Philanthropy and corporate social responsibility

The last element to describe is the evolution of the role of “conventional” (for-profit) business in society that has also come under scrutiny.

Although the statistics mentioned above refer to the growth of fees as a source of funding, private funding has also become a major source of income used to mitigate the reduction of public expenditure. Cause related marketing, pioneered by American Express, was launched in 1983 during the early years of the development of social entrepreneurship, and has evolved in parallel. One of the characteristics of social entrepreneurship is the introduction of new forms of collaboration with the corporate sector. Social enterprises started dealing with donors as if they were investors.

There is still not much detail available on the amounts and the type of funding received by social enterprises from the corporate sector. However, from a qualitative perspective, there are two relevant facts to be noted. First, social enterprise has found new “private” resources to finance the expansion of the nonprofit sector. Second, the image of business benefits from their contribution to the provision of social services. The support to nonprofit institutions and social causes points to a change in consumer demand.

In fact, the significance of social entrepreneurship cannot be understood without the examination of the recent evolution of philanthropy and corporate social responsibility.

Far from Friedman’s idea that the main responsibility of business was to increase profits (1970), Michael Porter and Mark Kramer suggested in 2002 that social value could have economic returns (Cochran, 2007:450). Based on this basic belief, new concepts were developed afterwards.

Austin, Leonard, Reficco and Wei-Skillern (2008) proposed the concept of **Corporate Social Entrepreneurship**, that evokes the idea of business engaged in the creation of social value. In the same vein, the concept of **Corporate Social Investment** is based on the belief that business and society are interconnected, and **Corporate Citizenship** proposes a model for financial, social and environmental sustainability of business practices (Njenga & Smit, 2007:4-5). The term philanthro-capitalism has been recently introduced in reference to the application of business experience to social problems in a move from remedial to sustainable solutions (Economist, 2006).

These ideas are not new and can be traced back to the emergence of philanthropy in the late 1800s in the USA (ISE, 2008).

There is always a risk that corporates pay just lip service to the objectives and use the theme as a public relation gimmick. But the key issue is that social entrepreneurship has struck a “responsive chord” (Dees, 2001).

Different contexts but common patterns

All these elements evoked are closely interconnected and are common across different countries. The economic, social and cultural context in each of them determines certain particularities. While in Europe, the stronger tradition of welfare influences the emphasis on the social economy, the attention in the USA is focused on the evolution of nonprofit organisations and corporate social responsibility. But the facts are common to all countries.

The economic significance acquired by the nonprofit sector over the second half of the previous century is a general fact, particularly as regards the creation of employment that has been traditionally one of the main arguments used in economics to defend private enterprise.

The second general fact is the competition and/or collaboration of nonprofit organisations and business for the provision of social goods and services and the withdrawal of the State.

The third one is the adoption by nonprofit organisations of business principles and techniques. The influence is also the other way around. Management principles are being adapted to the particularities of their activities, and some of the values and principles of the social sector are permeating the business world.

This latter aspect is precisely the general purpose of this research. But before we can examine the issue, it is useful to have in mind a broader picture of the ongoing social transformation.

2.2.2. Ideological context

The influence of political and economic ideas on human behaviour and social institutions is a key element to understanding the emergence of social entrepreneurship.

The literature examined, reflects two trends. The most prominent trend criticizes the influence of neoliberalism in the nonprofit sector. The adoption of nonprofit principles and values in conventional business is also an emerging issue.

Social entrepreneurs have been criticised for “selling out” the soul of nonprofit organisations (Robinson, Lehman & Miller, 2002). It is also frequently the argument that social entrepreneurship serves the neoliberal objective of “privatization” of public services and is accelerating the dismantling of the Welfare State (Cook, Dodds & Mitchell, 2003; (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Eikenberry, 2009).

But there are also other arguments that challenge the three key pillars of neoliberalism and orthodox economics that are echoed in the social entrepreneurship literature.

Most of the ideas included below have been retrieved from sources that are not strictly academic. The references correspond to publications that reproduce recent research in the new fields of institutional economics, economic sociology, economic anthropology and the philosophy of economics. The fact that these ideas have attracted a wider audience is a sign of the relevance of the subject.

The myth of efficiency or the paradox of productivity

In his description of the paradox of productivity, Charles Handy provided one of the most insightful descriptions of the inefficiency of the dominant economic ideology. The key problem is the sustainability of a system that generates better paid jobs but for fewer and fewer people: “recruit half as many people in the core business, paid twice and producing three times as much” (Handy, 1994).

The creation of employment used to be the main argument in favour of the social impact of business (Seelos & Mair, 2005). The defence of neo-liberal policies and

their emphasis on productivity and growth was based on the assumption that the benefits “trickle down” through employment and material abundance.

The myth is now widely discredited in the literature on social entrepreneurship. The fact is that the system encourages the exclusion of a vast majority of the world’s population from the production system and thus generates huge opportunity costs (Frances, 2008). The main challenge for capitalism is to provide the means for all these people to make a contribution to the generation of wealth.

The literature on social entrepreneurship has developed a broader concept of efficiency that measures the performance of enterprises according to the triple bottom line, namely, financial, social and environmental.

As the formal economy fails to produce enough employment, and the nonprofit sector is gradually becoming a major source of occupation, the ideological foundations of neoliberalism are questioned.

Rationality and self-interest: new perspectives

The second major revision concerns the rationality of human economic behavior. The criticism is not new. Amartya Sen had deconstructed the foundations of the assumption of rationality in neoclassic economics (Sen, 1977). But the progress of psychology, neuroscience and economic anthropology has provided new insights about human nature.

The research about the motivation of entrepreneurs and philanthropists points to the parallelism of self-interest and altruism. The act of giving is not completely selfless. It is based on the understanding that there is some kind of reciprocity in the long term (Richards, 2009). Altruism is an extension of the attitude that is natural with relatives and is based on the foundations of trust and reciprocity beyond financial exchanges.

These findings have been reinforced by the research undertaken on the role of gifts in tribal societies and the mechanisms of reciprocity. A whole new area of research is now emerging exploring the nonmonetary economics. The search for appropriate measurement of the social impact of social enterprises is a major contribution.

The difference between social and market norms can be explained in terms of this reciprocity. Dan Ariely (2009) suggests that market relations are governed by instant exchange based on individualism and self-reliance. Social relations do not require immediate reciprocity or instant payment. They are supported by a sense of belonging to a community and the rationality of solidarity behaviour in the long term. It is precisely in this context where social entrepreneurship is most effective.

These ideas resonate strongly in the literature on social entrepreneurship. Mair and Marti (2006) reject the idea that social entrepreneurs are purely altruistic. Mulgan and Landry implicitly suggest that Adam Smith might have reconsidered his idea of the invisible hand if the results of this research might have been available. They state that modern societies are driven by two invisible hands (Mulgan & Landry, 1995), one driven by short-term self-interest and the second inspired by the sense of responsibility and solidarity.

The “second invisible hand” corresponds to a broader and long term view of self-interest that it is implicit in the literature on corporate social responsibility. From this broader perspective it is easy to see why business principles are being gradually transformed and enriched when transposed to the social sector. Drucker suggested that corporations could learn from nonprofit organisations in the way they motivate their employees (Drucker, 1992).

The post-scarcity society

The final input to complete the perspective of the ideological context is related to another key principle of economic science: scarcity. Economics is frequently defined as the science that deals with the management of scarce resources. The context has changed dramatically during the twentieth century.

The idea that technology has systematically broken the “scarcity frontiers” since the Industrial Revolution (Anderson, 2009) is not new. Galbraith (1958), and more recently Giddens (1996), already provided insightful analyses. The knowledge economy that prevails in the twenty-first century is characterized by increasing returns that challenge the basic assumption of economic models (OECD, 1996).

“Knowledge and information tend to be abundant; what is scarce is the capacity to use them in meaningful ways (OECD, 1996).”

When applied to social enterprises, this characteristic acquires a completely different dimension. The literature on social entrepreneurship has emphasized the distinction between human and financial resources. The “production” of social wellbeing requires human resources that are extremely abundant.

The idea that scarcity is artificially created is directly connected to the problem of inequality. The literature on inequality is extremely abundant and cannot be explored here. But the idea that the system based exclusively on economic growth is gradually showing its limitations to satisfy human needs is a recurring theme in this domain (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010:5).

“Certain things when shared are not divided but multiplied. You can say that of love, of compassion, of hope. It is a very simple way of explaining feelings or actions that creates a virtuous circle... How can I have a good quality of life if those surrounding me are constantly striving for food, shelter, water. I might have a safe haven in my house but the moment I walk in the streets, I will be in an environment of poverty and violence. Social entrepreneurs are people who strive to pass on the idea that a person's well-being is dependent on the well-being of others” (Paulo Coelho quoted in Frances, 2008:155).

2.2.3. Technology and social evolution

This ideological evolution should be placed in a context characterized by the rapid progress of information and communication technologies.

The new technologies that made globalisation possible, driven initially by commercial and financial liberalization, have gradually enabled new forms of economic organisation (Powell, 1990). As technological devices became affordable the impact on social and political organisation was evident. The expansion of mobile phone services in Africa, or the role of social networks in the Arab Spring, are good examples.

The empowerment of individuals and networks has increased the complexity of social relations. Social and geographical mobility has increased substantially challenging traditional forms of organisation in small and stable communities and people's identities (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

The complexity of contemporary societies has determined that the distance between our decisions and the ultimate consequences of them have increased considerably. This distance has implications for our conception of morality (Ariely, 2012). The current financial crisis has confirmed the potential consequences of the disconnection of markets from reality and the dangers of the concentration of financial power.

In this new landscape of enormous fluidity of social and political relations, the role of the state, business, communities and voluntary organisations is changing rapidly. Social entrepreneurship cannot be completely understood if this evolution is ignored. It provides new tentative solutions for traditional problems and replaces institutions that are rapidly becoming obsolete.

2.2.4. Theoretical implications

The separation of ideological and theoretical aspects of the problem is somehow arbitrary but it is appropriate in this case. Social entrepreneurship has been proposed as a distinct academic field and its emergence should also be placed in the context of the evolution of other disciplines such as economics, sociology and management, and more particularly, the reasons for the prominence of new disciplines such as economic sociology and economic anthropology.

The prominence of these academic disciplines today have their origins in the movement known as “economic imperialism” launched by Becker in the 1970s, that fired back against the main assumptions of neoclassical economics.

His application of the method of economic analysis to understand other non-economic aspects of life was considered sterile by some colleagues because it could not explain many aspects of human behavior. As a result, other economists started importing non-economic ideas into the discipline, resulting in a revolution of economic science that has witnessed the increasing influence of institutional and behavioral economists such as North, Stiglitz, Williamson, Ostrom, Akerloff and Kahneman, to name only the most recent Nobel prizes (Fine, 2000).

The parallelism with social entrepreneurship in the domain of business studies is very strong. The application of management principles to the nonprofit sector has had some

interesting consequences. When exploring the social problems, scholars have imported some ideas that have influenced their research on conventional entrepreneurship. The identification of these ideas and assumptions is precisely one of the objectives of this research.

At the same time, the increasing fluidity and complexity of society is forcing the reintroduction of complexity and instability into the economic and management models and the convergence of research traditions that were traditionally isolated, such as economics, sociology, anthropology and psychology.

Gradually the basic assumptions of critical realism are being adopted. The new paradigm proposes transdisciplinarity and methodological pluralism as the most appropriate strategies to deal with the complexity of social reality.

In this context, the construction of a distinct academic field for social entrepreneurship seems inappropriate. But it is a fact that the extension of the concept of entrepreneurship to the social sector has had a significant influence in the field of management.

2.3. The market metaphor and the search for new analogies

Social entrepreneurship emerged in a context in which the use of the market and industry metaphors to explain the new phenomenon made sense and was widely accepted.

Analogy is one of the procedures that human beings use to understand reality. But the process of transposing certain images into a foreign context is not always adequate if certain principles and circumstances that are essential to that context are ignored. This is the critical issue that this research aims to unveil.

One contention of this research is that market metaphor and the division of society in three sectors is not adequate anymore.

Lohmnan (1992) traces the differentiation of economic and social activities back to Adam Smith's distinction between productive and non-productive labour that was critical in defining the evolution of mainstream economics. There have always been

economists that have focused their attention on the non-productive or non-markets aspects of social life, but until recently, institutional economists have been a minority group.

Orthodox economics was so dominant because of its apparent success in supporting the economic growth of industrial capitalism. Drayton (2002) illustrates the separation between the “business and social halves of society with the social half lagging further and further behind in productivity, salaries, repute, and esprit”.

In his view, this gap is closing through the revolution of the “citizen sector” to become much more effective than its business counterpart.

But the division of sectors is not a valid mental framework. Mulgan and Landry reminded that the term “third sector” is questioned not only because of its enormous diversity but also because many organisations providing services in the arts, education and recreational that are not targeting the poor (Mulgan & Landry, 1995).

Other solutions have been proposed to integrate the ideas of complexity and interconnectedness. There are two options to consider in the search for new metaphors.

The first option that has already been explored in the literature is the idea of continuum (Austin., Stevenson, and Wei-Skillern 2006, Nicholls & Cho, 2008). There have been several elaborations of the idea. Pearce (2003) proposed a widely accepted model of social economy. Mair and Noboa (2003) took it one step further by introducing a new dimension of social authority in Bozeman’s publicness grid. Bozeman had arranged organisation types along two axes: political and economic authority. With the third dimension of social authority the map enriches its explanatory power.

The second option deconstructs the values and principles that make social enterprise different from conventional business. In this case there is no clear division of institutions or individuals into distinct sectors, but rather the identification of specific purposes that could vary at different moments.

This is the option retained in this research that is aimed at exploring the possibility of defining a new map based on these values.

2.4. Conclusion

Most of the issues described above point to new avenues for research. The objective of this chapter was to raise awareness about them in order to introduce a broader context to understanding social entrepreneurship. This context is required for the correct application of the methodology of discourse analysis.

At this stage, the main contention of this research can be taken one step further. Social entrepreneurship is a complex phenomenon. The term refers to very different modalities of organisation and activity. The concept might have not been defined because of the difficulty of making sense of all the implications and interconnections. That could also explain why the definition is not precise. Using Weick's analogy (2001) I dare to suggest that a new "map" is needed.

Despite the fact that the definition of social entrepreneurship is vague, it fulfils a cognitive function as an umbrella construct (Hirsch & Levin, 1999). It designates a phenomenon that is still not well known. Keeping the definition broad could be useful until all connections among apparently disparate phenomena are analysed. Making sense is about establishing innovative and reasonable connections.

LITERATURE REVIEW
&
METHODOLOGY

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

The review of the literature combines two different approaches: chronological and thematic. The first introduces the historical logic that is required to understand the meaning and underlying trends. The second provides the analytical focus that is necessary to identify recurring themes.

Two broad themes are particularly targeted in the second part of the review: the literature focused on meta-theory (conceptual, definition and research programme) and the examples of methodological experimentation (variety of theoretical approaches and methods).

The review includes also a brief description of other research domains that are relevant to this research, namely, philosophy of science, entrepreneurship, organisation theory and nonprofit institutions.

3.2. Evolution of the literature since the 1980s

Two distinct periods can be distinguished around the year 2006 that marked a watershed in the literature (Nicholls & Young, 2008).

Before 2006 the literature was markedly fragmented and country specific (Weerawardena & Sullivan Mort, 2006; Galera & Borzaga, 2009; Trivedi, 2010). It could be classified around three groups that fit Nicholls' definition of "paradigm-building actors" (Nicholls, 2010) or "school of thought" using the term employed by Dees and Anderson (2008).

The first group included business schools and nonprofit organisations. It was mainly based in the USA and they focused on the commercial activities of nonprofit organisations and the operational aspects of the extension of business principles to the Third Sector. The literature in the UK could also be included in this group.

The group of scholars that gathered around the EMES network of European Universities adopted a different perspective. They focused mainly on governance issues of collective institutions, cooperatives and work integration organisations.

Finally, a third group of authors aligned to the key ideas of the Ashoka Foundation focused on the developmental and social innovation aspects of the phenomenon and the evolution of social enterprises in developing countries.

Between 2004 and 2006, three major international conferences facilitated the convergence of the parallel research traditions.

The year 2006 marked a clear “watershed” for academic literature (Nicholls & Young, 2008). Apart from the books that collected the papers discussed at the research conferences (Mair, Robinson and Hockerts, 2006; Nicholls, 2008), there were also three special issues devoted to the topic in different academic journals.

From 2006 the literature grew exponentially and acquired a markedly academic character with a stronger focus on rigorous conceptualization and methodology. In conducting a review of the literature the researcher identified 55 articles published between 1990 and 2003, whereas between 2004 and 2011 there were more than 180 published, of which 54 were published between 2004 and 2006 and 62 were published between 2010 and 2011.

In 2010 there was a noticeable development of methodological experimentation. It was the year when most articles on the topic were published, more than 50 articles of more than 200 identified during the review.

The growth in publications triggered the need for a **general overview of the literature** that was particularly abundant between 2010 and 2012. But as a consequence of the lack of consensus on the concept, the size and scope of the relevant literature varies enormously in the different reviews.

In the comprehensive sampling of the literature on the topic undertaken by Hill, Khotari and Shea (2010), they identified more than 460 articles published since the 1980s up to the end of 2008. Trivedi listed in his bibliography a list of the 80 most relevant articles. Short, Moss and Lumpkin (2010) identified **152 articles** published in

leading management and entrepreneurship journals. Gras, Mosakowski and Lumpkin (2010) analysed 248 social entrepreneurship papers, but in his website David Grass included a list of 403 articles related to the subject. The most recent overview by Cukier, Trenholm and Gekas (2011) compiled a master list of 567 articles, of which they focused on 123 that contained case studies.

For the selection of the sample and the analysis of the literature, I focused on the conceptual literature after 2006, particularly the scholarly articles that focused on the definition and the development of the research methodology. Only a few widely cited articles before that date have been included.

The main limitation of this decision is that the articles from 2011 and 2012 are not yet available through Wits University's system of online resources. The researcher had access to only certain of them that confirm the trends detected in previous years.

3.3. Overview of the conceptual literature

The literature on the topic is overwhelmingly conceptual with very few empirical contributions (Hill, Khotari, & Shea, 2010; Short, Moss & Lumpkin, 2009). The lack of consensus on the concept was a major obstacle for empirical research.

It is impossible to provide a comprehensive description in this review but there are a few contributions that had a marked influence, measured by the citations of the articles. A representative selection of this literature has been included in the sample.

Among the definitions most frequently quoted are the ones proposed by Waddock and Post (1991), Dees (2001), Borzaga and Defourny (2001), Austin, Stevenson and Weiskillern (2006), Peredo and McLean (2006), Weerawardena and Mort Sullivan (2006), and Martin and Osberg (2007).

Given the lack of consensus on the definition, most recent articles adopted a different approach to the problem of conceptualization, based on a comparative analysis of previous definitions. The first list of definitions identified appeared in Mair *et al.* (2006). I have identified other compilations of which Brouard and Larivet (2009),

Dacin et al. (2010), and Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, and Shulman (2009) are the most comprehensive, although none of them is complete.

A second type of article that is relevant for the research are those focusing on the development of research and the construction of the academic field.

Nicholls introduced the idea that social entrepreneurship was “developing rapidly into an autonomous field of research and practice” (Nicholls, 2008:5). One chapter of his book was entitled “structuration of the field” (Nicholls & Cho, 2008), which triggered new contributions to the construction of the field (CASE, 2008) and the development of the research agenda (Austin, 2006; Christie & Honig, 2006; Haugh, 2005; Peattie & Morely, 2008; Short, Moss & Lumpkin, 2009; Steyaert & Dey, 2010).

All these contributions focused almost exclusively on the issues that required further research. Not much attention was devoted to the problems of methodology, the connections to other disciplines, and much less to the ontological and epistemological assumptions or the “hard core principles” that are necessary for the construction of a coherent research programme in the Lakatosian sense (Nicholls, 2010).

Given that the focus of this research is on the ontological and epistemological foundations, the priority for the selection of the sample was given to the articles that focused on the problems of methodology and, more particularly, to those that have introduced an explicit reflection of this problem of assumptions. The main contributions are briefly outlined below.

3.4. Theoretical and methodological experimentation

The early literature focused on the traditional theory of entrepreneurship based on the characteristics of the entrepreneur. Dees considered social entrepreneurs as “one species in the genus entrepreneur” (Dees, 2001:1) and used the tradition of Say and Schumpeter based on the notion of innovation and opportunity (Dees, 2001).

This initial approach, exploring social entrepreneurship as a variety of entrepreneurship, was soon exhausted. Martin and Osberg argued that the characteristics of “*alertness to opportunity, creativity and determination*” could also

apply to inventors, artists, corporate executives, and other people that cannot be defined as entrepreneurs (2007:33).

Other theories and models have been imported from the field of management studies since then: the PCDO framework (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006), resource-based theory (Haugh, 2009); identity based model (Simms & Robinson, 2009); and the Validity Network Schema (VNS) by Hamby, Pierce, and Brinberg (2010). The latter is without doubt the most relevant to the research on assumptions because of the clear distinction the authors introduced between substantive, conceptual and methodological domains of research. All these articles have been included in the sample.

According to Dart, this “rationalist and economics-based theorizing of social enterprise” did not produce satisfactory results because it ignored the role of the “socio-political context in the emergence of new organizational forms” (Dart, 2004:412).

Dart (2004) pioneered the application of institutional theories and more particularly the concept of legitimacy. He opened the way for discourse analysis and other related methodologies from sociology.

Many other authors have followed this avenue for research. Mair and Marti (2006) suggested the applicability of other sociological theories: structuration theory, institutional entrepreneurship, social capital, and social movement. Nicholls and Cho (2008) applied DiMaggio’s concept of institutional isomorphism to understand the pressures that new emerging organisational types undergo to conform to existing forms. Nicholls (2010) also applied Giddens’ structuration theory to explain the process of legitimation as a dispute among institutions (government, funders, networks and nonprofit organisations) trying to impose their own organisational logic. The idea of competing discourses is very clear in the case of the UK (Teasdale, 2010).

Arthur, Keenoy, Scott Cato and Smith (2008) used the theory of social movements to explore the impact of certain social policies in England to restrain the capacity of social enterprises to challenge the social order.

The methodological exploration accelerated in 2010. Among the methods applied were: contents and semantic analysis (Hill, Khotari & Shea, 2010), discourse analysis (Levander, 2010), institutional analysis (Urbano, Toledano & Soriano, 2010), and social ecology (Trivedi, 2010). Hill, Khotari and Shea (2010) also attempted network analysis around the affiliation of authors with certain scholarly journals. There was also a first attempt to introduce Scenario Planning presented at the 2010 Skoll Forum (Martin & Ramirez, 2010). Finally, Goldstein, Hazy, and Silberstang (2010) introduced the complexity science model of social innovation.

Most of these articles have been included in the sample. As indicated above, all these methodologies brought into the field certain ontological and epistemological assumptions whose implications have not been explored in depth. Some of the articles mentioned above evoked the problem but there are only a few that include a more explicit reflection. They are considered in the section that follows.

3.5. Exploration of assumptions

The reflection on the ontological assumptions is very rare in the literature reviewed. However I have identified a few contributions that this research will examine in-depth and that have been included in the sample.

Nicholls (2010) evoked the problem when he insisted, using Kuhn's idea of paradigm, that the field that "has yet to achieve a paradigmatic consensus and lacks a *"normal science"* or clear epistemology" (Nicholls, 2010:611). But he did not explain clearly what he understands by paradigm, a concept that is also vague in Kuhn.

Dorado (2006) alerted scholars to the impact of values on the process and creation of social entrepreneurship. She explicitly observed that these values might be a major obstacle to apply directly the theories generated in the context of commercial entrepreneurship.

Light (2008) provided the first and perhaps most detailed elaboration on the ontological assumptions that are pervasive in the field. He elaborated a list of 40 assumptions around the characteristics of entrepreneurs, their ideas, the organisation they create and the context from where the opportunities emerge.

Mair and Marti (2006) suggested that the problem of social entrepreneurship should be tackled from a different perspective using the concept of “embeddedness” to understand the concept.

Hamby, Pierce, and Brinberg applied the concept to explain that social entrepreneurs implicitly assume that any social problem is entangled in a complex set of local and cultural considerations and requires “some degree of community acceptance, involvement, or ownership to be successful” (Hamby, Pierce, & Brinberg, 2010:172).

This is precisely the key assumption that set the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship apart from other commercial enterprises and traditional nonprofit organisations.

Mair (2008) referred to the “theory of social change” that all social entrepreneurs implicitly or explicitly adopt. The problem of social change has become a recurrent topic in the literature since then.

When choosing the methodology, the researchers, consciously or unconsciously, accept certain assumptions and beliefs about the nature of social relations and the mechanisms of social change that are not always explicit. This research aims precisely at unveiling them and analysing the implications of these choices. A clear understanding of these issues is necessary to provide the sound foundations required for the conceptualization and the development of the appropriate methodologies and public policies.

3.6. Other related fields

Most of the assumptions analysed are not unique to the domain of social entrepreneurship. For that reason, it is not appropriate to undertake this research in isolation without due consideration of the main contributions in these other fields.

There are two main areas of research that are particularly relevant. The first one is the philosophy of science. The second one is organisation theory as the broader theoretical framework for the research on entrepreneurship and nonprofit organisations.

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the recent literature on epistemology. However we need to take into account the broad lines of major research paradigms to establish a clear epistemological framework.

3.6.1. Philosophy of science: research paradigms

This review of the philosophy of science literature has been focused on the description and classification of research paradigms. It was guided by Van de Ven and Bechara's (2007) classification into four major scientific paradigms.

The classification they provided is extremely useful for the identification of epistemic assumptions in the social entrepreneurship literature. In addition to the traditional division between positivism and interpretative approaches, they include a comprehensive description of realism and pragmatism (Van de Ven & Bechara, 2007).

All attempts to provide a comprehensive classification of the field of philosophy of science will never be completely satisfactory but Van de Ven and Bechara managed to provide a very simple criterion based on the differentiation between the objective/subjective position on the ontology and the epistemology.

In their system, the positivist approaches are dominated by objective ontology and epistemology, while interpretative approaches assumed the opposite position. These two paradigms represent the "outer limits of philosophical thought" (Van de Ven & Bechara, 2007:40). Under the label of realism they include the authors that combine an objective ontology with either objective or subjective epistemologies. Pragmatism is characterized by the combination of subjective epistemology with either subjective or objective ontology.

Although it might be an oversimplification, this classification is very useful for the purpose of coding required by this research.

The identification of epistemological assumptions associated to positivism is the easiest one. The adoption of the "law-explanation" orthodoxy (Outwhite, 1987) and the use of the pretended "neutral" observation language of variables (Hughes, 1990) that has become deeply associated to any type of research in social sciences, is not

difficult to identify. However, Outwhite (1987) posits that the eclectic evolution of the “logical empiricist consensus” through a holistic turn in reaction to Kuhn’s makes it difficult to distinguish from some alternatives to positivism.

The classification of interpretation theories is somehow more difficult given the enormous variety. Van de Ven and Bechara include a wide spectrum of authors under the label of relativism. Harding (2005) uses two broad categories, anti-positivism and post-positivism. Outwhite (1987) identifies two major anti-positivist alternatives, what he calls the “hermeneutics proper” where he includes symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology and Winch’s ideas, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School that criticizes the transformation of epistemology into a mere methodology of science.

For the purpose of this research, a clear understanding of the basic ontological and epistemological assumptions is needed in order to trace back the methodologies and concepts applied to this particular paradigm. The method of discourse analysis and the concepts of legitimacy, isomorphism and identity are generally included in this paradigm.

For the realist assumptions, I follow the description of critical realism in Collier (2005), Lopez and Potter (2001) and Van de Ven (2007). Collier provides a clear introduction to Bhaskar’s ideas. The methodologies of scenario planning and complexity models (Goldstein Hazy, and Silberstang, ., 2010; Martin & Ramirez, 2010), applied in the research on social entrepreneurship could be traced back to this paradigm. Although this classification might be controversial, I found some of the basic assumptions of these articles closely connected to Bhaskar’s epistemology.

As for pragmatism, the methodology of grounded theory applied by Weerewardena and Sullivan Mort (2006) could be traced back to this paradigm.

The identification of the paradigms is not the focus of analysis. It is used just as indications for the identification of implicit epistemological assumptions.

3.6.2. Organisation theory: entrepreneurship and nonprofit sector

The second broad area of research that is relevant for the purpose of the research is the field of organisational studies and more particular the scholarly research on entrepreneurship and nonprofit organisations.

The research on organisation theory has been traditionally based in business schools. The “academic affiliation” with the discipline of management led to the dominance of the “pro-business ethos” that has only recently been questioned (Walsh, Meyer & Schoonhoven, 2006:657). Organisation theory is gradually becoming closer to sociology and this evolution might open new interesting perspectives to understand both commercial and social entrepreneurship.

It should be noted that with the evolution of technology, organisations are increasingly fluid. The traditional forms are evolving from hierarchy and markets towards networks, the trend identified by Powell in his seminal article of 1990.

The literature on organisation studies is abundant. For the purpose of this research I used two recent contributions that provided a comprehensive review of the different theories. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) analysed the diversity of theories in connection with the research paradigms they adopt. This perspective was very useful for the exploration of implicit assumptions in the literature on social entrepreneurship. Greenwald (2008) also offers a comprehensive list that groups the different theories of economic organisations according to a few dominant assumptions.

The research on entrepreneurship is the most immediate theoretical reference for the exploration of social entrepreneurship. Nowadays entrepreneurship is widely accepted as a distinct domain of research moving away from management studies. But both domains of research are still closely interconnected and have many assumptions in common. The interest on philosophical or epistemological assumptions that was recently renewed in management studies (Johnson & Duberley, 2000) is also shared in the domain of entrepreneurship.

The research on entrepreneurship has evolved rapidly over the last decade. When the research on entrepreneurship started two decades ago it was almost exclusively

focused on economic explanations of the phenomenon, but it has moved away to include a wider perspective on the social, economic and technological contexts that support or hinder the emergence of new enterprises (Hill *et al.*, 2010).

In 1988, Murray Low and Ian MacMillan launched this process. The explosion of entrepreneurship literature that followed explored the interdisciplinary connections of the field (Davidson, Per, Low, Murray, Wright & Mike, 2001).

Low and MacMillan's advice for the development of the field of entrepreneurship was precisely to analyse carefully "unstated assumptions" (1988:146), a research that was taken further by Gartner (1988; 2001) and Shane and Venkataraman (2000).

This is precisely the approach that has directly inspired this research project. When considering the opportunity of a distinct field for the research on social entrepreneurship we should take into account the evolution and main findings in the domain of entrepreneurship.

The other field of research that is extremely relevant for social entrepreneurship is the research of nonprofit organisations. In fact, the transformation of nonprofits is one of the drivers behind the development of the social entrepreneurship movement. Although there is no clear consensus, social enterprise is considered a nonprofit phenomenon by many authors. The terms "non-profit enterprises", "enterprising nonprofits", and "self-funded nonprofits" were initially frequently used in the early literature on social entrepreneurship.

The nonprofit scholarship received a major impulse in the USA from the projects driven by the Yale's Institute for Social Policy Studies and the Johns Hopkins Center for Civil Society Studies. The series of studies in nonprofit organisations that launched Yale in 1977 was a multidisciplinary research programme that produced more than 100 working papers and generated research resulting in more than 175 journal articles published and 32 books (Rose-Ackerman, 1986:vi).

One of the first publications was Dennis R. Young's analysis of behavioral theory in the nonprofit sector. He was the first author that applied the concept of

entrepreneurship to nonprofit organisations, opening a new window for the revision of traditional economic explanations (Young, 1983).

The ambitious comparative analysis of the nonprofit sector around the world launched by the CCSS at Johns Hopkins is the main sources of information about the size, role and significance of the sector.

According to Dart (2004), much of the research on the nonprofit sector by the most well-known authors (Weisbrod, Salamon and Hansmann) was traditionally dominated by “*rational-economic explanations*” through the elaborations of the theory of market and/or government failure.

The research has evolved enormously since then. The most recent review of the theories on the third sector was published in 2010 (Taylor, 2010) but it is not possible to provide even a brief overview in this chapter.

3.7. Conclusion

The main conclusion of this review is that methodological reflection only started recently and is still at a very preliminary level of development.

This review is, of course, not exhaustive, particularly in the fields of organisation theory and the nonprofit sector, but it points to a knowledge gap in the research around assumptions that this research aims to fill.

4. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH PURPOSE

The conceptual confusion can be broken down into three main aspects:

The lack of consensus on terminology is the first obstacle for theory development. Lohmann (1992:4) underlines the critical role of terminology in the development of theory that he defines as a “broad framework of shared terms, understandings, nominal and operational definitions, assumptions and conventional approaches”.

Directly related to the problem of terminology is the conceptual confusion that is also due to a poor understanding of the connections of social entrepreneurship to other aspects of on-going social transformation.

As a result of the conceptual confusion, the variety of theoretical approaches and methodological experimentation that has taken place over the past decade has not reached any clear conclusions.

The main contention of this research is that the conceptual confusion and the methodological uncertainty is due to a lack of reflection on the ontological and epistemological assumptions. The research purpose is not explanatory but rather exploratory. It is intended to build the case for further research and eventually to provide sound reasons to assess the choice of methodology or the need for a distinct academic field.

The importance of exploratory research is often overlooked. But the identification of the right questions is the most critical stage in the research process.

This research is aimed at the identification and analysis of the underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions and the exploration of any possible correlation to the conceptualization and the choice of methodology.

It also explores the practical implications of these assumptions for the design and implementation of the appropriate policies.

5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The general research question seeks to identify the correlations between the implicit ontological and epistemological assumptions, and the conceptualization of the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship and the choice of methodology.

The general research question has been broken down into specific research questions that will assist in the identification of the different assumptions and the description of alternative conceptualizations and the methodological approaches.

Given the scope of the project, I have limited the numbers of assumptions and conceptualizations. There is only one specific concept embedded in each research question as suggested by Punch (2006).

The method used does not require data collection questions. The research questions guided the process of codification required for the classification of the information and the identification of correlations.

The research questions are arranged into five major blocks.

The first block explores the use of terminology and the definition. Three research sub-questions capture the essence of the definition from different angles: the scope, the emphasis in the process of entrepreneurship, and any key distinctive element of the purpose.

DESCRIPTION OF TERMINOLOGY AND CONCEPTS

- What are the terms preferred by the author to refer to the phenomenon?
- What is the scope of the definition retained by the author?
- What is the key emphasis of the definition?
- What is the priority element in the conceptualization of social entrepreneurship?

The second block explores the epistemological paradigm, the theoretical framework of reference, the approach to research from different perspectives and the methodology applied.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

- Are the epistemological assumptions explicit or implicit?
- Is the epistemology adopted objective or subjective?
- What is the author's affiliation?
- What is the theoretical framework of reference?
- Does the author adopt an individualistic or holistic approach to research?

Research approach and methodology

- Is the main focus of the article conceptual or empirical?
- What is the methodology applied?
- Is there a clear justification provided for the use of the methodology?

The third block of questions refers to the size and the selection of the empirical sample. It is part of the epistemology of the field and it is aimed at unveiling the empirical evidence used in the text that might explain the divergences in the conceptualization and methods.

SAMPLE

- Is there any sample of social enterprises on which the conceptualization is based?
- What is the sample size?
- What is the methodology used for the sample?

The fourth block of questions explores the ontological assumptions. It is classified in three groups. The first one is aimed at identifying whether the assumptions are explicitly declared and any connection to any major paradigm of research. The second group searches for any indication around that could indicate an individualistic understanding of society and the nature of social relations. The last three questions

look for the position on materialism asking about the understanding of social wellbeing and measurement of enterprise performance and social impact.

ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

- Are the ontological assumptions explicit or implicit?
- What is the criterion assumed about the nature of reality (ontology)?
- Is there a particular philosophical paradigm explicitly or implicitly adopted?
- Does the author adopt an individualist or structuralist conception of entrepreneurship?
- What is the main assumption about the nature of social relations?
- What is the criterion emphasized to evaluate the performance of SE?
- What are the stated criteria for measurement of well-being in the society?
- Is there any specific method proposed for the measurement of impact?

The last block is focused on the policy implications. It explores the regulatory context and any specific policy analysis or recommendations. Two issues are specifically targeted because of their direct connection to the ontological assumptions: the role of the state, directly connected to the understanding of the nature of social relations, and the position on the distribution of profits of social enterprise.

POLICY ASSUMPTIONS

- Is there any analysis of public policy in the article?
- Is there any concrete policy recommendation?
- What is the policy and regulatory context underlying the sample of reference?
- What is the role of the state explicitly or implicitly assumed?
- Does the definition require any constraint as regards the distribution of profits?

6. RELEVANCE

There are three main issues that justify the relevance of the research:

The phenomenon challenges the traditional division between business, public and nonprofit activities. This is precisely what makes the topic most interesting from a theoretical point of view. It questions some assumptions that had been peacefully accepted in many disciplines (Dacin *et al.*, 2010; Mair & Marti, 2006). The idea of “blurring boundaries” has become a common place in the literature.

Second, there is a clear connection between entrepreneurship and development that needs to be clearly analysed in the case of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship has been proposed as an innovative solution to some intractable problems of poverty and public service delivery (Dees, 1998; Haugh, 2005; Mair, 2008; Nicholls, 2008). It has even been explored as an alternative for the delivery of public services in developing countries (Mair & Marti, 2009; Partzsch & Ziegler, 2011; Seelos & Mair, 2005).

Finally, the sound understanding of development implications is necessary for the development of appropriate public policies.

Despite the lack of consensus, there are many indications that the academic interest is more than just a fad. The high number of scholarly articles published from different disciplinary perspectives, the new specialised journals launched, the research conferences organised annually, the academic programmes provided in several universities, and the foundations and specialised centres established over more than a decade support this idea (Dees, 1998; Mair, Robinson & Hockerts, 2006; Mair & Marti, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006).

It is true that the possibility of a distinct academic field of research, suggested for the first time in 2006 (Nicholls, 2006; Nicholls & Cho, 2006; CASE, 2008; Nicholls & Young, 2008), is not unanimously supported anymore. But even the authors that deny the need for such a “discrete” field of research (Dacin, Dacin & Matear, 2010:42),

have confirmed their interest to continue the research within the broader theoretical framework of entrepreneurship and/or organisation studies (Dacin *et al.*, 2010; Hill *et al.*, 2010; Light, 2005; Mair, 2008).

7. METHODOLOGY

This research is conceived as a meta-analysis of the research in the domain, using the methods of contents and discourse analysis to provide a map of the key assumptions underlying the definitions and the methodologies adopted.

The research has been designed as a comprehensive exploration aimed at preparing for further research. It is based on documentary analysis of the written opinions of the most influential authors, using their academic publications.

Since the object of the research is the beliefs and values of researchers, the most adequate instrument for this type of investigation would be the method of in-depth interviews. But this type of interview would require a level of conceptual clarity that has not yet been observed in the analysis of the literature.

The method of contents analysis is the most appropriate tool for preliminary exploration of the field. It was used to analyse the occurrence of terminology, to identify definitions, theoretical frameworks and methods, recurrent themes, and detect possible correlations and any indication of underlying assumptions.

The analysis is completed using the method of discourse analysis developed by Fairclough.

The method of discourse analysis is particularly useful to detect systematic biases in the selection of data and/or the presentation of the ideas. The method emphasizes that the formal features of language found in the text should be considered as “particular choices from among the options available in the discourse types which the text draws upon...” (Fairclough, 1989:110). In certain cases, these biases might have been consciously or unconsciously articulated to benefit some groups although this sociological analysis is beyond the scope of this project (Fairclough, 1989:54).

7.1. Contents analysis

According to Babbie contents analysis is “essentially a coding operation” (Babbie, 1998:313). Stemler defines contents analysis as a “systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer categories based on explicit rules of coding” (Stemler, 2001:1). He emphasizes that the process of codification requires the previous adoption of a conceptual framework that influences the “*specific methods for observing in relation to that framework*” (Babbie, 1998:313).

The most attractive characteristic of contents analysis is that it is flexible and can be adapted to the scope and complexity required by the object of research (Neuendorf, 2002).

The major risk of the application of the technique is the problem of subjectivity in the process of coding that has necessarily an impact on the reliability of results. The biggest challenge is the decision on what contents will be examined and why (Neuendorf, 2002).

This risk was avoided in the case of this research because the coding operation was limited to a preliminary identification of the elements that would be analysed using the method of discourse analysis. No major conclusions were drawn from the analysis of contents alone.

Code review as iterative process

In any case, the process of codification is necessarily iterative. The process of contents analysis started with a preliminary codification of the responses to the research questions that was refined as the contents analysis progressed. It was revised through the phase of discourse analysis as the relevance of certain recurrent themes became clearer and the connections between the terminology and the ontological and epistemological assumptions emerged.

While the preliminary contents analysis provided an initial idea of the most frequent terminology and the recurrent issues and themes, the discourse analysis explored the connections between these ideas and the context of production and interpretation. As new connections emerged, the process of contents analysis was repeated in search for

specific issues that had not been identified or to assess the significance of certain recurrent themes. Through the assessment of relevance and the exploration of the most meaningful interconnections, the process gradually narrowed down the number of issues for analysis.

The process stopped when the most relevant questions for further research had been explored and the interconnections between them had been identified.

7.2. Discourse analysis

There is no one single methodology for discourse analysis. Neuendorf distinguished contents analysis from rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis, critical analysis, semiotic analysis, interpretative analysis and normative analysis (Neuendorf, 2002), but the distinction criteria is not clear.

For this research I followed the method proposed by Fairclough that differentiates three different elements of discourse (text, interaction, and social context) that are analysed in three distinct phases: *description* of formal features of the text, *interpretation* of the relationship between text and social interactions, and *explanation* of the relationship between interaction and social context (Fairclough, 1989:109).

The method requires a great of detail and it is extremely time consuming. It cannot be applied to a large amount of text and much less for the large number of scholarly articles included in the sample. In addition, not all aspects of the analysis are applicable to every type of text. Most of the grammatical features that the method focuses on are only present in the analysis of conversation where the power is enacted. Fairclough himself suggested that his method should be considered “as a guide, not a blueprint” (Fairclough, 1989:110).

The research focused on the first and third phases. The analysis of texts focused on the experiential, relational and expressive values of vocabulary and grammatical features.

Agency expressed or hidden through manipulation of grammar: nominalization

One of the main aspects of the analysis of grammatical features in Fairclough is the identification or disguise of agency in the text, through the use of passive voice or

nominalization (Fairclough, 1989:111). There is nominalization when a “process is converted into noun” and, in the operation, some key information, usually the agent, is missed (Fairclough, 1989:124).

Contested terms

Another key relevant feature of the method used in this research is the analysis of contested terms.

The analysis of vocabulary focuses on the choice of words whose experiential value is “ideologically contested”, the “ideological significant” relations between the meaning (synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy), the euphemistic expressions and any metaphor used (Fairclough, 1989:111).

For the purpose of this research the notion of contested term is broader than the “ideological” bias suggested by Fairclough. Following the definition of contested concept in Gallie, I have identified the ‘terms that combine general agreement on the abstract notion that they represent with endless disagreement about what they might mean in practice’ (Gallie in Cornwall, 2007:471).

These terms are also known as “buzzwords” and have gained acceptance because of their ‘euphemistic qualities’, and their capacity to evoke a wide variety of meanings. It also has a ‘normative resonance’ that ‘places the sanctity of its goals beyond reproach’ (Cornwall, 2007:472). In most cases, the normative and emotional charge of certain terms is the result of a long term process that cannot be completely understood without a longer term perspective.

Many of the terms used in the field of social entrepreneurship correspond to this description. This research elaborates further on previous analysis of the contested terms identified by other authors (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Jones & Keogh, 2006; and Reid & Griffith, 2006).

However it is not clear that the use of contested terms responds in all cases to a manipulative intention, even unconscious. There might be some cases in which these buzzwords fulfill another important cognitive function.

Bell suggested that the human mind knows through the language: “Nomen is numen, to name is to know” (Bell, 1973:9). The language is used to remember and communicate experiences even when they are not very well understood. In the essay on human understanding, Locke suggested that words, as the most developed signs we use, were a critical element for human understanding and the communication of knowledge because memory was not a reliable “repository” (Locke, 1690).

The cognitive function of language has been taken into account in the application of Fairclough’s method of discourse analysis.

The analysis also incorporated a broader perspective on the socio-cultural practice that brought into the picture the social, economic, political and ideological context explored in the background above to comply with the requirements of the explanation phase (Fairclough, 1989).

7.3. Research design: unit of analysis, sample, coding

The research was implemented in two steps. The first phase involved a descriptive exploration of contents and provided a preliminary codification that narrowed down the number of issues for the second phase of discourse analysis. Some correlations were tentatively identified.

In the second phase, the method of discourse analysis completed the exploration of implicit assumptions and elaborated further on the correlations detected and the understanding of the context in which the ideas should be interpreted.

7.3.1. Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis selected for the research was the articles in academic journals and other sources, defined as “social artifacts” by Babbie (1998). The articles contain a much clearer and precise exposition of the author’s ideas and provides extremely useful information to prepare for future interviews.

7.3.2. Sample

The project is aimed at the **analysis of a representative selection of articles in the field of social entrepreneurship** to explore the choice of research methods, the explicit or implicit assumptions about the nature of the phenomena and the epistemological approach and the consequences of this choice on the final outcome of the research.

As indicated by Babbie (1998) and Stemler (2001) the representativeness is a key element to ensure the validity and generalization of conclusions. The implicit risk of subjectivity will be avoided through the explicit reflection on the reasons for selection.

The sample was selected according to the criteria of “maximum variation” (Punch, 2006:51). The aim of the research was to explore all possible theoretical and methodological approaches in order to identify any common patterns or underlying assumptions that could be relevant to understanding the phenomenon.

The sample selection was based on an exhaustive literature review that combined the search in the Web of Science and Scopus databases and the snowball method of checking the references in each of the articles found.

The snowball method was applied to check the integrity and the relevance of the database searches. The term social entrepreneurship is still not included among the search indicators and the search of the databases is not completely reliable.

The literature benefited from several **general overviews of the literature** published over the past two years (Cukier, Trenholm & Gekas, 2011; Hill, Khotari & Shea, 2010; Grass, 2012; Grass, Mosakowski & Lumpkin, 2010; Short, Moss & Lumpkin, 2010; Trivedi, 2010) that have emerged as a result of the considerable increase in literature.

All these elements have been used to complete a **personal database** of more than 300 articles that has been compiled and systematically revised in 2012.

The criteria of relevance based on the number of citations and academic rigor, based on the quality of publications, was also taken into consideration in the elaboration of the sample.

Both criteria are complementary but only indicative because the **traditional citation indexes** have important limitations, particularly for new domains of research.

The most cited articles, particularly prior to 2006, were not published in peer reviewed publications that are usually resistant to new ideas. The articles published in scholarly journals are very recent and the citations in these cases are not an appropriate reference to measure the relevance either.

Moreover, the citation indexes, Journal Impact Factor and Eigen factor, refer to journals and not articles. I have used the Scopus database and Google Scholar as the main indication of relevance of articles and authors.

The criterion of relevance was assessed comparing both rankings of citations. Although Google Scholar includes a larger number of citations, there is a consistent correlation when comparing the top articles in both rankings. Fifteen of the articles retained for the sample are among the top 40 in both rankings.

The combination of variety, relevance and rigor of publications provides a sound foundation to assess the representativity of the sample.

The initial sample for the phase of contents analysis phase included 35 conceptual articles that provide a comprehensive overview of alternative conceptualizations, methodological options and the meta-theoretical reflections on the research, the assumptions and the construction of the academic field.

After the initial phase of contents analysis, a few articles were discarded and others were added. The sample selected for discourse analysis was reduced to 16 articles that were selected among those that provided a more comprehensive approach to all the research questions. Not all the articles were relevant for all the research questions. The final sample is included in Annex II.

7.4. Validity and reliability challenges

The challenges for validity and reliability are stronger in the second phase. A critical issue is the decision on which theories or perspectives are more relevant to judge the relevance of any particular content (Neuendorf, 2002).

The risk of subjectivity was avoided in this case because the purpose of research was mainly to provide a comprehensive overview of all key issues. The methodology adopted was appropriate for the research objective.

The conceptual and terminological confusion has provided a fertile breeding ground for rhetoric. Several articles reviewed have debunked certain myths around earned-income and the sustainability and efficiency panacea (Bradach & Foster, 2005; Reid & Griffith, 2006; Dees & Anderson, 2008; Teasdale, 2010). The issues have not been analysed systematically and in-depth but there are enough elements available to ensure that this research will provide meaningful conclusions.

The comprehensive exploration undertaken through this research has provided a complete overview of the key issues that require further research.

FINDINGS

&

CONCLUSIONS

8. FINDINGS and DISCUSSION

The findings are organised according to the research questions. The purpose of this research is to identify any meaningful correlations between the different conceptualizations, the terminology and the assumptions. It has also identified a few inconsistencies and knowledge gaps.

8.1. Terminology

The problem of terminology is the first entry point for analysis.

The main obstacle identified during the preparation of the research proposal was the variety of vocabulary used to refer to the phenomenon without much precision about the exact meaning.

The key assumption of the method of discourse analysis is that the choice of the terms is not neutral. There are assumptions and connotations embedded in each term that must be unveiled for the sake of clarity of communication. This is also the main obstacle for the development of theory (Lohmann, 1992) and the construction of a coherent academic field of research.

Fairclough suggests that the analysis of the term should take into account the alternatives available in the domain of discourse from where the text is selected (Fairclough, 1989). For this study I have also taken into account that, in some cases, the use of an alternative term in the text might respond to style requirements, mainly to avoid repetitions.

8.1.1. General analysis of the use of terminology

The first task of the contents analysis was to identify all terms in use and to provide a preliminary assessment of their relevance for further research based on the analysis of its occurrence in the texts and the clarity of the meaning.

Since I had no specialised software available I did not undertake an exact quantification of the use of terms. This preliminary exploration focused on the most frequent and prominent terms identified in the sample of articles.

A selection of the most relevant and controversial terms is retained for in-depth analysis using the method of discourse analysis. The exploration benefited from previous analysis of terminology in the existing literature (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Jones & Keogh, 2006; Reid & Griffith, 2006).

Terms in use

In the preliminary review of the literature I had identified the most common terms or phrases. The terms are sometimes used interchangeably (Jones & Keogh, 2006) even if they were originally introduced to designate different phenomena.

The terms were organised in three main categories that correspond to the three most prominent terms: **social entrepreneurship** used to refer to the activity and/or the abstract concept, **enterprise** referring to the entity or organisation, and **entrepreneur** designating the agent(s). This correspondence is not unanimously accepted but was adopted here for practical reasons.

The terms used to refer to **social entrepreneurship** as an activity are: social business, sustainable entrepreneurship, civic entrepreneurship, corporate social entrepreneurship, venture philanthropy, and caring capitalism. These terms are not synonyms.

The terms used as quasi-synonyms of **social enterprise** to designate the entity are much more varied. Social enterprise is used to designate both the activity and the entity. This ambiguity has generated some confusion that is discussed below. Two main groups have been distinguished. The following lists are not exhaustive but they are comprehensive enough for the purpose of this study.

The first group includes all the terms that emphasize the nonprofit character of the entity: non-profit enterprise, enterprising nonprofits, self-funded nonprofits, community wealth venture, community enterprise, social benefit organisations, and

human service organisations. Social business is also used to designate the organisation at times.

The second group includes all other terms that do not assume the nonprofit nature of the institution: social firm, social purpose venture, ethical enterprise, social-purpose commercial ventures, and business with social conscience.

There are no alternatives that are directly interchangeable with the term **social entrepreneur**. The term nonprofit manager, agent of change, or social innovator are sometimes used to refer to social entrepreneurs in very particular contexts, but are never used as synonyms.

Analysis of occurrence in the sample

Not all the terms listed above appeared in the sample of articles selected. The analysis of contents confirms that the most prominent terms in the literature are social entrepreneurship, social enterprise and social entrepreneur.

There are only two other terms that are frequently used in almost every article of the sample: venture and firm. Some authors use these terms to replace the word enterprise but there is not clear pattern of meaning.

Haugh (2009) uses the term firm consistently when referring to the theoretical framework of management studies. Firm is the term used most frequently in economics, following the Coase and Williamson theories of the firm. But this use is not general in all the texts of the sample.

The use of venture is much more varied. There is no clear correspondence with any particular discipline or meaning. Austin (2006:2) uses the term social-purpose commercial ventures to refer to normal business that have a social concern.

Other terms, such as community enterprise, are much less common and are related to very specific cases of social entrepreneurship. Haugh (2009) uses the terms community enterprises, and community-led social ventures, based on the particular sample selected in the texts. Her previous research is informed by a particular interest on specific forms of collective enterprise.

This is an indication of a correlation that deserves further research. The comparison of the terminology, the concept adopted and the empirical basis of the analysis could be very useful for the clarification of the concept.

The analysis of this research focuses on the three terms that are used in all articles, namely, entrepreneurship, enterprise, and entrepreneur. While the term social entrepreneurship designates the activity or the abstract concept, the term social enterprise is used in most cases to designate the organisation. The term entrepreneur is systematically used to designate the agent. This responds to a linguistic necessity but the analysis of contents identified some uses that contradicted this simple logic, particularly as refers to entrepreneurship and enterprise.

Although social entrepreneurship is the preferred term in most of the articles analysed, there are three cases in which this term is not systematically preferred that require some attention.

Dart (2004) only uses the term social entrepreneurship in four occasions, all of them when quoting other authors or institutions. The term entrepreneurship does not seem to be deliberately avoided. Dart states that the use of the term was not precise at the time he was writing.

However, he acknowledged a pattern in the use of the term. He refers to a “social enterprise movement” with a “narrow operational definition based on business based solutions” (Dart, 2004:414). He even suggests that the use could become the dominant trend (Dart, 2004:412) over the broader conceptualization of the phenomenon as “entrepreneurship and innovation” (Dart, 2004:420).

In the case of Levander (2010) social entrepreneurship is not completely excluded. There are two occurrences of the term social entrepreneurship and twenty one of the term cooperatives. The two examples selected by Levander are work integration cooperatives that provide employment to groups traditionally excluded from the work market.

In the text by Arthur et alia (2006) the preference for the term social enterprise is systematic. There is not one single occurrence of the terms entrepreneurship, firm or venture in the text.

Table 1 Terminology and definition

Year	Author	Preferred term	Definition
1998*	Dees	Social entrepreneurship	[SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR] Long lasting social improvement / innovation / accountability
2002	Drayton	Social entrepreneur	SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR focuses on talent on solving social problems ... envisage a systemic change and are characterized by creativity, widespread impact, entrepreneurial quality, and strong ethical fiber
2003	Boschee	Social entrepreneurship	[SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR] Earned income Double Bottom Line: financial and social returns.
2004	Dart	Social enterprise	“radical innovation within Nonprofit Sector
2006	Mair & Marti	Social entrepreneurship	innovative combination of resources exploring opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs
2006*	Nicholls & Cho	Social entrepreneurship	organisational activity characterized by ‘sociality, market orientation and innovation’
2006	Austin <i>et al.</i>	Social entrepreneurship	innovative, social value creating activity
2006	Weerawardena	Social entrepreneurship	Social value through exploitation of opportunity
2006	Arthur <i>et al.</i>	Social enterprise	[SOCIAL ENTERPRISE] trading for social purpose (DTI)
2009	Haugh	Social entrepreneurship	[SOCIAL ENTERPRISE] trading for social purpose & financial sustainability (DTI).
2009	Sims & Robinson	Social entrepreneurship	--
2010	Nicholls	Social entrepreneurship	organisational activity characterized by ‘sociality, market orientation and innovation’
2010	Hazy &	Social	--

	Goldstein	entrepreneurship	
2010	Urbano <i>et al.</i>	Social entrepreneurship	innovative combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs (Mair & Marti, 2006)
2010	Levander	Social enterprise	[SOCIAL ENTERPRISE] Work integration
2010	Trivedi	Social entrepreneurship	--

Discussion

The findings suggest that although the linguistic logic in the use of the three main terms indicated above seems to be the dominant trend, there are particular uses of the terms that point to different underlying assumptions.

The first one is the use of the term social entrepreneur. While the preferred term is social entrepreneurship in most articles, the definitions of two authors (Dees, 1998; Boschee & McClurg, 2003) focus on the social entrepreneur. In the case of Drayton (2002), social entrepreneur is the most common term. There is no one single occurrence of social enterprise in the text and just one occurrence of social entrepreneurship.

This choice points to an individualist conception of the phenomenon. Such a conclusion cannot be supported on the basis of the terminology alone but it is a strong indication that is considered below when analysing the ontological and epistemological assumptions.

The second issue refers to the choice between social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. This issue is directly connected to the most prominent debate during the early years of the literature. One group, represented in the sample by Jerr Boschee, chairman of the Institute of Social Entrepreneurs (ISE), insisted that commercial activities, and consequently, earned income, that is, income different from grants and subsidies, were the distinctive characteristic of the phenomenon. Dees and Drayton, to

the contrary, considered earned income as accessory and insisted on the contribution of social entrepreneurs to social innovation.

In an article published in the special issue of ARNOVA, Greg Dees and Beth Battle Anderson suggested that there were two different schools: **“social innovation school”** and **“social enterprise school”**. Boschee proposed that “social entrepreneurship” could be used as an umbrella term encompassing both concepts. The term social enterprise should be reserved for particular type of nonprofits characterized by the generation of “earned income” (ISE, 2008).

In my view, the compromise is not entirely satisfactory. The ambiguity proposed for the use of the term enterprise, to designate both the activity and the entity, is against Lohmann’s suggestion (1992), that the use of language for theory purposes should avoid unnecessary complexity and confusion.

The findings of this research point to the fact that the compromise suggested by Boschee was not clearly followed in the literature after 2006. Peredo and McMillan (2008) explicitly avoided the problem and proposed the use of both terms as quasi-synonyms. The authors that explored the issue from the perspective of management studies, such as Austin, Haugh and Urbano and that could be associated to Boschee’s emphasis on earned income, also retain the use of social entrepreneurship as the preferred term. This is also the preference of the authors that developed the sociological approach to the research introduced by Dart (Mair & Marti, 2006; Nicholls & Cho, 2006; Nicholls, 2010).

But these findings do not exclude possible correlations for certain groups or countries. It could be understood as evidence that there are two or more schools of thought that is a recurrent theme in the literature. Dart had pointed to the existence of a “social enterprise movement” already in 2004.

In the case of Levander (2010), a brief search of other related texts from Sweden through the internet indicate that there is no clearly preferred term in Sweden. Levander indicates that the concept was only introduced in Sweden early in the 2000s (2010:213).

But the text by Arthur *et al.* (2006) mirrors a dominant practice in the UK where the use of social enterprise is systematically preferred in policy documents and the literature. The term social enterprise is used to refer to the activity and the organisation and includes any type of entity that “trades for a social purpose”.

A similar connection between the term social enterprise, commercial activities (trading, business) and earned income prevails among a group of consultants and practitioners in the USA¹.

The detailed analysis of this problem is beyond the objective of this research, aimed at exploring the issues that are critical for the development of theory and policy in the field. The attempt to delimitate the use of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship is an issue that requires further research to analyse the possible association to any particular assumptions. This type of research would require a much broader sample and the use of specialised software.

Given the purpose and the means available for this research, the main focus of the analysis was on contested terms.

8.1.2. Analysis of contested terms

One of the features of discourse analysis is the examination of “ideologically contested terms” (Fairclough, 1989:111). I have selected four terms that have a particular incidence on the understanding of the concept.

First of all, the terms entrepreneurship (enterprise) and social, whose association is at the root of the new concept. I have also retained the phrase earned income, often associated with the idea of financial sustainability and self-sufficiency, because it

¹ There is one interesting connection between these two groups. Boschee was employed as consultant by the UK government during the early development of the institutional framework (ISE, 2008; Teasdale, 2010).

evokes major controversial issues that are critical to understand the meaning of social entrepreneurship. Finally, included a brief consideration of the term innovation.

Entrepreneurship: between market orientation and agency

Arthur, Keenoy, Scott and Smith suggest that the association of social and entrepreneurship could be considered as an oxymoron in the 1990s (2006:1). The positive connotations that the term entrepreneurship recently acquired require some attention.

The popularity of entrepreneurship goes well beyond the nonprofit sector. In his analysis of what he terms “entrepreneurial rhetoric”, Pozen identified another three common associations: *policy entrepreneurship*, *norm entrepreneurship* and *moral entrepreneurship*.

Another association that is even more relevant for this research, *institutional entrepreneurship*, is commonly used to designate a major stream of academic literature in organisation theory that was introduced by DiMaggio in 1988 (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009).

The positive connotations that make the term entrepreneurship so attractive have not been analysed in-depth in the literature on social entrepreneurship.

In his seminal article of 1998, Dees evoked this important issue. He suggested that “the idea of social entrepreneurship ... combines the passion of a social mission with an image of business-like discipline, innovation, and determination commonly associated with, for instance, the high-tech pioneers of Silicon Valley” (Dees, 1998-2001:1).

There are two distinct aspects of the issue that should be considered separately. The first one is the connection to the praise of free markets in the neoliberal ideology. The second one refers to the reconsideration of the agency-structure problem.

Entrepreneurship and market orientation

The idea of social entrepreneurship is often associated to market orientation (Nicholls & Cho, 2008), market driven, client driven or businesslike (Dart, 2004). The

connection between the emergence of social entrepreneurship and the dominance of the free market neoliberal ideology is a recurrent theme in the literature (Arthur *et al.*, 2006; Cook *et al.*, 2003; Eikenberry, 2004, 2008; Teasdale, 2010).

The positive connotations of the term entrepreneurship has a lot in common with the renaming of “capitalism” into “free market system” identified by Galbraith. The new term avoided all the negative charge of the system accumulated over more than one century (Galbraith, 2004). Fine (2000) places the origins of this association during the marginalist revolution in economics.

The key purpose of this analysis is to determine whether the use of the term is consciously or unconsciously overlooking any negative consequences of the new market orientation in the social sector. One of them is the potential exclusion of disadvantaged groups.

Arthur *et al.* (2006:3) suggests that the “potential ‘sink or swim’ hands off approach” to social policy puts the blame on the most deprived groups for not overcoming their exclusion. In the same way, Cook, Doods and Michell state that the social entrepreneurship movement “erodes the rights to universal welfare services based on the principle of social justice” (2003:57). In fact, the emphasis on individual self-reliance is a critical element of neoliberal discourse.

Guided by the progress of inequality since the late 1970s, the association of free market ideology and social exclusion is tempting but these opinions are not justified by strong empirical evidence in the case of social entrepreneurship.

The best known examples of social entrepreneurs are precisely characterized by strong convictions opposed to the idea of self-reliance. The analysis of whether these examples are truly representative of the broader phenomenon is a question that goes beyond the purpose of this study. It is key area for future research.

The agency dimension of entrepreneurship: proactiveness

The second connotation that the term entrepreneurship carries is directly related to the sociological debate on structure and agency.

There is no unique definition of the term entrepreneurship but the most widely followed descriptions of the role of entrepreneurs are associated to the idea of agency, either for the solution of temporal or spatial inefficiencies, as proposed by Cantillon and Kirzner, or with the pursuit of innovation through the process of “creative destruction” suggested by Schumpeter. The possibility of using that energy into social transformation is where the positive connotation evoked by the idea of social entrepreneurs lies.

Since the earliest definition of the concept of social entrepreneurs by Dees and Drayton, the emphasis on the proactive, creative and determined engagement to find solutions to social problems is a common feature in the literature. Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort underlined proactiveness as a key element in the definition they proposed (2006).

This proactiveness implicitly hides the negative consequences of the association of social entrepreneurship with individualism and self-interest. This association is more prominent in the ‘hero narrative’ that characterizes a stream of the literature (Nicholls, 2010). However, the analysis of texts indicates that this association is not supported by a strong correlation.

First of all, the connection between entrepreneurship and individualism has eroded over time as explained in the sections below. The emphasis on the context in which entrepreneurs operate and the cases of community entrepreneurship and participatory approaches to entrepreneurship documented in the literature are strong arguments against the association.

Conventional entrepreneurship has been reconceptualised away from the individualist perspective into the contextualized forms of networks and social capital. Entrepreneurship could be understood as agency in building consensus and sharing benefits.

Secondly, the concept of self-interest is also being revised. Gradually differentiated from the profit motive that dominates the economic literature it has been applied to other aspects of life. It has been noted that even in the cases of altruistic motivation,

any organisation, not just social enterprises, might promote changes that suit their particular interests, not necessarily economic or financial, against the general interest of the community.

This issue is a recurrent theme in the literature on social entrepreneurship (Nicholls & Cho, 2008) particularly in the texts that explores the collective expressions of social entrepreneurship (Arthur *et al.*, 2006; Haugh, 2009).

The idea of proactivity implicit in the concept of social entrepreneurship matches well with Sen's capabilities approach to development. There are many factors that explain social exclusion other than the entrepreneurial initiative. Exclusion is mainly the result of unequal distribution of means of production and coercion that it is frequently accompanied by the manipulation of beliefs with the intention of obfuscating the sources of that inequality (Piven & Cloward, 1977:1-2)

The findings of this research suggest that there is a connection between the term entrepreneurship and the positive and negative connotations indicated above. All the ideas evoked above are common in the descriptions of the phenomenon found in the texts analysed. But the findings cannot support that there is a strong correlation between entrepreneurship and the negative consequences. I am of the view that the notion of market orientation and proactiveness or agency are not problematic by themselves. The key problem is whether the decision mechanisms ensure a fair distribution of costs and benefits.

The analysis suggests criteria to analyse the hero narrative in future. The analysis should consider not just who promotes change but who decides what type of change and when and how it is implemented. If change is understood, in Schumpeterian terms, as creative destruction, any analysis of the impact of social entrepreneurship should explore in every case who is suffering the losses.

Another interesting indication obtained from the analysis is that the alternative emphasis on market orientation (earned income) or agency (innovation) supports the idea that there is more than one school of thought. The divergences between them should be taken into account in future research.

The association of social entrepreneurship to the notion of earned income and self-sustainability explored below provides a different perspective on this problem.

Earned income: from self-sustainability to diversification

The emergence of social entrepreneurship in the USA was directly associated to nonprofits searching for alternative sources of income to complement the revenue obtained through donations and public grants.

This revenue, known as “earned income”, was defined as an essential characteristic of social enterprises. The rejection of the “dependency model” and the objective of financial freedom and self-sufficiency of nonprofit organisations was adopted by the group of practitioners and consultants gathered around the Social Enterprise Alliance. This view is represented in an article by Boschee and McClurg included in the sample (2003:4).

Dees and Anderson criticised the phrase earned income as “value-laden” for two reasons. First it implied that attracting donors’ resources was not “earned” even though the process required more “talent, effort and an appealing value proposition” than finding consumers or clients (Dees & Anderson, 2008:147).

Secondly, they argued that the idea was based on what they called “**the myth of self-sufficiency**”. In their view, “every organization is dependent on outsiders for resources and support”, whether customers, investors, suppliers, workers, competitors or donors. They criticised the implicit value judgement in considering the dependence on consumers as a positive attitude while the dependence on philanthropy and government is suggested as sign of weakness and vulnerability (Dees & Anderson, 2008:147).

From that point of view, the financial freedom of social enterprises is not only exaggerated but misleading. The empirical evidence denies that organisations depending on earned income were more sustainable than those depending on grants. The most sustainable organisations are those that rely on a “*conservatively invested endowment fund*” (Dees & Anderson, 2008:149).

From self-sufficiency to resource theory. New terminology.

Boschee and McClurg's arguments are representative of a very particular view within the literature in the USA. But the recurrence of the term earned income in the sample is only significant in their article.

Table 2 Recurrence of the term earned income

Year	Author	Occurrence	Other similar terms used
1998*	Dees	1	
2002	Drayton	0	
2003	Boschee	21	
2004	Dart	3	Earned revenue
2006	Mair & Marti	2	
2006*	Nicholls & Cho	--	
2006	Austin <i>et al.</i>	2	
2006	Weerawardena	0	
2006	Arthur <i>et al.</i>	0	Trading
2009	Haugh	6	Unrestricted income, earned revenue, financial resources
2009	Sims & Robinson	1	
2010	Nicholls	5	
2010	Levander	--	Business, trading
2010	Urbano	0	
2010	Hazy & Goldstein	0	
2010	Trivedi	2	

Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) and Haugh (2009) introduced a more balanced approach to the problem.

Using the perspective of resource based theory, Haugh suggests that the dependence on grants or, what she terms as "restricted income", has a direct impact on the autonomy of the organisation to decide the objectives and strategy. She evokes a general complaint among nonprofit organisations about the lack of flexibility of most

donors, a constraint that commercial enterprises relying on customers and investors do not face.

In the same vein, Austin suggested that although the human and financial resources required in profit and nonprofit activities are similar, the latter face more constraints to acquire them. The adoption of certain business practices could undeniably facilitate their capacity to mobilize resources for their social mission (Austin *et al.*, 2006).

From this perspective, the emphasis on earned income cannot be completely rejected. However the term itself should be reconsidered to provide a more accurate image of the implications.

Dees & Anderson suggested the use of a different vocabulary, namely, “revenue for sales” (Dees & Anderson, 2008:147). Dart mentions the phrase “revenue-source diversification” that is even better to reflect the consequences of donors’ conditionality on the autonomy of organisations (2004:414).

However the market analogy and the related terminology should be used with caution. The terms investor and customer referring to donors and beneficiaries retains the notion of accountability and cannot be completely rejected upfront. But there are certain embedded assumptions directly connected to the materialistic and individualistic values of capitalism that should be carefully considered.

Assumptions implicit in the market metaphor

The first objection against the emphasis on earned income is the strong association to the assumption of individualism.

The ‘individualist’ emphasis on financial freedom and autonomy ignores the social and economic interdependency while exalting individual capacity to transform the world. It also overlooks the potential impact on social exclusion that social entrepreneurs claim to be addressing.

Certain mechanisms used to generate “earned income”, such as lotteries, could imply a regressive distribution of the cost of the social programmes if those who buy the tickets are not those who enjoy a privileged position (Nicholls & Cho, 2008). The dependence on fees also introduces a perverse incentive to select the beneficiaries

among the more affluent clients (Nicholls & Cho, 2008). And finally, it is also true that the energy and resources devoted by social enterprises to manage the commercial activities detract from those needed to pursue their social objectives.

None of these arguments is conclusive. The lotteries and similar regressive funding mechanisms are frequently used by governments to generate the funds that they apply to grants and subsidies. There are many types of perverse incentives in both nonprofit and public organisations that have an even more negative impact on the social orientation of these organisations. And finally, the efforts required to secure grants can be equally onerous as the effort to procure customers.

The assessment of alternative sources of funding should be based on the specific circumstances that concur in each case (Nicholls & Cho, 2008).

The second objection against earned income is that the emphasis on financial autonomy is based on a pervasive materialist assumption that has permeated the social and nonprofit domain.

The measure of nonprofits success is determined by their financial performance in terms of provision of goods and services and their ability to mobilize funds. The less visible impact derived from emotional support, empowerment, and wellbeing that is not measured in financial terms is largely ignored. The capacity to mobilise other non-monetary resources, through the development of networks, trust, motivation and inspiration of disadvantaged populations and volunteers, is left out of the equation.

The implicit risk is that only “permanently failing organisations” would survive. The concept was introduced by Meyer and Zucker to refer to institutions that achieved financial performance but fail to meet their social mission (Backman & Smith quoted in Dees & Anderson, 2008:150).

This is precisely one of the most consistent criticisms against the “marketization of nonprofits” when pursued at the expense of the role of these organisations in building a strong civil society and their critical intervention as guardians of certain values and “builders of social capital” (Eikenberry, 2004, 2008).

These arguments against social entrepreneurship are not conclusive either even if they point to serious concerns. One recurrent theme in the literature is the emphasis on trust and accountability. Dees (1998) suggests that the key advantage of social entrepreneurs is their “sound understanding of the constituencies they are serving” (Dees, 1998:5) and their skills to generate trust among donors and beneficiaries even in the absence of compelling evidence of social impact.

Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern also evoke the “reputation for fairness” as a distinctive characteristic of social entrepreneurs. This is particularly important for mobilisation of human resources. In the absence of financial resources or incentives to recruit and retain talented employees, social entrepreneurs employ a much wider range of motivations beyond the financial return (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006:11). In fact, Drucker suggested that the ability to attract and retain human resources is one of the key lessons that corporations could learn from nonprofits (Drucker, 1992).

This issue would require a much more extended analysis. Some other aspects of the problem are considered below in the analysis of the term “social”.

Earned income and profit

There is one more consideration to raise here. Earned income could be considered as a euphemism used to avoid the negative connotation of the term “profit”.

Jones and Keogh described the strong “intuitive resistance against profit” and the most frequent “*euphemisms*” used to replace the word profit by the terms ‘*surplus*’, ‘*residual earnings*’, ‘*gains*’ and ‘*yields*’ (2006:12). They also noted that the concept of ‘cost recovery’, common in the discourse of government and nonprofit organisations, often lacks any precision on whether profits are included or not (2006:13).

The key contribution from Jones and Keogh is that they demonstrate that the debate on the generation of earned income is misleading. The key issue is not in the generation of profits or whatever term is used, but on the adoption of the profit maximisation principle and the policy on profit distribution (Jones & Keogh, 2006:12)

This issue is directly connected to the research questions on policy recommendations. The question that explores the position of the authors on the restriction of profit distribution is critical to define the nature of social enterprises.

From the social dimension to the political implications

The social focus is a constant in almost every definition of the phenomenon. All the definitions of social entrepreneurship identified in the sample include the social dimension under different terms or connotations: social transformation, social change, social improvement, social purpose, social mission, social value, social needs, social problems, social benefits, social wealth enhancement, societal wellbeing, social return, societal impact, socially engaged private sector, societal impact, social goal, social aims, social ends, mission to change society, etc.

The social mission is usually the dominant purpose, “either exclusively or at least in some prominent way” (Peredo & McMillan, 2006:64) but it is generally combined with other objectives, most commonly with commercial activities of financial sustainability in what is commonly known as “double bottom line”. The association with innovation (or pattern breaking) is also a very common combination (Mair & Marti, 2006) and in some cases all three elements are included (Nicholls & Cho, 2008).

But there are no precise definitions of what the term social actually means or how to identify what objectives could be considered social. Social is one of the best examples of a buzzword.

Following Fairclough’s method, the first step in the analysis is the exploration of alternatives.

The opposition of social entrepreneurship to “nonsocial” enterprise suggested by Nicholls and Cho (2008) is somehow misleading. Seelos and Mair denied that there are no “non-social enterprises” because both entities have a social impact, particularly as regards employment (Seelos & Mair, 2005:243).

Social is more frequently opposed to “market”, or more precisely to “commercial” and “business” enterprise primarily driven by the profit motive and the generation of private wealth. Urbano *et al.* (2010) reintroduced the distinction between social and commercial efficiency from the institutionalist tradition in economics (Clark, 1923).

In the early literature, social entrepreneurship was frequently characterized as a nonprofit phenomenon (Taylor, Hobbs, Nilsson, O’Holloran & Preisser, 2000). Mair and Marti (2006) rejected the distinction based on the existence of profit. They argued that not all motives in the nonprofit sector were purely altruistic and that there are also important social aspects in conventional entrepreneurship

The privatization of public services inspired by neoliberal policies has had the effect of blurring the boundaries between market and nonmarket activities. As a result, the explanatory power of profit and market failure theories has been considerably eroded.

Thus the main obstacle to finding a clear definition of the social dimension is the lack of a clear alternative. In the analysis of the sample, I have identified alternative approaches to introduce some precision to the concept.

Some authors characterise the social dimension by a particular focus on the basic human needs of low income, disadvantaged populations unsatisfied by current economic or social institutions (Dees, 1994; Mair & Marti, 2006; Seelos & Mair, 2005). There are a few definitions that adopt this option, namely, the Roberts Foundation Homeless Economic Development Fund, the Skoll Foundation and Thompson, Alvy and Lees (2000). The emphasis on “sub-optimal markets and institutional voids” (Nicholls, 2008) and the priority assigned to social wealth, not as a by-product of economic value, but as the primary objective, seems to be the main avenue explored in the literature.

For the purpose of this research the most interesting direction used to define the concept is the political perspective introduced by Nicholls and Cho. They suggest that the notion of social implies a process of “normative self-construction” (Nicholls & Cho, 2008:101). The emphasis is not on the objectives themselves but rather the process leading to the decision.

They differentiate between two different processes used to define the objectives: the dialogical or participatory process and the monological dimension that is traditionally associated to the hero narrative of entrepreneurship.

The term “sociality” that they propose to characterise social entrepreneurship is not the most satisfactory solution to avoid the confusion. But it is very useful for this research because it is a good example of what Fairclough defines as nominalization, or the operation by which a “process is converted into noun” hiding critical information (Fairclough, 1989:124).

In this case, the information about the agent of the decision and the procedures are ignored. The key problem with the application of the idea of entrepreneurship to the social world is precisely that it obscures the political dimension that is essential to this domain.

As indicated above in the case of earned income, the key problem with the concept of social entrepreneurship is that it might implicitly adopt monological decision procedures that are coherent with individualistic and materialistic assumptions dominant in economics and management studies but that contradict essential values in social relationships.

As in the case of earned income, the question of what is social is the wrong question. The key issue is to define who benefits, what are the concrete benefits obtained, and the procedures followed to adopt the decision.

As in the case of earned income, a change of terminology could be also useful to progress towards a clearer and more precise conceptualization.

Several authors use the term **societal** instead of social (Dart, 2004; Dees, 2001; Drayton, 2002; Haugh, 2009). Although there is no clear definition of the term societal, it is a much less frequently used term. Hence it could be instrumental to avoid a great deal of connotations that have been accumulated on the word social over the last decade.

While social has been broadly associated with a macro perspective and vaguely opposed to market activities, the term societal could emphasise the relational,

interpersonal aspects of the social dimension. It could be useful to underline the political dimension that has been obscured.

From this perspective, the interpersonal, participatory or collaborative dimension of social entrepreneurship becomes an essential element of the definition. The literature on the phenomenon would benefit from the incorporation of some of the principles of the capabilities approach to development².

The analysis of this contested term suggests that the definition of the term social requires a clear understanding of the underlying individualist and materialist assumptions that are the main objective of this research.

Social value and appropriability

There is one final aspect of the term that should be noted here. The association of “social” and “value” has connotations that require some attention.

The definition of value has been traditionally an economic concern. The concept of value creation was further elaborated within strategic management as the convergence of scarcity, demand and appropriability. These two ideas are problematic in this association that are directly related to the materialist assumptions explored above around the concept of earned income.

Despite the altruistic idea behind the value propositions that social enterprises propose, we should not overlook that there is an implicit intention of “capturing” social value on behalf of the institution. Nonprofit marketing and branding is pretty much that. Gradually, the idea of social wellbeing, traditionally considered as an externality by economists, is being dissected into pieces that are more easily “appropriable”. This understanding of social values is radically opposed to the principle of the “commons”.

² The **capabilities approach** was introduced by Amartya Sen in his analysis of welfare economics. His ideas led to a new paradigm of human development that inspired the UN's Human Development Index (by Amartya Sen). The cause of poverty is assumed to be not the lack of access to resources (income or assets) and services but the deprivation of “substantive freedoms” that enable people to care for their own needs (Sen, 1989; 1993).

The idea of value creation also introduces the notion of scarcity that is problematic in the context of social entrepreneurship. By narrowing down the idea of value to the material resources involved in the process, other human and spiritual resources that are naturally abundant could be easily ignored. While the concept of social entrepreneurship is attractive because it brings back the emphasis on trust, accountability (Dees, 2001) and the distinction between human and financial resources (Austin *et al.*, 2006), the materialist connotations could come again through the back door.

The purpose here is mainly to raise awareness about this veiled connotation. This is further elaborated on in the sections regarding the ontological assumptions.

Innovation

The fourth contested term that we analysed in this sections is innovation. The notion of innovation or pattern breaking characteristic is a frequent requirement in the definitions of social entrepreneurship, but it is also very vaguely defined.

The paradox implicit in the notion of innovation is that for large scale impact there should be some kind of replication. Human progress operates through emulation and social entrepreneurship is no exception.

There is no interest in elaborating further on this problem because the importance of this requirement has been gradually downgraded (Seelos & Mair, 2012). In fact, there are only a few definitions that require that the combination of social mission and innovation results in systemic change defined as “long lasting social improvement” (Dees, 2001) and “large-scale solution to social problems” (Drayton, 2002).

Dees insisted on the importance of innovation and impact to criticize the emphasis on earned income (2003). Seelos and Mair have recently brought into the discussion Baumol’s suggestion that most innovations are just incremental improvements rather than radical departures from existing realities.

The main problem with the concept of innovation lies in the confusion between social improvement or change and social transformation meaning systematic, broad and long lasting change.

Without further elaboration on the problem, the key objective here is to raise the possible implications of the definition of this concept for the assumptions of the hero narrative. The requirements for social transformation necessarily undermine the relevance of individualist approaches.

8.1.3. Key ideas and final discussion on terminology

There are three main findings that can be retained from the exploration of terminology.

The first one is that the apparent variety of terminology is limited. There are three terms, social entrepreneurship, social enterprise and social entrepreneur that are gradually becoming dominant in the literature as generic terms. The use of alternative terms is frequently limited to specific cases or forms of social entrepreneurship. A more rigorous comparison of the use of terminology and the empirical base on which the analysis is based has been identified as a key avenue for further research.

The second finding is that the definitions of social entrepreneurship are dominated by the use of four highly contested terms. The key contradictions and paradoxes haven't been explored above. The use of a more precise terminology could be useful for the advancement of the theoretical construction of the concept.

The third finding is that, in most cases, the confusion around the terminology could be solved with a more in-depth analysis of assumptions, particularly as regards the beliefs around individualism and materialism. This finding confirms the relevance of the research purpose.

The analysis of terminology cannot support any conclusions on the concept but it is critical for any meaningful exploration of the phenomenon. The qualitative analysis undertaken is necessary for a broader quantitative analysis of the empirical base. Guidance for further empirical research is provided in the final section of this chapter.

8.2. Definition scope and emphasis

The contents analysis was not aimed at the systematic analysis of definitions. The objective was rather to check the scope or any emphasis or element that could characterize the conceptualization of the phenomenon for classification purposes.

Three research sub-questions were aimed at capturing the essence of the definition from different angles. First the scope, second the emphasis that, according to each author, characterizes the social-entrepreneurial process, and third, the element that dominates the definition of the purpose.

8.2.1. Scope

The rationale of the first question is mainly instrumental. The precision of the definition influences the validity of any correlation identified. The more restrictive the definition, the stronger the validity of the correlation.

The inclusive definition is the dominant type in the sample. The observation made by Dart in 2004 is still valid. The “broad characterization of social enterprise” is still the most frequent in the literature (Dart, 2004:413). Most authors propose broad umbrella or working definitions.

It also confirms Nicholls and Young’s suggestions that the “umbrella approach” to the problem was widely accepted. According to them the objective of the definition would be to set the “boundaries” of the phenomenon rather than to provide a restrictive description (Nicholls & Young, 2008).

The main problem with this approach is that such a broad scope is equivalent to no definition at all.

The finding is consistent with the preliminary review of the literature wherein more than 100 different definitions were listed and compared. Most of them are not complete and some are extremely vague. In these circumstances, any classification exercise is extremely difficult and the results are not at all satisfactory for the purpose of establishing any correlation with the terminology or methodology.

8.2.2. Emphasis of the process and key element of purpose

The two research questions in this sub-section were aimed at the identification of any emphasis of the definition regarding the process and the purpose of social enterprise according to each author. The intention was to provide a characterization of the concept that could be used for the exploration of correlations with the terminology, methodology or assumptions.

The analysis of contents reveals that there are two main elements that are recurrent as regards the process. First of all, earned income, trading, or commercial activities, that is, the provision of goods and services as alternative sources of income. Secondly, the innovative character of the venture or the exploitation of latent opportunities.

This distinction could be considered as the confirmation of the existence of two schools of thought as suggested in the previous analysis of terminology. But the analysis shows that most authors do not declare any preference. Even Boschee, included in the sample as representative of the authors that require earned income as a key element of the process, insists that it should be “tied” to the social mission. Their characterization of social enterprise is defined by the combination of both social and financial objectives.

The emphasis on innovation is also rather vague. While two authors (Dees and Drayton) explicitly require systemic, sustainable improvement, other authors simply focus on the outcome that certain social needs are addressed without a requirement for large scale sustainable change. The second option is the most common.

There is no clear emphasis in any definition as regards the conceptualization of the process that could be a defining element in the exploration of correlations.

The analysis of purpose is equally inconclusive. All definitions include the social purpose or dimension without any precision on the exact meaning attached to the term.

Table 3 Definition scope and emphasis

Author	Year	Definition	Scope	Emphasis (Process)	Key (Purpose)
Dees	1998	Long lasting social improvement / innovation / accountability	Exclusive	Innovation	Transformative social change
Drayton	2002	Systemic change characterized by creativity, widespread impact, entrepreneurial quality, and strong ethical fiber	Exclusive	Innovation	Transformative social change
Boschee	2003	Any person in any sector using earned income tied to social purpose.	Inclusive	Diversification of income	Double bottom line
Dart	2004	“radical innovation within nonprofit sector”	Inclusive	Not defined	Not defined
Mair & Marti	2006	innovative combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs	Inclusive	Innovation	Catalytic or remedial social change
Nicholls & Cho	2006*	organisational activity characterized by ‘sociality, market orientation and innovation’	Inclusive	Not defined	Not defined
Austin	2006	innovative, social value creating activity	Inclusive	Innovation	Social value (Remedial)
Weerawardena	2006	Social value through exploitation of opportunity	Inclusive	Innovation	Social value (Remedial)
Arthur	2006	trading for social purpose (DTI)	Inclusive	Diversification of income	Double bottom line
Haugh	2009	--	Not defined	Not defined	Not defined

Simms & Robinson	2009	--	Not defined	Innovation	Not defined
Hazy	2010	--	Not defined	Innovation	Not defined
Urbano	2010	innovative combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs (Mair & Marti, 2006)	Inclusive	Innovation	Catalytic or remedial social change
Nicholls	2010	Any entity (indv., org or network) characterized by 'sociality, market orientation and innovation'	Inclusive	Not defined	Not defined
Levander	2010	Business for work integration	Exclusive	Work integration	Remedial social change

For the purpose of codification, the emphasis on “earned income” is translated as a concern over the diversification of the sources of income, following the previous analysis of terminology. This could be considered as a key element of the process or as an objective in itself. In Table 3, the diversification of income is considered as a characteristic of the process while the pursuit of both social and financial returns, the double bottom line, is defined as the objective.

In the case of innovation, the formulation varies enormously. Based on the analysis of definitions, a classification has been introduced of the innovation purpose in three ideal types. Firstly, innovation is understood as requiring broad impact and systemic, transformative social change, as proposed by Dees (2001) and Drayton (2002). Secondly, innovation could be understood as catalytic change, that is, the social change introduced by the social enterprise might not have large impact, but it is clearly measurable and replicable, with a potential to trigger a general process of social transformation. Finally, innovation could be defined as remedial improvement addressing certain social needs without a requirement for large scale or sustainable change.

The definitions in Table 3 have been tentatively classified according to these four elements but almost half of the definitions do not contain a clear or even approximate indication of the purpose.

8.2.3. Discussion

The analysis of definitions confirms that the conceptualization of the phenomenon is still far from being consolidated. In these circumstances, the definitions provide little support for the identification of correlations. The lack of any precise emphasis in most definitions necessarily affects the direction of this research.

The exploration of correlations with the concept cannot be pursued without a proper understanding of the circumstances in which the definitions were proposed and the empirical evidence on which it was based.

The analysis of definitions should be completed with an in depth exploration of the authors' assumptions, particularly as regards the key elements of the social dimension of the phenomenon explored in the analysis of contested terms.

The analysis of texts has a limited capacity to provide a satisfactory solution to this problem. However, the distinctions introduced could be useful to formulate more precise interview questions for future research.

The findings suggest that most definitions adopt a neutral position as regards the main characteristics and purpose that points to the hybrid nature of the phenomenon. This conclusion is consistent with the dominance of the inclusive or broad type of definition which suggests that any type of organisation or process could be included into the concept of social entrepreneurship if it has a social purpose.

The focus for future research on the definitions should be on the analysis of the purpose and more particularly the manner in which the social objectives are defined, the target selected, and the expected impact measured. Some ideas are included in the final conclusions.

8.3. Epistemological assumptions and methodology

The analysis of epistemological assumptions is a critical element of this exploratory research. Their influence on the definition of research questions and the interpretation of research results has been emphasized in the field of Management studies (Duberley & Johnson, 2000). This is consistent with the assumptions of the method of discourse analysis that requires the appropriate interpretation of the context in which the text is produced and explained.

There are four types of questions. The first group inquires about the general paradigm. The second refers to the author affiliation and theoretical framework. The third explores the approach to research, and the final describes the methodology. The questions on the empirical base of the articles have been included in a separate section.

The responses to the first two questions are rather unsatisfactory. All the articles in the sample are silent on the basic epistemological assumptions and the research paradigm. The responses to these two general questions can only be answered after interpretation of the few indications found and some indirect clues. In most cases, the indications are contradictory and it was not possible to reach a clear conclusion.

The fact that the epistemology is not clearly defined is a major shortcoming and a major issue to address in order to progress with the construction of the academic field. However, given the emerging characteristic of the area of research, the lack of definition of the paradigm is understandable. Hatch and Cunliffe (2006) suggest that theoretical perspectives are only acknowledged ex-post when there are is a “critical mass” of authors that follow a common approach.

In the absence of clear information about the paradigm adopted in the texts, the information about author affiliation and theoretical frameworks has been conceived as entry point/approximation to the problem of epistemological assumptions.

Although there is no precise definition of paradigm and academic field it is clear that both concepts are based on the existence of assumptions about the ontology and the epistemology that are commonly shared by a group. The academic or work environments are defined by this type of scientific and cultural uniformity.

The information in this section is also extremely relevant for the development of a sociology of the field, to understand the interests and objectives behind certain institutions that might influence the development of knowledge.

8.3.1. Author affiliation

Three alternative approaches were considered to analyse the author affiliation: institutions where the authors are based or work for, academic journals where the authors have published their work, and the research networks they belong to.

The analysis of journals publications had been already been explored. Hill , Khotari and Shea (2010) used network analysis to identify groups of authors linked to any particular publications that could be considered as a distinct school of thought. They identified four schools of thought: entrepreneurship, social, governance and the for-profit nonprofit. The result was not entirely convincing because it was not supported by strong evidence but the idea pointed to a very interesting avenue for research.

Short Moss, and Lumpkin *et al.* (2010) adopted a different perspective. They analysed the journals grouped along the disciplines. This approach is more suitable for the analysis of theoretical frameworks. The findings confirmed that most contributions could be classified within management disciplines (26%), followed by entrepreneurship (11%), political science (10%), economics (9%), marketing (6%) and sociology (5%). The dispersion of journals in which the articles are published is too high to provide any meaningful insights at such an early stage of development of the research domain. Although the editorial line of each publication imposes certain constraints, for the time being most journals that have published articles have adopted a very broad approach. For these reasons, the analysis of journals was considered as a less relevant proxy to the epistemological assumptions.

However for future research on the topic of assumptions, this approach could be more relevant, particularly as regards certain specialized publications that have been launched over the past few years as they may provide more consistent results.

The analysis of specialized research networks was explored by Nicholls (2010:625). He established a correlation between the two main research networks, SEKN and

EMES, and two opposed conceptualizations, the “business logics and hero entrepreneur model” defended by the SEKN and Harvard, and the “social innovation tradition” that conceives social entrepreneurship as a process of social transformation through the innovative practices for delivery of public and social goods and services (Nicholls, 2010: 626). This insight is useful and is consistent with the findings on the terminology described above. But a more detailed analysis of the literature confirm that these groups are not strongly associated to the research networks that are still small, only relatively influential and not representative of a broader spectrum of key authors.

The third option that is retained here is the analysis of institutions. Faculties have a much stronger influence on the structure and contents of education programmes and the research undertaken by academics.

Based on the preliminary review of the literature, the initial codification for the question of affiliation distinguished between three broad groups: business schools and foundations or think tanks connected to the corporate sector, nonprofit sector practitioners and related research institutions, and a broad category of academia that included all kind of university departments such as sociology, politics, ethics and others, including management and business.

The separate category for practitioners and nonprofit think tanks was needed to accommodate the case of Boschee and other consultants and the constellation of associations and institutions that were contributing to research in the USA.

The general category of academia excluded Business Schools and acknowledges the wide diversity of contributions from different academic fields. The basic assumption for this classification was that the affiliation would provide a preliminary indication of the possible connection of the authors from any particular interests, whether business, political or nonprofit. But the institutional arrangements vary so widely that the findings should be interpreted with some caution until more detailed information on these arrangements is available.

Findings and discussion

The main finding is that the majority of authors are affiliated with business schools and management departments in universities that have no similar institutions. But the research approach varies. Only a few authors follow the standard requirements of management studies, with a precisely defined methodology and a positivist bias. The examples of Weerawardena (2006) and Urbano (2010) in the sample are representative of this group.

Some caution is needed to interpret these findings given the enormous variety of centres associated with business schools with different degrees of autonomy. A brief comparison of the three more influential institutions reflects that disparity.

The Social Enterprise Initiative at Harvard has a strong focus on MBA courses and executive education for business managers willing to explore and develop new business ideas to be applied to “social markets”. The research is strongly framed within management and entrepreneurship traditional models and theories.

The Centre for Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE) at Duke is also focused on business education but they have adopted a very different approach. The focus is on adapting business expertise into the social sector to maximize social impact. Their mission statement conceives the centre’s objective as the promotion of a broad network within the University in view of incorporating multidisciplinary views and promoting transformation in a broad area of subjects.

Finally, the Skoll Centre at the Said Business School is funded through a generous endowment from a business entrepreneur, Jeff Skoll, that provides a high degree of autonomy in the type of activities of the Centre. The centre is directly involved in the organisation of research conferences and the annual Skoll Forum is an event characterized by its high media profile.

The sample does not include many cases of other research centres that are very common in Europe with a strong focus towards the analysis of the social economy and cooperative models. In the United Kingdom, the Universities have been involved in the research on the social economy. One of these centres is the Cardiff Institute for Co-operative Studies (CICS) that was included in the sample but there are a few others

that have been active in the field, such as the Third Sector Research Centre (TRSC) that leads the research with a network of Universities (Birmingham, Southampton and Middlesex).

In Europe the collaboration is structured around the EMES network that associates nine centres, most of them involved in research on cooperatives and social issues. It is interesting to note that there is no centre from the UK represented in the network.

The findings merely indicate that the bulk of the research is being undertaken within the business/management academic environment rather than sociology, nonprofit institutions or even corporate related foundations. The findings should be taken with caution but not because the sample is not representative. On the contrary, it mirrors the broader picture of the field and the diversity of conditions of research centres specializing in social entrepreneurship affiliated to business schools

The method of discourse analysis is mostly based on the analysis of texts and should be completed with a more in-depth examination of the degree of independence, or in more sociology language, the strength of isomorphic pressures in the selection of topics and methods of research. This is a key issue for a future sociology of the field that requires a deep understanding of the academic context in a broad sample of institutions that it is beyond the scope of this research. It should include an analysis of in-depth interviews with a selection of the key authors in the field.

From this perspective, this first approximation is complementary to exploration of the theoretical framework that provides a second approximation to the kind of assumptions shared when analysed in their academic context.

8.3.2. Theoretical framework

Not all the articles reviewed define clearly the theoretical framework but there are many examples that contain an explicit reflection on the issue.

The selection of articles for the sample was precisely aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of the diversity of theoretical frameworks and methods used in the research on social entrepreneurship.

Table 4: Author affiliation and theoretical framework

	Author	Affiliation	Theoretical Framework
2001	Dees	Business School (Duke)	MANAGEMENT: Entrepreneurship
2002	Drayton	Nonprofit (Consultant - ISE)	Not defined
2003	Boschee	Nonprofit (Consultant - ISE)	Not defined
2004	Dart	Academia (Business Administration, Trent University)	SOCIOLOGICAL, Suchman theory of legitimacy
2006	Mair & Marti	Business School (IESE)	SOCIOLOGY: Structuration, Institutional entrepreneurship, Social capital, Social movements
2006	Austin	Business School (Harvard)	MANAGEMENT, PDCO
2006	Nicholls & Cho	Business School (Oxford)	SOCIOLOGY: Structuration, Institutional Isomorphism
2006	Arthur	Cardiff Inst. Co-operative Studies	SOCIOLOGY: Social Movements
2006	Weerawardena	Business School (Queensland)	MANAGEMENT (Grounded Theory)
2009	Haugh	Business School (Cambridge)	MANAGEMENT, Resource Based Theory
2009	Sims & Robinson	Business School (Stern New York)	SOCIOLOGY: Social Identity
2010	Nicholls	Business School (Oxford)	SOCIOLOGY: Structuration, Institutional Isomorphism
2010	Levander	Academia (Social Science, University of Gothenburg)	SOCIOLOGY, Neo-institutionalism
2010	Urbano	Academia (Management, University of Barcelona)	SOCIOLOGY (Institutional Economics)
2010	Hazy & Goldstein	Academia (Management, Adelphi University)	OTHER: Complexity Science
2010	Trivedi	Academia (Social Ecology School, University of California)	OTHER: Social Ecology

Three broad groups were distinguished in a tentative classification.

The first group includes the articles that propose the use of sociological theories to explain the phenomenon: structuration theory, social movements, social capital, social identity, neo-institutionalism and institutional entrepreneurship.

The articles that approached the issue from a broad economic and management perspective, including entrepreneurship theories, are grouped in the second category. There is a wide variety of management and entrepreneurship theories. The resource based view is the most frequently applied.

A third group includes the theoretical frameworks that cannot be strictly classified within the previous two, such as of complexity science (Goldstein & Hazy, 2010) and social ecology (Trivedi, 2010).

There are two main findings that deserve particular attention in this section:

First of all, there is no correlation between authors' affiliation and the theoretical framework adopted. The sociological approach is proposed by many authors affiliated to business schools or from a background in Management studies.

The second finding is that the apparent variety of theoretical approaches identified in the sample hides the convergence towards a common set of assumptions that is analysed in the sections that follow.

8.3.2.1. Institutional theory and social entrepreneurship

Institutional theory is the most frequent framework proposed among the authors within the first group and they represent very different approaches to institutionalism.

Dart was the first author to introduce the sociological perspective as an alternative to what he defined as the dominant “instrumental explanations of efficiency, effectiveness and rational utility” (Dart, 2004:415). He explicitly introduced the main assumption of the sociological approach, the premise that all organisations are systems “open to their social and cultural environments (Scott, 1992) and the norms, myths,

and symbols found therein (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) ... organizations are characterized as legitimacy-seeking systems” ... (Dart, 2004:416) ³.

Table 5: Institutional approaches

Author	Theoretical Framework	References
Dart	Sociological theory of organizations	DiMaggio & Powell (1983); Suchman (1995), Scott (1992)
Mair & Marti	Institutional entrepreneurship	DiMaggio (1988); Fligstein (1997); Holm (1995)
Nicholls & Cho	Institutional isomorphism	Suchman (1995)
Levander	Neo-institutionalism	DiMaggio & Powell (1983)
Urbano	Institutional economics	Clark (1923); North (1990, 2005)

Nicholls and Cho (2008) and Levander (2010) followed a similar approach but focused on the analysis of isomorphic pressures described by DiMaggio & Powell (1983). Levander used explicitly the term neo-institutionalism to refer to this theoretical framework. She understood legitimacy as the most critical factor for the survival of organisations.

Mair and Marti adopted a different approach. They proposed four complementary theories (structuration, institutional entrepreneurship, social capital and social movements). All of them shared the ontological assumption of embeddedness formulated by Granovetter that rejects the “atomistic” neoclassical explanation of economic behaviour (Mair & Marti, 2006).

Institutional entrepreneurship provides a new dimension for the research on social entrepreneurship. While the previous approach emphasized the isomorphic pressures as a major constraint on social entrepreneurs, the concept of entrepreneurship emphasized the agency of entrepreneurs as the source of institutional change.

³ Suchman (1995) defined legitimacy as the “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” (Dart, 2004:416)

DiMaggio (1988) was the author that introduced this new perspective evolving from the previous theory of isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Finally, Urbano *et al.* (2010) represents the economic perspective of institutionalism. They applied some ideas from Clark (1923) and North (1990, 2005) to explain the emergence of social entrepreneurship from an interdisciplinary approach. Both authors had argued for a “more socialized explanation” of economic development and entrepreneurship in reaction to the strictures of neoclassical economics.

Two ideas from institutional economics are particularly relevant for social entrepreneurship: the differentiation between business and commercial efficiency (Clark, 1923)⁴ and formal and informal institutions (North, 1990).

The variety of ideas and approaches within institutionalism is extremely rich and it has been used by other authors that were not included in the sample.

Dees introduced North’s concept of “adaptive efficiency” to present social entrepreneurship as a “low cost learning laboratory for society” through the decentralization of tentative solutions to social problems (Zeyen, *et al.*, 2012).

Dmitry Khanin applied some of the insights from the research on the tragedy of the commons by Ostrom and other institutional economists to explain social entrepreneurship as a potential approach to offset market and government failures caused by the three types of disharmonization (Zeyen, *et al.*, 2012).

There is one additional interesting insight that is relevant for the purpose of this research.

Despite the apparent diversity of the institutional approach within sociology and in economics there is a clear convergence around the explanation of human behaviour. Reconsidering certain assumptions around individualism, a more balanced approach is

⁴ ...“business or commercial efficiency is the efficiency of the individual business enterprise in making profits, while social efficiency is the efficiency of the economic system in producing ‘human’ or ‘social’ values. These social values are values that contribute to community welfare as well as to individual welfare” ... (Clark in Urbano, Toledano & Soriano, 2010:57).

adopted in which both agency and structure are taken into account following Giddens' structuration theory.

In the comparative analysis of the different approaches to institutional theory from sociology and economics, Pacheco, York, Dean and Sarasvathy (2010) concluded that institutional theory and institutional economics "have dealt with similar phenomena while using different language" (Pacheco *et al.* 2010:978).

"Both the institutional theory and the institutional economics approaches to institutional entrepreneurship acknowledge that individuals have the agency to drive the transformation of institutions in the pursuance of self-interest. In addition, both institutional economics and the institutional theory perspectives on institutional entrepreneurship depart from their disciplines' mainstream assumptions on the behavior of individuals in relation to institutions. While studies of institutional entrepreneurship in institutional theory deviate substantially from the traditional focus on isomorphism and the taken-for-granted character of institutions, the institutional economics approach was born out of discontent with neoclassical economics and its inability to address human action. Hence, the emergence of both of these perspectives highlights the need to put human action and agency in the center of economic and social systems (Pacheco *et al.* 2010:978).

Social entrepreneurship is a very good example of this process of convergence. The assumptions are now closer although the vocabulary is still differentiated.

The authors that approach the phenomenon from a sociological perspective use the concept of legitimacy. Those who approach the issue from a management perspective prefer the terms reputation, trust and accountability (Dees, 2001; Austin *et al.*, 2006). But all authors assume the influence of societal values and norms on entrepreneurship. They differ though on the reasons that explain why certain individuals are able to influence the evolution of these norms and values.

8.3.2.2. Convergence of management approaches

The insight obtained from the analysis of sociological approaches is confirmed in the review of the application of management theories.

There is a wide variety of management theories and business models that could be applied to social entrepreneurship. have not considered here the distinction between management and entrepreneurship theories because both share many assumptions and approaches.

Short, Moss and Lumpkin (2009) provided a comprehensive list of management theories applicable to the field: upper echelon theory, opportunity creation and

opportunity discovery theories, innovation theory, stewardship theory, prospect theory, agency theory, and resource dependence theory, among others.

Walske, Scarlata and Zacharakis explored Human Capital (HC) theory applying Gary Beckers' ideas to the research on social entrepreneurship (in Zeyen, Beckmann *et al.*, 2012).

Norris Krueger explored different business models as 'recipes' for economic sustainability of social ventures (in Zeyen, *et al.*, 2012).

The theories that have been most frequently used in the research of social entrepreneurship are the different analyses of opportunity recognition and exploitation and the resource-based view. The sample includes one article of the second (Haugh, 2009) but the basic assumptions of this theory are also explicit in Austin *et al.* (2006) which is the second most cited article in the literature.

The most relevant finding of the exploration of the management approaches is that there is a consistent trend towards the relaxation of the assumption of individualism that characterized neoclassical economics and management studies. This trend is consistent in articles analysed in the sample and during the preliminary literature review.

Filipe Santos suggests that the application of management theories to social entrepreneurship has led to questioning of the basic assumptions about human behaviour on which these theories were built, that is, the hypothesis of self-interest motivation and the principle of profit-maximization. The focus of social entrepreneur is value creation instead of "value capture" (Zeyen, *et al.*, 2012).

8.3.2.3. Discussion

The convergence of sociology and management approaches in the research on social entrepreneurship points to a much broader trend.

The common assumption gradually gaining acceptance is that interconnections of social and economic realities are such that they cannot be analysed in isolation. It

implies a reversal of the traditional epistemological assumptions of neoclassical economics.

This is the main common assumption that characterizes the third group identified in this section. The authors in this group could be considered as being at a more advanced stage in this convergence.

This issue deserves further research that is beyond the scope of this study.

For the purpose of this research, four ideas can be retained.

Firstly, the concept of social entrepreneurship can only be completely understood in the context of the influence of Sociology in Management and Entrepreneurship studies. Nicholls and Cho (2008) refer to Pozzebon's analysis of the influence of Giddens' structuration theory in Strategic Management. Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) suggest that social entrepreneurship has influenced the perception of commercial entrepreneurship (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006: 1)

The findings are consistent with the evolution of the entrepreneurship research that moved in the late 1980s from the focus on the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur to the exploration of the context in which they operate (Hill, Khotari & Shea, 2010:25). It is also consistent with the progress of institutionalism in economics (Urbano, Toledano & Soriano, 2010:67) and the emergence of economic sociology both characterized by the use of interdisciplinary approaches.

The implications are far reaching. When Dees defined social entrepreneurship "as genus of the species entrepreneurship", he implicitly adopted the assumptions of economic imperialism launched by Gary Becker. The introduction of the sociological perspective implies that social entrepreneurship could be considered as "a particular genus of social behaviour" (Nicholls & Cho, 2006:110) and marks the limitations of economic analysis to understand social phenomena.

The second idea refers to the construction of a distinct academic field for social entrepreneurship that is a recurrent theme in the literature. The advantages of such a distinct field should be assessed in the context of this epistemological convergence and

compared with the potential gains to be obtained from a holistic perspective and the adoption of academic transdisciplinarity.

The third issue that should be emphasized is that the notion of interconnectedness is consistent with the assumptions of the paradigm of critical realism. The methodological pluralism proposed by the authors that adopt this worldview is also appropriate for the exploration of social entrepreneurship.

Finally, the findings confirm the relevance of the in-depth exploration of assumptions as the most productive avenue to advance in the understanding of the topic.

8.3.2.4. Decline of methodological individualism

The previous observation is confirmed by the responses to the research question that inquires around the individualist/holistic approach.

Table 6: Individualist or holistic approach

1.	Author	Approach
2001	Dees	Individualist
2002	Drayton	Individualist
2003	Boschee	Not defined
2004	Dart	Holistic
2006	Mair & Marti	Holistic
2006	Austin	Holistic
2006	Nicholls & Cho	Holistic
2006	Arthur	Holistic
2006	Weerawardena	Holistic
2009	Haugh	Holistic
2010	Levander	Holistic
2010	Urbano	Holistic
2010	Hazy & Goldstein	Holistic
2010	Trivedi	Holistic

While the initial exploration of the topic adopted the individualist approach (Dees, 2001; Drayton, 2002), the analysis of contents confirms that methodological individualism has been consistently abandoned in the research on social entrepreneurship.

8.3.3. Research approach and methodology

The questions on the research approach and methodology were included to obtain complementary information about the epistemological assumptions.

The first question inquires about the purpose of the research in the article. The distinction between conceptual and empirical research is a recurrent theme in the literature on social entrepreneurship.

There is no clear explanation of what it exactly is understood by conceptual in the literature reviewed⁵. The distinction is closely related to the distinctions based on the nature of the data (qualitative or quantitative) and the logical approach or “direction of theorizing” (deductive or inductive) (Neuman, 2006:59).

The adoption of an empirical, inductive and quantitative approach could be interpreted as an indication that the authors adopt a positivist paradigm and assume the objective nature of the phenomenon. But the distinction is misleading. Both approaches are not necessarily exclusive but complementary. Almost every article includes some kind of empirical evidence that supports the conclusions, either as illustration (Austin *et al.*, 2006) or to test the hypothesis.

All articles in the sample adopt a conceptual and qualitative approach. The direction of theorizing is not clear although it could be implied that they adopt a deductive approach. The majority explore the applicability of certain theories or ideas to the phenomenon. This approach is not rigorously deductive because there is no hypothesis

⁵ For the purpose of this research I assume that the conceptual research, as opposed to empirical, means that the research is not intended to test any hypothesis by observation or experimentation but rather to develop that hypothesis or propose a theory.

explicitly formulated to be tested. There are only two articles that adopt a clear inductive approach (Urbano *et al.*, 2010; Weerawardena & Sullivan Mort, 2006).

These findings do not provide any meaningful indications on the epistemological assumptions. The choice of the research approach seems to be mostly determined by the availability of data rather than by a deliberate decision.

However, the questions are useful to identify some confusion around the methodological concepts that will be taken into account for future research.

The questions on methodology did not yield any clear indications on the epistemological assumptions either. The research methodology is not explicit in most articles even those that were published in academic journals and there are very few articles that provide a justification of the methodology adopted.

There are only four articles in the sample where the methodology is made clearly explicit: Urbano *et al.* (2010), Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort (2006), Levander (2010) and Haugh (2009).

But even in these cases there is also some confusion around the concepts of methodology and methods or techniques for data collection and analysis.

My understanding, following Krippendorff (1980), is that methodology is the conscious combination of the most appropriate methods and techniques to explore a topic⁶. But there is no clear definition in the literature. Two examples are useful to illustrate the confusion.

Urbano *et al.*, using the theoretical framework of institutional analysis, applies a “multiple-case-study approach” (2010:58) that they define as a “theory-building methodology” based on Eisenhardt’s guidelines of 1989.

⁶ “Methodology is the “explicit self-reflection on the logic of the combination of research methods and techniques that should reveal their powers and limitations and confirm that they are appropriate to the domain of application” (Krippendorff, 1980:10).

Weerawardena and Sullivan Mort claim to use a "grounded theory methodology". Having reached the conclusion that the literature was "theoretically inadequate", they "turn to the field" to "inductively derive a theoretical model from the phenomenon" (2006:26). They apply essentially the same procedures followed by Urbano *et al.*, building theory from case studies through an inductive process and they refer to the same guidelines developed by Eisenhardt in 1989.

It is not clear whether the methodology is multiple-case study or grounded theory.

Table 7: Research approach and methodology

	Author	Approach	Methodology
2001	Dees	Conceptual	Not defined
2002	Drayton	Conceptual	Not defined
2003	Boschee	Conceptual	Not defined
2004	Dart	Conceptual	Not defined
2006	Mair & Marti	Conceptual	Not defined
2006	Austin	Conceptual	Not defined
2006	Nicholls & Cho	Conceptual	Not defined
2006	Arthur	Conceptual	Not defined
2006	Weerawardena	Conceptual (Inductive)	Case study (Grounded theory)
2009	Haugh	Conceptual (Inductive)	Vignette
2009	Simms & Robinson	Conceptual	Not defined
2010	Nicholls	Conceptual	Not defined
2010	Levander	Empirical	Critical Discourse Analysis
2010	Urbano	Conceptual/Empirical	Case study (Institutional Analysis)
2010	Hazy & Goldstein	Conceptual	Not defined
2010	Trivedi	Conceptual	Not defined

For the analysis of the methodology undertaken, the terminology used by the authors was ignored and instead the identification of the methods or techniques for data collection were focused on (i.e. interviews, documentary analysis, participant observation, etc.) and data analysis. The identification of the method for data analysis is more complex. Usually, the technique used is that of contents analysis through the

development of matrices and other comparative tools to identify common patterns and differences, recurrent themes and contradictions.

Helen Haugh (2009) uses the method of vignette. The data collection method combines in-depth interviews, participant observation and secondary data gathered. The analysis uses the principles of grounded theory as in the case of Urbano and Weerawardena.

Ulrika Levander (2010) applies the Critical Discourse Analysis methodology. She uses documentary analysis for the collection of data and the analytical procedures developed by Fairclough.

The main conclusion that can be extracted from these findings is that the methodology applied to the research on social entrepreneurship is not well developed. The methodology is usually better explained in the articles that adopt an empirical or inductive approach to the problem but it is never defined when the approach is exclusively conceptual.

This is a general problem, not only for social entrepreneurship. In general, the methodology for conceptual and analytical research has been neglected. There is a positivist bias in social sciences, economics and management towards empirical analysis.

8.4. Sampling and empirical base

The questions about the sample inform not only the methodology but also provide indications about the reality that inspired the theoretical construction.

There are three observations relevant for the research purpose.

Table 8: Sample

	Author	Sample size	Sample method	Geographic
2001	Dees	None	--	--
2002	Drayton	None	--	--
2003	Boschee	2	Not defined	USA
2004	Dart	Indirect	Not defined	Developed countries
2006	Mair & Marti	5	Not defined	Developing countries
2006	Austin	12	Not defined	USA
2006	Nicholls & Cho	Indirect	Not defined	Developed countries
2006	Arthur	Indirect	Not defined	UK
2006	Weerawardena	9	Non probability	Australia
2009	Haugh	3	Non probability	UK
2009	Simms & Robinson	None	--	--
2010	Nicholls	None	--	--
2010	Levander	2	Non probability	Sweden
2010	Urbano	7	Non probability	Spain
2010	Hazy & Goldstein	None	--	--
2010	Trivedi	None	--	--

First of all, not all the articles analysed included a sample of social enterprises. This does not mean that there is no empirical base. All authors have in mind particular cases even if they do not make them explicit. Boschee and McClurg openly state that their ideas were “shaped by 50 years of experience in the field” (Boschee & McClurg, 2003:1).

In certain cases, the authors refer to external databases. The one developed by the DTI in the UK is referenced on two occasions (Arthur *et al.*, 2006; Dart, 2004).

The second observation is that the samples are always small, never more than 12 cases or examples. There are very few cases in which the authors produce a justification for the selection and the size of the sample.

The two most detailed descriptions of the sampling techniques are those elaborated by Weerawaderna and Sullivan Mort (2006) and Urbano *et al.* (2010).

Weerawaderna and Sullivan Mort explicitly refer to the criteria of “saturation” to justify the size of the sample up to the point where “incremental learning is minimal” (2006:26).

Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern state that the examples are not used for the purpose of theory building (grounded theory) but for illustrating the ideas in view of further research (2006:6).

Thirdly, all the explicit samples are selected using non-probability criteria, mainly convenience sampling. Mair and Marti declare that the examples of social entrepreneurship from developing countries “have been deliberately chosen to illustrate the global dimension of the phenomenon” (2006:38). In the case of Levander, the sampling criteria are not defined. The two institutions selected don’t use the concept of social enterprise but are described as “new cooperative enterprise” or “user-governed company” (Levander, 2010, 221). Whenever the authors refer to databases provided by other authors or organisations, the selection criteria are never made clear.

The main objection that could be made based on the previous findings is the fact that the empirical base of the analysis is not clearly detailed and is a major shortcoming in the literature. The use or the availability of the data could be a potential problem for the validity of research outcomes. It is a problem to be addressed by future research.

The final observation is that the type of social enterprises included in the sample represents a wide geographical variety in which the theoretical construction is developed.

Among the authors that include an explicit sample built for their own purposes the sample varies enormously:

- Boschee and McClurg (2003) and Austin *et al.* (2006) refer exclusively to the cases selected from his experience in the USA.
- Mair and Marti (2006) work on the basis of a small sample mainly from developing countries, with one exception.
- Weerawardena (2006) select the case studies from the database of the association of Australian social entrepreneurs.
- Haugh (2009) selected a small sample from community enterprises from the UK.
- Urbano *et al.* (2010) provided a small but detailed sample from the region of Cataluña in Spain.
- Levander (2010) includes two work integration cooperatives from Sweden.

The analysis of contents indicates that there might be a correlation between the empirical base and the conceptualization of the phenomenon and even the choice of terminology that deserves some further research.

8.5. Ontological assumptions

The questions could be classified into three groups of three questions each. The first one is exploratory to identify whether the assumption are explicitly declared and are related to any of the major paradigms of research. The second group searches for any signs that could indicate an individualistic understanding of society. The last three questions look for indications of materialistic conception of the phenomenon.

The first group of questions follows van de Ven's (2007) classification of paradigms described in the literature review.

The main finding is not only that the assumptions are not declared but that all texts without exception are silent on the paradigm, including the one by Nicholls (2010), which suggests that the field was characterized by a paradigm-building contest. He himself focuses on the analysis of the major discourses without any reference to the philosophical underpinnings of his theoretical position.

The second group of questions explore the author's assumptions around individualism and the nature of social relations.

The first issue has already been explored above in the section on the theoretical framework. The conclusions from this section should be put in this context. The analysis of contents confirms that the literature on social entrepreneurship has gradually abandoned the analysis of the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur to focus on the analysis of contexts, networks, resources, institutions and opportunities.

This trend is consistent with the general evolution of entrepreneurship literature. Gartner had already suggested in 1988 that the question of who is the entrepreneur was the wrong question, because it cannot be considered as an individual undertaking.

In his book about the E-myth, Michael E. Gerber (2005) has also insisted on the temporary nature of the entrepreneur. The people that respond to the characteristics of the entrepreneur are very rare. Rather than individual entrepreneurs Gerber emphasizes

the “entrepreneurial seizure” or moment that might affect a wide variety of individuals for varied reasons.

These ideas are reflected in the literature on social entrepreneurship. Dees acknowledges that his concept of social entrepreneurship refers to exceptional behaviours that are rare (Dees, 1998:5).

Boschee and McClurg (2003) refer to the three dimensions of entrepreneurship (dreaming, building and managing) that involve three distinct types (dreamer or innovator, the builder or entrepreneur, and the trustee or manager).

Table 9: Ontological assumptions

2.	Author	Individualist vs structuralist	Social relations
2001	Dees	Individualist	Competitive
2002	Drayton	Individualist	Not defined
2003	Boschee	Individualist	Competitive
2004	Dart	Structuralist	Not defined
2006	Mair & Marti	Structuralist	Not defined
2006	Austin	Structuralist	Competitive
2006	Nicholls & Cho	Individualist	Not defined
2006	Arthur	Structuralist	Collaborative
2006	Weerawardena	Structuralist	Competitive
2009	Haugh	Structuralist	Competitive
2009	Simms & Robinson	Structuralist	Not defined
2010	Nicholls	Structuralist	Not defined
2010	Levander	Structuralist	Not defined
2010	Urbano	Structuralist	Collaborative
2010	Hazy & Goldstein	Structuralist	Collaborative
2010	Trivedi	Structuralist	Not defined

The particularity in the literature of social entrepreneurship is that it incorporates two conflicting research traditions. In the entrepreneurship literature there is a strong emphasis on the individual “hero” entrepreneur. The tradition of collectivism and

cooperative movements on the contrary put the emphasis on the collective and participatory aspects (Peatie & Morley, 2008). The concept of social entrepreneurship should be differentiated in both traditions.

Nicholls also echoes this distinction in the identification of the three main discourses of social entrepreneurship: hero narrative, business ideal type and social innovation.

This is an issue that deserves further research combined with the analysis of the empirical example proposed above. I include some ideas that are included in the conclusion.

While the assumption of individualism seems to have been consistently abandoned, the responses to the second question, the nature of social relations seems to still be dominated by the competition.

The issue of collaboration and solidarity is a recurrent issue but when defining the phenomenon, the competitive nature of social relations is the dominant idea. There are a few insights that point in the opposite direction, particularly in the Dees emphasis on accountability (1998) and Nicholls and Cho's description of the dialogical aspects of sociality (2006).

The scope of the contents analysis is of limited use for a more meaningful exploration of the issue but points to a new direction for research. The assumptions on social relations should be considered in relation to the position of the author on the role of the state and the materialist assumptions that are explored below.

Finally, the third group of questions explore the assumptions around materialism. The three questions included explore the problem from different perspectives: the definition of wellbeing, the measurement of social impact and the analysis of entrepreneurial performance. The questions are somehow redundant but the rationale was to compare the assumptions at the micro, meso and macro levels.

All of the three issues are recurrent themes in the literature on social entrepreneurship. There is even a particular research stream specialized in what is known as "metrics of social entrepreneurship".

In the sample analysed there are no clear responses. However, from the context we can deduct that the urgency to measure performance (micro level) and impact (meso and macro levels) are both a materialist translation of a particular conception of wellbeing.

Although the analysis of the specific literature on the measurement of performance and social impact was not targeted it should be noted that most of the methodologies that have been explored are aimed at translating the nonmaterial aspects of the impact of social enterprises into a monetary equivalent measure.

In the sample analysed there are however many indications of an incipient relaxation of the condition of materialism. Dees and Austin are the leading authors in this matter. The reintroduction of nonmaterial relations into the entrepreneurship equation is forcing gradually a revision of the assumptions.

Any definition of social entrepreneurship should reflect the need for a substitute for the market discipline that works for business entrepreneurs. (Dees, 1998, 2) ... Markets do not work as well for social entrepreneurs. In particular, markets do not do a good job of valuing social improvements, public goods and harms, and benefits for people who cannot afford to pay. These elements are often essential to social entrepreneurship. That is what makes it social entrepreneurship (Dees, 1998, 3).

The value transactions in social entrepreneurship differ from commercial entrepreneurship in *kind, consumers, timing, flexibility, and measurability*. In the *kind* of value involved in the exchanges, social entrepreneurs must rely much more upon creative strategies to offset limited financial rewards and incentives with nonfinancial incentives to recruit, retain, and motivate staff, volunteers, members, and funders (...) Nonpecuniary motivation of staff represents one of the areas that commercial enterprises can learn from practice in social enterprises (e.g., Drucker, 1989). Social entrepreneurs often have to provide value more explicitly with a much more heterogeneous set of stakeholders than companies, and each group is seeking or giving a distinct form of value from the relationship.. (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006, 14)

8.6. Policy implications

The majority of articles in the sample do not include any policy analysis or recommendations. The few that include any references to the issue do not provide a systematic analysis but just one or two disconnected recommendations.

Based on the general review of the literature undertaken for this research this conclusion could be easily generalized since it is rare to find any specific references to policy. Doeringer (2010), Kerlin (2010), Galera and Borzaga (2009) include an analysis of the legal framework without any policy recommendations.

This is a major shortcoming found in the literature but it is also understandable given the lack of consensus on the concept.

The articles also do not define any particular position to the role of the state proposed or to the political context (liberal or welfare) in which the analysis is based. This information can be easily deduced from the context for most of the texts analysed. In the absence of any other guidance on the rest of the questions, the information is of little use. There is no correlation at all with the conceptualization or the terminology.

Finally, the position of the author on the restriction on profit distribution is also not explicit in most articles. In some cases the restriction of profit distribution is taken for granted but it is not explicitly declared. The fact that the question is not clearly tackled is another shortcoming in the literature. This issue is directly connected to the conceptualization and it is critical to define the nature of social enterprises.

This observation reinforces the relevance of the purpose of this research. The clarification of the assumptions on all these issues is a necessary step to develop not just strong policy recommendations but sound theory foundations.

This question should be considered in the context of the previous discussion about the positive connotations and the negative consequences of the introduction of earned income. The final impact cannot be assessed without a clear position on the distribution of profits and due consideration to the specific circumstances case by case.

Table 10: Policy recommendations

	Author	Policy analysis and recommendations	Profit distribution restriction
2001	Dees	No	Not defined
2002	Drayton	No	Not defined
2003	Boschee	No	Yes
2004	Dart	No	[Implicit]
2006	Mair & Marti	No	Not defined
2006	Austin	No	Yes
2006	Nicholls & Cho	No	Not defined
2006	Arthur	No	[Implicit]
2006	Weerawardena	No	Not defined
2009	Haugh	Yes	Yes
2010	Levander	No	Yes
2010	Urbano	Yes	Not defined
2010	Hazy & Goldstein	No	Not defined
2010	Trivedi	No	Not defined

8.7. Relevant facts for the conclusions

To conclude the chapter, this section highlights the most relevant findings of the research that point to meaningful correlations or knowledge gaps that deserve further research:

The main finding is that the conceptualization of the phenomenon has been based on a few contested terms. The descriptions contained in the definitions are too broad and there is no consensus about the key elements that characterize the phenomenon.

There is a direct connection between the problem of the definition and the terminology confusion. However, the analysis also points to the fact that the terminology is gradually stabilizing around three major generic terms and a broad concept of the phenomenon.

The alternative terms used in the literature are used in very specific contexts referring to specific modalities of social entrepreneurship. There are certain principles and beliefs that are common to all of them but they have not been explored in-depth so far.

As suggested in the analysis of the sampling methodologies there is a need for in-depth analysis of the empirical base that supports each conceptualization of the phenomenon. There are indications pointing to the correlation between certain terms and specific organisational forms that respond to different principles in different contexts.

This empirical analysis might be more productive for the clarification of the concept than the debate on the different schools of thought or the narratives that is a recurrent theme in the literature analysed (Nicholls, 2010).

The second major aspect of the findings comes from the analysis of epistemological assumptions that was the most critical section for the objectives of this research.

The fact that the epistemological assumptions are not explicit in most cases is a major shortcoming for the research, particularly for a field that is under construction. The research has also identified some confusion around the methodological concepts.

A positive aspect of the analysis of epistemology is that the gradual convergence of assumptions implicit in the different theoretical frameworks adopted might lead to a reconsideration of many of the problems identified in this research.

The analysis of methodology also revealed the poor quality of sampling methods. The wealth of examples and databases nowadays is much richer and the possibilities for future empirical analysis are varied.

Finally, the two aspects where the research yields were poorer were the information about ontological assumptions and the analysis of policy recommendations.

The direct analysis of ontology was not as fruitful as expected. From the indications obtained from the analysis of terminology, definitions and epistemology, two trends were identified: the decline of individualism and the pervasiveness of materialism deeply rooted in modern society. The latter is an issue to be carefully considered in the assessment of the instruments for the evaluation of performance and impact of social enterprises that are currently being developed.

The policy analysis and recommendations are generally absent. There are a few countries that have already developed specific regulations and frameworks for institutional support but there is no systematic analysis found in the literature. The lack of consensus about the concept might be a major impediment for policy development that should be taken into account when assessing the options to address this problem.

Any decision on policy depends on the beliefs about the nature of the phenomenon and social relations and the role of the state. The reintroduction of the political dimension into the definition of the social dimension of entrepreneurship points to a very interesting direction for further research.

9. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The main limitation of this research is the lack of precise use of terminology and the broad scope of definitions, representing a major challenge for the codification of contents.

The risk was somehow avoided by a clear statement of the assumptions and the criteria applied in the research process in an attempt to avoid any kind of unnoticed bias. This is the appropriate procedure to ensure the validity and reliability of qualitative analysis. The criteria are necessarily different from quantitative research.

The second major problem is the representativity of the sample. The size of the sample was designed to cover the maximum variation of theoretical frameworks but it might not have covered all relevant articles for the analysis of policy or assumptions.

The risk derived from this constraint was mitigated by the exploratory nature of the research aimed at the identification of key problems and trends. These issues would require further research over a broader sample or might be subject to empirical testing.

The outcome expected was not a comprehensive analysis of all epistemological and ontological assumptions but a first systematic map that could clearly identify not only correlations but also knowledge gaps and inconsistencies.

The outcome is a preliminary and sound approach to the problems that is useful for the future construction of a philosophy of the field. The analysis is also partly useful for the development of the sociology of the field.

Overall, the method was appropriate to identify correlations, major gaps and inconsistencies. It was not adequate to provide a comprehensive picture of the authors' assumptions because most of them are not explicit in the texts.

This outcome was expected. However, the exploration is extremely useful in itself for the development of appropriate research questions to be used in future in-depth interviews as it was anticipated in the chapter on methodology.

The findings confirm the relevance of the exploration of assumptions that was undertaken in this research.

10. CONCLUSIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings summarized above provided enough indications of the correlations that deserve further research. But the most relevant finding for the conclusions of this research lies precisely in the shortcomings identified. They point to serious institutional and cognitive barriers for the development of the concept.

10.1. Correlations and insights

Although no strong correlations were identified, there are two counter-intuitive insights that emerged clearly and that are particularly relevant:

The first one was the identification of the role of the terminology in the conceptual confusion. The definitions are based on the use of several contested terms. Following Lohmann's ideas (1992), any future conceptual research should include a detailed justification for the choice of terms in the definition.

For the analysis of the terminology and the definitions I propose to break down the concepts into key components.

The terms entrepreneurship or social can only be fully understood if the authors clarify who decides, who executes the decision, and the process adopted for that decision. This information should be completed with the analysis of the contributions and the distribution of profits. It is equally necessary to know who are the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the activities and what kind of benefits, not only financial, are received.

The examination of definitions should be based on a set of research questions that deconstruct the definition into, at least, the following elements: type of organisation (individual, collective or irrelevant), sector (nonprofit, business or across sectors), the population target (general or low income), the process or principles adopted (diversification of income, innovative combination of human and financial resources, participatory governance) and the purpose of the entity (remedial, catalytic or transformative).

From the analysis of terminology I have inferred that there are strong indications pointing to a variety of forms of social entrepreneurship. However the debate about the two major conceptualizations or schools of thought, emphasizing commercial activities or social transformation has been misleading and the research confirms that is not properly supported by empirical analysis.

A more comprehensive comparative analysis of several forms of social entrepreneurship and the related terminology could be more productive. Four major forms are identified in the literature: the nonprofit organisations diversifying income through commercial activities, business and corporations devoting part of their profits to social causes or using cause-related marketing to improve their image, work integration initiatives and other community development initiatives using innovative combinations of resources and management techniques. This classification is not exhaustive but it is just proposed for empirical testing.

The second major finding was the convergence of assumptions in the theoretical frameworks applied to the research on social entrepreneurship. The analysis included in this research has not compared the sample with the whole variety of theories developed in the context of organisation studies to assess if all the options have been explored.

The main conclusion of the analysis is that the literature seems to evolve gradually towards the worldview of critical realism. In this context, the debate about the construction of a distinct academic field is pointless. Methodological pluralism and transdisciplinarity are the most appropriate strategies for the exploration of social entrepreneurship.

10.2. Knowledge gaps and major shortcomings.

The identification of major gaps and shortcomings is even more relevant for the exploratory purpose of this research. There are three major issues:

The first major problem is the lack of a clear definition of the paradigm. The problem of the research on social entrepreneurship is not the lack of consensus but rather that the right questions have not been explored yet. The unclear position of the authors regarding a few critical ontological and epistemological assumptions has implications for the conceptualization of the phenomenon and the development of the research methodology.

The research questions were partly inspired by Nicholls' suggestions that the field of social entrepreneurship was at a pre-paradigmatic stage (2010). When comparing with the literature in other fields some ideas emerged. The assumptions have been explored in the research on entrepreneurship since the late 1980s. In the literature on social entrepreneurship there are no similar attempts to define the implicit assumptions. This research reveals that this is a source of confusion and possible inconsistency.

The definition of the paradigm should start with the clarification of the nature of the object of research that would determine whether theory and definition are understood as positive or normative processes. The second step is the clarification of assumptions underlying the choice of terminology.

The second major shortcoming identified concerns the clarification of the research methodology. There are two aspects of this problem. The first one is the confusion around certain concepts of the methodology and more particularly the methods and techniques for data analysis. The second aspect is the adoption of more rigorous sampling methods to improve the validity and reliability of future empirical research.

Given the complexity of the phenomenon the research should be inspired by the principles of methodological pluralism. The critical realist paradigm suggests that alternative methodological and theoretical approaches are compatible.

In future the specialization of analysis should be based not on disciplines or sectors of activity (social, economic, commercial, public...) but on the distinct levels of analysis where human relationships are articulated.

The notion of level of analysis is completely absent in the literature revised. The levels start at a micro level with the individual subjective and psychological aspects of the

problem, progressing towards the understanding of interpersonal and inter-subjective aspects, to arrive at the macro perspective that incorporates the context, resources, constraints and opportunities that contain the economic aspect of any problem.

Finally the third major gap identified is the analysis of ontological assumptions, beliefs and principles that inform the emergence of social entrepreneurship.

Given the scope and the method of this research, the exploration of values has been limited to three major issues: the beliefs around individualism, materialism and the relations between theory and practice (epistemology). The understanding of the phenomenon might require a more systematic investigation of these underlying beliefs. Further research on values should explore the different beliefs and ideas associated with these broad themes.

10.3. Avenues for further research

The main outcome of this research is a much clearer understanding of the role of theory and the type of research questions and methodology to be applied for future research.

The representativity of the sample was not the most critical concern for this research but rather the validity of the questions. The conclusion of this research is that the questions are appropriate and should be extended to a broader sample.

There are three issues that require particular attention.

First of all, the analysis of the correlation between empirical samples and terminology and conceptualization.

The research on social entrepreneurship requires a quantitative and macro perspective to assess the significance of the different forms of social entrepreneurship. This research requires precise data on the number of organisations, classification by sectors, objectives, sizes and types of funding, overall assessment of their income, expenditure and other dimensions of their social impact.

Nowadays, there are several databases available. The information about social entrepreneurs can be obtained from several institutions such as the Ashoka, Schwab and Skoll fellowship programmes, the national association of social entrepreneurs, the Universities and research centres and the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor.

Cukier, Trenholm, Carl and Gekas (2011) have already explored this direction. They analysed exhaustively the empirical base of the literature on social entrepreneurship to compile a master list of 567 unique articles citing “social entrepreneur” or “social entrepreneurship”. Searching for empirical analysis of case studies, they identified 366 case studies of social entrepreneurship in the sample, 35 of them were mentioned in more than one article. The 10 cases most often cited were: Grameen Bank (14 mentions); Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (6); Ashoka (6); Ben and Jerry’s (6); Partnership for a Drug-Free America (4); Delancey Street Foundation (4); and Pioneer Human Services (4) (Cukier *et al*, 2011:108) .

The second avenue for research is the exploration of values and principles indicated above. This investigation would be useful to understand the influence of reality on values and belief and how they affect back the reality. The analysis of values and principles is not only necessary for the conceptual clarification but also for policy development.

This research would require an historical and philosophical perspective on the links between present theories and ideas and the previous forms of the same themes in the disciplines of economics, sociology and ethics.

The concept of individualism varies depending on the understanding of the notion of rationality, self-interest, altruism and collaboration. The materialist beliefs are also affected by the understanding of scarcity and wellbeing.

The analysis would benefit from the comparison with other sets of values and principles in other disciplines. The best example can be found in Lohmann’s definition of the principles that inspire nonprofit institutions such as the principles of satisfaction, proportion, conservation and prudence consensus (Lohmann, 1992).

These principles should be compared to the principles of efficiency and maximization of profits dominant in management studies.

It should be noted that the gradual transformation of the values in the research on social entrepreneurship could also affect other disciplines.

Fine described the process by which economic imperialism, that is the extension of the analytical method of economics to other aspects of social life, led to the relaxation of certain rigid assumptions dominant in neoclassical economics and the incorporation of new insights from sociology. The process enabled the emergence of new approaches such as behavioural and information economics or economic sociology that discarded methodological individualism and the materialist view of society (Fine, 2000).

Finally, the third avenue for research that has been identified is the analysis of institutional constraints in the research process to understand the sociological dimension of the construction of the field. This research would require a good understanding of the experience of the authors, their background and their interests. Information about the institutions is also needed: their resources, their skills and capabilities, the declared objectives and the hidden interests of their members.

This research should introduce a clear distinction between academics, practitioners and investors to understand the intricacies of the competition for paradigm building suggested by Nicholls (2010), in particular, the techniques used, financial and social pressure, rational arguments, emotional narratives, etc.

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12. SAMPLE OF ARTICLES

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