

**The London School of Economics and Political  
Science**

***The Role and Significance of Social Entrepreneurship  
in UK Social Policy***

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**A thesis submitted to the Department of Social Policy and Administration  
of the London School of Economics for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy, London, May 2008**

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the role and significance of the idea and practice of ‘social entrepreneurship’ within UK social policy between 1980 and 2006. Social entrepreneurship came to policy prominence in 1997 with the election of New Labour. It promoted the role of individual social entrepreneurs as bringing about social innovation, and it held out the promise of contributing to social policy by revitalising poor communities, professionalising the voluntary sector, and reforming welfare.

This study problematises the concept of ‘social entrepreneurship’, challenges its claim-bearing nature, and presents a more critical and in-depth analysis than is found in the existing research and practitioner literatures. It does this by adopting a social constructionist perspective to analyse the development, representation and enactment of social entrepreneurship as discourse and practice, drawing on a wide range of data from interviews, policy and organisational documents, academic texts, websites, and the media.

The findings show that social entrepreneurship has neither given rise to the wide ranging innovations claimed nor resulted in coherent or systematic policy interventions. Rather, the idea of social entrepreneurship framed a convenient discourse within which to emphasise policy priorities centred on further incorporating a market orientation to addressing social needs, thereby extending the ‘enterprise culture’. In contrast, the practice of social entrepreneurship took place primarily at the community level, involving the labelling and support of several thousand ‘social entrepreneurs’ who carried out small-scale social initiatives.

The study identified four roles that social entrepreneurship plays in UK social policy, arising from the tensions between the market orientation of social entrepreneurship as an idea and its community oriented practice: celebrating the achievements of individuals; renegotiating welfare responsibilities through the ‘active welfare subject’; creating a channel through which business can engage with community; and enabling government policy to respond to the particularism of the local.

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## **Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ACD	Active Communities Directorate, Home Office
ACU	Active Communities Unit, Home Office
CAN	Community Action Network
CIC	Community Interest Company
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
Defra	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (renamed and restructured into Department for Children, Schools and Families and Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills)
DTI	Department for Trade and Industry (renamed Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform)
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
IPPR	Institute for Public Policy Research
ISERC	International Social Entrepreneurship Research Conference
JRCT	Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
NCVO	National Council of Voluntary Organisations
NEF	New Economics Foundation
OTS	Office of the Third Sector, Cabinet Office
PAT	Policy Action Team
SE	social entrepreneurship
Senscot	Social Entrepreneur Network Scotland
SEnU	Social Enterprise Unit, Dept. for Trade and Industry
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit, Cabinet Office
SITF	Social Investment Taskforce
SSE	School for Social Entrepreneurs
VCS	Voluntary and Community Sector
DTA	Development Trusts Association

## **Acknowledgements**

A PhD is the work of one person, but it is not work that takes place in isolation. I am grateful to all the people who provided me with invaluable support throughout the process.

First and foremost I am grateful to Tamás, my husband and partner, for his love, support, and patience from start to finish. Dr. Helmut Anheier, my first supervisor, accepted me as a PhD student at the Centre for Civil Society, and provided me with early guidance and helped me to hone my analytical skills. The award of a Dahrendorf scholarship made it possible for me pursue my studies full-time and I am grateful to both Lord Dahrendorf and to Atlantic Philanthropies for taking me on. I am indebted to Dr. David Lewis, who took over the role of supervisor, for his willingness to adopt me and my thesis. In particular his clarity and human touch contributed to the final product. Hakan Seckinelgin, Ray Dart, and Eva Kuti played a special role in reading drafts of the thesis chapters and providing me with important feedback together with moral support.

My thanks go to the many people at the Centre for Civil Society who over the years provided a stimulating and supportive community. In particular I would like to thank Sarabajaya Kumar, Karen Wright and May Seitenidi, who were always there for a chat, and always willing to listen and offer me their academic wisdom. I was privileged to get to know a special group of PhD students, staff, and research fellows during my time at the Centre and LSE, and my memories of that time are of warmth, friendship and consistently rigorous and thought provoking academic debate.

My family has provided me unquestioning practical help. My father has helped me financially and with a place to stay in London. My brother and his family have provided a home from home whenever I have needed it. Without their help I would not have been able to undertake this PhD.

This thesis is dedicated to Lea, who always managed to make me laugh and kept me sane during the final stretch; and to Olivér who came to life as I completed the writing.

## PREFACE

A growing band of social entrepreneurs, working at the grass roots of the welfare system in the space between the public and private sector, are developing innovative answers to many of Britain's most pressing social problems.

Social entrepreneurs are leading innovation in the most dynamic parts of the voluntary sector and on the edge of the public sector, often with the help of private sector partners. They frequently use business methods to find new solutions to problems such as homelessness, drug dependency and joblessness. They create innovative services by taking under-utilised resources – particularly buildings and people – to address social needs left unmet by the public sector or the market.

*Back cover of 'The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur' by Charles Leadbeater, published by Demos, 1997.*

In the mid to late 1990s, the idea that individual 'social entrepreneurs' were critical to the successful tackling of social problems started to be taken seriously in policy circles in the UK. Social entrepreneurs were presented as similar to business entrepreneurs – visionary individuals with the drive, passion and skills that are found in the private sector. Social entrepreneurs, however, were credited with creating social value and public benefits rather than private wealth, most often through nonprofit or voluntary action. They were promoted as central to the modernisation of welfare and the effective provision of social services, especially in tackling those social issues where the state and the market are said to have failed.

Social entrepreneurship as a new idea and way of thinking inspired political rhetoric and policy proposals, and was the subject of numerous think-tank publications. Immediately following the 1997 election, the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair, hailed social entrepreneurs as a new type of social activist and leader who would help solve pressing 'social problems'. From its early association with the 'third way', social entrepreneurship rapidly came to attract unequivocal cross-party political support. Since 1997 interest in social entrepreneurship has grown and developed, and the term has acquired a cachet that increasingly attracts resources, policy debate, and media attention (Taylor et al, 2000).



In more practical terms, social entrepreneurship has motivated the founding of several organisations that identify, support, train, and fund ‘social entrepreneurs’. Between 1997 and the end of 2006 hundreds, if not thousands, of social entrepreneurs have been identified in the UK: the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) trained more than 280 social entrepreneurs; Community Action Network (CAN) involved around 900 social entrepreneurs in its membership network; Senscot engaged with approximately 1,500 people who either are social entrepreneurs or work with social enterprises; and UnLtd, the foundation for social entrepreneurs, supported more than 2,000 budding social entrepreneurs. These social entrepreneurs have been supported and funded to help ‘solve’ a wide range of intractable social ‘problems’.

This thesis traces the emergence of social entrepreneurship in the UK and how it has been taken up as an idea and practice in UK social policy between 1980 and 2006. It explores the political and policy context within which social entrepreneurship developed, the changing ways in which the idea of social entrepreneurship was presented, and the range of practices and organisational enactments that were carried out in the name of social entrepreneurship. It poses the question: *What is the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy?* Three sub-questions were identified which address the distinctions between: the *context* within which social entrepreneurship emerged; the *idea* of social entrepreneurship and how it has been represented; and the *practice* of social entrepreneurship and how it has been enacted.

*What is the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy?*

- (i) *How and why has social entrepreneurship developed in the UK?*
- (ii) *How is social entrepreneurship represented?*
- (iii) *How is social entrepreneurship enacted?*

Both as an idea and a practice ‘social entrepreneurship’ brings together the market with social welfare. It is a phrase that self-consciously combines the values and methods of the business world with the voluntary sector, and it can appear counter intuitive and paradoxical – “Entrepreneurs are hero figures in the profit-seeking private sector. How can social welfare and entrepreneurship be brought together?”

(Leadbeater, 1997: 19). Yet this ‘social-ising’ of business terms is increasingly

common and familiar. Hybrid expressions which bring together a social term with a business term – such as ‘social capital’, ‘social investment’, ‘venture philanthropy’, ‘social business’, ‘social enterprise’, even ‘fair-trade’ – are proliferating. This trend is apparent not only in the UK, but also internationally in the fields of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international development, and in the growth of interest in corporate social responsibility and ethical investment. ‘Social entrepreneurship’ is one example of the prevalence of terms that combine social concerns and values with business practices and approaches.

The language of social entrepreneurship is striking – the claims made on its behalf, the descriptions of social entrepreneurs, the sheer enthusiasm with which it was greeted. Its application in policy and practice belies its use as an analytical or descriptive term, and it can be better considered as a rhetorical device, a ‘slogan’ (Dey, 2006; Swedberg, 2006; Sutherland, 2001).

One of the difficulties with the notion of social entrepreneurship is that it is not connected to a general theory of entrepreneurship, but is usually used as a slogan or inspiring phrase. (Swedberg 2006: 21)

It is primarily through language that the contested nature, ambiguous definitions, and claim-bearing nature of social entrepreneurship are apparent. Social entrepreneurship can seem as smoke and mirrors, and challenges us to think carefully about what is ‘real’, what is ‘spin’, and whose interests are being served and to what ends. But where Dees (2004) calls for a separation of the ‘rhetoric from the reality’, explicitly acknowledging the normative and often rhetorical nature of the literature, I would rather suggest that the rhetoric is itself part of the phenomenon under study. To consider social entrepreneurship without engaging with the rhetoric and the use of language is to miss something fundamental about its particular contemporary salience.

In his classic book ‘Keywords’ Raymond Williams (1976) comments on the importance of the way in which words are used, and that their meaning and significance may have little to do with formal definitions. He points especially to words which “involve ideas and values”, words which circumscribe how an issue is discussed and approached, and which reflect our understanding of how we experience the world (Williams, 1976: 17). Social entrepreneurship may not warrant the status of a ‘keyword’, but it can be seen as a fashionable term, a ‘buzzword’ that is deliberately

ambiguous at the same time as attracting policy attention, press coverage, money, and as inspiring people and organisations to take action. Such 'buzzwords' are said to frame issues and solutions, to influence how practitioners and policy-makers think, to imply possible futures, and to constrain what is done in practice and policy (Cornwall, 2007).

The way words come to be combined allows certain meanings to flourish, and others to become barely possible to think with.  
(Cornwall & Brock, 2005: iiiii)

This thesis takes up the challenge and potential of adopting a social constructionist perspective to analysing social entrepreneurship (Dey, 2006; Parkinson, 2005). Such an approach is especially conducive to researching social entrepreneurship in terms of language and discourse, focusing on how words construct reality and how this simultaneously provides opportunities and constrains ways of thinking and acting.

It becomes clear through this study that there was not a singular understanding of social entrepreneurship but rather it is an idea that has been presented in different ways by different parties for different ends. Similarly, the practices developed in the name of social entrepreneurship were a means of pursuing a range of interests and agendas. The research examines how the idea of social entrepreneurship and its fashionable status in policy circles opened up a space that enabled various actors to pursue a range of purposes, purposes that at times seemed quite different from the stated policy intentions. It considers how different actors have appropriated and moulded social entrepreneurship to suit their own ends, especially within the voluntary sector, community development, think-tanks, and politics. This research points to a more complex dynamic than a simple gap between policy rhetoric and the reality of policy interventions and organisational practices. It explores the implications and effects of policy and the ways in which policy discourses created opportunities that were then manipulated and used to support different vested interests and practice based agendas (Mosse, 2004).

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces ‘social entrepreneurship’ as the topic of this thesis and establishes why it is of interest. It then seeks to define and locate social entrepreneurship. It outlines the approach adopted, and sets out the contribution made to the broader literatures on social policy, entrepreneurship and the voluntary sector. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section reviews the literature to provide an overview of social entrepreneurship in terms of definitions, policy interest, and theoretical understanding. The second and third sections set out the research approach adopted and the structure and content of the thesis.

### 1.1 Introducing social entrepreneurship

The purpose of this section is to give a sense of what ‘social entrepreneurship’ is about, to define it, to set the context for it, and to outline briefly the way in which it emerged in the UK as something that organisations, individuals and policy makers were interested in bringing to life in terms of policy and organisational realities. It also reviews the academic and policy literature on social entrepreneurship, and seeks to position this study within existing debates and research on the topic.

#### *Defining social entrepreneurship*

Simple approaches to defining ‘social entrepreneurship’ bring together the meanings of ‘social’ with ‘entrepreneurship’ (Mulgan, 2006). In general this is interpreted as entailing coupling a ‘social’ mission with an ‘entrepreneurial’ process (Nicholls, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006). Two examples of such a definition are:

A social entrepreneur is someone who recognizes a social problem and uses entrepreneurial principles to organize, create, and manage a venture to make social change. (Wikipedia, 2007)

We define social entrepreneurship as innovative, social value creating activity that can occur within or across the nonprofit, business, and government sectors. (Austin et al, 2006: 1043)

This seeming simplicity avoids the difficulty of determining exactly what is meant by ‘social’ and ‘entrepreneurship’, both of which are complex and contested terms carrying with them a bundle of normative associations (Nicholls, 2006). One implication of this is that social entrepreneurship has suffered from a particularly bad case of terminological confusion. In 2002 Johnson commented:

Defining what social entrepreneurship is, and what its conceptual boundaries are, is not an easy task. This is in part because the concept is inherently complex, and in part because the literature in the area is so new that little consensus has emerged on the topic. (Johnson, 2002: 3)

By 2006, there seemed to be little progress towards achieving either academic or practitioner consensus about the definition (Martin & Osberg, 2007; Light, 2006; Mair, 2006; Nicholls, 2006).

However, despite some promising work thus far, a consensus over the boundaries of social entrepreneurship remains elusive. (Nicholls, 2006: 7)

Social entrepreneurship is attracting growing amounts of talent, money and attention. But along with its increasing popularity has come less certainty about what exactly a social entrepreneur is and does. (Martin & Osberg, 2007: 29)

Multiple definitions of social entrepreneurship abound (Light, 2006). The introductory chapter to an edited collection on social entrepreneurship identified ten definitions<sup>1</sup> used in the fifteen articles in the book (Mair et al, 2006). Hockerts (2006) identifies five different uses of 'social entrepreneurship': commercially oriented nonprofit organisations; efficient nonprofit management; cooperative and mutual ownership; social purpose business ventures; and networks for social entrepreneurs and venture philanthropy (p144-5). Mair and Naboia (2006) identify three meanings: nonprofit pursuit of alternative funding; socially responsible business; and the alleviation of social problems and catalysing of social transformation (p122). These different definitions indicate how such different activities as 'catalysing social transformation', 'cooperative' ownership, and businesses with a 'social purpose' are included under the broad umbrella term of 'social entrepreneurship'. Other authors draw attention to the resulting confusion and misunderstanding, and the danger that the term will "fall into disrepute" (Martin & Osberg, 2007: 30).

The first challenge is therefore to classify and categorise the various meanings that exist. Some are of a type and can be grouped and defined together, and doing this helps to avoid the plethora of definitions that have been put forward elsewhere and can serve more to complicate than clarify. The most helpful distinction found in the literature is the broad division drawn by Dees and Anderson (2006) between the

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<sup>1</sup> For a table listing the ten different definitions, see Mair et al (2006) pp4-6.

‘social innovation’ and the ‘social enterprise’ schools of thought. This distinction is adopted here as the two main forms that social entrepreneurship takes both as an idea and practice. The two schools of thought are described below, and summarised in Table 1.1.

*(i) The ‘social innovation’ school*

This usage emphasises the critical role of innovation and leadership carried out by individual social entrepreneurs in meeting new and existing social needs and creating new forms of social provision (eg. Leadbeater, 1997; Thake & Zadek, 1997; Dees, 1998b; Brickell, 2000; Thompson, 2002):

Social entrepreneurs are those people – the practical dreamers who have the talent the skill and the vision to solve the problems, to change the world for the better. (Skoll, 2006: v)

It places particular emphasis on the role of the ‘social entrepreneur’ as innovator, often equating ‘social entrepreneurship’ with such an individual.

The most commonly quoted definition is that put forward by the US academic J. Gregory Dees in 1998:

Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by:

- Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value),
- Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission,
- Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning,
- Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and
- Exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created. (Dees, 1998b: 4)

The language and bullet point form of this definition is typical of the managerialist literature that has dominated academic writing on social entrepreneurship. It draws on and mimics definitions of entrepreneurship found in the world of business, using concepts of ‘opportunities’, ‘innovation’, ‘resources’ and ‘outcomes’.

In the UK, think-tanks have made a major contribution to framing social entrepreneurship in terms of the ‘social innovation’ school of thought. This is a ‘grey’

literature with key publications dated 1995 and after. One of the most influential texts within this genre is 'The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur' by Charles Leadbeater, published in 1997 by Demos, which was at that time one of the most prominent think-tanks contributing to New Labour thinking.

Social entrepreneurs are driven, ambitious leaders, with great skills in communicating a mission and inspiring staff, users and partners. In all these cases they have been capable of creating impressive schemes with virtually no resources. (Leadbeater, 1997: 9)

The main characteristic of this body of work is the way in which it extols the value and 'heroic' contribution of individuals and draws on business concepts as providing the most effective basis for 'social' action. It is a promotional rather than an analytical literature, seeking to attract the attention of policy makers and funders, and it is this 'grey' literature that is largely responsible for and reflects the policy profile of social entrepreneurship in the UK.

There is a parallel academic literature that similarly defines social entrepreneurship in terms of the central role of 'heroic' and 'charismatic' social entrepreneurs (Light, 2006). Thompson et al (2000) identify three key characteristics of entrepreneurship: "a vision"; "leadership skills", and "a will". They go on to argue that:

True entrepreneurs create sea-change movements, either quickly or over time, and have a major impact. (Thompson et al, 2000: 336)

Waddock and Post (1991) refer to the "drive, energy and force" of social entrepreneurs as being critical to the kind of "catalytic change" that entrepreneurial action achieves (p399). In an early theoretical account of social entrepreneurship, Young (1983; 1987) similarly defined social entrepreneurship in terms of the actions and motivations of individuals. Mort et al (2003) develop a multi-dimensional model of social entrepreneurship that focuses on individual traits and abilities including: risk tolerance, pro-activeness, innovativeness, judgement capacity, virtuous behaviour, and opportunity recognition. While the academic literature frames social entrepreneurship theoretically, it nevertheless rests on a belief in the central contribution of exceptional and heroic individuals to the entrepreneurial process. Many of the academics who have researched and written on social entrepreneurship are as keen to justify and promote the concept as those coming from think-tanks.

***(ii) The 'social enterprise' school***

Within this school of thought, social entrepreneurship is conceptualised as the simultaneous pursuit of financial and social goals, and is often referred to as 'social enterprise'. Here entrepreneurship is interpreted as involving the adoption of the core business objective of making a financial profit. A typical definition is:

...business ventures initiated by nonprofit organizations for the purpose of generating net income to support their mission and programs, and often incorporating job training and employment, as well as other potential benefits, for their constituents (Massarsky, 2006: 72)

But this school of thought goes beyond nonprofits carrying out business activities and it can include community enterprise, community business, social purpose ventures, worker and consumer co-operatives and mutuals, socially responsible or socially-oriented business, and, if stretched, some examples of corporate social responsibility (Light, 2006). For some shared ownership, participative management and democratic values are central to the 'social' of social enterprise (Leadbeater & Christie, 1999; Pearce, 1999); for others it is the outcomes and impact that determine whether an enterprise is 'social' (Boschee, 1995, 2001). This sparked some debate as to what extent 'social' refers to the ends or means, though in general in the UK there has been greater emphasis on outcomes and impact.

Its fundamental principle – that public goods and services can be provided through entrepreneurial activities which achieve a 'double-bottom' line return, both social and economic – has given the notion of 'social enterprise' wide appeal. (Pharoah et al, 2004)

Within the 'social enterprise' school of thought, the focus is on the organisation and its activities rather than the individual – on the legal form, the governance structure, the organisational culture and processes, the skills and experience of those employed, as well as on the leadership and management of the enterprise. The benefits of social enterprises are presented as multiple: they can provide employment, often to people who are otherwise marginalised or excluded from the mainstream economy; they can provide social services, often contracting to local or central government; and they can contribute to economic development and create wealth in deprived areas.

Those organisations who are independent of the state and provide services, goods, and trade for a social purpose and are non-profit distributing. (PAT 3, 1999: 105).



The literature on social enterprise shows a similar pattern of development to that of the ‘social innovation’ school. There is a substantial ‘grey’ literature in the UK setting out and promoting the idea in policy and organisational terms, authored primarily by think-tanks (eg Westall, 2001). There is also a growing academic literature, rooted particularly in experiences and developments in the US and in Europe<sup>2</sup> (Kerlin, 2006).

Table 1.1 below sets out the distinctions between the two ‘schools’ of thought: the ‘social innovation’ school and the ‘social enterprise’ school. The table highlights the differential focus on individuals and organisations. It also shows the differences in perceived impact and benefits of the two forms of social entrepreneurship, where the ‘social innovation’ school creates innovation and social change, the ‘social enterprise’ school contributes to organisational sustainability as well as impacts such as employment, social services, and economic development. It also illustrates some of the similarities in the ways in which the ideas have been promoted by think-tanks and academics as significant new forms of social action, both of which combine practices from the private sector with the ‘social’ to create ‘hybrid’ approaches and organisations.

Table 1.1: Contrasting conceptualisations of social entrepreneurship

	<b>Social Innovation school</b>	<b>Social Enterprise school</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Visionary and entrepreneurial individual who pursues social goals	Dual purpose of social and economic goals
<b>Focus</b>	Individual characteristics Organisational and management processes (eg scaling up, measuring	Organisational form and processes.

<sup>2</sup> The US literature typically discusses social enterprise in terms of the financial sustainability of nonprofit organisations; the European literature is more focused on alternative legal forms such as co-ops and mutuals and discusses social enterprise in terms of its role in work integration and providing social services.

	outcomes)	
<b>Benefits</b>	Social change and transformation	Organisational sustainability, local employment, social service provision
<b>Purpose</b>	To promote the role of 'path-breaking' leaders who implement social innovation often from within the voluntary sector.	To promote and understand how organisations can simultaneously pursue social and financial goals.
<b>Complementary concepts</b>	Leadership, social capital, venture philanthropy, social investment, social value and benefit, sector blurring, hybridity	Social capital, mutualism community economic development, sector blurring, sustainability and resource dependency, hybridity
<b>Literatures</b>	'Grey' promotional literature from think-tanks, journalists, support organisations.  Academic literature, mainly from management and business.	'Grey' promotional and 'how to' literature from think-tanks and practitioners  Academic literature from voluntary sector studies, business management and some political science and social policy (split between a US approach, focusing on the nonprofit sector, and a European one, focusing on the social economy)
<b>Research</b>	Dominated by case studies	Some case studies, mapping exercises at local, regional and national levels
<b>Main characteristics</b>	Normative, descriptive	Normative, descriptive, some analytical

In many ways the distinction between these two schools of thought – individuals engaged in social innovation and change, compared with the simultaneous pursuit of social and economic goals by organisations – seems clear and straightforward. On the

other hand, the way in which these are confused and used interchangeably in the literature and in practice is commonplace. Many researchers and practitioners seem unconcerned about making a clear conceptual distinction, and I would suggest, this has hampered research and the development of theoretical understanding, as well as hindering the implementation of appropriate policy interventions. The position adopted in this research is that the two forms of social entrepreneurship are different and that care needs to be taken when reading the literature to determine in which ‘school of thought’ it is rooted.

I began this thesis with the assumption that there would be a clear focus on social entrepreneurs as bringing about innovation and change, on the ‘social innovation’ school of thought. After only a few months of background work, it became apparent that in researching social entrepreneurship I would also need to find a way of accounting for the overlap and confusion between the contrasting conceptualisations offered above. From an initial intention to clarify the definitions, I became more interested in why there was such confusion in the first place and what this confusion says about the role and significance of social entrepreneurship. This then went on to become one of the main themes of this thesis.

The confusing terminology warrants more critical questioning than has so far taken place in the literature. Even though this study is about the ‘social innovation’ school of thought, ‘social enterprise’ appears throughout. The literature on social enterprise is drawn on where it is relevant to my argument and can contribute to understanding, notwithstanding the ambiguous definitions found in the literature.

### ***Social entrepreneurship in the UK policy context***

The UK is distinctive in the way in which ‘social entrepreneurship’ has been taken up by government as relevant to social policy (Johnson, 2003). In the international context, the ‘social innovation’ form of social entrepreneurship has been promoted as a new global movement of ‘change-makers’, people leading innovative social change within particular national contexts, but normally with international implications and effects (Nicholls, 2006; Skoll, 2006; Fowler, 2000; Drayton, 2000). Such ‘social entrepreneurs’ are presented as outstanding leaders – ‘Uncommon Heroes’ – “society’s change agent: pioneer of innovations that benefit humanity” (Skoll Foundation,

internet). Since the 1980s a number of international networks of and awards for social entrepreneurs have been established from headquarters in the US, Switzerland, and in some other countries<sup>3</sup>. In general these have tended to identify social entrepreneurs in developing countries, though since the early 2000s there has been growing interest in working with social entrepreneurs in the developed world in order to support the development of global networks and to frame social entrepreneurship as a global movement (Grenier, 2006).

In the UK, however, social entrepreneurship has been promoted as an idea with particular domestic relevance. The emergence of ‘social entrepreneurship’ within UK policy was closely associated with the election of New Labour into government in 1997. In his first speech as new Prime Minister, on the pressing topic of welfare reform, Tony Blair, commented:

We will be backing thousands of social entrepreneurs – those people who bring to social problems the same enterprise and imagination that business entrepreneurs bring to wealth creation. (Blair, 1997)

An energy for change and optimism for the future accompanied New Labour’s landslide electoral victory in 1997. Contrary to what former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had said, people again started to believe that there was such a thing as society: there was a sense that the “me” generation was becoming the “we” generation, rejecting the rampant individualism of the ‘80s (Mulgan, 1997: 19). Labour promised to bring together the competing priorities of economic prosperity and social cohesion, under the banner of a new pragmatism that they described as the ‘third way’. It sought to retain the progress achieved under consecutive Conservative governments, but to place social justice as central to policy in the tradition of social democratic politics (Blair, 1998; Blair & Schroeder, 1999; Giddens, 1998, 2000).

Social enterprise and social entrepreneurship were consistently on the lips of those in New Labour and those influencing it (Leadbeater, 1997; Mulgan, 1997; Field, 1994).

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<sup>3</sup> Examples of these international networks include: Ashoka which is featured in this thesis and which supports ‘leading’ social entrepreneurs throughout the world; the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs, which identifies ‘outstanding’ social entrepreneurs internationally, and provides them with networking opportunities, in particular by inviting them to the annual World Economic Forum; the Avina Foundation which operates in Latin America, and seeks to facilitate partnerships between social and business leaders; Echoing Green, which works mainly in the US, but also internationally, and identifies and supports ‘early stage’ social entrepreneurs. For further information see Grenier (2004; 2006).

They were promoted through the left of centre think-tanks which were keen to influence the prospective Labour government, for example Demos, the New Economics Foundation (NEF), and the Fabian Society.

Since 1997, and in the years running up to that election, there has hardly been a think-tank worth its salt – and certainly not a Labour-inclined think-tank – that has not been promoting the idea of social entrepreneurs and social enterprises: people and organisations that plug the gap between state-owned enterprises and organisations and the traditional private sector, for-profit model. (Timmins, 2001)

A range of benefits and claims were made on behalf of social entrepreneurship, such that it took effect at a number of different locations: within communities; within the voluntary sector; within social welfare provision; within the public sector more broadly; and in society at large.

Early representations put forward social entrepreneurship as a community-based phenomenon, a necessary factor in tackling poverty and deprivation at the neighbourhood level, as “new forms of community action” (Moore, 2002).

It is important to emphasise that if a community regeneration organisation is to be effective and successful it will be the centre of a swirl of activity. Social entrepreneurs are needed to manage what can be large, fast-moving, creative organisations. Social entrepreneurs are therefore, an essential component, not an optional add-on. (Thake, 1995: 48)

Social entrepreneurship was said to enhance social capital and build community (Leadbeater, 1997; Thake & Zadek, 1997). In an overview of the field, Moore (2002) identified the impetus for social entrepreneurship in the UK as having its origins in community and neighbourhood renewal, in particular urban regeneration, issues that had been policy priorities for many years.

... it is the impetus for local regeneration and renewal that has provided one of the major driving forces of the social entrepreneurship movement. (Moore, 2002: 3)

Community leaders and ‘social entrepreneurs’ were to become the catalysts for overcoming the problems of run-down neighbourhoods. (Newman, 2001: 145)

Other authors located social entrepreneurship within the voluntary sector, or what is called the nonprofit sector in many other countries<sup>4</sup>. The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is the most commonly used term in UK policy, and refers to independent organisations with social purposes, most often identified as registered charities and as informal local community-based groups.

As a voluntary sector phenomenon, social entrepreneurship has been presented as indicative of fundamental changes within the sector, and as part of a historical process of growth and expansion that the sector has experienced over the past twenty years (Defourny, 2001). Defourny argued that there is a “new entrepreneurial spirit” reflecting an “underlying movement” which is impacting and reshaping the nonprofit sector (Defourny, 2003: 1). Social entrepreneurship was identified as essential to reform a sector that “is slow moving, amateurish, under-resourced and relatively closed to new ideas” (Leadbeater, 1997: 50). In these accounts, social entrepreneurship appeared as a kind of modernising force within the UK voluntary and community sector, providing an impetus for change, new forms of voluntary action, and a professional edge that would take the sector forward to further expand its role as a mainstream provider of social services.

Yet others envisaged social entrepreneurship as a timely response to social welfare concerns of the day and as an answer to the “crisis of our welfare systems” (Defourny, 2003; see also Dees, 1998b; Leadbeater, 1997; Thake & Zadek, 1997). Social entrepreneurship was claimed to “help empower disadvantaged people and encourage them to take greater responsibility for, and control over, their lives” (Thompson et al, 2000: 329); to counter dependency on welfare systems and charity (Mort et al, 2003; Leadbeater, 1997). More than that, for some, social entrepreneurship was a panacea that could cure *all* social ills (Nicholls, 2006; Leadbeater, 1997).

Social innovation holds the key to our social ills. Social entrepreneurs are the people most able to deliver that innovation. (Leadbeater, 1997: 19)

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<sup>4</sup> A number of different terms are used in different contexts, including third sector, voluntary sector, nonprofit sector, charity sector, civil society sector, social sector. Nonprofit sector is the preferred term in the US, and is the term used in much of the academic literature. Voluntary sector or voluntary and community sector are the most commonly used terms in the UK. The differences in terminology can be confusing but tend to reflect national customs more than fundamental definitional distinctions. The terms ‘voluntary sector’, ‘voluntary and community sector’ and ‘nonprofit sector’ are used in this thesis are used interchangeably and are not intended to signal a difference.

Moore (2002) went further, to argue that social entrepreneurship was an expression of 'moral individualism' and a modern basis for a cohesive society, where a return to traditional notions of solidarity would not be successful given the increasing diversity of people and their values. Further to that, she suggested that social entrepreneurship was not simply a response to welfare decline but was motivated by rather more profound human concerns. She insisted that globalisation and the rapidly changing world had given rise to new philosophical debates, new notions of a more socially and environmentally responsible economics, and basic questions such as "What kind of society would we like to live in?"

Social entrepreneurs and the social enterprises they create are one kind of response to a renewed search for the public good. (Moore, 2002)

She argued that social entrepreneurship was "producing a new form of citizenship, a new relationship between civil society and the state" (Moore, 2002). Along similar lines Mulgan (2006) described social entrepreneurship as:

...part of the much broader story of democratization: of how people have begun to take control over their own lives, over the economy, and over society. (Mulgan, 2006: 94)

Consistent with this attribution of societal level significance, Favreau (2000) saw the social economy as highlighting "the fact that societies are moving towards a new definition of the relationships among populations, the intermediate structures of civil society, the market and the State" and as leading to "greater democracy" (p236).

Social entrepreneurship, it was claimed, represented a new movement of people, people with a creative edge, dissatisfied with existing institutions and wanting more than just to make money or have a successful career in the private sector (Dees, 1998; Moore, 2002; Defourny, 2003; Drayton, 2006). These were people intent on bringing about social change, and as existing terms did not adequately capture their mix of determination and passion, they required a new label and were described as 'social entrepreneurs'.

In summary, social entrepreneurship was identified as making a critical contribution to community renewal, voluntary sector professionalisation, welfare reform, and ultimately the changing nature of citizenship and democracy in modern society. In policy terms, social entrepreneurship was credited as having the potential as a force for

good at *all* levels of society, and in all fields of action. With such claims and promises associated with social entrepreneurship, who could doubt that supporting social entrepreneurs was not only a good thing but also an urgent policy priority?

Unsurprisingly, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise appeared early on in the thinking of the new Labour government, taking their place in task force reports, in specific policy proposals, and in the allocation of funding. Social entrepreneurship was consistent with the communitarian edge that was characterising much policy rhetoric at that time (Hale, 2004; Taylor, 2003). It reflected the call for individual moral responsibility that signalled a break from the self-interest and selfishness of the political right. And it could be linked with the new friendship between business and Labour, and the reframing of business as a socially positive actor. Social entrepreneurship mirrored the ‘third way’ discourse of creating a middle ground between the politics of right and left, between society and the individual, between the state and business.

Yet, amidst all the enthusiasm for social entrepreneurship and all the hopes and claims associated with it, it has remained unclear what the discourse of social entrepreneurship actually means: to what extent is it merely a rhetorical device, a call for change and an inspirational assertion of what is possible? and how does government support provided in the name of social entrepreneurship actually impact on communities, the voluntary sector and the specific practices of welfare provision?

### ***Theory and research on social entrepreneurship***

In a 2002 review of the literature on social entrepreneurship, Johnson commented on “the atheoretical nature of the existing research” (Johnson, 2002). Four years later, it seemed that there was little progress on developing more theoretically grounded work. Greg Dees (2004), one of the leading academic authors on social entrepreneurship, pointed to the lack of rigorous and theoretically informed research, and consequently to the lack of knowledge and understanding of social entrepreneurship and limited progress in the field. He made a call to ‘sort out the rhetoric from the reality’, and commented on the tendency in the literature to over promote the concept and to assert rather than demonstrate its importance and its characteristics (Dees, 2004; Anderson & Dees, 2006). The confusion and overlap between social entrepreneurship and social



enterprise is as apparent in the academic literature as it is in practice and policy and the 'grey' literature. Taking this as a starting point, expectations of what the social entrepreneurship literature can offer are necessarily limited.

One of the most striking features of social entrepreneurship, and which has been apparent in the academic literature, is the central position given to the entrepreneurial individual<sup>5</sup>. These approaches have tended to list personal characteristics and aptitudes, but are rarely based on in-depth psychological studies.

The research literature describes social entrepreneurs as possessing a set of characteristics that are exceptional. (Johnson, 2003: 12)

Thake (1999) commented that the literature on social entrepreneurship contains "a breathtaking array of attributes which the entrepreneur is expected to possess" which are quite unrealistic for any single individual. He listed 77 personal characteristics and behaviours, including: creative, restless, risk taking, practical, accountable, dynamic, inspiring, persuasive, humble, flexible, courageous, collaborative, value-driven; and skills in financial management, marketing, IT, fundraising, communication, storytelling, negotiation, mediation. A good sense of humour and the ability to walk on water are not (yet) included.

This attention on the individual has been challenged, and questions have been raised as to how instructive or realistic such a focus is (Spear, 2000; Pearce, 2001; Moore, 2002).

There remains a critical point of conflict between views that a reliance upon heroic figures is insufficient to secure adequate provision of public services (Clarke & Newman, 1997) and the view that maverick entrepreneurial figures are capable of transforming out-dated attitudes and poor performance (Boyet, 1996). (Llewellyn et al, 2000: 11)

The future of social entrepreneurship is much less likely to be about individuals and much more about the viability of social enterprise. (Moore, 2002: 3)

Llewellyn et al (2000) suggest that social entrepreneurship is as much an organisational concept as it is personalised one, and that it includes forms of

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<sup>5</sup> The focus on the role and contribution of individuals is generally termed 'methodological individualism'. In fact, the term was first used by Schumpeter, one of the most influential theorists on entrepreneurship. In a review of Schumpeter's work and contribution, Swedberg (1991) comments that even though Schumpeter 'coined' the term, Menger 'invented' it.

innovative and risk-taking management (see also Thake, 1999). Rather than focusing on 'heroic' individuals, they draw attention to social entrepreneurship as a set of alternative activities, processes and outcomes, often, though not necessarily, taking place within an organisational setting and drawing on certain entrepreneurial competencies, skills and orientations of individual leaders and managers. Social entrepreneurship is then not simply a 'maverick entrepreneurial figure' or heroic leader, but is implicated in and generated by organisational practices and cultures.

The move away from a primary focus on individual social entrepreneurs to organisational issues has been accompanied by a growing managerial orientation in the academic literature. There is an increasing focus on organisational processes, performance measurement, access to finance, legal form, and growth strategies (Mair et al 2006; Mosher-Williams, 2006; Nicholls, 2006). More often than not the individual social entrepreneur still occupies a central defining position but he or she is contextualised organisationally, and generally within a nonprofit or voluntary organisation (Drayton, 2006). This literature comes mainly out of business schools and MBA programmes, and constructs social entrepreneurship principally in terms of management practices within nonprofit organisations (Badelt, 1997; Young, 2006). Theoretical developments have undoubtedly been influenced by the growth in research centres and MBA electives on social entrepreneurship within US business schools<sup>6</sup>.

The time is ripe for making significant progress in social entrepreneurship research that will build a solid foundation for practice, education, policy and further research. Attention to the field is increasing. Business schools are responding. (Anderson & Dees, 2006: 165)

In the introduction to an influential book on social entrepreneurship, Nicholls (2006: 7) positions the academic study of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise "at the intersection of the established fields of non-for-profit management and commercial entrepreneurship", constructing social entrepreneurship as a management issue.

... most commentators concentrate on the 'entrepreneurial' in social entrepreneurship and what constitutes good managerial practices of a certain kind. (Young, 2006: 59)

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<sup>6</sup> Nicholls (2006) identified nine university centres for social entrepreneurship internationally, all of which were in business schools. Two were in the UK, one in Canada and six in the US. This is one illustration of the dominance of the managerialist orientation that is increasingly characterising theoretical approaches to social entrepreneurship, and also of the way in which anglo-saxon approaches are defining and influencing the topic.

Furthermore, management and business studies are becoming the consensus discipline within which social entrepreneurship is being studied and understood, and certainly the approach advocated for by the most influential authors in the field (Anderson & Dees, 2006; Nicholls, 2006; Austin, 2006). Anderson and Dees (2006) argue the importance of “emphasising management rather than social sciences and public policy” (p157), on the basis that nonprofit research has been unproductive and unfairly biased against business, and that public policy conclusions are “only indirectly useful to social entrepreneurs” (p158).

Along similar lines, in proposing a research agenda for social entrepreneurship, Austin argues for “building on the existing research, which in turn, has generally built on business entrepreneurship research” (Martí, 2006: 18). Even though Austin calls for interdisciplinary approaches, the details of his research agenda are almost entirely focused on management concerns such as “optimal organizational form”, “management and incentive systems”, the “stages in the entrepreneurial process”, the influence of “contextual elements”, the role of “different revenue sources”, and how to demonstrate the “value proposition to stakeholders” (Austin, 2006: 24-31). The “actors” in social entrepreneurship are identified in terms of the “key attributes of social entrepreneurs”, as if there are no other participants in social welfare (Austin, 2006: 26). The proposed research agenda completely ignores any notion that social change might involve some form of political action or moral imperative. In addition any mention, let alone debate, about the ‘needs’, the ‘social causes’, and the people being helped by social entrepreneurs is absent.

This thesis, however, is not concerned with managerial issues. The management literature therefore has little to offer theoretically. It is, however, significant as framing current academic understanding of social entrepreneurship and as shaping discourses on social entrepreneurship.

There are a few other disciplinary perspectives present in the literature which offer some alternative insight into social entrepreneurship and social enterprise: Cho (2006) embarks on an analysis rooted in political science; Dey (2006) uses rhetorical and discursive analysis; Parkinson (2005) employs critical discourse analysis; Dart (2004) approaches from sociology; Edwards (2002) applies postmodern social welfare theory;

and Amin, Cameron and Hudson (2002) come from the discipline of geography. While this work is generally more concerned with ‘social enterprise’ than ‘social innovation’, the overlap and confusion between what are understood in this thesis as two distinct concepts mean that these accounts can nevertheless make a useful contribution here.

Such alternative disciplinary approaches provide more critical accounts of the subject. The academic literature on social entrepreneurship is the focus for Dey’s (2006) vigorous critique. He offers a rhetorical analysis that identifies an “approving choir of academics” who concentrate on presenting a “self-evidently good image” of social entrepreneurship (p121). More specifically he identifies a number of characteristics of academic texts that serve to ‘seduce’ the reader and limit alternative interpretations, including assumptions of business practices as best, that the present is no longer tenable, that economic sustainability is critical, and that success depends on those charismatic and rare individuals known as social entrepreneurs. Dey’s (2006) analysis seeks to challenge “the ceaseless perpetuation of management and economic discourses” (136).

... social entrepreneurship is portrayed as a foremost rational and technical activity which can be measured and therefore predicted... creating the impression that social entrepreneurship operates smoothly, completely devoid of political struggle (Dey, 2006: 130)

Cho (2006) focuses more explicitly on the political, arguing that “existing definitions of social entrepreneurship are both tautological and monological” (p34). The effect is to cut off debate, to limit alternatives, to ignore the inherently contestable nature of the ‘social’, to sideline systemic and structural inequalities and injustices, and ultimately to risk undermining democracy. In their conclusions, both Cho (2006) and Dey (2006) are optimistic that with some adjustment and creativity social entrepreneurship can “fulfill its potential as a driving force for positive social change” (Cho, 2006: 54). And they call on academics to introduce more nuanced, critical, and inter-disciplinary approaches to the study of social entrepreneurship.

In a policy oriented analysis, Edwards (2002) suggests that social enterprise is an active contributor to the on-going remoulding of welfare, characterised by the fragmentation of the welfare state, the move away from ‘universalist’ social provision, the decline of traditional forms of authority, and the abandonment of a relationship between social progress and state welfare. Along similar lines, McDonald and

Marston (2001: 10) focus on the policy discourses in the community sector to identify “an emerging matrix of ideas” centred on concepts such as ‘social capital’, ‘social entrepreneurship’, ‘civic engagement’, ‘community capacity building’ and ‘communitarianism’. They argue that these ignore the systems and structures which may be creating or contributing to social inequality and deprivation. They conclude that the effects of this include: closing down debate about alternative ways of organising welfare; destabilising social justice as a core value and organising principle; limiting accountability to end users; and undermining the role of the state in welfare.

In a lengthy empirical analysis also focused on the community level, and one of the most compelling contributions to the literature on the social economy and social enterprise in the UK, Amin, Cameron and Hudson (2002) suggest that policy expectations of social enterprise are too high in terms of reforming welfare provision. They point to a danger that social enterprise ends up “plastering over the cracks of composite welfare deprivation in places of long-term decline” (p123) thereby losing its distinctive contribution as a space for experimentation and the development of alternatives. They conclude by challenging discourses that locate the social economy as filling the gaps left by the mainstream, at the same time as gaining legitimacy by mimicking the mainstream.

It [social enterprise] can never become a growth mechanism or an engine of job generation, or a substitute for the welfare state, but it can stand as a small symbol of another kind of economy, one based on social needs and enhancing social citizenship. (Amin et al, 2002: 125)

The issue of gaining legitimacy through mimicking the mainstream is analysed by Dart (2004). He employs new institutional theory to conclude that widespread “faith in market and business based approaches and solutions” has given rise to the emergence of social enterprise as a way for nonprofit organisations to gain legitimacy. He found little evidence that social enterprise offered more effective organisational models, and commented that “social-enterprise activities remain relatively immune from performance-based criticism and delegitimation” (p419). Equally, Dart suggests that this represents more of a pragmatic response to a contextual imperative rather than a fundamental re-conceptualisation of a world-view.

The drive for legitimacy found at the organisational level is experienced differently at the individual level, where research indicates a persistent ambivalence around social

entrepreneur as a personal identity. Shaw et al (2002) reported that only 45% of social entrepreneurs would actually describe themselves as social entrepreneurs. Similarly, using critical discourse analysis to research the identity of social entrepreneurs in the UK, Parkinson (2005) found that social entrepreneurs did not readily identify as 'entrepreneurs'.

The linguistic shift towards social entrepreneurship appears not to have been embraced by the *subjects* of the discourse. (Parkinson, 2005: 12)

She goes on to argue that there is a 'chasm' between the discourses of social entrepreneurship and the voices of those at the centre of the discourse, concluding that:

It does suggest that critical discourse analysis is a useful interpretive approach to studying meanings and associations in the social construction of entrepreneurship in society. Clearly, conventional entrepreneurship research paradigms cannot be transposed directly on to social or community action. The ideological tensions inherent in, and the meanings behind, the discourse of social entrepreneurship, perhaps provide an interesting field for the development of sophisticated approaches to researching entrepreneurship as a social phenomenon. (Parkinson, 2005: 14)

Parkinson's (2005) findings and conclusions are exploratory, nevertheless they suggest that characterisations of the individual 'hero' entrepreneur are socially constructed and therefore serve some purpose that is not simply about objectively identifying the personal attributes of the people in question. This in turn implies that the emergence of social entrepreneurship discourses may have implications for changing conceptualisations of social agency rather than indicate a new category of social actor.

These more critical perspectives on social entrepreneurship do not make up a systematic or coherent critique, and there is little or no cross-referencing between them, but taken together they offer analyses with a number of implications for the basic conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship, for policy and practice, as well as for future research and theory development. The literature points to a tension between the rhetoric of social entrepreneurship as a necessary and radical new force for change, and analyses which argue that social entrepreneurship mimics the mainstream, is a way of gaining legitimacy, and represents a continuation of the neo-liberal impulse to reduce the role of the state and propel welfare provision further to the market. Based on the literature four main critiques of social entrepreneurship can be identified:

- i) It focuses too much on the characteristics and role of exceptional individuals, thereby crediting individuals with more power and effect than they can realistically have. It individualises what are societal and structural problems, undermining the role and responsibilities of the state and fragmenting social welfare.
- ii) It mimics the mainstream by privileging business and crediting being business-like and market oriented with attributes and effects which extend inappropriately in the arenas of social and political action. This undermines the role of communities as sources of creative alternatives.
- iii) It sidelines political and social issues and processes, including the place of social justice, the effects of power inequalities, the implications of economic inequality, and the inherent nature of the social as contested.
- iv) The main implication of these critiques is that social entrepreneurship is ineffective in practice in bringing about the kind of radical change with which it has been associated or in introducing alternatives to outdated institutions. It ‘plasters over the cracks’ rather than tackling problems in fundamental ways or challenging existing systems.

This review of the academic literature on social entrepreneurship demonstrates that there is not as yet an extensive literature on social entrepreneurship, nor is there a much rigorous research. But what there is points to concerns with the central and defining characteristics of social entrepreneurship – the explicit individualism, the use of language and concepts more commonly found in business, the wide-ranging and enthusiastic claims for its potential and impact, and the lack of attention to the political processes in which it is embedded. Using this literature on social entrepreneurship as a starting point, it is now possible to set out the direction and broad theoretical perspective for this study. Adopting a social constructionist<sup>7</sup> perspective offers potential for understanding the significance of social entrepreneurship in the context of changing policy discourses. The literature suggests that a discursive or interpretive analytical approach will help to identify and question the assumptions underlying

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<sup>7</sup> Often social ‘constructionism’ is used interchangeably with ‘constructivism’, however Gergen (1985) points to the use of ‘constructivism’ within psychology to refer to Piaget’s theories and also to some forms of perceptual theory (Burr, 1995). I therefore use ‘constructionism’ throughout.

social entrepreneurship, locating it within and as constituted by existing policy discourses rather than as something ‘new’ and ‘necessary’. This builds on the small amount of critical work that has taken place into social entrepreneurship by locating social entrepreneurship more explicitly within the particular policy context of the UK, but is nevertheless at odds with the dominant trend in the literature towards management oriented analyses.

## **1.2 Research questions and approach**

The research question posed in this thesis is: *What is the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy?* My initial interest was in what I perceived to be an inherent paradox in the term ‘social entrepreneurship’ – between the collective values of the ‘social’ and the individualism of ‘entrepreneurship’. This was a useful and productive starting point, and brought the contested nature of social entrepreneurship to the fore. However, I also found that it did not have purchase on what became increasingly apparent as a central issue in relation to understanding social entrepreneurship: the changing nature of social welfare in the UK. It became important for me to understand the significance of social entrepreneurship within this wider social context, and in particular in terms of social policy.

In seeking to understand the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in the UK social policy, my interest was in why and how the label social entrepreneur and the term social entrepreneurship became fashionable and in what ways this new terminology and new thinking were useful. This led me to consider social entrepreneurship in two ways: as an *idea*; and as a *practice*. This research therefore explores what sort of conversations and debates ‘social entrepreneurship’ enables, who engages in the field and why, who benefits from social entrepreneurship and how, and what sorts of organised actions and practices social entrepreneurship has given rise to.

This focus on social entrepreneurship as a field of ideas, policy, discourse, and action distinguishes this study from almost all the existing research into social entrepreneurship. In general social entrepreneurship is conceptualised as constituted by social entrepreneurs, the organisations they create and the processes they carry out (eg Mair et al, 2006; Mosher-Williams, 2006). Organisations supporting social entrepreneurs, such as the School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) and Ashoka, are seen



by academics and researchers as sources of information and as providing credible examples of social entrepreneurs (eg Seelos et al, 2006). There has been almost no consideration given to the way in which the ideas and practices of social entrepreneurship are being created and shaped by these infrastructure and support organisations, as well as by researchers, journalists, policy-makers, and others interested in social entrepreneurship or interesting in making a living from social entrepreneurship.

In order to explore the field of social entrepreneurship and its role and significance in UK social policy, three sub-questions were identified. These questions were not clear at the outset of the research, and were developed during the research process and as an explicit and conscious part of that process. This consisted of an iterative and on-going engagement between the literature and ongoing research findings from the field, which clarified and highlighted certain issues and gaps in the literature. The final sub-questions were refined following the first stage of the fieldwork, which included some interviews and early analysis. These questions are:

*(i) How and why has social entrepreneurship developed in the UK?*

This question is the starting point for considering the role and significance of social entrepreneurship. Here I am interested in the origins, history and path that social entrepreneurship has taken, with a particular emphasis on the context within which this has taken place.

*(ii) How is social entrepreneurship represented?* This question seeks to explore the different meanings and images associated with the idea of social entrepreneurship.

*(iii) How is social entrepreneurship enacted?* The final question looks at the practices within the field of social entrepreneurship, what organisations supporting social entrepreneurs do and how they do it.

These questions were developed from the social constructionist approach adopted in this study, drawing particular attention to aspects of context, representation and enactment (Fairclough, 2001, 2003). Social constructionism is a theoretical stance which claims that social reality is created – ‘constructed’ – by the way that people think, talk and act (Hacking, 1999; Searle, 1995; Berger & Luckman, 1966). Social

constructionism provides a uniquely appropriate approach that enables this research to engage with the ambiguous and contested definitions that characterise social entrepreneurship, and to understand the resulting confusion as part of the field, and as part of its role and significance.

Within this broad social constructionist approach, three more specific theoretical lenses were adopted. These provided three different perspectives through which to view social entrepreneurship and its role and significance. They are presented here as offering complementary rather than alternative approaches.

- i) Entrepreneurship theory. Social entrepreneurship is often presented as a form of entrepreneurship, as part of a larger family made up of different types of entrepreneurship (Mort et al, 2003; Thompson et al, 2000; Dees, 1998b). As such, theories and research into entrepreneurship offer one way of understanding what social entrepreneurship might be, what roles it plays, what forms it takes, and how it is enacted.
- ii) Voluntary and community sector theory. In the UK social entrepreneurship is generally located as a voluntary and community sector phenomenon, where social entrepreneurs lead social, nonprofit, citizen, voluntary, community, third sector organisations<sup>8</sup> (Drayton, 2006; 2000; Defourny, 2003, 2001; Leadbeater, 1997). Voluntary sector theory offers a way of understanding social entrepreneurship as a source of social innovation and in terms of its expanding role as a social welfare provider.
- iii) Welfare and social policy discourse. Social entrepreneurship as the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought has been analysed in terms of the changing nature of welfare and social policy in the UK, and as contributing to the remoulding of social welfare and the renegotiation of relationships between state, individual and community (Edwards, 2002; Amin et al 2002; McDonald & Marston, 2001). Discourse analysis in social policy provides the third perspective adopted here,

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<sup>8</sup> All these terms, and more, are used to refer to organisations that are neither purely private nor public. The terms are used here as a way of indicating inclusivity and to reflect the different terminologies used by different authors.

focusing on the 'social innovation' version of social entrepreneurship and its contribution and role in welfare reform and changing policy discourses.

Research data was collected from a wide variety of sources, including interviews, media coverage, policy documents, speeches, 'grey' think-tank reports, promotional materials, books, organisational documents, websites, membership databases, newsletters, and academic writing. In this way, the intention was to engage with the breadth of social entrepreneurship as a field of discourse, policy interest, and organisational practice. It was also important that the data collected capture: the range of contextual influences; the variety of ideas, representations and images; and the diversity of organisational and individual practices and enactments.

### **1.3 The purpose, contribution and structure of this thesis**

This section sets out the aims and contribution of this thesis and its structure. This is intended to provide a map of the rest of the thesis and to introduce the direction that it takes.

#### **Purpose**

The primary purpose of this research is to answer the research question posed – *What is the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy?* Within that, four aims have guided the thesis. These are (i) describing the landscape of social entrepreneurship in the UK and documenting the dynamics of how it emerged and developed over time, (ii) contextualising social entrepreneurship within changing political and policy discourses, (iii) revealing the way in which social entrepreneurship has been constructed, and (iv) broadening the scope of analysis beyond management and business.

First, this study aims to describe social entrepreneurship in the UK. It reviews the ways in which it was promoted and presented, the alternative representations put forward, the nature of the policy responses, the forms it has taken, the organisational enactments, the resources it has attracted, and the individuals that have been drawn to it. The intention is to set out the landscape of social entrepreneurship, to provide a detailed map of the field – in particular focusing on the ideas that have shaped it, the

practices undertaken in its name, and the policy interventions. The intention is also to capture the dynamism of the field, how it developed, and how it was influenced by and adapted to the changing context.

Second is to contextualise social entrepreneurship and to approach it as a phenomenon with a very particular contemporary significance, rather than to treat it as a newly discovered (or newly labelled) category of social actor. The UK provides an especially interesting case for this, since even though social entrepreneurship can be seen as an international phenomenon, its entanglement with politics and government policy in the UK is striking. This thesis therefore seeks to analyse the hopes and claims attached to social entrepreneurship, locating them within the social policy and voluntary sector contexts in the UK. Only on this basis, I suggest, can the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy be discussed.

Third is to unpack and expose social entrepreneurship as an idea and practice in the light of the assumptions underpinning it. The aim is to reveal the different ways in which social entrepreneurship has been and can be constructed and the differing implications for policy and practice. More specifically the intention is to uncover and challenge many of the assumptions underpinning the claims that are associated with social entrepreneurship, and to look critically at how social entrepreneurship has been enacted and how it has been used to support different ends by different actors.

Fourth, one of my aims is to rescue social entrepreneurship from the current tendency to identify it solely as a management or business issue (Cho, 2006; Dees & Anderson, 2006; Light, 2006; Austin, 2006). The organisational rationalism that pervades the literature on social entrepreneurship offers a limited understanding of a phenomenon that is meant to be about challenging existing institutions and structures and providing creative alternatives. By drawing on a broader academic literature my hope is to provide an analysis that engages with the political nature of social entrepreneurship and moves beyond understanding it as a 'business-like' process.

## **Contribution**

The academic study of social entrepreneurship is in its infancy. It has been primarily dominated by approaches developed from business and management rather than from social policy. Yet one of the characteristics and challenges of researching and theorising social entrepreneurship is its location between traditional sectors, challenging existing academic literatures and theory which are often specific to the business, nonprofit or public sectors (Evers, 2001; Badelt, 1997). This thesis draws on and intends to contribute to four main academic literatures:

- social policy literature: by locating social entrepreneurship within shifting social welfare paradigms and policy discourses, and by assessing the contribution and significance of social entrepreneurship to these;
- voluntary and nonprofit sector literature: by documenting and theorising the development of social entrepreneurship as a new field of policy and practice within the voluntary and community sector in the UK;
- entrepreneurship literature: by adopting a social constructionist approach to the conceptualisation of a new form of entrepreneurship in the form of 'social entrepreneurship, and by contextualising and linking social entrepreneurship with social policy discourses;
- this research also contributes to the small but growing academic literature focused specifically on social entrepreneurship. This study aims to offer a more in-depth and critical perspective than is currently found, and to challenge the normative nature of much of this literature.

These four literatures are distinct, but when approaching from the standpoint of social entrepreneurship, the links and connections between them become apparent. These connections become clearer in Chapters 2 and 4.

## **Thesis outline**

This thesis is written to build up a progressively more detailed picture of social entrepreneurship chapter by chapter. The topic, context and research questions are introduced in this chapter, where the main definitions of social entrepreneurship are set

out, the nature of social entrepreneurship in the UK is briefly presented, and the broad theoretical approach adopted is outlined.

The *second chapter* focuses in on some of the key concepts and theories identified in the introduction that can contribute to providing insight into social entrepreneurship. It reviews academic literature on the nature of entrepreneurship, the role of the voluntary sector, and changing notions of social welfare.

The research design, methods and form of analysis are set out in *chapter three*.

The data and main findings of this study are set out in chapters four, five and six.

The *fourth chapter* sets the scene for the development of social entrepreneurship by outlining in more detail the policy context into which social entrepreneurship emerged. It refers back to the ‘enterprise culture’ promoted under Prime Minister Thatcher, and describes how New Labour has adopted and adapted these ideas, taking the time period from 1980 to 2006. It goes on to set out a timeline and three phase framework within which to consider the emergence and development of social entrepreneurship in the UK, highlighting key dates, documents, events and organisations. It therefore starts to answer the first sub-question on the development of social entrepreneurship in the UK.

*Chapter five* sets out how the idea and representation of social entrepreneurship has changed over time and how policy interest developed during that same period. It answers the second sub-questions on how social entrepreneurship is represented in the UK, and fills in some of the details about how social entrepreneurship as an idea has changed and developed over time.

*Chapter six* focuses on how social entrepreneurship is enacted. It reviews the organisations set up to support and promote social entrepreneurs, the structuring of a space for social entrepreneurs, the nature of the relationships that social entrepreneurship has forged, the way in which ‘social entrepreneur’ as a personal identity has been taken up, and how these relate to changing political and policy priorities. It answers the third sub-question about how social entrepreneurship is

enacted, and completes the description of the development of social entrepreneurship in the UK by focusing on the emerging and changing practices.

The *concluding chapter* brings the data and literature together to answer the overall research question on the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in the UK, drawing out the implications for policy and practice

## **CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Introduction**

This chapter sets out the three theoretical lenses that can be applied to social entrepreneurship and which were introduced in Chapter 1. The chapter starts by considering what is meant and understood by ‘entrepreneurship’, setting out different conceptualisations of entrepreneurship and also some of the main limitations of the literature. It goes on to review the different roles of the voluntary sector and identifies weaknesses and limits of the sector. Finally, it outlines analytical approaches to social policy discourse, and focuses on how these have been applied to provide insight into the ‘third way’ and the New Labour policy agenda.

### **2.1 Understanding entrepreneurship**

Social entrepreneurs are almost invariably likened to business entrepreneurs, and social entrepreneurship is generally assumed to be a form of entrepreneurship (eg Blair, 1997). Much of the literature on social entrepreneurship draws on theories of entrepreneurship (Osberg & Martin, 2007; Nicholls & Cho, 2006; Mort et al, 2003; Bolton & Thompson, 2000; Dees, 1998b; Badelt, 1997). But these works have not reviewed or reflected on the complex and ambiguous nature of entrepreneurship, neither have they engaged with the critiques and debates surrounding the conceptualisation and theoretical understanding of entrepreneurship. The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of entrepreneurship, highlighting the most influential theoretical approaches as well as reviewing the limitations and concerns with theory and research.

This section introduces entrepreneurship and discusses the different ways in which it is conceptualised. It starts by reviewing the ways in which entrepreneurship is defined and located, focusing in particular on the different functions it plays in the economy and society and highlighting some of the theoretical limitations. It moves on to consider the figure of the entrepreneurial individual, who has captured the popular imagination and forms the basis for much academic research. This emphasis is critiqued, and various cultural assumptions that support such a focus on individual



personality and behaviour are identified. It then reviews the way in which 'entrepreneurship' has been applied to a range of different contexts and settings. Considering the different ways in which entrepreneurship is understood and theorised is a starting point for considering the meaning of social entrepreneurship and the different ways in which it is, or could be, socially constructed.

### **Defining and locating entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship was described once as a 'heffalump' – 'a rather large and very important animal' that has been surprisingly elusive and difficult to capture in spite of its size and distinct nature (Kilby, 1971). It has been defined in a variety of ways, and has been identified as taking place at a number of different sites in society and in the economy. This section provides an overview of these approaches and briefly outlines some of the main criticisms of theory development in the study of entrepreneurship.

#### ***The function of entrepreneurship***

Entrepreneurship has been identified with a number of different roles in the economy and in society by different authors at different times, including bearing risk, innovation, leadership, alertness to opportunities, decision-making, and networking<sup>9</sup>.

The term entrepreneurship was first used in a theoretical sense in 1755 by Richard Cantillon<sup>10</sup>. He identified risk-bearing as the unique function of entrepreneurship (Hebert & Link, 1988; Kilby, 1971). Cantillon argued that while most people had a known wage or return for their work, entrepreneurs had an uncertain return as they bought goods for a known price and sold their products for an unknown price. Hence entrepreneurs bore risk for society, acting where there were uncertain outcomes, enabling new goods to become available and new markets to be established. If successful, entrepreneurs would make a profit as a reward for the risks taken. The point for Cantillon was that market economies are by their nature infused with uncertainty, and that entrepreneurs therefore play a critical function in bearing the risks of that uncertainty (Hebert & Link, 1988).

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<sup>9</sup> For a detailed account of the theoretical history of entrepreneurship, see Hebert and Link, 1988.

<sup>10</sup> Cantillon was born in Ireland and moved to France. His credibility and influence as an author and the originator of the term entrepreneurship in economic theory was enhanced by the fact that he was a very successful financier and entrepreneur in his own right.

While risk remains an important theme within the study of entrepreneurship, the function most commonly identified with entrepreneurship is innovation, and this comes from the work of Joseph Schumpeter. Schumpeter wrote on entrepreneurship between 1911 and 1950 and his work is considered the starting point for almost all future conceptions (Swedberg, 2000). Entrepreneurship took centre stage in Schumpeter's economic theories, as the driving force behind capitalism and as pivotal to economic progress – the entrepreneur “motivates the capitalist process” and is the “precursor to economic development” (Schumpeter, 1934).

For Schumpeter the fundamental function of entrepreneurship was innovation, meaning the creation and transformation of industries, bringing about radical and discontinuous change socially as well as economically. For innovation to take place, the resistance of the status quo needs to be overcome, resulting in ‘creative destruction’ as old industries fail and fade into the background, allowing new ones to emerge.

As well as emphasising entrepreneurship as innovation, Schumpeter also drew attention to the role of entrepreneurship in providing “economic leadership”. This has been most often theorised as transformational, visionary, or charismatic leadership, where the entrepreneur has a central vision of what he or she wants to create, which is then communicated in ways which motivate people and attract resources (Mintzberg, 1989; Drucker, 1985). These approaches have tended to emphasise the role of entrepreneurs as leaders of organisations.

Following Schumpeter's contribution, entrepreneurship became a focus of research and theory within economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and, with the greatest enthusiasm, in management and business studies. This has given rise to a number of different theories and approaches to entrepreneurship that have come to define the way in which entrepreneurship is defined, theorised and researched (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001a). For the economist Israel Kirzner, entrepreneurship is about adaptation to changes in the economy and market place by noticing and making decisions on potentially profitable opportunities that appear<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kirzner contrasts the role of his entrepreneur with that of Schumpeter – Kirzner's entrepreneur brings the economy back to equilibrium when a disequilibrium exists, whereas Schumpeter's entrepreneurs

continuously and naturally. In Kirzner's thinking, alertness to opportunity is the central and defining feature of entrepreneurial activity, rather than innovation or risk (Kirzner, 1982, 1989).

A strong strand of entrepreneurship research is into networking, which reflects the notion of entrepreneurs as unusually positioned to identify previously unconnected spheres and to create (and profit from) links between them (eg Burt, 2000; Aldrich & Zimmer, 1998; Grannovetter, 1995; Aldrich & Waldinger, 1990). There are behavioural conceptualisations of entrepreneurship and its role: Casson (2000) understands entrepreneurship as about judgement and decision-making; and Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) as about the pursuit of opportunities without the necessary resources to hand.

Initially these different perspectives and conceptualisations of entrepreneurship were competing. This is striking in Schumpeter's writing, where he denied that entrepreneurship was anything to do with taking risks, and attributed the risk-taking role to the financier or capitalist. Over the years, however, more complex and multi-dimensional conceptions of entrepreneurship have developed, such that innovation and risk-bearing are understood as occurring together. In the academic literature entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised as dynamic, complex, context dependent, interactive, and multi-dimensional (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001b; Thornton, 1999; Hofer & Bygrave, 1992).

Theory development has therefore shifted away from the tendency to try and identify a single function or essence to entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship is generally acknowledged as encompassing several different functions or roles in the economy, including:

- risk-bearing;
- innovation;
- leadership;
- decision-making;

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disrupts equilibrium by creating disequilibrium and innovation which then settles down to a new, transformed equilibrium. Schumpeter's entrepreneur is the initiator of endogenous change, whereas Kirzner's entrepreneur responds to exogenous changes.

- resource mobilisation;
- alertness to opportunity;
- networking and ‘bridging’.

There may still be debate as to which is more important, but in general all of these functions are recognised as aspects of entrepreneurship. This multi-dimensional understanding of entrepreneurship is also consistent with popular perceptions of entrepreneurship (Perren & Jennings, 2005; Hyrsky, 1999).

### *The effects of entrepreneurship*

There has been much debate and disagreement about how the functions identified above are filled and what effects entrepreneurship has on the economy and in society. Two of the most common are addressed below: entrepreneurship as creating organisations; and entrepreneurship as creating an ‘enterprising climate’.

A prevalent definition of entrepreneurship is ‘new entry’ or ‘organisational founding’, which is generally equated with small business and self-employment. Many theorists of entrepreneurship are focused on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are more about job and wealth creation than fundamentally changing the structure of an industry or bringing about the kind of ‘creative destruction’ and innovation that Schumpeter had in mind. In fact one of the main drives for supporting business entrepreneurship is not to support radical innovation, but rather to encourage small-scale economic business development en masse as contributing to overall economic progress, employment, wealth creation, and national prosperity (Reynolds et al, 2002).

Small scale business start ups is presented as encouraging initiative and innovation as a self reinforcing circular process that takes place as entrepreneurial activity becomes normalised and role models are created. Wennekers et al (1997) argue that entrepreneurship will result in an ‘enterprising climate’, which in turn will foster further entrepreneurship. Bygrave & Minniti (2000) argue that there is threshold of entrepreneurial activity, that once reached will be self reinforcing, inspiring more new entrepreneurship. In fact entrepreneurship can also be conceptualised in terms of cultural and social values and norms:

If I had space to develop this point, I should end up by saying that to some extent entrepreneurial activity impresses the stamp of its

mentality upon the social organism..... the mere emergence of a quantitatively significant number of entrepreneurs presupposes, and its existence contributes to, a certain type of civilization and a certain state of the public mind (Schumpeter, 1998 (1949): 19).

Both of these approaches take entrepreneurship away from early ideas of entrepreneurship as fundamentally disruptive, as bringing about innovation and transformation, and as providing leadership to the economy.

### *Theoretical limitations*

There have been a number of substantive critiques of theory and research into entrepreneurship, pointing mainly to the fragmented nature of the literature and the lack of an overarching organising theoretical framework (Busenitz et al, 2003; Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001b; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Chell, 2000; Thornton, 1999; Bygrave & Hofer, 1991).

The multiplicity of disciplinary approaches has led to an exciting array of different approaches, but there has been limited rigorous inter-disciplinary work (Thornton, 1999).

practitioners in each of the social sciences tend to define the problem so that the principal determinants of entrepreneurial performance fall within their discipline (Kilby, 1971: 4)

The effect has been that psychologists identify entrepreneurship as cognitive or behavioural processes at the individual level; sociologists as a hierarchy of status, social values and structures; and management studies in terms of organisational structure and strategy. As a result progress in understanding entrepreneurship holistically has been hampered by the fragmented nature of much of the literature, and this has been frequently noted (Busenitz et al, 2003; Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001b; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Chell, 2000; Thornton, 1999; Bygrave & Hofer, 1991).

The highly permeable boundaries of entrepreneurship facilitate intellectual exchange with other management areas but sometimes discourage the development of entrepreneurship theory and hinder legitimacy. (Busenitz et al, 2003: 285)

While theory and research into entrepreneurship is criticised as being fragmented, it is also criticised as being too homogenous. Research and theory into entrepreneurship has been dominated by functionalist, instrumental, and rational approaches, giving rise to a single dominant paradigm or way of approaching entrepreneurship (Jennings et al,

2005; Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004; Hjorth et al, 2003; Gartner, 2002; Bygrave, 1989). In particular the identification of entrepreneurship as a management topic has been critiqued.

... most entrepreneurship scholars have received their training in strategy groups within existing management departments or in stand-alone strategic management departments (Gartner et al, 2006: 324-5)

... the dominant paradigm of entrepreneurship research is based upon a relatively narrow range of metatheoretical assumptions. The concentration of effort within this narrow range has resulted in Functionalism becoming dominant within the subject domain. (Jennings et al, 2005: 146)

In the case of alternative perspectives of entrepreneurship research, there is not so much a gap as a chasm (Jennings et al, 2005: 147)

One implication of this is that the literature has tended to be normative and affirming, assuming that entrepreneurship is of central importance rather than questioning or investigating its effects in detail (Hjorth 2003; Swedberg, 2000). Entrepreneurship is generally considered an important concept and field of study, directly causing economic growth and prosperity. Yet, the actual contribution of entrepreneurship to economic growth should be approached with some scepticism. The causal significance of entrepreneurship is more often assumed or asserted than empirically tested (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001b; Wilken, 1979).

Despite centuries of scholarly attention, and the persistent conviction that entrepreneurship is an essential driver of economic growth and change, there has emerged no general theory. (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001a: pxi).

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (Reynolds et al, 2002) found that levels of entrepreneurship were lowest in Belgium and Japan, and highest in Mexico. The authors concluded that entrepreneurship borne of market opportunities was not associated with economic growth, but that entrepreneurship in developing countries arising out of necessity was associated with macro-economic growth. They drew no conclusions about the nature of the causality.

In fact, entrepreneurship is often noted for its absence in economic theory, and its role as a driver of economic growth is therefore less assured than theorists of entrepreneurship would normally assume (Baumol, 2005; Swedberg, 2000; Cosgel, 1996; Galbraith, 1991; Baumol, 1968).

... despite his central importance in economic activity, the entrepreneur has been a shadowy and elusive figure in the history of economic theory. (Hebert & Link, 1988: 11)

Some authors have argued that entrepreneurship is in fact more important politically than economically. And that it is within politics that entrepreneurship is considered central to economic growth and success (Perren & Jennings, 2005; Baumol, 2005). Yet there is almost no explicit acknowledgement in the main literature of entrepreneurship as a politicised concept or of having direct political significance<sup>12</sup>.

The belief in market-driven ideology and the assumption that new business ventures create jobs and foster innovation has embedded entrepreneurship into political discourse. (Perren & Jennings, 2005: 173)

### **The entrepreneurial individual**

... every age and every social organization approaches these problems from an apriori of its own, that is to say, from a conviction that individual initiative in the matter of economic development counts for almost everything or else for almost nothing. (Schumpeter, 1998 (1949): 15)

The study of entrepreneurship has given a high profile to the special talents of individual entrepreneurs, and the default understanding of entrepreneurship is most often as the entrepreneurial individual, both in academia and among the general public. Schumpeter has been credited with having given rise to this interest in the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001b; Swedberg, 2000). He painted a compelling picture of the entrepreneur as a rare and brave figure, with the “dream and will to found a private kingdom” (p17), the “joy of creating” (p17), and “a capacity of seeing things in a way which afterwards proves to be true” (Schumpeter 2000:64).

It is often said that Schumpeter glorified the entrepreneur and portrays him as a kind of aristocratic hero who has little in common with the businessman in the real world. To some extent this is true: Schumpeter had a taste for what is dashing and bold. (Swedberg, 2000).

The distinction between entrepreneurs and “mere” managers was drawn carefully by Schumpeter (Schumpeter, 2000: 60). Similarly, the distinction between the entrepreneur and the bureaucrat were spelt out (Galbraith, 1991), and between

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<sup>12</sup> The exception to this is the literature on the ‘enterprise culture’, though this has developed almost entirely separately from the literature on ‘entrepreneurship’ (du Gay, 2004).

entrepreneurs and administrators (Stevenson, 1985). These are important distinctions in emphasising the dashing character of the entrepreneur in contrast to the routine administrative role of managers, bureaucrats and administrators.

At the same time, some theoretical confusion exists in the distinction between entrepreneurship and management. In the theories of Jean Baptiste Say in France, Carl Menger in Austria, and Alfred Marshall in Britain, entrepreneurship was presented as a type of superior management. Whilst it is possible to stereotype management as routine administration and entrepreneurship as innovative and ground-breaking as Schumpeter did, theory and research point to a more complex reality. Managers rarely deal with the purely routine, and entrepreneurs frequently also run (and manage) organisations.

The centrality of the entrepreneurial individual is highlighted in Cosgel's (1996) work. He applies the critical literary theory of Northrop Frye, which classifies the protagonists in novels in terms of their relationship with the environment and other individuals, to identify the various types of entrepreneur in different theoretical 'narratives'. He argues that Schumpeter's entrepreneur is the 'Romantic hero' who is superior to other people and also has special perceptions and will power, giving him control over the environment. Kirzner's entrepreneur fills the 'high mimetic' role. This is the entrepreneur who is superior to other people in having special abilities in being able to spot opportunities, but does not necessarily have control over the environment. The 'low mimetic' entrepreneur is the ordinary person who can carry out entrepreneurial activities given the right incentives and training, and is the entrepreneur who is identified with small and medium enterprises (SME) and the establishment of small businesses and self-employment. Lastly is the anti-hero of Marxist analysis, whereby the entrepreneur is equated with the capitalist and is the economic villain depriving people of the fruits of their labour and of property rights.

A different but complementary analysis is provided by Cunningham and Lischeron (1991) who identified six schools of thought in the literature on entrepreneurship:

- 'Great Person' school, in which the entrepreneur is pictured as being all powerful and ultimately successful;



- ‘Personality’ school, where the focus is on the drive, values, and personality traits of individuals;
- ‘Classical’ school, where the entrepreneur carries out the functions of innovation, taking risks, and setting up new organisations;
- ‘Management’ school, where the entrepreneur has a set of skills around planning, strategy, and accessing resources;
- ‘Leadership’ school, where the entrepreneur is essentially a leader of people and mobiliser of resources.
- ‘Intrapreneurship’ school, where the entrepreneur is responsible for reassessing and adapting existing organisations.

The entrepreneurial individual is certainly not singular, and there are clearly several different types of person apparent in the literature and also in the popular imagination. The two classifications outlined above, by Cosgel (1996) and Cunningham and Lischeron (1991), point to three ‘entrepreneurial’ figures who dominate thinking and research:

- The ‘charismatic hero’, ‘romantic hero’ or ‘great person’, very much in the image of the Schumpeterian entrepreneur. This figure is credited with an exceptional level of talent, someone who can exercise power over others and over circumstances, and can bring about innovation and radical change.
- The ‘managerial’ entrepreneur is the person who has learnt a range of skills and techniques in strategy and planning and can apply them both within existing organisational settings and in establishing new organisations to create change, balancing the different roles of ‘manager’, ‘leader’, and ‘entrepreneur’.
- The ‘ordinary’ entrepreneur sets up small new businesses or becomes self-employed, taking risks and mobilising resources, perhaps innovating at the local level. It is the cumulative effect of large numbers of ‘ordinary’ entrepreneurs that impact on the economy and bring about economic change and progress.

### *Conceptual biases and assumptions*

The focus on the individual as the object of study has been vigorously debated – from the seminal article “Who is the entrepreneur?” is the Wrong Question” (Gartner, 1988), through calls to focus more on the context, the organisation, the outcomes, the process, and so on (Stevenson & Jarillo, 1990; Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). Even Schumpeter was clear that “the entrepreneurial function need not be embodied in a physical person and in particular in a single physical person” (Schumpeter, 1998: 10).

Empirically the focus on personality has been repeatedly discredited in the literature, such that attempts to identify the entrepreneurial personality are no longer considered fruitful (Cole, 1969; Kilby, 1971; Gartner 1988; Chell, 1991; Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001b). This has been on the grounds that personality traits are not stable, they vary over time and with individual maturity and experience, and depend on context (Chell et al, 1991). It is also thought naïve to assume that a single personality type would thrive in the many different environments and time periods within which entrepreneurship can be found (Kilby, 1971).

Early entrepreneurship studies typically focussed on the personality or cultural background of the individual entrepreneur as the determinant of entrepreneurial behaviour. Over time, these approaches yielded to a recognition that meaningful research must adopt a more contextual and process-oriented focus. (Low & MacMillan, 1988: p146)

Despite such clear indications that entrepreneurship cannot be equated with a particular personality type, the individual entrepreneur remains a powerful and often dominant figure in entrepreneurship – the ‘myth of the lonely only entrepreneur’ as ‘hero of the drama’ persists (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001c). The idea that there is an entrepreneurial personality or character remains a powerful intuitive reality for many people.

There have been some attempts to understand why the figure of the entrepreneur is so attractive and enduring (Drakopoulou Dodd & Anderson, 2007). Bouchikhi (1993) attributed the tendency to individualise entrepreneurial action as a way of explaining a complex phenomenon in a simple way. Similarly Cunningham and Lischeron (1991) referred to the appeal of the ‘heroic’ or ‘great person’ entrepreneur as offering a commonsensical understanding. Others have been more directly critical, pointing to an individualism that reflects a cultural bias in the West, and especially in the US.

Although the origins of this argument are obscure, decades of anecdote, especially in American biography, celebrate the larger-than-life and seemingly unique individuals who single-handedly, it often appears, create the organizations that transform both industries and the ways of day-to-day life in society. (Schoonhoven & Romanelli, 2001c: p385)

The figure of the 'heroic' entrepreneur has been more thoroughly critiqued by Ogbor (2000). He employs critical theory, analysing the discourse, to unpack the cultural assumptions underpinning entrepreneurship:

...the concept of entrepreneurship is discriminatory, gender-biased, ethnocentrically determined and ideologically controlled, sustaining not only prevailing societal biases, but serving as a tapestry for unexamined and contradictory assumptions and knowledge about the reality of entrepreneurs. (Ogbor, 2000: 605)

The entrepreneur is presented as visionary, persistent, driven, special: the 'all American' hero of the Wild West who "discovered and 'conquered' the land of opportunity" (Ogbor, 2000: 617). Ogbor (2000) contends that the discourse of entrepreneurship reproduces the "dominant ideology of the heroic and rational man", with entrepreneurship as a white male Western phenomenon, in which the driven and rare individual overcomes all obstacles in the environment leading to ultimate success – the 'Romantic hero' of Cosgel's (1996) analysis.

Ogbor (2000) suggests that much thinking on entrepreneurship has led to the "dismissal of sociological, historical and other political forces, (and) ultimately left the entrepreneur to psychological determinism" (Ogbor, 2000: 620). One of the key effects of the discourse, Ogbor states, is to replicate the power structures in society, between genders, races, countries, and between 'successful' (ie enterprising) and 'unsuccessful' communities. Jones and Spicer (2005) similarly argue that the focus on the entrepreneur has the effect of reproducing "current relations of economic domination" (Jones & Spicer, 2005: 237).

Rather than arguing that the focus on the entrepreneurial individual is unproductive and therefore that alternative approaches are needed, Jones & Spicer (2005) suggest that it is the very instability and impossibility of the entrepreneur which make the discourse meaningful and powerful. They argue that the repeated attempts and repeated failures to identify the entrepreneur point not so much to the need to try harder or more rigorously or with different tools (theories), but to a fundamental

characteristic of entrepreneurship. The point of entrepreneurship is not to exist as a definable, researchable, theorisable phenomenon, rather they suggest that it is an 'empty signifier', offering a space within which desire is structured.

What if entrepreneurship research has not failed at all, but has uncovered something significant about the underlying structure of entrepreneurship discourse, that is, that 'the entrepreneur' is an empty signifier, an open space or 'lack' whose operative function is not to 'exist' in the usual sense but to structure phantasmic attachment? (Jones & Spicer, 2005: 235)

The point of the object of desire, to be an entrepreneur, is that it is "unattainable and only vaguely specified", so that people aspire to it, reach for it, but never achieve it (Jones & Spicer, 2005: 237). It is in this way, they suggest, that power relations are maintained.

### **Entrepreneurship beyond economics**

The economy, and more specifically, capitalist economies are considered as providing the most conducive environment for entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurial activities... are performed in all societies by individuals whose judgement differs from the norm. Military and political life provide as much scope for entrepreneurship as economic life, but capitalism is a peculiar set of institutions and property relations that provides the widest berth for entrepreneurship. (Hebert & Link, 1982: 155-6)

Three characteristics of the market which are thought especially supportive of entrepreneurship are: profit; competition; and ownership. Profit is often assumed to be a motivator for entrepreneurs, but its more important role is in providing the entrepreneur with financing to reinvest into the entrepreneurial venture and also for possible future initiatives (Casson, 2000). Competition is important as a way of selecting those ventures which are productive. As von Mises pointed out "The market is always crammed with visionaries who want to float such impracticable and unworkable schemes", and it is consumer choices, the supply of capital, and return on investment that will select which schemes will work (von Mises, 2000). And ownership is important because it enables the entrepreneur to have control over their organisation and intellectual property.

In spite of this close identification with capitalism, as thinking on entrepreneurship developed it has also become increasingly clear theoretically that entrepreneurship is

not just a function of market economies, but that it can take place in many different contexts – “Every social environment has its own ways of filling the entrepreneurial function.” (Schumpeter, 1949:10).

One of the main alternative applications of entrepreneurship has been within policy, politics and the public sector. Lewis (1980: 9) defines a public entrepreneur as “a person who creates or profoundly elaborates a public organization so as to alter greatly the existing pattern of allocation of scarce public resources”. Kingdon’s work on agenda setting has been particularly influential within social policy, and policy entrepreneurs and political entrepreneurs are now well recognised as the initiators and champions of policy change (Kingdon, 1995).

But their defining characteristic, much as in the case of a business entrepreneur, is their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of future return. That return may come to them in the form of policies of which they approve, satisfaction from participation, or even personal aggrandisement in the form of job security or career promotion. (Kingdon, 1995: 122)

In Kingdon’s work, policy entrepreneurs are not seeking financial profit or private wealth, though they may be motivated and rewarded by status, recognition, or even more simply “they enjoy being part of the action” (Kingdon, 1995: 123). They are not characterised by adopting business practices, but rather as operating politically in complex and changing policy contexts. Many of the techniques, approaches and skills are therefore different, as political promotion and negotiation are different processes from product development, business planning and marketing. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurial functions identified in the preceding section – innovation, bearing-risk, leadership, bridging/networking and so on – are as relevant to policy entrepreneurship as they are in a business context, and as such there is also some overlap in terms of approaches and skills. Kingdon’s theory of agenda setting has been applied in a number of different policy contexts.

However, entrepreneurship in other contexts is generally assumed to signal economic activity, and more often than not profit-making commercial activity. According to Baumol (1990), entrepreneurship is evident throughout history and cross-culturally as people have pursued status and wealth through the military, the church and other fields. In Baumol’s account, such forms of entrepreneurship did not necessarily

involve commercial activity, even if the pursuit of wealth was involved. Historically, wealth was not necessarily accumulated through business, but as he points out, through military action, the church, and other institutions, depending on the contemporary social, economic and political structures of the day. While Baumol emphasises the existence of entrepreneurship historically and in very different contexts, his definition is still restricted to entrepreneurship as a form of economic, money-making activity.

As entrepreneurship has become more fashionable it has been applied in an imaginative array of different contexts: cultural entrepreneurship, sport entrepreneurship, religious entrepreneurship, rural entrepreneurship, ‘ecopreneurship’<sup>13</sup>. But all of these are conceived and written about in terms of commercial profit making activities. So even though entrepreneurship has been shown to be theoretically relevant in different fields, it is still more often than not equated with economic activity, doing business and the pursuit of (personal) financial gain (Steyaert, 2000). In effect, the term ‘entrepreneurship’ is often used simply to signify profit motivated business or commercial activity in a setting not usually associated with the market – such as religion or sport or, as is the topic of this thesis, social welfare.

### **Summary**

The review of the literature on entrepreneurship has shown that ‘entrepreneurship’ is a contested concept, underpinned by a number of cultural, political and social assumptions. It is certainly not the objectively determined, analytical concept that many theorists and researchers into entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship assume.

Entrepreneurship theory refers to a range of functions performed in the economy and in society, including innovation, bearing-risk, leadership, transformation and change, alertness to opportunity, decision-making, networking, and bridging previously

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<sup>13</sup> For example, Lounsbury, M. and Glynn, M. A. (2001) where ‘cultural entrepreneurship’ is defined as “the process of storytelling that mediates between extant stocks of entrepreneurial resources and subsequent capital acquisition and wealth creation”. Also see O’Brien, D. B. and Overby, J. O. (1997) where ‘sport entrepreneurship’ is equated with ‘sport business activity’; Seymour, N. (2003) who comment that “the figure of the religious entrepreneur, the person who participates in both spiritual and business activities”; and Isaak, R. (1987) who defines ‘ecopreneurship’ as “system-transforming, socially-committed environmental businesses characterized by breakthrough innovation”.

unconnected spheres of activity. It is credited with being the driver of economic development and progress. Yet, in spite of the considerable attention and research that entrepreneurship has attracted, the actual impact and effects of entrepreneurship have been more often assumed than investigated or tested empirically.

Entrepreneurship is strongly associated with the figure of the individual entrepreneur, where three portrayals dominate much research and popular understanding: the charismatic hero; the managerial entrepreneur; and the 'ordinary' entrepreneur. Entrepreneurship is also generally equated with 'doing business' in the sense of pursuing money making, profit oriented, commercial activities. Even though there are a plethora of different types of entrepreneurship – for example 'sport entrepreneurship' and 'religious entrepreneurship' – they invariably refer to commercially oriented, profit making, business activity and not to the functions of risk and innovation.

## **2.2 The roles of the voluntary sector**

In the UK context social entrepreneurship is conceived of as a voluntary sector phenomenon, performing a critical role as a source of innovation in the provision of social services (Moore, 2002; Leadbeater, 1997). It is also seen as contributing to the development of the voluntary sector as a whole, not only in terms of change and innovation, but also through professionalising a sector that is otherwise said to be amateurish and parochial (Leadbeater, 1997).

The citizen sector became structurally entrepreneurial and competitive across the continents with a speed and energy that is probably unparalleled. (Drayton, 2006: 46)

This dynamic social entrepreneurship, in which the EMES network is particularly interested, covers in fact two different areas. On the one hand, it involves the setting up of new entities that can be considered as a sub-group of the third sector and, on the other hand, it refers to a process, a new entrepreneurial spirit that affects and reshapes older approaches. In this sense, it reflects a strong trend, an underlying movement that is capable of having an impact on the whole of the social economy or the non-profit sector. (Defourny, 2003)

This section, which reviews the literature on the voluntary and community sector in the UK, is in two parts. The first part considers what characterises the voluntary sector

and the particular contribution it is said to make – its roles and functions in society. The second part outlines the limitations and weaknesses of the sector.

### **The roles and purposes of the voluntary sector**

Voluntary organisations or charities are found in almost all walks of life, from local bridge clubs and parent groups, to multi-million pound housing providers and international development agencies. One metaphor that has resonated in the UK is the idea that the voluntary and community sector is a ‘loose and baggy monster’ – a sector which is difficult to define, has porous and changing boundaries, and incorporates a multiplicity of forms of organisation (and organising) with a diversity of purposes and practices (Kendall & Knapp, 1995). It is this diversity in particular that has often been difficult to capture within theories of the sector.

Early theories of the nonprofit or voluntary sector, developed largely by economists, asserted that the sector played an important role by meeting needs that are not met by either the state or the market. These are often referred to as the ‘government failure’ and ‘market failure’ theories, and reflect a residual approach to the voluntary sector (Weisbrod, 1988; Hansmann, 1987, 1996). While many have searched for more positive accounts, these remain popular perspectives in much of the literature and are even reflected in the language of the sector in the labels of ‘nonprofit’ and ‘nongovernmental’ organisations.

At the same time, much of the nonprofit literature has a normative bias. There are many assumptions about the unique characteristics and contributions of the sector, which can give the impression that it exemplifies moral agency and is innately pro-social (see for example Lohmann, 1992). It is a rosy picture, and bound up with idealised notions of ‘community’ as inclusive, caring and profoundly ‘good’ (Taylor, 2003). I would suggest that such normative ‘pro-social’ approaches are as naïve as those offered by the residual approaches mentioned above.

As theories have developed, increasingly discerning accounts of the role of the sector have been proposed, which tend to offer complementary perspectives rather than arguing for the failure of other sectors. Within these broad approaches a number of distinct roles based on the comparative advantages of the voluntary sector to the



market and state have been identified theoretically (Kendall, 2004; Salamon et al, 2000; Weisbrod, 1988; Kramer, 1981; Hansmann, 1980; Horton Smith, 1980).

- Service provision. The idea that voluntary and community organisations provide particularist or specialist services is probably the most widely recognised and is certainly the most widely theorised and researched. Voluntary and community organisations are said to be closer to their users and embedded in communities, therefore engendering higher levels of trust than alternative service providers (Kendall, 2004; Hansmann, 1980).

Empirical evidence indicates that voluntary and community organisations do provide ‘niche’ services for people who are marginalised or excluded from mainstream services, where the state has failed, or where demand is such that it would be uneconomic for private sector to meet those needs (Kendall, 2004). At the same time there is little evidence to support voluntary organisations as closer to their users and more embedded in communities, and Marshall maintains that ‘this is largely mythology’ (1996).

- Advocacy. Advocacy, including watchdog activities, public awareness campaigns and direct political lobbying, is often considered of equal centrality to the voluntary sector as service provision. Research by Wilkinson and Taylor (2003) found four specific ways that voluntary organisations performed advocacy roles: mobilising and giving voice to peoples’ concerns and interests, in particular ‘marginalised’ groups; raising awareness of issues with the public and amongst members; ‘reframing’ issues and bringing new issues to public and policy attention; and influencing the impact of policy by implementing it. However, the role is difficult to pin down in practice, and only a small proportion of voluntary organisations have been found to carry it out (Kendall, 2004; Knight, 1993). On the other hand, this should not detract from the impact of advocacy on society in changing values and practices, as well as on government policy.
- Innovation. Theory suggests that because voluntary organisations are independent and without the constraints or accountabilities to stakeholders or

voters experienced in the other sectors, that they can experiment and innovate more freely (Horton Smith, 1980). In practice, however, there is little direct evidence to support the idea that the voluntary sector is more innovative than any other sector – despite the “large numbers of historical and current examples of innovative activity can readily be found in the voluntary sector” (Kendall, 2004: 110). Mulgan comments that in fact the sector is often more conservative and less innovative than other providers within the same field (Mulgan, 2006). Even if much of the sector is conservative, there may still be voluntary organisations that have a significant impact in terms of innovation, even if it is not commonplace.

- Value guardian. Galambos (1993) suggests that the voluntary sector defends and promotes certain values, which differ depending on the historical context, but are fundamental to the needs of society and its progress – “the ability of the market economy to address its pressing problems and to reform itself depends on nonprofits as institutional facilitators” (Young & Hammack, 1993: 405). An inherently pro-social value driven characterisation of the sector is common and appealing to many authors. Lohmann (1992) characterises the voluntary sector as based on values of participation, shared purpose, mutuality, fairness and justice in the provision of ‘common goods’. Horton Smith (1980: 19) goes so far as to say: “the voluntary sector as a whole provides moral and ideological leadership to the majority of human society”. Frumkin argues that “nonprofit organisations are important because they provide a unique way for individuals to pursue innovative, iconoclastic, and value-driven solutions to social problems” (Frumkin, 2002: 128).

Yet, the idea that the voluntary sector is distinctive in having values or providing a particular type of common goods has been widely disputed (for example Marshall, 1996; Bolton, 2003). Such critiques deny the sector a moral high ground, and assert that all sectors have values. Similarly it is clearly not the case that all voluntary organisations have ‘pro-social’ values, especially given their role in promoting particularist interests.

- Community-building. Voluntary and community organisations are thought of as playing a special role in creating connections and solidarity between people<sup>14</sup>. Certainly there is literature which suggests that local participation through community organisations is critical to enhancing the capacities and confidence of individuals and groups (Taylor, 2003). It is also apparent in the work of Ben-Ner and Gui (2000), who suggest that the nonprofit sector plays a distinctive role in providing ‘relational goods’, which are bound in social relationships and often include belonging to a group and participating collective activities. There is, however, also evidence that voluntary organisations are not especially embedded within communities, and do not necessarily play a strong role in the generation of social capital (Begum, 2003). Kendall (2004) found that the evidence is inconclusive on whether the voluntary sector has a particular role or advantage in community-building.

Some authors argue that there is a ‘community sector’, distinct from the voluntary sector and consisting of small, local, informal groups, which do not necessarily employ staff and may not be registered organisations. The community sector, therefore, does not appear on official records, and there are therefore few statistics on its size and make up. The idea of the community sector has become more influential as the different roles and needs of small local organisations and large, national and international voluntary organisations have become more apparent. And of course, the community sector is said to play a particular role in community building. In the UK, there is now policy recognition of the voluntary and community sector (VCS).

The roles are not intended to be mutually exclusive, and there is clearly overlap between them. In reality organisations are not likely to fill a singular role, such that a service provider can also be an advocate, an innovator, and can contribute to community building. Nevertheless, the distinctions between these roles are important because there is a tendency to emphasise some roles over others especially in much

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<sup>14</sup> This has a long standing history, from de Tocqueville (1835; 1840) who identified the unique contribution of voluntary associations in America to community commitment and involvement, and thereby to devolved and effective democratic government; to the more recent work of Robert Putnam (1993; 2000) into social capital and how norms of trust and reciprocity, which are fostered in voluntary associations, contribute to democracy and economic development.

government policy that is focused on the sector. For example, the service provision role has taken on a high priority in the UK context following policy interest in the outsourcing of central and local government services. The idea that the sector fills a set of roles is therefore important, not least in informing policy debate.

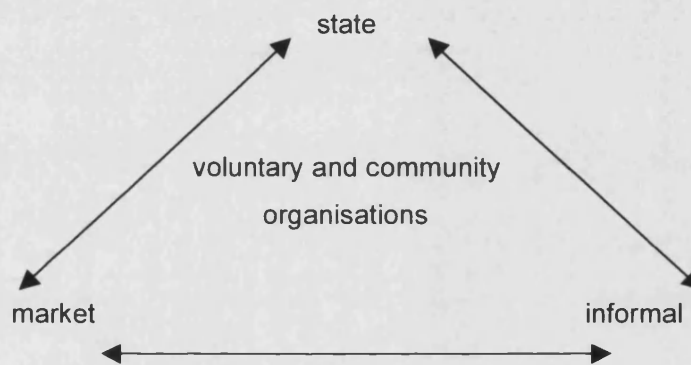
At the same time, there are some limitations to equating the voluntary sector with a set of roles that are either not effectively filled by other sectors, or are complementary to the roles of existing institutions. The idea that the voluntary sector makes a distinctive contribution to society based on a gap-filling function is overly instrumental and inherently frustrating. It fails to acknowledge a more positive or aspirational role for the sector.

The gap-filling approaches also fails to acknowledge explicitly other significant institutions in society, namely religion, the family or household, and community. As such it presents a model of society and the economy based on three differentiated sectors: public, private and voluntary. This simple three sector approach, with 'clearly separated and delineated roles', has been termed 'naïve' by Young and Hammack (1993) when thinking about complex market economies. Similarly Kramer (1998) draws attention to the 'blurred, permeable, and interpenetrated' boundaries between sectors, not just recently but historically (p7). In fact the distinctions between sectors are increasingly 'blurred' and there is growing evidence that people do not readily identify the distinctive structural features of voluntary organisations (Taylor, Langan & Hoggett, 1994). This implies that the sector does not have such a clear-cut role as is often implied by theories of state and market failure and comparative advantage.

An alternative theoretical perspective that engages with the looseness and bagginess of the sector is Evers' notion of the sector as an intermediate area or tension field (Evers, 1995). Evers has developed a theoretical framework which positions voluntary and community organisations as "a dimension of the public space", between the spheres of the state, market and informal – "as an intermediate area rather than a clear-cut sector" (Evers, 1995: 159-160). Within this space the tensions felt in society between the different rationales of the market, state and informal are played out (p159).

Evers' theory also has the advantage for this study of locating the voluntary sector within a social policy framework, specifically a mixed economy of welfare. As such, the voluntary sector is not so much a definable and bounded sector but rather an intermediate space within which a range of voluntary and community sector organisations can be found. This is directly relevant to this study given the way in which social entrepreneurship is said to contribute to social welfare provision and reform. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the voluntary and community sector as a space between the three corners of the state, market and informal.

Figure 2.1: Evers' welfare mix framework



The table below Table 2.1, sets out the characteristics of the three spheres of market, state and informal and relates these to the main political discourses which constitute these spheres. The market is understood as instrumental, individualistic and driven by economic goals, and is underpinned by neoliberal discourses; the state is universalistic, standardised and bureaucratic and rooted in socialist political discourses; and the informal privileges the family and community, tradition and norms and is based on traditional conservative political discourses.

Table 2.1: Rationales of market, state and informal spheres in Evers' framework

Sphere	Structural characteristics	Historical political discourse
market	instrumental, success based on profit, valuing individual choice, linkages mediated by money exchange, form of private	the privileged sphere of <u>neoliberal</u> politics, where individual choice dominates and welfare is best provided through the market, and

	ownership	where the state should be minimised
state	universalistic, based on central rules and standards and democratic accountability, form of bureaucracy	central state control seen by <u>socialist</u> politics as able to provide universalist progress and modernisation, where local, particularist interests are a threat
informal	family and community obligations and linkages based on norms and traditions, particularist and based on specific interests	traditional emphasis of <u>conservative</u> political doctrines, emphasising family and community, with a paternalistic state (and in the UK a deferential public)

Evers suggests that one effect of the tensions is that voluntary sector fields and individual organisations are often hybrid and contested, as they seek new ways of accommodating and balancing these tensions. Some organisations are closer to the informal – the small and often ad hoc volunteer based local groups involved in community building; some to the state – in the larger scale and more bureaucratic social service providers. Further to this, voluntary and community organisations are also active in “generating tensions, ideas and conflicts” themselves, adding to the ability of society to identify, articulate, and debate issues (p163). And some organisations play a significant role in expressing views that have not been dominant in society or are in some way contentious or difficult, such as concern for the environment or the promotion of human rights, or lobbying for policy change on issues such as abortion.

In fact, Evers insists that in a healthy welfare democracy, voluntary and community organisations make an essential contribution to what he calls “the search for more synergetic welfare mixes” which involves genuine pluralism in social service provision (p173). The critical factor for Evers is that voluntary and community organisations are understood and supported as independent, and that they do not become a “dumping ground” for what the state and market would rather cast off (p178). Of course some voluntary organisations are more like arms of the state, or arms of a corporation, than independent bodies. It is the co-option of the sector as a

whole, or even of a particular field of action that would be most threatening, rather than the position of even a few influential charities.

Evers' framework has not been applied extensively in the literature, and its limitations and weaknesses have therefore not been explored extensively. Kramer (1998) comments on the versatility of the framework, but notes that its conceptual ambiguity seems to have limited its application and in particular has drawn attention away from the voluntary sector as distinct in its own right. He comments that it is most useful when sector boundaries are not important, when seeking to describe rather than explain, and when research is focused on historical, cultural and socio-political trends which influence the division of responsibility for welfare.

... the welfare mix serves as an expression of different political concepts in social policy, such as the changing responsibility between different actors in the social service sector, and in the formal and informal production and delivery of social services. (Kramer, 1998: 33)

The gap-filling roles identified above can help to ground the roles of the voluntary sector, and to lessen the conceptual ambiguity in Evers' theory noted above. Within the welfare mix framework, the differing roles of advocacy, innovation, service provision, value guardian, community building are all present, but framed within the larger tension field.

### **Limitations of the sector**

There is less research and theory on what are the limits of the voluntary sector, and whether there are the particular problems inherent in its structures. Salamon (1987) put forward a theory of 'voluntary failure' that identifies the institutional limits, constraints and tendencies of the sector when compared with public provision:

*i) Insufficiency* refers to the fact that voluntary organisations cannot be relied upon "to generate resources on a scale that is both adequate enough and reliable enough to cope with the human-service problems of an advanced industrial society" (Salamon, 1987: 39). Additionally, they can find it much harder to obtain resource during economic recession, when social needs may be greater. Kendall largely supports this weakness, referring in particular to the uneven spread of voluntary activity across the UK: "voluntary action was commonly strongest where it was least needed, and weakest

where it was most needed” (Knight, 1993: xvi). Similarly Young and Hammack (1993) conclude that there are not only serious challenges for nonprofit organisations in gaining resources for their work, but that there are also serious tensions between the need for marketing and competing to raise funds, and ethical positions arising out of the mission of the organisation.

*ii) Particularism* reflects the tendency of voluntary organisations to focus on specific and defined groups of people, and therefore be exclusionary or discriminatory. There is some evidence of certain groups being excluded from the voluntary sector as a whole, and in particular minority ethnic communities, though this is very mixed and varies by field and geographical area (Kendall, 2004; Connelly, 1990).

*iii) Paternalism* can be apparent as voluntary organisations are not based on ‘rights’, and are often the preserve of the more privileged and elite in society, and not necessarily a means for expression and action amongst people who are in need. Philanthropy and charity have traditionally been associated with ‘the great and the good’, and such paternalistic approaches have been increasingly challenged by the user movements found in the UK. At the same time, Kendall points to limited successes in achieving user involvement or control over services (2004: 121).

*iv) Amateurism* refers to the use of volunteers and the relatively low salaries which discourage qualified professionals and encourage “amateur approaches to dealing with human problems” (Salamon, 1987: 42). Kendall (2004) points out that this could potentially hinder organisations from growing and achieving scale. Again there is mixed evidence with some indications that there are perceptions of significant inefficiencies within voluntary organisations (Knight, 1993; Deakin, 1996). This was found to be true among for-profit managers who took up positions in voluntary organisations, in particular when it came to disciplining staff (Leat, 1995: 49). It was also acknowledged it could at times be harder to measure and monitor effectiveness of services and to manage budgets that were often subject to complex restrictions depending on the source.



## **Summary**

Theory and research into the voluntary and community sector have identified a number of roles that it fill which make it distinct from other institutional actors, as well as a number of limitations in its capacity to fill those roles.

The voluntary and community sector can be thought of in an instrumental way as filling a number of roles left by the market and state, for example welfare service provision, advocacy, innovation, value guardian, community building. The balance between these roles depends in part on government policy. At the same time, the evidence that voluntary organisations fill any of these roles effectively is inconclusive.

An alternative theoretical perspective on the sector conceptualises it as a tension field (Evers, 1995) within which welfare debates take place and roles and responsibilities for welfare are renegotiated. An important role of the sector is therefore as a space for debate, diversity, and divergence as new and conflicting ideas, practices and ways of thinking are played out. Within such a perspective the way in which it fills the gaps left by the state and market are therefore not fundamental to defining and understanding the sector. At the same time, the contribution and effectiveness of the voluntary sector is constrained by a number of structural weaknesses, though it is not clear to what extent these are inherent to the sector and to what extent they are surmountable.

### **2.3 Social policy discourse**

Chapter 1 showed how social entrepreneurship has laid claim to solve a wide range of pressing social problems and has been taken up by government as important, locating it clearly as a social policy issue. Social entrepreneurship is understood here as emblematic of and a signifier of the broad changes that have been taking place in social welfare and social policy over the past few decades, if not since the establishment of the welfare state in the 1940s. It has also been closely identified with the 'third way' and New Labour policy agendas which seek to bring together a sense of social responsibility with individual prosperity.

This part charts the growing use and usefulness of critical and discursive approaches to social policy research and analysis. ‘Discourse’ is often used vaguely, in a similar way to social construction, without much thought as to the precise meaning intended and people may refer loosely to a political discourse, a consumer discourse or a religious discourse: “underlying the word ‘discourse’ is the general idea that language is structured according to different patterns that people’s utterances follow when they take part in domains of social life” (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 1). Jorgensen and Phillips suggest a ‘preliminary’ definition of discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)”. Discourse is about the patterns and themes present within different forms of communication that give sense and meaning, and have certain intended and unintended effects. Stuart Hall (1992: 292/3) defines discourse as:

A discourse is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e: a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. When statements about a topic are made within a particular discourse, the discourse makes it possible to construct the topic in a certain way. It also limits the other ways in which the topic can be constructed.

Discourse is often thought of as consisting only of language, but is, in fact, more broadly defined.

For some, especially in the Foucauldian tradition, there is an interest in discursive practices which blend together text, talk and practice, and this suggests a wider use of methods is possible. (Mason, 2002: 57)

This part shows how discourse analysis has been applied to social policy in the UK, in particular to ‘third way’ thinking and the policy developments that have taken place under New Labour.

### **Concepts of welfare and the welfare state**

Social welfare in the UK has most often been associated with the ‘welfare state’, yet in reality welfare exists through a mixture of direct state provision, private sector provision, and through voluntary action, communities and family (Deakin, 1994). The Oxford English Dictionary definition of welfare is:

The state or condition of doing or being well; good fortune, happiness, or well-being (of a person, community, or thing); thriving or successful progress in life, prosperity.

In terms of social policy, welfare incorporates notions of meeting certain basic material and economic needs, as well as promoting social integration, solidarity, social justice, as well as individual well-being (Mullard & Spicker, 1998).

The post war settlement meant that the main responsibility for welfare – good fortune, happiness and well-being – was passed to and taken on by the state. The idea of the welfare state came into being in the UK following the publication of Beveridge's 1942 report. The Beveridge report set the agenda for slaying the five giants of 'want, ignorance, squalor, disease, and idleness'. Following from this, welfare policies focused on addressing economic and social problems associated with poverty, education, health, disability, unemployment, housing, and old age. The welfare state was presented as a safety net and system of support for people in need, present throughout the lifespan of individual citizens, 'from cradle to grave'. In practice this has included both universal provision, as is still the commonly held aspiration for the National Health Service, and means-tested benefits for those who are defined as being in need or deserving of assistance (see for example Titmuss, (1967) in Pierson & Castles, 2000). The welfare state took its place alongside Keynesian economics in confirming the role of government as the guardian of social well-being as well as economic progress and stability.

...the post-war welfare state has been viewed – in Britain at least – as both evidence of progress and the institutional form through which further progress could – and would – be accomplished. (Clarke, 1998:172)

The 'welfare state' was not so much a systematic and coherent policy as the discursive reframing of a number of existing, diverse and incoherent social initiatives under a single umbrella (Timmins, 1996). It proved to be a powerful political and policy concept. Welfare, and in particular the welfare state, was significant as a signal of social progress and aspirations for a better society, and even a better world (Deakin, 1994). Collectively the welfare state was seen as an integral part of a progressive society and as providing a sense of common endeavour towards creating a better world following the Second World War (Briggs, 2000; Leonard, 1997; Timmins, 1996).

Since then, the roles, relationships and divisions of responsibility for welfare between state, individual, market, and voluntary sector have been subject to almost constant renegotiation. Since the 1970s, the emergence and dominance of neo-liberalism has

been one of the strongest themes in social policy writing, stemming from the economic crisis of the mid-1970s, economic recession, and the ensuing identification of the welfare state as the 'illness' rather than the 'cure' (Offe, 1982). Growing and acute dissatisfaction with the existing welfare settlement contributed to the election of a Conservative government in 1979 with its political vision promoting a market based ideology of social welfare (Taylor, 2003; Slater & Tonkiss, 2002). Concepts of the welfare state and how best to provide or ensure well-being changed, as responsibility shifted away from the state and further towards the market, individual and voluntary sector.

These changes were accompanied by the loss of the idea that welfare is inherent to a vision of advancing society or of social progress and development (Giddens, 1994). Postmodern analyses highlight the abandonment of conceptions of social progress as "integral and intimate" to welfare (Clarke, 1998: 172; see also, Leonard, 1997; O'Brien & Penna, 1998). In fact, the Conservative government of 1979-1997 viewed state welfare as fostering dependency and as hindering the social and economic development of the country. The New Labour government elected in 1997 was not as hostile to state welfare, and focused policy on modernising and reforming public services, but did not go so far as to reconceptualise welfare as a progressive force in society. Labour continued down the road set by the previous government, conceiving the main driver of change and development as the market and economic growth (Newman, 2001).

Welfare and the welfare state have come to occupy an ambivalent position in social policy. There is a general consensus across the political spectrum that government plays a key role in ensuring social welfare, if not through direct service provision, then through, legislation, regulation and funding. And, while the market may be associated with economic progress and material prosperity, there is anxiety about its role in social progress. It has been suggested that there is an underlying social and political unease with whether what is perceived and experienced as a faster pace of change in society actually reflects progress and human advancement towards something such as a 'good society' (O'Brien & Penna, 1998). At the same time, discourses of the 'nanny state', 'dependency', the 'crisis' of welfare, and a high level of mistrust in central government have come to dominate much debate on social welfare policy (Clarke et al,

2001). The welfare state itself, once the signifier of a progressive and civilised society, has come to be seen by some as undermining and threatening the economic success of nations and the freedom of individual citizens (Culpitt, 1992).

The position and role of welfare and the welfare state have changed as the political, social and cultural context of the UK have changed. Welfare is understood and credited with effects and implications that depend on political position and ideological trends. In order to explore and understand better the relationships between welfare policy, cultural trends, and political ideologies, the next section turns to the use and application within social policy of analyses based on text and discourse.

### **Relevance of discourse analysis to social policy**

A number of authors have argued that social policy has much to gain from engaging with and utilising analytical approaches which focus on language, discourse and text (Fischer, 2003; Fairclough, 2003a; Fitzpatrick, 2003; Newman, 2001; O'Brien & Penna, 1998). One key reason for this is said to be that policy itself is about debate, argument, rhetoric, assertion and is therefore made of language. It is through language that a social welfare issue or problem is identified and defined, and it is through language that solutions are developed, negotiated, rejected, accepted, refined.

As politicians know only too well but social scientists too often forget, public policy is made of language. Whether in written or oral form, argument is central in all stages of the policy process. (Majone, 1989: 1)

Discourse has been defined as: "(i) ...a systematic, coherent set of images, metaphors and so on that construct an object in a particular way, and (ii) ...the actual spoken interchanges between people". Text means "anything which can be 'read' for meaning" (Burr, 1995: 184). The assumption is that language (and other ways in which meaning is communicated) is not a means through which reality can be accessed but rather that texts construct reality.

Whereas other qualitative methodologies work to understand or interpret social reality as it exists, discourse analysis endeavours to uncover the way in which it is produced. This is the most important contribution of discourse analysis: It examines how language constructs phenomena, not how it reflects and reveals it. (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 6)

Discourse analysis is part of what has been called a ‘cultural turn’ or ‘linguistic turn’ in the social sciences, and has been inspired by the work of such influential authors as Habermas, Boudrillard, Derrida, Saussure, and Foucault<sup>15</sup>. This ‘turn’ has been felt to a limited extent in social policy, though it is reported to be gaining in influence<sup>16</sup> (Carter, 1998). It is associated with post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-positivism, and social construction, all of which have been debated within social policy and other social sciences<sup>17</sup>.

Social policy and welfare are the arenas of fiercely disputed political ideals. And definitions of welfare are rooted in particular political ideologies, proscribed by contemporary debates and trends, and influenced by what issues are perceived as being important at a particular moment in time (O’Brien & Penna, 1998). Discourse analysis has been put forward as especially relevant to social policy.

In many ways, critical discourse analysis speaks to the core goals of social policy... When used in conjunction with other qualitative approaches, critical discourse analysis has the potential to be a powerful and revealing form of social inquiry, particularly when used to investigate the nature of changes and forces that are shaping welfare state programs and forms of service delivery at the local, institutional and socio-cultural level. (Marston, 2002: 313).

Discourse analysis can help to reveal competing ideologies and political assumptions, analysing not only the effects of the discourses but also the nature of discursive struggles and their implications.

Marston (2002) draws attention to some of the ways in which post-modern and discursive approaches have opened up new avenues of understanding and research in social policy. Discourse analysis has been used to highlight how welfare subjects are differentially constructed as ‘dependent’, as ‘socially excluded’, as ‘users’ who should

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<sup>15</sup> For an introductory account of Saussure’s structural linguistics and Foucault’s notion of discourse, and their influence on the development of discourse analysis see Jorgensen and Phillips, 2000: 8-14. This also provides a brief outline of what is meant by ‘postmodern’ and ‘post-structuralist’. For more in depth discussion of Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical approaches see Howarth (2000) Chapters 3 and 4; also see Chapter 2 of the same book for a review of Derrida’s contribution to discourse analysis.

<sup>16</sup> The adoption of social constructionist approaches and the application of discourse analysis is more widespread in social policy than it is in either the study of entrepreneurship or the voluntary sector.

<sup>17</sup> For discussion of the relevance of social construction to social policy see: *Journal of Social Policy* (1994) 23 (3) which devotes a special issue to post-modernism in social policy; John Carter’s (1998) article ‘Postmodernity and Welfare: When Worlds Collide’; and Frank Fisher’s book (2003) *Reframing Public Policy*.

‘participate’, as ‘customers’ who can exercise ‘choice’ (Baldock, 2003; Marston, 2002). Concepts of the state itself have also been challenged, shifting away from understanding the state as monolithic and unitary, but rather as diverse and inconsistent, opening up spaces for resistance and non-state based manifestations of power.

One way in which discourse analysis has been used is to highlight the difference between ‘rhetoric and reality’, showing how policy discourse is rarely implemented or followed through in practice (Fairclough, 2000). Mosse (2004) has focused on development policy to paint a more complex picture of the relationship between policy discourse and practice. He argues that ‘good’ policy is largely unimplementable but serves “to legitimise rather than to orientate practice” (p648). Policy discourse is used by practitioners to translate the complexity of organisational realities into coherent and rational representations. It is therefore not so much policies or practices which fail, but interpretations of policy.

But post-modern approaches have also has been subject to criticism (Taylor-Gooby, 1994). There is concern that post-modernism sidesteps the fundamental concerns of social policy, in terms of the distribution of power and resources, because of its emphasis on subjectivity and relative experiences. Discourse analysis is not about assessing levels of material deprivation, measuring structural inequality, or categorising different types of welfare recipients or policy actors in terms of quantifiable attributes such as age, race, gender, which has been the more traditional focus for social policy (Carter, 1998). As Marston (2002) comments

Poverty, for example, is an ideological formation, it is a truth produced by particular discursive strategies, but it is also a social construction – and people die from it. (Marston, 2002: 308)

However, discursive and post-modern approaches are not attempting to colonise social policy, but to add a distinctive tool that many consider useful for some aspects of welfare research (Marston, 2002; Fischer, 2003; Carter, 1998). The section below looks in more detail at the applications of discourse analysis. In particular it reviews some of the approaches used to analyse the ‘third way’ and New Labour policy, policy that is seen as defined more by the use of language and ‘spin’ than by a coherent political rationale.

## **Discourse and New Labour**

It has proven particularly difficult to assess the exact nature of the political programme of New Labour, let alone whether there is an overall direction or progress towards a politically articulated vision of society. The difficulty in classifying and understanding New Labour and the 'third way' has been subject to much comment in the literature (Bastow & Martin, 2003; Newman, 2002; Rose, 2000). Attempts to pin it down are frustrated by its lack of an ideological underpinning, its ambiguous political commitments, its incoherence and internal contradictions, and the self-conscious media image. As such, analysis of the language of New Labour has become an increasingly popular way of attempting to unpack and understand the nature and implications of government policy.

In the early days of New Labour, there were a number of critiques and analyses of the 'third way', and these are considered relevant here because this is the immediate policy context within which social entrepreneurship started to be discussed and taken seriously. In fact, social entrepreneurship and social enterprise have been very closely and specifically identified with 'third way' thinking.

Ambiguity, inconsistency and incoherence are considered not so much as characterising the 'third way' and frustrating attempts to analyse it, but as constituting the 'third way'.

The Third Way is all things to all men, shifting in emphasis as the government's mood changes. (Bastow & Martin, 2003: 61).

Rather than a "political program", the 'third way' can be thought of as "a way of visualizing political problems" (Rose, 2000: 1395) or as "a framing device" (Newman, 2001: 45) which helps to organise and rationalise welfare and other issues. In this sense the 'third way' is considered here not as a political vision but as a discourse (McLennan, 2004; Bastow & Martin, 2003; Newman, 2001; Rose, 2000). This changes the emphasis of analysis from attempting to identify a coherent political philosophy to trying to understand the 'third way' in terms of its purposes and effects.

Adopting critical discourse analysis Bastow and Martin (2003) argue that the 'third way' was not intended to set out a definitive or clear political programme, but rather to create the space for new coalitions and partnerships which supported a return to



government. One important purpose has been to distance New Labour from ‘old’ Labour and its “discredited past” as well as from the harshness of neo-liberalism, thereby creating the opportunity for something different. When in government, it enabled New Labour to promote change and modernisation as crucial, without idealising a past or setting out a picture of the future (Newman, 2001). This is apparent through the discursive structuring of the ‘third way’. Three particularly striking features of the discourse are outlined below.

*(i) The inevitability of social change*

Change is framed by New Labour as something that is happening independently of human agency – Giddens (1999) refers to the ‘runaway world’ and the juggernaut of globalisation – where the choice is whether to join in or be left behind.

‘Adapt or die’ is the implicit, often explicit, demand and this accounts for the urgency New Labour attaches to its programme of modernisation. (Bastow & Martin, 2003: 68)

This is what Rose has termed “sociological determinism”, the way in which social and economic trends, such as modernity, globalisation, individualism and the changing nature of risk, are framed as necessitating a particular political response (Rose, 2000: 1394).

Globalisation, modernisation and consumerism were inextricably entwined in new Labour’s discourse. They represented a set of narratives that constructed an imperative to change... This cascade of change served to de-mobilise actual and potential sources of opposition, not least through its appropriation of the vocabulary of radicalism, leaving critics and opponents ‘lost for words’. (Newman, 2001: 53)

The modernisation agenda of New Labour is put forward as a technical challenge rather than an ideological, moral or political commitment. This is reflected in the emphasis on ‘evidence-based’ policy and ‘what works’, rather than on an idealised vision of a possible future or moral imperatives.

The deference to the market and neo-liberal economic policies are framed as necessary and inevitable, and not as a political choice. The opportunities for debate and the exploration of alternatives are closed off. Because the point of the discourse is not to rally people around a political vision but to legitimate policy and close off debate, Hay (2004) argues that the normalisation of neo-liberalism under New Labour, and the way

in which the direction of social change is framed as unassailable, are in part responsible for the cynicism and disconnect the public feel towards politics.

*(ii) Reconciliation of traditional antagonisms*

The second feature of 'third way' discourse is the way in which it brings together and claims to resolve traditional political antagonisms and conflicts in a pragmatic and ideologically neutral way. It draws on both left and right, aspiring to rise above political differences, standing for both economic prosperity and social justice.

My vision for the twenty-first century is of a popular politics reconciling themes which in the past have wrongly been regarded as antagonistic – patriotism and internationalism; rights and responsibilities; the promotion of enterprise and the attack on poverty and discrimination. (Blair, 1998: 1)

This has been termed "the language of reconciliation" by Fairclough (2000). Yet there are numerous tensions within New Labour policy that are not so easy to reconcile. It seeks to avoid ideology by proclaiming pragmatism, and yet asserts a moral agenda as imperative in both domestic and foreign policy. It simultaneously devolves power to a more local level, and draws in control to the centre. It prioritises social inclusion and community engagement at the same time as deliberately excluding people (for example through anti-social behaviour orders, ASBOs, and curfews) and institutions (such as failing schools or poorly performing hospitals) from the mainstream.

The contradictions and paradoxes within New Labour policy point to the reluctance of New Labour to engage with and explore ways of reconciling the tensions, and the way in which it falls back on simply asserting reconciliation. This has been interpreted as populism by Powell (2000) and Lister (2001), who argue that the ambition to please all people and grab headlines has resulted in incoherent policy-making and a lack of political leadership.

Bastow and Martin (2003) propose a different and more generous interpretation. They suggest that where Thatcher was not concerned with the social costs of neo-liberal policies, New Labour retains a sense of responsibility for social welfare and seeks to guide the country through a period of profound change "without the fallout of social disruption and breakdown" (p66). Social solidarity and cohesion depend on being able to appeal to people and their interests across the board, hence the discursive emphasis on reconciliation and rising above old conflicts.

### *(iii) A new social morality*

In order to promote cohesion and avoid social disruption, Bastow and Martin (2003) argue, New Labour seeks to govern “through moral categories that emphasise common purpose, mutual obligations and shared responsibilities” (p66). And this is the third feature within ‘third way’ discourse to be highlighted here, what has been called the moralising and ‘responsibilisation’ of community and individuals (Rose, 2000). It is also expressed through the focus on community, social capital, and the voluntary sector. But this moralising is not a simple exhortation, or even a cynical façade, but a way of governing people.

Yet in New Labour’s project moralisation is not a façade masking its real intentions simply to adopt free market policies. On the contrary, and perhaps even more insidiously, the purpose is to generate a new culture in which individuals think of themselves as self-regulating subjects responsible for their own personal innovation as products on the labour market. (Bastow & Martin, 2003: 67)

Foucault’s notion of governmentality has been employed by a range of authors as a way of considering and analysing New Labour and the ‘third way’, and especially its moral and social interest (Fyfe, 2005; Newman, 2003; Dean, 2003; Rose, 2000). Governmentality has been defined as ‘the conduct of conduct’, and can be further understood as the technologies and means through which government regulates social activity and through which individuals “are constituted as self-disciplining subjects” (Newman, 2003: 5). It is about the exercise of power as productive rather than coercive, in the sense of producing identities which construct citizens as responsible for their own welfare, the prospects of their communities, the behaviour of their children, and so on<sup>18</sup>.

People are impelled, if not compelled, to adopt the identity of responsible, active, working citizen, and to play their part in the essential programmes of modernisation and reform. Williams (1999: 667) traces the construction of an “active welfare subject” by both the right and left. The welfare recipient is made ‘active’ as a way of countering the culture of ‘welfare dependency’. ‘Active’ has multiples meanings. It entails exercising choice and in some cases being relabelled as a ‘consumer’. It also involves taking responsibility for their own welfare, and articulating the welfare needs

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<sup>18</sup> Rose (2000) cites the example of the parental reading pledge, whereby parents sign a commitment to read with their children for at least 20 minutes a day, illustrating the concern of government to ensure compliance with its idea of morality.

of their communities. The active welfare subject is therefore as much about individual needs as it is about collective needs and shared responsibilities.

Here is a welfare subject whose identities are sustained through interdependence, through striving for the mutual recognition of worth and a tolerance of diversity, and whose capacity for self-interested action is mediated through bonds of belonging and meanings of identity and structured by local, national and international relations of power and inequality. (Williams, 1999: 685)

Those who are unwilling to contribute to the changes that New Labour have prescribed are out of touch, old fashioned or “wreckers” (Blair, 2002b). As Rose (2000: 1409) comments “Citizenship becomes conditional on conduct”.

Embedded in these contemporary programmes and strategies for the reformulation of social governance is a particular ethic of personhood—a view of what persons are and what they should be allowed to be. (du Gay, 2004: 41)

This ethic is even apparent in the construction of ‘responsible’ children. Cunningham and Lavalette’s (2004) case study of the student strike in protest against the war on Iraq points to the tension between the students as ‘active citizens’ who engage in policy debate and democratic processes, and their labelling as ‘irresponsible truants’ who were punished for their actions. Even though public services and welfare are prime targets for ‘enterprising up’ (du Gay, 2004: 45), it is clear that political debate and political action is not an arena where government is looking for people to exhibit their entrepreneurial inclinations.

Discourse analysis has proven to be a powerful way of understanding the rationale behind New Labour social policy, and in identifying some of the implications of the way in which it frames and debates policy.

## **Summary**

Reviewing the social policy literature has pointed to social welfare as an arena of intense political debate, with almost constantly shifting relationships between the state and citizen.

Welfare in the UK has been provided through a mix of public, private and voluntary sector services. Concepts of social welfare in the UK have changed from an original vision of a universal welfare state indicative of a progressive society, to welfare as fostering dependency and leading to economic decline. The division of welfare roles and responsibilities between state, individual, market and community have shifted away from the state taking primary responsibility and towards a greater role for individuals and the market. These trends have been associated with the growing dominance of economic imperatives and neo-liberalism in political discourse.

Discourse analysis has proven to be an increasingly useful and powerful way of analysing shifting welfare paradigms. In particular it has been applied to the 'third way' politics of the New Labour government, especially given the lack of a clear and coherent political vision and concerns about 'spin' and media presentation. The three main characteristics of New Labour approaches to policy have been identified as: "sociological determinism" which entails in particular an unquestioning deference to the influences of global capitalism; "the language of reconciliation" which involves asserting a new pragmatism in politics; and the "responsibilisation" and moralisation of individuals and communities who are required to behave as 'active citizens'.

### **Chapter summary**

It is suggested here that research and analysis of social entrepreneurship is best approached from multiple perspectives in order to capture its complex and hybrid nature. As such this chapter has reviewed three literatures which are directly relevant to social entrepreneurship and its role and significance in UK social policy: entrepreneurship theory; the study of the voluntary or nonprofit sector; and social policy discourse analysis. The three literatures provide complementary rather than alternative theoretical approaches, and were chosen because of the particular way in which social entrepreneurship has manifested in the UK and the particular research questions posed here. They provide the framework for this study into social entrepreneurship in the UK, providing the basis for carrying out the research, and collecting and analysing the data. The next chapter sets out the research methodology and process in detail.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

### **Introduction**

Having established the theoretical approach adopted in this study, this chapter sets out the research design and the research process followed. It is divided into three sections. In the first section the way in which the research topic and research questions were clarified and refined is discussed. Within this, the rationale for using a single case study design is presented and the boundaries to the case are described. The second section outlines the research process and how the research was carried out in practical terms, over what time period, how the data was organised and analysed, and how initial findings and themes were drawn out. The chapter ends with some reflections on the nature of the research process and on the limitations and weaknesses of this study.

### **3.1 Research design**

The research design is important in clearly establishing the research approach, the questions, and the boundaries of the study. This section starts by outlining the broad approach adopted in terms of social construction. It goes on to revisit the research questions, conceptualising social entrepreneurship as an idea, a practice and field of action, and a policy discourse. It then locates social entrepreneurship in relation to other fields of policy discourse and organisational practice, and in particular to distinguish it from some of the other ‘social-business’ concepts that have become popular in policy debates in recent years. This helps to establish boundaries to the research topic. This in turn enables the different stages and elements of the research methods to be outlined, the types of data required and appropriate data collection techniques.

#### *Clarifying the epistemological stance*

Social construction is an epistemological approach that can be applied to a wide variety of social phenomena, and has been (Hacking, 1999). It is an approach which claims that social reality is created – ‘constructed’ – by the way that people think, talk and act.

Underpinning social construction is the idea that ‘social reality’ is not necessarily given or natural, but that social customs, traditions, rules, relationships, norms, rituals,

and institutions are created by people. As such social reality is an on-going production process whereby people interact with one another and attribute meaning as they build social relationships and institutions:

... social order is a human product. Or, more precisely, an ongoing human production. (Berger & Luckman, 1966: 51)

Some people have more say in the construction and regulation of 'social reality' than others, and this clearly locates power in certain places and amongst specific people and roles in society. Change takes place over time both spontaneously and deliberately, through debate and almost imperceptible alterations in behaviours, as well as through intentional interventions.

Social construction challenges in particular the positivist empirical traditions of social science research, and especially where variables and factors are clearly identified and studied statistically (Burr, 1995). Instead, it focuses attention on contexts, relationships, and perceptions and is characterised by a focus on variety, difference, contradictions, and contested accounts. It also draws attention to absences and silences (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Social construction attempts to challenge underlying assumptions relating to ways of organising and understanding the world and to demonstrate that how something is constructed is not inevitable, that there are alternatives (Hacking, 1999). In contesting taken for granted forms of understanding and dominant ideologies, social constructionism seeks to identify where power lies in society and to expose and challenge inequalities. It seeks to open up new ways of constructing and considering 'social reality'. As such, social construction does not claim to be neutral or objective. Rather it is often either explicitly or implicitly political, and in many cases the purpose of research is to bring about change, often by reconceiving social reality from different perspectives (Harding, 2003).

Social construction provides a helpful perspective on social entrepreneurship for a number of reasons, and focuses the research on: the *context* within which social entrepreneurship developed in the UK; the *idea* of social entrepreneurship; and the way in which social entrepreneurship has been realised in *practice*.

First, it offers a way of relating the emergence of social entrepreneurship in the UK to dominant ideologies and to trends in policy discourse. In this way the *context* is a

central issue which influences, shapes and contributes to the construction of social entrepreneurship, rather than providing a background against which social entrepreneurship develops. This helps to address the main research question which locates social entrepreneurship specifically within UK social policy.

Second, it offers a more questioning and critical approach than exists in much of the literature by revealing and challenging the assumptions underpinning it. As such it provides a way of unpacking the *idea* of social entrepreneurship (Hacking, 1999). In doing that, the purpose is to reveal the assumptions which uphold the idea, the different interests that are served, and the variety of purposes and effects of the idea.

Third, social entrepreneurship is a field of *practice* that has been consciously created and promoted: I am suggesting that it is not ‘natural’, but something that has been ‘constructed’ rather than discovered. As Hacking (1999) says, social entrepreneurship is ‘real’ but not ‘inevitable’. Social construction provides a way of revealing and interrogating the relationships created, who has what control over the forms social entrepreneurship takes, who are included and excluded as social entrepreneurs and how, and to what social purposes it contributes.

### ***Refining the research questions***

At the early stages of undertaking this PhD I felt swamped with so much information and knowledge that at times I found it difficult to see the wood for the trees. Grint (2000) expressed this very potently when he commented on how, as his academic studies progressed, his knowledge of leadership increased significantly at the same time as his understanding decreased. As I became clearer about my perception of social entrepreneurship as a social construct, I was able to focus the research questions on social entrepreneurship as an emergent concept and field of practice, rather than social entrepreneurship as entrepreneurial people and processes. This was a significant shift in my thinking and focus, and was more of a gradual process than a clear-cut change in direction. It also meant leaving behind some of what I was interested in, and actively forgetting some of the things I thought I knew. Phillips & Hardy (2002: 61) comment that “research questions grow out of the set of basic assumptions about the topic of study held by the researchers”, and there was certainly a period during which I



needed to become more aware of what my assumptions were in order to refine the exact focus of study and the sort of research questions I wanted to ask.

I was also influenced by Dess et al's (1999) article reviewing research directions into entrepreneurship to realise the importance of asking questions that are not obvious (i.e. something we already know), irrelevant (does not speak to any assumptions) or absurd (something completely counter intuitive) (Dess et al, 1999). Over time, the research questions did become clearer to me as part of a process of understanding and articulating my own interests and perspective, together with my increasing familiarisation with the discourses and practices of social entrepreneurship. The research questions were posed in Chapter One, and are repeated here as a reminder and reference:

*What is the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy?*

*(i) how and why has social entrepreneurship developed in the UK?*

*(ii) how is social entrepreneurship represented?*

*(iii) how is social entrepreneurship enacted?*

The first question is focused on *contextualising* social entrepreneurship and identifying the relevant political and policy discourses and trends that have contributed to the ways in which social entrepreneurship has been taken up in the UK. It sets the scene for social entrepreneurship, and marks out the important moments and events in the development and emergence of social entrepreneurship in the UK.

The second question is focused on social entrepreneurship as an *idea*. It therefore reviews the different images and representations of social entrepreneurship, the rationale and justifications put forwards, and how these developed and changed over time. It also explores in more detail the reasons why social entrepreneurship became of interest within government policy, and why it came to be seen as a means through which government policy agendas could be pursued and achieved.

The third question is focused on what takes place under the name of social entrepreneurship – social entrepreneurship as a *practice*. It is about the ways that social entrepreneurship has been taken up by practitioners, why there were

organisations set up to support social entrepreneurs, how resources have been allocated not only for the work of social entrepreneurs but for promoting the idea of social entrepreneurship, and what sort of relationships have been created as part of the enactment of social entrepreneurship. It is about social entrepreneurship as a field of organised action.

### ***Conceptualising, locating and bounding social entrepreneurship***

There is a difficult balance in all research into social entrepreneurship between being precise and clear in terms of the definition employed, and being broad and inclusive in order to allow for the flexibility required to understand such a new phenomenon (Nicholls, 2006; Osberg & Martin, 2007). This research faced the same challenge.

I make no attempts here to present a clear definition of social entrepreneurship, because the point of this study is to identify and explore the range of definitions and representations of social entrepreneurship in use. As stated in Chapter 1, this thesis is focused on social entrepreneurship as the ‘social innovation’ school of thought. It does however contain consistent references in the text to the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought in terms of the overlap and confusion between these two broad definitions.

The main way of establishing boundaries to the research was textually. As such, texts which used the term social entrepreneur or social entrepreneurship in terms of the ‘social innovation’ school of thought were identified as the main way of focusing the work and establishing boundaries. Such texts were authored by a wide range of organisations and individuals: think-tanks, support and infrastructure organisations, the media, politicians, policy-makers, social entrepreneurs, people working in the voluntary sector. In a few cases, some organisational texts and practices which did not themselves use the terminology of social entrepreneurship, but which were closely involved in shaping social entrepreneurship, were also included.

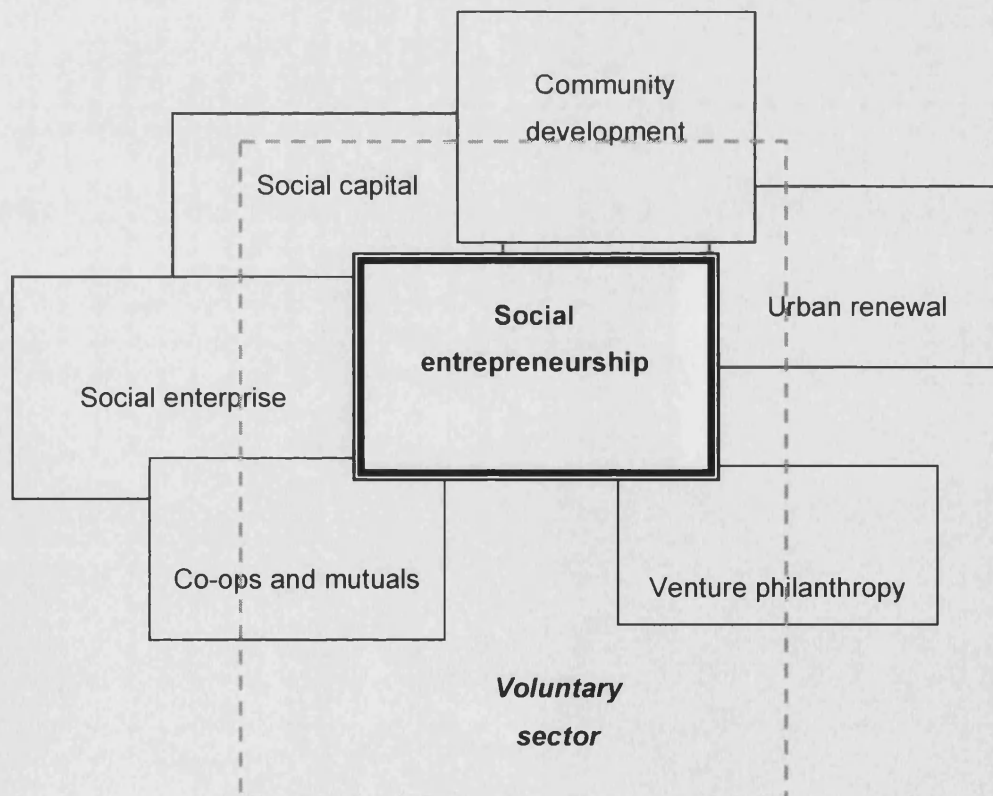
In terms of discourse and language ‘social entrepreneurship’ can be located in relation to other similar terms that have emerged into policy debate since the 1990s, specifically ‘social capital’, ‘social enterprise’ and ‘venture philanthropy’. These terms often appear together, and are closely associated as new approaches to tackling ‘social problems’, as two of the founders of UnLtd said:

there is a lot of rhetoric around, around entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, community entrepreneurship, community business, venture philanthropy...

at the moment there is lots of talk about venture philanthropy, venture funds, new money, new ways of thinking about money.

Similarly, social entrepreneurship can also be located in relation to a number of existing and more 'traditional' fields of social action, including 'community development', 'urban renewal', 'co-ops and mutuals', and as part of the 'voluntary sector'. The diagram below, Figure 3.1, positions social entrepreneurship in relation to these different fields and terms, showing how social entrepreneurship is at the same time distinct but closely interconnected with them.

Figure 3.1: Locating social entrepreneurship



### ***Defining the case study***

This research has been construed as a case study in discourse analysis. This then provides a methodological framework within which to consider social entrepreneurship discursively. The case is considered to be social entrepreneurship as a concept, a policy discourse and a field of action in the UK.

In his influential work on conducting case study research, Yin comment that “the distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomenon” where “the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2003: 2). Approaching social entrepreneurship as a case study is consistent with Yin’s (2003) three criteria for the applicability of case studies:

- ‘how and why’ research questions are being posed;
- there is no control by the researcher over events;
- the events are contemporary.

As a single case study, this research is not intended to be representative of policy or practice developments in the UK, although the discourse of social entrepreneurship is located within wider changes in policy discourses and is part of the dynamic of those changing discourses. Instead, social entrepreneurship is presented here as of interest in its own right, what Stake refers to as an “intrinsic case study” (Stake, 1998: 237). In his account of case study research Stake argues that case studies do not make good grounds for theoretical generalisations but are better thought of as unique and ‘intrinsically’ valuable. Consistent with Stake (1998), social entrepreneurship has not been chosen here as a topic of study because researching it will contribute to advancing understanding of some other phenomenon; rather social entrepreneurship is regarded here as an important and interesting phenomenon itself. A great deal of care is therefore needed when analysing the case and considering to what extent any findings or analysis can be generalised.

Social entrepreneurship as a single case study has elements of being both a descriptive and an explanatory case (Yin, 2003). The study aims to document and describe the

landscape of social entrepreneurship as discourse and practice, as well as to provide theoretical insight into how and why it is significant and what roles it plays. It also aims to present social entrepreneurship as it has changed and developed over time, and therefore offers a longitudinal perspective on the topic.

In designing the case, Yin (2003) identified ‘embedded units’ as key components. The embedded units are especially useful for identifying sources of data and focusing data collection. And in policy analysis, Marston (2002: 307) points out that “the objects of investigation are both the policy products (documents, legislation) and the individuals and organisational activities that develop and implement these products”.

As such, three main embedded units were identified for this study: the policy discourse; organisations; and individuals. The embedded units were identified as operating at different levels of analysis. The potential sources of data for each unit were identified: the policy level – policy documents, media reports, speeches mentioning or focused on social entrepreneurship; organisations – those supporting social entrepreneurs and those promoting social entrepreneurship more widely; individual – people who have been labelled or awarded the title of social entrepreneur and those who have self identified as social entrepreneurs. These are presented and summarised in Table 3.1 below, and the sites of data collection are listed.

Table 3.1: Data collection sites and embedded units

<b>Embedded units</b>	<b>The data sites</b>
Policy discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy, research and reports into social entrepreneurship</li> <li>- systems and discourses shaping and influencing the environment and support for social entrepreneurship, including political interest and media coverage</li> </ul>
Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- organisations promoting the concept of social entrepreneurship</li> <li>- organisations supporting, funding, training, or otherwise engaging directly with social entrepreneurs</li> </ul>
Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- individual social entrepreneurs, members of SE networks, award winners</li> <li>- commentators and critics on social entrepreneurship</li> </ul>

When there is a single case being studied, an embedded design can help to avoid “slippage” and keep the study focused (Yin, 2003: 42). At the same time it is very important when conducting the analysis to return to the single case as the primary research site. There can be a tendency to report multiple cases, especially if organisations are being studied, rather than to bring the embedded units together in order to analyse the single case in question.

the main unit of analysis is likely to be at the level being addressed by the main study questions. (Yin, 2003: 25)

As well as considering the embedded units, the longitudinal perspective adopted in this study was an important aspect of the research design. The main period of data collection was from early 2000 to the end of 2004. However, because the field was changing so rapidly, it was important to remain up to date with what was taking place, and in practice I did take advantage of subsequent opportunities to gain further information about the field up until the end of 2006. As Yin suggests, I remained “flexible” and took “advantage of unexpected opportunities” in ensuring that I responded to the case as I was researching and learning about it (Yin, 2003: 42). Similarly, as I started to write up the history and emergence of social entrepreneurship, it became important to look back as far as 1980 to trace early occurrences of social entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, because I had not anticipated this, it meant that I did not collect interview data about this period but relied more on documents and other forms of written evidence.

This provides an overview of the research design and how the case of social entrepreneurship was identified and bounded. The processes of data collection and analysis are detailed below.

### **3.2 Research process**

The research process took place in four consecutive stages, with each part informing how the next stage was carried out.

The collection of data and its analysis took place side by side, in an iterative way. This had many benefits in being able to keep track of and respond to ongoing developments

in the field of social entrepreneurship, and analysis could inform and guide the research as it progressed. Furthermore, a discourse analysis approach meant that it was important that I identified how social entrepreneurship was presented, discussed, and enacted in routine ways, as praxis, and not simply how people chose to present it to me as a researcher. At the same time, if I had sought out all the conversations and all the ways in which social entrepreneurship was being realised, I would quickly have become overwhelmed by data. I therefore did need to find ways of focusing the data collection and identifying what data was most relevant and what I could use that would be meaningful (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

My role as a researcher took on multiple forms, and I engaged with the field of social entrepreneurship in a number of different ways. Some of the research focused on planned data collection, where sources of data were identified and hunted out, whereas other aspects of the research involved observation and participation and arose more out of my position within and close to the field. However this also meant that at times my role felt ambiguous, as the boundaries between the data collection, the data analysis and my own role were blurred. A diversity of types of data was identified in order to ensure that the data collected reflected the variety and extent of discourses on social entrepreneurship. There was an emphasis on “naturally occurring” texts which are “examples of language in use” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002: 71).

In this part I outline the four stages of data collection: background interviews; semi-structured interviews; documents; and participant observation. I then go on to set out the ways in which data was analysed.

### **Data collection**

Table 3.2 summarises the four stages of research and the three level at which data was collected. During the first stage, the focus was on the organisational level. The second stage, of semi-structured interviews, broadened the data collection to include the policy and individual level as well as the organisational level. The third stage, which focused on collecting documentary data, was similarly broad. And the final and fourth stage honed in on the policy and organisational level.

Table 3.2: Stages of research

Stage of research	Policy level	Org. level	Ind. level
Stage 1: Background interviews	•	• organisations promoting and supporting social entrepreneurship	•
Stage 2: Semi-structured interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• voluntary sector umbrella bodies</li> <li>• government and policy makers</li> <li>• critics and commentators</li> </ul>	• organisations promoting and supporting social entrepreneurship	• individual social entrepreneurs
Stage 3: Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• think-tank reports</li> <li>• government policy and reports</li> <li>• political speeches</li> <li>• media coverage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organisational websites</li> <li>• organisational documents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• database information about members of social entrepreneur networks</li> <li>• documents and websites about individual social entrepreneurs and their organisations</li> </ul>
Stage 4: Participant observation	• attendance at conferences, seminars and other events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attendance at conferences, seminars and other events</li> <li>• brief pieces of consultancy work</li> </ul>	•

### ***Stage One: Background***

The starting point was to gain an overview of the field, and in particular what is going on, who is talking about it, what are they saying, what are they trying to achieve, what



the issues are, and what the key debates are about. My focus was on social entrepreneurship as ‘social innovation’, as set out in Chapter One, and this was the entry point to the topic and remained the primary focus throughout.

During 2000, I talked informally with 7 people active in the field about social entrepreneurship in order to gather background information. These were: the director of the School for Social Entrepreneurs; the director and administrator of Ashoka UK; two freelance consultants active in the field; two people working at Community Action Network, one of whom was a founding employee; a member of one of the social entrepreneur networks.

My understanding and knowledge of social entrepreneurship was also informed by the research I had undertaken in 1997, as part of an MSc<sup>19</sup>, into the relationship between the vision and actions of social entrepreneurs. At that time I had also met with the founder (Lord Michael Young) and first director (David Stockley) of the School for Social Entrepreneurs; carried out a short piece of research for the SSE; attended the rather plush launch of the Demos publication ‘The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur’; attended several lunchtime and evening meetings of Ashoka with social entrepreneurs from developing countries; met with the Chair of Ashoka informally; undertook some voluntary work for Ashoka into funding opportunities for their work in Central and Eastern Europe; and attended a seminar on social and civic entrepreneurship organised by the Open University. This was a mix of academic study, paid work, voluntary work and general engagement and interest in the field and provided background knowledge and experience of the field.

### ***Stage Two: Semi-structured interviews***

Interviews are often a significant source of data for qualitative research, but in the case of discourse analysis it should be noted that an interview introduces an additional dynamic between the person interviewed and the researcher. I was aware that this could distract from or even distort the discourses on social entrepreneurship (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). The interviews were, nevertheless, a useful way of creating texts on social entrepreneurship, and on the whole it was assumed that the nature of the interviews was indicative of wider discussion and thinking on social entrepreneurship.

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<sup>19</sup> The dissertation ‘Social Entrepreneurs: Vision and Action’ was carried out in 1997 as part of an Organisational Psychology MSc at Birkbeck College, University of London.

They were especially useful in determining the context for social entrepreneurship, and also as a more direct way of accessing people's perceptions and the ways that they understood social entrepreneurship than was apparent from some of the documents and public information.

Interviewees were selected on the basis that they knew about social entrepreneurship, and in most cases were actively involved in the field. They were identified as people who were influential in promoting and developing concepts of social entrepreneurship, or as people who had commented on or used the term in a considered way. Informants included:

- founders, directors, trustees and staff of organisations promoting social entrepreneurship;
- social entrepreneurs, both self identified and identified by others;
- people working in community development;
- funders;
- people who had a policy interest in social entrepreneurship, either in central government, local government, voluntary sector infrastructure organisations, or think-tanks.

Several were easily identified as key people in the field, and through them other interviewees were identified. An effort was made to ensure that people from around the UK were interviewed, including people from London and the South East, Wales, Scotland, and the North of England. Interviews were loosely structured to encourage informants to talk about what aspects of social entrepreneurship were most salient to them, in their own words. Generally three initial open questions were asked to start the conversation, which then developed into a discussion:

- What does social entrepreneurship mean to you?
- Why do you think that social entrepreneurship has emerged now?
- What are the main issues within the field of social entrepreneurship?
- What are the main challenges experienced by social entrepreneurs?

Points were probed and followed up as they arose, and where it seemed helpful my own thoughts and reflections from previous interviews or documents were used to prompt responses. This meant that some interviews covered similar issues, and others raised completely different ones, and depended on the position of the person interviewed and their interest in the field, which was often as personal as it was a reflection of their organisation and its role. The sort of areas covered included: organisational issues faced by social entrepreneurs, including governance and accountability; the nature of the organisations supporting social entrepreneurs; the nature of funding relationships; the relationships with and role of government; the tension between the focus on the individual social entrepreneur and collective processes; forms of risk and failure. Most of these arose from the opening questions. In general the interviews were informative and comfortable, and the conversations were lively. During a couple of interviews I felt that the people were not engaged with the issue and were not so animated, and both of these were with representative bodies within the voluntary sector. In these cases social entrepreneurship was of more marginal interest to their main work. In several cases I had additional contact with the people interviewed, and this was counted as observational data rather than interview data.

In all cases, except for one where the tape recorder failed, interviews were recorded, and generally lasted between 45 minutes and 3 hours. There were two phases of interviews. The first took place between November 2001 and February 2002, and 18 people were interviewed. The second phase took place a year later, following some analysis of the first stage of interviews, and following further active data collection in terms of observation and documents. The research was broadened to include a wider range of organisations that were starting to use the term social entrepreneurship and more policy oriented interviews. 14 people were interviewed at this stage.

The interviews were conducted on the basis that they were confidential, and interviewees are therefore not named. As such, quotations from interviews included in this thesis are not attributed, except occasionally when the role or position of the person making the comment is considered important.

There were some experiences I had which I would consider common among researchers, especially when conducting interviews for social science research. Certainly there were people I interviewed who were conscious of the time they spent with me and took care in circumscribing it. In some cases it was useful to emphasise my practical work experience in order to gain credibility, and in other cases it was useful to have been put in touch through a third person. In most cases I was able to access the people and organisations I approached, even if at times it took several months to arrange an actual interview date. There were some people who did not reply to letters or calls, and who did not want to be interviewed.

At the same time, there were a number of other issues that I felt related specifically to social entrepreneurship. Some people were very reluctant to engage with academics and academic research, and this was expressed in terms of their interest in 'action' and 'doing' rather than 'talking' and 'thinking', and as about having an 'entrepreneurial' approach themselves: the catch phrases 'doing not thinking' and being 'practical not academic' were used by several people. The reluctance and ambivalence towards academia was more apparent amongst the organisations promoting social entrepreneurship than amongst individual social entrepreneurs. The latter were generally keen to learn about what I was doing and keen to tell their stories. Another interesting development was the introduction of charging for interviews by one of the social entrepreneur organisations (CAN) and a prominent social enterprise. Though this did not directly affect me it was an issue for two masters students who were researching social entrepreneurship and who had approached me for advice and guidance. The suggested rate was £100 per hour. In both cases it was justified as needing to place a financial value on their time and expertise, and as being business like and professional. And in both cases the fees were dropped for the masters students. The issue of how organisations signal their 'business-like' and 'professional' nature are covered in later chapters.

A report was written up of the findings from the first stage of interviews, and copies were sent to the informants. This was done partly to elicit responses from them, though a more important reason was to provide them with feedback about the range of views on social entrepreneurship. This proved to be an important way in which I was able to then access organisations in the second stage of interviews. It also prompted

UnLtd, with which I already had contact, to approach me to carry out some consultancy work for them. And this proved an invaluable way for me to learn more about the field and keep up to date with developments. The first stage report was also an important part of the analysis.

### ***Stage Three: Documents***

#### Printed materials

Social entrepreneurship is presented and promoted in a wide range of documents, most of which are publicly available, and have played an important role in defining and shaping the debates on social entrepreneurship. Some of the most important documents were think-tank reports, often referred to as a 'grey' literature. Other written documents that were relevant included: a number of government taskforce and policy reports; transcripts of speeches by government ministers; public organisational documents and promotional materials, such as annual reports and accounts; internal organisational documents, such as evaluations and memos; press reports and media coverage.

#### Websites

The internet has been a key medium through which social entrepreneurship has been presented, promoted, and discussed, and has also been a repository for information. The emergence of social entrepreneurship has been concurrent with popularisation of the internet. The main websites analysed for this study were those of the organisations promoting and supporting social entrepreneurs and those of government. In order to document changes and developments over time, I accessed the websites regularly during the period of this research, and also made use of archived websites available on the internet.

#### Visual images

Visual images do not play quite such a central role in social entrepreneurship as the written word plays, but are nevertheless important in providing insight into the discourses. The range of visual images and impressions that were considered in this research included: photographs and the appearance of promotional materials, including websites; offices and workplace environments; visual imagery used in texts, documents and presentations; cartoons (though social entrepreneurship has not inspired much humour).

### ***Stage Four: Observation and participant observation***

My role researching social entrepreneurship located me as a participant within the field of social entrepreneurship rather than simply as an observer or investigator looking in from outside. Equally, my prior involvement with and knowledge of the field

provided opportunities for me to observe and participate in a range of events, conferences, training sessions, seminars and as a consultant. I also had regular informal meetings and telephone conversations with a number of people involved with and interested in social entrepreneurship, as a way of sharing experience, knowledge and ideas, and gaining insight into the dynamics of the field. This included people whom I had interviewed, as well as researchers and academics, and a range of people working as consultants or within social entrepreneurship organisations.

The emphasis was on variety in terms of both the type of data collected and the way in which it was collected. The intention was to gain a rounded picture of social entrepreneurship as a field, identifying the many different forms that it takes. In the following part I outline the approaches I took to collating the data and starting to analyse it.

### **Data analysis**

In the introductory chapter four key purposes to this study were presented: to describe the changing landscape of social entrepreneurship in the UK; to contextualise social entrepreneurship within policy debate and discourse; to reveal the nature of social entrepreneurship as an idea and practice; and to rescue the analysis of social entrepreneurship from the dominance of managerial perspectives. The analysis of the data focused on addressing these purposes.

Two main strategies were adopted. First, the data was organised, coded and categorised in order to create the basis for describing and contextualising social entrepreneurship. Second was a more specific focus on identifying and analysing the discourses in order to reveal and critique social entrepreneurship.

The organisation, coding and categorising of the data involved a period of familiarisation. This included transcribing interviews, detailed reading of the texts, organising the texts, and inputting them into NUD\*IST4 where possible. Through these processes I came to know the texts well and could tentatively start to identify commonalities and variations between and within texts. NUD\*IST4 is a computer

based qualitative data analysis package, which is especially useful in qualitative analysis for the identification of ‘codes and categories’ that capture common concepts, and in mapping out how concepts relate to each other (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through this process I could start to identify in detail: the different definitions of social entrepreneurship in use; the different images of individuals presented; the way in which the language of ‘business’ was applied to social entrepreneurship; its location; the sorts of problems it is meant to solve; and what sort of relationships it enables.

Some of this analysis then formed the basis for a more discursive analysis. The focus here was on identifying coherent and distinct discourses running through social entrepreneurship. It was more about synthesising different elements and aspects of social entrepreneurship, rather than breaking them down into codes and categories as has happened in the previous stage of analysis. The point of discourse analysis is to investigate the purposes and effects of the discourses.

The overall goal of the analysis is to explain what is being done in the discourse and how this is accomplished, that is, how the discourse is structured or organized to perform various functions and achieve various effects or consequences. (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 95)

Discourse analysis is not a prescriptive process, and Gill comments that “the skills of discourse analysis do not lend themselves to procedural description” (Gill, 2000: 177). Analysing texts in coherent, interesting and meaningful ways requires both close attention to detail and the ability to step back and see patterns and relationships. It is sometimes referred to as a craft, which benefits from practice and experience (Wetherall & Potter, 1992; Phillips & Hardy, 2002; Wood & Kroger, 2000).

The creative and reflexive nature of discourse analysis make it essentially incompatible with traditional scientific notions of validity and reliability. Wood & Kroger (2000) argue that, rather than considering validity and reliability, discourse analysis should be considered “warrantable to the extent that it is both trustworthy and sound” (p167).

In a general way, we mean that trustworthy claims are those that can be dependent upon not only as a useful way of understanding the discourse at hand, but also as a possible basis for understanding other discourse.... sound claims are solid, credible, and convincing (because



they are logical, based on evidence, etc.). (Wood & Kroger, 2000: 167)

Taking this on board, during the data analysis I attempted to follow the suggestions put forward by Wood and Kroger (2000), and similarly emphasised by Gill (2000), to demonstrate the warrantability of the analysis. These included: orderly and well documented data (and certainly a computer package helped with this); grounding interpretation in demonstrable examples, and constantly identifying examples and counter examples to make the claims and arguments I was developing more robust; a coherent argument<sup>20</sup> which takes account of exceptions and alternatives; and plausibility, in the sense of it relating the analysis to theory and other bodies of knowledge. At the same time, the analysis was a personal process, involving subjective judgements based on immersion in the data, self-reflection, and regular reference to theory.

The approach I adopted followed common analytical principles and practices found within discourse analysis and focused on the content (what are the discourses?), the purposes (what are the aims of the discourses?) and the effects (what are the effects and implications of the discourses?). In practice I went back and forth between these different aspects of the analysis rather than carrying them out in a sequence, and it was effectively an iterative process that built up the analysis gradually. Emphasis was placed on the substance and meaning of the texts as well as on how the texts were structured. I approached the analysis with a series of questions, which came from the literature review and the initial familiarisation with the texts, and were very much about testing out my own impressions of social entrepreneurship. These in turn gave rise to additional questions. Some of those questions are detailed in Table 3.3 below following the analytical practices identified above, the content, purposes and effects of the discourses:

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<sup>20</sup> Wood & Kroger (2000: 174) are careful to distinguish a coherent analysis and argument from coherent discourse, where the discourse is coherent from the participants' perspectives, whereas analysis and argument are the role of the researcher. Discourses may in fact be incoherent and contradictory, but can nevertheless be analysed to produce a coherent argument.

Table 3.3: Supplementary questions informing the research and data analysis

<b><i>What are the discourses of social entrepreneurship?</i></b>	
Content	What claims are being made? What problems are being solved? What are the characteristics of social entrepreneurs? What images of social entrepreneurs are being presented? Who are the social entrepreneurs? What sort of solutions are offered by social entrepreneurship? Who is included and who excluded from the field of social entrepreneurship? What is not being talked about? What stories are being told? Which social issues are covered and which are left out?
<b><i>What are the aims and intentions of the discourses?</i></b>	
Purposes	What sort of change is being sought? Who is being persuaded of what? Whose support is being sought and what sort of support? In what ways do the texts engage people and encourage debate and argument, and to what extent are they rhetorical and prescriptive? How is social entrepreneurship as a field located in relation to other fields? What are the implications of the location of social entrepreneurship?
<b><i>What are the effects and implications of the discourses?</i></b>	
Effects	Who is involved with social entrepreneurship? Who is attracted by the field? Who is left out? What issues are omitted or sidelined? Who gains status or power or prestige from social entrepreneurship? How does social entrepreneurship create links with other fields? What issues does social entrepreneurship raise?

One starting point was to look carefully at the sort of claims being made by ‘social entrepreneurship’, what problems it was intended to solve, and how it was to solve those problems. At an early stage I was starting to see common patterns in the texts, and could start to explore and test different discourses with a wider range of the texts. The concept of ‘interpretive repertoires’ was useful as a way of thinking about the different discourses that were being used and how they contributed to the construction of social entrepreneurship (Wetherall & Potter, 1992). The analysis continued in this vein, constantly referring back to the texts and looking for which themes and discourses were apparent, and where there were variations and contradictions.

### **3.3 Reflections on the research**

This section discusses some of the challenges I faced during the research and writing of the PhD, and some of the learning that came out of this for me. It also reflects on the weaknesses of the study and the research design, which became clearer during the writing up period.

#### ***The nature of the research process***

Undertaking a PhD requires a level of self reflection that goes along with attempts to grapple with and understand the topic being researched, and is both an academic learning process and a personal learning. I quickly realised that on most occasions I felt better able to connect with and relate to the people identified as social entrepreneurs and their work, than to those promoting social entrepreneurship. In fact I often felt a certain loyalty and obligation to try and help them where I could, and certainly where I thought there were useful contacts or information I would share these (with both social entrepreneurs and those promoting social entrepreneurship). One of the frustrations for me in doing a PhD was realising that there was often very little I could do or give at the time that would be helpful.

During the research process, I came to understand my role as a researcher as ambiguous. At the same time as I sought both to network with people and organisations in the field, I aimed also to retain a more objective and analytical perspective on it. At times I felt frustrated that I was not more of an insider and was concerned that I did not have enough information or day-to-day contact. As time went on, I gained more confidence. The consultancy work I carried out was one way that my relationship with the field developed, and a reasonable concern about this is that it would have drawn me into adopting the normative perspective on social entrepreneurship common to those organisations. If anything it was the opposite, and some of those experiences tended to make me more critical of the concept and the way in which it was being enacted. This form of engagement was useful in bringing out and making explicit my own judgements and assumptions about social entrepreneurship as a concept and the organisations working with social entrepreneurs.

When I started researching social entrepreneurship in 2000, there was little literature on social entrepreneurship and only a few pieces of academic work on the topic. This made for an exciting PhD subject, but it also made for a confusing one with few

pointers as to a productive route for research. Furthermore, social entrepreneurship was changing and evolving rapidly during the period of the study, which also made it hard to pin down and identify consistent boundaries and an exact focus for research. As more academic studies became available, particularly with a number of edited books on social entrepreneurship published in 2006, it became easier to position my thesis and its contribution. Despite my frustrations about the time it has taken to complete this thesis, I now think that altogether the delays were beneficial and enabled me to gain a far better insight into the topic than would have been possible if I had completed prior to 2006.

A closely related issue that gave me cause for considerable reflection was the nature of the academic research into social entrepreneurship and to what extent it offered useful theoretical insights into the topic. One of the aspects of social entrepreneurship that I found confusing in the early stages of my PhD was between social entrepreneurship as a normative and politicised concept and as a theoretically founded and analytical concept. I realised that much of the existing academic research is normative in nature, as academics have sought to promote and legitimise the field as worthy of interest and study. My concern was to approach social entrepreneurship in a more analytical and discriminating way, and to avoid re-presenting some of the normative narratives of social entrepreneurship that could equally be found in think-tank publications, organisational documents and academic studies. This served to fuel my interest in the concept as a social construct and to view the academic literature as contributing to the process of social construction.

#### ***Methodological lessons and limitations of this study***

The research design was a case study, with the case as social entrepreneurship as a field of ideas, practice and policy. This entailed identifying a number of data collection sites relating to embedded units at the organisational and individual level (Yin, 2003). The challenge of analysing a single case and going beyond analysis of the embedded units was highlighted earlier in this chapter. This was not so much a difficulty or problem in this work as a reminder to return always to the field as the main unit of study. What was harder was to assess exactly what data was required in order to make the link from the organisational level to the field. This research did not engage in detail with internal organisational issues, for example internal structures, management practices and culture. Rather it focused on how the organisations

presented themselves, and much of the time though not exclusively, on information that was publicly available. More detailed data collection and analysis at the organisational level may have resulted in a richer understanding of the field, and may have provided information about social entrepreneurship as an organisational practice that I did not access.

Similarly, I identified individuals as key informants to the study, but I had not anticipated personal identity as being a main theme. As the research continued, I chose to focus more on the organisations and policy relating to social entrepreneurship rather than the individual social entrepreneurs and how they responded and inculcated the identity on offer. Personal identity is therefore not analysed in the kind of depth that may also have provided additional insight into the rationale and significance of social entrepreneurship. This is clearly an area for future research.

The analytical approach adopted was discourse analysis. I chose this approach because it offered a way into social entrepreneurship that drew attention to language where the rhetoric and presentation of social entrepreneurship were so striking and provocative. I had not initially appreciated that discourse analysis is a complex theoretical field in its own right, and that to understand it in detail requires more considerably more time than I had. In addition, there are no set procedures or technologies to follow when conducting discourse analysis, and it is a technique that benefits from experience and practice. I had no experience of using discourse analysis prior to this thesis. During the final writing up, I did write and present a conference paper applying discourse analysis to social entrepreneurship internationally. This was very helpful in contributing to my confidence and familiarity with discourse analysis, and provided me with additional experience in manipulating data and identifying discourses. I realise, however, that there is considerably more potential for the application of discourse analysis in the field of social entrepreneurship than I have been able to demonstrate in this PhD.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the value of adopting a social constructionist approach and how this helped to focus the research onto the context within which social entrepreneurship developed, the idea of social entrepreneurship and the practice of social

entrepreneurship. It then outlined how the research was undertaken, and ended with some reflections on the research process. The next chapter discusses the context within which social entrepreneurship developed in the UK, and starts to present the findings of this thesis.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **Introduction**

This is the first of three chapters that describes and starts to analyse social entrepreneurship in the UK. The first chapter provided an overview of social entrepreneurship and some of the policy claims associated with it. In particular it highlighted the potential contribution of social entrepreneurship to community renewal, voluntary sector professionalisation, and social welfare reform. This chapter outlines in more detail how these three issues have been important to the changing political and policy context in the UK between 1980 and 2006. It starts to trace how social entrepreneurship emerged and developed. It charts how policy discourses have changed over time and relates these to the growing interest in social entrepreneurship. In doing this, it starts to tell the story of social entrepreneurship, and more specifically to set out a developmental framework and timeline for social entrepreneurship.

The importance of the policy context was established in Chapter 1 and in particular the eagerness with which the newly elected Labour government of 1997 embraced social entrepreneurship. The connection between the arrival of social entrepreneurship on the policy scene and the election of the New Labour government and its 'third way' policies in 1997 is evident, both in terms of timing and the very close association in people's minds between social entrepreneurship and the third way.

Now we realise we can combine the best of each [social and private] and people begin to have the insight that there are very valuable things in business, there are also very important values of solidarity and care between people. How do we move forward, being modern people, to shed the blinkers of yesteryear, to combine these things? It's pretty pure Third Way Blairism.

At the same time, Thatcherism is perceived as having set the scene for social entrepreneurship and as having contributed to the mindset, the social climate and the political imperatives that made social entrepreneurship possible.

...the political climate is important. Social entrepreneurs have been around forever but the idea of promoting a movement of social entrepreneurship – Thatcherism helped, the focus on the individual and the individual ability to change things, to achieve things, to take responsibility for themselves.

The emergence of social entrepreneurship has been associated with a frustration with the selfishness of Thatcherism, and has been seen by some as an attempt to ‘socialise’ entrepreneurship.

Maybe it's the shift from Thatcherism when everyone was a hard edged yuppie, loads-a-money and it's just the pendulum swinging the other way for a bit.

The shift from the ‘enterprise culture’ of Thatcherism to the ‘third way’ of New Labour is therefore the core of this chapter. This chapter takes the concepts of ‘enterprise’ and ‘entrepreneurship’, and discusses how these have been taken up and applied within social policy, welfare and the voluntary sector. It shows how enthusiasm for creating an ‘enterprise culture’ during the 1980s under the Conservative government of Prime Minister Thatcher, was followed by calls for an ‘entrepreneurial culture’ by the New Labour government. The bringing together of ‘enterprise’ and ‘welfare’, and the desire for more enterprise within social welfare, is part of ongoing changes taking place in ideas of welfare and how social policy should best respond to issues such as growing individualism. In particular, it is this shift from the free market “selfish” values promoted under Thatcher to a concern for community and civic values under Labour that provides the context for social entrepreneurship.

This chapter describes these evolving policy discourses and analyses the continuities and disjunctures between them. It is divided into three sections. In the first section, Thatcherism and the ‘enterprise culture’ are outlined, and key dates and events in the early appearances of social entrepreneurship are mentioned. Second, the New Labour policy context is set out, together with early policy responses to social entrepreneurship and the burgeoning organisational infrastructure established to support social entrepreneurs. Last, three stages in the development of social entrepreneurship during this period are proposed. These stages then form the framework for the next two chapters, which build up a picture of social entrepreneurship in the UK and how it has been represented and enacted.

#### **4.1 Thatcherism and the ‘enterprise culture’**

A Conservative government was elected in 1979. At this time Britain had become known as ‘the sick man of Europe’, with high levels of inflation, low levels of production, and a stagnating economy. The term ‘enterprise culture’ came into



common usage during Thatcherism, and “emerged as a central motif in the political thought and practice of the Conservative government in Britain” (Keat, 1991). The idea that a culture of entrepreneurship or an ‘enterprise culture’ could be deliberately fostered was taken up politically during the 1980s and has continued to be a major theme under successive governments. The new Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was concerned that “the British sense of enterprise and initiative would have been killed by socialism” and that her role was to reignite that spirit and give it free reign in a deregulated free market economy, and so “to transform Britain into an ‘enterprise culture’” (Keat, 1991: 1). There was a clear political vision, which involved radical transformation of the country.

During the 1980s entrepreneurship came to command a high level of regard not just in the UK, and being enterprising and entrepreneurial has become an aspiration of individuals, organisations, communities, and of whole societies:

Entrepreneurial fervour in the 1980s became a worldwide movement.  
(Alvarez, 1996).

The societal transformation represented by the ‘enterprise culture’ had two strands to it: i) an institutional focus on reforming public and private sector bodies, which spilled over to the voluntary sector; and ii) the promotion of an individual morality, encouraging people to be independent and enterprising, and challenging ‘dependency’ on state welfare (Keat, 1991).

Institutionally the private sector was privileged as an organisational form and ‘enterprise’ was equated with competition and free market practices. There were extensive programmes of economic and institutional reform, and these formed the basis for the transformation of both the business and public sectors. Two of the most important mechanisms adopted by government were privatisation and market deregulation (Carr, 2000). State-owned enterprises were privatised, a wide range of local government services were contracted out, and public bodies were restructured to include elements of competition (quasi-markets) and management practices that had been developed primarily in business settings (such as cost centres, strategic planning, and human resource management).

But it was not only structural change in organisational form that was central to policy, but also cultural shifts to what was presented as a more professionalised, business-like way of working that emphasised effective management over the traditional values of public service. It involved an emphasis on, and a celebration of, rationalisation, strategic review, performance, all of which were intended to transform British business and public services into responsive, flexible, efficient and highly competitive organisations (Clarke, Gewirtz & McLaughlin, 2001). The implication of these institutional reforms was that “ ‘the commercial enterprise’ took on a paradigmatic status, the preferred model for any form of institutional organization and provision of goods and services” (Keat, 1991: 3). This was explicitly contrasted with the public sector which was identified as bureaucratic and out-dated, and associated with inefficiency, inflexibility and ineffectiveness (du Gay, 2000; Carr, 2000).

Alongside such attempts at institutional reform, individuals were idealised as embodying ‘enterprise’, and were extolled to demonstrate “initiative, energy, independence, boldness, self-reliance, a willingness to take risks and to accept responsibility for one’s actions” (Keat, 1991: 3). Such qualities were attributed with a kind of higher morality, and were equated with the pursuit of economic and social advancement, regardless of wider societal and community contexts and structures.

Enterprising business figures were promoted to inspire and act as role models and aspirational figures. At one end was the individual entrepreneur who founded, directed and grew a large internationally competitive business, the ultimate in self-starting, visionary, problem-solving business leader (Carr, 2000). Richard Branson and his Virgin empire stood out as an emblematic role model of that period. At the other end, business owners running small to medium sized local companies were “presented as cultural heroes at the heart of the enterprise culture, who will not only regenerate the economy but also renew the morality and moral backbone of modern society” (Carr, 2000: 101).

There was also an emphasis on reforming the role of individuals within the welfare system, where ‘dependency’ on the ‘nanny state’ was identified as a major problem (Heelas, 1991). Original concepts of the welfare state assumed state benefits were a ‘safety net’, providing a step up to a better life for a population that was generally

thought of as diligent. This perception was turned on its head. Le Grand (1997) argues that policy in the 1980s assumed people were self-interested 'knaves' or passive 'pawns', who had become 'dependent' on an over generous welfare system. Challenging this welfare 'dependency' then became a major plank for policy discourses.

In an attempt to challenge this systemic dependency, benefit recipients were relabelled 'customers' or 'consumers' rather than users, clients or beneficiaries (du Gay & Salaman, 1992). The idea being that as 'customers' they had choice and control as to what services they received, as would be the case in a marketplace. The battle lines were drawn, and the market orientation of the 'enterprise culture' was pitted against the 'dependency culture' of the 'nanny' state.

In this way, the enterprise culture was not only about encouraging certain ways of being, but was also concerned with reforming the self and shaping personal identity (Heelas, 1991; Carr, 2000).

...we are all entrepreneurs of our own lives... involving ourselves in the preservation, reproduction and reconstruction of our own human capital. (Carr, 2000: 211).

Enterprise was imbued with a morality or ethic, such that only 'enterprising individuals' were considered responsible and worthy citizens, where 'enterprise' was wholly and exclusively identified with the private sector, with private ownership and business organisational structures, and with a set of values around free market competition and individual self-interest.

### **The changing fortunes of the voluntary sector**

During this period the general ambivalence and lack of attention paid to the voluntary sector and community organisations were striking<sup>21</sup> (Kendall, 2000; Prochaska, 2004). Yet in practice and policy the voluntary sector was viewed as a default option for the

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<sup>21</sup> While there was a general lack of interest in the voluntary sector in policy terms, this did not stop consecutive Conservative prime ministers from expressing their concern for citizenship and community, and there were many warm words in support of the voluntary sector. This rhetoric was not underpinned by positive policy interest. "Voluntary organisations were larded with praise by Ministers and their representatives as expressing the willingness of citizens to commit themselves to the bettering of their own society; but there was a marked reluctance to trust organisations with responsibilities (especially financial ones) except on the government's own terms." (Deakin, 2005)

contracting out of local social services in preference to local government, where taking power away from local government was a clear policy of central government. So, even though the voluntary sector was not necessarily highly regarded, it was viewed in an instrumental way and was a useful means through which social services which were not attractive to the private sector could be provided. As a result it grew significantly during this period. Between 1990 and 1995, the income of the sector as a whole increased by 38%, with income from government sources increasing by 64% (Kendall & Knapp, 2000). It is this slightly strange combination of government ambivalence accompanied by dramatic increases in funding to the sector that makes the UK sector unique internationally (Kendall, 2004: 216)

Alongside its growth, the voluntary sector was subject to the introduction of market forces through compulsory competitive tendering for local authority contracts and competitive bidding for regeneration funding within cross sector partnerships. The sector was also subject to expectations to become more professional and to rise to the challenges of the 'enterprise culture' by becoming more business like (Dartington, 1992; Billis & Harris, 1996). In fact, the dominant trends in the sector between the 1980s and late 1990s were pulling it towards the 'market', with the adoption of management techniques from business, the emphasis on professionalisation, the development of the 'contract culture', and the need to compete for funding and contracts. During this period there was considerable concern within the sector about the loss of a voluntary ethos and value base resulting from the trend to managerialism (eg Taylor, 1996; Lewis, 1996).

In broad terms the relationship between government and the voluntary sector was antagonistic, and the lines between the sectors were generally considered clear. At the same time many individual voluntary organisations adopted an instrumental approach themselves, mirroring that of government, and were willing to adapt and respond to contracting and the incorporation of more business like practices, often resulting in the expansion of their operations.

### **Limits and tensions in the enterprise culture**

Enterprise culture discourse was neither coherent nor consistent, and whilst it is possible to look back to the 1980s and early 1990s and see patterns and overall trends,

the contradictions and inconsistencies are also central to understanding the enterprise culture. Entrepreneurship is often defined in contrast to management, and yet management is as much at the heart of enterprise culture as entrepreneurship. Government programmes at that time were labelled by academics as the ‘new public management’ (NPM)<sup>22</sup> and the ‘new managerialism’ (Clarke & Newman, 1997). In fact, it is the bringing together of management and entrepreneurship that in some ways defines ‘enterprise culture’: the idea of the ‘entrepreneurial manager’, someone who is on the one hand highly rational, efficient and cost conscious, and on the other visionary, innovative and risk-taking. Carr refers to this as “the dialectic contradiction at the heart of enterprise culture” and suggests that this has its roots in business practice<sup>23</sup>, and is reflected in the management and organisational theory literature (Carr, 2000: 22).

A second and much commented on contradiction was the role and size of the state. Enterprise culture and entrepreneurial government promotes the rolling back of the state and the diminishing of bureaucracy, as public services are decentralised, contracted out or simply handed over to the market (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). In practice, entrepreneurial governance was implemented through contractual relationships and controlled through systems of performance management, which entailed a still significant role for the state, albeit as regulator rather than direct provider, as well as significant new layers of bureaucracy (du Gay, 2000: 64).

Yet it has itself only been advanced by greatly enhancing the centralizing powers and regulatory functions of the State. (Hall, 1988)

Enterprise culture seemed to imbue almost all aspects of life, taking on different forms and prioritising different aspects (Keat, 1991; Hall, 1988). But despite its seeming pervasiveness, critics and commentators concur that Thatcherism did not wholly succeed in changing British culture (Herzner, 1999).

The spread of Thatcherite discourse marks the *partial* success of the hegemonic project of Thatcherism in destroying the post-war social

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<sup>22</sup> The term ‘new public management’ was coined in 1991 by Christopher Hood in ‘A public management for all seasons?’ in *Public Administration* 69 (1): 3-19. It came to signify the way in which the idea of public service was transformed into a management issue, where concepts of management were taken from private sector practices.

<sup>23</sup> Carr (2000) gives the example of Richard Branson and Virgin, where Branson is the creative entrepreneur but also ensures the effective and efficient management of each new business launched.

democratic consensus and replacing it with a pro-market, anti-collectivist set of values. (Phillips 1998: 847, emphasis added)

One major shortcoming of the enterprise discourse has been identified as the “crudely utilitarian enterprising self” (Heelas, 1991: 87). Hertzner (1999) goes so far as to suggest that the reason for the ultimate failure to transform British society in the ubiquitous way intended, was the absence of a moral emphasis on decency, fair play and serving the public good. Hertzner argues that such strongly expressed self-serving values did not serve the entrepreneur, who, while glamorous, was also a figure of avarice, opportunism and corruption, a figure who might be envied but was not admired or loved – “the business-person-as-manager was still held in contempt” (Jenkins, 1999: 307).

Rather than attempt to unite business expertise and productivity in the persona of a new kind of business hero, possessed of some other-regarding gentlemanly virtues, Thatcherism left the public with the overwhelming impression that Britain did not need such virtues at all. This was a fatal flaw. (Hertzner, 1999: 309)

But the problem was more than just the lack of decent and virtuous enterprising individuals. A sense of community and the social was missing from the enterprise culture discourse. Thatcher’s famous statement that ‘there is no such thing as society’<sup>24</sup> has come to represent the lack of concern for the social and the obsession with the market. Some communities of people became labelled as representative of a moral decay in the country, most notably travellers and single mothers, and were targeted with policies aimed at destabilising their ways of life, marginalising them, or integrating them into the mainstream. In her book ‘Public Policy in the Community’ Taylor (2003) subtitles her history of community under Thatcherism as ‘Community Lost’ (p3).

Communities became fractured and sites of unrest rather than sites of solidarity. Rising levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment meant that there were

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<sup>24</sup> The much quoted comment by Thatcher, that ‘there is no such thing as society’, is indicative of the way in which the individualised nature of the enterprise culture as a political project was interpreted and understood. The intention was to refer to the abstraction of society, and attempt to ground it in where actual responsibility lay: “And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look to themselves first. It's our duty to look after ourselves and then, also to look after our neighbour. People have got the entitlements too much in mind, without the obligations. There's no such thing as entitlement, unless someone has first met an obligation.” (Prime minister Margaret Thatcher, talking to Women's Own magazine, October 3 1987)

increasing numbers of people left out of the 'market society' and the drive towards consumerism (Taylor, 2003; Slater & Tonkiss, 2002). As local communities felt besieged, there were outbreaks of rioting and urban unrest, often sparked by racial tensions. Deprived inner city areas became places requiring 'urban regeneration', which generally meant market based strategies focused on 'property-led answers' (Imrie & Thomas, 1999: 6.). Even where there was a recognition of problems located in defined geographical areas, the focus was on economic development and not on community building.

Bringing together the ideas of 'enterprise' and 'community', Skillen (1992) argued that enterprise is not inherently market based or self-interested, but is a social virtue, and that there is therefore no reason for 'enterprise' or 'entrepreneurship' to be solely associated with either the market or with selfishness.

'Initiative', 'risk' and 'imagination' are values as wide and deep as human experience. Enterprise is a formal virtue, it is more or less neutral with respect to goals, to the *content* of activities. It is thus a mistake to identify enterprise with acting in a self-seeking fashion. We can be as enterprising in pursuit of altruistic or disinterested goals, as we can be of those of an egoistic variety. Indeed, we can be as enterprising as a group as singly. (Skillen, 1992: 80)

One of the challenges for an effective opposition to this neo-liberal dominance was identified as de-coupling the concept of 'enterprise' from the powerful identification with business and commerce, and for its potential to be reclaimed as a social virtue that could be expressed through family, community, and mutual and voluntary action (Skillen, 1992; Carr, 2000). 'Social enterprise' had certainly been used in this way in the UK in the past.

Social enterprise adds to this an ambitious and expansionist attitude designed to maximise social participation. But as used here, social enterprise refers to activity of a different order. Social enterprise is determinedly inclusive: critical of membership limitations, and active in recruitment. It welcomes really large scale ideas and activities, and accepts that the resultant financial problems are part of the 'hard day's night'. Social enterprise ambitiously pursues chosen ends, rather than passively accepts what is readily available. (Morley, 1967: 82)

There were some attempts to re-engage with local communities under the leadership of Prime Minister John Major, who took over from Thatcher in 1990. Most notably, Major celebrated and drew attention to his upbringing in Brixton, South London, where Brixton had been one of the sites of major urban unrest and rioting. He also

introduced the Citizen's Charter, as a way of re-balancing what had clearly become an over emphasis on the responsibilities and obligations of citizenship and a lost sense of the role of the state in protecting and promoting the rights of citizens. But such attempts remained unconvincing and superficial in the context of what had taken place in the previous 15 years.

During the early 1990s the Labour party, as the main political opposition and having lost four general elections in a row, had embarked on a major internal review and reformulation of both the party structure and its political philosophy. It was looking for more modern ways of expressing a commitment to social solidarity and social justice, and to move away from its roots in the trades unions. Within the Labour party, and those opposed more broadly to the Conservative government and its policies, this was a period of struggle but also a period of creativity and solidarity. There was a burgeoning of left of centre think-tanks, partly designed to formulate policy ideas and to start to set the parameters for a new political vision for the country. Some ideas were picked up from developments in the US, in particular the idea of 'communitarianism' and the need to place communities at the centre of public policy (eg. Etzioni, 1993).

### ***Early appearances of social entrepreneurship***

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the term social entrepreneur was rarely heard in the UK. More consistent references to social entrepreneurship could be found in the US and in some parts of Western Europe. The US approaches consisted of both the 'social innovation' and the 'social enterprise' schools of thought, whereas the European perspective came from the 'social enterprise' school of thought. From 1990 social entrepreneurship started to have a presence in the UK in both forms, though it was not until 1994 that social entrepreneurship was first presented as having a possible role in public policy. After this it was taken up more seriously by a number of people who started to put forward more specific proposals about the potential relevance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy.

Social entrepreneurship first appeared in the UK press from 1985. In these early appearances, there was little sense of a coherent notion of social entrepreneurship, let



alone a policy agenda around it. It was used as a descriptive term, referring to a number of different types of people, including:

- businessmen turned ‘social’ (Field, 1990; Hetherington, 1987);
- the founders of “local community enterprises or employment initiatives” (Woodcock, 1985, 1986);
- the leaders of urban regeneration organisations (Hackney, 1988; Hetherington, 1987);
- “to describe enablers who act as catalysts in the community” (Daniel, 1988: 28);
- and in reference to the inventiveness of Lord Michael Young (Young, 1991).

It also appeared in Hansard, in 1989, as a term for employees who are seconded from business to voluntary organisations (HC Deb. 1988/89). In all cases there was an implied connection between the worlds of ‘business’ and the ‘social’, albeit in quite different forms.

These early uses in the UK were low key and unfocused, though they did indicate a gap in language for people wanting to talk about how business and social welfare might connect. But it was certainly not a language that was picked up by policy makers within the Conservative government of the day, and social entrepreneurship was far from being associated with particular programmes or policy proposals. Nevertheless, this early intimation that a new language was critical for enabling connections between ‘business’ and ‘social’, whatever the exact definition or form of ‘social entrepreneurship’, is an important perspective on social entrepreneurship and the reasons for its emergence in the UK.

The first practice based model of social entrepreneurship appeared in the UK when Ashoka, a US foundation, set up a small UK office in 1990. Ashoka grant funded ‘public service entrepreneurs’ in developing countries. Ashoka had a low profile in the UK, and was interested primarily in fundraising for its programmes in developing countries and in introducing its fellows to potential supporters. Even though Ashoka made a relatively early appearance in the UK, it had no agenda to present social entrepreneurship to a wider audience or to promote it as significant in the UK or in UK

social policy. It remained specialist and limited in its appeal, and where it was known it was as an international development organisation.

In 1994 the first sign of change was apparent to a more strategic and focused approach. The left of centre think-tank, Demos, published a report mentioning social entrepreneurs – ‘The Common Sense of Community’, by Dick Atkinson. It was aimed specifically at influencing policy, if not of the Conservative government of the day, then of the Labour party which was considered by many as the government in waiting.

Atkinson’s idea of social entrepreneur as elected ‘neighbourhood officer’ and community facilitator received some press coverage, but it was not an idea that persisted for any length of time (Moore, 1994). Nevertheless, Atkinson and the report he wrote had some important consequences: it presented social entrepreneurship as having policy significance; it positioned social entrepreneurship as a community-based phenomenon; it helped to familiarize a number of politicians, political commentators, and policy makers with the term social entrepreneurship; and it used a think-tank report as the mechanism for promotion. It also reflected cross-party political support for the idea, with acknowledgements to MPs from the Labour, Conservative and Liberal parties as having contributed to Atkinson’s thinking.

A second think-tank report, published in 1995, had more influence. The publication by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) of ‘Staying the Course’ (Thake, 1995) positioned social entrepreneurs as central figures in urban and community regeneration.

It was social entrepreneurship and the central role of social entrepreneurs that the press and others latched on to (Johnstone, 1995; Cooper, 1995; Phillips, 1995a,b).

A new breed of social entrepreneur has helped turn around some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Britain, according to an independent charity which says their dynamic, community-based organisations add to the creation of wealth in local neighbourhoods and should play a "central role" in regenerating disadvantaged inner cities. (Cooper, 1995: 11)

Atkinson’s ideas sowed some seeds of interest in social entrepreneurship, but Thake’s report created a buzz around the term. This sparked debate and a growing excitement

among a few people that social entrepreneurship was something significant. During 1995 and 1996, there was a spurt of activity among people who latched onto the idea of social entrepreneurship. Lord Michael Young, Charles Leadbeater, Geoff Mulgan, Dick Atkinson, Andrew Mawson, Adele Blakebrough, the Reverend Peter Thomson, Helen Taylor-Thompson, Laurence Demarco, Mel Young pioneered social entrepreneurship in the UK. They all had a strong background in voluntary action and several of them identified themselves as social entrepreneurs. They were all outspoken, articulate, and experienced, and were increasingly interested in this rather nebulous idea of social entrepreneurship and how it might translate into organisational action. During 1995 and 1996 they were operating largely independently, though with growing awareness of each other's thinking and interests.

There were two developments that took place in 1995 and 1996 that were not focused specifically on social entrepreneurship but came to have a profound influence on the emergence of social entrepreneurship in the UK and the form it took. In 1995 the Scarman Trust set up a new programme providing grants of around £2,000 to individuals in deprived communities – people it named 'can-do citizens'. The Scarman Trust was directly influenced by the work of Tony Gibson who had devoted himself to community development and founded the Neighbourhood Initiatives Foundation. In 1995 he wrote 'The Power in Our Hands' about the many many local people doing extraordinary thing – people he called 'moving spirits'.

Based on the experience and successes of the Scarman programme, the Millennium Awards Scheme, launched in 1996, focused similarly on providing small grants to individuals – 'starpeople'. But where the Scarman Trust started with a few £100k, the Millennium Awards Scheme had a total budget of £200 million. There was a direct path from the 'can-do citizens' supported by Scarman to the 'star-people' of the Millennium Awards Scheme, and, what later was to become support for the 'social entrepreneurs' of UnLtd.

While interest in social entrepreneurship as 'social innovation' in the UK grew during the 1990s, there were also some early signs of interest in 'social enterprise'. From about 1990 the idea of 'social enterprise' was taking root in both the US and Western

Europe<sup>25</sup>. Teasdale (2006) suggests that social enterprise in the US refers to an *activity* which is undertaken by any sector or individual, and social enterprise in Europe refers to particular types of *organisation* that are distinct from the public and business sectors. In the US much of the impetus for social enterprise came from reductions in government grant support to nonprofits during the 1980s, and the search for alternative, more sustainable and less volatile sources of income (Dees & Anderson, 2006; Boschee, 1995). In Western Europe the impetus came more from the changing nature of the welfare state, and the shift away from direct provision to the contracting out of social services. This was coupled with high levels of unemployment during the 1980s and early 1990s which resulted in an EU level focus on employment initiatives and work integration (Kerlin, 2006). However, as Teasdale (2006) goes on to point out, there is considerable overlap between the two and both have influenced developments in the UK, though these influences were not felt at the policy level until the mid to late 1990s.

In the UK, think-tank reports were important as early ways of putting forward the idea, describing the phenomenon, and starting to spell out possible policy implications (Crabtree & Roberts, 1992; Welch & Coles, 1994). As well as influences from Europe and the US, there were more local origins to the growth of interest in social enterprise in the UK from the co-operative movement and from some in community development who had worked on 'community enterprise' (Teasdale, 2006). The profile of social enterprise was very low at this point, and its conceptualisation and relevance to the UK still vague, but there were certainly some early signs of interest in the idea.

By the mid-1990s, therefore, there was the beginning of talk and debate around ideas of social entrepreneurship, early notions of potential policy responses, initial proposals for organisational approaches to supporting social entrepreneurs, and a seemingly receptive political opposition. But social entrepreneurship was still the specific interest of only a few individuals. In the UK the issues included: who would take up these ideas, how they could be translated into organised action, and in what forms they would become part of government policy.

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<sup>25</sup> For more information about the emergence of social enterprise in both the US and Europe see: Dees and Anderson (2006); Kerlin (2006); Borzago and Defourny (2001).

## **4.2 Reinstalling 'the social' under New Labour**

The Labour government came to power in 1997 after 18 years in opposition. The change in government was greeted as a breath of fresh air, and a wave of optimism swept through the country. New Labour fostered an image of itself as young, energetic, creative, responsive, and in sharp contrast to the perceived greyness of the outgoing government. In a mirror of Thatcher's concerns eighteen years previously, where she had fretted that the naturally enterprising nature of the British people had been destroyed by socialism, New Labour were concerned that the essential civic nature of the British had been eroded by neo-liberalism. New Labour discourses therefore emphasised 'community', 'partnership', 'participation' and 'inclusion', invoking an ethic of reciprocity as well as individual responsibility.

The language of democracy, citizenship, society, community, social inclusion, partnership, public participation, central to new Labour's discursive repertoires, can be understood as an attempt to reinstall 'the social' in public and social policy. (Newman, 2001: 6)

The 'third way' was New Labour's way of articulating its broad policy approach. Giddens, a leading academic and architect of the 'third way', presented the 'third way' as a political response to modernisation and certain unavoidable societal changes taking place (Giddens, 1998). It lays claim to a radical centre-left vision that responds to forces of modernisation, and in particular globalisation, individualisation, the retreat of traditionalism, and the collapse of socialism as an alternative economic system. Whilst there are criticisms that New Labour has rejected traditional socialist values, Giddens asserts that the 'third way' is unequivocally left wing, as its primary concerns are with equality, social justice and emancipation (Giddens, 1998; Giddens, 2000). At the same time it is also concerned with ensuring sound economic management, a prosperous economy, and the development of an 'entrepreneurial culture' (Giddens, 1998: 99).

A key message of the new government was the need to modernise and move forward, beyond the old fashioned political divisions of the left and right. Its domestic policy priorities reflected this as it focused on three key issues: the economy and business; public sector reform and modernisation; and democratic renewal, which was associated with the 'new localism' and 'civil renewal'.

A main way in which 'new' Labour distinguished itself from 'old' Labour was its attitude to the private sector.

The ability of national governments to fine-tune the economy in order to secure growth and jobs has been exaggerated. The importance of individual and business enterprise to the creation of wealth has been undervalued. The weaknesses of markets have been overstated and their strengths underestimated. (Blair & Schroeder, 1999: 2)

Business was no longer the 'enemy of the people', but a sector to be courted and fostered. Labour put considerable effort into winning over London's financial institutions, gaining trust with business and industry as a whole, and achieving credibility with the public in its ability to run the economy successfully.

Enterprise and entrepreneurship remained strong themes in New Labour, both in terms of continuing to ensure an enterprising business culture (Brown, 2003), and in references to making the public services more enterprising and more entrepreneurial (du Gay, 2000; Hendry, 2004).

We need more successful entrepreneurs, not fewer of them. But these life-chances should be for all the people. And I want a society in which ambition and compassion are seen as partners not opposites - where we value public service as well as material wealth. (Labour Party Manifesto, 1997)

Entrepreneurial values and the spirit of enterprise are as much lauded by New Labour in the early 2000s as there were by the New Right in the mid-1980s. (Hendry, 2004: 53)

Private sector approaches and business practices have continued to be seen as making an invaluable contribution to improving public services. But reform programmes are no longer focused on privatisation and the introduction of quasi-markets, but rather have been intent on adopting the private sector characteristic of quantified performance measurement – as a quasi-bottom-line for public services. Being 'entrepreneurial' under New Labour is about shifting away from the emphasis on management processes under the previous government, to focusing on results and outcomes (Newman, 2001). As such, target setting, monitoring and reporting are all understood and promoted as effective means through which public sector performance can be improved. Enterprise and being entrepreneurial under New Labour therefore retain their highly rational, managerial, and even bureaucratic, manifestation.

...the amount of bureaucratic regulation required to control a public sector full of supposed entrepreneurs is far, far greater than was ever needed to control hierarchically dutiful public servants. (Hendry, 2004: 56)

Applied to individuals, the 'entrepreneurial culture' has the effect of reframing citizens as responsible, participating and dutiful, whether as parents, neighbours, or in other roles (Newman, 2001; du Gay, 2000). Concern that welfare creates a 'dependency culture' continues to be strongly felt, and the 'enterprising' individual is still expected to demonstrate their initiative and self-reliance primarily economically, through paid work. In fact, widening opportunities for employment has been central to this New Labour expression of the dutiful working citizen. Such employment policies have been implemented in somewhat coercive forms in the New Deal and Welfare to Work programmes (Newman, 2001).

On the one hand, entrepreneurs become the ultimate expression of the individual with free will to take charge of their own destiny/welfare, but yet government demands that free will is exercised in a manner that benefits the economy/society. (Jennings et al, 2005: 150)

There are, however, some profound distinctions between the enterprise culture of Thatcher and the policies and rationales of New Labour. The enactment of enterprise in institutional and individual terms has been supplemented with an emphasis on enterprise as a community-based phenomenon. People are not identified as lone actors, as they were under the Conservatives, but rather as citizens embedded and active within 'community'.

For a community to thrive it needs individuals to create wealth for themselves and their families and investors seeking a financial as well as a social return. (SITF, 2000: 3)

Communities are constructed as both the location of a wide range of multi-faceted problems such as poverty, crime and deprivation, but also as the source of solutions through individual and collective action, and through the creation of 'social capital' (Smith, 1998; Amin, 2005).

Indeed, in future people will not wait for Whitehall to solve our problems. Instead of people looking upwards to Whitehall for their solutions, from region to region, locality to locality, more and more people will themselves be in charge of the decisions that affect their lives. (Brown, 2000)

Communities are viewed as places where people will re-engage as citizens, and will be active participants in regenerating their own areas and in forging new identities for

themselves. This has been evident through consultation processes such as the Policy Action Teams (PAT), as well as geographically focused policies such as Neighbourhood Renewal and the New Deal for Communities

The community is introduced as a means through which improvement can be achieved, for example in area based programmes (for example Health Action Zones, though many of these have now been abandoned) and regeneration initiatives, such as the New Deal for Communities and the creation of 'self-sustaining communities'. (Schofield, 2002)

This policy trend has been termed the 'new localism' by some, including many in government, and has wider implications for governmental agendas focused on the renewal of democracy, decentralisation and the devolution of power (Stoker, 2005). The most notable implementation of localism has been through the new devolved parliaments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

There has been more devolution to English regions in the last few years than in the preceding one hundred years and this localism involves the freedom to determine local needs in regional development agency budgets worth £2 billion a year and in economic development, regeneration, tourism, planning... (Brown, 2003)

But the main way in which the 'new localism' is conceptualised is in terms of governance and the changing roles, responsibilities and relationships between the state, the individual citizen, and the 'local'.

Reforms to enhance choice, diversify supply and devolve control are all now taking hold as the Government moves from a centralised command and control model to what has been called new localism. The issue now is how much further to go... Public services cannot be run by diktat from the top down. In this next period, accountability needs to move downwards and outwards to consumers and communities. Empowering them is the best way to make change happen. (Milburn, 2004)

The 'new localism' was informed by concerns for improving public services alongside an impetus for a more fundamental restructuring of the role of government and a re-imagining of the nature of democracy. Robb (2005) acknowledges that there is not an agreed approach, and a number of inconsistencies and differences in emphasis existed between ministers.



## **Mainstreaming the voluntary sector**

When New Labour came to power, it directed unprecedented attention at the voluntary and community sector (Kendall, 2000; Fyfe, 2005).

... we will need a better appreciation of the important role local, voluntary and charitable community organisations can play in future delivery. (Brown, 2003).

Kendall (2000) points to the 'mainstreaming' of the sector in government policy. The sector has been identified as a critical source of new ideas within social welfare, a key provider of public services, and a participative forum where people engage, especially as volunteers, thereby renewing civic culture and local democracy (Private Action, Public Benefit, 2002). This fitted very neatly with the two major domestic policy areas of public sector reform and modernisation, and democratic and civic/civil renewal.

So, as we begin the 21<sup>st</sup> century we look again to the voluntary and community sector to help us rekindle the spark of civic services that fires the building of strong civic communities; to reform the operation of public services and build a bridge between the needs of individuals living in those communities and the capacity of the state to improve their lives.

Our aim must be to build a new partnership using the sector's strengths to challenge and stimulate new ideas, complement our shared objectives and take forward the development of social policy generally. (Boeteng, 2002)

Many of the trends within the sector, which gained momentum under the Conservatives, have continued. Voluntary sector growth has continued apace. The sector has grown with the formation of new organisations, the revenue of the sector has increased, and employment levels have risen. Research has shown that increasing proportions of funding are coming from government contracts rather than grants, where contracts have increased from 48% in 2001/02 to 62% in 2004/05, and grants have decreased from 52% in 2001/01 to 38% in 2004/05 (UK Voluntary Sector Almanac, 2007).

Government has tended to paint an overwhelmingly positive picture of the voluntary sector (Kendall, 2004). But there was also growing recognition within government, by commentators, and from within the voluntary sector itself of some of its weaknesses. There was a particular focus on the need for improved leadership,

organisational capacity building, more reliable revenue flows, and more up-to-date regulation (Robb, 2005).

Leadership in the sector is an issue that still hardly dares to speak its name. Behaviour that attracts the admiration of the public and politicians and brings in the donations can too often be a nightmare to manage, breeding destructive internal conflicts. Squaring that circle - promoting high profile visible personalities against delivering the quiet care that's another part of the charitable tradition - remains as awkward a task as ever. (Deakin, 2001: 4)

These are thought to be especially important if voluntary organisations are to take over a greater proportion of social service provision, as government (and many voluntary organisations) hope. Pressures to professionalise and adopt business type practices were unabated, and became more widely accepted even if some still expressed reservations (eg Stoker, 2001; Deakin, 2001).

Along with the pressure to be more business-like was pressure from government, and increasingly from other donors and supporters, to demonstrate impact and effectiveness through outcome and performance measurement. Concerns were centred on the almost inevitable tendency towards quantitative measurement and the difficulty in finding rigorous ways of evaluating and communicating some of the 'softer' and more qualitative and developmental effects of voluntary action. As such, some commentators argued that the sector should resist "incorporation into the universe of performance measurement and those limp parodies of commercial practice that seek a surrogate bottom line to stand in for the role of profits in business." (Deakin, 2001: 4)

Similarly, there were concerns within the sector about an overarching focus on the service provision role of the sector and lack of acknowledgement of its advocacy role.

We believe, therefore, that the focus of the next government's voluntary and community sector policy must be about more than just public services. Despite all the successes that we have had over the last ten years, there is a danger that government can view the sector in an instrumental way, as solely a means of providing and improving service delivery. (Etherington, 2005: 3)

There have been several reviews and reports which have involved substantive input from voluntary sector organisations and have set out these issues in some detail: 'Private Action, Public Benefit' by the Cabinet Office (2002), the 'Cross-Cutting Review' by the Treasury (2002), the Better Regulation Task Force (2005), the Third

Sector Review<sup>26</sup> (2006), and countless other issue specific consultations. To tackle the issues raised, central government initiatives, carried out in partnership with the sector, include: the Compact, Millennium Volunteers, Futurebuilders, Change Up, the Giving Campaign, as well as strengthening the Charity Commission and the introduction of a new Charities Bill aimed at reforming the legal framework of the sector.

What were generally seen as clearly drawn lines of battle between the sectors under the Conservatives became blurred and ambiguous. One conclusion would be that the level of interest by New Labour is indicative of the seriousness with which central government regards voluntary organisations and their potential, implying a more supportive and enabling context than in the past. And along these lines Kendall (2004) reports increased opportunities for the sector to engage with policy debates and influence them. On the other hand, taking all these initiatives together, they start to look more like an attempted take-over than the hand of friendship. This seems to be especially the case when it comes to the implementation of policy, which voluntary organisations find “fraught and frustrating” (Kendall, 2004: 217).

For some, there are fears that the sector is being co-opted and neutered by an interfering and controlling government (Dahrendorf, 2001). Others contend that the sector is more heterogeneous, sophisticated and resilient, and that on balance the closer relationship with government results in opportunities for influence rather than simple co-option (Deakin, 2005).

Community and voluntary groups became more directly involved in developing solutions within the new partnership arrangements, to some extent being ‘incorporated’ into official institutions but also presenting challenges to dominant culture and ways of working. (Newman, 2001: 167)

And others argue that it is the way in which the relationships is approached and managed that is important (Etherington, 2003).

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<sup>26</sup> The Third Sector Review was launched on 15 May 2006, and is focused on the role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration over the next 10 years. It is part of the Comprehensive Spending Review, and differs from previous similar consultations with the third sector which were focused on service delivery. According to NCVO it is “the largest consultation ever undertaken by government with the third sector” <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/policy/funding/index.asp?id=2777>.

In fact the relationship between the voluntary sector and New Labour government is far more complex, varied and multi-dimensional than can simply be summed up as positive or negative. The prevalent view is a cautious optimism, where the sector is encouraged to engage with government but with a “healthy degree of scepticism” (Deakin, 2005: 42).

There are clearly many continuities between New Labour and the preceding Conservative government in their interest in actively promoting an ‘enterprising’ or ‘entrepreneurial’ culture. Both governments focused on doing this by importing ideas, techniques and models from the private sector into the public sector. But the Labour government has introduced a strong focus on community and the role and contribution of the voluntary sector. One question that remains is whether ‘enterprise’ has been reclaimed as a social virtue, as Skillen (1992) challenged, where social enterprise and social entrepreneurship are emblematic of such a shift.

### ***Building support for social entrepreneurship***

The election of the New Labour government in 1997 was a turning point for social entrepreneurship. Suddenly it was “flavour of the month” and had the attention of the “boss” (White, 1999: 17).

We will be backing thousands of social entrepreneurs – those people who bring to social problems the same enterprise and imagination that business entrepreneurs bring to wealth creation. (Blair, 1997)

The opportunity presented by the election of the Labour government, and the concomitant interest in new policy ideas with a ‘social’ edge, was enthusiastically taken up by many of those promoting social entrepreneurship. The proponents of social entrepreneurship had two priorities. One was to influence government thinking and policy; the other was to raise funding to set their own ideas for supporting social entrepreneurs in motion and to established new organisations. For both, the idea of social entrepreneurship needed greater legitimacy, and its role and potential contribution in the UK needed to be spelt out more clearly and more persuasively.

One of the main ways that they did this was to pursue links with some of the left of centre think-tanks, in particular Demos and the New Economics Foundation (NEF),

which in the late 1990s were helping to shape New Labour and its policies and rhetoric (Denham & Garnett, 1998). There were close personal connections between some of those promoting social entrepreneurship, the think-tanks, and New Labour. Sue Gillie was Chair of Ashoka (UK) and a trustee of NEF. Adele Blakebrough, one of the main promoters of social entrepreneurship, is married to Ian Hargreaves, an associate with Demos. Both NEF and Demos went on to publish influential reports on social entrepreneurship.

Two think-tank reports on social entrepreneurship were published in 1997. 'The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur' by Charles Leadbeater (1997), published by New Labour's favourite think-tank of the time, Demos, has come to be the best known and most widely quoted of the publications promoting social entrepreneurship in the UK. It profiled five UK social entrepreneurs, three of whom were actively promoting the idea of social entrepreneurship. The second report was published by NEF, 'Practical People, Noble Causes' by Stephen Thake and Simon Zadek. These reports created a platform from which a raft of policy proposals could be presented, as well as providing social entrepreneurship with publicity and credibility, and with media friendly stories of social entrepreneurs and their achievements. The director of the School for Social Entrepreneurs commented:

We have been immensely helped by that fact that Demos published the Charles Leadbeater book and that there have been other organisations established. That made our life easier. If there hadn't been anyone else doing that we would have had to have done it.

There was a strong element of self-promotion. Many of the policy recommendations set out were taken directly from the aims and ideas of those advocating for social entrepreneurship, and were not the product of analysis based on rigorous or independent research. The individuals presented as exemplars of social entrepreneurship in the reports included many of those promoting social entrepreneurship. And the organisations they led became known as 'entrepreneurial'. This applied in particular to Andrew Mawson who headed up the Bromley by Bow Centre in East London, and Adele Blakebrough who was chief executive of Kaleidoscope, a drug rehabilitation organisation in South West London.

...the whole essence of the social entrepreneur lobby is that the social entrepreneurs are very persistent and assertive and all the rest of it, so given that there were people who were acting in that kind of way, its

almost natural that they would push their cause fairly loudly and aggressively.

It suited New Labour, the government mood, and you had a few prominent characters like Andrew [Mawson] and Adele [Blakebrough], and they kind of put the thing forward.

Through these various individuals and organisations, the idea of who or what is a social entrepreneur started to take on a tangible form. Social entrepreneurs were people that policy makers and journalists could meet, and in the case of emblematic organisations – such as Bromley by Bow, Kaleidoscope, and Balsall Heath – places they could visit.

...a base of support was established (for CAN) among business and church leaders, who were able to visit the Bromley by Bow Centre to see the effectiveness of social entrepreneurship in action. (Sanderson, 2000)

From being marginal to, if not outside of, policy debate, proponents of social entrepreneurship such as Leadbeater, Mulgan, Mawson and Blakebrough quickly became part of the wide-ranging consultation programmes that New Labour undertook in its first years in power.

Denham & Garnett (1998) argue that think-tanks in the UK are more interested in media coverage and asserting a particular position than in detailed research or in contentious and difficult policy issues. Their influence on government has been “more easily detected in its discourse or rhetoric than in the detail of policy” (Denham & Garnett, 1998: 185). The think-tanks depended on the advocates of social entrepreneurship for ideas and information, and they acted as a mechanism for aligning certain novel ideas or interesting practices with policy agendas, ensuring that they were politically relevant and would catch the attention of politicians. To this end, the language of the reports drew on the policy discourses of the day to reinforce the importance of social entrepreneurship to issues such as ‘social capital’ and ‘social cohesion’.

They build social capital in order to promote social cohesion. (Thake & Zadek, 1997: 21)

The work of social entrepreneurs creates value in several ways... Most importantly, they set in motion a virtuous circle of social capital accumulation. (Leadbeater, 1997: 10)

Equally, without the think-tanks, those promoting social entrepreneurship would have struggled to gain publicity for their ideas and work. In his research on think-tanks, Blank (2003) notes that “social entrepreneurship has come via Demos” (p104).

The extensive use of think-tank reports in promoting social entrepreneurship positioned social entrepreneurship not only within policy debates but also amongst a more informed and elite group with connections to government. Several proponents of social entrepreneurship were seen as “very close to government” and “high level connected”. The Rev. Peter Thomson, part of the group promoting the ‘2,000 by 2000’, is reported to be “a close friend of the Prime Minister and his wife” (Wroe, 1997: 13). Further to this, the close relationship between the left of centre think-tanks and government has been noted (Denham & Garnett, 1998; Blank, 2003). Blank quotes Leadbeater, one of the leading authors at Demos and a key proponent of social entrepreneurship, as saying “The connection between Demos and the government is not corporate, rather personal really, and informal” (p94). These personal connections were, and continue to be, important for the promotion and realisation of social entrepreneurship.

By 2001, interest in writing think-tank reports to promote social entrepreneurship was waning. NEF published ‘Low Flying Heroes’<sup>27</sup>, focused on ‘micro-social enterprise below the radar screen’. Demos carried out research into the training and support needs of social entrepreneurs in London during 2001. A report was drafted, but was never published (Bentley, 2001, unpublished).

Having made progress in defining and promoting social entrepreneurship, and having succeeded in gaining a profile among policy makers, advocates of social entrepreneurship started to focus on establishing and running their new organisations. Between 1997 and 2000 four key organisations were founded to support UK social entrepreneurs:

- The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) was set up by Lord Michael Young in 1997 offering a year long training and development course for aspiring social entrepreneurs from all walks of life.

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<sup>27</sup> It is not clear from the booklet when it was published, and most likely either 2000 or 2001. It is listed in this study as 2001.

- Community Action Network (CAN) was established in 1998 by Andrew Mawson, Adele Blakebrough and Helen Taylor-Thompson. It is an internet based network of social entrepreneurs, which also runs a number of projects and programmes supporting to foster entrepreneurial activity in different geographical locations and within different fields.
- Senscot was founded in 1999 and is a Scottish based membership network of social entrepreneurs and people interested in social entrepreneurship.
- UnLtd was created in 2000 as the vehicle for a £100 million endowment from the Millennium Commission. It was a collaborative effort that included Ashoka, SSE, CAN and Senscot along with three other organisations. UnLtd is a grant making foundation, providing funding and support to social entrepreneurs throughout the UK.

A small and specialist field working on social entrepreneurship was therefore starting to establish. They were supported financially by business donors, grant-making trusts, and increasingly through government grants. The organisations focused on consolidating their programmes and the forms of support they provided to ‘social entrepreneurs’. The founding of UnLtd in 2000 was especially important in that it represented the permanent establishment of social entrepreneurship in the UK and the ambition that ‘social entrepreneurship’ passes into ‘common usage’. Two of the founders of UnLtd expressed this in the following ways:

Social entrepreneurship is currently very trendy as something, but it won't stay that way. With UnLtd we are here for good, one of the things about us is that we have an endowment. So we are here forever and we have to operate on the strategy.

As a result of the work of unLTD in the UK over the next five or ten years. I believe that with the resources they have available, that the word will pass into common usage. I believe that. I have seen the scale and the ambitious of the thing. And one of the key ambitions is that the ordinary person on the street will know what a social entrepreneur is which at the moment no one would.

There were some additional important developments in the field of social entrepreneurship that contributed to its consolidation and legitimacy as a credible concept in UK practice and policy. In 2001 two award schemes were launched aimed at social entrepreneurs – by the management consultancy Ernst & Young and by the magazine the New Statesman and Society. In 2003 UnLtd made its first grants to



social entrepreneurs, bringing dedicated new money to the field of social entrepreneurship. And in 2004 the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship was established at Said Business School at Oxford University, and held its first annual World Forum attracting social entrepreneurs from around the world.

In parallel to the emergence of the 'social innovation' version of social entrepreneurship in the UK, interest in the 'social enterprise' school of thought was also flourishing. By the late 1990s, the idea that social enterprise organisations could contribute to economic development was starting to catch on (Leadbeater & Christie, 1999; Westall et al, 2000).

Other forms of mutual organisation also have considerable potential to aid and drive regeneration. Social enterprises use the talent and imagination of social entrepreneurs to generate mutual profit for the community they operate from. (Thomas, 2000)

As noted above, UK interest in social enterprise was influenced by developments in both the US and in Europe. The effect of this was that the UK absorbed some of the language of 'social enterprise' that originated in the US with the focus on income generation, funding diversification, and sustainability by nonprofit organisations. It also absorbed some of the ideas of the 'social economy' from Europe with the emphasis on co-operative organisations, common ownership, and creating employment for people otherwise excluded or marginalised from the mainstream economy. Several different strands to social enterprise developed in the UK, at times appearing contradictory, but better considered as having different origins and different emphases (Teasdale, 2006). Government was influenced by the idea of social enterprise as a form of business (Westall, 2001), but also picked up on the need to develop enterprising activities within the voluntary and community sector (Private Action, Public Benefit, 2002). But perhaps most significantly, government saw social enterprise as a type of organisation through which to contract social services, offering a 'third way' between the private and voluntary sectors.

...if the concept of "social enterprise" didn't exist, Tony Blair would have invented it. (Taggart, 2002)

The emergence of social entrepreneurship as a field of action and an area of policy interest can be understood in terms of Kingdon's (1995) theory of agenda setting and policy entrepreneurship. According to Kingdon (1995) there are three streams – the

policy, politics and problems streams – that need to be connected in order for a policy idea to be taken seriously and adopted. Policy entrepreneurs act within the policy stream to promote their idea, linking it to and framing it as relevant to the politics and problems streams.

The individual proponents of social entrepreneurship acted as policy entrepreneurs, filling a number of critical roles in ensuring that social entrepreneurship came to be seen as an important issue within government policy. They ‘demonstrated’ social entrepreneurship principally by embodying the idea: they were themselves self labelled ‘social entrepreneurs’, and this provided them with credibility and a “claim to a hearing” among policy makers (Kingdon, 1995: 180). They ‘communicated’ social entrepreneurship by describing the concept and articulating an argument for its policy relevance, especially through the think-tanks reports. They ‘realised’ the idea by developing a range of organisations and programmes in support of social entrepreneurship. And they drew on their personal networks and connections to ‘mobilise’ support for social entrepreneurship within government.

In filling these different roles the advocates of social entrepreneurship connected the three streams identified by Kingdon,. This had the effect of putting social entrepreneurship onto the policy agenda, and also of positioning the advocates themselves within policy circles as experts and advisers. Opportunities to demonstrate the immediate policy relevance of social entrepreneurship were present in both the politics and problems streams. Politically, the reception of ‘social entrepreneurship’ was particularly enthusiastic because of the eagerness of New Labour at that time for new ideas that conveyed their ‘third way’ thinking in policy terms. Social entrepreneurship neatly reflected political discourse which brought together ‘enterprise’ with social justice. This was coupled with the personal connections and friendships between policy makers and the proponents of social entrepreneurship which may have contributed to an unquestioning acceptance of the idea.

Social entrepreneurship was framed as addressing a range of ‘problems’ which already existing in policy discourse: the ‘welfare state crisis’, the need for public sector reform, issues of urban regeneration and community renewal, and the shortcomings of the voluntary sector. Their closeness to government meant that the advocates of social

entrepreneurship could insert ideas of social entrepreneurship into a wide range of policy initiatives.

### ***Locating social entrepreneurship discourses in UK social policy***

From 1997 social entrepreneurship and social enterprise started to appear in political speeches, in departmental reports and in policy proposals, statements and documents. The apparent relevance of social entrepreneurship across a range of issues was striking, as was the ease with which the term could be accommodated within a variety of policy fields. Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise discourses were readily adopted by government departments as applicable to a range of policy areas, including urban regeneration, education and health, as well as the voluntary sector and community development.

### ***Urban and community regeneration***

When Blair (1997) first used the term ‘social entrepreneurship’, indicating its potential significance to the New Labour government, it was in connection with urban poverty and social exclusion. The idea of ‘social entrepreneurship’ moved from political rhetoric into the policy arena through the Policy Action Team (PAT) reports that were published by the government in 1999.

The Policy Action Teams were an experiment in joined-up government, set up in 1998 by the newly formed Social Exclusion Unit<sup>28</sup> (SEU) within the Cabinet Office. The eighteen Policy Action Teams (PAT) brought together different government departments and people from the voluntary and community sectors, constituting a forum for developing cross-departmental policies that would reverse the trends in urban deprivation and poverty<sup>29</sup>. Three of the PAT’s featured social entrepreneurship, bringing it to the attention of a wider range of policy and decision makers inside government.

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<sup>28</sup> The SEU had been established in the Cabinet Office by the new government in the summer of 1997, and Geoff Mulgan was seconded from Demos to head it up.

<sup>29</sup> Each PAT team involved between 20 and 46 individuals, including a lead civil servant and Champion Minister. The PATs formed the basis for the establishment of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit and its agenda to revitalise the most economically and socially deprived areas in the UK through the New Deal for Communities.

The PAT reports were the precursor to the publication in 2001 of the neighbourhood renewal strategy by the Social Exclusion Unit (Cabinet Office). Within the strategy, social entrepreneurs were identified with small-scale local initiative and were associated wholly with “community groups”, “community organisations” and “community activists” (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001: 28). However, mentions of social entrepreneurship were insignificant when compared to the more substantial policies outlined in the strategy, which included Local Strategic Partnerships and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund. The ultimate aim of the policies, which cut across housing, education, health, employment, and crime, was an “urban renaissance” (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001: 10).

As well as interest from the Cabinet Office in the contribution of social entrepreneurship to tackling urban poverty, the Treasury also showed an interest. In 1999 HM Treasury set up the *Social Investment Task Force* (SITF) which reported to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in October 2000 with its report, ‘Enterprising Communities: Wealth beyond Welfare’. While the PAT reports in themselves had little direct policy impact, the ‘Enterprising Communities’ report included a number of policy recommendations which were adopted.

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit was set up in 2000 within the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR). Its priorities and plans were set out in the neighbourhood renewal strategy, and in relation to social entrepreneurship and social enterprise included:

- Community Empowerment Fund enabled local community and voluntary sector engagement in Local Strategic Partnerships - £35 million over 3 years.
- Community Chests provided small grants to community groups in deprived areas – a total of £50 million over 3 years.
- Community Venture Development Fund established with the venture capital industry, as one of the recommendations following the Social Investment Taskforce Report in 2000 – matched funding of £10 million.
- The Phoenix Fund provided funding to support small business in disadvantaged areas, including for social enterprise - £96 million over 4 years.

This constructed social entrepreneurship at the community level and primarily in terms of the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought.

### *The voluntary sector*

In 2002, the Cabinet Office published an important review of the voluntary sector, identifying social entrepreneurship as an important new policy concept.

- ‘Private Action, Public Benefit. A review of Charities and the Wider Not-For-Profit Sector’, published by the Cabinet Office.

In this report, social entrepreneurship was defined in terms of the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought, and the potential impact and benefit of social entrepreneurship was presented as being as much economic as social.

The Treasury similarly extended its interest in social entrepreneurship to the voluntary and community sector in general. And in 2002 it published ‘Role of the Voluntary and Community in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review’, appraising the potential of social enterprise organisations in public service contracting.

Within voluntary sector policy, social entrepreneurship in terms of innovation took a very secondary role when compared with social enterprise. The Home Secretary’s interest in civil renewal referred to social entrepreneurs as making a profit and seeking “a new way to deliver public services” (Blunkett, 2003: 25). By 2006, social enterprise ran through much of the discourse of the Department for Communities and Local Government<sup>30</sup>, but social entrepreneurs barely got a mention.

### *Industry and business*

Social entrepreneurship was taken up within the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), and in 2002 the Social Enterprise Unit was set up as part of the Small Business Service. In many ways social enterprise fitted neatly with the enterprise discourse prevalent within policy approaches to industry and business. And locating social enterprise within the DTI positioned it as in essence a commercial activity. Social enterprise became a new, if idiosyncratic, form of business.

Social enterprise, however, operated on the margins of the DTI’s remit. ‘Business Links’, the government sponsored small business advisory agency, struggled to accommodate social enterprise and its ‘double bottom line’, preferring more traditional

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<sup>30</sup> The Department for Communities and Local Government was set up in 2006, and was the successor department to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

small business structures with greater likelihood of economic success. Its location in the DTI also distanced social enterprise from its natural partners in the voluntary sector. 'Social enterprise' moved department in 2006 to the newly formed Office of the Third Sector<sup>31</sup> in the Cabinet Office, where it sat alongside the voluntary and community sector'. This helped to assert the significance of both social enterprise and the voluntary and community sectors across a range of government departments.

### *Health*

Social entrepreneurship and social enterprise were taken up with particular enthusiasm within the Department of Health. In 2005 the Social Enterprise Network was formed within the NHS, aimed at "those with an interest in social enterprise and social entrepreneurship in health and care" (Social Enterprise Network, internet). And in June 2006, the Social Enterprise Unit was set up within the Department of Health. The Department of Health had multiple applications for social entrepreneurship: as a source of innovation and new service development; as a means of improving management within the health services; as a way of involving patients and service users; as a new form of contracting; and as a way of achieving value for money.

### *The environment and rural affairs*

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) took up the idea of social enterprise, and in March 2005 published 'Defra and Social Enterprise: A Position Statement'. Within this statement Defra set out its support of the government's general interest in supporting social enterprise, and also identified specific ways in which social enterprise contributed to its policy priorities.

Social enterprises use business solutions to achieve public good, and have a distinct and valuable role to play in helping create a strong, sustainable and socially inclusive economy... (Defra and Social Enterprise, 2005: 6).

However, the statement contained no references to social entrepreneurs or to social entrepreneurship. The focus was on social enterprise, which was presented as an emerging organisational sector, rather than a type of action or an aspect of the voluntary sector.

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<sup>31</sup> The Office of the Third Sector was created in 2006 by combining the Social Enterprise Unit from the DTI with the Active Communities Directorate from the Home Office, relocating both these into the Cabinet Office.

Until 2000 the dominant understanding of social entrepreneurship in the UK was the 'social innovation' school of thought. But during 2000 social entrepreneurship as 'social enterprise' was gaining a higher profile and there was growing confusion in the precise use of the terminology.

It is clear that social entrepreneurs, in so far as they truly exist as a breed in their own right, don't fit neatly into any of the boxes that we like to divide people into: private sector, public sector, voluntary sector. They may have started in one, but they usually find themselves dipping their toes into the others. Where the waters become a little muddied is over the extent to which social entrepreneurs adopt the principles of business, particularly in terms of making profits. There is also a grey area between what makes an individual a social entrepreneur and what makes them an ethical businessman or woman. (Garrett, 2000: 138)

By 2001 support for social entrepreneur organisations had become a routine part of government funding for the voluntary sector infrastructure through the Active Communities Unit (ACU) in the Home Office. Social entrepreneurship was becoming incorporated into public policy, at the same time its impact was very limited.

4 years after Tony Blair's breathless paragraph, social entrepreneurship has become a well-established part of the social policy landscape, but has not yet had a decisive impact on the mainstream delivery of social policy through public services, even in the field of urban regeneration. (Bentley, 2001: 23)

Since 2001 social enterprise has been subject to increasing policy and media attention and has led to a number of specific and significant policy changes, including the introduction of a new legal form (the Community Interest Company, CIC), changes in local government procurement practices, and tax incentives for those interested in investing in social enterprise. The creation of the Social Enterprise Unit in 2002, within the Department of Trade and Industry, was a clear signal of the seriousness of government interest, and social enterprise strategy was published in the same year. In 2006 the Social Enterprise Action Plan was launched, and a social enterprise unit was established within the Department of Health in 2006 dedicated to promoting social enterprise in the health service.

The new Labour government, elected in 1997, embraced social entrepreneurship as 'social innovation' with enthusiasm. Advocates for social entrepreneurship took

advantage of the opportunity that the new government represented, promoting social entrepreneurship through think-tank report and personal connections. Interest in social entrepreneurship grew, resources were attracted, and several new organisations were set up to support social entrepreneurs. From 2001 policy interest started to shift away from the 'social innovation' school of thought to the 'social enterprise' version of social entrepreneurship. By 2006, there was substantial government interest and policy focused on social enterprise, but policy interest in social innovation seemed to have waned.

It is worth considering the different policy agendas against Kingdon's (1995) criteria for successful policy impact: technical feasibility, value compatibility and anticipation of future constraints. In terms of value compatibility, both social enterprise and social entrepreneurship seem to fit a contemporary society in which people are increasingly comfortable with combining values of individualism with those of social justice. In particular both terms challenge the sector divides and are seen as very 'third way', and therefore highly consistent with New Labour rhetoric. In terms of technical feasibility, proposals relating to social entrepreneurship struggle for being more focused on changing a culture and mindset than on changing structures or policies. In fact the publication 'People before Structures' put forward the idea of 'Neighbourhoods in Business' which would make social entrepreneurs 'the legitimate leaders of renewal in their neighbourhoods' rather than local government (Brickell, 2000: p47). However the publication itself points to the criticism of unfairness in sidelining local government as the 'representative' democratic body. Similarly the process for identifying social entrepreneurs as individuals, and not as professionals or people linked with a sector or field, is invidious and easily seen as not compatible with a government commitment to transparent and systematisable processes. On the other hand, proposals for social enterprise are more readily translated into policy changes such as introducing a new tax incentive or a new organisational form, and are therefore more technically feasible.

Social enterprise also had another clear advantage in that it was about economic development as well as social benefits. One of the main points of social enterprise was to create organisations that generate income for themselves, and the implication being that they are less dependent on grants and donations and even government contracts.



While social entrepreneurs claimed to create social capital and to make use of under-utilised resources, they did not claim to be significant in generating financial wealth and therefore were not so closely identifiable with government interest in economic prosperity. In particular social enterprise came across as a more compelling model for tackling economic and social deprivation concurrently in many communities.

### 4.3 Three stages in the development of social entrepreneurship

The development of the field of social entrepreneurship has been outlined above in the context of the changing political and policy landscape, from the ‘enterprise culture’ promoted under Thatcherism to the more socially oriented ‘third way’ of the New Labour government. This section proposes a three stage framework for considering the emergence and establishment of social entrepreneurship in the UK. The table below summarises these three stages in the development of social entrepreneurship in the UK.

Table 4.1: Three stages in the development of social entrepreneurship in the UK

<b>1980-1994</b>	<b>1995-2000</b>	<b>2001-2006</b>
<b><i>Precursors and early ideas</i></b>	<b><i>Arrival, acclaim and establishment</i></b>	<b><i>Consolidation and growth</i></b>
Early and inconsistent use of ‘social entrepreneurship’ in the UK.	Active promotion, growing policy recognition, and establishment of first social entrepreneur support organisations.	Consolidation and growth of organisational infrastructure supporting social entrepreneurs; policy interest increasingly focused on ‘social enterprise’.

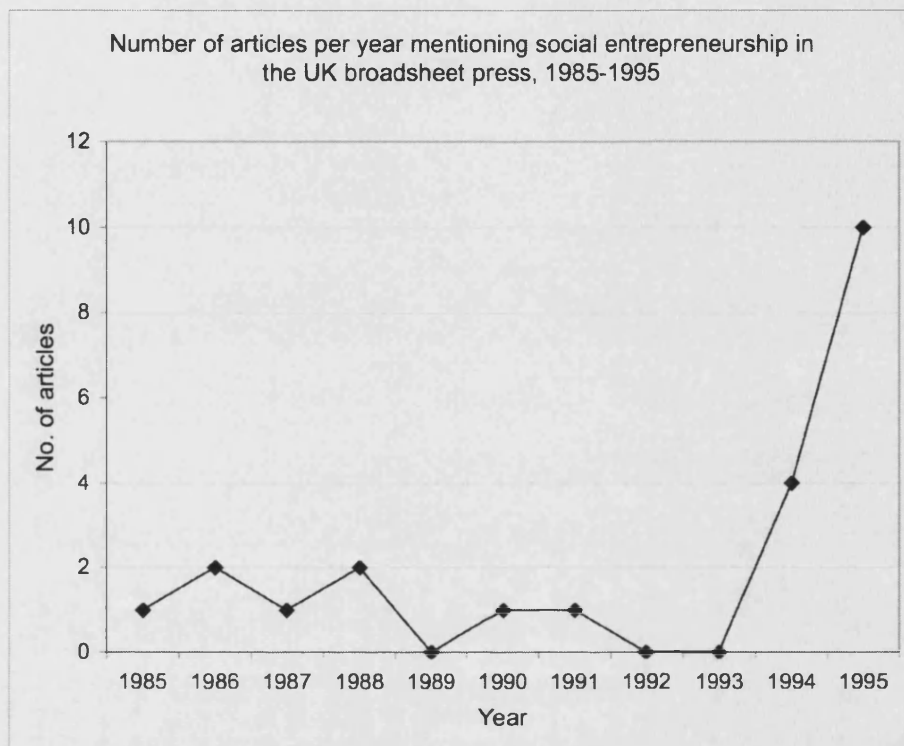
In the text below each of these three stages is described and the key dates are set out, including the publication of influential reports and the founding of new organisations. The public profile of social entrepreneurship is illustrated in terms of its appearances in the press, which demonstrates the growing interest in social entrepreneurship. After

describing each of the three stages, the key organisations and policy initiatives which together formed the infrastructure for social entrepreneurship are outlined.

### **First stage: 1980-1994**

The first stage is presented here as from 1980 to 1994. The starting point is the year in which Ashoka was set up in the US and started to apply the terminology of entrepreneurship to social causes in developing countries. In the UK the term 'social entrepreneur' was used occasionally, inconsistently and by only a very few people during the 1980s and early 1990s. Use reflected attempts to try to describe the growing awareness of an overlap between 'business' and the 'social', rather than any kind of a distinct concept.

1994 has been selected as the end point for this stage because the publication of 'The Common Sense of Community' by Atkinson (1994) marked the first tentative entry of social entrepreneurship into policy debates, though with little tangible impact. The report mentioned social entrepreneurship in a policy context, though not as a central theme, and its influence on policy debates at this point was marginal. This point is reinforced when looking at the use of the term 'social entrepreneurship' in the press. The graph below illustrates the increase in press mentions of 'social entrepreneurship' between 1985 and 1995. It shows clearly that there was a greater increase in mentions of 'social entrepreneurship' between 1994 and 1995 than in the preceding years. For this reason, 1994 is included as part of this first early stage in the emergence of social entrepreneurship in the UK, and 1995 in the next stage.



The average number of mentions of social entrepreneurship in the press in the ten years between 1985 and 1994 is 1.2 per year.

The key dates that define this period are set out below. This highlights the slow way in which social entrepreneurship started to be discussed in the UK, over at least a decade.

- 1980 Ashoka founded in the US and first 'public service entrepreneurs' identified in India
- 1985 'social entrepreneur' starts to appear intermittently and inconsistently in the UK press
- 1990 Ashoka sets up UK fundraising office
- 1994 'The Common Sense of Community' published by Demos (Atkinson, 1994) proposes 'social entrepreneurs' as elected neighbourhood officers

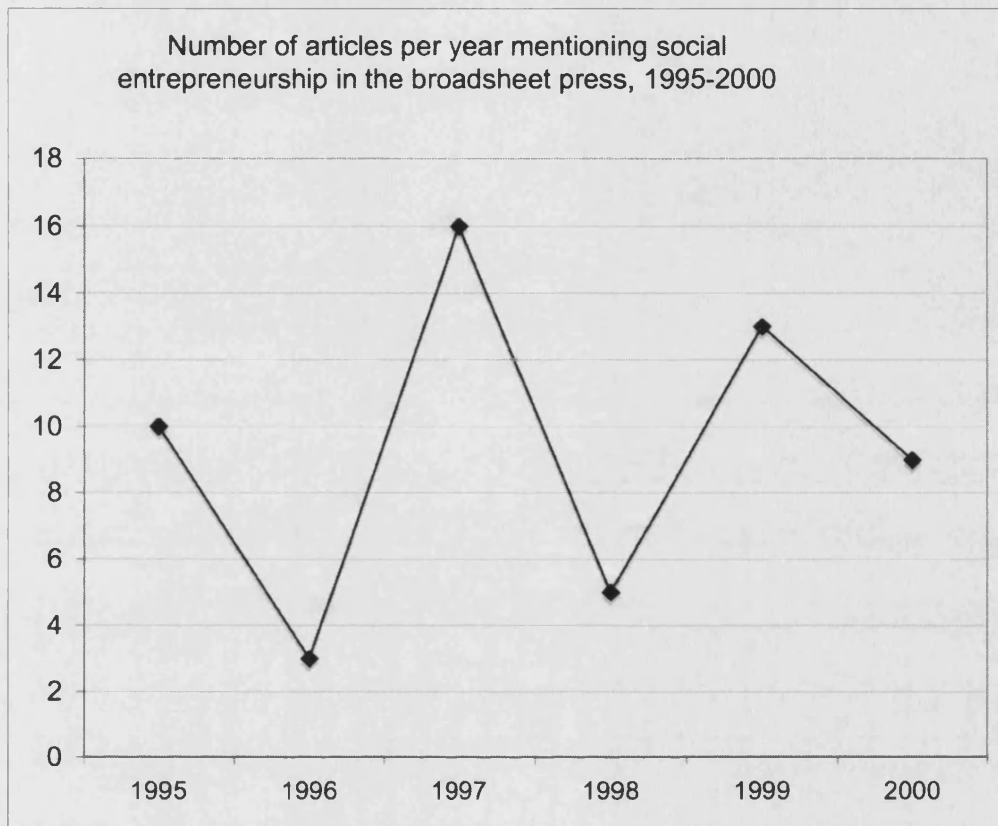
## **Second stage: 1995-2000**

This second stage, from 1995 to 2000, saw the emergence of social entrepreneurship as a concept with policy significance and around which to organise. 1995 marked a turning point, as the term social entrepreneurship started to be used more deliberately and more consistently. In 1995 Ashoka started to use 'social entrepreneur' rather than 'public' or 'public service' entrepreneur. The publication of 'Staying the Course' by Thake (1995) attracted press interest as well as helping to convince a number of practitioners that social entrepreneurship warranted the establishment of specialist support organisations. By the end of 2000 several specialist support organisations had been established, and were experimenting with how best to support social entrepreneurs in practice.

Importantly, the idea of social entrepreneurship sparked debate among people wanting to influence the development of the Labour party's policy agenda. In 1995 and 1996, social entrepreneurship was taken up by a select few people intent on promoting it as requiring policy intervention. As a result, when New Labour was elected to government in 1997, social entrepreneurship was immediately received as a concept with policy relevance. A series of think-tank reports were published setting out the idea and its potential role in policy, and putting forward specific proposals for policy interventions. During this period interest in 'social enterprise' also started to develop, taking up ideas that had been developing in the US and Europe.

The end point of this stage is marked by the creation of UnLtd (the foundation for social entrepreneurs) at the end of 2000, and by the growing confusion among policy makers and practitioners between the 'social enterprise' and 'social innovation' schools of thought.

The graph below shows the number of appearances per year of 'social entrepreneurship' in the UK press, illustrating that press interest in the idea had grown significantly since 1994. The average number of mentions during the period 1995-2001 was 9.3 per year.



The key dates which define this period are listed below.

- 1995      ‘Staying the Course’ published by JRF (Thake, 1995) inspires press, practitioner and policy attention for ‘social entrepreneurs’  
 Ashoka changes its terminology and starts referring consistently to ‘social entrepreneurs’  
 The Scarman Trust starts to support ‘can-do citizens’
- 1996      Early ideas for forms of support for social entrepreneurs put forward  
 Millennium Awards Scheme launched, supporting ‘starpeople’
- 1997      ‘The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur’ published by Demos (Leadbeater, 1997) gives rise to policy debate and press coverage  
 ‘Practical People, Noble Causes’ published by NEF (Thake & Zadek, 1997)

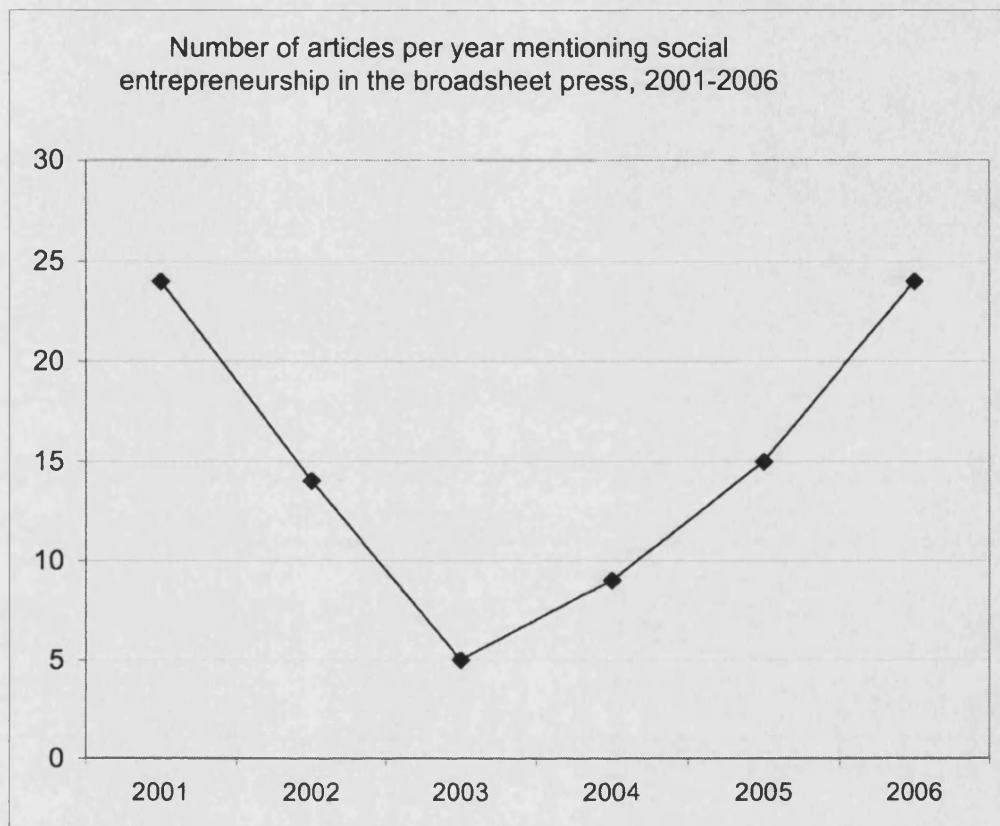
	New Labour elected and early policy interest in social entrepreneurship expressed by the new Prime Minister
	School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) founded
1998	Policy Action Teams (PATs) established
	Community Action Network (CAN) founded
1999	PAT reports published promoting idea of social entrepreneurship
	Senscot founded
2000	UnLtd – the foundation for social entrepreneurs – created, and named preferred candidate for the Millennium Awards Scheme endowment of £100 million

### **Third stage: 2001-2006**

From 2001, the third stage, social entrepreneurship started to institutionalise and become a routine part of organisational life in the UK voluntary and community sector. For those directly involved, the emphasis shifted from promoting the idea of social entrepreneurship to strengthening the organisations and programmes they had created to support social entrepreneurs.

At the same time, there was little additional policy support for social entrepreneurship as ‘social innovation’, and social entrepreneurship in the UK was increasingly understood in terms of the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought.

The graph below shows how press interest in social entrepreneurship became more routine. Despite the dip in coverage in 2003, the average number of mentions per year between 2001 and 2006 stood at 15.2, compared with 1.2 in the first stage and 9.3 in the second stage.



The key dates which define this period are listed below. This was a much less eventful period than the previous one, and is characterised by growth and organisational consolidation.

- 2001 ACU routinely funding social entrepreneur support organisations  
Launch of Upstarts Awards and Ernst & Young Awards for social entrepreneurs
- 2002 Social Enterprise Unit established in the Department of Trade and Industry
- 2003 UnLtd makes its first grants to 'social entrepreneurs'
- 2004 Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship established at Oxford University  
First Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship
- 2006 Social Enterprise Unit established in the Department of Health

### ***Organisational infrastructure***

Several of the organisations and policy initiatives associated with social entrepreneurship have been mentioned in this chapter. This section introduces the key organisations which have been involved in defining and promoting social entrepreneurship as an idea, and which have developed the practices intended to support social entrepreneurship. For a detailed list of the think-tank reports and other policy related publications relating to social entrepreneurship, see Appendix A.

The following organisations have come to be the central players in realising social entrepreneurship in the UK, and form much of the basis for the analysis in this thesis. They are described in order of their founding.

#### **Ashoka**

Ashoka is a US-based nonprofit organisation, and is generally credited with having pioneered the idea of social entrepreneurship in terms of the ‘social innovation’ school of thought (Bornstein, 2004; Dees & Anderson, 2006). It was set up in 1980 to support individual ‘public service entrepreneurs’ in developing countries, initially in India. Ashoka is certainly the first organisation to have developed a clear definition and systematic forms of support for entrepreneurs working for the public good. Though it was not until at least 1995 that Ashoka started to refer consistently to ‘social entrepreneurs’ in its public materials (Dees & Anderson, 2006).

Ashoka started to talk about launching in the UK in 1997, when the then Chair of Ashoka had been a driving force behind the NEF report ‘Practical People, Noble Causes’ by Thake and Zadek (1997). Certainly by 2001 it was committed to starting programmes in the developed world and to shifting its focus away from being an international and development oriented nonprofit to becoming a global fellowship. It launched in the US and Canada in 2000, and confirmed its strategic commitment to launching in Western Europe in 2003 (Ashoka (UK) Trust, Report and Financial Statements, 2003: 4). By the end of 2006 Ashoka had failed to introduce a UK programme, in spite of much senior staff time and several years of planning.



## **The Scarman Trust**

The Scarman Trust never adopted the language of social entrepreneurship, but it has had a fundamental effect on how social entrepreneurship is understood and practiced in the UK. Its work directly influenced the operations of the Millennium Awards Scheme and the founding of UnLtd, the foundation for social entrepreneurs, in 2000.

The Scarman Trust<sup>32</sup> was set up in 1991 following the public enquiries led by Lord Scarman into the riots and civil disturbances of 1981. In many ways it was a product of the community breakdown experienced under Thatcherism, and in particular of the ethnic tensions that existed in some areas. In 1995, The Scarman Trust sought to break new ground by providing small grants of around £2,000, coupled with personal support, directly to individuals. It called these people 'can-do citizens', focusing on those wanting to undertake small local projects within poor neighbourhoods. Its purpose was to encourage local citizen action and to enhance participative democracy in deprived areas.

The Scarman Trust invests in can do-ers - people who act as a catalyst and mobilize these assets for positive and concrete change.

Alongside the cash awards we provide a range of practical, personal and comprehensive support to award winners through a combination of assistance from our experienced local teams and by plugging individuals into appropriate networks. Awards winners will also have access to a national information service a range of community development tools, networking events, web site, phone conferences, and both face-to-face and distance learning to help to achieve their goals. (The Scarman Trust, Background, internet)

## **The Millennium Awards Scheme**

Scarman's approach of supporting 'can-do citizens' led directly to the approach adopted by the Millennium Awards Scheme. The Awards Scheme was set up in 1996 by the Millennium Commission, funded by the National Lottery, and as part of the government's plans to celebrate the new millennium. The idea was to support anyone, in any community, with an idea to do something on their own initiative. Awards were distributed through a range of voluntary sector partner organisations which also provided advice and expert support to award winners.

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<sup>32</sup> The Scarman Trust was initially named the Charter 88 Trust. It changed its name in 1995 to the Scarman Trust, following an internal review and the appointment of a new director.

The Millennium Awards Scheme gives small Lottery grants called Millennium Awards to individual people for projects which will benefit themselves and their community.

A typical Millennium Award is around £2,000 and anyone can apply for one. People of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, from any part of the UK can be Millennium Award winners.

(Millennium Awards Scheme, internet)

The Scheme was allocated a total of £200 million. It planned to spend £20 million per year for five years, a total of £100 million by 2000. From the beginning the intention was that half of the allocation, £100 million, would be awarded as an endowment to an organisation or a group of organisations to make the work of the Awards Scheme permanent.

In the first year, 1996-7, 13 partner organisations were awarded between £300,000 and £3million. By 30 September 2000, there were 81 partner organisations, 12,675 award winners and a total of £38.5 million had been spent (Millennium Commission Annual Report and Accounts, 1999-2000). By time the Awards closed in 2004, 32,000 'starpeople' had been supported with £100 million.

### **The School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE)**

The School for Social Entrepreneurs was the brainchild of Lord Michael Young. Lord Young's ambition was to imbue the voluntary sector with the kind of credibility, effectiveness, excitement and 'hard headedness' more often associated with the business sector, such that "voluntary bodies could become the pacesetters for the rest of the economy" (Young, *The Guardian Society*, 1998: 6; Cunningham, *The Guardian*, 1995). His idea was that the SSE would be "a new kind of 'business school' for the voluntary sector".

The larger ambition is to combine the sometimes antithetical virtues of high-mindedness and hard-headedness....

To introduce the innovations that are required, voluntary organisations need entrepreneurial capacity which is at least equal to that in private business. There is much in common between the entrepreneurs of business and the non-profit sectors, and much they can learn from each other. (SSE, 1997: 2).

Early plans were to train and work with around 100 students a year (SSE, 1998b; Cunningham, 1997), but funding limitations meant that plans were reduced, and the

first intake of 23 students<sup>33</sup> started in January 1998. By the end of 2000, 51 students had passed through the SSE.

### **Community Action Network (CAN)**

CAN was established in 1998 by Andrew Mawson, Adele Blakeborough, and Helen Taylor-Thompson, three of the five figures that featured in the high profile Leadbeater report 'The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur' (Leadbeater, 1997). CAN based its legitimacy on the credibility and public profile of its founders as social entrepreneurs.

Community Action Network was launched in April 1998 by three social entrepreneurs. It is a network created by social entrepreneurs for social entrepreneurs. (CAN, About Us, The CAN Story, internet)

CAN's aim was to identify, promote and support social entrepreneurs by creating an internet based peer support network which would tackle the isolation that the founders had experienced.

... they shared a wide range of shared interests and a common problem: in building their projects, they had all suffered from a sense of isolation, a sense that they were having to invent every idea and process as they went along. What they agreed they needed was a source of advice, encouragement and good practice generated by people like themselves, to provide a pooling of experience. (Sanderson, 2000: 1)

It also aimed to set up a network of local CAN centres that would act as physical locations where social entrepreneurs could meet and network.

The more specific target was to create the 2,000 by 2000 network of social entrepreneurs, as promoted by Mawson and mentioned in the preceding chapter as one of the main recommendations in Leadbeater's 'The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur' (1997). This target was not achieved; by Autumn 1999 CAN had a core of 200 members, and by December 2000 it had reached 400 members (Sanderson, 2000); and by 2006 it had 909 members.

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<sup>33</sup> There are different accounts of the exact number of students. Young (1998) reported that 23 started the programme. The First Year Review (SSE, 1998b) stated that 23 students started the course and 22 completed it. In an interview the director of SSE reported that 21 students started but that 20 completed the year-long course. Information on the SSE website about graduates from the school lists 20 former students.

## **Senscot**

Senscot – a Scottish based network of social entrepreneurs and people interested in social entrepreneurship – was established in 1999 by Mel Young and Laurence DeMarco. Its aim was to facilitate networking between social entrepreneurs, to provide information on developments in social entrepreneurship, and to promote social entrepreneurship in Scotland. The co-founder and director of Senscot was not especially concerned with the terminology of social entrepreneurship, but with getting something off the ground that resonated and would attract support

It doesn't matter, community activists, community leaders. I intersperse the terms. Its nothing to me more than that, its almost quite cynical, to attract money. I could equally have set up the social community leaders network... I am also an opportunist, so when the name seemed to attach energy I adopted that and managed to attract some funding.

By the end of 2000, Senscot had 180 members (UnLtd, 2000: 9).

## **UnLtd**

In June 2000, the Millennium Commission launched a competition for “innovative proposals” from organisations or consortia which would continue to distribute funds “to individual people with a bright idea to help themselves and their communities” (Millennium Commission, press release, 2000). The opportunity to bid for £100 million endowment inspired the different organisations to come together and put forward a proposal for the support of ‘social entrepreneurship.

UnLtd was a collaborative effort between: SSE, CAN, Ashoka (UK) Trust, Senscot, the Scarman Trust, Changemakers<sup>34</sup>, and Comic Relief<sup>35</sup>. These were a diverse group of organisations that had not worked together before. For those familiar with the organisations, they were unlikely bedfellows. There were some very different attitudes and approaches within the partnership, and this fostered fierce competition between the organisations. Apart from Comic Relief, which is a large grant-making foundation, all

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<sup>34</sup> Changemakers is a voluntary organisation which promotes citizenship among children and young people, and in particular through volunteering. It does not have a special focus on ‘social entrepreneurship’, but its founder played an important networking role in bringing together the organisations which collaborated to form UnLtd.

<sup>35</sup> Comic Relief is a grant making foundation that raises its funds every two years through high profile public fundraising. Its aim is to make grants to causes and organisations that are unpopular and cannot easily engage in public fundraising, for example one of its priorities is youth homelessness in the UK.

the partners were directly supporting individuals in bringing about social change. The director of one of the collaborating organisations commented:

There is a really interesting thing that has happened. If you look at UnLtd, how were those organisations able to come together and say what are we going to do together? Whereas previously they weren't prepared to expose themselves to the competition.....

The social entrepreneurship market got big enough that they didn't have to try and claim all of it in order to survive. We all realised there was a potential – it's a big enough new idea that it can have niches within itself. It has developed enough over the past 4-5 years since we all started talking about it. It has developed to the point where we can separate and say you have this bit, you have that bit, whatever...

UnLtd was chaired by Jeremy Oppenheim, also the Chair of Ashoka, and a partner with McKinsey & Company management consultants. As a direct result of Oppenheim's role in McKinseys, UnLtd benefited from the pro-bono and diligent preparation of the bid document by McKinseys, and this set it apart from the competing bids. In its winning proposal to the Millennium Commission, UnLtd's mission statement was put forward as:

Our mission is to reach out and unleash the energies of individuals as a vital force for regenerating their communities. We call these people social entrepreneurs. (UnLtd Powerpoint Presentation, 2000: slide 2)

The core of its proposed work was a ladder or staircase of support, whereby social entrepreneurs could work their way up the ladder.

Level 1: 1,500 grants annually of up to £2,500 to individuals or small groups

Level 2: 100 grants annually of up to £15,000

Level 3: the creation of a new 'social venture fund' that would make 5 grants annually of around £1 million for the expansion of successful organisations

In December 2000 UnLtd was declared the preferred candidate for the £200 million Millennium legacy.

Having won the bidding phase, to the surprise of many involved, the formal process of negotiation with the Millennium Commission and the practicalities of setting up a new organisation almost led to the demise of UnLtd before it had started.

The story of unLTD so far is the tale of an idea that took on a life of its own, of individuals who wanted to fly before they could walk, and of the coming down to earth that's a vital part of survival in the

emerging world of social entrepreneurs. It's the story of how unLTD learned its limits. (Dobson, 2002)

By 2003 the internal organisational problems had been overcome and UnLtd made its first grants in the spring of that year. Its work was structured around the activities presented in its original proposal to the Millennium Commission, though with some modifications: Level 1 and 2 awards to individuals; the creation of a Level 3 social venture fund; and research and evaluation. In addition, UnLtd took over the creation and management of the 'Fellowship' support programme, providing services to former Millennium and UnLtd Award Winners. UnLtd's organisational structure reflected these different areas of work. It is the largest organisation working specifically on social entrepreneurship in the UK.

### **The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship**

The Schwab Foundation was established in 2001 by the founder of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Charles Schwab, and his wife. It is based with the WEF in Geneva, and identifies 'outstanding' social entrepreneurs internationally, and provides them with high level international networking opportunities through the WEF. Between 2001 and 2006, two UK social entrepreneurs were selected, including one of the founders of Senscot.

### **Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship**

The establishment of the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Said Business School, Oxford University in 2004 has been significant in terms of the profile and resources focused on social entrepreneurship as an academic topic. It is an international centre. Set up with an endowment of \$7.5 million (roughly equivalent to £4 million) from Jeff Skoll<sup>36</sup>, an American business entrepreneur who made his fortune as the founding chief executive of E-Bay.

The initial idea, led by Skoll's personal interest, of focusing on social innovation and leadership, had changed by the time the centre launched. The Centre adopted an

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<sup>36</sup> Skoll setup the Skoll Foundation in 2003 and now devotes himself to philanthropy, specifically to support social entrepreneurial organisations and to promote social causes and social entrepreneurship with the general public. His most high profile initiative is Partnership Productions, which is a Hollywood production company, responsible for a number of mainstream films with social messages, including 'An Inconvenient Truth', the Oscar winning film with Al Gore.

inclusive definition of social entrepreneurship, to include a range of social enterprise activity as well as social innovation within its scope. Its research priorities are geared towards management and finance, rather than politics and public policy (Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Our Research Strategy, internet).

There are three core activities at the Skoll Centre: five scholarships a year for social entrepreneurs for MBA places at Said Business School; the high profile annual World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship; and a number of research fellowships (Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, internet). So far much of its work has been dominated by an Anglo-American approach, such that many of the speakers at the World Forum are British or American as are most of the staff and fellows.

Table 4.2 below summarises the key organisations set up to support and promote social entrepreneurship within the ‘social innovation’ school of thought between 1990 and 2006.

Table 4.2: Founding of social entrepreneur support organisations, 1990-2006

<b>Year</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Aims and focus</b>
1990	Ashoka UK	Fundraising for international programmes
1995	Scarman Trust starts to support ‘can-do citizens’	To promote active citizenship in deprived communities.
1996	Millennium Awards Scheme established, supporting ‘starpeople’	To support individuals to bring about change in their local communities.
1997	SSE set up	A ‘business school’ for the voluntary sector.
1998	CAN set up	A mutual support network for ‘social entrepreneurs’.

1999	Senscot set up	A hub of information and support for community-based social entrepreneurs.
2000	UnLtd formed	To provide funding and support for 'social entrepreneurs' to regenerate their communities.
2001	The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship	To create a global fellowship of outstanding social entrepreneurs
2004	The Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Oxford University	Teaching and research into social entrepreneurship. Hosting the annual World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship

### Chapter summary

This chapter described the changing political and policy environment between 1980 and 2006, and the emergence of social entrepreneurship into policy discourse during this period. It described the 'enterprise culture' that was promoted and fostered under the Conservative government of 1979 to 1997, and went to show how 'enterprise' and 'entrepreneurship' remained central themes under New Labour. It demonstrated how the term social entrepreneurship started to have some resonance during the 1980s, especially in policy circles. It went on to show that it really started to gain policy significance as New Labour came to power with their 'third way' agenda, and their rhetoric of reconciliation between politics of the 'left' and 'right' and between social and economic policy priorities. This chapter contextualised social entrepreneurship within UK social policy and identified three periods in its emergence into policy discourses: 1980-1994 precursors and early ideas; 1995-2000 arrival, acclaim and establishment; and 2001-2006 consolidation and growth.

The next chapter uses this timeframe to explore social entrepreneurship as an idea, discussing the second research question about the representation of social entrepreneurship in the UK. It considers the different ways in which social



entrepreneurship has been represented in the UK, the different groups of people and organisations with an interest in promoting and presenting social entrepreneurship, and which ways have come to dominate policy.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE IDEA AND REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **Introduction**

This chapter sets out the history of social entrepreneurship in the UK in detail, paying particular attention to the way it has been represented in the media and in policy debates, and tracing how these representations have changed over time. Chapter 4 described the background and context to social entrepreneurship, and started to show how social entrepreneurship has been influenced by the dominant policy discourses of the time. It started to tell the story of social entrepreneurship, proposing a three-stage framework within which to consider the emergence and development of social entrepreneurship. This chapter shifts attention away from the context and focuses on the details of the ideas and representations of social entrepreneurship. It applies the three-stage framework to describe the changing representations and discourses of social entrepreneurship in the UK.

This chapter is about how social entrepreneurship has been talked about, written about, and discussed – it is about language and the use of language. The representation of social entrepreneurship is about what sort of images of social entrepreneurship have been created, where discourses put forward projections of ‘possible worlds’, inventing new ways of being and of doing things, and initiating new social practices and new relationships. Such discourses offer an imagined future, and these “imaginaries” are important sources of inspiration for the on-going development of the idea (Fairclough, 2001: 2). Representation is not only about presenting imagined futures or possibilities, it is also about reconceptualising the past and the present in light of the new idea. This in turn reinforces the potential of the idea, giving it both historical credibility and contemporary relevance.

But this chapter is not only about how social entrepreneurship has been represented and what sort of images of the past, present and future have been created. It is also about what sort of arguments have been used to justify it, whose interests are served, and what ends are sought. In that sense it is about the rhetoric of social entrepreneurship, how the language of social entrepreneurship is used to persuade and convince. Gill (2000) comments that “discourse is involved in establishing one

version of the world in the face of competing versions” and that “emphasis on the rhetorical nature of texts directs our attention to the ways in which all discourse is organized to make itself persuasive” (176). This implies that both the content of what is communicated and the way in which it is communicated are important.

This chapter is structured around the three stages in the development of social entrepreneurship identified in the previous chapter: Stage 1 – precursors and early ideas; Stage 2 – arrival, acclaim and establishment; and Stage 3 – consolidation and growth. Each of these three stages is divided into three main areas: the different ways in which the figure of the social entrepreneur has been *represented*; the *rationale* of social entrepreneurship and the *claims* made in the name of social entrepreneurship; and the resultant *policy interest* and interventions.

These three stages are presented in Table 5.1 below, with a summary of the main features of each stage. During Stage 1 (1980-1994) the term ‘social entrepreneurship’ was used inconsistently and did not have a particular policy profile, but by 1994 was starting to be considered in policy terms. Stage 2 (1995-2000) was marked by growing policy interest and political enthusiasm in ‘social entrepreneurship’. And Stage 3 (2001-2006) saw a shift towards understanding of social entrepreneurship as ‘social enterprise’.

Table 5.1: Overview of the three stages in the representation of social entrepreneurship

<b>Stage 1</b> <b>Early ideas</b>	<b>Stage 2</b> <b>Arrival and acclaim</b>	<b>Stage 3</b> <b>Consolidation</b>
<b>1980-1994</b>	<b>1995-2000</b>	<b>2001-2006</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inconsistent and random use of the term social entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• In 1994 social entrepreneurship first promoted as having</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active promotion of social entrepreneurship, aimed at influencing government policy, especially through think-tank reports.</li> <li>• Election of New Labour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Social entrepreneur’ increasingly used in the press and political speeches.</li> <li>• Policy interest and interventions increasingly focused on</li> </ul>

<p>specific policy significance.</p>	<p>government which embraces social entrepreneurship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy starts to develop in support of social entrepreneurship.</li> <li>• By 2000, 'social enterprise' emerges as the dominant conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship.</li> </ul>	<p>social enterprise and voluntary sector capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social entrepreneurship field deliberately seeks to encompass different definitions and forms of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise.</li> <li>• Political interest increasingly crosses party political lines.</li> </ul>
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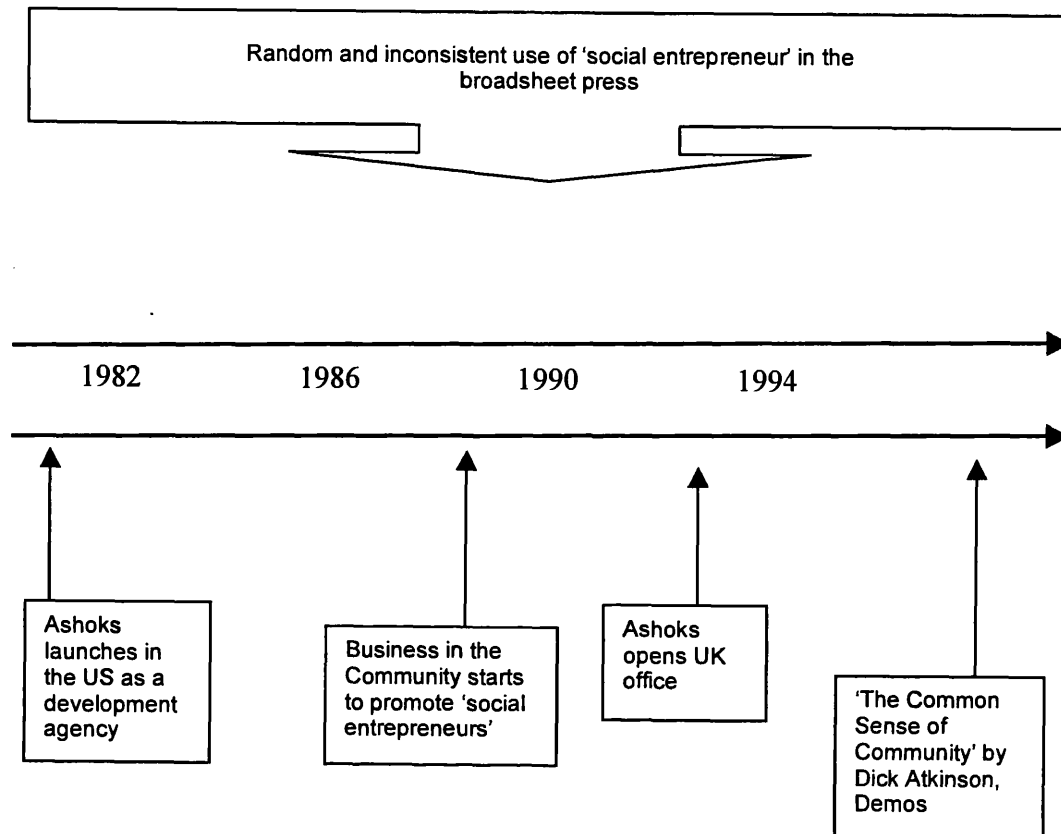
The chapter concludes with a discussion of the significance of the changing representations of social entrepreneurship in the UK, and the changing nature of the policy interest in it.

### 5.1 Stage 1: Precursors and early ideas: 1980 to 1994

During this first period, the term 'social entrepreneur' was used casually and inconsistently, and its meaning was far from clear. It was picked up by some politicians and political commentators from across the political spectrum, and it seemed to resonate with the frustration and despair felt at the social breakdown in some communities, alongside concern for economic and material progress. The energy which the Labour party was devoting to honing its new political agenda meant that it was adopted and developed most enthusiastically by those seeking to contribute to a revived left-of-centre political vision that became expressed as the 'third way'.

The timeline below shows the key dates during this period when particular representations of social entrepreneurship were put forward.

Figure 5.1: Stage 1 timeline in the representation of social entrepreneurship



## Representations

This part discusses the different ways in which 'social entrepreneurship' was represented during this period. From the beginning the assumed and unquestioning focus was on the figure of the individual 'social entrepreneur', and as such social entrepreneurship was invariably and exclusively identified with a type of person. There were certainly no references to social entrepreneurship as a process or an organisational approach.

Three contrasting ways in which the social entrepreneur was represented in these early days are described below. The three figures are considered in the light of the different representations of entrepreneurs set out in Chapter 2: the 'charismatic hero'; the 'managerial' entrepreneur; and the 'ordinary' person as entrepreneur, who appears here as 'community-based'.

### ***Charismatic heroes***

This charismatic and heroic figure of the social entrepreneur was first described systematically by Ashoka. Bill Drayton, who set up Ashoka, believed that determined people with visionary ideas were what changed the world, and supporting such people was therefore the most effective way to create the greatest good. The emphasis is very much on one individual's passion and vision as the source of social innovation and change.

The leading public entrepreneur is extraordinarily determined. He or she keeps looking at a problem until a solution begins to appear. Then the public entrepreneur keeps at it until that initial vision becomes a realistic idea, then a reality in one or a few places, and then, ultimately, the new norm everyone in society follows.... These special individuals are possessed by an idea, and they cannot rest until it has redefined their field across society. (Drayton & MacDonald, 1993)

Ashoka highlighted the rare and special nature of its social entrepreneurs:

On average, we find only one in ten million per year. (Selecting Leading Public Entrepreneurs: 3).

But these charismatic heroes were not British, and Ashoka was not interested at this stage in promoting the idea of social entrepreneurship as having a UK role or significance.

### ***Managerial social entrepreneurs***

The managerial social entrepreneur, on the other hand, did find a UK form. In the mid-1980s the term social entrepreneurship was adopted and promoted by Stephen O'Brien, then Chief Executive of Business in the Community.

Social entrepreneur. Coined in the 1980s by Stephen O'Brien, the chief executive of Business in the Community, to describe enablers who act as catalysts in the community. (Daniel, 1998: 28)

Social entrepreneurs were presented as founders of new organisations, as skilled, rational, and strategic. These managerial social entrepreneurs were not necessarily especially innovative or visionary, but rather acted as facilitators or enablers, working through organisations to bring about change.

“They are the kind of people who in the past would have gone off and founded a national organisation like Shelter,” says Stephen O'Brien, “but today they are acting on a much more narrowly focused geographical canvas. They have the kind of skills you'd find in a very entrepreneurial business person, but instead of exercising them to

make their fortune, they have decided to use them to improve their community.” (Vallely, 1995: 25)

### *Community based entrepreneurs*

The ‘ordinary’ person as entrepreneur was represented in some ways through Atkinson’s ideas of the social entrepreneur as neighbourhood officer (Atkinson, 1994). Atkinson located social entrepreneurship quite precisely, within the specific conditions being experienced in deprived communities in the UK.

Just as the private economic sector depends on risk-taking, visionary people to construct new companies, products, services and wealth, so the third sector needs social entrepreneurs. The role, once less vital, used perhaps to be fulfilled by the village priest or the head of the village school. Today, a new breed of determined professional is needed who is employed by the active citizens of the neighbourhood forum to bind together and empower the fractured community. (Atkinson, 1994: 57)

Atkinson’s ideas were focused at the local level and on rebuilding community, rather than on ideas that would change whole societies. His was an attempt to institutionalise entrepreneurial creativity and risk-taking at the local community level and within democratic structures.

But Atkinson’s entrepreneur was a paradoxical figure – the idea of an elected entrepreneur who is democratically accountable does not exist within the literature on entrepreneurship. In fact, the bureaucracy and public accountability that go along with being elected are generally considered counter to being entrepreneurial. The point of entrepreneurship is to disrupt and change, to be an outsider to existing institutional structure, rather than to be democratically representative. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the idea of the elected neighbourhood social entrepreneur did not take hold among either policy makers or practitioners.

At this stage, social entrepreneurship was low profile and ideas and representations were in the early stages of construction. All three representations came to influence the later development of the concept of social entrepreneurship in the UK and its role in social policy.

## **Rationale and claims**

At this stage the rationale for social entrepreneurship was loosely expressed, and there was no comprehensive or coherent rationale for social entrepreneurship specifically within the UK. There were, however, four themes apparent in the discourses that formed a basis for considering its potential role.

a) *Generic*. The idea that social entrepreneurship offers a universally applicable, generic approach is a theme running through much thinking on the topic. Ashoka in particular emphasised its relevance to any social context or historical time period, and this has been a core tenant to the expansion of Ashoka internationally.

Its based on a very simple idea that applies to any field, any country, any period. (Drayton, 1986)

Entrepreneurship is an attitude of mind and spirit. The mixture of daring, determination and dynamic can be found and applied in all spheres of life. (O'Brien, 1985)

b) *'Business-like'*. A second theme running through almost all discourse on social entrepreneurship was the application of 'business-like' concepts and practices to public welfare. This was clearly expressed by Ashoka, which was careful in its use of language: Ashoka was presented not as a 'foundation' and as not making 'grants' to 'beneficiaries' or 'recipients', but as making 'awards' or 'stipends' to its 'fellows'. It adopted words and concepts more often found in the corporate world making them seem more familiar to those from the private sector.

The words are familiar: venture capital, start-up needs, problem-solving, entrepreneurs, change makers, path breakers. But the context in which Bill Drayton uses them to describe the Ashoka Society is not. (Hendrix, 1986)

The use of 'business-like' language was also apparent in the approach adopted by Business in the Community. O'Brien approached social entrepreneurship as a way of bridging the divide between the corporate world and the voluntary and community sector. He was conscious of the need to find ways of enabling more meaningful communication between the sectors if business was to have a significant role in the 'community'. The creation of a common language, with common concepts and expressions, was intended to help break down barriers between the sectors.



c) *Community based*. The theme of community was most prominent in Atkinson's work, but was also apparent in the representations of the managerial social entrepreneur. 'Community' was to become a central concept in the development of both the idea and practice of social entrepreneurship in the UK.

d) *Welfare 'crisis'*. The fourth theme, running through all these early notions of social entrepreneurship, drew more directly on contemporary welfare discourses which were premised on limiting the role of government in the provision of social welfare and encouraging greater individual self-reliance.

These four themes found in the presentation of social entrepreneurship contributed to an emerging rationale and justification: its generic nature and assumption that being 'business-like' is best, as well as the premise of state welfare ineffectiveness and failure. As yet these did not come together to create a coherent rationale, but social entrepreneurship was clearly rooting itself in policy discourses that had defined the 1980s:

- "entrepreneurial fervour" (Alvarez, 1996);
- the 'new managerialism' and the emphasis on being professional and 'business-like';
- the moral superiority of the entrepreneurial or enterprising individual;
- the ineffectiveness of public sector bureaucracy and the 'crisis' of the welfare state.

Equally, social entrepreneurship was sensitive to the dissatisfaction and frustration with the selfish individualism of the 'enterprise culture', and as such it looked to emerging policy interests of the 1990s. The inclusion of notions of 'community' in particular provided for a sense of social virtue and society as a social phenomenon.

This is an attempt to rest entrepreneurship from what is became under the Tories which was basically selfish self serving focused on profit right wing concept.

## **Political and policy interest**

At this point social entrepreneurship had no real presence in UK social policy. There were signs, however, that the term appealed instinctively across the political spectrum, from the right wing political commentator Melanie Phillips (1995a, 1995b) to a set of endorsements Atkinson had attracted from members of all political parties.

As set out in the previous chapter, it was Thatcherism that set the scene for social entrepreneurship and provided a receptive political climate as well as practical experiences of the shift within public services towards private sector and market based systems.

I think that Margaret Thatcher started it by making regeneration money competitive, which encouraged that mood and spirit.

There were some early mentions of interest in the idea of social entrepreneurship by Labour MPs and left wing political commentators (Field, 1990, 1994; Jacques, 1994).

Britain is in dire need of two kinds of entrepreneurs. We need many more in the business field. But we must also begin to prize social entrepreneurs. (Field, 1994)

But by the mid 1990s there was neither definitive political nor policy interest in social entrepreneurship.

Between 1980 and 1994 the idea of social entrepreneurship was quirky and marginal, and any particular significance it might have in the UK was not yet articulated. At the same time, some of the early ideas and themes that were apparent did contribute to the future development of social entrepreneurship – in particular the three different representations of the ‘social entrepreneur’, its generic relevance, and its synergy with the business world. And these are taken up in the next section, which focuses on the development of social entrepreneurship from 1995.

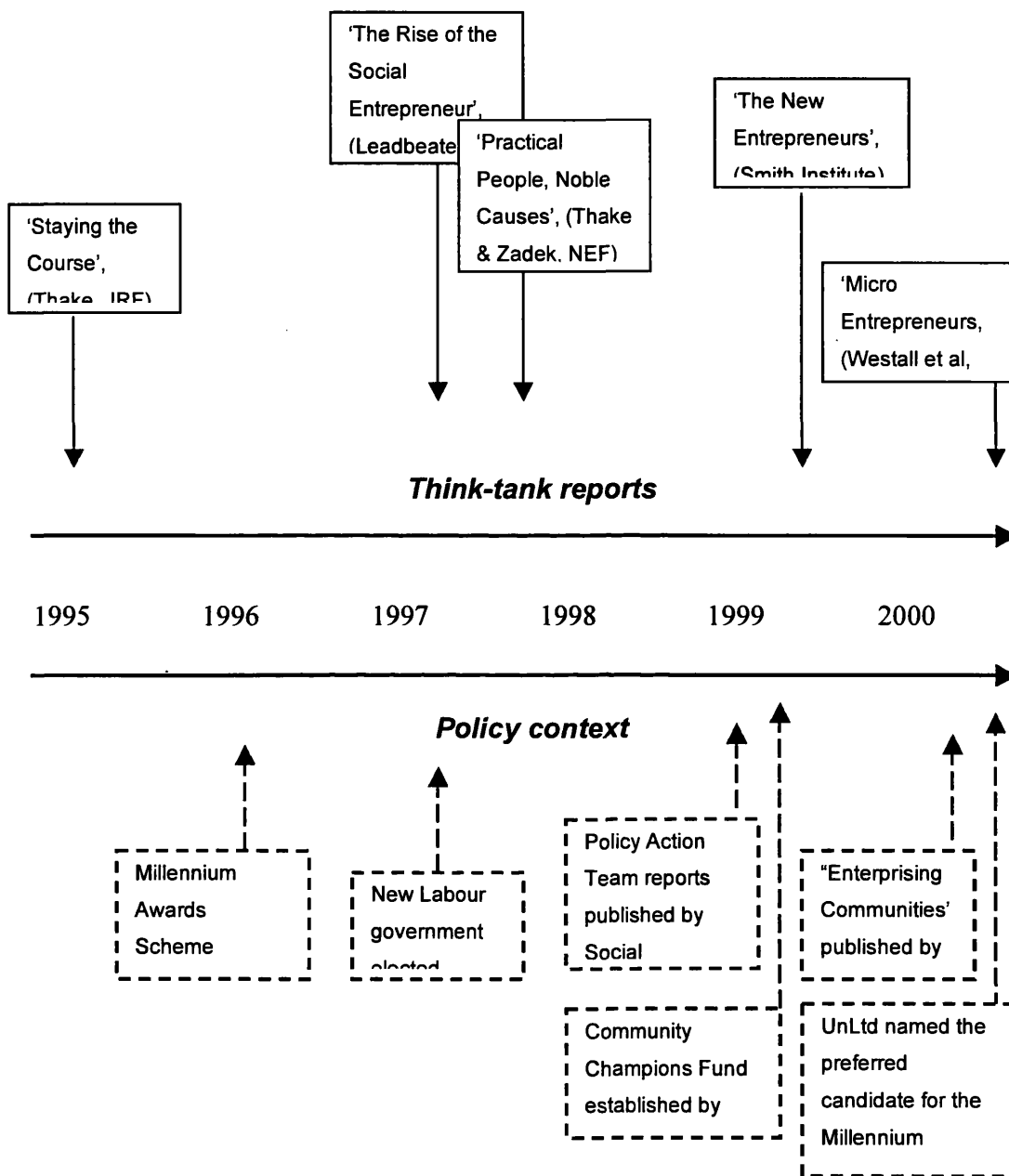
## **5.2 Stage 2: Arrival, acclaim and establishment: 1995 to 2000**

In the mid-1990s the term social entrepreneurship started to be used more consciously, more consistently, and more frequently. Think-tank reports were a major means through which social entrepreneurship gained a profile. During this period, organisations supporting social entrepreneurs were set up and attracted funding, the

idea of social entrepreneurship was taken up by the newly elected Labour government, and social entrepreneurs were increasingly recognised and lauded. At the same time there was growing antagonism, suspicion and criticism of social entrepreneurship, in particular from the field of community development. There was also some ambivalence about the terminology among those promoting social entrepreneurship. During the late 1990s, social enterprise was also gaining in profile, and was starting to be taken up by government.

Figure 5.2 below marks the key publications and reports which promoted social entrepreneurship, and the key events in the policy context which supported the emergence of social entrepreneurship.

Figure 5.2: Stage 2 timeline in the representation of social entrepreneurship



### Representations

During this period the representation of social entrepreneurship became clearer and more multi-dimensional. The almost exclusive emphasis on the individual social entrepreneur remained, and the three representations identified above persisted, though in somewhat altered forms. In this part the forms that these three representations took

on are described. These three main representations of social entrepreneurs are then considered in terms of their differences and similarities, and some of the assumptions about what it means to be 'entrepreneurial' and 'social' are discussed.

### *Charismatic heroes*

The social entrepreneur as 'charismatic hero' became the figure most immediately and commonly associated with social entrepreneurship in the UK.

The early picture of social entrepreneurs as lone, charismatic heroes...  
(Bentley, 2001: 22)

I think that by talking up social entrepreneurship you focus on the particular contribution of a charismatic individual who really makes it their life to develop a project.

The most influential representation of social entrepreneurs was put forward in the Demos report 'The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur' (Leadbeater, 1997).

But what makes a social entrepreneur? Social entrepreneurs are:

- entrepreneurial: they take under-utilised, discarded resources and spot ways of using them to satisfy unmet needs
- innovative: they create new services and products, new ways of dealing with problems, often by bringing together approaches that have traditionally been kept separate
- transformatory: they transform the institutions they are in charge of, taking moribund organisations and turning them into dynamic creative ones. Most importantly, they can transform the neighbourhoods and communities they serve by opening up possibilities for self-development.

(Leadbeater, 1997: 77)

At once, the 'charismatic hero' took on a specifically British form. One person interviewed referred to social entrepreneurs in terms of the 'buccaneering' figure of Richard Branson, bringing to mind a kind of adventurer and risk-taker, a modern day Errol Flynn who challenges the status quo, but is inherently good and romantic, someone who overcomes all obstacles and pitfalls with charm and determination.

Social entrepreneurs are individualistic mavericks, the Dysons and Bransons of community development. (MacGillivray et al, 2001: 31)

With Branson as its business counter-part, it is not surprising that the social entrepreneur as 'charismatic hero' became the most clearly articulated and popular image of social entrepreneurship.

### ***Managerial social entrepreneurs***

The idea of the social entrepreneur as ‘manager’ also persisted, but took on a variety of forms not immediately apparent in the representations found in the 1980s. There were three ways in which social entrepreneurs came to be represented in managerial terms: as leaders of large regeneration organisations; as leaders of successful mainstream voluntary sector organisations; and as leaders of social enterprise organisations.

First was the social entrepreneur as heading up community regeneration organisations, as presented by Thake (1995) in ‘Staying the Course’. Community regeneration organisations were large, cross-sector partnerships, generally funded by government grants, and tasked with regenerating the economies of deprived areas. Even though Thake’s (1995) report devoted only two pages to describing social entrepreneurs, he painted a compelling picture:

At the centre of every successful community regeneration organisation is a new type of professional person: the social entrepreneur. In many ways they are similar to private sector entrepreneurs. They are able to see and develop the potential of under-utilised resources – human, financial and physical. They are personable, have energy and are able to motivate people. They have organisational and persuasive skills and they are excited by the prospect of getting things done. They are adept at the administration and manipulation of grant regimes. They differ from their private sector counterparts in that the purpose of their involvement is to create assets, resources and surpluses which make the community richer. They are part of an apolitical, ethical thread within society which has a concern for social justice.

It is important to emphasise that if a community regeneration organisation is to be effective and successful it will be the centre of a swirl of activity. Social entrepreneurs are needed to manage what can be large, fast-moving, creative organisations. Social entrepreneurs are therefore, an essential component, not an optional add-on. (Thake, 1995: 48)

Describing social entrepreneurs as adept at administration, resource mobilisation, and motivating people emphasises entrepreneurship in terms of managerial skills, as does the idea that social entrepreneurs are an ‘essential component’ in managing ‘large, fast-moving, creative organisations’.

Second was the idea of mainstream voluntary sector managers as social entrepreneurs, bringing an entrepreneurial approach to the voluntary sector. The School for Social

Entrepreneurs encapsulated this idea with its aim of creating a business school for the voluntary sector.

The idea of social entrepreneurs - extolled by the Demos think-tank and a new business school - is of individuals who lead risk-taking voluntary organisations. (Noble, 1997: 8)

Third was the idea of social entrepreneurs as heading up social enterprise organisations. The particular skill of the social entrepreneur was to balance 'social' and 'business' goals when running such hybrid organisations. The main emphasis on being 'entrepreneurial' was to be 'business-like', and there was a secondary emphasis on being 'innovative', in that social enterprise was a novel organisational form. It could also involve founding an organisation, though not necessarily.

Social entrepreneurs are the people who make the Social Economy and Social Enterprises work. (Pearce, 1999)

There is a growing interest in the contribution of 'social entrepreneurs' who work for community objectives through a combination of commercial and non-commercial activities..... (Deakin, 2001: 16)

The managerial social entrepreneur was especially appealing to policy makers, as a type of professional person managing a range of welfare services at the same time as being 'community' focused. This fitted neatly with emerging policy discourses – the professionalism of the 'enterprise culture' coupled with a moral purpose and sense of the public good which were important to the Labour party and reflected public concerns about how to reconnect with 'society'.

Between 1995 and 2000, these three representations of the managerial social entrepreneur emerged, but by the end of 2000 one was clearly dominant in policy debates. It was the social entrepreneurs heading up social enterprise organizations who became the main focus for growing policy interest. Chapters 1 and 4 highlighted how, from around 2000, social enterprise started to be taken seriously in policy circles (eg Westall et al, 2000; Moore, 2000). The potential for social enterprise as a better option for some public services than public and private sector management was also starting to be put forward (Moore, 2000; Pearce, 1999).

### *Community based entrepreneurs*

Even though Atkinson's elected neighbourhood social entrepreneur did not gain purchase on the imagination of policy makers, the emphasis on local community-based

action found in Atkinson's work took on a central importance in social entrepreneurship. The centrality of 'community' was strongly emphasised by Thake and Zadek (1997) who promoted the idea of 'community-based' social entrepreneurs.

Creative and energetic leaders play an essential part in making societies work. When they are active in politics we call them national leaders; when they turn their attentions to commerce we call them entrepreneurs. By naming them, we recognise them, give them status, help them exploit their full potential. In one part of our society, however, we too often fail to name these leaders, to recognise their qualities and the contributions they can make. We rarely provide adequate support to their efforts: indeed, often our institutions work against them. And yet our lives are influenced by these people, and our future may actually depend on them. These are the 'community-based social entrepreneurs'. (Thake & Zadek, 1997: 6)

Social entrepreneur: One of the new breed of local activists who believe that energy and organisation can improve a community. To be found organising street patrols to liberate red-light districts, or running local exchange-trading schemes. (Rowan, 1997: pT67)

The community-based social entrepreneur was a more marginal figure than the charismatic hero or the managerially oriented figure. Sencot talked about encouraging 'delinquents', and it certainly presented social entrepreneurship as primarily a local community phenomenon.

The vision for social entrepreneurship in Scotland might focus on community leadership. I liked what Mel said about promoting the 'delinquents', it captured something about breaking new ground, not fitting into the structures that government and into 'normal practice'. I think a lot of it boils down to encouraging leadership, new models of leadership. To call it 'community leadership' might be narrowing it down too much, and yet it is one expression that takes me closer to what I think social entrepreneurship should be about. (Boase, Sencot AGM, 2001)

Social entrepreneurship became a way of re-imagining the role of individuals within communities, where a sense of community had been 'lost' following the embrace of the market and neo-liberalism during the 1980s (Taylor, 2003). It was also a way of highlighting the importance of community development and updating it with a more contemporary language, attracting policy attention. 'Community' quickly became a central and defining feature of many forms of social entrepreneurship in the UK. It even appeared in Leadbeater's (1997) account of 'heroic' social entrepreneurs – people who transform local communities. 'Community' was a legitimising badge for social



entrepreneurship, fitting neatly with Labour party discourses which were incorporating ideas of 'localism' and 'community' into their policy agenda.

But, social entrepreneurship as a solution to pressing social problems was not just about the figure of the individual social entrepreneur. It was also about a change in culture, about promoting a shift in the way of doing things, in attitudes and values.

We are trying to put in place the foundation stones for a new, entrepreneurial culture in the public and voluntary sectors. (Mawson, 2000: 142)

...there's something about generating a social enterprise culture or generating a culture or way of being which brings out entrepreneurial characteristics in whole masses of people. (Voluntary organisation chief executive, interview)

Enterprise is not another word for business, it is about how we run all aspects of our society. Enterprise skills and the enterprise approach are needed in the public sector as in the social economy. (Pearce, 1999)

In spite of the differences in representation, there was also a lot that these different representations of social entrepreneurship had in common, specifically the ways in which 'entrepreneurship' and 'social' were presented. This points to some of the assumptions underpinning the developing ideas of social entrepreneurship in the UK.

Invariably 'entrepreneurship' was equated with business, and social entrepreneurs were deemed the same as or 'equivalent' to business entrepreneurs.

Social entrepreneurs are the equivalent of true business entrepreneurs but they operate in the social, not-for-profit sector. (CAN, internet)

Social entrepreneurs were portrayed in the interviews as having "the skills and values which are common to entrepreneurs in the business sector", and as using business type tools and techniques such as planning, marketing, and measurement. Social entrepreneurship was about "competition", "outputs", "audit trails", and "quality of service"; "business plans" and "accounting"; "return on investment" and "customer care". It was also about "seizing the moment, making connections, wheeling and dealing in ideas" and "someone who actually gets things done". It emphasised the role of the "customer", "the quality of service", and the importance of organisational growth and replication.

The emphasis on the ‘customer’ was portrayed through the ‘cup of coffee’ story. This image drew on the fashion for coffee bars, and was intended to create an image of a satisfied ‘customer’, and was part of CAN’s discourse, as presented by one of its directors:

If you come to Kaleidoscope and asked for a cup of coffee it would be cappuccino, frothy coffee, from a Gaggia machine, with all the noises and the smells. It doesn't matter what state you are in you would receive it in a pottery cup, a proper ceramic cup with a saucer and a teaspoon, with chocolate sprinkled on top, and it would be 25p. What would it cost, it would be subsidised. But imagine you are the run down, insecure client coming for the first time to this place, and you ask for a coffee and you are expecting something out of a machine or a horrible thing, and then somebody gives you that kind of coffee, it makes you feel oh this is a bit different, valued, its about treating you with respect, its about raising standards.

Taken together, this gives a sense that social change is more about meeting consumer needs (or wants and preferences) than a process of political empowerment or promoting human rights. And welfare becomes a business transaction rather than a democratic commitment to social justice. This is well illustrated by one of the leading proponents of social entrepreneurship in the quote below, advocating a more ‘business-like’ approach.

Calling for a more businesslike approach to regeneration, he said “inner city areas need managing properly by experienced players; the problem is not a democratic deficit but access to a greater range of quality services. Who provides services is not a political decision really but a business one.” (Mawson, quoted in Butler, 2002)

Being ‘business-like’ was not the only characteristic of social entrepreneurs. Representations tended to identify social entrepreneurs as isolated and working alone – “unsung high-flyers” – and as hampered by limited access to funding and support networks (Gray, 1997). This is consistent with the image of the business entrepreneur, the “myth of the lonely only entrepreneur” that Schoonhoven and Romanelli (2001c) attribute with so much staying power in both academic and practitioner thinking on entrepreneurship.

The ‘socialness’ of social entrepreneurship was expressed in several ways. Primarily, it was about goals, objectives, outcomes and impacts that bring ‘social value’ or create ‘social benefit’ (Young, 2006; Nicholls & Cho, 2006). This contrasts most sharply with notions of ‘social’ being a process, and ideas and values which have been

pervasive in the voluntary and community sector in the UK, such as ‘participation’, ‘user involvement’, and ‘empowerment’. All of these are ‘buzzwords’, but all convey an emphasis on the means being as important as the ends.

Secondly, social entrepreneurs were represented as having “ethical fibre” and “unquestionable integrity”: Ashoka’s entrepreneurs are people who are “totally honest” (Ashoka, *Selecting Leading Public Entrepreneurs*, leaflet; Schwab Foundation selection criteria); CAN entrepreneurs were ‘driven by strong belief/vision’; SSE entrepreneurs were ‘high-minded’. In this sense the ‘socialness’ of social entrepreneurship was about the personality of the social entrepreneur.

Thirdly the ‘socialness’ was conveyed in terms of ‘collaboration’, involving ‘partnership’ and ‘teamwork’. And lastly, the discourses on social entrepreneurship consistently fell back on notions of community, positioning social entrepreneurs within an abstracted notion of the local.

### **Rationale and claims**

During this period, a clearer rationale and narrative for the field of social entrepreneurship formed. Chapter 1 traced the changing policy claims for social entrepreneurship, as making critical contributions: to tackling community deprivation; to voluntary sector professionalisation; to public sector reform and welfare provision; and to the changing nature of citizenship and democracy.

Discourse analysis draws attention to the nature of the ‘problem’ and the ‘solution’ as starting points for analysing how an argument or rationale is constructed and made persuasive. This part therefore focuses on the ways in which social entrepreneurship was promoted, rationalised and justified, by reviewing first how the ‘problem’ was characterised and second how the ‘solution’ (social entrepreneurship) was located within existing policy discourses.

The ‘problems’ that social entrepreneurship is intended to ‘solve’ are presented as ‘pressing’, ‘urgent’, ‘acute’, ‘intransigent’ ‘intractable’ – all words that contribute to a sense of impending crisis and alarm.

... those intransigent social and environmental problems the government is committed to addressing. (Thake & Zadek, 1997: 21 NSS)

These social entrepreneurs are creating innovative ways of tackling some of our most pressing and intractable social problems: youth crime, drugs, dependency, chronic joblessness, illiteracy, Aids and mental illness. (Leadbeater, 1997: 16)

I think that there is a desperation in our society to find some answers to very pressing social problems.

The impression of crisis was reinforced by the portrayal of existing 'traditional' institutions and approaches as having completely failed.

... if we really look hard historically at what we have done as a voluntary sector we have sometimes contributed to people's poverty we have kept people dependent.

The direct result has been the notorious squalor of the social sector. Inadequate innovation - especially when compared to the steadily compounding productivity gains achieved by an entrepreneurial and competitive business world - has left social organizations sclerotic, service quality poor, costs high, salaries low, and repute lower still. (Drayton, 2000: 1)

The state, once the saviour, is regarded as just another of the problems. Some of the passion has drained out of general politics and been transferred to a thousand separate good causes. Successive governments have undermined their own civil service and the professionals in the public sector employed in teaching, local government and medicine. The domain of public service has been vacated... (Young, 1997, New Statesman)

Similarly, social entrepreneurship was put forward as necessary to modernise and reform the voluntary sector which was presented as needing to improve its performance in order to play a more central role in society, acting as "the lively standard-bearer of civil society" (Young, 1998: 6).

the increasing challenges of society require the voluntary sector to focus on innovation and ways to improve its performance (SSE, 1997: 2).

...the students [of the SSE] are all people who want to make a difference, in however small a way, to the way society works. To that end, they will all be concerned with the future of the voluntary sector in general... The voluntary sector should no longer be cast as a residual - defined, in effect, by reference to what the government and commercial sectors do, and do not do. The opportunity is for the role to be recast in a much more positive, proactive way. (Young, 1998: 6)

The problems were presented as historically significant, unprecedented. More than that, the necessity of social entrepreneurship was premised on historical and inevitable changes that were taking place which require a whole new approach and mindset. This was apparent in practice based and in academic texts:

*Academic*

We are at a major turning point in history, and that social and development models are in crisis and require immediate attention (Favreau, 2000: 227).

*Practitioner*

The last two decades have seen an extraordinary historical turning point, the breakout of the social sector from this squalor. Across most of the world, the logjam suddenly broke. Social entrepreneurship has multiplied, competition has arrived, and the sector is racing to catch up. (Drayton, 2000)

This sense of urgency, coupled with the generic nature of the ‘acute social needs’ and the failures of all existing approaches, helped to convey social entrepreneurship as offering an invaluable and timely solution – and social entrepreneurs as the heroes and the saviours of the day.

But broader than that, you asked before why is the government and everybody interested, well they are interested because they know the public sector can't deliver what they need and that the private sector won't - there is a gap, so they are always thinking maybe the voluntary sector now will be able to. And the voluntary sector has in the past filled many many gaps. But they are looking to see if the voluntary sector can do something extraordinary or different.

...social entrepreneurship has rapidly become the most influential idea of our time. (Skoll, 2006: vi)

Social entrepreneurship was not put forward as a ‘new’ solution to a ‘new’ policy problem. Rather it drew on existing policy discourses and on-going concerns about ‘the dependency culture’, poverty, the ‘welfare state crisis’, ‘bureaucracy’ and government ‘inefficiency’. This was brought together with the policy interests of New Labour in embracing the voluntary sector as an alternative and preferred provider of social welfare, with public sector reform agendas, and concerns about rebuilding ‘community’ and the ‘social fabric’ of society. By locating social entrepreneurs within ‘community’, within ‘the voluntary sector’, or within the ailing public sector, the ‘indigenous’ nature of the solution was emphasised. Social entrepreneurs therefore appeared as understanding the way in which each sector worked, at the same time as

offering something different in that they could ‘learn’ from the private sector in order to bring about ‘excellence’.

The second point which I think is critical is that social entrepreneurs represent a model of excellence within the public sector which is indigenous to the public and social sector. This is not about importing Price Waterhouse or Coopers and Lybrand or someone from Barclays to tell us how the public sector should be made more efficient. A lot of these people are happy to learn from the private sector, but it is more about developing indigenous models of excellence of entrepreneurship within the public and social sector. That matters critically for the reform agenda in the public sector. (Leadbeater quoted in *The New Entrepreneurs*, The Smith Institute, 2000: 15)

During this period, the rationale and claims associated with social entrepreneurship became closely tied into specific UK policy discourses. This was an essential transition from the very generic claims that were being made in the previous period if social entrepreneurship was to become significant within policy. The effect was to frame social entrepreneurship as directly relevant to very contemporary policy concerns. Furthermore, social entrepreneurship became imbued with concepts and language that connected directly to the ways in which policy makers were discussing issues. This helped to make social entrepreneurship familiar, easy to talk about, and therefore an appealing and natural ‘solution’ to call on.

To carry conviction, the new people need to shed the fusty image of traditional do-gooders and be as bustling and businesslike as they are benevolent. Step forth the social entrepreneurs. (Young, 1997: 20)

The case for social entrepreneurship was made stronger by the ‘epochal’ language used (du Gay, 2004). The argument for social entrepreneurship depended on the urgency of existing problems, the absolute failure of existing approaches, and the sense of historical changes requiring something new and immediate. Social entrepreneurship appeared as a new idea which captured spirit of the times, the zeitgeist.

... epochal accounts are those that seek to encapsulate the Zeitgeist in some sort of overarching designation (du Gay, 2004: 43)

At the same time, social entrepreneurship remained a very generic solution, located in almost any arena and able to ‘solve’ almost any problem – from tackling specific social needs such as ‘youth crime, drugs... illiteracy’, to bringing about organisational and institutional change. Du Gay argues that the ‘pervasiveness’ of ‘enterprise’ accounts for its longevity in policy discourse.

What was once seen exclusively as the ideological property of the New Right is gradually transmuted into a set of seemingly neutral organizational techniques (Scott, 1996; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000; Crouch, 2001) applicable to a range of circumstances from community regeneration ('Social entrepreneurship': Leadbeater, 1999) to remodelling social security ('Entrepreneurial welfarism': Stoker, 2000) to restructuring higher education ('the Enterprise University': Considine and Marginson, 2000). And, in turn, this pervasiveness or 'reach' also helps to account for the obduracy of Enterprise. (du Gay, 2004: 40)

There were, however, some limitations to framing social entrepreneurship as so generic, so all applicable. These limitations started to become apparent at the end of 2000, when policy interest in social entrepreneurship as the 'social innovation' school of thought started to be overtaken by interest in the 'social enterprise' school of thought.

### **Political and policy interest**

With the election of the Labour government in 1997, social entrepreneurship became part of the new political vocabulary (Sutherland, 2001; Daniel, 1998). As noted in above and in Chapter 2, social entrepreneurship was acclaimed by the new Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and it was a term on the lips of many in and close to government.

We will be backing thousands of social entrepreneurs – those people who bring to social problems the same enterprise and imagination that business entrepreneurs bring to wealth creation. (Blair, 1997)

Blair's speech was a useful part of the process of conferring status and respect upon social entrepreneurs. (Thake & Zadek, 1997: 31)

From this point onwards, social entrepreneurship was consistently and inextricably identified with the Labour government, and more specifically with the 'third way' and the reform and modernisation agenda that it sponsored.

It is not going too far to say the success of the new Labour project itself turns on whether social entrepreneurs can be effective, within "the community" and across the broader national policy arena. (Thake & Zadek, 1997: 31)

Certainly in this country the government wants help to discover what a Third Way is, and this might be attached to that agenda.

The Policy Action Teams, mentioned in Chapters 1 and 4, were the first formal way in which social entrepreneurship featured in policy debate within government, and were a key way in which social entrepreneurship gained some purchase on government

policy<sup>37</sup>. Individuals promoting social entrepreneurship, including Leadbeater, Atkinson and Blakebrough, were on three of eighteen teams (PATs 4, 9, and 16). In PAT 4 (Neighbourhood Management) and in PAT 9 (Community Self Help) social entrepreneurship was mentioned in passing. PAT 16 (Learning Lessons) referred extensively to social entrepreneurs and community leaders. It was focused on the training and support needs of people working in regeneration, be they in central or local government or in the voluntary and community sectors. One interviewee commented on how the PAT process was used by those promoting social entrepreneurship:

In particular the PAT 16 working group report, there were clearly people on that who wanted to push that agenda, and it got hold, and was picked up by various ministers who've been running with it.

Of the thirty-three proposals made in PAT 16, seven related directly to social entrepreneurs, and many others were about improving civil servant and policy makers' understanding of community development and the role of social entrepreneurs.

Recommendations included in PAT 16:

- 1 The creation of a development fund to support social entrepreneurial activity.
- 5 Developing a training and support strategy for entrepreneurs.
- 6 Achieving the target of at least 2,000 entrepreneurial organisations on databases by the end of 2000, and if it proves feasible, 5,000 by the end of 2005.
- 7 Establishing 'Community Bridge', as a parallel support network to 'Business Bridge', bringing experienced social entrepreneurs together with those developing new community projects to provide advice and specialist support.
- 8 Developing greater awareness of the benefits of social entrepreneurship and the conditions necessary for its success, perhaps including a new national award for social entrepreneurship.

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<sup>37</sup> Dick Atkinson was on PAT 4 on Neighbourhood Management; Adele Blakebrough and Geoff Mulgan were on PAT 9 Community Self Help; and Geoff Mulgan and Charles Leadbeater were on PAT 16 Learning Lessons.



- 9 Social entrepreneurs should be considered for appointment to the boards of RDAs [Regional Development Agencies] and similar types of organization.
- 10 Regeneration programmes should report on support given to community leaders and social entrepreneurs.

In reality these were small scale or tightly targeted proposals, and certainly did not entail major policy shifts or the creation of a comprehensive infrastructure of support for social entrepreneurs. In fact, much of the report was about culture change – about the culture in the public sector, about the culture of cross-sector partnerships, about the organisational culture of voluntary organisations, about changing attitudes within neighbourhood renewal areas:

Successful neighbourhood renewal will require more than improved training and an increased supply of entrepreneurial leaders. The impact of aptitudes, preferences, attitudes, behaviour, values, belief systems and organisational cultures must also be considered. (PAT 16, 1999: 63)

This highlights one of the challenges for government in attempting to implement policies that support social entrepreneurship – their rhetoric was to foster change, but translating this into structural and policy change was not straightforward. Reflecting on the role of government at that time, Mulgan (2006) commented:

As Blair's chief adviser on social policy I was one of those who concluded very early on in favour of not grand plan but a more evolutionary approach, designed to push forward the drivers of social entrepreneurship and remove some of the barriers so as to allow for organic growth. The worst thing we could have done would have been to pump too much money into social entrepreneurship, raise expectations too high, and then see inexperienced leaders and organizations crash into disappointment. (Mulgan, 2006: 82)

Yet, government departments were starting to show an interest in targeting funding to individuals as a way of building community and encouraging local activism. This was in line with its interest in encouraging broadening volunteering, and supportive of its agendas around community cohesion and civic responsibility. In fact, political rhetoric was focused on social entrepreneurship as a form of community-based initiative.

In 1996, the Millennium Awards Scheme had been set up under the Conservative government, providing small grants of around £2,000 to individuals with an idea to do

something beneficial within their local community. Through the Awards Scheme, more than 32,000 individuals were supported, and five annual evaluations of the scheme carried out between 2000 and 2004 were overwhelmingly positive. And, in 1999 the Department for Education and Skills (Dfes) piloted the Community Champions Fund which followed the same model as the Millennium Awards Scheme, but focused more specifically on educational initiatives. The pilot was deemed successful and it became an on-going funding programme.

In 2000, social enterprise started to appear on the government agenda in a significant way. Even at this early stage of its emergence in social policy agendas, social enterprise was more easily amenable to government support and direct policy interventions than social entrepreneurship. HM Treasury set up the *Social Investment Task Force* (SITF) which reported to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in October 2000 with its report, 'Enterprising Communities: Wealth beyond Welfare'<sup>38</sup>.

I want to see more investment in the UK in social enterprises - projects which have social objectives, and are not simply profit orientated. (Brown, 2000)

This report focused on forms and mechanisms for financing and investment in 'under-invested' communities, and how this would release the entrepreneurial talent in such communities. Social entrepreneurship was defined in an all encompassing but ambiguous way, to mean forms of initiative and innovation with purely social goals, business activities with social goals, and small-scale community based enterprise.

**Social or Community Entrepreneur.** A person who uses conventional business discipline, management tools and entrepreneurial skills to achieve a social purpose. (SITF, 2000: 31)

Five proposals were made which were all taken up by the Treasury, and were clearly carefully anticipated and previously negotiated. They included tax incentives to encourage financial investment in deprived areas and recommendations for two new legal forms of organisation (Community Interest Company and Public Interest Company) that would mix social and financial goals while ensuring that economic benefits were retained within the community. As well as specific structural changes,

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<sup>38</sup> The commission of this report was one of the recommendations that came out of PAT 16. "4. Commission a feasibility study into options for providing easier access to social capital funding and low-cost loans for community-based organisations. This should be co-ordinated by HMT with a report completed by autumn 2000." (PAT 16, 1999: 33)

the SITF proposals offered a more coherent and feasible strategy than the raft of proposals that came out of the Policy Action Teams.

Social entrepreneurship had arrived on the policy scene in 1997, with the election of the New Labour government. Initially it was embraced enthusiastically, and became a part of policy considerations. But it proved challenging in terms of concrete policy interventions and support. During this period, it became clearer that the forms of social entrepreneurship that resonated most within policy were the ‘community-based’ version and ‘social enterprise’.

Between 1995 and 2000 social entrepreneurship moved from being a quirky idea on the margins of policy, to being positioned within the ‘third way’ debates that formed the foundation for New Labour’s social welfare agenda. This was an experimental period, during which time a number of different ideas about social entrepreneurship were advanced, drawing on different policy discourses for legitimacy and justification. The forms that resonated most strongly were the ideas of ‘community-based’ social entrepreneurs and ‘social enterprise’. Both these were taken up seriously within UK social policy, resulting in resource allocation and legislation, as well as prompting some debate and criticisms.

### **5.3 Stage 3: Consolidation and growth: 2001 to 2006**

Social entrepreneurs are becoming part of the very fabric of our society. And mainstream thinking is embracing the concept of organisations which embrace moral purpose alongside entrepreneurial expertise.

I believe there is now a window of opportunity. A chance to resolve the conflict between strong social purpose and a sense of enterprise.  
(Hewitt, 2002)

Since 2001 the term social entrepreneur was used more widely. But increasingly its use was in line with the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought rather than in terms of ‘social innovation’, both in practice and in policy. A BBC Radio 4 edition of Shoptalk was titled ‘Are social entrepreneurs the next big thing?’ where the programme was devoted to a discussion of social enterprise (Shoptalk, 2003). At the same time, social entrepreneurship became increasingly associated with public sector reform, as its role

and significance broadened from its earlier presentation as contributing to community regeneration, voluntary sector reform, and welfare service provision.

## **Representations**

The three different portrayals of the social entrepreneur described in the previous section continued to be key figures in the world of social entrepreneurship: the charismatic hero; the managerial social entrepreneur; and the community-based entrepreneur. From 2001 these representations were overlaid by a new way of presenting social entrepreneurship. What were several distinct types of social entrepreneur, with all their similarities and differences, transformed into a continuum. In fact, into two continuums. One relates to the degree of entrepreneurialism – from the ‘ordinary’ to the ‘outstanding’ social entrepreneur. The other relates to the orientation to profit – from pure charity to pure business.

The first continuum outlined here is about the extent to which an individual is entrepreneurial. The social entrepreneur continuum represents people as more or less entrepreneurial, without necessarily being defined as something else. This contrasts with business entrepreneurship, where entrepreneurs are more normally compared with administrators or managers, who are portrayed as having opposing skills and characteristics. One implication of this is that *all* people are to some extent socially entrepreneurial.

I think that everyone has certain levels of innate abilities for healing and massage and for entrepreneurship.

Figure 5.3 below presents this first continuum, from the ‘ordinary’ ‘community-based’ social entrepreneurs typified by Scarman’s ‘can-do citizens’ to the ‘outstanding’ hero figures of Ashoka.



The continuum found its clearest expression in the work of UnLtd, where social entrepreneurs received support at three different ‘levels’, on the assumption that they would climb up the ‘staircase’ of support. One of the founders of UnLtd commented:

Another idea which is the one I subscribe to is that anyone can become a social entrepreneur, people start on a progression through life and through experiences and through achievements and through growing self-confidence they come to what they become.... But most people have the capacity to become confident successful changemakers in the world. So if you adopt that model, giving people a chance, a progression, a staircase, if you lack opportunities is what one is talking about.

The continuum meant that some of the distinctions between the different representations of social entrepreneurs promoted in the previous period were lost. Equally there was not a cut off point at which suddenly the former representations disappeared, rather the idea of a continuum gradually became the more common and credible way of representing social entrepreneurs while the different types of social entrepreneur continued to be presented in some settings.

The second continuum referred to the orientation to social goals and to financial profit (see Alter, 2006: 209; Bloom, 2006: 280). In 2001 there was growing confusion in the use of terminology in the UK as to whether social entrepreneurship referred to social enterprise or to social innovation. At first there were some attempts to clarify the distinction and to stress the difference between social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. Such attempts at clarification were most clearly expressed in an exchange on the Social Edge<sup>39</sup> internet forum on social entrepreneurship in 2003, where articles by Greg Dees and Jerr Boschee went up against each other. Dees (2003) asserted that “Social entrepreneurship is about innovation and impact, *not* income” while Boschee (2003) argued that “Unless a nonprofit organization is generating *earned* revenue from its activities, it is *not* acting in an entrepreneurial manner”.

Innovation can only take an organisation so far – unless there is earned income it is not entrepreneurial. That lets people off the hook, they claim to have done something different but they are continuing to function on a dependency model. (Boschee, seminar, 2002)

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<sup>39</sup> Social Edge is a web based chat and information site focused on social entrepreneurship, funded and run by the Skoll Foundation.

In spite of this push towards a separation of terms, discourse was dominated by attempts to bring the two ideas closer together and to mask any distinctions between them. In a first attempt to accommodate the two ideas, whilst still allowing for a distinction, some people conceived of social enterprise as one of many activities that social entrepreneurs engage in, albeit a particularly popular one. As such, social enterprise was positioned as a sub-category within social entrepreneurship.

However, the growing policy interest in 'social enterprise' meant it was rapidly becoming more of an explicit focus for policy than 'social innovation'. The label 'social entrepreneur' was increasingly and consistently being applied to leaders of social enterprise organisations, and social enterprise was often labelled as social entrepreneurship in the press, among voluntary sector leaders, and among academics. It became invidious to conceive of 'social enterprise' as a sub-set of social entrepreneurship, and nonsensical given that 'social enterprise' was becoming more important than 'social innovation' in policy debate. So from attempting to differentiate social entrepreneurship as 'social innovation' and as 'social enterprise', efforts shifted to integrate them. The idea of a continuum became the main way in which this was achieved.

[I]t is important to underscore that market orientation is a continuous rather than a discrete variable. (Nicholls & Cho, 2006: 109)

Note that the distinction between social and commercial entrepreneurship is not dichotomous, but rather more accurately conceptualized as a continuum ranging from purely social to purely economic. (Austin et al, 2006: 3)

This continuum found its expression in the work of academics, practitioners, policy makers, and commentators on social entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

In US academic circles, social enterprise is understood to include those organizations that fall along a continuum from profit-oriented businesses engaged in socially beneficial activities (corporate philanthropies or corporate social responsibility) to dual purpose businesses that mediate profit goals with social objectives (hybrids) to nonprofit organizations engaged in mission-supporting commercial activity (social-purpose organizations)... This broad definition is consistent with how business schools at leading American universities understand social enterprise... This definition is also used by many social enterprise consulting firms... (Kerlin, 2006: 105)

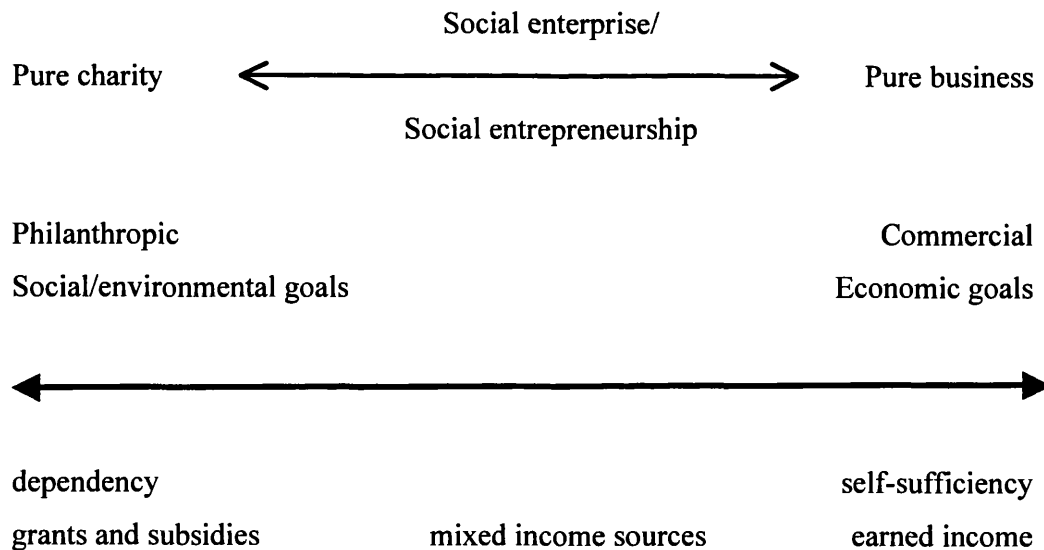
Chapman et al (2007) found that such a continuum is a commonly accepted way of representing social enterprise in policy circles in the UK.

we have shown that this ‘continuum model’ is a commonly accepted way of thinking about the relationship between the sectors... .  
 (Chapman et al, 2007: 85)

They go on to argue that such a continuum is unhelpful because it oversimplifies the motives and purposes of social enterprise.

Figure 5.4 below sets out the second continuum, from purely charitable or social goals to purely business or financial goals. Most organisations, both voluntary and private sector organisations, can be positioned somewhere along this continuum. The area where social and business goals are combined is the space of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

Figure 5.4: Continuum of goal orientation in social entrepreneurship



At one end of the continuum are charities, nonprofit, and voluntary organisations which devote themselves to purely social or environmental goals, and at the other end are business and commercial activities which are purely profit motivated. Between these two extremes is a continuum of organisations that are variably oriented to social and financial goals – social enterprises.



Pressure on NFPs to become sustainable through the introduction of commercial activity suggests that it is possible to position social enterprises along a spectrum from the purely philanthropic to the purely commercial (Dees, 1998a: 60)

This continuum has also been expressed in terms of the degree of 'dependency' on grants and donated funds to 'self-sufficiency' and self-generated or fee income (Boschee & McClurg, 2003; Anderson & Dees, 2006).

In some ways the two continuums offered a more multidimensional understanding of social entrepreneurship. They brought together the different representations and images of the social entrepreneur that had been promoted, and served to construct an inclusive idea of social entrepreneurship. This application of continuums as a way of overcoming dichotomies is very 'third way'. It overcame and reconciled tensions and differences by definition, by assertion (Fairclough, 2000; Powell, 2000). This in turn created the sense of a more important and larger field of policy and organised action, incorporating both the 'social innovation' and the 'social enterprise' schools of thought.

Yet, the combined field contained so many forms of action and types of organisations that it blurs what boundaries there might be, even more so than the 'loose and baggy monster' that is the voluntary sector (Kendall & Knapp, 1995). If all people are 'entrepreneurial' to some extent, and organisational goals are described as some mix of social and financial, then almost anyone and any organisation can locate themselves along the continuums, thereby associating themselves with the ideas and practices of social entrepreneurship if they so desire. As such the idea of social entrepreneurship was understood as having potential relevance for all voluntary and community organisations.

### **Rationale and claims**

From 2001 the emphasis shifted away from needing to justify and legitimise social entrepreneurship. Instead attention started to focus on the scale of the impact that social entrepreneurship could potentially achieve. Among those promoting and working with social entrepreneurs, including academics, the main claims started to be organisationally focused, on expansion and growth together with financial sustainability.

One of the biggest challenges for (successful) social entrepreneurs was consistently presented as the need for them to scale, grow or replicate their organisations or programmes. The logic being applied to social entrepreneurship was that organisational expansion was the key to more effective social innovation and change, as it increased the reach, effectiveness and impact of social change organisations. In effect, pursuing social change became equated with organisational growth. Approaches to growth included dissemination, affiliation, and branching as well as straightforward organisational expansion and franchising (Dees & Anderson, 2004).

A parallel issue that appeared as consistently was that of sustainability (Hartigan, 2006). This is illustrated by the title of one of the books on social entrepreneurship published in 2006 – ‘Social Entrepreneurship: New Models of Sustainable Social Change’ (Nicholls, 2006). Social entrepreneurship, it asserted, produces practical and sustainable social innovations, by definition. In the context of social entrepreneurship, sustainability almost invariably refers to the on-going financial viability of an organisation. This gives a particular advantage to ‘social enterprise’ organisations (Boschee, 2001).

The availability of finance was considered by some as lagging behind the potential of entrepreneurial voluntary organisations (Hartigan, 2006).

The first and perhaps the most pressing issue confronting researchers is to contribute towards the development of a market for social ‘capital’ investment. (Nicholls, 2006: 407)

At the same time there were ‘new philanthropic entrepreneurs’ on the look out for worthy and effective organisations to fund or ‘invest in’ (Osberg, 2006). There was a ‘new’ breed of funder, attracted to the ‘new’ breed of social entrepreneur. In a special ‘giving’ supplement in the Economist (February 2006), Bishop wrote:

There must be something for philanthropists to “invest” in – something that ideally will be created by ‘social entrepreneurs’, just as in the for-profit world entrepreneurs create companies that end up traded on the stockmarket. (Bishop, 2006: 9)

This emphasis in social entrepreneurship on organizational impact, outcomes and scale was a strong theme in the influential article by Martin and Osberg (2007) on defining social entrepreneurship. They argued that Andrew Carnegie could be thought of as a social entrepreneur because he built a national system of libraries and not just one

library benefiting a single community. Similarly they used the example of a school for AIDS orphans to insist that social entrepreneurship is defined by creating an entire new system and not simply a single example.

It would be possible to reformulate a school for AIDS orphans as social entrepreneurship. But that would require a plan by which the school itself would spawn an entire network of schools and secure the basis for its ongoing support. (Martin & Osberg, 2007: 37)

The rationale for social entrepreneurship became increasingly based on issues of organisational management – finding appropriate ways of expanding successful entrepreneurial efforts to achieve large-scale systemic impact, and ensuring on-going financing.

### **Political and policy interest**

Over the last term New Labour has managed to free ‘entrepreneurship’ from its Thatcherite connotations of individual greed by linking enterprise to issues of inclusion, regeneration and to personal aspiration. (Westall, 2001:49).

In terms of government interest and policy initiatives, a clear picture emerged. Policy interest in social entrepreneurship and social enterprise followed three routes: building the capacity of the voluntary and community sector so that more organisations are able to provide public services; encouraging innovation within the public sector as a way of furthering public sector reform; and the potential role of social enterprise in reshaping the private sector and contributing towards a fairer society.

In his account of the policy initiatives introduced to encourage social entrepreneurship, Mulgan (2006) listed a number of interventions that government undertook during his time in the Cabinet Office. These were initiatives aimed not so much at supporting social entrepreneurship directly, but at removing barriers and providing incentives in order to encourage the organic development of the field. He included the small grants given to individual social entrepreneurs through the Millennium Commission and UnLtd. But everything else listed concerned the mainstream voluntary sector or social enterprise, including: improving the tax treatment of donations; encouraging volunteering; licensing the Charity Bank; creating the Community Interest Company as a new legal form; setting up the Futurebuilders fund to support voluntary sector infrastructure; targeting advice to social enterprise through Business Links; funding

voluntary sector participation in Local Strategic Partnerships; introducing the New Deal for Communities; and promoting social enterprise in public sector procurement.

None of these initiatives stood out as contributing to creating substantial support for social entrepreneurship as a clear-cut field of activity. Encouraging volunteering, promoting giving, and developing the organisational and management capacity of voluntary organisations, were all aimed at furthering the government's agenda to expand the role of the voluntary sector in social service provision. None of these policy interventions required a concept of social entrepreneurship or a distinct set of organisations supporting social entrepreneurs.

Since about 2002, government ministers were explicit in identifying social entrepreneurs and social enterprise as playing an important, even critical, role in public sector reform, providing a "bridge" between individuals, communities and the state (Boeteng, 2002: 3). Blair's own comments about social entrepreneurship shifted from mobilising thousands of people in communities (Blair, 1997), to identifying social entrepreneurs as key agents within the public services who can bring about public sector modernisation (Blair, 2002a).

It is a shift that will turn front-line leaders like head teachers, hospital medical directors, and police superintendents into Britain's new social entrepreneurs. This is the decade when we will look to public service professionals as the new byword for can-do innovation and dynamism. For shaking things up and getting things done. They will achieve this with a staff reinvigorated through more attractive and flexible pay and conditions. (Blair, 2002a)

Social entrepreneurs then became not so much mobilisers within local communities, but the standard bearers of government change agendas in the public services. Though their 'social' motives and sense of public duty were superseded by financial incentives. Supporting social entrepreneurial initiatives became one means for effecting public service reform.

Change in Whitehall is fundamental too - to make the civil service more outward-looking and entrepreneurial, and to bring much greater individual accountability and rewards for success. (Blair, 2002)

Encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit and entrepreneurial management in the public services has a longer history, going back to the 1980s and the 'enterprise culture' promoted under Thatcher.

Yet, it was social enterprise that attracted the most enthusiasm. From 2001 there was a flurry of interest across government departments, interest that seemed to be growing by the day. Barbara Phillips, head of DTI Social Enterprise Unit was quoted in *The Observer* as saying:

For a lot of ministers, it's a winning formula: business solutions to social problems. (Phillips, 2003)

The *Social Enterprise Unit*, set up in 2001 within the Department of Trade and Industry to act as a hub and reference point for the development of social enterprise, published 'Social enterprise: a strategy for success' in July 2002. The strategy identified social enterprise as "a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested" into the community or cause (p7). In his introduction to the strategy (2002), PM Blair wrote "I was struck by the fact that social enterprises are delivering high quality, lower cost products and services" (p5).

Social enterprise featured in a significant way in several policy documents on the voluntary sector, where the idea of social entrepreneurship as 'social innovation' was all but absent.

- (i) The 'Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review' by HM Treasury, September 2002, identified social enterprises as potentially important service delivery organisations that could contribute to economic development and public sector reform.
- (ii) 'Private Action, Public Benefit. A review of Charities and the Wider Not-For-Profit Sector' by the Cabinet Office and Strategy Unit, September 2002 sought to 'encourage entrepreneurialism' by which was meant 'entrepreneurial ways to secure a sustainable income'. It proposed the creation of a new legal organisational form – the Community Interest Company – for social enterprise (p8-9).

Interest in social enterprise then spread across government departments, as set out in Chapter 4:

There is no evidence of any government departments or other stakeholders who do not think that social enterprise has a role to play in policy delivery. (Henry et al, 2006: iv)

Social enterprise was taken especially seriously within the Department of Health, which set up its own social enterprise unit. Here social enterprise was understood as providing “high quality services in ways that are flexible, non-bureaucratic and have the potential to deliver good value for money” (Department of Health, What are the advantages of social enterprise? internet). In addition social enterprise was said to have a particular benefit in involving patients and in providing services that are responsive to local needs.

Social entrepreneurs are to help create new ways to provide choice in health and social care, thanks to a new unit established today in the Department of Health. The new Social Enterprise Unit will encourage innovation and entrepreneurialism in health and social care and pave the way for new services which better meet patients and service users' needs. (Department of Health, press release, 2006)

Social enterprises involve patients, staff and service users in designing the services they provide. This means that services are better tailored to meet patients' and service users' needs and are based on expert knowledge of a particular area. (Department of Health, internet).

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs added its voice to the interest in social enterprise when in 2005 it issued a position statement and then a strategy regarding social enterprise and its role in ‘sustainable development’.

In investigating this contribution we have found that social enterprise contributes to all five of Defra’s strategic priorities. Social enterprise is active in a range of business areas which contribute to our objectives on combating climate change, improving energy efficiency and tackling fuel poverty. (Michael, 2005: 2)

In 2006, the Cabinet Office published ‘Social enterprise action plan. Scaling new heights’. In the Forward, the Prime Minister restated some of the hopes being laid at the feet of social enterprise:

In its [the social enterprise sector’s] promotion of a fair society, we are seeing increasing innovation and confidence. In deprived areas, we are seeing its ability to increase employment and opportunities. In public services, we are seeing its ability to offer innovation. (Blair, 2006)

The 2006 action plan focused not only on ways to encourage and support social enterprise organisations, but set out its priority to create a culture of social enterprise. To this end, government was seeking to introduce social enterprise education into schools, and to inspire children to take social enterprise seriously as a career option.

At the same time, the potential role of social enterprise expanded – not only in contributing towards the modernization of public services, but also at bringing ethical values to the private sector.

In doing their work, they challenge the private and public sectors. They are at the vanguard of change in both. To the private sector, the challenge is to put ethical values at the heart of their business and be a responsible member of the community. To the public sector, the challenge is to deliver public services in a different way, using the skills and expertise of users and frontline workers. (Miliband, 2006)

And it was not only the Labour government that was so enthusiastic about social enterprise. Initially social entrepreneurship and social enterprise were identified very closely with the third way; by 2005 both had clearly crossed party political lines.

For the Conservatives, fostering social enterprises to fix the social problems that big cities specialise in is seen as a way back into areas where they have struggled to win support for a decade. For the Blairite bit of the Labour Party, social enterprises are attractive because they can bypass local bureaucracies and inject some drive into public service reform. (Economist, 2005: 71-72)

David Cameron, Leader of the Conservative Party was reported in The Guardian on May 27, 2006, as saying:

Our vision is clear - for Britain's inspiring social entrepreneurs to make an ever-increasing contribution to the long-term challenges of community regeneration, public service improvement, and job creation in our country. (Cameron, 2006: 2)

The trend towards interest in the 'social enterprise' school of thought and away from the 'social innovation' school of thought was consistent with dominant understandings of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship, and its variants, has invariably been understood as a form of profit making commercial activity, and social entrepreneurship as 'social innovation' was something of an exception to this. Certainly, social entrepreneurship has not succeeded in reclaiming 'enterprise' from its identification with business (Skillen, 1992).

Between 2001 and 2006 the different meanings and representations of social entrepreneurship were brought together. This was especially the case in academia and amongst practitioners. By bringing together the two schools of thought that have

dominated thinking on social entrepreneurship, ‘social innovation’ and ‘social enterprise’, it created the impression of a larger and more coherent field. In policy circles, two particular interests have dominated the discourse. Government became increasingly focused on ‘social enterprise’ and its potential to provide financially sustainable initiatives within a variety of settings including education, the health service, community regeneration, and the service providing voluntary sector. The second focus has been more general public sector reform, where policy makers are interested in ‘social entrepreneurs’ as part of a more pervasive change in culture and attitude, bringing about an ‘enterprise’ or ‘entrepreneurial’ culture.

#### **5.4 The representation of social entrepreneurship in the UK**

This section now turns to answer the second research question – *How is social entrepreneurship represented?* It starts by discussing the three different representations of the individual social entrepreneur described in the chapter. It relates these to the theoretical perspectives on entrepreneurship and the voluntary sector set out in Chapter 2, drawing out the different assumptions and underlying rationales, and relating these to policy discourses. It goes on to consider the two major developments that have defined changing conceptualisations of social entrepreneurship: the growing interest in ‘social enterprise’; and the shift to representing social entrepreneurship along continuums rather than as typologies.

Representations of social entrepreneurship drew extensively on ideas of entrepreneurship. As with entrepreneurship, the individual social entrepreneur took centre stage. The portraits of the three types of social entrepreneur took their form directly from the better known representations of business entrepreneurs: the ‘charismatic hero’; the manager as entrepreneur; and the ‘ordinary’ or ‘community-based’ entrepreneur. These figures dominated thinking on social entrepreneurship until 2001, and since then have continued to be influential. The three different figures alternately vied with one another and came together in promotional documents and policy debates.

The ‘charismatic hero’ dominated popular and often academic thinking on social entrepreneurship. The social entrepreneur was an authentic Schumpeterian entrepreneur – bold and dashing – innovative and risk-taking.



... to some extent, the field has crystallised thus far around the image of the social entrepreneur as romantic hero: the creative, risk-taking actor who tackles social problems using new approaches, untapped resources, and his or her bare hands... (Nicholls & Cho, 2006: 111)

Such a social entrepreneur was almost identical to the business entrepreneur as 'great person' (Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991) or 'romantic hero' (Cosgel, 1996). These images reproduce gender stereotypes and structural inequalities, giving precedence to the male figure as saviour, in the case of the social entrepreneur as a direct contrast to the 'nanny' state (Ogbor, 2000). This reflected and reinforced the idea of the entrepreneur as conquering male, defeating the unreliable and irrational female, in the form of state provided 'nanny' welfare.

Such heroic figures were intended to be role models and aspirational figures, creating a measure against which people can assess others and themselves. Such figures, as Jones and Spicer (2005) argue, were also intended to be unattainable, as impossible to measure up to, and thereby maintaining power inequalities between those who create and present the figure and those who aspire to it.

Adopting a voluntary sector theory lens, the charismatic discourse of social entrepreneurship was clearly focused on enhancing the innovation role of the sector. Innovation was presented as a much needed and rare attribute of a sector which was otherwise stagnating, where charismatic social entrepreneurs were the drivers of change.

The figure of the 'charismatic hero' was positioned within a narrative of epochal change (du Gay, 2004). Social entrepreneurship was put forward and justified as providing the necessary radical transformation arising from the failure of existing institutional structures to address 'urgent', 'acute' and 'intransigent' social problems. The discourse dismissed government as unable to deliver the kind of radical change required – "The state, once the saviour, is regarded as just another of the problems" (Young, 1997). Charismatic and heroic social entrepreneurs provided the vision, passion and drive to bring about the radical institutional changes that are required to address the full range of social problems that remain impervious to existing welfare approaches – people who are 'entrepreneurial', 'innovative' and 'transformatory' (Leadbeater, 1997).

However, the charismatic social entrepreneur was not so immediately or obviously relevant to policy makers. The charismatic hero was popular in the media and with some organisations promoting social entrepreneurship, but did not become a part of political or policy discourse. There are two main reasons for this. First, policy agendas and were focused on 'reform' and 'modernisation' rather than radical transformation, and the epochal discourses supporting charismatic forms of social entrepreneurship were therefore at odds with dominant policy discourses. And second, charismatic heroic figures, who were characterised as being idiosyncratic and unpredictable, and who challenge existing institutional structures, were not easily accommodated within highly structured and systematised state programmes.

The managerial social entrepreneur, on the other hand, was more attractive to policy makers. This was a 'business-like' figure – professional and skilled, good at leading and managing organisations, focused on efficiency and effectiveness. The managerial social entrepreneur was flexible, and could put his or her talents to use in a variety of settings. Firstly, as voluntary sector managers who were better able to deliver social welfare services for the right cost, at the right quality and at a large enough scale to warrant government interest. Second, as a new cadre of professional managers of hybrid social enterprise organisations, bringing together a business-like edge with an ethical focus, and with a particular capacity for providing cost-effective social welfare services. And thirdly, as working within the public services, bringing about reform and leading change. In some ways this was a reformulation of the enterprising manager from the Thatcher period, the professional self-starter made decent and virtuous (Herzner, 1999). Though this updated figure also required an attractive salary as an incentive, and it was assumed that a sense of moral purpose was not a powerful enough motivation in its own right.

This was not a figure associated with radical transformation or epochal change, but fitted neatly into the New Labour government policy discourses of 'reform', 'modernisation' and professionalisation of both the voluntary and the public sectors. It was a representation that drew particularly on 'third way' discourses, providing a 'technical', pragmatic and ideologically neutral solution to the inevitable and unstoppable changes taking place (Bastow & Martin, 2003). It trod a middle path

between left and right, between 'social' and 'market', reconciling long-standing antagonisms, without needing to account for how this reconciliation takes place in practice. In terms of filling a voluntary sector role, the managerial social entrepreneur was identified almost solely with the practical task of social welfare service provision. It had the effect of equating social change with an organisational level of action and with effective and financially sustainable organisational practices rather than with raising public consciousness or creating a new political vision around which to mobilise and inspire people.

The representation of the community-based social entrepreneur was also consistent with government policy interests and discourses, but in a different way. The community-based social entrepreneur represented initiative and self-reliance at the local level. There was little emphasis on the 'business-like' nature of community-based entrepreneurs. In policy terms the community-based entrepreneur reflected communitarian themes, and was about communities taking more responsibility for their own welfare. It was also an expression of government concerns with promoting active citizenship, and the role of citizens in rebuilding deprived communities both socially and economically. A parallel form was found in the rhetoric of the Department of Health, which promoted social enterprise as involving patient and service users in health care development. The community-based social entrepreneur was the moral face of society, the pro-social, responsible citizen, the opposite of those people subject to ASBOs (anti-social behaviour orders).

The key voluntary sector role was one of community building, often referred to by government as creating social capital. While the focus was on individuals, the policy interest was more about a behaviour and attitude that could be generalised and fostered across populations, to create 'enterprising communities', rather than the particular contributions of a single individual to solving a local problem.

The distinctions between these three representations of 'social entrepreneur' are summarised in the table below, Table 5.2, based on: the *level* at which the different types of social entrepreneur are said to make an impact; the *voluntary sector role* they each play; the dominant *personal style* of each; the *discursive roots* of the difference representations; and the role in government *policy*.

Table 5.2: Contrasting representations of the ‘social entrepreneur’

<b>Type of social ent.</b>	<b>Charismatic hero</b>	<b>Managerial</b>	<b>Community-based</b>
<i>Level</i>	Societal level	Organisational level	Local, community level
<i>Vol. sector role</i>	Innovation	Service provision	Community-building
<i>Personal style</i>	Creative, innovative, visionary, intuitive	Professional, strategic, rational	Responsive, empowering, facilitative
<i>Discursive roots</i>	Populist, ‘great person’	The business-like ‘enterprise culture’  ‘Third way’ pragmatism	‘Communitarian’ discourses  ‘Third way’ individual morality and responsibility
<i>Policy role</i>	Rhetorical: Inspirational role models	Implementing government organisational reform agendas	Encouraging individual and local responsibility
<i>Policy intervention</i>	-	Strategic focus on social enterprise across government. Depts.	Small grant programmes

These three figures continued to be presented, but by 2006 these representations were overlaid by two continuums aimed at incorporating the different understandings of social entrepreneurship into one field: degree of individual entrepreneurialism; and organisational orientation to social or market goals. The continuums have a number of implications for understanding the idea of social entrepreneurship, and these can be explored by applying Evers’ (1995) framework of the tension field between the state, market and informal.

The first continuum, from charismatic to community-based entrepreneur, can be located as a tension field between the individualism of the market and the personal of the informal, between the generic nature of the sphere of business and the particularism of the local. But the creation of a continuum implies that there was a defining entrepreneurial 'essence' or 'entrepreneurial quality' which was common, to a lesser or greater extent, to all people along the continuum. This precludes the idea that there can be quite different forms and expressions of entrepreneurship, which might vary depending on the context, the age of the person, gender, ethnicity, experiences, skills, or any other contextual or personal attributes, which are what would be found in the informal sphere. Conceptualising the social entrepreneur in this way implied that social entrepreneurship was more about the market intruding into the community, than an attempt to bring some of the particularism of the informal to market.

There are two ways of interpreting the continuum between social and market oriented goals. One is along the tension field between the market and state, between private benefit and the public good. This fitted with the long-standing attempts to marketise the public services, and was consistent with the representation of social entrepreneurs by politicians as 'change makers' within the public sector. It was also consistent with ideas of social entrepreneurship as an organisational management issue, and as contributing to government policy agendas of reform and modernisation in the public services, whereby innovation was located as taking place as part of the market mechanism of competition.

The second was along the tension field between the market and informal, and reflected a rather newer attempt to reconcile the generic nature of the market with the particularism of the local. It did not restrict innovation to a market based process, but allowed for innovation and change to be locally generated, arising out of the very specific needs and talents of people in a particular area. Critics of social entrepreneurship have generally focused on the idea of social entrepreneurship as bringing private sector practices to community development. But there was also potential for business to gain from the more personal and community based forms of individualism that is found with the informal sphere.

It is striking that the business-like nature of social entrepreneurship was expressed in detail, and yet what the 'social' means remained weakly articulated and assumed.

Social entrepreneurship ventures are often social by a process of normative self-construction that does not admit to easy interpretation. (Nicholls & Cho, 2006: 101)

But this is what should be expected. Social entrepreneurship was not about articulating a new vision of what 'social' might mean: it was about bringing the discipline and practices of entrepreneurial management to bear on 'social problems'. It could be considered as a continuation of government attempts to instil an 'enterprise culture' into the 'social', and specifically into the provision of welfare services and into local communities.

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter explored the *idea* of social entrepreneurship as it has been taken up in the UK as a policy issue. It traced the way in which representations have changed over time, identifying in particular the different figures of the individual social entrepreneur that dominate understanding of social entrepreneurship namely the charismatic, managerial, and community-based social entrepreneurs. It found that representations of social entrepreneurship are consistent with broader concepts of entrepreneurship, encompassing an emphasis on adopting business-like practices and pursuing economic goals, bringing these to bear on 'social' issues. Social entrepreneurship also draws on 'third way' discourses in attempting to combine seemingly incompatible concepts of the market and social justice, claiming to create a more 'pragmatic', less 'ideological', and more holistic approach.

The trend towards understanding social entrepreneurship in terms of the 'social enterprise' school of thought was discussed, and especially how this has been taken up within policy circles. Similarly the shift within academia to conceive of the two schools of thought on social entrepreneurship – 'social enterprise' and 'social innovation' – under a single umbrella was described. Evers' (1995) theory of the voluntary sector as a tension field within the mixed economy of welfare was employed to analyse these trends. The chapter concluded that 'social entrepreneurship' was a part of policy discourses that sought to extend the 'enterprise culture' first promoted under Thatcherism into welfare services and community regeneration.

The next chapter is the third of three data chapters. It reports and discusses the findings relating to the enactment and practices of social entrepreneurship, and starts to contrast the representations of social entrepreneurship with its practice.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE PRACTICE AND ENACTMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **Introduction**

This chapter is about what has been done in the name of social entrepreneurship. It discusses how social entrepreneurship has been enacted and how this enactment has changed and developed as social entrepreneurship has emerged into policy debate. Chapter 4 described the policy background and context, focusing in on the promotion of social entrepreneurship. Chapter 5 focused on the development of social entrepreneurship as an idea. These two chapters emphasised the location of social entrepreneurship within policy discourses in the UK. This chapter completes the picture of social entrepreneurship in the UK by focusing on social entrepreneurship as a practice. It is less about policy and more about organisational realities and how individuals have adopted social entrepreneurial identities in their work.

Enactment is about the generative power of discourse to construct reality, to bring to life social practices. It is a process of internalising the discourses, and how new practices and new identities develop and become normalised.

... discourses may be enacted in ways of acting and interacting, and they may be inculcated in ways of being, identities. Take for instance 'creative partnerships'. For 'creative partnerships' to go beyond the realm of imaginary construal into the realm of actual existence, people would need to start acting and interacting differently, and being different. (Fairclough, 2003b: 7)

The enactment of social entrepreneurship is taken to mean the development of a set of social practices centred on the concept of social entrepreneurship, where "Social practices can be thought of as ways of controlling the selection of certain structural possibilities and the exclusion of others" (Fairclough, 2003a: 23). The purpose is to identify not only what is being done in the name of social entrepreneurship, but also how it is done, what sorts of relationships are being constructed, and who is being excluded and how. Social practices are made evident through actions, relationships, and the performative aspects of language. The chapter therefore retains a focus on language and discourse, but also draws on quantitative and qualitative data to locate and explore the practices of social entrepreneurship.



This chapter is divided into the same three time periods as the preceding chapter, tracing the changing enactment of social entrepreneurship over time. Within each period the development of an organisational infrastructure of support for social entrepreneurship is examined along with the adoption of ‘social entrepreneur’ as a way of being, a personal identity. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the changing enactment of social entrepreneurship can be understood within the UK policy context.

The table below provides a summary and overview of the three stages in the practice and enactment of social entrepreneurship. During Stage 1 (1980-1994) there was no clearly identifiable community of social entrepreneurs, nor support and funding for social entrepreneurs. During Stage 2 (1995-2000) the first organisations were set up specifically to introduce the idea of social entrepreneurship in the UK, to identify social entrepreneurs, and to provide support for them. Stage 3 (2001-2006) saw how social entrepreneurship was increasingly enacted at the community level and as ‘social enterprise’.

Table 6.1: Overview of the three stages in the enactment of social entrepreneurship

<b>Stage 1</b> <b>Early ideas</b>	<b>Stage 2</b> <b>Arrival and acclaim</b>	<b>Stage 3</b> <b>Consolidation</b>
<b>1980-1994</b>	<b>1995-2000</b>	<b>2001-2006</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Idea of social entrepreneurship introduced to the UK from the US.</li> <li>• No clearly identified social entrepreneurs in the UK.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First UK organisations supporting social entrepreneurs set up, providing training, networking, advice, funding to UK social entrepreneurs.</li> <li>• Increasing numbers of people identified as social entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice of social entrepreneurship increasingly dominated by UnLtd.</li> <li>• Blurring between support provided to social enterprises and social entrepreneurs.</li> <li>• Adoption of ‘social entrepreneur’ as</li> </ul>

	<p>in the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social entrepreneur as personal identity starts to develop.</li> </ul>	<p>personal identity approached with ambivalence.</p>
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### 6.1 Stage 1: Precursors and early ideas: 1980 to 1994

Before 1995 the idea of social entrepreneurship had hardly been born in the UK, and there was almost no activity relating directly to social entrepreneurship. The only social entrepreneur organisation active in the UK at this time was Ashoka, though at this time it was focused on international development and not on creating UK programmes.

#### Activities and relationships

In 1990 Ashoka<sup>40</sup> set up a small UK office in central London, with a part-time administrator, a board of trustees and an active and committed Chair. Ashoka's purpose in establishing a UK office was fundraising, targeting rich individuals<sup>41</sup> and grant making trusts. In addition to fundraising, the UK office regularly hosted Ashoka fellows, social entrepreneurs from developing countries who were visiting the UK. It helped introduce them to potential funders and other interested parties and held regular informal meetings at which the visiting social entrepreneurs would present themselves and their work to gatherings of around ten to twenty people. These were friendly but exclusive gatherings.

Most significant was that Ashoka engaged in a long-standing and routine relationship with the business world. McKinsey and Company is a management consultancy, described in the broadsheet press as “the epitome of private sector, profit-driven efficiency” (Cowe, 2001). Ashoka's founder, Bill Drayton, had been a McKinsey consultant in the US, and Ashoka UK drew actively on its connections with McKinsey: as a source of volunteers; to provide strategic consultancy in determining

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<sup>40</sup> At around the same time, Ashoka also established small fundraising offices in several other European countries, but the UK office was the only one that lasted more than a few years.

<sup>41</sup> The Chair of Ashoka was a member of the Network for Social Change, an informal, exclusive and private group of wealthy individuals committed to philanthropic giving. They met regularly to listen to invited speakers looking for funding, including occasional Ashoka fellows.

Ashoka's role in the UK; and when McKinsey partner, Jeremy Oppenheim, took over as Chair in 1998.

Ashoka's practices positioned social entrepreneurship as an elite concept, as operating within the world of international development and NGOs, and as closely connected to business. It made no effort to link up with the UK voluntary sector, reflecting the reality of the parallel and unconnected worlds of NGOs and voluntary organisations found in the UK.

### **Personal identity**

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the label of social entrepreneur was used sparingly and without particular effect. At this stage, there was no community or identifiable group or network of people in the UK who could be called social entrepreneurs. As mentioned in Chapter 5 there were occasional uses in the press, but these were inconsistent and casual.

What was clear at this stage was that social entrepreneurship was not an emerging grassroots movement of people who had a collective experience of being marginalised, and came together under the banner of 'social entrepreneur'. The people who met visiting Ashoka fellows and were gaining a sense of what it meant to be a social entrepreneur were donors and supporters, often with more interest in international development than in UK welfare and social issues. The Ashoka social entrepreneurs were focused on their own work and raising money for their organisations, and not on promoting the idea or identity of 'social entrepreneurship'. Being a 'social entrepreneur' had little meaning or resonance among people working on UK social welfare issues.

### **6.2 Stage 2: Arrival, acclaim and establishment: 1995 to 2000**

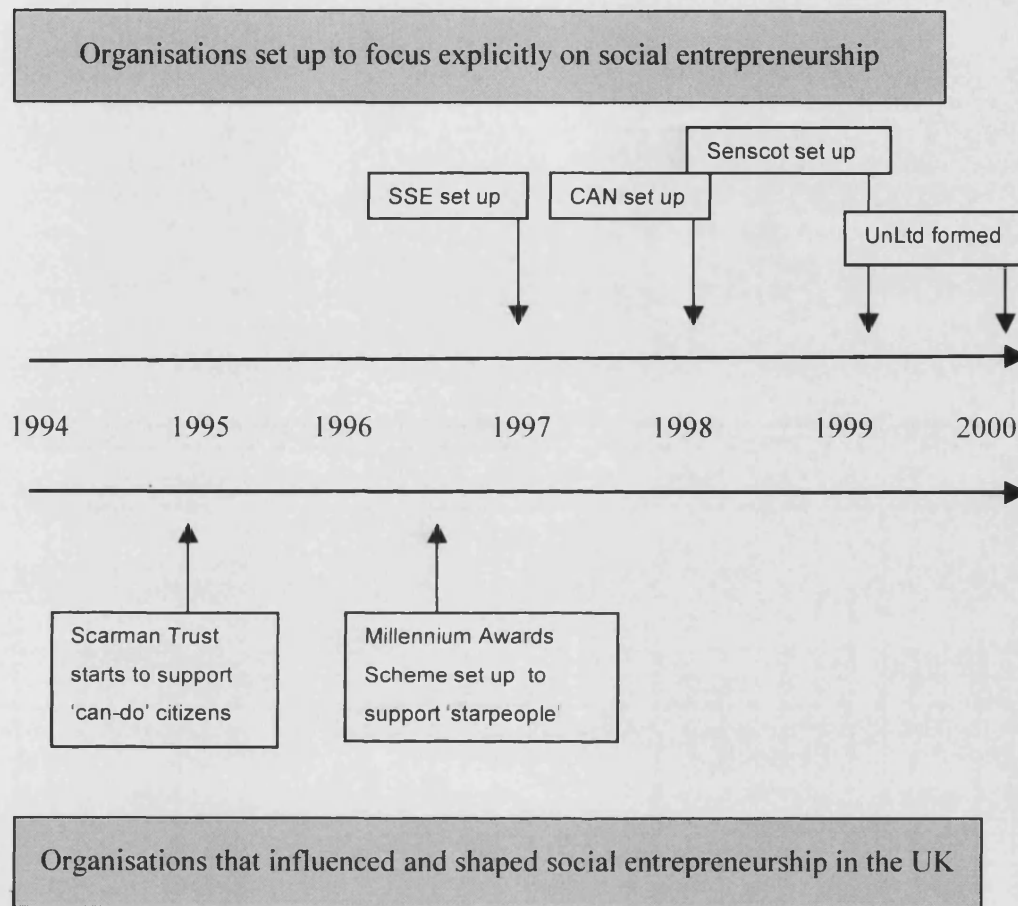
During this period, 1995 to 2000, social entrepreneurship became established in the UK as a field of action and as relevant to policy. This was an exciting time. It was the time when organisations competed with each other to define the field, when they lobbied hard to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the New Labour government, when they promoted social entrepreneurship to potential supporters, when they sought media attention to raise their profile and gain legitimacy, and when they

started to put into practice their ideas of who is a social entrepreneur and how social entrepreneurs should best be supported.

In some ways the development and establishment of social entrepreneurship was rapid and substantial. By the end of 2000, it was clear that social entrepreneurship was here to stay. The organisations had successfully pioneered a range of different programmes for social entrepreneurs and were consistently attracting funding. And a £100 million endowment had been raised by UnLtd, resulting in the opportunity to create a permanently endowed grant making foundation to support and promote social entrepreneurship. Yet, in other ways developments were disappointing, and many of the ambitious aims of the organisational founders and proponents of social entrepreneurship were not achieved in full.

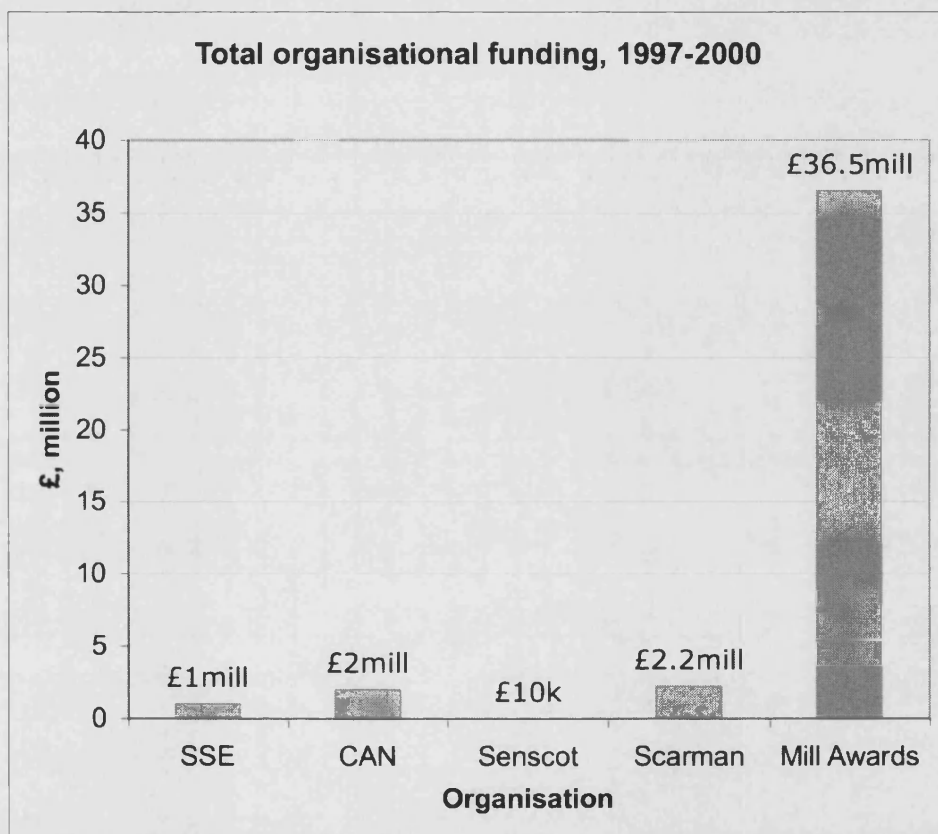
The figure below shows the dates on which the main social entrepreneur support organisations were established, and illustrates the rapid succession of organisational foundings during this period.

Figure 6.1: Timeline showing the founding of social entrepreneur support organisations, 1995-2000



By 2000, CAN, SSE and Senscot had raised a total of around £3.1 million specifically to support social entrepreneurship in the UK. With annual incomes of more than £100,000 per year, this positioned CAN and the SSE in the top 10% of registered charities in England and Wales by income<sup>42</sup>. Senscot occupied a similar position in Scotland. All of this was dwarfed by the Millennium Awards Scheme, which had distributed almost £36.5 million to 77 partner organisations by September 2000 (Millennium Commission Annual Report and Accounts, 1999-2000: 18).

<sup>42</sup> These figures have been calculated based on Charity Commission figures for the year 2000 (see <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/registeredcharities/ccfacts00.asp#intro>).



*\* total funding for CAN and SSE have been calculated based on income and expenditure figures officially recorded on the Charity Commission website.*

*\*\* the funding for Senscot is an estimate based on conversations.*

### **Activities, structures and processes**

The activities and interventions of social entrepreneur infrastructure organisations shaped the way in which social entrepreneurship was realised in the UK. They

considered themselves as inspiring and structuring a new movement of people. The director of the SSE commented:

... social entrepreneurs have been around forever but the idea of promoting a movement of social entrepreneurship...

The activities of these organisations are set out here under two headings: identifying social entrepreneurs; and supporting social entrepreneurs.

### *Identifying social entrepreneurs*

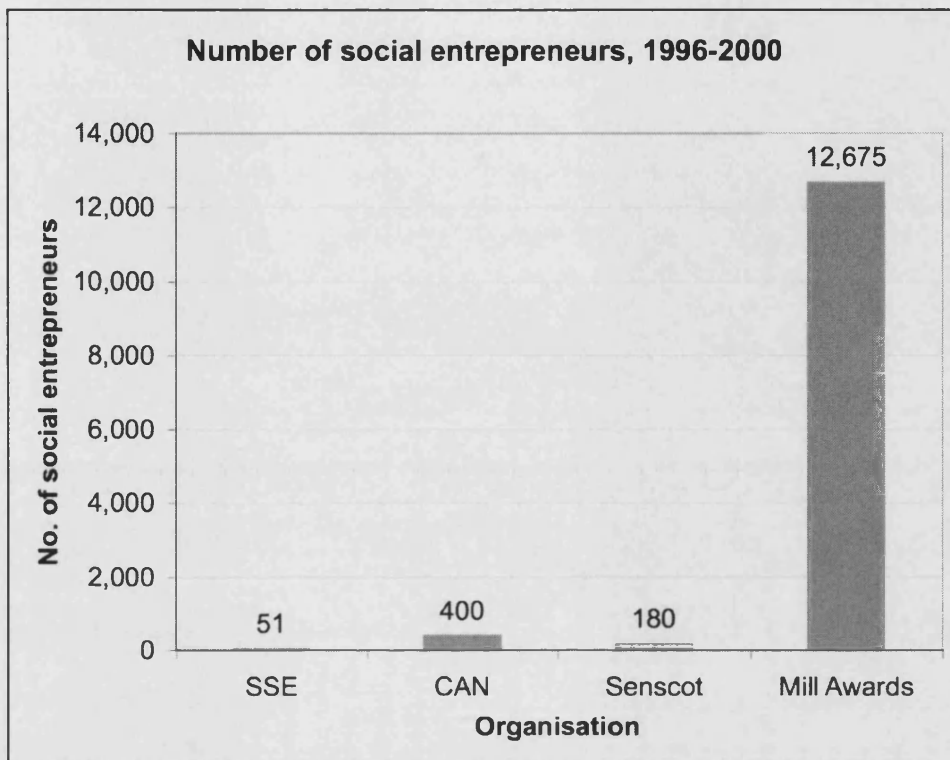
Between 1997 and 2000 increasing numbers of people were recognised and labelled as 'social entrepreneurs'<sup>43</sup>. This took place primarily through being accepted into the SSE, and becoming members of CAN and Senscot.

Within their networks and memberships CAN, Senscot and SSE had identified approximately 630 social entrepreneurs<sup>44</sup> by 2000. While this is an impressive figure, CAN did not achieve their goal of identifying 2,000 social entrepreneurs by the year 2000, nor did SSE reach its target of training 100 social entrepreneurs annually. Again, these achievements were completely dwarfed by the Millennium Awards Scheme, which supported 12,675 individuals during this period. The figure below shows the different numbers of 'social entrepreneurs' associated with each of the different organisations.

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<sup>43</sup> Figures for the Scarman Trust for this period were not available.

<sup>44</sup> This is based on SSE figures of 51 graduates from the School, together with estimates of CAN and Senscot memberships. The CAN membership figure was estimated assuming regular growth in membership numbers from the known figures of 200 in the Autumn of 1999, and 470 in mid 2001, this gives an estimate of 390, which is approximated to 400 for the purposes here. Senscot membership was around 180 as of the end of 2000. There was negligible overlap between the different organisations in terms of membership.



The numbers involved imply that these social entrepreneurs were not the rare and special people, the ‘charismatic heroes’, the ‘one in ten million’ whom Ashoka presented. In practice, the social entrepreneurs identified were ‘community-based’ and locating social entrepreneurship as a community-based phenomenon was consistent across the organisations.

From the beginning Senscot positioned itself as close to the community sector, aiming to empower people at the grassroots. The founding director of Senscot commented:

The challenge for Senscot is to help people at the very grassroots, who are just emerging, aspiring to do something for community gain.

The SSE deliberately moved away from its original focus on voluntary sector managers to locate its work within deprived communities. An internal review of the first year of the SSE course highlighted the low level of enrolment of people from disadvantaged areas, and in particular people from black and ethnic minority communities. In response to this, the SSE determined to set up local courses, meaning



that students could remain in their local context and would not have to move to London. A pilot programme ran in Salford, 1999, and in Glasgow in the following year. Based on these experiences, the SSE raised funding to roll out the programme to 10 regions between 2000 and 2003, with a grant of £1 million from the Millennium Awards Scheme to support 70 “grass roots community activists or entrepreneurs” (Millennium Commission Annual Report and Accounts, 1999-2000: 21).

Similarly, CAN drew on community discourses to justify and position itself, putting forward its overall aim as:

to strengthen communities and attack deprivation in the UK. (CAN, About Us, The CAN Story, internet).

And one of the founding directors of CAN clearly located social entrepreneurs as community-based:

Normally a social entrepreneur is engaged with community service or community work that in some way is dealing with people who are often very marginalized.

Most notably, proposals for UnLtd located its impact and work clearly at the community level and this reinforced the position of social entrepreneurship in the UK as community-based.

The organisations applied a mix of predetermined criteria and standards together with personal judgement to determine who was to be included and who excluded as ‘social entrepreneurs’. Social entrepreneurs were identified through a range of approaches. The SSE advertised and issued press releases; CAN approached the personal friends and acquaintances of the founders; Sencot used direct mail and word of mouth.

One of the challenges of identifying and enrolling social entrepreneurs was that it did not equate to an organisational position or role, such as chief executive or even founder, or to a field of action. Reflecting on their selection process, the SSE acknowledged the essentially evaluative nature of the process of identifying social entrepreneurs.

No selection process is perfect and we will inevitably make some mistakes each year, but we have attempted to improve the way in which we spot those who do have the necessary drive and

commitment and those who do not. (SSE, First Year Review, 1998: 14)

When we are looking to recruit [for Salford SSE] and when I go around the country, I am looking for people who have, either are or don't yet realise that they are one of these people. I think you know, it's a gut feeling, you can just tell if someone is one of these people.

To identify people, it's an art and not a science.

The infrastructure organisations acted as gatekeepers to social entrepreneurship. The expertise, insight and ultimately the power to determine the nature of social entrepreneurship in the UK was exercised by these organisations. They determined who were (and who were not) the social entrepreneurs and where social entrepreneurship was located. During this formative period, in practice, there was a consensus among the support organisations, locating social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurs as 'community-based'.

### ***Supporting social entrepreneurs***

All the organisations were focused on supporting individual social entrepreneurs. The activities of the different organisations are summarised in the table below.

Table 6.2: Organisational activities

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Activities</b>
The Scarman Trust	Individuals and small groups	Small grants (£2k) Personal support and advice
Mill Awards Scheme	Individuals and small groups	Small grants (£2k) Personal support and advice
SSE	Individuals	Year long training course
CAN	Individuals	Membership network Peer support Managed office space
Senscot	Individuals	Membership network and information hub Peer support and networking

The similarities between the approaches adopted point to three core activities:

- Making ‘small’ grants to individuals and small groups of people;
- Providing professional and targeted advice, support and training;
- Developing peer support networks.

These are described in turn below.

#### (i) Small grants programmes

At this stage, none of the organisations using the language of social entrepreneurship and focused specifically on social entrepreneurs made grants to individuals. It was rather the Scarman Trust and the Millennium Awards Scheme that pioneered making small grants. But it was their work that formed the basis for what was to become UnLtd, and what was to be the largest social entrepreneur support organisation. The very different roots and philosophies of these two organisations therefore made an important contribution to the form that social entrepreneurship was to take in the UK.

The Scarman Trust’s stated purpose was “to continue that ‘bottom up’ approach to democracy and was rooted in the constitutional reform movement” (Scarman Trust, Our Roots, internet). Its language and the concepts central to its work were more explicitly political than the business oriented language of social entrepreneurship. Scarman understood individual action as an expression of collective will and responsibility, what they called ‘the new citizenship’ (The 2003 Citizen’s Convention, Delegates Pack, December 2003).

These Can Doers are not lone individuals but catalysts of collective processes of community development – people who say We not I. (Pike, speech – The New Citizenship, in The 2003 Citizen’s Convention, Delegates Pack, December 2003: 9)

While the Millennium Awards were not so explicitly political, they were also about enhancing expressions of local citizenship, encouraging individual initiative, and creating opportunities for community development. It was about bringing together the role of individuals with the needs of communities. Even though both the ‘can-do citizens’ and the Millennium Awards were introduced under the Conservative

government, they were more characteristic of New Labour policy discourses and the reassertion that that is such a thing as society.

### (ii) Targeted support

The provision of personalised and targeted support, expert advice and training was most characteristic of the SSE. The SSE's year-long programme was based on the principle of 'learning by doing' and was structured around a hands-on 'apprenticeship', mentoring, peer support, seminars from experts, and some targeted skills training (SSE, 1998a). The first year internal review highlighted improved self-confidence, greater self-awareness, as well as opportunities to network as key benefits of the course. After completing the course, one of the students commented:

I have gained confidence in my own abilities. And in my own self-worth. I have learned how to engage in formal collective activity. I have developed my powers of vision and strategy. I am more assertive, more focused, more analytical. (SSE, 1998b: 10)

It was clear that learning specific skills or techniques was not the most important element of the SSE, but rather the 'softer' aspect of personal development. Business skills and being 'hard-headed' did not feature.

### (iii) Peer support networks

The creation of peer support networks cut across almost all of the organisations. Senscot's main activity was to build a network of social entrepreneurs and those interested in social entrepreneurship in Scotland. From the start, the heart of Senscot's work was its network and its ability to act as a hub, informing and connecting people. The director of Senscot said:

Senscot will never grow into an empire, its job is to connect people up, sitting in the middle, receiving e-mails, saying ah haa I know three people who are doing that, in the bulletin that goes out every week, we'll ask does anyone know anyone else who is doing that.....

Senscot quickly established a reputation in Scotland and beyond for its regular Friday afternoon e-mail bulletin, which gave an eclectic mix of news, information, opinion, and personal thoughts and reflections from its director, Laurence DeMarco. The style of the bulletin was idiosyncratic, creating a sense of a personal and informal connection, which in turn created a sense of community amongst the subscribers.

Dear Paola,

The writer William Saroyan said on his deathbed "I thought I would never die..." Me? I imagine I'm dying all the time. Last summer convinced myself that I had stomach cancer - symptoms vanished when hospital showed me live TV coverage of my tumourless abdomen. Over Christmas it was imaginary throat cancer - wrestled for 10 minutes with exasperated consultant: "Try to relax." - "But you're sticking your finger down my throat..."

Recently felt numbness and weakness in my legs - research convinces me it's multiple sclerosis - Terror - Resolve to be brave, but medical receptionist senses my funk- "You'd better come over" - "I think I've got MS, Doctor." - He looks up patiently from my bulging file notes - "And why do you think that?" "I've got the exact symptoms described on the MS website" - "Men over 60 don't get MS, Mr Demarco". Flood of relief - "But what else can it be, Doctor?" "That depends on what else you've been reading about." Wry smile, but I think he meant it as a rebuke.

...

"You can learn more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of discussion" - Plato

CAN focused on developing a strong membership base and on creating opportunities for peer support through a specially designed intranet, aiming to address the sense of isolation that the founders had experienced As well as the intranet, CAN disseminated information beyond its membership through its monthly electronic newsletter – 'CAN-zine' – though publication was a bit erratic. It contained information and articles about CAN and its members.

**CAN-zine - june 1999.** Find out what's going on in CAN. News and views from CAN members around the country and CAN activities and events. (CAN-zine, 1999)

The second key activity that CAN undertook was the CAN Centre, a place which would "bring together organisations which are at the leading edge of social change in Britain" (CAN, About Us, The CAN Story, internet). In setting up its own offices, CAN started to develop the idea of providing high quality office space for like-minded organisations, open plan offices that would facilitate interaction and collaboration and would encourage creativity. This was about creating opportunities for peer support through shared office space. CAN was joined by Demos and a number of other think-

tanks and voluntary organisations. In 2000 it opened the Mezzanine, near Waterloo station.

The Mezzanine was presented as the physical embodiment of what it means to be 'entrepreneurial' and as highlighting its distinctiveness from the 'traditional' voluntary sector. A CAN director described the Mezzanine in the following way:

That I like to work in this very modern creative environment, now this is a very typical social entrepreneurial project, that some voluntary groups would even tell you they don't like, its Ikea furniture, it looks bright, it looks clean, modern. You come in here and way wow this isn't the voluntary sector I know.... And if you are saying to me what is the difference, I don't want that second hand shabby up a back alley in Kennington two flights of stairs up. I don't want that for my clients.

At the same time, it was difficult to assess the extent to which these efforts actually resulted in peer support and new forms of networking. Within CAN and Senscot, social entrepreneurs joined loose networks, largely on-line, with some opportunities for face-to-face meeting. But the capacity of 'social entrepreneurs' to engage was not so straightforward. One CAN member commented:

My problem with using and contributing to CAN is the sheer amount of time it takes being a Community Activist, particularly if the brand of work is much more collaborative than the stereotypical kind of entrepreneurship. (Gray-King, quoted in CAN-zine, 1999)

The SSE offered the most intensive opportunities for peer engagement. The experience of the year-long course was certainly profound for many of the students (SSE, 1998b). Yet even one of the SSE students commented that it was hard to remember she had devoted a year to becoming a 'social entrepreneur' while she was between tutorials and learning sets.

One student commented that between study periods she often did not feel like an SSE student. (SSE, 1998b: 11)

There are therefore indications that peer support and networking did not necessarily take place spontaneously or naturally, even given opportunities to do so.

The support provided by these organisations was more about opening up new spaces for people identified as 'social entrepreneurs' than about providing highly structured services. At this early and experimental stage, such spaces were relatively flexible and unstructured, focused largely on creating opportunities for networking and mutual

support. Social entrepreneurs were considered as being more in need of information and moral support than specific skills, qualifications, or even money.

During this second period in the emergence of social entrepreneurship into UK social policy, two main roles of the social entrepreneur support organisations can be identified. First was that the organisations act as gatekeepers to the field of social entrepreneurship, determining who are the 'social entrepreneurs' and therefore what forms social entrepreneurship takes in the UK; and second is that their support activities were focused on opening up new and flexible spaces within which social entrepreneurs could connect with one another, though in practice the 'social entrepreneurs' were often more focused on their own organisations and work than on social entrepreneurship.

### **Relationships**

The enactment of social entrepreneurship was characterised by the different relationships that were established, relationships between the social entrepreneur support organisations and different sectors and institutions, in particular business, government and the voluntary and community sector.

#### ***Relationships with business***

The social entrepreneurship organisations concentrated on making friends with the business sector, where a similarity of approach and interests was often cited as providing a positive basis for partnership.

Business recognises that social entrepreneurs add value to depleted social resources, just as businesses seeks to add value to shareholders' investment.... CAN has benefited enormously from the advice, encouragement and financial support of numerous companies. (CAN, About us, The CAN Story, internet)

In the case of CAN and the SSE, business was crucial in providing early support, enabling both organisations to get off the ground: CAN raised £130,000 from GTech; and SSE raised £100,000 from HSBC.

But it is business rather than government that has given most concrete help so far - CAN's entire first-year funding has come from the private sector. 'You can't be entrepreneurial at the moment if you're going for statutory funding because it takes too long,' argues Blakebrough. (Baird, 1998: 8)

Any criticism about accepting money from an organisation that at the time was immersed in scandal was brushed to one side.

Asked about accepting money from GTech (whose chairman resigned in February after a libel jury declared he had tried to bribe Richard Branson), Blakebrough tells the story of Salvation Army founder, William Booth. When challenged about taking a brewer's 'tainted' money he replied: 'I don't know about tainted money - 'taint enough.' (Baird, 1998: 8)

### ***Relationships with government***

There was also effort by both CAN and the SSE into developing a close relationship with government, though without quite the same level of enthusiasm or deference.

Community Action Network is also committed to working collaboratively with other members of the third sector and with public sector bodies and government. (CAN, About us, The CAN Story)

*This is, of course, the basis on which SSE works and we would be happy to expand our provision at the Government's expense!*  
(Recommendations for Policy Action Team on supporting social entrepreneurs, SSE, italics in original)

The Scarman Trust in particular developed close relationships with government, and was successful not only in raising funds from the public sector, but also in influencing the introduction of new grants programmes such as the Community Champions Fund outlined in the preceding chapter.

### ***Relationships with the voluntary and community sectors***

In terms of its relationships with other sectors and fields, although social entrepreneurship was being positioned as 'community based' it was also being positioned as an alternative and challenge to community development, with individualism being pitted against collective action.

I think you could see social entrepreneurship and the related concepts around capacity building and the particular form that community involvement is being promoted in now around regeneration projects as a more effective attack on community development than anything that happened under the Tories.

I think both ends of that spectrum are caricaturing the other end. The Andrew Mawsons of this world for instance, talk disparagingly about 1970s community work, and community development is old hat and all the rest. The purest community development people say, in the confederation of community work training groups, don't want talk about individuals at all, which is as unrealistic as throughout all the experience of community development work very few people would



deny that individuals play key roles and that is how things are usually started – a handful of individuals.

Those promoting social entrepreneurship therefore set up a rather antagonistic and disruptive relationship with the field within which they was operating.

The relationships established by the social entrepreneur support organisations reflect the language and rhetoric of social entrepreneurship, in particular that there was a natural connection with business.

### **Personal identity**

The first people to be identified as social entrepreneurs, and who also often identified themselves as such, were the founders of the social entrepreneur support organisations. This had the effect of bringing the idea of social entrepreneurship to life and of conferring some credibility on the new organisations.

Lord Young, founder of the SSE, was the most influential and credible figure identified as a social entrepreneur, and gave weight to the term among even the most sceptical, as one of the critics of social entrepreneurship commented in an interview:

Michael Young has been a great creative force in social action... that kind of inventiveness is not the same thing as the more business oriented definitions of entrepreneurship...

Lord Young has been hailed as one of the most influential social reformers in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and the number of organisations he set up as well as the way in which his work bridged academia, politics, many fields within the social sector, and even business, made him particularly difficult to categorise. For those familiar with Lord Young, his work and achievements, he is the archetypal social entrepreneur.

Michael Young is different. His enterprises are designed to produce a public benefit, not a private fortune. But it is more complicated than just that. Undoubtedly, he's Britain's most brilliant social entrepreneur of this century. The organisations he has launched now number over 30. The number of people he has helped runs into millions. (Dean, 1995: 2)

Bill Drayton, founder of Ashoka, self-identified as a social entrepreneur, as did the founders of CAN, Senscot and to some extent the SSE.

*One of the founders of CAN*

I have been a social entrepreneur all my working life.

*Ashoka*

When Drayton calls someone a 'social entrepreneur', he is describing a specific and rare personality type – someone, in fact, like himself. (Bornstein, 1998)

*One of the co-founders of Senscot*

When I heard I was a social entrepreneur I was sort of relieved, when I accepted that I was, when I chose to say, one comes across a term, one looks at the rough meaning giving by various people and say good as... it tends to make order of a muddled career that I have had.

*Former SSE student and initiator of Salford programme*

I thought it [social entrepreneur] was quite an exciting term, and it implied something different, so when I saw the first article about the School [for Social Entrepreneurs] in 1997, I read this article and thought, that is me.

One of the dynamics of social entrepreneurship has been a motivation among these founders to create support networks of like-minded people. This has been accompanied by the need to construct a new personal identity around which to organise – that of 'social entrepreneur'. The fact that they were not comfortable with existing labels – for example 'community activist', 'voluntary sector leader', 'community leader' – does indicate a discursive gap. And the term 'social entrepreneur' clearly resonated, conveying an excitement, exclusivity and progressiveness that was attractive to some people. In particular it served to counter the stereotyped image of the 60s hippy as the main initiator of social change, creating an identity that could stand as an equal alongside the contemporary entrepreneurial business figure. Being a 'social entrepreneur' was about status and respect.

The traditional image of the knit-your-own-muesli community organisation is gone. These people are hard-headed, determined and intelligent. (Coburn, 1995: 25)

I see social entrepreneurship mainly as people in the voluntary sector who have had enough of that kind of unprofessional, dowdy, voluntary type style.

At the same time, there were signs that 'social entrepreneur' was not a term or identity with which everyone was comfortable.

Community workers have metamorphosed into social entrepreneurs in the last year - whether they like it or not. And many of them do not. (Noble, 1997: 8)

Waite (2000) goes so far as to suggest that 'social entrepreneurs' are a necessary construct as mediators and implementers of government policy.

They see that the government's vision cannot be legislated into existence from on high. It needs to be invented and applied in society, by networks of workers and activists who will mediate a philosophical approach into real life, and conjure a set of notions into existing form. (Waite, 2000)

Moore (2000) similarly, but with no intended criticism, presented social entrepreneurs as delivering government policies, in particular as tackling social exclusion and poverty.

There are inherent tensions in 'social entrepreneur' as a personal identity. In particular between 'social entrepreneur' as offering a higher status, exciting, more professional identity than found in the 'traditional' voluntary sector, and 'social entrepreneur' as an instrument of government policy.

### **6.3 Stage 3: Consolidation and growth: 2001 to 2006**

By 2001 social entrepreneurship had achieved a level of legitimacy and was attracting support from government, business, the media, and the voluntary and community sector. Social entrepreneurship expanded, especially when UnLtd started to make grants in 2003 and the numbers of people identified as 'social entrepreneurs' in the country grew. Conferences and celebratory events became part of the annual calendar. This period was characterised less by experimentation and the excitement of starting something new, and more by the need to build strong organisations and to demonstrate the worth and impact of the existing organisations supporting social entrepreneurs.

The table below summarises the progress made between 2000 and 2006 by the key social entrepreneur infrastructure organisations in terms of the numbers of UK social entrepreneurs in their networks and their income. It shows very clearly the impact of UnLtd on social entrepreneurship, both in terms of numbers of social entrepreneurs and also the financial resources devoted to social entrepreneurship.

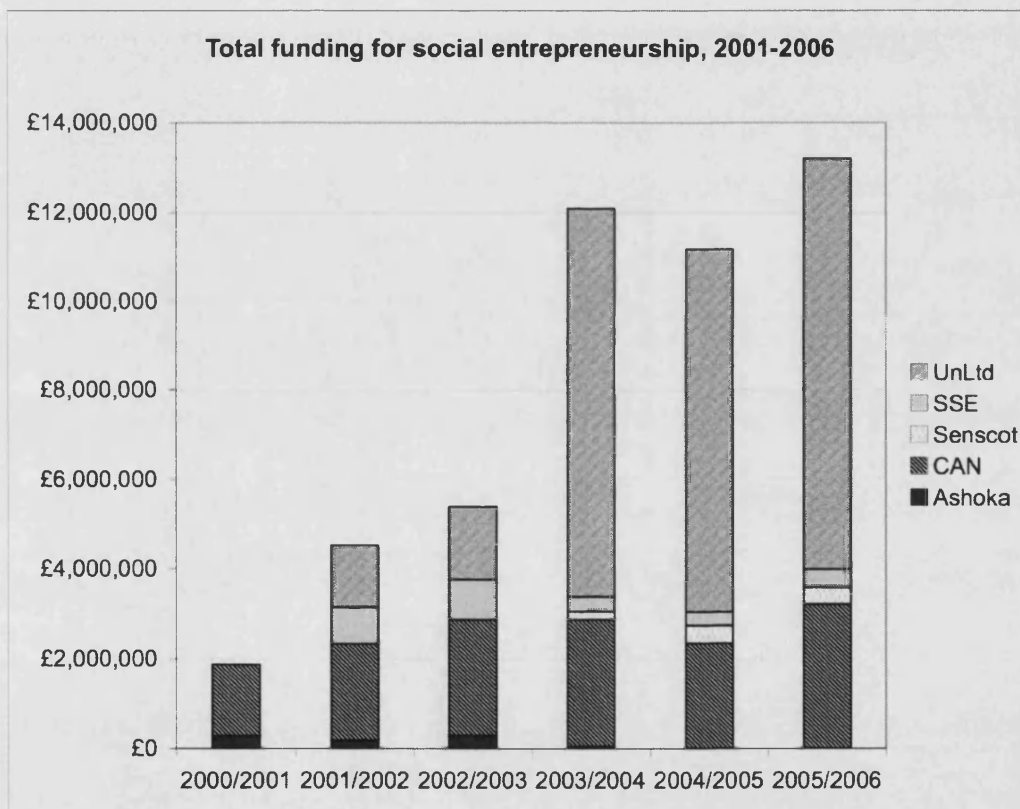
Table 6.3: Progress of social entrepreneur support organisations, 2000-2006.

Organisation	No. of UK soc entrepreneurs		UK Income	
	2000	2006	2000	2006*
Ashoka	--	--	£0.3 million	--
CAN	400	909	£1.5 million	£3.2 million
Senscot	180	1,500	£0.1 million	£0.4 million
SSE	51	276	£0.5 million	£0.4 million
Schwab Fdn	--	2	--	--
UnLtd	--	2,216	--	£9.2 million
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>631</b>	<b>4,903</b>	<b>£2.4 million</b>	<b>£13.2 million</b>

\* figures are taken from Charity Commission website for the financial year 2005/6.

At the same time, there was confusion among the organisations about how to respond to the growing policy interest in social enterprise, and the blurring between the 'social enterprise' and 'social innovation' schools of thought. On the one hand social entrepreneurship was growing and becoming more firmly established in the UK; on the other hand the original ideas were increasingly muddled and confused with the field of social enterprise which was growing at an even faster rate and was attracting greater attention from policy makers and the media.

This was compounded by the fact that 'social entrepreneur' as a personal identity remained ambiguous, and continued to be defined and dominated by those promoting the idea. 'Social entrepreneurs' themselves seemed largely ambivalent about taking on the new identity that was being proffered.



*Figures for Senscot were only available from 2003*

*The SSE figures do not include the associate schools, but the schools are in the early stages of development and did not have significant turnovers.*

UnLtd has clearly had the largest impact on the field of social entrepreneurship in terms of funding. Most of UnLtd's income is from its endowment, but it has also raised additional funding from charitable and business sources, as well as regional

funding from public sector sources<sup>45</sup>. In 2004/5, UnLtd raised £1.1 million on top of its endowment income. In 2005/6 the income from its endowment was £6.4 million, and it raised an additional £2.8 million, almost one third of its total income for the year.

Since 2001, the most significant and consistent source of funding for social entrepreneurship has been government. This has been supplemented by funding from charitable sources, mainly grant making trusts and also membership fees and individual donations.

SSE and its associate schools depended on grant making foundations and public sector sources, including a regular grant from the Home Office. Sencot raised some funds from membership and voluntary donations, but most of its funding has also been from government: in 2005 80% of its income and in 2004 almost 60%.

Similarly CAN's income has come mainly from government sources, though it has also developed a more diverse funding base than the other organisations, and has been especially successful in developing its earned income. The table below shows that the proportion of income receives from government has been consistently larger than from any other sector source, reaching 61% of its total income in 2005. It also shows how variable private sector support has been, varying from 1% in 2004, to 3% in 2003 and 5% in 2006. Earned income increased from 9% in 2003 to 26% in 2005.

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<sup>45</sup> In 2003/4 it raised £165,000 from the European Social Fund for its work in Scotland; £225,000 from North Yorkshire County Council; £95,000 from Social Firms Social East and the Development Trusts Association; and £78,000 from the New Deal for Communities. (Annual Accounts, UnLtd, 2003/4, see page 11)

Table 6.4: CAN, proportions of income from different sources

Source of funding	2005		2004		2003	
	£	%	£	%	£	%
<b>Govn.</b>	1,891,568	61%	1,326,500	47%	1,400,190	54%
<b>Charit.</b>	258,930	8%	912,500	32%	856,400	33%
<b>Private sector</b>	157,255	5%	27,500	1%	72,500	3%
<b>Self generated*</b>	798,954	26%	564,977	20%	244,057	9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,106,707</b>		<b>£2,831,477</b>		<b>£2,573,147</b>	

*Figures calculated based on CAN Financial Statements for year ended 31 March 2004, available from Charity Commission website, Note2, page 10 which lists the Income for Charitable Activities. The only income not included is investment income, which totalled in the region of £2,500 for both years.*

*\* Self generated income includes membership fees, speaker fees, income from the Mezzanine and monies covenanted from the Bright Red Dot Foundation for business related activities.*

The early reliance on business support when social entrepreneurship was emerging in the UK changed during this third period, as government funding came to dominate the field.

### **Activities, structures and processes**

The main activities of the social entrepreneur support organisations continued to be identifying and supporting social entrepreneurs. But whereas in the preceding period, the organisations were initiating and experimenting with their approaches, during this third stage in the development of social entrepreneurship in the UK, the organisations were focused on refining and consolidating their position and their activities. This part first reviews the strategic focus of the organisations, it then outlines who were

identified and included as social entrepreneurs, it goes on to discuss how the organisations have structured a space for social entrepreneurship through their activities, and then reviews the use of events and awards within social entrepreneurship.

***Strategic focus***

A main challenge facing all the support organisations during this period was focusing and prioritising their work. This was about refining their particular niche and distinctive contribution to social entrepreneurship in the UK. This part reviews how the organisations positioned themselves in practice in relation to one another and in terms of the ‘social innovation’ and ‘social enterprise’ schools of thought.

The following table summarises the positions of the different organisations in terms of ‘social innovation’ and ‘social enterprise’, and refers also to their focus on ‘community-based’ forms of social entrepreneurship. Ashoka was the only organisation which focused on ‘charismatic heroes, though it had no operations in the UK. CAN and Senscot shifted their focus towards ‘social enterprise’ and away from ‘social innovation’, while the SSE and UnLtd were committed to the ‘community-based’ version of social entrepreneurship as ‘social innovation’. The Skoll Centre, the most recently formed organisation, attempted to incorporate all versions of social entrepreneurship into its work.

Table 6.5: Strategic focus of organisations

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Strategic focus</b>
<b>Ashoka (UK) Trust</b>	Remained committed to social entrepreneur as ‘charismatic hero’.
<b>CAN</b>	Shifted focus away from ‘social innovation’ towards ‘social enterprise’.
<b>SSE</b>	Strengthened commitment to ‘community-based’ version of ‘social innovation’.
<b>Senscot</b>	Shifted focus away from ‘social innovation’ towards ‘social enterprise’. Remained



	community focused.
<b>UnLtd</b>	Attempted to incorporate 'social enterprise', but reverted to 'community-based "social innovation' focus.
<b>Skoll Centre</b>	Dual commitment to 'social innovation' and 'social enterprise'.

The experiences of these organisations are described below in more detail, starting with Ashoka, then the SSE, CAN, Senscot, and finally UnLtd. The Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship is not outlined here because its focus is international and not the UK.

More than any other of the social entrepreneur support organisations, Ashoka has struggled to find a position in the UK, and by the end of 2006 it had failed to launch its planned UK programmes. This failure can be attributed to three main causes: the tendency to centralise control back to the US; a lack of UK specific knowledge; and an unwavering commitment to the social entrepreneur as 'charismatic hero'. Together these meant that Ashoka did not achieve a distinctive UK rationale, it failed to position itself credibly within the emerging social entrepreneurial debates and practices the UK, and it failed to relate to the opportunities represented by the changing policy context.

From a UK perspective, Ashoka was clearly thought of as something from outside, interesting but not rooted in British needs or culture. While many people admired the work of Ashoka and its international fellows, taking inspiration from them, it was harder to take them seriously in practice. As one leading figure promoting social entrepreneurship in the UK commented:

Also being an American thing it's [Ashoka] very highly structured. I don't want to be rude, but often I feel that Americans have tunnel vision they don't look at the broader context very often. They create very simple structures, very simple paradigms, very simple working methods, and they just do it regardless. Whereas the British way is to be a bit bloody minded about things, to challenge everything, etc etc to be a bit anarchic, and to say energy is more important than structure.

...

I won't say a thing against Ashoka, because they do a good job.

From 2002 Ashoka headquarters decided to rein in the management and control of the UK office. During 2002/3 both the director and part-time administrator of Ashoka UK left the organisation. Ashoka UK was restructured, the day to day management was taken over by US staff, and the trustee body changed from being predominantly British to consisting of members of the Ashoka senior management team.

Ashoka UK transferred its efforts from international fundraising to planning how to launch a UK programme for 'leading social entrepreneurs'. To this end, there were a number of attempts to recruit a new UK based director<sup>46</sup>, though it was not until the autumn of 2006 that the post was successfully filled. In the meantime, without an operating office of staff in the UK, Ashoka was unable to gain an understanding of and feel for the UK. It lacked basic knowledge about important developments in the UK, for example: senior staff did not understand why the Labour party had relabelled itself New Labour; they were unfamiliar with devolution, let alone the existence of different legal systems and charity laws in England/Wales and Scotland; and they did not understand the position and role of the welfare state in the UK or of the voluntary and community sector. Coupled with their ongoing commitment to the 'charismatic hero' version of the social entrepreneur, Ashoka's position and thinking were at odds with developments taking place in the UK context.

The reluctance of Ashoka to participate in and contribute to the way in which social entrepreneurship was developing in the particular context of the UK was epitomized by its withdrawal from UnLtd. The centralising of management to the US was a direct response to Ashoka's role in UnLtd. US headquarters had consistently been resistant to what they viewed as government money<sup>47</sup>, even though officially the Millennium Award Scheme was an independent, albeit government regulated, body. Rather than a major achievement and contribution to the support of social entrepreneurs, as far as Ashoka headquarters was concerned, UnLtd was a digression from its real work.

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<sup>46</sup> In 2001/2, one attempt to recruit and appoint a UK director stalled and failed simply through administrative lack of follow up; a second appointment in 2003/4 ended unexpectedly when the working relationship between the US and UK proved provided for too little in-country direction.

<sup>47</sup> Ashoka prides itself on its political independence and the fact that it does not accept money from government.

Ashoka resigned its founder status and place on the board of UnLtd in 2005, removing itself from being able to influence the development of the UK largest organisation focused on social entrepreneurship and thereby disconnecting itself further from having a UK specific role.

While Ashoka had its own internal challenges to deal with and seemed unable to make progress in the UK, CAN, Senscot, SSE and UnLtd were taking different ideas of social entrepreneurship forward in practice. All four of these organisations struggled in different ways with whether to or how to incorporate the growing policy and practitioner interest in ‘social enterprise’ into their work.

**Is social entrepreneurship the same as social enterprise?** They're certainly related, but they're not the same thing. (SSE, What is a social entrepreneur? internet)

And all four resolved this tension in different ways:

- The SSE was the most tightly focused. In practice it retained its commitment to the ‘social innovation’ school of thought and to its year-long training course for social entrepreneurs.
- CAN and Senscot both developed a range of activities, and broadened their focus to include social enterprise. By the end of 2006, the work of both organisations centred on the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought rather than the ‘social innovation’ version.
- UnLtd attempted to incorporate a more business oriented version of social enterprise into its work, but having failed to achieve this it reverted to its original vision of supporting ‘community-based’ social entrepreneurs.

The SSE walked a careful line between engaging with the growing interest in the ‘social enterprise’ school of thought, and maintaining a practical commitment to training ‘social entrepreneurs’. At times it sought to clarify the distinction between ‘social enterprise’ and what it understood as ‘social entrepreneurship’:

A lot of those social entrepreneurs will be engaged in social enterprise activity but still, James Smith at the SSE, one of the things he is brilliant at doing, when I have heard him stand up and speak he says that social entrepreneurship is not the same as social enterprise. From my perspective I would welcome more people saying that.

At other times, the SSE was happy to blur the distinction and so position itself within policy debate on social enterprise.

AW: So what are the differences between social enterprise and social entrepreneurship?

JAMES SMITH: My favourite definition of an entrepreneur is someone who pursues opportunities without regard to resources. If you have the resources to pursue an opportunity, you are a manager. If you don't, but you decide you will do it anyway, you become an entrepreneur. The social entrepreneur drives the development of a social enterprise.

(Smith, 2002)

The SSE has consistently sought to frame its work so it is seen as policy relevant, for example making the connection with the 'respect' agenda that came to the fore in 2005/6.

In view of the contribution that social entrepreneurs can make to increasing community engagement and volunteering activity, recent policy measures and political discourse surrounding the 'respect agenda' highlights the kind of role the SSE and social entrepreneurs can play in contributing to effective personal transformation of neighbourhoods. (School for Social Entrepreneurs, nef evaluation report, 2006: 85)

The SSE's position may have been ambiguous at times, nevertheless in practice it did not wander far from its main purpose of providing training to innovative 'social entrepreneurs'. CAN, on the other hand, seemed to position itself in a more deliberately ambiguous way, and it is almost impossible to identify a consistent and clear-cut mission for CAN, both in terms of its self-presentation and from its activities. They were criticised for being 'funding groupies', and certainly they worked hard to keep their fingers in many different pies.

I laugh at the Community Action Network because they are the biggest grant seekers I have ever seen, and if you look at how they set about what they are doing at the moment they're funding groupies.

CAN sought to be active in almost all areas of voluntary action and social welfare, including football clubs, schools, health centres, community cafes, and dry docks. In fact, the quantity and variety of projects that were being initiated and pursued contributed to the sense of CAN as chaotic and opportunistic.

In total, some 200 projects of one sort or another are currently being pursued, and the number rises almost every day... One day CAN will decide to put an entrepreneur on Mars. (Thinking about CAN, 2003)

Within this plethora of activity, it was apparent that between 2001 and 2006 CAN's attention was shifting away from its original focus on 'social innovation' and increasingly towards 'social enterprise'. It started by deliberately blurring any distinction between creating a peer support network of social entrepreneurs and promoting social enterprise:

CAN is a mutual support service for social entrepreneurs working across the UK. It is seeking to move traditional charitable projects away from a culture of dependency towards becoming more sustainable social enterprises, where an increasing proportion of the organisation's income comes through trading. (Mawson, The Guardian, 2002).

This transition is also clear from its website: from its stated focus on 'social entrepreneurs' in 2001 and 2003 to 'social enterprise and social entrepreneurs' in 2006.

- In February 2001 CAN described itself as "a mutual learning and support network for social entrepreneurs" (CAN, internet, Feb 2001).
- In December 2003 CAN changed its strapline and described itself as "the UK's leading organisation for the development and promotion of social entrepreneurs." (CAN, internet, Dec 2003).
- In August 2006 CAN described itself as "the UK's leading organisation for the development, promotion and support of social entrepreneurs and social enterprises" (CAN, internet, Aug, 2006).

This transition was also apparent in the projects it has run and the way in which these have been presented. Its engagement with social enterprise has taken increasing prominence in its work. Initially its Mezzanine shared office enterprise was more of an accidental activity, and mention of it barely appeared on its website or in its promotional materials. At the end of 2003, when CAN changed its website design, the Mezzanine was one of 13 projects listed.

Early on its career, CAN had to move office, which led to the creation of the "Mezzanine" a now very successful networking showcase (though CAN's founders claim, with pride, they had no fixed plan when they took it on – a good story for a charity, not so good for a company) (Thinking about CAN, 2003)

But by 2005, the Mezzanine was a “flagship CAN project” (Bright Red Dot Foundation, Report and Accounts, 2005: 2). The Mezzanine was important in a number of different ways. It provided a story of entrepreneurship from its own work rather than always falling back on the stories of its founders, and this served to legitimise its position within social entrepreneurship, and more particularly, as a social enterprise. It provided both a fundraising opportunity<sup>48</sup> and an independent income. And it positioned CAN at the centre of the network of ‘entrepreneurial’ organisations for which it was providing the managed office space<sup>49</sup>. A similar pattern is apparent in the growing prominence of its social enterprise support services, from its first Phoenix funded project in 2001 to its high profile Breakthrough programme launched in 2006.

A parallel shift towards social enterprise is apparent in Senscot’s work, though it has been more precise and more strategic. Senscot explicitly clarified its mission to support social enterprise in 2004 and reasserted this a year later:

Senscot will continue to build and operate an independent network with the scale and momentum to drive an expanding social enterprise sector in Scotland. (Senscot, Annual Report, 2005: 1)

Senscot was less concerned about social entrepreneurship as an individualised phenomenon, and more focused on developing a field of action or sector, albeit with a community-based emphasis. As well as supporting networks of individuals and lobbying for increased policy support for social enterprise, Senscot has also advocated for and supported the creation of several new social enterprise infrastructure organisations, including the DTA<sup>50</sup> Scotland, the Social Enterprise Academy, Senscot Exchange, and First Port. It has also housed some of these organisations as they have got off the ground, providing low-cost office space.

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<sup>48</sup> CAN published ‘How to Mezzanine’ in 2003, funded by the DTI; and it received a grant of more than £0.6 million from the London Development Agency to support the development of the Mezzanine 2 at London Bridge.

<sup>49</sup> Postscript: In September 2007, CAN revamped its strategic focus and its website, introducing the strapline ‘growing social business’. The two main headlines on its new homepage read ‘Supporting social enterprise’ and ‘CAN: Scaling up social enterprise’. CAN presents two main themes to its work: the Mezzanine; and supporting the scaling up of social enterprise organisations. Social entrepreneurs are presented as the people who lead and run social enterprises. Essentially CAN has refocused its work to concentrate wholly on social enterprise: “CAN’s vision is of a social economy buoyed by a thriving social enterprise market. Our mission is to help social entrepreneurs achieve it” (CAN, About Us, internet, 2007).

<sup>50</sup> DTA stands for the Development Trusts Association, a leading organisation in the development of social enterprise in England and Wales.

UnLtd had the most troubled engagement with social enterprise. Following its formal recognition as the preferred candidate for the £100 million Millennium legacy, the priority was to start putting the organisational structure in place in order to meet the target of commencing grant-making by December 2001 (UnLtd, 2001). Seven trustees were appointed, one from each of the founding organisations. And Rosalind Copisarow was appointed director in mid-2001. She brought with her a plan to merge her current organisation, the micro-lending agency Street UK<sup>51</sup>, with UnLtd.

As a result, says Copisarow, the impact both organisations can make on poor communities will be multiplied. “The synergies are huge between social entrepreneurs, who want to use business skills to create wealth for local communities, and micro-entrepreneurs, who want to use business skills to make a living for their family,” she points out. (Benjamin, 2001).

Copisarow’s vision was a much broader and bolder one than that of the seven founding organisations of UnLtd. She was acknowledged by the trustees as being entrepreneurial. But with a background in the corporate sector, she was not familiar with the kinds of accountabilities involved in managing charitable and public monies, and this came to be one of the major stumbling blocks to her plans. One of UnLtd Trustees commented:

The present CEO of UnLtd in the UK, is an extraordinary entrepreneurial woman called Rosalind Copisarow. I think she is hopeless with the board at the moment, whether she can learn it... Her weak point is she has probably never had to work in a context of accountability. If you are managing £100 million its naïve to imagine you can do that in isolation.

The bold vision came to an abrupt end when the Scarman Trust wrote to the Home Office in the autumn of 2001 with serious concerns about how UnLtd was progressing, and wanting to withdraw from the partnership.

UnLtd also became painfully aware of the limits of personality. With more than a clutch of visionaries and blue-sky thinkers on its board and among its patrons, it was hardly surprising that their choice of chief executive was big on persona and ideas as well as skills and experience. But observers have suggested big egos are not necessarily best suited to negotiation with the Millennium Commission. One source says ‘hubris and personality’ were as much responsible for the unravelling of the merger as the technical difficulties. (Dobson, 2002)

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<sup>51</sup> Street UK was founded in 2000 by Copisarow. Its aim was to support ‘micro-entrepreneurs’.

For the Millennium Commission there was a clear distinction between micro-credit and the emphasis on small business and community economic development, and small grants to individuals in deprived communities with the emphasis on local participation and active citizenship. The attempt to bring together a version of social enterprise with a community-based conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship was not viewed as credible or convincing.

By December 2001, rather than meeting the target of making its first grants, the merger had halted, Copisarow had returned full-time to Street UK, and UnLtd had appointed a new Chief Executive, John Rafferty. The broader vision of providing loans or micro-loans to individuals or small businesses was abandoned. UnLtd regrouped and focused back on its original task – providing small grants and development support to individuals with innovative ideas.

As UnLtd started to demonstrate its worth as the preferred candidate, the Millennium Commission regained confidence, and the danger of failing at the starting block receded. UnLtd was formally established on 27 January 2003, and registered with the Charity Commission on 31 January, having met all the Millennium Commission criteria. The money was finally transferred to UnLtd on 26 February 2003, more than 2 years later than originally planned, and the first grants were made in the Spring of 2003.

The different organisations responded to and incorporated different aspects of the policy interest and discourse on social enterprise into their work. All clearly felt the pressure to change and adapt their work in response to growing profile of and funding for social enterprise. UnLtd made the most audacious move by taking the blurring between social entrepreneurship as ‘social innovation’ and as ‘social enterprise’ literally. But its failed attempt to bring them together under one roof indicates that in practice they are not part of the same organisational or even policy rationale. The other organisations were more like to blur the distinctions in their presentation and rhetoric, but in practice their operations and activities needed greater focus and clarity. The implication of not finding a way to engage with the policy discourses was well



illustrated by Ashoka's unwavering commitment to its own agenda, accompanied by its failure to find a position in the UK or to launch its long planned UK operations.

### ***Locating social entrepreneurs***

The support organisations continued in their role as 'gatekeepers', identifying who was included and who excluded from social entrepreneurship. The emphasis on 'community-based' versions of social entrepreneurship continued to dominate practice, along with the growing interest in social enterprise.

From 2001, the SSE reinforced its position as supporting community-based social entrepreneurs who are addressing a wide variety of different needs and causes, and it therefore moved further away from the early vision of a business school for the voluntary sector. It positioned itself clearly as aiming to transform individuals and, through that, to change communities.

The SSE's approach to personal transformation means that social entrepreneurs both benefit themselves and are better placed to pass on this focus and personal transformation in their own projects and communities. (School for Social Entrepreneurs, nef evaluation report, 2006: 80)

Many of the organisations and projects that the SSE students undertook were not necessarily innovative or groundbreaking when viewed from a national perspective, though they were generally about new organisations or introducing new services at the local, community level. On the other hand there have been a few fellows of the SSE whose work has had national impact, and a few who have worked internationally. The following list is a random sample of SSE social entrepreneurs, the descriptions were taken from their website in January 2003. It gives a sense of the range of different fields and purposes that were being pursued within the SSE:

- a music centre and school for young people in Aston;
- producing a feature length film on youth homelessness;
- support for bereaved Muslims within Newcastle;
- 'Community Mums Project' – a home visiting scheme where experienced mothers are recruited and trained to visit first time mothers in their own homes;

- ‘Grandparents Plus’ – to support and promote the role of grandparents;
- a furniture re-cycling project in Newcastle;
- youth radio station in Bradford.

The profile of UnLtd award winners was similar – mainly community-based, mainly social welfare oriented, with a handful of winners working on organisations and projects with national or international implications.

CAN’s membership, on the other hand, consisted largely of people working for medium sized local voluntary organisations, and not community organisations. The spread of fields and activities among CAN members was very diverse – including the arts, education, disability, youth, sports. As with the SSE and UnLtd it was dominated by social welfare and to some extent culture, rather than environmental or animal concerns. But the membership was unevenly spread across the UK, reflecting the contacts and leadership within local CAN offices rather than an objectively determined level of social entrepreneurship in any particular area. In addition, there were several organisations with multiple memberships of CAN, most notably CAN itself and the organisations that the founders of CAN had run in their previous jobs<sup>52</sup>.

- CAN – 12 members;
- Bromley by Bow – 15 members;
- Kaleidoscope – 6 members

At the same time, there was a shift within CAN and Senscot to identify ‘social entrepreneurs’ as leaders of social enterprise organisations. The 1,500 social entrepreneurs identified in the table above, were referred to by Senscot as the social enterprise organisations with which it had contact (Senscot Annual Report, 2005).

### ***Structuring a space for social entrepreneurs***

The parallel challenge for the support organisations was in consolidating and further developing their range of activities in support of social entrepreneurs. The types of activities as well as the way they organised their work served to structure the space

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<sup>52</sup> These figures are taken from a database of members that CAN provided in September 2002.

within which social entrepreneurship developed, and therefore what forms social entrepreneurship took. As the space for social entrepreneurship became more carefully structured, defined and bounded, the nature of what is social entrepreneurship in the UK also became clearer.

Table 6.6 below sets out the different activities undertaken by the different social entrepreneur support organisations. It shows how much larger UnLtd was than any of the other organisations, effectively dominating who was seen as a ‘social entrepreneur’ in the UK. It also shows how CAN and the SSE did not achieve their initial ambitions of working with hundreds and thousands of social entrepreneurs in the UK.

Table 6.6: Organisational activities, 2006

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>UK activities</b>	<b>Numbers of social entrepreneurs, 2006</b>
<b>Ashoka (UK) Trust</b>	(planning for UK launch)	-
<b>CAN</b>	Membership network Projects Mezzanine	909
<b>SSE</b>	Year long training course Fellowship	276
<b>Senscot</b>	Membership network and information hub Peer support and networking	1,500
<b>UnLtd</b>	Small grants (£2k) Personal support and advice Fellowship	2,216
<b>Skoll Centre</b>	Teaching, MBA Academic research Annual World Forum	-

Three core activities were identified as being the focus for development and support in the previous stage, and these remained the focus in this third stage, albeit with somewhat different emphases:

- Making 'small' grants to individuals
- Providing professional and targeted advice, training and support
- Developing peer support networks/ membership

The emphasis in the preceding stage was on developing peer support networks, this shifted in this period to grant-making and professional targeted support.

#### (i) Small grants programmes

The main role in grant-making to social entrepreneurs was undertaken by UnLtd. The Scarman Trust continued to support 'can-do citizens' with small grants; and the Millennium Awards Scheme finally closed its doors in 2004, having supported 32,000 'starpeople'. A 2003 evaluation of the Millennium Awards concluded with:

Millennium Awards are an exceptional demonstration that small grants can have large impacts. Some of the issues that Award winners tackle have defeated local authorities, charities or government departments. The values at the heart of Millennium Awards, about trusting and empowering individuals and communities, are precisely the values that underlie strong social capital. (Small grants, big impact. Millennium Awards Impact Study, 2003: 11)

But providing small grants to individuals is not in and of itself a novel activity, even if the exact focus in social entrepreneurship has some new aspects to it.

#### (ii) Targeted support

While the provision of small grants and personalised support are distinct activities, what has characterised support for social entrepreneurs is that these activities have been brought together. The following table shows that the value of the support, advice and consultancy provided by UnLtd is roughly equal to the value of the financial support it has provided.

Table 6.7: UnLtd support to recipients

	<b>Grants</b>	<b>Non-financial advice and support</b>	<b>Total benefit to recipients</b>
<b>2003*</b>	£292,437	£585,129	£877,566
<b>2003/4</b>	£1,989,654	£1,808,621	£3,798,275
<b>2004/5</b>	£3,100,904	£2,422,139	£5,523,043
<b>2005/6</b>	£3,572,651	£3,301,873	£6,874,524

*\* The 2003 activities were limited to the Spring of 2003, just before the end of the financial year.*

*All figures taken from UnLtd Annual Accounts for the years in question.*

UnLtd structured its support along a ladder or staircase, and this applied to both the size of the grants available and also to the advice and support available. At Level 1 grants were around £2,000, and support was semi-formal through the regional offices; at Level 2 grants are around £15,000 and support was through more targeted and structured consultancies and expert advice; UnLtd Ventures provided no funding, but worked very closely with about 10 organisations over a year, providing consultancy and expert input to support expansion and organisational development.

There are strong indications that the concept of a ladder of support is relevant in practice, and that there is a follow through from Level 1 to Level 2:

- in 2005/6 41% of Level 2 Award Winners were previously Level 1 Awards Winners (Annual Accounts, UnLtd, 2005/6: 26);
- in 2004/5 45% of Level 2 Awards Winners were previously Level 1 Award Winners (Annual Accounts, UnLtd, 2004/5: 12).
- in 2005/6 UnLtd Ventures worked with 10 organisations of which 7 were former Level 2 Award Winners.

UnLtd also raised funding for particular groups such as young people and refugees, similarly providing specialist support alongside grants.

The SSE provided more intensive support to social entrepreneurs, emphasising personal learning. Its year long courses retained an emphasis on personal development and building self-confidence, and were structured around 'action learning', mentoring, and opportunities to network and meet leading practitioners and experts in a range of different fields of social welfare.

So the focus of a programme for developing entrepreneurs needs to be on their own confidence, self-insight and personal impact as well as an opportunity to experiment for themselves and to explore in some depth the experience of others. (Young, 2003: 1)

And a 2006 evaluation of the SSE endorsed this approach, and also endorsed its focus on supporting people who work primarily in local communities, effecting change from the 'bottom-up'.

The SSE has expanded its national coverage through its associate schools, run by partner organisations under a franchising arrangement: Fife (2002), the East Midlands (2002/3), Northern Ireland (2005), Liverpool (2006), and Aston (2006), and a school is planned in Cornwall. It has also continued to run a core course from London. The table below shows the numbers of students passing through the SSE annually. It also shows that it has not been possible to operate each local associate school each year, with the effect that sometimes an SSE course is a one-off in a local area.

Table 6.8: SSE students by year, location and programme, 2001-2006.

Year	Location	Numbers	Annual total	Year	Location	Numbers	Annual total
2001	SSE	14	28	2003	Fife	8	15
	Belfast	7			Stepney	7	
	Devon	7		2004	SSE-RSG	20	27
		Fife	7				
2002	SSE	15	68	2005	SSE- Essentials	12	38
	Aston	5			SSE-RSG	16	
	Bradford	5			Fife	10	
	Cardiff	5		2006	SSE- Weekly	21	49
	East London	5			Aston	10	
	Fife	12			Clapham Pk	8	
	Newcastle	7			Fife	10	
	Salford	6					
	Shrewsbury	8					
			<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS, 2001-2006</b>		<b>225</b>		

*Figures calculated based on information taken from SSE website.*

### (iii) Peer support networks

Peer support networks, memberships and fellowships featured consistently across the social entrepreneur support organisations, but rather being at the centre of their activities, they became increasingly peripheral during this period. All the organisations have struggled to find effective ways of facilitating peer support.

CAN priorities have changed significantly, from its membership being the main purpose of its work when it was set up in 1998, to the membership being something of a sideline. It has certainly not depended on its membership for its legitimacy. CAN's membership grew slowly but steadily. It reached 825 in August 2004, and 909 by July 2006. An internal report in 2003 commented that:

...very few can be described as active CAN members, interacting regularly and constructively with CAN and with each other.... there are perhaps 50-100 member with whom we actively engage, and who help in the delivery of projects; little time or effort is spent on the rest.... Nor can CAN the charity be described as a truly national organisation – there are huge “gaps” in our coverage. (Thinking about CAN, 2003)

Benefits to CAN members depended more on opportunism and personal connections to CAN staff than on systematically provided services.

Senscot took a more systematic approach to developing its networks, though it moved away from talking about a ‘membership’ to talking about its ‘contacts’. By the end of 2006 Senscot was in contact with approximately 3,500 people through its weekly e-mail bulletin, and estimated that it had contact with 1,500 social enterprise organisations in Scotland. It organised a range of events and meetings, facilitating face-to-face contact as well as ‘virtual’ encounters. Between 2004 and the end of 2006 it established 14 Local Social Enterprise Networks, informal gatherings of people working in social enterprise.

The SSE worked to establish a fellowship of former students, a kind of ‘alumni’ association. But this was clearly not considered a central activity for the SSE by the fact that there was no mention at all of the fellowship in the 2006 evaluation of its ‘core programmes’. Similarly, UnLtd also tried to establish a fellowship of Millennium Scheme Award winners and UnLtd award winners. But this was a stop-start effort, as a feasibility study in 2003 found a lack of interest among former award winners.

In February 2003 the Millennium Commission asked UnLtd to investigate the viability of developing a National Fellowship for everyone who had previously received a Millennium Award. It was agreed that UnLtd would carry out a pilot which was launched in Greater London and Wales in February 2003, with a series of events,



training and networking opportunities for previous and current Millennium Award winners.

The pilot established that there was not significant demand from previous award winners for such a Fellowship and that the participation rate from those who did join was sufficiently low to question the value for money of such provision. (UnLtd Annual Accounts and Report, 2004: 6)

At the same time, UnLtd experimented with new ways of structuring peer support networks. It set up an annual study and exchange programme to India, a partnership with a social networking website, and on-line 'ideas bank' – all of which provide different sorts of opportunities for social entrepreneurs to network with one another.

Between 2001 and 2006, support for social entrepreneurs became more structured and more targeted. In particular the ladder of funding and support provided by UnLtd has created a practice-based model of what social entrepreneurship is in the UK context – it has created incentives for individual initiative at several levels, and most specifically for people who are not employed already within the voluntary and community sector.

At the same time, original ideas of facilitating peer support networks of social entrepreneurs proved harder to enact than envisioned. CAN, for example, limited its activities to the Mezzanine and to supporting the growth of established social enterprise organisations. This was very different from its original vision of building a mutual support network of community-based social entrepreneurs, the '2,000 by 2000'. Senscot was the most successful at retaining a commitment to building networks, but it became focused on supporting the development of social enterprise as a field of action, and even moved away from individuals as being the only focus for its support and activities.

Equally, social entrepreneurship became more fragmented. The confusion with social enterprise and the repositioning of two of the main social entrepreneur support organisations (CAN and Senscot) as supporting social enterprise, marginalised the 'social innovation' school of thought. The space for 'socially innovative' social entrepreneurs was shaped almost entirely by UnLtd, with some supplementary and specialist support from the SSE.

## *Events*

From 2001, events became an important way in which social entrepreneurship was enacted. These included awards ceremonies, seminars, and conferences that have become part of the annual schedule within the field of social entrepreneurship. This was partly because there were now organisations that could organise and host such events. It was also a sign that there were increasing numbers of people involved in social entrepreneurship and that they were looking for opportunities to meet, to celebrate and to acknowledge the reality of social entrepreneurship in the UK. Events have been especially important as a physical manifestation and reflection of the form that social entrepreneurship has taken.

Two awards were launched in 2001: the New Statesman and Society in cooperation with Centrica<sup>53</sup> launched the Upstarts Awards; and Ernst and Young added a category of social entrepreneurship to its annual awards for entrepreneurship in the UK. There were relatively few entrants for the first years of both awards, in some cases only one candidate for a particular category. But in both cases, the numbers of entrants has increased over the years, and both are well established in the calendar of social entrepreneurship events.

In its first year the Upstarts Awards were clearly aimed at social entrepreneurs, and more specifically people bringing about change within their communities.

Do you have the passion, conviction and self-belief to improve your local community positively? (Upstarts, internet, 2001)

In its second year, 2002, it shifted its emphasis and paid more attention to social enterprise – “Upstarts Awards 2002 exist to reveal the stars of social enterprise to the world and spread the idea of social entrepreneurs as a dynamic force for change” (Upstarts, internet, 2002). This had the effect of broadening the range and number of organisations with which they engaged and making the awards more policy relevant and therefore of greater general interest. By the middle of 2004, the Awards were presented as “Rewarding the business of social enterprise” (Upstarts, internet, 2004). Categories changed slightly each year, and the annual awards total approximately

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<sup>53</sup> Centrica is a large corporation, which includes in its holdings companies such as British Gas and the AA.

£20,000. Awards have attracted government interest and have been presented by a Minister each year.

Ernst & Young are an international consultancy providing accounting and related business services. The Ernst & Young entrepreneurship awards are high profile and prestigious in the business world. The rationale for the awards was as a way of finding out the detailed practices of successful companies that were not their clients, information that would otherwise be considered confidential. This could provide openings for new consultancy contracts, but more importantly also ensured that Ernst and Young were on top of the most innovative developments across a range of businesses. The rationale for introducing a social entrepreneur category was different. Social entrepreneurs provided media friendly stories, reflected well on Ernst and Young's social commitment, and brought in a new and dynamic group of people to the awards events.

The award targeted social entrepreneurs as individual leaders and innovators in the social field. Data in the form of written application forms was provided by Ernst & Young for the years 2001 to 2003 (inclusive). The assessment criteria and selection process for social entrepreneurs, compared with that for business entrepreneurs, was weak and ill thought through, reflecting Ernst & Young's lack of in-house expertise in voluntary and public sector matters. In this period there were 47 nominations, of which 4 were duplicates. Of these, fifteen, or 40%, could be categorised as enterprise development, often involving training and skills for young people. All other categories (such as education, youth, health, arts, sport etc) had one, two or three nominations within them. There is therefore a clear bias towards social initiatives that include an element of economic enterprise development. So even though Ernst & Young did not have the intention of making awards to social enterprises, the nominations and winners were nevertheless likely to be involved in some form of economic development. In 2006, Ernst & Young partnered with the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship for the UK social entrepreneur of the year awards.

Awards are by their nature celebratory and to some extent introspective. They provide a way for people from within a field to recognise each other, and impart a sense of a

coherent and recognisable field of activity, a sense of achievement and a sense of community. They also confer credibility, providing a profile and press coverage for the winning organisations, and may open up access to people who are otherwise inaccessible. As one social entrepreneur commented:

You need money, you need resources, you need to be noticed by the government, you need to be the example they use in this strategic document, so one good way is to win awards along the way. That is a tool. It's a hassle and it takes a day to fill in or half a day and then you have to kind of dress up and have lunch with people, but then often there are really useful people around the table. It's quite a bizarre way of networking.

At the same time, awards are a sign of the consolidation of the field of social entrepreneurship. Awards are not only a way of conferring credibility on the winners, but also in asserting and celebrating the importance of social entrepreneurship as a whole.

Conferences and seminars, on the other hand, are not necessarily celebratory. They can provide the opportunity for more in-depth and serious discussion, and more critical appraisal. In the case of social entrepreneurship, however, this has not been the case. The main caveat to this is that my research did not cover social enterprise in detail, and it may be that there has been more rigorous and considered debate within that field. Certainly the one social enterprise event I attended, run by Business Links Winchester – ‘Social Enterprise: Ultimate solution or ultimate shambles?’ – did involve a degree of publicly articulated scepticism that I have not heard at any of the various social entrepreneurship events I have attended.

The highest profile event in the social entrepreneurship year is the annual World Forum held by the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, based at the Said Business School, Oxford University. It is the largest event organised by the business school, with around 600 people attending, and aims to be a place for academics and practitioners to meet.

The blurb for the forum reads: “The social sector is approaching a tipping point. All around the world, societies are bringing the dynamism and pursuit of effectiveness to social development that has more typically thrived in commerce.’ The discourse is more Richard Branson than Gandhi. (Wajid, 2006: 1739)

The 2004 and 2005 Forums were unashamedly ‘business-like’, attended by “Armani-clad delegates” who would be at home at Davos, but wishing or believing that they were at ‘Woodstock’.

... the Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship - the Davos of social entrepreneurship.... (Hutton, 2005)

... the radical of 2006 is dressed in a suit and about to host a conference featuring former US vice-president Al Gore, as well as the vice-president of the World Bank and the former head of Goldman Sachs.... It's getting harder to distinguish the radicals from the establishment. (Little, 2006)

I think we have just witnessed the Woodstock of our generation. The excitement and energy of the conference, leading off with Prince Charles' video address, has been overwhelming. I think we have touched on something profound that is going on in the world. (Skoll, 2004)

The Forum aimed for a broad audience, and deliberately appealed to both the ‘social innovation’ and the ‘social enterprise’ schools of thought. It was international in nature, though has had a tendency to be dominated by US speakers, including a selection of leading academics, some well known and inspiring social entrepreneurs, the international organisations supporting social entrepreneurs such as Ashoka, and a splattering of Hollywood stars<sup>54</sup>. Robert Redford and Ben Kingsley took the stage at Oxford<sup>55</sup>, presenting the Skoll annual awards to leading international social entrepreneurs and talking about their interest in social entrepreneurship. The arrival of Hollywood was perhaps the most unexpected turn on the UK social entrepreneurship scene.

There was a self-congratulatory tone, but acknowledgement among both the participants and the organisers that it would take a few years to get the format, content and feel of the event right. The presence of someone like Al Gore, who attended the 2006 Forum, was not to inform people or start a debate, as people who would attend such a conferences are undoubtedly already convinced by global warming, but rather to inspire and create a sense of community among the ‘changemakers’ in the room. Certainly the on-line discussions that took place during and shortly after the Forums,

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<sup>54</sup> Films produced to date include *An Inconvenient Truth*, *Syriana* and *The Kite Runner*. It is less clear what the arm of its work co-ordinating follow on social action has achieved, though in the case of ‘*An Inconvenient Truth*’ there are certainly signs that the film has had a significant impact, certainly in the US.

<sup>55</sup> Ben Kingsley attended in 2005 and 2006. Robert Redford attended in 2006.

within the Social Edge chat and blog site for social entrepreneurs, (another Skoll Foundation venture) were full of superlatives.

I think the highlight of this forum was a jolt of inspiration, you know? Seeing so many people doing so much good work. It makes you say, "I want to go out there and make it happen." (Jain, 2004)

The Forum's first night's convening has concluded, and I'm not sure I can convey the inspiration I got from hearing these speakers. Each of the stories are so powerful and almost unbelievable - in the sense that one can't believe everyone isn't swept up in the power of doing good because the people of the world deserve it. (Vaserius, 2005)

But the Forums have also alienated people. In most cases, dissent was voiced in hushed whispers, in the corridors, in the outside courtyard, or on the terrace. Sometimes this has felt like a process of checking people out, and during the 2004 conference I had around a dozen conversations where people circle around an issue and as they become more confident they were able to say more clearly what they thought. The director of one social entrepreneur organisation has told me several times that she/he seriously doubts the emphasis put on the term social entrepreneur and sees it as community activism, believing that social enterprise is something very different that should be presented separately – "but I can't say that, can I". As a result, some people have held back from attending the 'circus':

The reason I don't attend the Skoll 'circus' at Oxford each year is because of the implicit veneration of personal wealth – the invasion of the American fixation on money and markets. I have seen occasional businesses where there is no tension between profit and social justice – but let's not pretend that there is anything 'radical' about 'sooking up' to the corporate sector. (DeMarco, 2006)

The Skoll World Forum may be the highest profile of social entrepreneurship events, but many of the characteristics of the Forum are apparent in other conferences – the prestigious and wealthy locations, the dominance of 'white middle aged' men as speakers, and the corporate and self congratulatory style. Most notably, CAN has held biennial conferences based on the Brickell publication 'People before Structures', in 2001, 2003 and 2005.

A bit of the usual 'we are the future' hysteria, but that's part of the CAN culture. (personal communication, 2005)

Such events have signalled that social entrepreneurship has shifted slightly from a promotional stance to a celebratory one, but by the end of 2006 it had certainly not created a space for more analytical or critical reflection.

Meanwhile within the sector many of the [social entrepreneur] umbrella organizations remain more in the advocacy and celebration mode, at home in a culture of anecdotes about heroic individuals with carefully burnished stories of success against the odds. (Mulgan, 2006: 91)

## **Relationships**

Social entrepreneurship initially had a close relationship with business and the private sector, and more antagonistic relationships with government and the voluntary and community sector. Between 2001 and 2006 this changed, such that government now seemed to have the most to offer social entrepreneurship, and the voluntary and community sector were drawn more into debates on social enterprise and how to incorporate fee generating activities into their work rather than to becoming more innovative and entrepreneurial.

### ***Relationships within social entrepreneurship***

The field of social entrepreneurship was hardly cohesive or collaborative. While there was recognition of some common ground between the different support organisations, they were more often 'competitive' and 'arrogant', such that there was no sense of a coherent field of action emerging which required a collective voice or lobby to gain influence and impact. As one of the founding director's of CAN said:

... with the SSE we actually had a dinner together before CAN started before the School started and we said we can see we need to do something in this area, at the end Lord Young said your thing sounds really interesting I hope it works, good luck, and he said I am going to start the school for social entrepreneurs, and we said good luck to you and we'll see who gets there first.

As the field developed and started to attract attention and interest from funders and policy makers, the competition grew between the different versions of social entrepreneurship and the different organisations vied with one another as to which would define and represent social entrepreneurship in the UK. At times the level of competition appeared extreme.

I wonder if there is any connection between that and what I find the nasty tendency in the world today towards fundamentalism, fundamental social entrepreneurs.

The competitiveness and lack of co-operation between the organisations was exemplified by the experiences of UnLtd.

### ***Relationships with business***

The relationship between the private sector and social entrepreneurship was more complex than simply a funding one. Certainly the amount of money passing through the social entrepreneur support organisations was not especially striking. Perhaps more important has been the form of engagement.

CAN has been most successful in attracting business support and it has formed some novel partnerships with the private sector, finding ways to channel the expertise on offer in more structured and strategic ways than is often the case. In 2006 CAN and Permira entered a partnership to support the scaling up of social enterprises, creating the Breakthrough programme. For CAN, Permira offered the expertise and funding that social enterprises needed; and for Permira, CAN was an organisation it could relate to and that would provide it with a worthwhile and meaningful role in supporting social causes. The relationship was about transferring skill and expertise more than it was about transferring money.

In some ways CAN's relationship with Permira mirrored that of its early relationship with GTECH. Permira is a private equity company that received considerable bad publicity during 2006 about its management of companies that it taken over. Yet CAN failed to engage seriously with ethical debates about the impact of such business activities on social well-being. It is rather dismissive of any criticisms. They may be in danger of unwittingly fostering a similar form of cynicism about the relationships between business and social enterprise as has developed in approaches to corporate social responsibility programmes and has become known in the environmental field as 'greenwash'.

Several business oriented management consultancies have shown a strong interest in social entrepreneurship and social enterprise. McKinsey & Co. had a track-record in social entrepreneurship through its on-going relationship with Ashoka, and its role in the founding of UnLtd. McKinsey went on to develop its relationship with UnLtd by providing pro bono consultancy both to UnLtd and to UnLtd award winners. Other management consultancies have also become active, notably Ernst & Young with their annual awards, but also Bain and Co. and the Monitor Group.



### ***Relationships with government***

In the early years, until 2000, private sector funding played a pivotal role in getting CAN and the SSE off the ground. But by 2001, government funding was the main source of support – across departments and across central, local and regional government. Supporting social entrepreneurship organisations became part of the Active Communities Unit routine grant making for voluntary sector infrastructure.

The level of government funding located social entrepreneurship as part of the mainstream voluntary sector, albeit a more progressive part which was contributing to the government agenda on voluntary sector reform.

it [social entrepreneurship] was trying to bring together different sets of values and customs from the business sector with the voluntary sector, and really being able to get things moving in quite an imaginative and dynamic way and cutting through some of the largely negative constraints that slow things down in the voluntary sector.

in my mind that reflects a general trend within the voluntary and community sector as a whole which is there, and needs to be encouraged, which is that everyone has to be thinking more enterprisingly as there isn't the money, the traditional grant funding available to going round. We all have to learn to think in a more business-like, more enterprising kind of way and social entrepreneurs are in one sense at the front of that way of thinking.

As such, the rhetoric produced by several of the social entrepreneur organisations that was so critical of government and condemning of the 'traditional' voluntary sector, was consistent with government interests rather than challenging it.

As an example, CAN's distance from its membership, its grant chasing reputation, and its close relationship with government positioned it as an advocate and implementer of government policy. Its main message was that government needed to change its overall approach and be more business-like and less bureaucratic. It had less to say about specific policies or in promoting specific policy change.

And they [CAN] are rolling out this New Labour philosophy about the private sector, the voluntary sector is all a bit Dad's Army, amateurish. So what we've got to do now is adopt business methods.

Similarly, within the SSE funding for all the associate schools has been raised from the public sector, most often local government or regional governmental agencies<sup>56</sup>.

### **Personal identity**

Despite the growing numbers of social entrepreneurs in the UK, 'social entrepreneur' as a personal identity remained ambiguous. Even by the end of 2006, it did not seem to have achieved a popular acceptance. The adoption of a new identity is almost inevitably met with some resistance, and this has certainly been the case with social entrepreneurship. Some of the people who headed up or worked in organisations supporting and promoting social entrepreneurs were uncomfortable with the label. The internalisation of a new concept and identity is described by Fairclough as inculcation, and this reflects the way in which 'social entrepreneur' has been embraced in some circumstances and by some people, and rejected in other contexts.

Inculcation is a complex process... A stage towards inculcation is rhetorical deployment: people may learn new discourses and use them for certain purposes while at the same time self-consciously keeping a distance from them. (Fairclough, 2001: 3)

From the beginning there were tensions between the identity of 'social entrepreneur' as self conferred or as externally conferred. In fact, several people commented that people who call themselves social entrepreneur are by definition not social entrepreneurs.

...anyone who calls themselves a social entrepreneur is not a social entrepreneur because he wouldn't want to be one. (*Trustee of UnLtd*)

there is a sense that people who would self select as a social entrepreneur might well not be, people who really are, might not.

Some people were seen as self-labelling as social entrepreneurs inappropriately or ambiguously.

...a community worker from another organisation based outside Burnley in a public meeting praised a community activist for being a social entrepreneur, when all they were doing was a very old fashioned form of lobbying for their group's needs for council resources.

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<sup>56</sup> Aston SSE is funded by Birmingham City Council; East Midlands SSE by the East Midlands Development Agency; Northern Ireland SSE by Belfast Local Strategic Partnership; Liverpool SSE by Liverpool City Council.

Other people have talked themselves up as social entrepreneurs, and other people doing the same kind of activity are either not identifying it as social entrepreneurship or they resist that description of it.

This constructed social entrepreneur as a personal identity in a rather paradoxical way – the idea that someone who would call themselves a social entrepreneur is, by definition, not a social entrepreneur.

There were a variety of orientations to the identity of social entrepreneur among those people who have been identified as such. These range from complete rejection of the label, though ambivalence, to a contingent approach, conditional acceptance, and embracing of the term. On balance, being a ‘social entrepreneur’ carried with it a range of connotations and baggage, which people found more or less comfortable depending on their existing sense of identity or identities and the circumstances within which the label was being applied.

There are people who are resistant to and openly reject the label of social entrepreneur, as one member of CAN commented:

Because there would be an element of smugness about calling myself a social entrepreneur which I wouldn't feel very comfortable with and also when you carry labels like that, a strong label, which it is, and provokes a strong reaction. And maybe I prefer to move a little more anonymously through my working life.

A high profile example of the way in which ‘social entrepreneur’ has been rejected is contained in this description of David Robinson<sup>57</sup> in a government report:

The emphasis has been on showing people what is possible, in ways that they could not have found on their own. He sees his philosophy as the opposite of that of a “social entrepreneur”, who provides the driving ideas behind a project, and often ends up pulling all the strings. (Strengthening leadership in the public sector, 2001: 27)

This uneasiness with the label social entrepreneur was also apparent amongst students who have been through the SSE programmes. In the 2003 evaluation of the SSE, 46% of the social entrepreneurs coming out of the School did not use the term to describe themselves:

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<sup>57</sup> David Robinson was one of the founders and then director of Community Links in Newham, East London, widely acknowledged as a remarkably successful community development organisation, and often referred to as a social entrepreneur.

This is a term which I think confuses and alienates a lot of people, so I tend not to use the term. It has also become a bit of a trendy buzzword and as such its usefulness is limited. (Vision 21, 2003: 20)

This is consistent with other research into social entrepreneurship. In their survey of 80 social entrepreneurs in the North of England and Scotland, Shaw et al (2002) found that only 45% used the label 'social entrepreneur' to describe themselves (Shaw et al, 2002: 26).

For some their rejection of a social entrepreneurial identity centred on it being a "middle class" concept, conveying "business, money grabbing and all those kinds of characteristics".

I could identify with it [being a social entrepreneur] – I am reasonably literate and can understand the terminology and it is not unusual for me, I come from a middle class background.

This idea of social entrepreneur as a 'middle class' construct is consistent with Parkinson's (2005) findings.

On the surface, the concept is openly dismissed by many of the interviewees, with statements such as: "it's amusing!", "it's ridiculous!", "too posh...I'm working class". (Parkinson, 2005: 10)

The sample of 'social entrepreneurs' understood 'entrepreneur' as referring to business and as indicating "aggressive" and "individualistic" behaviour. Parkinson's analysis identified an identity among the sample expressed more as a "guardianship function" rather than with "any sense of an entrepreneurial personality" (Parkinson, 2005: 8).

At the same time, there is a theme running through the adoption of a social entrepreneurial identity, reflecting a more instrumental and contingent approach. Some consciously used the term within particular contexts and because it had an "energy" around it and was fashionable, and because it helped to create a bridge to the private sector.

Generally around social entrepreneurs, I wouldn't categorise myself in that way as it's a horrible clique to get into. But, I find it's quite a useful word to describe myself in the business context.

And certainly when being a 'social entrepreneur' involved access to networks, funding or support, there was less unease with it.

I have been quite surprised by how pleased people are by being asked to join the social entrepreneur network, they perceived it as being a

compliment. So we did an experimental project, sent out a hundred invitations, and we got 62 yes's - it was quite extraordinary, they had to go to the trouble of filling in a form and so we decided that after this initial trial period, that this would work.

Yet, the people who remain most committed to 'social entrepreneur' as a personal identity are some of the people who led the organisations promoting social entrepreneurship. This applied especially to CAN and Ashoka, where the founders of CAN continued to present themselves as 'social entrepreneurs' and one of Ashoka aims was to develop the profession of social entrepreneurship.

... social entrepreneurship is a reflexive phenomenon. Conversations with actors in business and civil society suggest that social entrepreneurship is as much about the changing self-awareness and identity of leaders in the social sector as about the way their organizations operate. In fact, many individuals who would be considered social entrepreneurs by leading identifiers of social entrepreneurs such as Ashoka, the Schwab Foundation or the Skoll Foundation never thought about themselves in this terminology. By contrast, others whom these organizations would not consider to be social entrepreneurs present themselves publicly in the language of social entrepreneurship. Handling reflexivity properly inevitably injects an interpretive dimension into the analysis. (Martin, 2004: 23)<sup>58</sup>

There is an irony that the identity of social entrepreneur was intended to confer status and inspire respect – as a professional alternative to the amateur and hippy image of the community or voluntary sector worker – but that many of the very people who are being identified as social entrepreneurs were so resistant or ambivalent to the identity. This becomes even more pertinent when it is government or government funded schemes that are designating the 'social entrepreneurs' and calling on people to be 'entrepreneurial'. Parkinson (2005) points to the paradox that the social entrepreneurial concept and identity is being promoted by the very people and institutions that are identified locally as contributing to their problems.

Though not oppositional at text level, the discursive practices controlling the production and consumption of the texts are oppositional in that they appear to defy the notion that self determination over community problems or local issues is best dealt with through entrepreneurship. The reader might also identify the irony that the proponents of social entrepreneurship as part of a

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<sup>58</sup> Ashoka, the Schwab Foundation and the Skoll Foundation all target their support to social entrepreneurs or social entrepreneurial organisations, and have drawn up strict criteria whereby applicants go through an arduous and testing application procedure before they enter the club or network of such accredited social entrepreneurs. These particular foundations all work internationally.

strategy for local development and social inclusion are still central to the construction of the problem. (Parkinson, 2005: 12)

As a personal identity, 'social entrepreneur' faced a particular direction. Its association with 'business' and with being 'aggressive' and 'individualistic', as well as being 'posh' and 'middle class,' alienated many of the very people it was seeking to engage. Such an identity did not resonate with a 'community-based' approach, and especially not with those who lived in poor or deprived areas. Rather it provided a connection into the 'middle class' world of business and government policy. The use of a range of other terms, such as 'can-do citizens', 'sparkplugs', 'visionaries', indicates that 'social entrepreneur' was not a compelling term in many contexts. There was little sense that 'social entrepreneurs' were rallying together as a new movement of people committed to a particular type of change or interested in promoting a particular approach or practice.

#### **6.4 The enactment of social entrepreneurship in the UK**

This section now turns to answer the third research question – *How is social entrepreneurship enacted?* It reviews the structuring of a 'social entrepreneurship' space with particular reference to who is included, how they are supported, and to what extent 'social entrepreneurship' constitutes a new movement or a new community of practice. It goes on to consider the relationship between 'social enterprise' and 'social innovation'. It then discusses the nature of the engagement between practice and policy.

The community-based emphasis apparent in the representation and idea of social entrepreneurship, and outlined in the previous chapter, also ran consistently through the enactment of social entrepreneurship. The work of UnLtd in particular clearly located most UK social entrepreneurs as acting locally, carrying out small-scale projects targeted at very particular needs and communities.

At the same time, social entrepreneurship had a particularly close relationship with business and what it means to be 'business-like'. This was apparent in the representations of social entrepreneurship, outlined in the previous chapter. It was also

apparent in some of the practices of the social entrepreneur support organisations and some of the interest in social entrepreneurship shown by business. Certainly, the social entrepreneurship events and awards were ‘business-like’ glossy occasions.

The tension between the informal and business, based on Evers’ (1995) framework, was highlighted in the previous chapter. In practice there was a lot of effort put into finding appropriate ways to direct private sector expertise and resources at social entrepreneurs and into communities. One corporate manager talked about the need for big companies to be more sensitive to the user/consumer led innovations – ‘positive deviants’ – as an important reason why his company was supporting CAN. Similarly, the social entrepreneur support organisations placed a great deal of emphasis on their particular ability to relate to business.

The initial idea of creating peer support networks of social entrepreneurs – to provide opportunities for sharing experiences and information, to develop partnerships, and to tackle the sense of isolation – proved hard to follow through in practice. Certainly CAN, with its founding idea of ‘2,000 by 20000’ moved away from its original emphasis on networking and creating an on-line community of social entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, networking remains central to social entrepreneurship, but the belief that it would take place spontaneously and naturally was no longer prevalent. The idea of a generic ‘fellowship’ of Millennium Scheme Award winners was put to one side, and UnLtd has developed more structured and focused ‘networks’ centred on particular groups or activities. Along similar lines, Senscot also focused its network development on specific rather than generic networks, creating local social enterprise networks.

In spite of the growing numbers of social entrepreneurs, and the establishment of an increasingly stable infrastructure of support for social entrepreneurs, the adoption of ‘social entrepreneur’ as a personal identity was resisted by many. Certainly ‘social entrepreneur’ as a way of being carried less meaning, than ‘social entrepreneur’ as a way of presenting *other* people. The ‘social entrepreneurs’ themselves tended to adopt an instrumental approach, making use of the opportunities open to them as they would do so with other opportunities for funding or support. Social entrepreneurship was not

so much a movement of ‘social entrepreneurs’ but more a way of focusing attention onto individuals and their role in welfare and social change.

The enactment of social entrepreneurship was shaped by policy priorities and policy discourses. At one extreme, this was notable by the inability of Ashoka to make a case for its work in the UK, its failure to engage with the way in which social entrepreneurship was taken up politically, and the early positioning of social entrepreneurship as addressing social welfare problems and reforming the welfare state, which are considered important government responsibilities in the UK. Most organisations, however, attempted to strike a balance between adjusting their work to fit with policy priorities, representing their work as reflecting policy interests, and adapting their activities to the changing contexts within which they were operating. They trod a path between presenting themselves as directly relevant to current policy concerns at the same times as appearing to constantly challenge and attempt to move policy forward. CAN, for example, achieved this by their outspoken criticism of government, its structures and bureaucracy at the same time as it chased government funding and took on a range of government funded projects. UnLtd manage and monitor their Level 1 and Level 2 as a way of demonstrating their commitment to supporting citizen action in deprived communities – consistent with government policy priorities – and have also been successful in raising additional funding to develop new ways of supporting and targeting social entrepreneurs.

One of the most significant influences of policy discourse was the shift towards supporting social entrepreneurship as ‘social enterprise’ rather than ‘social innovation’. Many of the organisations stumbled over themselves to be associated with ‘social enterprise’. And as a result the co-habitation of ‘social enterprise’ and ‘social innovation’ within the social entrepreneurship infrastructure organisations was commonplace. It was made easy by the similarities in language and the dominant understanding of ‘entrepreneurship’ as ‘business’. For example the Upstarts Awards shifted their focus from social entrepreneurs to social enterprise from one year to the next, without needing to explain the shift because the language was so similar that it could be expressed as a simple refinement of focus. In a similar way CAN’s growing interest in social enterprise during this period did not require a change in language or



in organisational focus. 'Social enterprise' and 'social innovation' schools of thought were increasingly considered manifestations of the same phenomenon.

But in practise, organisations could only embrace both 'social enterprise' and 'social innovation' temporarily. This was clearly evident from the experiences of UnLtd and its bold, albeit somewhat politically naïve, attempt to bring them together. In practice, there has been increasing separation between the two schools of thought. Both CAN and Senscot have effectively positioned themselves as focused on 'social enterprise', with a nod towards their origins in the idea of social entrepreneurship as about innovation. The SSE and UnLtd, on the other hand, have retained a consistent focus on the 'social innovation' version in their organisational activities, despite 'social enterprise' remaining as part of their discourse and organisational presentation.

This separation of 'social enterprise' and 'social innovation' draws into question the usefulness of the conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship along the social/business continuum identified in the previous chapter. The tendency for academics and policy makers to present social entrepreneurship in this way may be obscuring the actual experience of bringing together social and economic goals within an organisation. It certainly masks any conflicts and tensions between the different goals, as well as masking the effects of a range of other organisational orientations, including the distinction between 'business-like processes' and 'business-like goals' drawn by Dart (2000).

### **Chapter summary**

This chapter discussed the enactment of social entrepreneurship, exploring the ways in which social entrepreneurship has been realised in practice and through policy interventions, rather than in policy debate and discourse. It focused on the organisations that have promoted and supported social entrepreneurship, and on the adoption of 'social entrepreneur' as a personal identity.

The findings showed three main ways in which social entrepreneurship has been enacted. First, in terms of the 'social innovation' school of thought, social entrepreneurship has been enacted primarily at the community level. It is a way in which funding has been directed into local communities, providing support for

individuals in order to trigger change at the local level, especially within the poorest and most deprived areas in the UK. Second, support organisations and policy interest in social entrepreneurship has been directed towards 'social enterprise', and over time most support for social entrepreneurship came to be focused in this way. While discourses have presented 'social innovation' and 'social enterprise' under one umbrella, as manifestations of the same phenomenon, in practice this has not been evident as both organisational enactments and policy interventions have needed to be clear and focused in separating these two forms of social entrepreneurship.

Third, there was considerable ambivalence in the adoption of 'social entrepreneur' as a personal identity. It was more often used as a way of presenting and talking about other people, than as a way in which people label or present themselves. Social entrepreneurship was therefore not about mobilising a grassroots movement of people, but is rather an elite or middle class concept that was useful for raising resources and gaining a policy profile.

The next chapter brings together the findings from Chapters 4,5 and 6 to conclude this thesis and discuss the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy.

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION: THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN UK SOCIAL POLICY

### Introduction

Following the election of a Labour government in 1997, social entrepreneurship entered UK policy discourse with a flourish. Self-proclaimed social entrepreneurs were welcomed into policy debate and brought an urgency and optimism about its potential impact. The idea of social entrepreneurship and its associated practices promised to bring about much needed change to a range of social welfare institutions, marrying a 'business-like' professionalism with the values and ideals of the 'social'. This thesis set out to understand what social entrepreneurship meant in the UK and how it came to be realised as a field of organised action and policy discourse. It posed the question: *what is the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy?*

This study described the changing landscape of social entrepreneurship in the UK, tracing the passage of the ideas and practices between 1980 and 2006. Chapter 4 pointed to the importance of the political *context* and trends in policy discourse in creating the opportunities for the emergence of social entrepreneurship, and then in shaping the particular forms that social entrepreneurship took in the UK. Chapter 5 discussed social entrepreneurship as an *idea*, describing the different ways in which social entrepreneurship has been represented and promoted in policy, and how representations have changed over time. Chapter 6 examined how social entrepreneurship has been taken up in *practice*, focusing on organisational enactments and their development.

This chapter brings together these findings to answer the original research question. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the main findings, setting out how social entrepreneurship is understood in the UK, and its role and significance in UK social policy. The second part identifies areas for future research. Finally there is an epilogue with some reflections on political developments that have taken place during 2007 and their implications for social entrepreneurship.

## 7.1 Main findings and discussion

This part focuses on the central research question, the role and significance of social entrepreneurship in UK social policy. In the introduction I asked to what extent social entrepreneurship is simply a rhetorical device, a call for change and an inspirational assertion of what is possible; and in what ways it has actually been enacted in practice and policy to bring about change in communities, the voluntary sector, and specific aspects of welfare provision. This research painted a more complex picture than either the proponents or critics of social entrepreneurship envisioned, and the findings suggest that there is not such a clear distinction between social entrepreneurship as rhetoric and social entrepreneurship as action. This part first explores the relationship between social entrepreneurship as an *idea* and as a *practice*. It goes on to examine the particular roles that social entrepreneurship has played and their relevance to UK social policy.

'Social Entrepreneur - self-appointed, unaccountable careerist who uses the language of the private sector but who wouldn't last 30 seconds in the real market place'. (Rough Guide to Regeneration, 2002)

The findings point to a disconnect between the extravagant claims made on behalf of social entrepreneurship and the ways in which it has been enacted. The claims were set out in some detail in the introductory chapter and included professionalising the voluntary sector, reforming welfare and mobilising a movement of 'social entrepreneurs' (p23-25). This thesis argued that the idea of social entrepreneurship took on several forms that it was claimed would make an impact in these different settings. These included the 'community-based,' 'managerial' and 'charismatic hero' portrayals of social entrepreneurs, described in Chapter 5, along with the spreading of an entrepreneurial culture into the public, voluntary and community sectors. But 'social entrepreneurship' did not result in the radical transformation of sectors or society as had been claimed, nor has it given rise to a movement of 'social entrepreneurs'. In practice, 'social entrepreneurship' in the UK meant the several thousand people who were labelled and supported as 'social entrepreneurs' and who were carrying out relatively small scale local social action (p256). However, the language and label of 'social entrepreneur' was not taken up readily at the community level (p257). 'Social entrepreneurship' was rather a means through which those seeking to influence policy and raise funds, in particular the social entrepreneur support organisations, have gained a policy profile by distinguishing themselves from

‘traditional’ approaches at the same time as adopting and adapting dominant policy discourse in order to appear familiar and relevant.

As an *idea*, there were several different understandings of social entrepreneurship, and these were set out briefly in the introduction and in more detail in Chapter 5. Yet, despite the different definitions in use and the distinctions between different versions of social entrepreneurship, the exact meaning of social entrepreneurship seemed to matter less than what it was used to signify in general terms. For policy makers the language of social entrepreneurship was more important than the organisational practices or specific policy interventions (p189). The idea of social entrepreneurship framed a convenient discourse within which to emphasise policy priorities centred on further incorporating a market orientation to addressing social needs.

In policy debate and organisational rhetoric, the terminology of social entrepreneurship was indicative of the coming together of ‘business’ with the ‘social’ (p171). However it was not used to signify an equal relationship, rather its usage indicated the application of business concepts, practices and approaches to the provision of social welfare. It equated the course of social change with a set of organisational processes – good management, strong leadership, effective governance, performance measurement, organisational expansion and growth. It also communicated the need for individuals to be enterprising and entrepreneurial – not only in their work lives, but also in taking responsibility for their own and their community’s welfare (p197). With this in mind, the discourse of social entrepreneurship was one aspect of ‘enterprising-up’ the arena of social welfare, a way of further extending what was known under Thatcherism as ‘the enterprise culture’ into the community and into the voluntary and public sectors.

The *practice* of social entrepreneurship contrasted with social entrepreneurship as an *idea*. The centrality of ‘community’ to the enactment of social entrepreneurship in the UK has been clearly shown, and the tendency to use ‘community’ as a ‘legitimising badge’ (p170). Social entrepreneurship was manifested primarily at the community level, as directing support and attention to the thousands of local people who are taking the initiative in identifying and meeting social needs, generally through community and voluntary organisations (p196). As such it was positioned as closer to the field of

traditional community development than as originating innovation within the mainstream voluntary or public sectors and in bringing about societal level transformation.

Social entrepreneurship, however, was not a grassroots movement rising up from the streets (p256). It was not a field of action owned and defined by the ‘social entrepreneurs’ but rather by those who took it upon themselves to promote and support ‘social entrepreneurs.’ As a practice, it is suggested here that social entrepreneurship was a mechanism through which business and policy support and attention was directed into poor communities. It was an expression of the communitarian tendency in policy discourse, which was drawn on and adapted to gain legitimacy and facilitate relationships between the private sector and the field of community development.

Social entrepreneurship was not so much a new movement or radical new approach, but could be more realistically considered a useful label and rhetorical device which resonated in the political climate of the day for those wanting to construct their support for social action in new ways – be they people in business, in the voluntary sector, in community development, or in government. It was a way in which some people working in the voluntary and community sector reframed their field in order to gain greater purchase on policy, and to attract resources and support from the private sector. It offered a safe space for those in business to start to engage in social welfare issues, as well as practical mechanisms through which they could direct their support. And it provided a flexible concept for those in government to signal the need for change and ‘enterprise’ in almost any setting. Four roles are suggested below as the main ways in which social entrepreneurship made an impact on UK social policy: celebrating the achievements of individuals; renegotiating welfare responsibilities through the ‘active welfare subject’; creating a channel through which business could engage with community; and enabling government policy to respond to the particularism of the local.

### **Celebrating individual achievements**

The research findings demonstrate that social entrepreneurship in the UK was consistently identified with the role of individuals, such that ‘social entrepreneurship’

and 'social entrepreneur' were often used interchangeably. As an *idea* 'social entrepreneurship' created role models and inspirational figures who served to personalise policy issues; in terms of the *practice* of social entrepreneurship, it was a way of recognising and celebrating the achievements of individuals, by giving awards and creating a cadre of 'social' heroes.

### ***Creating role models***

The figure of the social entrepreneur contributed to policy rhetoric by creating inspirational role models (p195). As early as 1994, Martin Jacques identified the 'social entrepreneur' as a potential role model for New Labour, and in 1996 Leadbeater had identified social entrepreneurs as the 'heroes' of the 90s.

No political strategy with any sense of ambition can succeed unless it generates role models that come to express its values and aspirations... So what might be the role models for Tony Blair's brave new world?...

... Blair's role models might be the Milton Keynes Professional, the Social Entrepreneur perhaps Zoe Wanamaker's Tessa in *Love Hurts* and the Juggler (the modern working mother). (Jacques, Sunday Times, 1994)

The heroes of the new politics of the late Nineties are communities and the social entrepreneurs who promote them, working in that grey zone between the market and the state, deriving a sense of civic spirit from the basic building blocks of neighbourhood associations, sports clubs, churches and voluntary organisations. (Leadbeater, 1996: The Observer: 16)

The 'social entrepreneur' then featured as a symbolic figure and role model in the early speeches of the newly elected Prime Minister (1997, 1999), most clearly and consistently in the form of the 'community-based' social entrepreneur.

Every year thousands of new charities and self-help groups are founded, and thousands of social entrepreneurs achieve extraordinary things in difficult circumstances. (Blair, 1999)

Equally the 'managerial' social entrepreneur was used in policy discourses to signal taking forward public sector reform and as leading social enterprise organisations (p169).

The 'social entrepreneur' appeared in political speeches and in policy documents as a way of signalling the key role of individuals in taking up government policy. It had the effect of personalising policy and translating major policy issues such health

service reform and welfare provision to the level of individual action. It was one way of projecting responsibility for welfare to individual citizens, in particular in the form of the 'community-based' social entrepreneur.

### ***Celebrating individual achievements***

Social entrepreneurship has been enacted as a showcase for individual 'social entrepreneurs' and as a way of celebrating individual success. This was most apparent through the events and awards, and in particular their celebratory nature and the emphasis on providing inspiration rather than thoughtful reflection or analysis (p244-249). It was also evident through the organisational websites and publications, which highlight the personal stories and achievements of individuals. Telling the stories of what particular social entrepreneurial individuals have done became an important activity within social entrepreneurship. This reinforced and added diversity to the role models who are created and presented as social entrepreneurs.

At the same time, social entrepreneurship did not develop into the coherent field of organised action that was anticipated and hailed by its early advocates, and is still assumed by many of those working in and researching social entrepreneurship (rather than by the 'social entrepreneurs' themselves). The ambivalence with which those identified as 'social entrepreneur' approached the identity was discussed in Chapter 6, and indicates that the label 'social entrepreneur' was more useful and meaningful among policy makers and others interested in supporting and promoting social entrepreneurship than among the social entrepreneurs themselves.

The relationship between the idea and practice was close, and the presentation of social entrepreneurs as role models and inspirational figures was directly supported by the centrality of awards and stories to the enactment of social entrepreneurship. There were tensions, however, between the representation of social entrepreneurs as 'charismatic heroes' in some discourses and the policy and practice based emphasis on community level action. At the same time, in the UK, charismatic heroes took on a very limited and particular role, mainly in the media as human interest stories and as a way of presenting social issues to a wider public. The more significant tension was in the ambivalence with which 'social entrepreneurs' approached the personal identity, often rejecting it or using it in an instrumental way. So while the stories of social



entrepreneurs were intended to inspire, people were less comfortable with actually being 'social entrepreneurs'.

### **Renegotiating welfare relationships**

Social entrepreneurship was associated with government interest in creating 'enterprising communities' where entrepreneurial responses to welfare needs were encouraged and enterprising individuals are credited with catalysing such action (p180). Social entrepreneurship as an *idea* was used in policy discourses to signal the need for 'enterprise' and culture change in a variety of institutional settings, and as a *practice* social entrepreneurship was more specifically focused on supporting the emergence of the 'active welfare subject' who acted both individually and collectively to take responsibility for welfare.

### **Signalling culture change**

When New Labour came to power in 1997, social entrepreneurship appeared to be a new idea worthy of policy development and state support. And social entrepreneurship featured in a number of policy documents early on in the government's term of office – the Policy Action Team reports commissioned by the newly formed Social Exclusion Unit. But it quickly became apparent that the sorts of interventions put forward did not constitute a coherent and practicable policy agenda. As Mulgan (2006: 82) commented, government decided to "remove some of the barriers" and to adopt an "evolutionary approach" so as not to raise expectations too high". As such, no systematic or distinct set of policy interventions developed which focus on social entrepreneurship as 'social innovation' (p190).

Instead, policy interest in social entrepreneurship became a calling card to signal New Labour's interest in the voluntary and community sector, neighbourhood renewal, outsourcing welfare services, and public service reform. In the following quote, PM Blair's interest in social entrepreneurship is effectively about encouraging voluntary action and capacity building of the voluntary sector.

I believe that the modern role of government is not to supplant this [social entrepreneurial] activity, to dominate it, or for that matter to ignore it. Instead government has two primary responsibilities: first, making it as easy and attractive as possible for people to give money and time, and, second, where appropriate, to provide the support that

voluntary organisations need to deliver services and strengthen communities. (Blair, 1999)

Small grant programmes were set up to support community-based entrepreneurs, but did not make up an organized programme of support for social entrepreneurship.

In policy discourse, social entrepreneurship was not a way of focusing or structuring policy interventions, but rather a way of signalling the need for a change in attitude, approach, behaviour, and ultimately, culture, in the voluntary sector, in the public sector, and in community development. Social entrepreneurship represented the introduction of a new enterprising culture (p171). As one policy adviser within government commented:

I think most social entrepreneurs will end up by increasing the significance of enterprise within the sphere of their activity, but in my mind that reflects a general trend within the voluntary and community sector as a whole which is there, and needs to be encouraged which is that everyone has to be thinking more enterprisingly.

Within government policy on social enterprise, there was a more structured approach to developing a support framework, but even within this, “Fostering a culture of social enterprise” was presented as a priority (Social Enterprise Action Plan, 2006).

### ***Realising ‘active welfare subjects’***

As a practice, social entrepreneurship was one way in which government has supported the creation of ‘active welfare subjects’ (Williams, 1999). According to Williams (1999), the ‘active welfare subject’ of policy discourse is about the melding of individual interests and needs with collective interests and needs. It is not about self-interest or even enlightened self-interest, but about duty and responsibility. By locating social entrepreneurs at the community level, the support organisations reflected policy discourses which exhorted individuals to be self-reliant and responsible. Similarly, directing funding into social entrepreneurship was a way in which government added to its support for ‘active welfare subjects’.

There were tensions between social entrepreneurship as acting within communities and within institutional settings, and in this case the policy rhetoric and the practice were operating in parallel rather than as mutually reinforcing. Those supporting social entrepreneurs took up the idea as most relevant and applicable at the local level,

leaving a more general policy rhetoric which exhorted people in a wide range of settings to be enterprising.

### **Engaging with business**

Social entrepreneurship was positioned by policy makers, academics, support organisations, and the media as close to the world of business, claiming to create a new and more engaged relationship between the market and social welfare by employing concepts and approaches familiar to those in business. As an *idea* social entrepreneurship was presented in ‘business’ language and as a ‘business-like’ approach (p171-173); as a *practice* social entrepreneurship was not so clearly like ‘business’ and was more about facilitating the transfer of resources from private sector organisations to voluntary and community organisations (p250).

### ***Framing social change in ‘business’ terms***

The idea of social entrepreneurship was clearly constructed as like ‘business’. Chapter 5 showed how the language of business and management ran through all texts on social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs used ‘market research and impact evaluation’ and draw on ‘market-based mechanisms’; they are ‘professional’, ‘cost-effective’, ‘practical’, and ‘hard-headed operators’; they have the ‘the discipline and dynamic nature of the business sector’ and ‘the foresight, energy and drive that we recognise in the business world’<sup>59</sup>.

But more importantly than simply applying business techniques, the logic was of a rational and competitive business process, where ‘social problems’ are ‘solved’ and ‘social market failures’ are ‘resolved’, where ‘social impact’ is ‘measured’, where ‘solutions’ are ‘spread’, and where a priority is organisational (and sector) growth and expansion (p1720).

One of the key effects of the managerialist discourse of social entrepreneurship was that it constructed ‘social problems’ in terms of organisational management. It equated social impact with organisational expansion rather than with, for example, a change in public consciousness or understanding. This resonated strongly with ‘third

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<sup>59</sup> The quotes included in this paragraph are taken from the following sources, listed here in turn: Hartigan 2002; Schwab Foundation (Internet); Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship (Internet); Dees, 2003; John, 2006; Hugill, 1997; Baderman and Law, 2006.

way' discourses that sought 'solutions' through technical rather than political or ideological means. As critiques of social entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurship have pointed out, this served to avoid contentious discussion about the nature of social 'problems', issues of social justice, rights, and the role of morality – it became more important that the 'solution' was 'effective', 'measurable' and 'scaleable' than that it was 'right' or 'just' or democratic (p187-189).

More than that, 'social enterprise' framed 'solutions' to social problems as requiring an economic aspect, where effectiveness was linked with the financial sustainability of organisations. Running through ideas about social entrepreneurship was a tension common to business entrepreneurship: whether it is fundamentally about innovation, transformation and radical change, or whether it is about commercial, profit making activities and being 'business-like'. Attempts to resolve this tension by framing social entrepreneurship in terms of two continuums were prevalent but conceptually and practically unconvincing (p259).

#### ***Channelling support from business to community***

The enactment of social entrepreneurship in the UK was more about local community and small-scale voluntary action than some of the other claims made on its behalf centred on the radical restructuring of social welfare in the image of business or the professionalisation of the voluntary sector. One role of social entrepreneurship then was to bring 'business' to the 'community'. Where the voluntary sector had been subject to many decades of influence and pressures to become more professional and more 'business-like', finding ways to make the dominant societal paradigm of 'business is best' relevant to small and often ad hoc community groups had been less straightforward. Social entrepreneurship created a channel through which private sector approaches and resources have been filtered, adapted, and directed into communities, most often as targeted expert support rather than as cash (p240).

By adopting the language of business and asserting that business methods and processes are essential to tackling social problems, a space was created within which those in business could engage with social issues. Business and management become important, and business people were made to believe they could contribute and make a difference without needing to understand the complexity of social needs. Within that space, the practice of social entrepreneurship introduced mechanisms that enabled the

exchange of ideas, money, expertise, energy, people, and techniques between the sectors. Money was perhaps the least significant aspect, as business support for social entrepreneurship in financial terms was marginal. The transfer of skills and expertise took place through consultancy services, both formally and informally, whether targeted to the support organisations or to the social entrepreneurs.

While there were efforts to adapt and make the 'business-like' approaches suitable for the social entrepreneurs, there was clearly a greater emphasis on transferring business expertise to community development than on creating an equal relationship. This was particularly evident in the deferential approach shown by the support organisations to business and the unwillingness to challenge business methods, compared with the enthusiastic way in which government was criticised (p250-251).

There was considerable tension between the idea of social entrepreneurship and its practice in relation to being 'business-like'. In fact, the pressure to be 'business-like' was more apparent in representations than in the enactment of social entrepreneurship, where there was more sensitivity and flexibility to the needs of 'social entrepreneurs' than is apparent from the discourse. The findings also showed that there was an outstanding tension between the idea of social entrepreneurship as existing along a continuum of social and commercial goals, and the practice of social entrepreneurship which sought a clear distinction between the two (p259).

### **Facilitating community-based policy**

Social entrepreneurship in the UK has been consistently located within local communities, bringing answers to social problems through community-based initiatives. This contrasts sharply with some of the discourse on social entrepreneurship which emphasised heroic leaders and societal level transformation (p167). As an *idea*, social entrepreneurship depended on policy interest in communitarian discourses for legitimacy at the same time as being a means for bringing 'community' to policy attention (p197); as a *practice*, social entrepreneurship was a means through which funding, expertise and advice was targeted into poor communities, building on existing capacities and resources rather than creating new organisational or institutional arrangements (p257).

### ***Bringing 'community' to policy attention***

At the same time as 'social entrepreneurship clearly drew on managerial and enterprise discourses, in the UK it was also rooted in communitarian ideas. Ideas of the social, society and community had been ignored and sidelined in much Conservative policy during the 1980s and early 1990s, and those working in the voluntary and community sector felt neglected. The election of New Labour to government represented a welcome opportunity for the work of voluntary and community organisations to be taken seriously and gain policy recognition.

With its concern for recreating a sense of society and social responsibility, New Labour policy was liberally sprinkled with notions of 'community'. In order to fit with policy agendas, texts on social entrepreneurship in the UK had a similarly liberal sprinkling of 'community'. Social entrepreneurship was therefore presented to fit with government priorities of community building and community cohesion, with creating social capital and challenging anti-social behaviour, with local consultation and participation, and with its area based policies. This helped to provide ideas of social entrepreneurship with legitimacy and immediate relevance.

Social entrepreneurship discourse has been a way in which some parts of the community sector and the field of community development have attempted to reframe their work to present community needs as immediately urgent and community-based responses as effective. It has also served to provide the people working these fields with a sense of importance and to challenge the ways in which they were sidelined in policy debate the past.

### ***Targeting support to poor communities***

In practice, the main way in which social entrepreneurship was enacted was to direct funding and advice to individuals carrying out locally based social initiatives primarily within deprived communities (p235-243). The social entrepreneur support organisations have channelled support from government to individuals as a way of supporting small scale locally initiated projects. Social entrepreneurs were not supported in isolation but because of their position and influence within communities. As Young (2003) said about the SSE, by supporting the personal transformation of individuals, they aimed to transform communities as change becomes infectious. Similarly, the purpose of the Scarman Trust was to catalyse institutional change at the

local level through targeted support to individuals and encouraging 'active citizenship'.

On the one hand social entrepreneurship was a way in which individuals and individualism could gain recognition within community development, a field that has been otherwise dominated by notions of solidarity and collective action and has often been reluctant to engage with issues of leadership and to respond to the growing individualism of society as a whole. On the other hand, government has struggled to find ways of supporting locally initiated action in deprived communities, where it has consistently tried and failed to achieve economic and social prosperity. Small scale locally targeted support to individual social entrepreneurs offered a way of doing that. Social entrepreneurship infrastructure organisations provided government with a mechanism through which they can support grassroots action without imposing centralised structures. A wide diversity of actions and types of people were supported through social entrepreneurship. As such social entrepreneurship can be understood as a way for the universalist tendencies of the state to respond to the particularism of the local.

## **7.2 Implications for future research**

Social entrepreneurship is an international phenomenon, and can be identified in some form or another in many countries. It is for example promoted at the international level through the work of the Ashoka Foundation and the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurs. At the same time, it has achieved its highest public and policy profile in the US and UK, and it could be argued that it is largely an Anglo-Saxon concept which is being exported. This study has focused on social entrepreneurship in the particular context of the UK. In order to build knowledge and understanding of social entrepreneurship as an international phenomenon or one constructed within specific and different national settings elsewhere, similar studies in different countries and locations could contribute to drawing out the different ways in which social entrepreneurship is understood and enacted depending on the context. Comparative studies may also be a productive form of research. Such work could contribute to more nuanced and context specific understandings of social entrepreneurship.

Another area of potential research interest is the issue of personal identity and the extent to which 'social entrepreneurs' identify themselves as such, what they mean by it, how such an identity fits with other identities, and how useful it is to them. The ambivalence found in this study, exhibited by those identified as social entrepreneurs, may also reveal a range of other issues and concerns about the limitations of the concept of social entrepreneurship to the social entrepreneurs, to policy makers and to support organisations.

A third area of research that this study has indicated is important is how social entrepreneurship is enacted as a community phenomenon. In other words rather than researching social entrepreneurship at the individual, organisational or field level, the suggestion is to focus on geographical communities. In this way different forms of social entrepreneurship could be identified, the interaction between them, and the impacts and effects within communities.



## APPENDIX A

### UK reports and publications on social entrepreneurship

#### 'Social innovation' school of thought

Table A.1: UK think-tank reports on social entrepreneurship

Date	Title	Author(s)	Published by
1994	The Common Sense of Community	Dick Atkinson	Demos
1995	The Other Invisible Hand: Remaking Charity for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Charles Landry and Geoff Mulgan	Demos
1995	Staying the Course. The role and structure of community regeneration organisations.	Stephen Thake	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
1997	The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur	Charles Leadbeater	Demos
1997	Practical People, Noble Causes. How to support community-based social entrepreneurs	Stephen Thake and Simon Zadek	NEF
2000	The new entrepreneurs. Seminar 3: Social Entrepreneurship	John Wilson (ed)	Smith Institute
2000	People before Structure. Engaging communities effectively in regeneration	Paul Brickell	Demos
2000	Moving pictures: Realities of voluntary action	Duncan Scott, Pete Alcock, Lynne Russell and Rob Macmillan	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
2000	Low flying heroes. Micro-social enterprise below the radar screen	Alex McGillivray, Pat Conaty and Chris Wadhams	NEF
2001 (unpublished)	Creative Tension? Social entrepreneurs public policy and the new social economy	Tom Bentley	Demos

Table A.2: Other UK books and publications on social entrepreneurship

Date	Title	Author(s)	Published by
1996	The Power in Our Hands. Neighbourhood based world shaking	Tony Gibson	Jon Carpenter Publishing*
2000	Urban Renaissance: A strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal and the Welfare Society	Dr Dick Atkinson	Brewin Books*
2003	Can-do Citizens. Re-building marginalised communities	Matthew Pike	Scarman Trust*
2005	Working from the Heart. An exploration of what propels 12 quality social entrepreneurs.	Helena Plater-Zyberk	UnLtd
2006	Everyday Legends. The ordinary people changing the world, stories of 20 great UK social entrepreneurs.	James Baderman, Justine Law	UnLtd

### 'Social enterprise' school of thought

Table A.3: UK think-tank reports on social enterprise

Date	Publication	Author	Think Tank
1992	Towards a new sector: Macro-policies for community enterprise	Tim Crabtree and Andy Roberts	NEF
1994	Towards a social economy – trading for a social purpose	Peter Welch and Malcolm Coles	Fabian Society
1999	To our mutual advantage	Ian Christie and Charles Leadbeater	Demos
2000	Micro-Entrepreneurs: creating enterprising communities	Andrea Westall, Peter Ramsden & Julie Foley	NEF/IPPR
2001	Value Led Market Driven. Social enterprise solutions to public policy goals	Andrea Westall	IPPR
2001	The Mutual State. How local communities can run public services	Ed Mayo and Henrietta Moore	NEF

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