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Meanings Behind the Language of Social Entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT

The re-badging of social activity in terms of social entrepreneurship and the rhetoric used to promote the concept can neglect the ideological and political influences at its roots. Drawing on critical discourse analysis, this paper looks at the meanings that are central to individuals labelled as social entrepreneurs, as constructed by them, in order to understand the appropriateness of the entrepreneurship paradigm. It questions whether a discourse analysis approach to studying social entrepreneurship, through looking at meaning in context, is a useful means of understanding the concept as a social phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

The growing interest in social enterprise and entrepreneurship (Boschee, 1995; Dees, 1998; Drucker, 1994; Pearce 1994) has been couched in rhetoric aimed at promoting the concept rather than critical understanding (Dees, 2004). While helpful in profiling the sector, commentators are now calling for approaches that reflect the complexity and ambiguity that characterise activity in the social or community context (Dees, 2004; Krashinsky, 1998; Paton, 2003; Pearce, 2003).

With the move from the community to the social 'era' (Pearce 2003) in the UK over the last 10 years, interest in the *social* as a context for entrepreneurship has grown. Research and debate has tended to centre on a functionalist focus on enterprise on the one hand, and the heroic treatment of social entrepreneurs on the other. Commentators have expressed concerns that the repackaging of long standing community processes as a new form of entrepreneurship is not only neglecting some of the ideological and political principles at the roots of founder movements (Pearce, 2003) but also potentially misdirecting resources. Conceptual and empirical research is called for that looks at the complex reality behind the rhetoric (Dees, 2004).

Whether symptomatic of the pervasion of business and managerial discourses into all domains of civil and public life (Paton, 2003; Steyaert and Katz, 2004), or of political strategies connecting enterprise to socio-economic needs (Jennings et al., 2005), this shift comes loaded with philosophical assumptions. Jennings et al. (2005) suggest the dominant economic philosophy at the heart of entrepreneurship is capitalism and free market economics. These assumptions, added to the ambiguity of entrepreneurship and the complexity of community, render social entrepreneurship particularly problematic conceptually. The unquestioning use of managerial discourses could undermine the very attributes of social enterprise that are its strength (Krashinsky, in Paton, 2003) if, as Paton suggests (2003), social entrepreneurs and enterprises operate in a different world of meaning.

Definitional and conceptual difficulties have dogged entrepreneurship research generally (Gartner, 1988; Jack and Anderson, 2002), leading researchers to call for greater paradigmatic freedom and interdisciplinary exploration more appropriate to the complexity of entrepreneurship (Chell and Allman, 2001; Grant and Perren 2002; Howorth et al., 2004;

Landström, 1999). In social entrepreneurship, concerns are as much ideological as paradigmatic. The suggestion is that the rise of social enterprise from its roots in community (economic) development with a radical political agenda, *community* has been sidelined. Stronger emphasis is placed on the skills of individuals rather than the collective to bring about change, resulting in a sense of elitism reflected in current questions of how to spot potential and back the winners. If, as Steyaert and Katz (2004) explicate, the “everydayness” or “prosaics” of entrepreneurship (Steyaert, 2004) is important for understanding its ubiquitous potential, rather than as the privilege of the few, then “empowering the many” in the community context is certainly important (Pearce, 2003:69).

As with many areas of social policy and science, the search for alternative approaches that break with functionalist positivism has seen the emergence of interpretive research in entrepreneurship. Discourse theory provides a constructionist epistemology that opens up interdisciplinary perspectives (Hastings, 2000) through the “detailed analysis of structures and strategies of text and talk” (Van Dijk, 1997:23). Researchers in many areas of social policy and social science, including housing, urban policy, education, organisational behaviour and entrepreneurship focus on discourse and language (Atkinson, 1999; Collins, 1999; Hastings, 1999; 2000; Jacobs, 2004; Stenson and Watt, 1999). Discourse and narrative methods have been used in entrepreneurship research (for example, Ahl, 2004; Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004; Jennings et al., 2005; Lindh de Montoya, 2004). As yet however, according to Hjorth and Steyaert (2004), the linguistic turn in entrepreneurship studies has been limited.

This paper looks at the concepts and meanings that are central to people labelled as social entrepreneurs as constructed by them, in order to understand the appropriateness of, and assumptions inhering in, the entrepreneurship paradigm. It explores three research questions:

- How far is the linguistic shift towards social entrepreneurship embraced by the *subjects* of the discourse?
- What ideological and cultural meanings appear as central to their construction of their reality as social entrepreneurs?
- How does this contribute to discussions about research perspectives in the emerging field of social entrepreneurship research?

The paper uses a discourse analysis approach to studying the language of social entrepreneurship, through looking at meaning in context.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

This section describes firstly two theoretical fields of enquiry, selected because they are epistemologically appropriate to social science and the study of social phenomena: discourse analysis and phenomenology. It then discusses briefly the social construction of entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship more specifically.

Discourse as meaning and power

In discourse theory, language is constitutive of meaning, the “prism through which we conceptualise the world” (Jacobs, 2004:819) and is seen as a social practice shaping and shaped by social relations and structures. While discourse analysis belongs to a number of schools of discourse, most social scientists draw on the poststructuralist distinction between Foucault and Fairclough.

For Foucault (1972), language is a reflection of power relations, struggles and dynamics. Discourses are “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1969, quoted in Parker, 1999), and determine how power and knowledge are produced. Sets of discursive practices delimit the boundaries of debate (Foucault, 1969) and become self policing. Discourse analysts who have built on Foucault “fracture texts into different discrete discourses which then hold positions for speakers and reproduce relations of power” (Parker, 1999:3).

Critical discourse analysts of the Fairclough school (1989, 1992, 1995) suggest that discourse is more than reflective of social power situations; it is mutually productive in that language use influences, as much as it is influenced by, social practice. Discourse must therefore be studied in reference to the social and political context. Wodak (2003) describes it as constituting “situations, objects of knowledge and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people” (Wodak, 2003:187). Analysis is *critical* in its connectedness to social issues (Van Dijk, 1997), with analysts making explicit their social and political position: “Analysis, description and theory play a role especially in as far as they allow better understanding and critique of social problems...Their ultimate goal is not only scientific but also social and political, namely *change*.” (Van Dijk, 1997:22-3).

This paper uses an approach drawn from critical discourse analysis developed by Fairclough (1992). It entails a three stage process:

- 1 Discursive practice looks at the macro processes of text production, distribution and consumption; in other words, the context within which statements are made, how they connect to other debates and how texts (written or spoken) are framed (Fairclough, 1992:86). It is useful here for highlighting how social entrepreneurship talk is framed by and takes its meaning from different agendas.
- 2 Text analysis covers the micro processes of discourse that shape the text (Fairclough, 1992:86), including text cohesion, ethos, grammar, theme, modality and word meaning. The structuring of the text is useful for revealing innovation in wordings and agency.
- 3 Social practice deals with the reproduction or transformation of social structures and ideological/political effects, in other words, the effect of the texts on wider power relations and ideologies.

The focus here is on talk as “it is in this mode of language where the dialogical nature of linguistic activity is most obvious” Hastings (2000:134). So although an interview, as with a politician’s speech, may not appear dialogical (see Fairclough, 1992; Hastings, 2000), the listener is still part of the production of meaning through interpretation.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology, in this case specifically the phenomenological interview, is an interpretative approach to qualitative research, used increasingly in entrepreneurship (Thompson et al., 1989; Cope and Watts, 2000; Cave, Eccles and Rundle 2001). Starting from the perspective of lived experience, phenomenology emphasises discovery and description, rather than proving or justifying theories (see Cope, 2003 for discussion). The methodology is inductive in that the researcher’s theoretical stance is shelved, as far as possible, and propositions are allowed to emerge out of the research. It is this grounded, interpretive aspect of phenomenology and its potential for gaining insight into others’ experience and point of view that makes it suitable for this research. The phenomena under exploration finally result in a combination of agendas, debates and conceptualisations associated by the interviewees with the theme of social entrepreneurship.

The social construction of entrepreneurship

As entrepreneurship theory has developed from a prevailing economic perspective, via traits based theories, to a more socially embedded perspective on entrepreneurial behaviours and processes (Gartner, 1998), social constructionist approaches have emerged in entrepreneurship research (see Chell and Pittaway, 1998; Jennings et al., 2005). The move is from the dominant functionalist perspective that focuses on the economic dimension of entrepreneurship towards multiple paradigm approaches that are sensitive to the complexity, discontinuity and idiosyncrasy of entrepreneurship and that deal with the various dimensions in which entrepreneurship is conceived and played out (Howorth et al., 2004; Steyaert and Katz 2004). With work mainly situated within interpretivism (Grant and Perren, 2002; Jennings et al., 2005) some are urging for entrepreneurship research to embrace radicalism.

Against this backdrop, this research refers to Nicholson and Anderson's perspective on the conceptual difficulties associated with entrepreneurship, through the collective construction of the entrepreneurial myth by the media (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005). Nicholson and Anderson (2005) propose that the myth embodied in cultural beliefs, popular literature and journalism becomes self perpetuating; mystery is created around the myth of the entrepreneur and perpetually reinforced. The mystery shrouding the myth grows, the myth becomes shorthand and eventually "the uncorrected 'collective memory'." (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005: 166.). While the enterprise culture can be seen as re-asserting individualism (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005), access is actually limited by those without experience and not contested. This is a reminder that the dominant myth and narrative built up around entrepreneurship is culturally, politically and ideologically loaded.

Social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship, the use of entrepreneurial processes for social purpose, has been part of a wholesale shift over the last decade in the UK from the community to the social "era" (Pearce 2003). This has entailed, Pearce argues, a shift in language from political engagement to problem fixing, collective action to individual entrepreneurs and from democratic structures to a focus on social purpose (Pearce, 2003).

The rising interest in the field has been characterised by functionalism and positivism aimed at mapping and promoting the concept (Dees, 2004) which tend to reinforce accepted patterns. Firstly, heroic claims are made in the rhetoric that social entrepreneurship reaches the parts of society other policy initiatives do not reach, that social entrepreneurs are *unsung heroes* and *alchemists* with *magical qualities* who can *build things from nothing*. Research has shown a tendency for comparison of individuals with business entrepreneurs, that promote similarities, shared traits and behaviours but different motivations and objectives (for example Shaw et al., 2001) or against enterprises and economy (see Smallbone et al., 2001). Although these studies highlight interesting factors, such as different drivers or agendas, discomfort with the entrepreneurship concept and the collective local nature of initiatives, they promote uncritically the understanding of social entrepreneurship in terms of the dominant entrepreneurship paradigms.

Secondly, as entrepreneurship has been positioned by various governments as the fix for economic ills, social enterprise particularly has been closely coupled with the economic ills of the most intractably deprived areas since the late 90s in the UK. In this, social entrepreneurs are seen to have a role in this as "skilled at redirecting, using and regenerating underused, abandoned, redundant or derelict human and physical resources" and bringing "to life a strong sense of community in an alienating environment" (Community Action Network website).

Thirdly, the sector is subject to critical assumptions about the management and role of the sector: “Social enterprises must see themselves as businesses, seek to become more professional and continuously raise their standards of performance and their ambitions” (DTI 2002); and “social enterprise should ‘become part of the solution to reviving and strengthening local economies’ but ‘should not be seen as a side show to the real economy’” (NWDA 2003).

Critique of the simplistic treatment of social entrepreneurship has prompted a return to the economic, social and political context at its roots. Many clearly locate social enterprise within community (economic) development with its political agenda of alternative democratic structures and processes. Wallace (1999) traces the development of the current social purpose enterprise paradigm in the US through various movements, from community activism and leadership, civic emancipation, economic empowerment through self-sufficiency, political mobilisation for neighbourhood improvement and self reliance (Wallace, 1999). Pearce (2003) traces the history of the movement in the UK back to the 70s Job Creation Programme, when the focus was on community development, and the radicalist cooperative movement. Haughton (1998) situates the UK movement within sustainable regeneration, itself a response to the failure of top down urban policy approaches throughout the 80s (Haughton, 1998). While social and community entrepreneurship in the UK emerged out of structures aimed at anchoring the benefits of the local economy within communities, it was not until the end of the 90s that the discourse around social enterprises as businesses emerged.

It is thus important to consider the effects and implications of the shift in discourse. In forcing entrepreneurship to the “fore of how we conceptualise change and creation” (Steyaert & Katz, 2004:186), the meaning of entrepreneurship itself becomes dispersed, contested and possibly re-interpreted. More critical research that captures the complex realities is required.

METHODS

Data was collected through phenomenological interviews with 20 social entrepreneurs. Individuals were nominated by five local agencies (funders, intermediaries), partly to avoid definitional problems of social entrepreneurship, partly to ensure the group was policy relevant in that they were selected as social entrepreneurs backed by the local agencies.

Interviewees were informed in advance of the overall topic of the research. All interviews started with the question, “Tell me what you think makes you successful” and then allowed to take their own direction. Open questions eg *how?*, *why?* were used as a way of facilitating reflection.

The data from the transcripts was analysed in two stages: firstly using *wmatrix*, to present a *snapshot* of the linguistic content. The *wmatrix* software “allows the macroscopic analysis (the study of the characteristics of whole texts or varieties of language) to inform the microscopic level (focusing on the use of a particular linguistic feature) as to which linguistic features should be investigated further” (Rayson, 2002). This exercise identified lexical and semantic frequencies in the combined social entrepreneurs texts, as compared to two other corpus of spoken texts: British National Corpus of spoken English (BNC) and the Corpus of Entrepreneurship and Small Business (CESB, spoken) developed at Lancaster University. Words and concepts were presented in terms of degree of difference against the *norms* of each corpus.

Secondly, in-depth critical discourse analysis was undertaken of five of the interviews, selected to be reflective broadly of the overall sample in terms of gender and local origin,

factors considered possibly interesting or significant. Manageable sections of the text were selected either because of their relevance to the research question or, as Fairclough (1992) suggests, they contain moments of apparent crisis or *crucis*, such as hesitation, redefinition, repetition, contestation or deliberation.

RESULTS

Key words and concepts

When compared to the British National Corpus (BNC) of spoken English, a list of words and concepts was identified as being most different from the *norm* in spoken English. These are presented in order of greatest difference in Table 1.

The words and concepts are not significant in themselves but may be significant when considered alongside the results of *wmatrix* analysis of spoken text from private sector entrepreneurs, selected because of similar size, interview method (phenomenological) and research topic (interviewees also asked to talk about success and failure).

Table 1 shows the top 10 most significant differences in key *concepts* and the top 20 most significant differences in key *words*, in order of greatest difference¹. Column 1 contains the results of *social* entrepreneurs compared to general spoken English. Column 2 presents the results of private sector entrepreneurs compared to general spoken English. Column 3 compares directly both spoken texts of social and private entrepreneurs.

Looking firstly at the key concepts in the upper section of Table 1, entirely different sets of conversing areas are seen in columns 1 and 2. The social, local and human preoccupation of the social entrepreneurs is thrown into relief.

When the social entrepreneur texts are compared directly against spoken text of entrepreneurs using the CESB, six new key concepts appear as most divergent from the entrepreneurship *norm*, the new concepts used significantly more being *obligation* and *government*.

The lower section of Table 1 shows the top 20 most significant differences at word level. Again, entirely different set of words are used frequently by social and private sector entrepreneurs when asked to talk on the same subject. Furthermore, the following were either very low on the social entrepreneurs' list (eg did not differ significantly from the norm) or were not present at all: market (+12.97), opportunity (+29.26), profit (+23.48), risk (+19.07); trading; income, sustainability, performance. This is surprising, given the context and discussion topic.

One of the most striking differences in the comparison of both social and private sector entrepreneurs against the BNC norm, was the use of the pronouns *i* (-24.33) and *we* (-24.16). While first person singular *i* is not used significantly more by the private sector entrepreneurs than the social entrepreneurs, the first person plural *we* varies radically. In the spoken text of the general entrepreneurs, *i* and *we* are of similar ranking. For the social entrepreneurs, the word *we* is the second highest frequency word overall, which may suggest collective agency.

When compared directly against the spoken text of entrepreneurs rather than the BNC, *social* becomes more overused than *we* and all remaining words rise in order (except *entrepreneur*).

Finally, it is useful for this paper to consider modals as reflective and constitutive of agency (Rayson, 2002). All modal auxiliaries except *could* (+7.18) appear underused compared to

the BNC and most are significantly underused (min. -6.6). The negative modals, *can't* and *won't* are also significantly underused. Data has not yet been analysed at this level for the entrepreneurship texts.

This presents a snapshot of the dominant concepts and lexical items manifest on the surface of the texts as a whole.

Meanings in Discourse

Critical discourse analysis was undertaken on five excerpts, referred to here as Samples 1 through 5. The results are discussed here in terms of five themes identified from the theoretical perspective discussed: identity and agency, portrayal of activity as entrepreneurial, resonance of entrepreneurship discourses, affinity with the entrepreneurial narrative or myth and reproduction of ideologies and social practices.

Identity and agency

Agency was found to be as prominent to the interviewees, as in the metaphorical conceptualisation of the entrepreneur generally captured by Nicholson and Anderson (2005). Agency for *making things happen*, is clearly seen to lie with them in three elements: voice, transitivity, and subject position.

Verbs are predominantly transitive in that the object and agency is clear, as in “me empowering them” in Sample 4. The dominant voice is active, active being the unmarked choice (Fairclough, 1997:182). Occasional shifts into the passive seem to coincide with certain events where external agency is key or with references to their own career or story and confidence is lower, as in Sample 2:

“To be honest wi’ya, if somebody told me five year ago I’d be here doing what I’m doing today, I’d have laughed at them. And I was asked because of my experience...”

This coincides with the “happenstance” nature of social entrepreneurship identified by Pearce (2003).

This sense of agency is reinforced by *subject position*. All speakers establish a stance as local knowledge holder and champion for their community. The speakers in Samples 2 and 4 also assume at certain points the position of an instructor/teacher, with the reader as learner of community enterprise. Both speakers use rhetorical devices of teaching, with rhetorical questions and answers negating presupposed answers.

“What makes you want to do it? Because it’s not being done.... What motivates you? Well it isn’t money.”

Samples 2 and 3 use the rhetorical mode of an orator: “and that’s what I’m saying. Comes from the gut right, comes from the heart...” as does Sample 1.

Despite this sense of individual agency, the use of collective pronoun *we* is still prevalent, creating a complex picture of the social entrepreneurs as agent but in a collective community process. As the *wmatrix* results indicated, the interviewees seem to take their identities and their activities’ meaning from the position between two main social presences: community and the regeneration professionals, rather than through their own character, status or activity:

“so I suppose the professionals, if you like, involved, had to bring the community on board a lot quicker than they probably would have done to get to fit in with all this funding. We...”

Community and the professionals are both present as an imagined audience (Van Dijk, 1997) suggesting that people generally are forefront in the speakers’ awareness.

There is a notable flux in the speakers' position vis a vis the community, as in Sample 4, where the first person agency comes in and out of focus against the backdrop of community and collective agency:

“and what we would really like to do is have control of our own...so we're developing a plan for the village...So it's about doing things that help the people.”

While agency is clearly not portrayed as the domain of *the people*, responsibility and causality, central to the conceptualisation of all social problems (Hastings, 1999) are sometimes transferred to the *professionals* as in Sample 5:

“there were all these people, we don't understand what they're saying half the time” and “then someone came in from the North East to do this training and we went through all this training...”

In this, the professionals are mostly negatively framed as preventing agency at the local level as in:

“so instead of [council] or the county council telling us what to do, it's about getting what we want.” (Sample 1)

Locality is a final prominent factor in the construction of their identities as in Sample 1:

“...and if we don't do something about it now we'll become one of these totally deprived areas.”

While identities seem to be constructed from this *inbetween-ness* within the local environment, rather than the brokerage role suggested by etymological explanations of entrepreneurship in terms of *entre prendre*, this identity seems to be legitimised more through a guardianship function than any sense of entrepreneurial personality.

Portrayal of activity

Again, as with the metaphorical conceptualisation of entrepreneurs, prominence is given to activity. Processes and action are foregrounded. Process types used are mainly action and relational in nature, with a notable absence of emotional or cognitive process types. This is interesting given the topic and interview situation which might expect to draw out reflexivity. Mental processes are used most in Sample 5, where they are subjective, *I think, I suppose* but often tempered by statements such as “...but other people wouldn't say that...”

Speakers avoid nominalisations, the turning of a verb into a noun. Where they are used, *employment, funding, decline, submission, partnership working, renewal, training, achievement* are probably echoes from rhetoric and agency speak have the effect of backgrounding the actual process and creating distance between the speaker and activity (Fairclough, 1995).

Activity can also be looked at through local *theme*, which in the samples is often carried through a referent rather than made explicit. This is most commonly a conjunction, adjunct or article, which gives the reader the sense the activity is undefined. The nature of the interviewees' purpose takes on an amorphous form. Numerous references are made to *something, it* or *things* throughout all the interviews; *doing something/doing something about it, getting things done, doing things differently, putting something back* are prominent, as in Sample 4:

“er it is making things happen and in a word that's probably it. Er, standing joke around here er is me saying 'make it happen' but that's me empowering them and trying to get other people to do things not talk about, not plan.”

In this, the speakers avoid defining their activity; this is more often achieved by talking about what it is *not* or how it differs from the mainstream. This might suggest that the *process* or *presence* itself is important, the *what, how* or *outcome* being less significant. This resonates

with Pearce's view (2003:68) that many people involved are "getting on with it" or "getting the job done". Where the outcome or impact of activity is evident, it is expressed in relation to place and people as in Samples 2 and 4: "it's seeing people that come on board that have learning difficulties and watch them turn themselves around" and "it's about doing things that helps the people."

The modality of the texts roots this activity firmly in the here and now. Two main tenses are used in all the samples: simple present/past, which represent a categorical modality (Fairclough, 1997:158) of *is* and *was*; and the past/present continuous, for immediacy and proximity. There is a discernable absence of any future tense, though the conditional is used occasionally. This gives the texts a less forward-looking visionary perspective than might be expected and reinforces the temporal importance of action (Shaw et al., 2001).

As indicated by the *wmatrix* results, modal auxiliaries are virtually never used, with the exception of equivalents of *must*: *has to*, *have to*, *needs to*. This gives the readers an overall sense that the social entrepreneurs are driven by obligation rather than opportunity. This appears to come from a sense of duty in the absence of other agents. One paragraph in Sample 3 demonstrates this:

"we have to prove we're good enough ...we really have to be sustainable nowit does need business standingso it has to grow with the people of [place] and the benefit of [place]. It has to grow and it has to be good."

In Sample 4, opportunity is rationalised as need:

"What makes you want to do it? Because it's not being done. There's a market gap....So identify the need, respond to the need."

Activity thus seems to play an important role in creating the above sense of agency. The vague nature of the activity and its connectedness to need rather than opportunity affirms a more leadership than entrepreneurially constructed activity, in which the outcome is less important than the process of doing something.

Resonance of entrepreneurship culture and discourses

Intertextuality, the snatches and influences of other texts, can be manifest or interwoven into the texts (Fairclough, 1995). Echoes of agency speak are evident throughout, often in articulating local problems and prescribed solutions, to convey technical or political information. This is reinforced by the level of presupposition, the assumed prior knowledge of the reader. Presupposition is wide spread regarding local context, the bureaucratic environment and current social/community enterprise agendas. In Sample 3, the "does" acts as a cue:

"So it *does* need business standing behind it and that's why I took my diploma. We *do* see ourselves as a business."

Social pathology is seen in text types used to explain problems of areas and people. In most, there is some shift in discursive production around these points, between conversational and analytical production, often pointing to the speaker's unease, as in:

"it sounds a bit strange...but because this was a mining area originally, the community's not...well, we've got low achievement levels, low levels of literacy and numeracy."

Business analysis is brought in, but woven in to the explanation of community which is the dominant text type.

"I'm a manager of a community group...People who can't get a job, we're actually helping them. Which general businesses don't do, for some reason."

"It isn't necessarily doing things according to a business plan, it isn't necessarily doing things that are written down alternative targets and objectives..."

Where business and management discourses are used in connection with entrepreneurship, these in turn are used in ways which acquire their own meaning. Business and other forms of community organisation are seen to become interchangeable. Interesting instances of rewording appear in Sample 2, with the frequent redefinition of company as “scheme”, “project”, “group”. *Business* is directly associated with negative connotations such as “dirty”, “ruthlessness”, “ogres”, ‘exploiting the black economy’, ‘wealth and empire building’, ‘treating people as just second class’. *Money*, too, seems to be a pre-occupation, as the *wmatrix* results would indicate, but on closer analysis is mainly *funding* and *money* terminology. There are some mentions of profit, though in the main example justified as “profit is not a dirty word”, echoing a current soundbite.

In Sample 5, the use of the word *stuff* represents unidentifiable discourses from elsewhere. This is partly hedging but representational of terminology with which the speaker is uncomfortable, in this case business models:

“well all the constitution stuff, the legal stuff about being a company erm budget control. So there was all that kind of stuff going on.”

Around propositions that are technical or politically or culturally sensitive, hedging is common, particularly money, rhetorical soundbites and business speak. This suggests either low association with the proposition or that the speakers are feeling outside their legitimacy. Some hedging is evident around the construction of social problems also. “We’re helping a lot of people with learning difficulties and things like that.” or “She had problems at home and things like that.” This could suggest either. This seems the more likely explanation in Sample 5:

“and then, the residents association stuff wasn’t really, I didn’t, it wasn’t really for me I don’t think you know it was the sort of they’d been going there for the tea and the, not that I’m don’t get me wrong I’m not sort of...”

The analysis would indicate that the discourse of entrepreneurship is neither manifest in the spoken text of the interviewees, nor intertextually influential. Critically, there appears to be greater intertextual influence from a number of external discourses, including: exclusion, employment, community, regeneration, business and biology. A number of notable discourse domains are absent in the extracts including politics and governance.

Affinity with the entrepreneurial myth and narrative

There are surprisingly few references to entrepreneurs/ship throughout the interview texts though where they do occur, references are most often to mainstream business or the businessman. 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”. Low affinity can be seen through a form of semantic engineering - articulating around the word a series of qualities associated with the proposition by the proponent or speaker (Fairclough, 1992:132). Their conceptualisation of *entrepreneurship* is articulated only in direct reference against “true entrepreneurship” and “general business”. The term *entrepreneurship* becomes insufficient to convey the dislocation they perceive between the myth of the entrepreneur and their work in the social context.

The samples reproduce the stereotype of the entrepreneur, particularly as the fallible aggressive entrepreneur of 2000 rather than the earlier heroic saviour identified by Anderson & Nicholson (2005). Both community and the “system” are depicted as decidedly non-enterprising at the same time.

Metaphoric and other figurative language portray their role more as protector and champion. Dominant themes include: shepherding (*getting things moving, bringing them in/round/on board, getting people through gateways and barriers, going round and round and round*),

battle, though often in sense of the lost battle (*charging into, hard slog, banging heads against brick walls, running round in circles*), rapid learning (*climbing Everest, steep curve, inclines and declines*) and nurturing (*renewal, regeneration, growing, organic growth, inhibitors*). These conceptualisations suggest the speakers are possibly better aligned to some of the metaphorical conceptions identified by Nicholson and Anderson (2005) with the charming saviour entrepreneur.

Reproduction of ideologies and social practices

In terms of social relations and structures, the texts of the social entrepreneurs are seen as reinforcing and reproducing long standing tensions between local government and community, in particular the struggles over local development, empowerment and involvement (Oatley, 1998). The reproduction of these relations suggests the perception of the issues are deep seated, whatever the rhetorical intentions of local agencies regarding social enterprise. This re-politicises the environment and logic of social entrepreneurship.

Social identities are demarcated through the ethos of the samples. Communities (*the community, community, people, the people, they, these people*) are socially pathologically constructed as being in need of saving and associated with peripherality and out there-ness: "Always did things on the side, such as, erm community groups" (Sample 4). A clear role is perceived in breaking down barriers, physical and virtual, and helping people in past *gateways* and *barriers*. Groups are rarely defined more closely than this except in Samples 5 and 2, where the *residents group* and *young people with learning difficulties* are defined. The reader has the sense that the speakers simply do not have the resources available to them to distinguish further within the complex metaphor that is *community* (Myerson and Rydin, 1997). This possibly symbolises a role the interviewees see for themselves in reaching the undefined within the community, in other words those beyond target groups prescribed through policy initiatives. There are hints of a transformational objective regarding people in the community (Hastings 1999) such as "me empowering them" and "we're helping them", although more often this is represented also as coming down from the "professionals".

As seen earlier, the professionals and local government in particular are depicted as an obstruction ("hit a brick wall with them", "it's like banging your head against a brick wall") within an exploitative and corruptive system. The social identity of the official as non-entrepreneurial and non-dynamic is reinforced throughout, as seen in the following series of negative polemical cues in Sample 4:

"it isn't because you're a bureaucrat, and it isn't because you're a local authority person. None of those fit. It's not a nine to five, it's not a routine, it isn't a job that you can write down on a piece of paper..."

The speakers seem to seek the complicit support of the reader in defining these social positions. There are numerous, sometimes explicit, attempts to establish affinity with the reader through tags such as "you know", and, in Sample 4, "you ought to see them." Positive and negative tag questions are used occasionally, often with a question to which the answer can only be affirmative. In this example from Sample 2, the response is actually spelled out on behalf of the reader to make certain: "It is good to see that, eh? Aye, it is good to see that." A negative tag is used in Sample 5 for the same effect but marking lower affinity, "some people are better at partnership working, aren't they, you know."

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 strategy for local development and social inclusion are still central to the construction of the problem.

The political and ideological effects of the practices are to reinforce possibly naturalised identities akin to the world of regeneration, as opposed to those of entrepreneurship, in which ultimately control is not necessarily the same as agency.

DISCUSSION

From the analyses, it is apparent that the activity of the social entrepreneurs as constructed on the ground does not relate to many of the conceptual concepts conventionally associated with entrepreneurship, either at surface or discursive levels. Taking as given the broadly accepted conceptual building blocks of entrepreneurship, taken from Perren (2002) for example, (risk acceptance, innovation, belief in control over events, generating new activities, proactiveness, need for independence, identification of market opportunities, personal drive/need for achievement and ambiguity tolerance), few appear as central even on the surface of the texts. *Starting new activities* and *belief in control over events* are evident to an extent but through the critical discourse analysis are redefined in relation to social need.

Instead, the conceptual building blocks that appear to have a positive association in their construction of the social entrepreneurs' reality regarding social entrepreneurship are:

- Locality as critical to identity
- Protecting *the community*, letting them down as measure of failure
- Recognition (instead of performance) as measure success
- Resilience (rather than sustainability) as measure of success
- People and team orientation, collective action
- Reactionary activism, fighting the system
- Action (doing something, the job) over what or how
- Helping independence in the community
- Their experience as learning

The following concepts emerge by negative association but appear instrumental in articulating their reality:

- Business: people as 'ruthless', 'ogres' and commerce as malign
- Money: as compromise to values
- The 'system' as obstructive force
- Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship as a different world.
- By their absence, conventional building blocks of entrepreneurship: innovation, risk, proactiveness, market opportunities, personal drive, ambiguity tolerance (Perren 2002).

This presents a chasm between these and the dominant concepts in the rhetoric around *social enterprise/entrepreneurship*. A brief review of core policy and strategy texts from national, regional and local agenciesⁱⁱ identified the following categories: *doing lots with very little, financial independence through sustainability, contributing to the mainstream economy, bringing business discipline to social ventures, innovating for change, helping people take charge of their lives and futures*. Again, a couple of concepts are marked on the surface of the interview texts, notably *financial independence* and *bringing business discipline to social action*, but redefined. However, the one category that appears to be a central thread through the meanings of the texts is around *helping people take charge of their lives*.

It is no surprise that the language of agency documents differs from the text of research interviews. It is however, interesting to look correspondingly at how other discourses map in

a macroscopic way on to the main themes. For example, the concepts used in the rhetorical discourses of community economic development and sustainable regeneration seem to correspond, at least as well, with those used to construct social entrepreneurship by this sample. Concepts from Haughton's localist model of community economic development (1998:874), include: *done by local people, local control of assets and decision making, reduce economic leakage, build local capital base, build community asset base, build alternative economy, social entrepreneurs*. Haughton refers to the latter also as *community leaders*. In this vein, the conceptual building blocks Perren identified for leadership (Perren, 2002), including *team orientation, genuine interest in others, inspiring trust, honesty and integrity, ability to motivate*, might be equally applicable. This is not to suggest that leadership is an alternative or more appropriate paradigm. Rather it is used to demonstrate that entrepreneurship, as leadership, is a complex social construction whose central concepts are already contested.

This phenomenon was validated using a software programme that asks participants to prioritise concepts against each other, in this case the themes emerging from the research marking both high and low affinity between rhetoric and interview texts. Designed as a dialogue tool on the basis of the linguistics field of pragmatics, the software is useful for highlighting perceived difference and similarities in conceptual meaning. The exercise was undertaken with the social entrepreneurs and intermediaries, as both prominent agent identified in the interviews and representatives of the agencies involved in the local (re-)production of social entrepreneurship rhetoric.

The exercise showed the social entrepreneurs as a group place greater priority on the key factors and definitions of successful social entrepreneurship emerging from the analyses. Parties shared most common ground on *what* social entrepreneurship is trying to achieve, far less on *how* these objectives are achieved.

In discussing what constitutes successful social entrepreneurship, *motivating people to do things for themselves* and *achieving financial independence* were high priority for both social entrepreneurs and intermediaries. They disagreed most on *making the most of underused resources*, a priority for the intermediaries but not for the social entrepreneurs, who gave much higher priority than the intermediaries to *strengthening sense of place and local identity*.

Regarding key factors in achieving the above, there was much greater divergence on priorities. Factors weighted most strongly by the intermediaries in comparison to the social entrepreneurs were *a robust business plan* and *access to procurement opportunities*, whereas the social entrepreneurs diverged most with the priority given to the *role of the board or committee*.

Although this exercise is ongoing, this has so far shown a distinct conceptual divide between the two parties. The implications of this need further exploration. The interviewees' weak identification with entrepreneurship could be explained by cultural as well as conceptual reasons. For example, discussing entrepreneurship in their context could be outside the linguistic resources of the interviewees in that particular time and place; or the myth of the entrepreneur may be perceived as inaccessible and dismissed, taking the interview into more comfortable territory. Interpretations could also be wide ranging depending on perspective.

CONCLUSION: MATCHING RHETORIC AND REALITY

This paper has shown that, in the case of these social entrepreneurs, the frames of reference used to construct and articulate their realities are multiple and resonate more closely with other conceptualisations than those of entrepreneurship. The linguistic shift

towards social entrepreneurship appears not to have been embraced by the *subjects* of the discourse. Any reverberations of official agendas around business, profit and management are often couched in devices that suggest low affinity, and the social entrepreneurs, when asked to talk about show a greater pre-occupation with the socially pathological construction of local issues, geographical community and power struggles in the control over local change. Through applying discourse analysis to a phenomenological research process, the ideological and cultural meanings as central to their social construction have been allowed to emerge. These seem to centre around three main tenets: their position within the ideological struggle between local government and community; need driven agency anchored firmly in the present and immediate past; and collective action for local change.

The paper does not suggest either that activity in the social or community context should not be classed as entrepreneurial or indeed that the reality of the modern environment in which social enterprises and entrepreneurs operate does not necessitate the adoption of certain discourses such as sustainability and business management. It does demonstrate that the conceptual assumptions in the dominant entrepreneurship discourse, critiqued by many entrepreneurship researchers, may constitute an even wider chasm when applied to people and processes in the domain labelled social entrepreneurship. It appears that in Pearce's model of changing language around social entrepreneurship (Pearce 2003), political engagement and collective action still have currency to those operating on the ground and that democratic structures may equally be as prominent as the focus on social activity. It is also a reminder that discursive shifts, driven by policy makers, funders, the sector and academics alike, do not necessarily infiltrate ideology at the level where the action is located. Therefore, while the questions of how to back the winning product, process or person may become accepted, to many they may propagate a focus that is difficult to contest and could influence the use of resources.

Further analysis is needed before the research can draw clear theoretical implications. The jury is still out on the net contribution of discourse analysis approaches to social sciences and policy (Mills, 1997, in Hastings, 2000; Jacobs, 1999). Working with the already difficult application of CDA to spoken text, this research has certainly experienced difficulties with the presentation of the data and a lack of comparable research to enable appreciation of the influence of local and cultural factors. A longer term study would be interesting to capture the naturalisation (and possibly assimilation of) the entrepreneurship paradigm. Nonetheless, it has advantages as an approach. The microscopic focus on language use ensures objectivity but within a subjectivist macroscopic framework, in which the social and political stance is made clear (Fairclough, 1995). It avoids some of the unavoidable subjectivity of interpretation involved in analysis even of phenomenological enquiry in entrepreneurship, as noted by Thompson et al (1989). Most importantly perhaps, it captures the voices of those most often assumed to be the object of, rather than a subject in the production of, the discourse of which they form the centre.

At the very least, the paper has identified concepts and meanings, used by people labelled as social entrepreneurs to construct their social reality, that draw primarily on discourses other than entrepreneurship. 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.

NOTES

i. The plus sign (+) before the LL figure (log-likelihood) shows relative overuse, the minus sign (-) shows relative underuse. Above or below 6.63 is considered significantly different from the *norm*. For the purposes of the report, insignificant words such as “yeah”, “er”, “y’know” have been removed (this would be significant for other forms of linguistic or discourse analysis such as conversation analysis).

ii. From a brief review of the DTI’s Social Enterprise: A Strategy for Success (2002), School for Social Entrepreneurs and Community Action Network websites, North West Development Agency Social Enterprise Survey (2003) and the West Cumbria Social Enterprise Hub proposal (West Lakes Renaissance, 2005).

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Table 1 Most significant differences in Key Concepts (top 10) and Key Words (top 20)

No	Social Entrepreneurs (BNC)	LL	General entrepreneurs (BNC)	LL	Social Entrepreneurs (CSEB)	LL
KEY CONCEPTS						
1	Business: generally	+792.55	Business: generally	+258.54	Groups and affiliation	+496.32
2	Work and Employment: generally	+673.83	Ability:- Success and failure	+252.81	Food	-260.04
3	Groups and Affiliations	+389.37	Money: Affluence	+175.19	Obligation and necessity	+241.21
4	People	+312.70	Business: Selling	+40.5	Government etc.	+220.55
5	Personal Names	-271.44	Personal names	-33.20	Helping/hindering	+201.42
6	Money: Affluence	+259.76	Power, organizing	+32.36	Social actions, states, processes	+180.24
7	Helping and Hindering	+245.62	Ability:- Ability, intelligence	+31.90	Work and employment: Generally	+170.00
8	Social actions, states and processes	+219.97	Geographical names	+31.89	Business: Selling	-133.60
9	Time: Beginning and Ending	+202.27	Information technology and computing	+28.19	Clothes and personal belongings	-126.92
10	Affect: Modify/change	+132.38	Money generally	+26.16	Money: Affluence	+120.14
KEY WORDS						
1	community	+814.47	uk	+252.14	community	+ 816.09
2	we	+577.24	us	+220.62	social	+ 552.96
3	social	+552.70	failure	+212.13	we	+ 383.88
4	funding	+419.23	ceo	+147.08	funding	+ 375.84
5	people	+348.32	investors	+139.74	project	+ 227.02
6	because	+343.44	founder	+128.05	Allerdale	+ 200.15
7	project	+313.73	entrepreneur	+114.61	centre	+ 140.43
8	entrepreneur	+282.27	business	+110.73	enterprise	+ 140.25
9	business	+276.73	company	+81.18	entrepreneur	+ 128.89
10	allerdale	+216.98	banking	+78.55	restaurant	- 125.05
11	so	+213.16	venture	+44.17	you	- 120.08
12	centre	+194.70	backed	+38.72	Whitehaven	+ 113.60
13	job	+189.19	investment	+37.96	enterprises	+ 108.19
14	organisation	+164.48	hurt	+37.47	volunteers	+ 105.52
15	enterprise	+150.60	equity	+37.03	i	- 104.02
16	involved	+140.91	dollars	+35.03	west_Cumbria	+ 102.78
17	working	+127.86	entity	+34.41	he	- 101.08
18	whitehaven	+123.15	technology	+33.61	committee	+94.95
19	money	+121.14	market	+32.42	local	+90.72
20	started	+116.91	cv	+31.52	sustainable	+89.67