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# Social entrepreneurship: laying the foundations of a nascent paradigm

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**Abstract:** Social entrepreneurship was imperative in the economic and political spheres since the 1980s, thanks to the efforts of powerful foundations such as Ashoka or the Grameen Bank, which aroused the interest of the scientific community in this phenomenon. Since the 1990s several research works concerning social entrepreneurship were born, giving birth to several definitions, conceptions, and theoretical readings, going from economics to anthropology. Nevertheless, the researchers were not able to develop a standardized theory, so leaving the field open for various interpretations of various disciplines made social entrepreneurship a metapragmatic field. The purpose of this article is to highlight the theoretical foundations of social entrepreneurship through a comparative approach. We first tried to entrench social entrepreneurship in time, after we had characterized it by the key concepts that make up the readings of the phenomenon," said we do not claim completeness our main goal is to find conceptual models allowing researchers to decipher the practices of social entrepreneurship in its different forms of socio-economic expression in different contexts, something that was achieved by our proposal of a sketch on the four conceptual pillars of social entrepreneurship.

**Keywords:** Social entrepreneurship; Entrepreneur; opportunity; local embedding; social enterprise.

#### 1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship (SE) is a phenomenon that developed in the 1980s on the international scene in the midst of the crisis of the welfare state. During the 1990s, SE spread throughout the world. A plethora of SE initiatives have emerged in developing countries, the most prominent example being Bangladesh (Grameen Bank), but also in Latin America and Africa.

In Europe, it first emerged in the heart of the social economy in Italy in 1991, the early initiatives were carried out by the "social cooperatives" which were the first initiatives carried out by "social cooperatives" which aim to respond to social needs that are poorly. The first efforts were made by "social cooperatives", which address social needs that are poorly met by public services and the state.

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The Social Enterprise Initiative launched in 1993 by the Harvard Business School was the baptism of SE in the United States.

In addition to this, the emergence of foundations (Ashoka) supporting social entrepreneurs (Social Entrepreneurship Movement, 2012). SE first surfaced in the academic field in the late 1990s (Boshee, 1995; Leadbetter, 1997; Dees, 1998; Wallace, 1999), and it is considered to be still in its stage (Johnson, 2003). The conceptualization of SE is in its infancy, it is seen as a new field of study, and it is one of the most important. Therefore, the researcher seeks through this study to highlight the theoretical foundations of social entrepreneurship through a comparative approach.

#### 2. Literature review

In recent years, the concept of entrepreneurship has received a lot of attention from researchers, practitioners, and even governments in many countries, due to its association with economic growth, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), of those countries (Al-Hakimi & Borade, 2020; Goaill & Al-Hakimi, 2021). The conceptualization of SE is in its infancy, it is seen as a particular formula of entrepreneurship, it proposes a lever for the revival of socio-economic sector. The definitions of SE present four key elements, namely the character traits of the social entrepreneur, the range of operations, resources and processes used, and the social entrepreneur's mission. SE is a sub-field of entrepreneurship in the early stages of development, it is alongside other sub-fields other sub-fields such as business concepts, entrepreneurship... SE as a as a field of science has attracted the interest of the scientific community, it has been definitions, but it remains "illdefined", "closed in on itself" (cluster), the ideas it conveys ideas it conveys remain few in number but disorganized without any significant theory (Steyaert & Hjorth, 2008).

SE has three basic elements: identifying a stable equilibrium that excludes, or marginalizes, a social group that does not have the to transform market equilibria. Secondly, by identifying an opportunity and opportunity and the generation of a proposed new social value, thirdly SE develops a new equilibrium that ensures a better future for the group and the society. SE is based on the discovery and exploitation of business opportunities by identifying social and economic needs not met by the market and the state.

The mission of SE is to create social value (Omrane & Fayolle, 2010). SE is seen as a singular form of entrepreneurship (Dees, 1998), with a focus on the creation of social value (Dees, 1998), in this sense Defourny and Nyssens (2007) stresses on the three main notions intertwined: social enterprise, SE, social entrepreneur.

SE research has to some extent replicated the theoretical and empirical theoretical and empirical evolution of entrepreneurship. Researchers have focused on the personality of the entrepreneur and

in particular on behaviors or processes, or on opportunity to emphasize the entrepreneurial nature and to differentiate it from other from other phenomena such as philanthropy. There is a stream that has focused on the of the social entrepreneur, according to this approach, social entrepreneurs are characterized by special characteristics (Drayton, 2002), special leadership skills (Thompson, Alvy, & Lefebvre, 2003), a passion to achieve their vision in the sense of Bornstein (2004), and strong ethics in the sense of Drayton.

Several researchers have focused on entrepreneurial processes - on the 'how' - in other words on the way entrepreneurs act. in other words, the way entrepreneurs act, in order to differentiate between social and entrepreneurial initiatives entrepreneurial initiatives (Dees, 1998).

The literature on SE is still not well defined, Spear (2006) argues that it has borrowed a terminology from the field of entrepreneurship (Gözü et al, 2009). Definitions of SE refer to processes and attitudes, definitions of social entrepreneurs are based on the founder of the initiative, definitions of social enterprises (SEs) are based on the tangible results of SE.

## 2.1. Social entrepreneurship: towards an emerging paradigm

The theoretical work on SE is similar to that of entrepreneurship in that they share a common starting point: entrepreneurial practice. The field of entrepreneurship is witnessing the emergence of a consensus around the definition of entrepreneurship is experiencing the emergence of a consensus around the definition of entrepreneurship, whereas for SE there is a proliferation of definitions.

SE research has long developed an extensive description of the description of the phenomenon, but at present no unanimous definition exists (Helm.S, 2004). SE has unclear boundaries with other disciplines, Interdisciplinarity has strengthened its position as a research field.

SE is also influenced by several disciplines such as anthropology, economics, sociology, and political science (Dacin, Dacin and Tracey, 2011). Research in entrepreneurship research could replicate the same evolution of research on entrepreneurship (Bruyat and Julien, 2001), which Austin et al (2006) argue is due to by the inability of SE as a field of research to develop a solid theory that can be generalized.

SE presents itself as a sub-field of entrepreneurship in the early stages of development, it is in the early stages of development, it stands alongside other subfields such business concepts (El Halaissi and Boumkhaled, 2018). The authors consider that there is a lack of theories, generalizable models and definitions of SE. In this sense, Thompson et al (2000) observed the growing use of the notion of SE whose meaning is not yet understood. Entrepreneurship research has to some extent replicated the theoretical and empirical evolution of empirical evolution of entrepreneurship. Schockley and

Franck (2011), building on the work of work of Schumpeter and Kirzner, argue that entrepreneurial thinking in SE has its origins from the creativity and originality of entrepreneurial discovery. Several theories of SE appear to be convergent with the seminal work of Kirzner and Schumpeter Schumpeter, such as Young (1983) who equates non-profit Entrepreneurship with the opportunistic judgement. Weerwardena and Mort (2006) include "proactivity "Weerwardena and Mort (2006) include 'proactivity' as one of the three dimensions of the multidimensional model of SE.

Entrepreneurial thinking in SE is characterized like that of conventional entrepreneurship by the nonrationality of the processes of the new institutions or the entrepreneurial discovery. It arises not from the rationality of the social entrepreneur, but in his but in their new institutions or entrepreneurial discoveries. A major theoretical construction of SE has focused on the social impacts of social impacts of SE mainly at the micro-social level, following the theoretical classical perception of entrepreneurship. To embrace the singularity of the construct we propose to the specialist community to mobilize the following concepts: entrepreneur, opportunity, process, local embeddedness.

### 2.2. The entrepreneur: an agent of social change

Several researchers have focused on the personality of the entrepreneur and in particular on behaviors or on social opportunity to emphasize the entrepreneurial nature and entrepreneurial nature and differentiate it from other phenomena (Al-Hakimi et al., 2022). Some academics consider that there is a tendency towards the individualization of SE, which limits analysis of the social entrepreneur as an individual. In this trend we find Drayton (2002) who questions the nature of SE, while emphasizing the qualities and the qualities and motivations of social entrepreneurs.

To decipher the phenomenon of SE some authors propose to analyse the individuals behind SE organizations by looking closely at characteristics such as previous experience, motivations... There is a current that has focused on the personality of the social entrepreneur, there is a stream that has focused on the personality of the social entrepreneur, following this approach social entrepreneurs are characterized by special traits (Drayton, 2002), skills, leadership (Thompson et al, 2000), a passion to achieve their vision in Bornstein's sense, and as well as strong ethics in Drayton's sense. The processes described by Drayton are similar to Schumpeter's process of 'destructive creation'.

Social entrepreneurs differ from conventional entrepreneurs in the sense of Drayton in their singular ability to deal with social problems. Dees (1998), drawing on theories of entrepreneurship, he argues that social entrepreneurs are a unique species of the entrepreneurial family, unique species of the entrepreneurial family. Schumpeter argued that the qualities required to become an entrepreneur are possessed by a small number of individuals, Dees (1998). Dees (1998), building on this idea, argues that the social entrepreneur possesses a set of exceptional skills and traits, Dees adds that social entrepreneurs are a unique type of leader and should be recognized as such.

Bacq and Janssen (2011) argue that the social entrepreneur has rare qualities that allow him or her to seize existing opportunities. Omrane and Fayolle (2010) insist on the need to possess certain skills in order to carry out SE projects. Boutiller (2008) specifies the importance of capabilities such as observation of the socio-economic context, he also points out the importance of mobilization of a diversity of resources.

Other authors focus their definition on entrepreneurial motivation, Boutiller (2008) in this sense asserts that the social entrepreneur is motivated primarily by the collective well-being collective well-being, he is committed to serving society and therefore responding to needs poorly met by the market and the state.

Some authors assimilate the social entrepreneur to an agent of Change, they thus base themselves on the economic theory of the social entrepreneur, the latter is thus perceived as a driver of change in the Schumpeterian sense of the term (Boutillier, 2008; Steyaert & Hjort, 2008).

Following this same perspective, Boutiller argues that for the social entrepreneur or in SE, innovation is embedded in the entrepreneurial logic which can take different forms, via the introduction of innovative methods take different forms, through the introduction of innovative methods the social entrepreneur creates change.

One of the specific features of SE is its market orientation in order to ensure the financial sustainability and efficiency of business activities. Market orientation is market techniques for creating social value (Choi & Majumdar, 2014).

Dees (1998) and Boutillier (2008), argue that the central feature of the social entrepreneur is Reis (1999) and Brinkerhoff (2001), based on their analysis of the (2001) based on the work of Schumpeter-entrepreneur-agent innovator-advancer that social entrepreneurs innovate and create new processes to achieve their goals. objectives. Sullivan Mort and colleagues (2003), continue in this vein by arguing that the social entrepreneur takes an innovative approach to creating social value.

The innovation of social entrepreneurs, according to Thompson and colleagues (2000), is manifested in atypical ways of mobilizing resources, building on the work of Say, they argue that entrepreneurs are individuals who are able to seize opportunities and produce goods and services produce goods and services tailored to the needs of citizens. Bornstein (2004) argues that Ashoka's social entrepreneur creates novelty and an innovative way of responding to problems. The social entrepreneur is alert to social opportunities (social problems) that emerge in the context in which they operate.

#### 2.3. From market crisis to opportunity: a metamorphosis

A problem for the 'conventional' entrepreneur is an opportunity for the social entrepreneur. Different authors propose that market failure creates different opportunities for both the for both the entrepreneur and the social entrepreneur (Austin et al, 2006). The central driver of SE is the need to address a social problem so the organizational form of the social enterprise should be appropriate. The central driver of SE is the need to respond to a social problem and thus the organizational form of the social enterprise should correspond to the appropriate modality for mobilizing the resources needed to solve that problem.

Classical entrepreneurship theory conceives of 'market failures' as an entrepreneurial opportunity. entrepreneurial opportunity, several entrepreneurship theorists have proposed that competitive imperfection in markets implies opportunities for entrepreneurial action and economic profit. Following Leibenstein's "X-efficiency" theory, which is concerned with market gaps and imperfections, it takes as its starting point the ideal state of pure and perfect competition correlated with expected entrepreneurial activity and the magnitude of these outflows. Kirzner introduced the concept of entrepreneurial vigilance to understand the modality of identifying economic opportunities in one's environment. Opportunity refers to a socio-economic imperfection or imbalance.

The opportunity refers to a socio-economic imperfection or imbalance that exists in the market and is overlooked by actors, but which can be identified by 'vigilant entrepreneurs'. "Entrepreneurs in this sense need to have a significant knowledge of their society in order to identify opportunities. Entrepreneurs in this sense need to have significant knowledge of their society in order to identify these imbalances. Under these conditions the motivation to satisfy the collective well-being is amply justified according to Spear (2006).

SE is presented as action by individuals or private organisations private organisations addressing different opportunities in the market (social needs), (Korosec and Berman, 2006). Various authors argue that it is a response to market failures, i.e., the inability of the market and the state to provide for the social needs of citizens (Shepherd and Patzelt, 2010; Ombrane and Fayolle, 2010; Mair, 2010).

The main purpose of SE is to meet social needs that neither the public nor the private sector has paid attention to (Thompson, 2002; Alvord et al, 2003). public or private sector have paid attention to (Thompson, 2002; Alvord et al, 2004). It is based on the discovery and exploitation of business opportunities through the identification of social and economic needs not met by the market and the state. It has as its mission the creation of social value (Omrane & Fayolle, 2010). SE presents itself as a tool to help governments solve social problems, it offers an analytical framework It offers an

analytical framework for proposing responses to the challenges of sustainable development (Omrane, 2013).

Bacq and Janssen (2011) describe SE as a series of steps ranging from from identification, evaluation to exploitation, they thus converge with the classical conception of entrepreneurship by Schumpter and Kirzner and the theory of market failure, these theorists argue that the objective of HE is to create social value, through market activities by mobilising different resources.

SE by exploiting opportunities in the market-social problems not addressed by the active system-, responds to the social needs of citizens and creates social value (Bacq and Janssen, 2011). Some researchers argue that SE is a process of identifying, evaluating and exploiting opportunities with the aim of creating social value through market activities and the use of a diversity of resources (Zahra et al., 2009; Janssen et al., 2013). Mair and Marti (2006) offer another reading of SE by stating that it is a process encompassing several phases focused on the combination of resource innovations, pursuit of opportunities to solve social problems or solve environmental problems. They distinguish between a variety of definitions which they organize into three stages: firstly, SE is a process of creating 'value' through resources in new ways. Secondly, it is a set of combinations of resources focusing firstly on exploring and exploiting opportunities in order to create social value through stimulating social change or responding to social needs. Thirdly, it concerns the provision of goods and services, but can refer to the services, but can refer to the creation of new organizations.

SE in the sense of Martin and Osberg (2007) consists of three components: first, identification of a stable and unjust equilibrium that excludes or marginalizes or negatively affects the lives of certain social groups that lack the means to ensure a situation of equilibrium. Second, identification of the opportunity and development of a new social value to challenge the equilibrium situation. Third, developing a new stable equilibrium that reduces the suffering of the target population through imitation and the creation of an ecosystem around a situation of equilibrium to ensure a better future.

SE thus refers to the identification and exploitation of opportunities through the observation of new problems or needs not yet met by traditional organizations (Martin, Osberg, 2007). It promotes sustainable development that respects human rights while working to promote sustainable development that respects human rights while striving for a reasonable use of resources, and it is also about complex social problems, such as poverty and social exclusion, which are externalities generated by externalities generated by legal or illegal business activities require the development of development of innovative solutions (Johnson, 2000).

SE has three basic elements, firstly identifying a stable equilibrium that excludes, or marginalizes, a social group that does not have the to transform the equilibrium. Secondly, the identification of an opportunity and the thirdly, SE develops a new balance that ensures a better future for the develops

a new equilibrium that ensures a better future for the group and society society (Martin, Osberg, 2007).

Mair (2010) equates SE with a process of meeting the basic needs of local people that conventional organizations cannot meet. This process includes the provision of goods or services or the creation of institutions or the reform of inadequate the main objective is to change or modify the economic or social structures that are at the root of structures that have led to the failure of the system to meet basic needs. The financial viability of social enterprises is an important pillar for the ES, but it is not a sufficient condition for the is not a sufficient condition, sometimes the capacity of the target population to pay becomes an obstacle to an obstacle to the viability of the SE project. The purpose of SE is to create social change through the modification of political and economic realities at the local level. It is the local context that shapes the opportunities for HE and determines the tactics and strategies to be employed strategies to be employed that characterize the entrepreneurial approach.

The entrepreneurial approach to SE is reflected in the ability to obtain and attract resources, the ability to attract resources, the ability to recombine them to create new values, create new ways of doing things new ways of doing things (Mair, 2010). Leadbetter (1997) equates SE with entrepreneurial behavior for social purposes, mobilizing market activities to meet the needs of to meet the needs of disadvantaged social groups.

Bacq and Janssen (2012) argue that SE is focused on the search for innovative solutions to address social problems not addressed by the existing system. SE is described as a movement that addresses market failures through social needs (jobs, education, care...) through innovative and socially oriented organizations. organizations with a social purpose. Its role is to create new ways of producing that take into account the social needs of citizens.

AVISE1 defines SE organizations as social enterprises whose disadvantaged by the market, they ensure the inclusion of populations excluded by the system via the excluded by the system through the provision of employment and skills training (O'Connor Sulphey and AlKahtani (2016) in this same vein argue that HE tackles problems that traditional organizations (market, state) do not (market, state) cannot solve. SE presents itself as a necessary solution to the exacerbation of social problems and challenges of human communities in the face of recurrent market crises. SE is presented as a flagship solution (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008), it the needs of the socially underserved, it takes on a 'palliative role' (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008). SE is framed by a welldefined process that includes phases embraced by innovation.

## 2.4. Process: a pathway of innovative value creation

Mair and Marti argue that examining a set of activities arising from SE as a process seems to be a more fruitful approach. Other authors (Bacq and Janssen, 2011; Spitzeck and Janssen, 2010), sharing Mair and Marti's idea, have taken up Gartner's theoretical model of Gartner, who in 1988 described the process of business creation using the following elements characteristics of the individual(s) creating the business, the process of creating the new business, the characteristics of that organization, the environment of the new entity.

According to Gartner's theoretical model, the actions of business creation are summarized in 6 behaviors: identifying a business opportunity, accumulating resources, bringing a product or market a product or service, produce a good or service, create an organization or respond to organization or responding to government and society. The identification of social opportunities is the central process of SE, the of SE, the marketing of products or services targeted at people experiencing poverty are all important steps in entrepreneurial action for SE in Catford's sense.

SE in the sense of Catford and Nicholls. In order to clarify the points of concordance between between SE and conventional entrepreneurship, we can use micro-credit as an example of micro-credit as the flagship activity of SE, which is centered on a strategic choice: the fight against poverty through income-generating economic activities.

Entrepreneurship theory conceives of the phenomenon of SE as a new form of entrepreneurship, orchestrated by the new form of entrepreneurship, orchestrated by an individual, organizations with special The theory of entrepreneurship conceives of the phenomenon of SE as a new form of enterprise, orchestrated by an individual, organizations with special character traits and which through processes borrowed from the market and framed by values ideals, the common good, creates socio-economic value. This entrepreneurial form entrepreneurial form develops in an organizational framework adapted to the local context, in structures called "social enterprises", whose norms are of a collegial and collective nature, these organizations must be embedded in the territory in order to meet their objectives.

## 2.5. Local embedding: territorial anchoring

The local dimension of SE is manifested in its operation at the lowest level of the territorial scale. SE mobilizes its proximity in favor of the local population, to offer them products and services adapted to their needs (Sulphey and Alkahtani, 2016).

SE mobilizes its proximity to the local population to offer them products and services adapted to their needs (Dees, 1998). On the social level, they give donations to the local community (Choi and Gray, 2008).

The 'local' is the space for SE to create opportunities and develop strategies. At the local level, opportunities are formed, and the tactics and modes of action of SE are developed. The organizational nature of SE also depends on the specificities of the local level (Mair, 2010). The SE actions are targeted at the local level, their impacts can be global. SE organizations contribute to the promotion of a sense of social responsibility at the local level (Bilan, 2010).

SE is embedded in the territory, this specificity allows it to observe the socio-economic context in order to develop responses adapted to the various social and economic needs (Boutillier, 2008). Social enterprises are anchored at local level, their inscription in the territory include a form of sustainability which is manifested by their activities, products and services are designed for the needs of the local population (Akhabi, 2008). SE can also aim at the economic revitalization of disadvantaged territories; through the social enterprise it participates in the co-construction of the territorial offer.

The social innovations carried out by social enterprises aim to strengthen the development of the territory by improving the quality of life of human resources, its capacity for development and regeneration (Dardour, 2012). The initiatives of integration through economic activity carried out within the framework of SE are developed at the level of the territory, they are elaborated in a logic of sector and complementarity with the resources of the territory. These organizations, which are part of a hybrid model, are active in a 'meso-economic' scale (Richez-Batesti, 2016).

Organizations in the European context contribute to the implementation of the sustainable development objectives by developing activities that have a positive impact on the territory the territory, the populations that inhabit it while protecting the environment (Defourny, 2007).

The activities included in the framework of SE target the development of the territory through the creation of "social value". SE creates significant change by addressing social problems while seeking to generate sustainable to generate sustainable improvements, they act at the territorial level, but their actions can have a global impact, they target several sectors: education, health, development....etc. (Omrane & Fayolle, 2010).

A key feature of SE is the promotion of social responsibility at the local level is the space for intervention of SE. In the sense of Seelos and Mair, it is a set of small-scale initiatives whose main purpose is to meet human needs at the local level and participate in the implementation of SDG by addressing social and economic problems such as poverty and social exclusion, while working to

protect the environment and generate stable incomes that ensure the sustainability of natural resources, through the implementation of local development initiatives within a collective framework (Simonov et al, 2014; Tremblay et al., 2009).

SE is presented as a process of finding solutions to problems at the local level that are not problems at the local level that are not met by traditional organizations. The aim of SE is to create social change by modifying political and economic realities at the local level. It is the local context that forms the opportunities for SE and determines the opportunities for SE and determines the tactics and strategies to be employed which characterize the entrepreneurial approach (Bilan et al., 2017).

#### 3. Conclusion

SE is a sub-field of entrepreneurship, which differs from the parent field by the specificity of the individuals or organizations that lead this movement, by its field by the specificity of the individuals or organizations that lead this movement, by its entrepreneurial culture, its unique perception of opportunities, and its mode of operation. One of the main characteristics of SE is that it is embedded at the local level and attached to the territory, which clearly distinguishes it from entrepreneurship. The social entrepreneur has altruistic motivations; he develops socio-economic projects to ensure collective well-being through the mobilization of a range of resources. The opportunities in SE are inherent to the negative externalities of the market and the actual needs of the people. Social problems are, in the eyes of SE actors, 'opportunities' to be seized that will allow the creation not only of value in the economic sense but a double (socio-economic) value.

The social entrepreneur, through innovative processes, combines different processes in order to meet the expectations of communities. The embedding of SE facilitates the identification of the real needs of the people. SE is presented in the literature as a set of activities that offer innovative responses to social and economic problems. It appears that social entrepreneurs can carry out their mission and respond to unmet needs only if they are motivated and have the qualities (altruism, skills, innovation...) necessary to ensure these social projects target the local population. SE research is therefore concerned with the creation of non-economic value for individuals and society but does not continuously include the current states of nature, as well as the sources of life and support of the community. Their starting point is social study or 'societal case' for meeting the needs of individuals. The objectives of social entrepreneurs vary from establishing a new model of systemic social change, solving systemic social change, solutions to social problems, new market opportunities, empowerment and political transformation.

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