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CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

THIS DISSERTATION AIMED TO EXAMINE how social enterprises and their leaders operate when their resources are exceedingly scarce, and circumstances change rapidly. In this final chapter, we firstly revisit this dissertation's overarching research question. Subsequently, we summarize the study's structure and outcomes. Next, we discuss this dissertation's broader implications, underlying limitations, and future avenues of research. We then evaluate the practical relevance and, lastly, draw this thesis to a close.

REVISITING THE OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTION

The original intent of this dissertation was to examine how social enterprises in dynamic environments operate when their resources are exceedingly scarce. Hence, the overarching research question of this dissertation, presented in Chapter 1, was as follows:

How do social enterprises and their leaders operate when resources are exceedingly scarce, and circumstances change rapidly?

We have addressed different aspects of this question in the ensuing chapters. In Chapter 2, we examined what social enterprises are. Moreover, rather than aiming for a universal definition of social entrepreneurship and settling the debate, we called for a cluster of complementary definitions and ongoing work in this area.

Furthermore, Chapter 3 looked at how social enterprises, i.e., *organizations*, operate under situations of pressing resource constraints. Our data came from a country in crisis and revealed how bricolage is a valuable concept to describe how social firms make do. Importantly, our findings prompted us to view bricolage as a dynamic rather than a static concept.

Additionally, Chapter 4 examined how social entrepreneurs, i.e., *individuals*, led their firms toward newness. Contrary to conventional thinking, most social entrepreneurs that we encountered did not match the classic image of heroic frontrunners. Instead, we saw evidence

of generative leadership, which we conceptualized as an outward-looking rather than self-referential role that can be shared more broadly within the organization and produce non-linear outcomes.

Finally, Chapter 5 provided more insight into the theme of uncertainty. We focused on a particular type of uncertainty, namely, unknown unknowns, because this is an area that is of relevance to the empirical setting of this dissertation and one that lacks scholarly knowledge. We found that while unknown unknowns are outside human awareness, they may have significant negative consequences. We, therefore, argue that it is unwise to perceive ignorance as bliss.

In summary, within a context of vigorous resource constraints, we connect social enterprises with dynamic bricolage and individual entrepreneurs with generative leadership, noting that there is much going on beyond human awareness, which, on the whole, may introduce unacceptable risks.

THESIS STRUCTURE AND RESEARCH OUTCOMES

Thesis Structure

In this thesis, we carried out four comprehensive studies, which we subsequently presented in Chapters 2 to 5. Each chapter represents a different analytical focus within the stated research aim. Starting with the basics, in Chapter 2, we conducted a systematic scoping review of the scholarly literature to examine the essence of social entrepreneurship. This inquiry evaluated the academic debate on definitions of this dissertation's core concept and how the topic is commonly researched, both theoretically and methodologically. This segment thus prepared the ground for the other chapters in this thesis.

From there, in Chapters 3 and 4, we conceptualized empirical phenomena that may be salient in social enterprises facing resource constraints, namely, bricolage and generative leadership. These topics resonate with the *European Research Agenda on Social Innovation*,

for instance, in terms of a shared interest in bricolage and actor/environment interchanges (Brandsen, Ecchia, Eschweiler, Hulgård & Nogales, 2016). Further, the empirical chapters' interpretative use of grounded theory in a longitudinal setting aligns with scholarly calls for new methodological forms (see, e.g., Sarasvathy et al., 2014) and longitudinal studies (e.g., Janssen et al., 2018).

Finally, in Chapter 5, we inquired into tacit unknowns (also known as unknown unknowns). Although this phenomenon is commonplace in social enterprises, particularly so in those operating in dynamic and resource-deprived environments, it is poorly understood academically.

Research Outcomes

In Chapter 1, we highlighted several gaps in the scholarly understanding of social entrepreneurship and connected these with research questions, which subsequently shaped Chapters 2 to 5. Table 23 summarizes the ensuing research outcomes in a structured way. Here, we emphasize that the three-part problem statement, which we presented in Chapter 1, informed more comprehensive research problems that evolved in our resulting studies, albeit more comprehensively grounded in the literature. Therefore, we include our research problems, instead of the original problem statements, in the table.

Table 23: Research Problems, Research Questions, Main Empirical Findings, Key Theoretical Inferences, and Academic Discourse

Chapter and Short Title	Research Problems	Research Questions	Main Empirical Findings	Key Theoretical Inferences	Academic Discourse
(2): A review of the literature on social enterprises	We posit that academic definitions of social entrepreneurship are often problematic and theoretically deficient.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the scholarly perspective on social entrepreneurship definitions? 2. From where do researchers draw theories to develop their understanding of social entrepreneurship? 3. How do scholars conduct empirical research methodologically? 	[Not applicable]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We propose a principled approach based on a theory of definition for articulating alternative definitions of social entrepreneurship. • We infer that scholars repeatedly remain silent on their choice criteria, underlying assumptions, and added value of the theoretical lenses they use. • We posit that scholars have developed different perceptions of the maturity of social entrepreneurship research, resulting in different methodological choices. 	Social entrepreneurship literature.
(3): A framework for bricolage	Scholars generally depict bricolage statically, i.e., unchanging within its surrounding contexts. In this chapter, we examine the	How do strategy and bricolage in resource-constrained social enterprises correspond with one another?	Our qualitative data suggest that the nature of bricolage may distinctly change with a venture's development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We conceptualize kinds of bricolage that are not just about fixing problems but also about forming strategies or realizing predefined ones. • We suggest a theoretical framework, depicting how the emphasis of bricolage varies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social entrepreneurship literature. • Entrepreneurship literature.

Chapter and Short Title	Research Problems	Research Questions	Main Empirical Findings	Key Theoretical Inferences	Academic Discourse
	<p>validity of this presupposition.</p>			<p>with a social enterprise's evolution.</p>	
(4): An inquiry into generative leadership	<p>A key assumption dominating the social entrepreneurship literature is that individuals, usually in a leadership role, are personally responsible for venture success. In recent years, however, some scholars have begun contesting such views. There is still scant empirical evidence and limited theorizing, though, to support alternative representations. This chapter presents such material.</p>	<p>1. How do we characterize social entrepreneurs facing exceptionally challenging circumstances for extended periods? [Initial research question]</p> <p>2. What is contained in the idea of generative leadership? [Revised research question]</p>	<p>We encountered “generative leaders.” These individuals are influencers who contribute to their organization’s development by creating conditions through which new ideas and approaches emerge, rather than engaging in top-down interventionism in a controlled manner.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We enhance the scholarly understanding of social entrepreneurship by presenting a framework with the defining properties of heropreneurship and generative leadership. ● We respond to calls to interpret longitudinal empirical data on social entrepreneurship through complexity theory, thereby mainly complementing theoretical work in this area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social entrepreneurship literature. ● Complexity theory literature.

Chapter and Short Title	Research Problems	Research Questions	Main Empirical Findings	Key Theoretical Inferences	Academic Discourse
(5): Understanding unknown unknowns	Although “unknown unknowns,” arguably, commonly affect social enterprises operating in dynamic environments, little is known about them.	What are the critical properties of unknown unknowns in organizations?	[Not applicable]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spotlight counterfactual reasoning is an abductive approach that helps scholars to understand better unknown unknowns in a non-reductionist manner. Casting unknown unknowns as organizational dark matter reveal their agency, which otherwise might easily remain concealed. 	Organization theory.

Study 1: A Review of the Literature on Social Enterprises

In this study, we sought to address the lack of scholarly understanding of what precisely is social entrepreneurship and how its underlying theories come into being. We consequently drew on a theory of definition by Suppes (1957) to explore several scholarly conceptualizations of social entrepreneurship and their meaning. We argued that Suppes' framework sheds new light on extant definitions of social entrepreneurship. It is also a tool to recognize their weaknesses and identify tangible ways to improve them, that is, make them more revealing, clear, direct, precise, and logically convincing.

We correspondingly advocated definitions of social entrepreneurship that (1) convey its essence, (2) separate its definiendum and definiens, (3) are phrased positively, and (4) avoid figurative and obscure language. We argue that Santos (2012) provides an example of a definition that meets these criteria: "Social entrepreneurship is the pursuit of sustainable solutions to neglected problems with positive externalities" (p. 335).

We subsequently observed that social entrepreneurship researchers mainly use pre-existing management and organization theories in their empirical studies. However, our findings show that scholars often provide scarce information on which theories they use and their choice criteria. Also, they often fail to disclose information on the underlying assumptions of their theoretical lenses and the expected benefits of specific perspectives. Lastly, we found that researchers vary their methodological orientations substantially even though they often do not provide the rationale of their positioning.

Study 2: A Framework for Bricolage

Social entrepreneurship researchers have used the concept of bricolage to explain how organizations deal with resource scarcity. Although scholars have described different forms of bricolage, these types are believed to be unchanging within their surrounding contexts, and so

are examined in isolation. In this study, we questioned this presupposition, which neglects the dynamic potential of bricolage.

The empirical data collected suggest that making do with the limited means available can also *inform* strategy development, suggesting a correspondence between bricolage and strategy. We call this type of bricolage “formational bricolage,” which helps elevate emerging, practice-based insights to a strategic level.

Conversely, we also encountered so-called “strategic bricolage,” meaning entrepreneurial action that is *curbed by* a bigger vision on the firm’s aims. Strategic bricolage stimulates goal congruence, consistency, and efficiency. We understand that formational and strategic bricolage are linked to different phases in a venture’s development.

Study 3: An Inquiry into Generative Leadership

In this study, we delved into the unexplored combination of leadership of social entrepreneurs and complexity thinking. The initial research question in this study—How do we characterize social entrepreneurs facing exceptionally challenging circumstances for extended periods?—gave ample evidence to challenge the common scholarly depiction of social entrepreneurs as heroes and consider the contrarian concept of generative leadership instead. Hence, the second, revised research question that framed this study—What is contained in the idea of generative leadership?—helped examine this concept in greater detail.

We found that generative leaders are self-effacing professionals that create conditions for organizational action, instead of engaging in top-down interventionism. Given the nature of our empirical context, we importantly relied on complexity theory to evaluate our empirical data. Complexity theory aims to interpret dynamic, open systems that often lack explicit boundaries.

Study 4: Reflections on Unknown Unknowns

In Chapter 5, we explored unknown unknowns. Although this aspect was not explicitly included in the overarching research question, it is inescapable for firms dealing with resource scarcity and rapidly changing circumstances and, thus, relevant to our studies. Our research approach in this chapter is in line with abductive reasoning. Whereas inductive and deductive logic, respectively, generate and validate knowledge claims, the primary aim of abductive reasoning is to arrive at “plausible, conjecturable explanations” (Bamberger, 2018, p. 2). Abductive reasoning is typically seen as a precondition for making out-of-the-ordinary discoveries.

In this essay, we used an image metaphor—namely, organizational dark matter—to challenge a key axiom concerning unknown unknowns, which predicates that ignorance is bliss. The essay posits organizational dark matter as a metaphysical concept through which we can better understand unknown unknowns in organizations. This angle particularly helps appreciate the agency of unknown unknowns, i.e., their influence on the environment.

WIDER IMPLICATIONS, UNDERLYING LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE STUDIES

We now zoom out to reflectively reveal three broader theoretical implications and corresponding limitations of this dissertation. From there, new avenues for future research on social entrepreneurship emerge. The first implication concerns the philosophical foundations of this dissertation. The second appertains to topical orientations. The third implication considers stylistic forms in research. We trust that combining these fundamental perspectives—philosophical foundations, research topics, and stylistic forms—will provide a strong impulse to social entrepreneurship research.

Philosophical Foundations: On Qualitative Research Methods

Precept undergirding this dissertation. This dissertation is founded on the precept that social entrepreneurship is a complex, human affair that does not necessarily impose positivist

approaches, i.e., attempts to make clinical and impartial observations, quantify phenomena, and create lawlike inferences from objective data (Alvesson & Deetz, 2000). While such methods are *de facto* standardized in the natural sciences and are prevalent in entrepreneurship research (Hlady-Rispal & Jouison-Laffitte, 2014), their suitability in (social) entrepreneurship research is nonetheless contested (Karatas-Ozkan, Anderson, Fayolle, Howells & Condor, 2014).

The root of the criticism can be summed up with the maxim that “not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts” (Cameron, 1964, p. 13). This point is not only applicable to studies of history and human civilization; it is also salient in researching theoretically immature organizational fields (per Edmondson & McManus, 2007) like social entrepreneurship. In these domains of inquiry, it is still prudent to ask “how” and “why” questions to build a better understanding of the phenomena involved, such as has been the case with the central research questions in this thesis. Subsequently, scholars such as Lewis (2016) have called for postpositivist approaches, suggesting to probe social enterprises from within. This dissertation responds to such calls.

We have thus relied on inquisitive, interpretative practices to uncover meanings of social entrepreneurship under resource constraints. Hence, its qualitative inquiry was a “situated activity” (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 26), whereby sensemaking on my account played an important role. Thus, it is apt to quote Gioia and Pitre (1990): “What is ‘out there’ becomes very much related to interpretations made ‘in here’” (p. 587).

For instance, after finishing my third interview with a director, he got up to show his latest business initiative in another office. I was hesitant to follow him because he had been generous with his time, and I did not want to overstay my welcome. Nevertheless, I decided to continue our conversation with an open mind. Subsequently, my thinking around the concept of “generative leadership” first came to mind after seeing the pictures he showed of a prototype

for a new product and, particularly, hearing him emphasize the team effort behind this innovation. Later on, as we tried to tie this concept to the literature and gather more empirical evidence, we gradually laid the foundation for Chapter 4 of this thesis.

This example illustrates the development of novel yet plausible concepts that are grounded in reality and connect to a theoretical discipline, with room for improvisation, intuiting, and extensive reflection. As a situated, qualitative researcher, I tried to observe complex social realities firsthand. My challenge was then to provide abstracted *explanations* of what I had encountered, rather than merely summarize large volumes of unstructured information (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). In the process, I used existing theoretical perspectives much in the way that Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009, p. 22) describe abductive research:

The analysis of the empirical fact(s) may very well be combined with, or preceded by, studies of previous theory in the literature, not as a mechanical application on single cases, but as a source of inspiration for the discovery of patterns that bring understanding. The research process, therefore, alternates between (previous) theory and empirical facts (or clues) whereby both are successively reinterpreted in the light of each other.

Sometimes the “studies of previous theory” were only temporary pursuits. For instance, in Chapter 4, we wrote extensively on institutional theory. But, rather than joining a debate about institutional theory in dynamic settings (see, e.g., Barin Cruz et al., 2016; Kostova, Roth & Dacin, 2008; Peng, 2003; Peng & Martina Quan, 2009), we decided to discard most of our writings on this topic and focus our attention on complexity theory instead.

Methodological limitations. As this research evolved, its characteristics and, therefore, its inherent limitations became more apparent. For instance, I realized that interviews are far from objective instruments, conducted from a safe distance. On the contrary, they are human

encounters. In my case, they were (civilized) duels for clarity, conducted in noisy spaces, icy-cold basements, rundown side rooms, formal meeting rooms, or open-plan offices. Inevitably, these encounters uniquely shaped the very empirical material I sought to gather. What is more, it is hard to imagine that a different researcher, even if they were to ask the same questions as I have and experience the same contextual factors, would evoke the same responses as I have. Body language, facial expressions, eye contact, pacing, interjections, exclamations, interruptions, personal appearance, tone of voice (to name a few) are all important and influential. In the words of Alvesson and Deetz (2000), my study, in essence, was a “dialogic process” that was “imprinting the research product” (p. 139). Thus, the first methodological limitation is that this dissertation’s research methodology introduced subjective biases.

Second, there is the issue of generalization, which can be understood as extending the outcomes of this study to other situations somewhere else (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As a situated qualitative study, with its comparatively small sample size and unique Greek/European context, it is unlikely that its resultant theoretical ideas can be used to make indiscriminate inferences elsewhere (i.e., external generalization) or even to the same empirical setting at a different point in time (i.e., internal generalization).

That said, this study did not aim to produce generalizable theoretical findings. The gist of the arguments put forward should not be understood as: “here is a situation of social entrepreneurship under resource constraints; therefore, there *will* be different forms of bricolage and also generative leadership.” Such predictions would be unfounded. Instead, the intent was to develop new abstractions and shed light on their characteristics, *for their own sake*. Thus, we argue that “if one recognizes, in practice, the concepts developed in Chapters 3 and 4, i.e., formative/strategic bricolage and generative leadership, then here is what they may look like from a theoretical standpoint.”

The contextual setting of extreme resource constraints thereby was a functional decision; this, we hoped, would highlight or tease out factors, dynamics, or phenomena that under more normal conditions would more likely remain hidden from view. The work presented in this thesis on bricolage and generative leadership hopefully reflects this basic approach. The ensuing theorizing should thereby not be seen as endpoints. Far from it, they hopefully trigger additional inquiries, only through which these ideas can mature.

Third, qualitative researchers face the challenge of assessing what is true. Wittgenstein (2010) wrote in *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that “the world is the totality of facts” (p. 25). Adopting this stance, however, would be problematic for qualitative social researchers grappling with the varying meanings that studied objects create in their minds, often subconsciously. In the field of social entrepreneurship, it can be compellingly argued that there are no clear, unequivocal facts to “collect” (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014) that could then be neatly synthesized into manageable theoretical categories, feeding into law-like depictions of reality with predictive powers. Instead, the reality is messy, dynamic, and often etheric; this calls for qualitative approaches.

However, in my experience, handbooks on qualitative research methods tend to fall short on dealing with the inherent ontological and epistemological challenges of qualitative research. For instance, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe sensemaking as a “formal” activity (p. 136); however, they provide little direction on what exactly this entails. Additionally, Miles et al. (2014) cast interpretation as an impromptu and ongoing activity; interview material, they say, is “coauthored” and interpretation happens along the way by both the researcher and interviewee. The authors, though, provide little insight into how such interpretations take shape. Moreover, Schutt (2011) argues that interpretation requires “technical exactitude” (p. 323), though the techniques offered in the sourcebook lack specificity.

Therefore, it is plausible that in the countless iterations of perceiving, interpreting, and explicating—both on the part of studying subjects, like myself, and studied objects, i.e., my interviewees—there is an undercurrent of inexcusable bias, constant and strong, with the power to pull researchers offshore anytime. Specifically, during the analysis of empirical material, the one question that should always be on our minds is whether sensemaking and explanation are turning into unfounded speculations or opinion-making, but how precisely is this prevented?

Future research on methods. On this account, we call for further methodological guidance in the area of interpretation. If qualitative research means going beyond taking things at face value and instead focusing on *verstehen* and *erklären*—as opposed to predicting how A leads to B—we would suggest that social entrepreneurship researchers draw on fields such as hermeneutics, phenomenology, cognitive science, and neuroscience to further enhance qualitative approaches to their studies.

Additionally, researchers could benefit from combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to data collection and analysis (Small, 2011). Such mixed-methods studies are still rare in prominent social entrepreneurship research (for an exception, see Phillips, Alexander & Lee, 2017). Nonetheless, mixed-methods could alleviate some of the limitations of purely qualitative research designs, as described earlier, as they bring in more structured data sets.

While mixed-methods studies tend to focus on first validating hypotheses and then conducting qualitative inquiries, as seen in the study by Phillips et al. (2017), one could consider the reverse, i.e., starting with the qualitative research activities. The qualitative part helps understand a study's context and mechanisms at play. The researcher can subsequently supplement the empirical material with more structured data, e.g., from questionnaires to previously engaged informants. The aim of the latter phase would not be to conduct a comprehensive quantitative study but mainly supplement the qualitative empirical material and ease the sensemaking thereof.

For instance, a research team could ask the interviewees to reflect on the initial research findings to assess whether they recognize themselves in the tentative outcomes. Substantial discrepancies should be cause for further investigations. As such, the research design incorporates some moderately quantitative elements, without trying to synthesize essentially contradicting research paradigms. It is this coming together of opposites in the social sciences—rather than the pursuit of dichotomies in their pure, principled form—that Abbott (2001) describes in his book *Chaos of disciplines*. A similar approach to social entrepreneurship studies might yield valuable results.

To conclude this section, we have described our positioning concerning qualitative research and argued that further methodological work is needed to advance the interpretation of qualitative empirical material. We have also called for mixed-method research, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, to counterbalance some of the inherent weaknesses in qualitative research.

Research Topics: On Future Social Entrepreneurship Studies

Chapters 2 to 5 in this thesis identified several topical limitations as well as proposed corresponding directions for further studies. Table 24 lists these points. In addition to this summary table, drawn from the underlying chapters, we acknowledge a crucial limitation in the complexity theory framework in Chapter 4: it lacks an ethical dimension.

Future research on complexity theory. We argue it is worth exploring whether and, if so, how ethics can be integrated into complexity theory, possibly through the inclusion of morality as a core tenet. The short of it is that the natural world is categorically amoral and, therefore, that applications of complexity theory in that realm need not consider morality. This argument, however, does not hold in organization studies. When studying complex human systems, such as organizations and their socio-cultural-economic contexts, we cannot assume

Table 24: Limitations and Topical Suggestions for Future Research

Chapter and Short Title	Limitations	Topical Suggestions for Future Research
(2) A Review of the Literature on Social Enterprises	Our quest to finding the <i>genus</i> of social entrepreneurship could lead to dogmatism.	The richness of social entrepreneurship could be served by taking a postmodern turn, whereby a hegemonic stance, which comes from conceptual “settlement,” makes room for a cluster of definitions and ongoing linguistic remodeling.
(3) A Framework for Bricolage	Although the framework for bricolage and strategy in social enterprises breaks new ground in terms of linking two disparate concepts, it is beyond the scope of this study to examine the micro-processes in the co-evolution of bricolage and strategy. For instance, this means that the current model does not describe how insights from bricolage activities are incorporated into strategies or, conversely, how pre-existing strategies curb bricolage.	Now that bricolage and strategy have been associated with one another at a basic level, further studies could examine their evolving relationship in greater detail. In this area, there are opportunities for theoretical pluriformity to aid a more in-depth inquiry. For instance, scholars could use concepts from the strategy or sensemaking literature to enhance the concept of formational bricolage.
(4) An Inquiry into Generative Leadership	This study does not examine duality, i.e., how generative leaders may act, at least to a degree, as “heropreneurs,” and vice versa.	Future studies may explore how “heropreneurship” and generative leadership interweave.
(5) Reflections on Unknown Unknowns	The essay highlights problems surrounding unknown unknowns and explores ideas that convey what this phenomenon entails. However, being an essay, it is intrinsically limited in that its theoretical depth is not the same as with conventional scholarly papers. Nonetheless, it marks a useful developmental starting point for a contemporary debate on agnotology.	Future research could be aimed at developing a conceptual framework for organizational dark matter, addressing how, where, and when aspects of this perspective can be studied.

away ethical and moral considerations. The empirical findings presented in Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis suggest that they are intrinsic to it. Evaluate, for instance, a young, unemployed Greek's ruminations to leave hearth and home; this is a profoundly principled decision. Two people with different morals, standards, and values may make very different decisions under the same circumstances.

Cilliers (2002 [1998]) hints at this moral dimension when writing: "Our existence is also governed by values that give meaning to life" (p. 111). Cilliers subsequently argues that the choices one makes (e.g., on deciding what to see or not see) are profoundly ethical—and not merely technical—because they shape how reality is perceived, or even which reality is perceived, concluding that "complexity tells us that ethics will be involved" (Cilliers, 2011, p. 151). The author, thus, essentially suggests that ethical and moral considerations must be given a place in complexity theory. This idea resonates with the call of scholars such as Tedmanson et al. (2012) to conduct further research into the ethics of regular entrepreneurship. What is more, incorporating morality into complexity theory would enhance its suitability for studying *social* entrepreneurship, which is a phenomenon with a distinct ethical dimension. A brief inquiry suggests that there is little research on the role of ethics in social enterprises operating in complex, dynamic environments.

In the process of incorporating ethical considerations in complexity theory, we suggest drawing on sociology, philosophy, and psychology. For instance, sociologists Hitlin and Vaisey (2013) provide a review of moral typologies. Furthermore, Woermann (2013) explores the "ethics of complexity" from a philosophical stance, moving beyond morality as a set of normative rules. Moreover, as a final illustration, we suggest drawing on psychological classics such as by Fromm (1950), taking a humanistic view on morality. We contend that a multidisciplinary approach could and should fruitfully inform uses of complexity theory in organization studies. Hence, for instance, "emergence" need not be limited to describing novel

features of impersonal parts within a whole; it can also mean the surfacing of moral conflicts in young professionals, brought about, for example, by pondering in which part of the world they think they should live and work.

Stylistic Forms: On Using Literary Devices

Stylistic limitations. The third proposed area for further exploration concerns the *form* of studies on social entrepreneurship, which alludes to outer appearances of academic writing, that is, how scholarly knowledge is presented through language. Golden-Biddle and Locke (2007) argued that language in journal articles often is “unadorned” and “disembodied” (p. 10). Our review of the social entrepreneurship literature revealed a similar pattern. This is also a limitation in this dissertation, whereby academic writing conventions compel researchers to use “logocentric” (Van Maanen, 1995, p. 134), i.e., clinical language. The question is whether this is always necessary and whether we should perhaps also consider other more aesthetic forms. We argue for the latter and have tried to maneuver stylistic norms in this thesis. However, the boundaries could have been pushed further.

Future research using new forms. Since Locke and Golden-Biddle (1997) compellingly demonstrated that rhetorical practices are inevitable in academic organization studies, we might as well extend our repertoire. Other scholars, too, have expressed similar inclinations. For instance, Zinsser (1991) advocated the view of “nonfiction as literature” (p. 95), and Pollock and Bono (2013) promoted the use of storytelling techniques such as incorporating human elements. Further, while commenting on his sixth commandment of writing, entitled “Use humor, tropes, and poetry,” the sociologist, Fine (1988) wrote: “sociological writing is so damn dull [...] Using metaphors, figures of speech, [and] poetic language can enliven an argument and create reader attention” (p. 154). We contend that the use of literary devices could do even more than that—they could illuminate, and perhaps even extend, the conceptual meaning of an idea.

Thus, as a thought experiment, let us apply this idea to a critical concept in Chapter 4, i.e., generative leadership, and assess how the use of an image metaphor brings out more meaning or makes it easier to grasp the concept.

Thought experiment: Generative leadership as an image metaphor. Ontologically, leadership is an intangible concept. This implies that any attempt to capture its genus only through language, though valuable in its own right, cannot convey its full meaning. Therefore, as a complementary exercise, we now attempt viewing generative leadership as an “image metaphor” (Cornelissen, Oswick, Christensen & Phillips, 2008, p. 14), that is, a pictorial sign or symbol. It is here that we depict generative leadership as ripples on a pond. Even though, of course, generative leadership is not in a literal sense movement on water, we contend that, *figuratively speaking*, there are notable similarities between these two ideas and that by exploring the image metaphor, we would better understand the meaning of the concept at hand as well.

Figure 3: Generative Leadership and the Metaphor of Ripples on a Pond⁴



⁴ Image by sea turtle and used under a Creative Commons license.

From the above image (see Figure 3), we first note that there is not one ripple, but several of them coexisting. Some visibly are stronger than others. This indicates the notion that generative leadership is not necessarily restricted to one individual and that it can be exercised by multiple people simultaneously. This perspective suggests that leadership is not a hierarchical and linear endeavor, meaning that it is not limited to a single source (i.e., the leader at the top of an organization) instigating one-directional movements downwards. Instead, leadership is a concurrent phenomenon, which may occur in multiple places at once and involve several actors. This may be dubbed a “heterarchy,” which contrasts the word “hierarchy.” Thus, leaders are not identified by their job titles or organizational position, but by their willingness and ability to create ripples and anticipate those of others. Typically, there will be many leaders in an organization rather than a few, inviting us to see leadership as a function rather than a manifestation of individual agency.

Furthermore, all ripples radiate outward, fading away from their point of initiation. As ripples spread out over time, they increase their scope while their intensity is reduced. This imagery illustrates that, in generative leadership, distance, reach, and impact are dependent upon another. In the process, ripples may collide and blend in with ripples that originate elsewhere, which may neutralize or even enhance their vigor for a short while. In generative leadership, we thus have to accept unpredictability in an evolving world; unique constellations emerge and disappear continuously. Seemingly trivial activities can still exert an influence—in other words, those who sit somewhat idle, though not entirely, may still exhibit generative leadership to some degree—for instance, when a small ripple in the periphery encounters another ripple and changes its course or intensity.

Finally, we should mention that in this metaphor, there are no waves, only ripples. This imagery reminds generative leaders not to overemphasize their abilities as change-makers. When the conditions are said to be incessantly dynamic and fluid, leaders may at best initiate

movements (i.e., they send ripples) and, yet, in an environment where many sources emanate movement more or less at the same time, outcomes remain mostly unpredictable. It is with this imagery in mind that we can better interpret testimonials such as the following by McMillan and Carlisle (2007, p. 588):

The [organization] changed in many ways, but not via radical transforming dissipative structure change nor in an incremental step by step fashion. We would describe the program as creating small implicate and explicate ‘ripples’ of change which emanated from individuals and groups [...] which affected the whole institution so that it changed recognizably.

To conclude, we contend that an image metaphor for generative leadership enhances its disembodied linguistic depiction; it elevates our understanding of what actually is generative leadership. Subsequently, we would urge social entrepreneurship scholars to use image metaphors and other literary devices in their journal articles.

PRACTICAL RELEVANCE

Conventional wisdom states that nothing is more practical than a good theory. This maxim, however, does not do justice to the underlying approaches, processes, and methods that have produced those theories in the first place. After all, such matters, too, can be of immense practical value. In organization studies, one such approach to developing theory is critical management studies. Since the early stages of my thesis writing, this perspective has been a continuous source of inspiration. In critical management studies, researchers first identify common underlying assumptions of organizational phenomena, then challenge these assumptions. Finally, they articulate compelling alternatives in an attempt to alter the scholarly understanding of reality fundamentally. Alvesson and Deetz (2000) call these three interrelated steps “insight,” “critique,” and “transformative redefinition” (p. 17).

Our identifying and fundamental questioning the validity of the frequent scholarly depiction of social entrepreneurs as heroic leaders, in Chapter 4, and counter-proposing the substantially different concept of “generative leadership,” followed a similar logic. Thus, overall, we like to think that there is an undercurrent of critical management studies throughout this dissertation. This is not meant to signal negativity or rejection. On the contrary, it is incorporated in the spirit of seeking substantial theoretical contributions.

However, practically, too, approaches that marry the identification and questioning of assumptions underlying tenacious organizational problems—thereby potentially exposing inconvenient truths or falsehoods—to the development of innovative solutions may produce significant value. Hence, the precepts of critical management studies, as stealthily applied in this thesis, can also be most appropriate to practitioners in strategic or managerial roles.

In addition to this overarching practical implication, this dissertation has produced several other practical contributions in its respective chapters. Therefore, the concepts in this dissertation need not be seen as ethereal abstractions; they can also help practicing social entrepreneurs get better at what they do as well as inspire future applied research.

Study 1: A Review of the Literature on Social Enterprises

The first study in this thesis, in Chapter 2, is a conceptual piece that systematically examines the breadth and depth of the elaborate academic literature on social entrepreneurship. Apart from the scholarly contributions of this scoping review, several implications can be derived from it that are of interest to practitioners:

1. ***Evaluating the Social Return On Investment (SROI)***. Without tangible results, most ventures would struggle to legitimize their existence. Hence, even though it is difficult to assess a social enterprise’s social impact, practitioners need to evaluate their SROI so that they can communicate their achievements to stakeholders. As exhibited in the literature review chapter, social entrepreneurship researchers scrutinize the various

SROI frameworks out there. Practitioners who draw on this knowledge may subsequently make more informed decisions about which SROI frameworks are most suitable for their ventures' contexts, as well as better understand their strengths and limitations.

2. ***Building symbiotic relationships with conventional businesses.*** In comparison to regular businesses, social entrepreneurs may believe that they are not in an enviable position. They might think that companies that solely pursue profit have the upper hand, for instance, in markets for capital, labor, and goods and services. The literature review in this thesis, however, highlights the possibility of symbiotic relationships between social enterprises and regular businesses. Accordingly, social enterprises are well-placed to address issues in immature market segments that initially seem unattractive for traditional businesses. Social enterprises, hence, could develop these segments, with the intent of paving the way for regular businesses to enter at a later stage. While indeed this may subsequently compel pioneering social enterprises to change their value proposition, or even exit their market segment, this evolution, on the whole, could drive growth and, hence, accelerate the resolution of societal or environmental issues that social enterprises initially set out to resolve. Practically, social enterprises would do well to consider such scenarios and, for instance, proactively seek out strategic partnerships with regular businesses at an early stage.

3. ***Understanding definitions of social entrepreneurship to form exemplary identities.*** The literature review thoroughly discussed the definitional debate in the scholarly social entrepreneurship literature. While the analysis acknowledged that precise definitions of social entrepreneurship are not available, it argues that it principally is a commercial activity aimed at generating social outcomes. This positioning means, for example, that a children's farm set up as a foundation and wholly dependent on charity funding and

volunteers is not a social enterprise, even though in reality, many petting zoos adopt this identity. Thus, the practical value of the assessment of the academic debate on social entrepreneurship definitions is that it contributes to concept clarity, which practitioners can build on to develop truthful identities. Thus, a children's farm, set up as a foundation with volunteers and charity funding, is precisely that—a foundation.

Study 2: A Framework for Bricolage

While scholars have used bricolage to explain organizational action in the face of severe resource constraints, there is a dearth of studies that link this idea to other concepts. This dissertation's first empirical study, however, addresses this gap in Chapter 3 by linking bricolage and strategy. This chapter has the following practical implications:

1. ***Giving words to practices of social entrepreneurs.*** Even though bricolage may feel like a natural—if not the only viable—*modus operandi* for social entrepreneurs with poor access to resources, this does not necessarily mean that they are conscious of what it is they do, or that they can explain their approach to others. Arguably, social entrepreneurs may often be unconsciously competent at bricolage. For instance, none of the informants of this study had spontaneously mentioned “bricolage” during the conversations. Hence, the first practical implication of this study is that it gives social entrepreneurs a language to describe their actions. The structuring of bricolage in this study (i.e., its context, underlying values and principles, inputs, practices, and outcomes), though grounded in the scholarly literature, helps practitioner audiences articulate to others what they do in social enterprises.
2. ***Considering bricolage and strategy in unison, albeit dynamically.*** The framework for bricolage presented in this study also gives prominence to strategy, namely, in its infancy and adolescence phases of venture development. For practitioners in evolving social enterprises, this signals the importance of balancing bricolage and strategy, rather

than viewing them as disparate phenomena with separate developmental trajectories. In a venture's infancy phase, the framework serves as a reminder to social entrepreneurs to draw on knowledge obtained from bricolage when crafting strategies. The social entrepreneur's ability to take a broader view—"systems thinking" was conceptualized as a core property of bricolage—will be of particular value in this regard. Next, in a venture's adolescence phase, the framework invites bricoleurs to be mindful of their venture's overarching strategy to ensure internal alignment. Perhaps this aspect of the framework is the most challenging for bricoleurs because it works against their inherent creative and improvisational tendencies.

Study 3: An Inquiry into Generative Leadership

The dissertation's second empirical study, in Chapter 4, examines leadership in social enterprises operating under resource constraints. Its main practical implication is that it draws attention to a non-heroic form of leadership:

- ***Viewing leadership as an organizational function.*** Social entrepreneurship scholars and business incubators who depict social entrepreneurs as heroic figureheads propagate a view on leadership that some practitioners may deem unfitting. This thesis' conceptualizations on generative leadership counteract such one-sided representations by envisioning a form of leadership that is not exercised by lone individuals from "above." Instead, it depicts leadership as an organizational function that anyone can and, in fact, should enact to influence their immediate surroundings in a complex environment. The ensuing development of generative leadership offers practitioners a positive and empowering message. Thus, this concept may serve as an alternative role model for social entrepreneurs who struggle to identify with social entrepreneurs as heroic individuals.

Study 4: Reflections on Unknown Unknowns

The conceptual essay in Chapter 5 offers an inquiry into tacit ignorance (“unknown unknowns”). Using an image metaphor from the natural sciences—namely, dark matter—it argues that unknown unknowns, although outside human consciousness, can nonetheless shape organizational outcomes. This proposition has two practical implications:

1. ***Putting tacit ignorance on the organizational agenda.*** Over the last decades, businesses have acknowledged the strategic importance of concepts such as innovation management, organizational learning, and human development. Ontologically, these notions are grounded in knowledge, not ignorance. For instance, skills are mostly know-how. Hence, in said fields, there would be a natural tendency to expand what is either known or filling in what is consciously unknown. In contrast, the fourth study in this thesis draws attention to an ontological opposite, i.e., tacit unknowns. The act of dwelling on unknown unknowns could potentially help organizations to leapfrog to radically new vantage points. Such dwelling, however, is easier said than done, and practical guidelines are welcome. This dissertation’s fourth study hopefully triggers the development of a practical toolkit for meditations on tacit unknowns. For instance, rather than building knowledge maps or learning pathways, which are common in established entities, organizations could benefit from ignorance maps or deliberate forgetting. A toolkit for better understanding tacit unknowns could, once available, provide concrete guidance on how to articulate such deliverables.
2. ***Expanding the notion of uncertainty.*** All organizations deal with uncertainties to some degree. Typically, these are operationalized as “risk.” What this means, in practice, is that assessors calculate probabilities of things going wrong and propose various ways for mitigating such events. Hence, this thinking is steeped in known knowns and known unknowns. The essay on tacit ignorance, however, challenges this conception of

uncertainty as a risk. Instead, it prompts practitioners to consider expanding the notion of uncertainty and incorporate tacit unknowns in its scope. Here, the abovementioned toolkit for meditations on tacit unknowns could be of value. Beyond such endeavors to engage in applied research, however, there is also merit in reconsidering governance structures. Their well-known propensity to especially suppress dissent, as well as intuition, should be cause for reassessment, as such matters can be crucial in identifying traces of unknown unknowns.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This dissertation sought to examine how social enterprises and their leaders operate when their resources are exceedingly scarce, and circumstances change rapidly. After surveying the scholarly social entrepreneurship landscape, the thesis' first empirical study illuminated bricolage, noting that "making do" may intertwine with strategy. The second empirical study explained how generative leaders instigate movement in social enterprises. Lastly, in a conceptual essay, we explored the meaning of tacit ignorance from an organizational theory perspective; this form of ignorance is prevalent in social enterprises in highly dynamic, resource-poor contexts.

In this final chapter, we revisited our overarching research question, summarized the research outcomes, the dissertation's broader implications, and underlying limitations. We also presented ideas for future studies and recounted the thesis' practical relevance. I trust this dissertation makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of social enterprises and their increasing importance in society.