

This text is forthcoming in Douglas, H., & Grant, S. (Eds.) (2013). *Social entrepreneurship and enterprise: Concepts in context*. Melbourne: Tilde University Press.

Governing the social through ‘social entrepreneurship’: A Foucauldian view of ‘the art of governing’ in advanced liberalism

Pascal Dey

University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, pascal.dey@unisg.ch

ABSTRACT

This chapter probes how Foucault’s work can contribute to a political understanding of social entrepreneurship. Concretely, building on Foucault’s work on the ‘art of governing’, social entrepreneurship gets reflected in its relationship to neoliberal governmentality. Conceiving social entrepreneurship as an answer to that little ‘something’ which has been kept vacant after the ostensible demise of the welfare system, I suggest that social entrepreneurship defines a ‘programmable reality’ in which entrepreneurial modes of self-fashioning become sensible, even mandatory. Delineating how ‘social entrepreneurship’ turns the social into a space of competition, individual responsibility and self-organisation by demanding entrepreneurial virtues and behaviours from people who until recently were not envisioned as entrepreneurs, the point is made that the formation of enterprising subjects is anything but an omnipotent and totalitarian process. The chapter hence concludes that studies of neoliberal governmentality need to go alongside qualitative inquiries of actual practices of self-formation, for it is only by studying how governing unfolds on the local level that the struggles and contradictory relationship between power and subjectivity can be grasped.

KEYWORDS: Social entrepreneurship, governmentality, neoliberalism, power, subjectivity, resistance, Foucault.

INTRODUCTION

In academic circles as elsewhere, it is common to conceive of the rise of social entrepreneurship primarily as a more or less spontaneous reaction to state and market failure. Yet, what is usually ignored in this *ex nihilo* perspective are the many people and institutions which lend social enterprises and social entrepreneurs their support by contributing money, knowledge and legitimacy. Different actors from academia, the community and the business sector have participated in mainstreaming social entrepreneurship (Nicholls & Young, 2008; Hervieux, Gedajlovic & Turcotte, 2010). Such relations necessarily have a formative effect in that social enterprises and entrepreneurs are called on to emulate the values and behaviours of those who support them (O'Connor, 2006). In many countries, notably the United Kingdom, government has been at the forefront in promoting social entrepreneurship (Nicholls, 2010). Commentators have been quick in suggesting that government uses its access to important resources to determine, in the strict sense of 'dominating', the trajectories of subjects and organisations in the social sector. For instance, it has been argued that compliance with the social entrepreneurship 'template' is achieved by influencing practitioners' cognition and behaviour based on the purposeful manipulation of economic resources (Mason, 2012). Contractualism and other forms of managerial control are seen as particularly effective for rendering organisations in the social sector more enterprising (Curtis, 2008). Moreover, social entrepreneurship policies are construed as "opportunistic mechanisms [of government] with which to implement new disciplinary mechanisms" (Levander, 2010, p. 214). What is more, social entrepreneurship's embodiment of the market discourse (Dart, 2004) has been identified as a serious threat to social organisations' mission (Seanor & Meaton, 2008). However, we might have been too easily seduced into believing that 'social entrepreneurship' is a deterministic force that transforms organisations and individuals in the social sector, more or less directly, into enterprising subjects with the ultimate aim of advancing the cause of neoliberal politics (Edwards, 2008).

Though it appears intuitively compelling to construe social entrepreneurship as an important means for constituting the social sector as a 'governable terrain' (Carmel & Harlock, 2008), it makes far less sense to purport that social entrepreneurship is a "euphemism for incorporating activists into the realm of market relations" (Scandrett, 2010, p. 1). The danger that arises from such trenchant evaluations is that we end up thinking of social entrepreneurship exclusively in negative terms, reducing it to an instrument of the elite who try to advance their own political agendas at the expense of others, and thus to buttress their privileged position in society. To evade mistaking social entrepreneurship for a

‘dominant discourse’ produced by those in power to undermine the democratic spirit of the social sector, I would like to summon the work of Foucault, particularly as it pertains to the ‘art of governing’, to kindle an understanding of social entrepreneurship’s role in scripting the subjectivity of the social sector according to the conditions of the ‘era of austerity’ (Clarke & Newman, 2012). The aim here is to demonstrate that social entrepreneurship involves a modification of the nexus between the state, civil society and the market, which is chiefly based on a normalisation of competition, a focus on responsibility and freedom, and the production of subjects who are able to relate to, and constantly align themselves with the national interests. Pinpointing how the objects of neoliberal governmentality (i.e. people in the social sector who are expected to act and think like entrepreneurs) always retain a, however fragile, possibility for resistance, this chapter closes by rebuilding a sensibility for the contradictory nature of governing, placing particular attention on framing the social sector as a space where the dialectics of power and resistance engage in an agonistic relationship of ‘permanent provocation’ (Foucault, 1982).

The present chapter is structured along the following lines. The next section offers a brief reflection on different understandings of neoliberalism, culminating in the explication of the contours of Foucault’s neologism ‘governmentality’. This is followed by a more focused analysis of the nexus between social entrepreneurship and neoliberal governmentality, which *inter alia* looks at how social entrepreneurship conjures up a post-welfarist regime of the social which produces an ideal subject based on the tropes of entrepreneurship, responsibility and self-organisation. The chapter concludes that advancing our understanding of social entrepreneurship as a tactic of neoliberal governmentality requires embedded qualitative inquiries of whether and how social entrepreneurship programmes and policies are able (or not) to structure people’s field of action and identity (Foucault, 1982), thus homing in on the “messiness, complexity and unintended consequences involved in the struggles around subjectivity” (McKee, 2009, p. 465).

BACKGROUND

Recent comments have suggested that social entrepreneurship is somehow “naturally” related with advanced liberalism or neoliberalism. For instance, Mair (2011) suggests that social entrepreneurship is more likely to occur in liberal economies. Grant (2008) further shows that the scope of contemporary social enterprises in New Zealand was influenced by neoliberal reforms dating back to the 1980s. Cook, Dodds and Mitchell (2003) add that social entrepreneurship “is the means that Third Way writers propose to reconstruct welfare and

involves building social partnerships between the public, social and business sectors” (p. 57), while harnessing market behaviour in the interest of public goals. The figure of the social entrepreneur has further been associated with “efforts to privatise goods and services, and to restructure social services with a ‘neoliberal’ twist” (Ziegler, 2009, p. 14). Largely concurring with these interpretations, I take them as a starting point to introduce the merits which derive from governmentality studies for a political understanding of social entrepreneurship. I begin by highlighting the relationship between social entrepreneurship and neoliberalism from the viewpoint of ideology, thus carving out the unique potential of Foucauldian thinking by means of comparison.

The ideological view: Social entrepreneurship as a smoke-screen

Social entrepreneurship has been criticised for being a neoliberal strategy for social service provision (Dey & Steyaert, 2012). Especially among practitioners, concerns have been raised that social entrepreneurship forms a smoke-screen which conceals the real conditions of the social sector; social entrepreneurship is produced and disseminated by the state and associated actors to cover up government failures and in particular to conceal government’s share of the responsibility in the looming ‘death of the social’. The ideological operation thus consists in making virtues related with entrepreneurial behaviour, economic prudence, and collectivism palatable for as many citizens as possible. In other words, the ideological perspective implies that social entrepreneurship’s function as an instrument of state power is mainly to secure that civil society will take care of itself, thus containing revolutionary impulses which might surface in the wake of neoliberal reforms of the social (Wacquant, 2010). By extension, social entrepreneurship gets construed as part of an ideological hegemonic project (Springer, 2012) whose principle aim is to organise society in line with the interests of the affluent strata of society. Such hegemony involves elite actors from the private sector, and on the other hand the ‘capitalist state’ whose primary role is to protect the former’s interests (Guattari, 2009).

There are a number of problems conveyed by this view of framing social entrepreneurship as part of an ideological hegemonic project which tries to govern the populace in a ‘top down’ manner. A first problem is that it instigates a strict separation between ‘false consciousness’ on the one hand, and the ‘true’ social condition of the people on the other. This distinction is problematic to the extent that it contains “the deep conviction that there is a true being of society, and that society will be just if it is brought into conformity with this true being, and therefore one can draw just prescriptions from a description that is true, in the sense of ‘correct’” (Lyotard & Thébaud, 1985, p. 23). Consequently, delineating social entrepreneurship as an ideology means that it stands in opposition to something else

which is supposed to count as truth. For Foucault (1980, 2000), this dichotomy between truth and non-truth is untenable for it neglects that the ‘truth’ also is always socially mediated and thus ‘produced’.

To be sure, ‘social entrepreneurship’ has permeated common sense and has no doubt affected the discursive boundaries of what qualifies as legitimate and illegitimate behaviour and knowledge in the social sector (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008). But this alone does not explain why and how individuals become social entrepreneurs. We have to be doubtful of whether simple ideological shifts (e.g. from community to individual action; from capacity building to managerial problem solving) will suffice to transform individuals in the social sector into entrepreneurial subjects (Jones & Spicer, 2009). A further problem of a purely ideological understanding of social entrepreneurship is that it might end up favouring individual institutions such as the state over networks and, most significantly, strategies and practices. Aligning social entrepreneurship too closely with the state or any other ‘powerful actor’ (Mason, 2012) might support the impression of a simple causality. Thus, any attempt to understand social entrepreneurship from the standpoint of a particular institution makes oneself prone to simply trying to explain the former through the latter, thus essentially explaining power with recourse to power (Foucault, 1982). The crucial danger involved in such ideological inquiries is that one might over-emphasise the role of particular institutions in shaping the social while simultaneously turning a blind eye towards the local practices of self-formation through which individuals become particular subjects. It is to these conundrums that Foucault’s (neoliberal) governmentality offers some pertinent answers.

Neoliberal governmentality

The focal attention in Foucault’s (1988, 1991) seminal work on the ‘art of governing’ or ‘governmentality’, two terms which he used synonymously, was on how power works to shape individuals in accordance with particular logics or, more precisely, rationalities. A first point to be noted is that governmentality, contrary to popular belief, sees governing not as the sole duty and responsibility of the state. Stepping beyond the narrow limits of state-based power, governmentality conceives of the governing as a shared activity in which a variety of non-state actors (from the voluntary and business sector) participate (Hindess, 2005). While Foucault was quite generally interested in issues of government in different historical eras, the term ‘governmentality’ was mainly used to allude to the ways in which government had changed from the Middle Ages to the neoliberal era.

Now, given the many different meanings attached to the concept neoliberalism (Ward & England, 2007), it should be borne in mind that the present usage of the term does not

indicate a laissez-fair politics justified by a “government sucks” story (Marens, 2008). As is broadly accepted in the scholarly community, whenever one speaks of neoliberalism a distinction needs to be made between its theory and its actual practice or reality (Ferguson, 2010). For instance, the reality of neoliberalism is often related not so much with the actual retreat of the state (as theory would have it) but with the reframing of the state’s role in conjunction with the task of governing (Isin, 1998). Rather than shrinking in size and power, neoliberalism as a practice of governing entails fundamental shifts in the state’s *modus operandi* where formal forms of governing (read sovereign power) are increasingly complemented with informal ones. This new politics is sub-political in the sense that it takes place beyond, or partly outside of the influence of the state (Holzer & Sørensen, 2003), while nevertheless ascribing the state an important role in creating and securing the conditions of competition (Cotoi, 2011).

This clarification is important to the extent that many interpretations of neoliberalism are still premised on a zero-sum logic which suggests that the neoliberal ‘roll back’ of the state is accompanied by a similar increase in the power of non-state actors. The zero-sum logic is misleading because it turns a blind eye to the fact that the state in many liberal countries still plays an eminent role in supporting, funding and encouraging non-state actors (Sending & Neumann, 2006). What the zero-sum logic ignores is that the state’s power to influence society might not have ceased, but changed its form. Hence while the primary role of the state in neoliberal government is to embody a “principle of competition and maximisation in the categories of perception and practice of social agents and institutions” (Hilgers (2012, p. 81), this ethos of competition is introduced less through the exercise of sovereign power, but rather through extending political forms of government to forms of self-regulation (Lemke, 2002). Neoliberalism implies a shift in the philosophy of governing in that governing is performed not so much on passive objects, but by directly conferring responsibility to individuals and collectives outside of the state. That such non-state actors are increasingly offered active involvement in resolving the issues which were previously dealt with by the state does not signal the demise of the state but, rather, that governing is extended to those who were hitherto only seen as objects of governing (Sending & Neumann, 2006). Consequently, neoliberal governmentality entails, above all, the distributed strategies and practices through which people are encouraged to govern themselves through their own volition (Burchell, 1996), and in the best interest of society.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, NEOLIBERAL GOVERNMENTALITY AND THE POST-WELFARIST REGIME OF THE SOCIAL

Bluntly put, neoliberal governmentality consists of managing populations by bringing individuals in line with political rationalities (Rose, 1996a), thus essentially producing ‘active citizens’ who are located in a “network of obligations towards themselves and others” (Powell & Steel, 2012, p. 2). This ‘responsibilization’ of society presupposes the discursive production of social realities and subjectivities which produce a certain action-orientation on the part of those being governed (Springer, 2012), and an understanding that the ethos of enterprise offers the most pertinent account for promoting welfare. Hence, to properly understand how practitioners in the social sector are exhorted to become social entrepreneurs, the first question being posed here is: “what is the specific reality which social entrepreneurship helps produce?” In the second step, I address the question “what forms of new subjectivity are introduced as an ideal for governing the social sector?” The last subsection then sheds light on the notorious disjuncture between the sort of political realities and subjectivities ‘social entrepreneurship’ implies and those which it actually produces, claiming that the perpetual “failure” of social entrepreneurship epitomises instances of possible reversal and resistance.

Social entrepreneurship and the political transformation of the social

Social entrepreneurship is part of a political project to the extent that it discursively transforms the way we think about, and act in the social sector. Social entrepreneurship offers a novel language for thinking about how to best go about conducting the social sector, thus addressing “who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed” (Gordon, 1991, p. 3). Although representing a fluid discourse that constantly shifts its meaning (Teasdale, 2012), it is safe to claim that the problematisation of the welfare state is the discursive register upon which ‘social entrepreneurship’ is built and to which it lends support and legitimacy (Nicholls & Cho, 2006; Peredo, 2011). The problematisation of the welfare state is by no means a new phenomenon, dating back to the 1970s (Dey, 2007). However, especially in the wake of the global financial crisis, it has become commonplace to assert that the welfare state is a thing of the past. The rhetoric of austerity, in particular, has proclaimed that the demise of publicly supported welfare networks is inevitable, while envisioning a shift of responsibility from state to non-state actors within civil society as the most pertinent strategy for moving forward. Importantly, the current crisis of globalised capitalism has not just assigned civil society a central role in solving the current ills; rather, it has in many places turned economic problems into social ones by shifting the locus of ‘austerity’ from the private sector to the public space. For instance, media and corporate discourses have moved the focus from the failures of the financial industry in the USA and UK to the level of nation states (Clarke &

Newman, 2012). This re-focus had the distinct effect in many countries of placing further heed on the “unwieldy and expensive welfare state and public sector, rather than [on] high risk strategies of banks, as the root cause of the crisis” (Clarke & Newman., p. 230). Whilst public debate in these countries, as well as in other liberal societies such as Greece, Spain, France or Ireland, is still strongly focused on allocating responsibility for the current crisis, these debates have also discursively transformed the ‘crisis of the social’ into a technical problem that calls for pragmatic (read apolitical and non-ideological) solutions (Rose, 1996b). Social entrepreneurship is thus to be seen as an answer to the ‘crisis of the social’ which, due to its emphasis on managerial problem-solving, gets to depoliticise not only the social, but also the state and the market. As Cho (2006) points out in this regard: “The social entrepreneur asks ‘How can I mobilize resources to solve this issue,’ rather than ‘why does this issue exist?’” (p. 47).

At heart, social entrepreneurship does not instigate the death of the social but the emergence of a kind of sociality which is properly aligned with the demands of the economy (and not the other way around). This sociality, which Dean (2010) calls a post-welfarist regime of the social, has as its main principle the unleashing of the entrepreneurial spark of civil society. One can see that the role of government in the post-welfarist regime of the social is to “constantly intervene, but on society, rather than on the economy itself [...] by encouraging entrepreneurship in all areas of life, including those areas that were traditionally alien to the economic way of thinking and acting” (Guala, 2006, p. 6). The UK coalition government’s Big Society program (Alcock, 2010) offers an emblematic case of the ‘becoming entrepreneurial’ of the social. Stressing civil society’s redemptive qualities by conjuring a golden past whereby voluntary organisations, co-operatives and mutual organisations supposedly delivered welfare services effectively and without the need for government intervention (Teasdale, Alcock & Smith, 2012), the Big Society is an “endorsement of the positive and proactive role that [...] social enterprise could play in promoting improved social inclusion and ‘fixing Britain’s broken society’” (Alcock, 2010. p. 380). The Big Society has strong affinities with von Hayek’s theory of spontaneous self-organisation, notably his vision of the Great Society based on a liberal polity (i.e. free market, limited government, and the rule of law; McNamara & Hunt, 2007). In this Hayekian universe, social entrepreneurship works to posit “the need for a change in attitude, approach, behaviour and, ultimately, culture, in the voluntary sector” (Grenier, 2009, p. 198). Even more, the post-welfarist regime posits that the social fully evolves only on the condition that the state withdraws from its role in direct welfare provision. Social entrepreneurship thus

points at the positive possibilities which emanate from conditions of (financial) scarcity: it is only if left to their own devices that individuals and organisations in the social sector will realise their full potential, developing various strategies and practices which will incrementally create an optimum social structure outside of welfare dependency.

Whilst social entrepreneurship gives rise to a post-welfarist regime of the social premised upon the principle of self-organisation, we now need to look more specifically at the connection between the problematisation of welfare and the sort of ideal subjects this problematisation spawns.

The production of the social entrepreneur

Neoliberal governmentality depends primarily on the promotion of ideal or suitable subjects (Burchell, 1996), that is, subjects who concur with market principles of competition and entrepreneurship. Governmentality implies that subjects are produced rather than already existing. This reflects Foucault's anti-humanism (Paden, 1987), which strictly opposes the idea of an autonomous subject, and instead delineates subjectivity as a particular truth effect. The act or, to use Foucault's (2008) own language, art of neoliberal governing consists mainly of promoting entrepreneurship to inject the logic of competition into all forms of social life (Gane, 2012), all the way down to the individual. The assumption thus, is that the individual is to some extent the "fictitious atom of an "ideological" representation" (Foucault, 1984, p. 204). In the particular case of post-welfarism, "ideology" creates subjects who prevail under conditions of economic scarcity precisely because they assume responsibility for themselves and others by dint of acting and thinking like entrepreneurs.

Although the production of such ideal subjects is by no means automatic or inevitable; the point to be stressed here is that a crucial function of 'social entrepreneurship' is to offer individuals in the social sector a normative script which compels them to internalise entrepreneurial principles and values out of practical necessity. Whilst neoliberal governmentality quite generally seeks to endow individuals with an entrepreneurial ethos, its method consists of changing individuals' souls (Hilgers, 2012). The transformation of the social sector hence depends on the provision of ethical principles and practical know-how (i.e. skills, aptitudes, motivations) that instruct individuals how to be successful in the post-welfarist regime of the social. The central invocation of 'social entrepreneurship' comprises reason as a core element in that everyone is (or should be) able to understand that the best way forward as a charity manager, social leader and community activist in the 'age of austerity' is to believe in the ideas of management and business entrepreneurship, that is, to freely endorse them in the conduct of oneself as a responsible subject.

As Newman (2011) further points out, choice is a central ingredient for summoning the citizen to take on new roles in conjunction with welfare state reforms. Essentially, the idea of free choice entails a double operation (Rose, 1999): the individual in the social sector is not simply free to act entrepreneurially, but obliged to use his or her freedom to make a change in society. Practitioners *cum* social entrepreneurs must thus actively and constantly use their ability to make proper choices in order to transform both individual and societal potentialities into actualities. The logic of choice forms a vital strategy for drawing the contours of communities in which individuals freely and autonomously work upon themselves so as to play, as one of the UK's former prime ministers put it in a position paper on parental responsibility, a vibrant part in society (Blair, 1994). It is under conditions of freedom that the individual learns to make the right choices to take care of his or her own fate (Rose, 1999). 'Free choice' works to conceive of responsibility – in terms of the self as well as of society – as a matter of individual provision. Peredo (2011) provides a point in case by mentioning that social entrepreneurship gets envisioned through the discourse of possessive individualism which stresses attributes such as alertness, inventiveness, risk-taking propensity while pointing out how talented individuals use those skills to create and distribute social goods. As Dean (2008) further makes clear, the trope of individual responsibility is the primary strategy for transforming societal challenges into problems of proper 'self-management'. Social entrepreneurship thus represents the *par excellence* image of how even under conditions of scarcity and precariousness, it is still possible to retain resilience and act in a responsible manner. To this end, the social entrepreneur transforms life itself into an enterprise, using the know-how of management and business entrepreneurship to organise life in terms of choices, challenges and opportunities.

As said, the shift from the welfare state to the post-welfarist world of spontaneous self-organisation is anything but spontaneous. Rather than being a miraculous effect of laissez-faire politics, the post-welfarist regime of the social is based on a network of disparate actors (among them business schools, investment banks, venture capitalists, incubators, think tanks and policy-makers) who are related to, and thereby support one another, through particular discourses, laws, philanthropic and business initiatives. Though the significance and particular contribution of the state in this post-welfarist regime might vary from one country to another, there are plenty of examples where government plays a crucial role in fostering active social entrepreneurs by creating apt conditions on both the level of discourse and on the level of financial resources. England represents a fitting example as it is said to have the most developed institutional support structure for social entrepreneurship in the

world (Nicholls, 2010), which uses diverse policies and programmes to promote entrepreneurial and business-like values and practices in quite diverse areas such as health, social care and regeneration (Baines, Bull, & Woolrych, 2010). The UK Office of Civil Society, founded under the coalition government in 2010, is probably the most manifest attempt to stimulate an entrepreneurial ethos in the social sector by enabling people to develop social enterprises and thus become social entrepreneurs (Powell & Steel, 2012). Whilst such endeavours might either be supported or contested by various non-state actors, a first point to be noted here is that governmentality implies precisely that the normalisation of particular political realities and subjectivities cannot be explained solely from the standpoint of (networks of) institutions (Foucault, 1982). The promotion of social entrepreneurial subjectivity must be construed as the result of variegated and polymorphous practices, which involves, but is not limited to activities such as business competitions, social entrepreneurship awards and courses, media reports, practitioner guide-books and best-management approaches. Although these practices are quite heterogeneous, Foucault (2008) reminds us that the heterogeneity of any system is often “overcome” by a strategic connection of its parts. That is, although different, even contradictory, ways of fostering social entrepreneurship might exist (Teasdale, 2012), these diverse sets of practices are united in a strategic game whose ultimate aim is the production of the conditions (i.e. realities and subjectivities) which facilitate a more entrepreneurial model of welfare provision (Dean, 2010).

The ubiquity of ‘counter-conducts’ on the level of practice

The contention so far has been that neoliberalism has not produced the death of the social, but the emergence of a post-welfarist regime of the social (Dean, 2010) which seeks to create the conditions under which individuals in the social sector can be acted upon as entrepreneurs with the aim of optimising their capacity for social production. Obviously, the reality enacted by ‘social entrepreneurship’ is necessarily selective in that certain issues and conditions of proper (co)existence are emphasised and others marginalised or neglected. For instance, social entrepreneurship causes a discursive marginalisation of community issues as well as “complex values and meanings behind the *social*” (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008, p. 291; emphasis in original), thus instigating a semantic shift from “political engagement to problem fixing, collective action to individual entrepreneurs, and from democratic structures to a focus on social purpose” (Parkinson & Howorth, 2008.). By the same token, favouring managerial and entrepreneurial rationalities over alternative ‘truth regimes’, social entrepreneurship leads to a subservience of the social to economic rationalities which in turn marginalise practices

and values pertaining to, for instance, solidarity, participation, trust, dialogue and exchange (Eikenberry, 2009).

This being said, it must be kept in mind that social entrepreneurship does not stand in a deterministic relationship to subjectivity. As Deleuze (1988) eloquently put it: “subjectivity is derived from power and knowledge without being dependent on them” (p. 101). What this means for the topic at hand is that despite continuous attempts to make the social more enterprising, one will find many exceptions to the self-optimising subject (Hilgers, 2011). To be sure, these ‘exceptions’ are not to be seen as a blind-spot in Foucault’s work for he never considered neoliberal governmentality as being anywhere close to a neo-Weberian ‘iron cage’. Instead, Foucault (1982) was well aware that “there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight” (p. 225). Acknowledging that power seldom produces what it intends, Foucault (2007) in one of his last lectures coined the term ‘counter-conducts’ to delineate “the tactical reversals to which rationalities of governmentality are prone” (Binkley, 2009, p. 75). The idea of counter-conduct thus responds to the allegation that studies of governmentality tend to remain quiet with regard to questions of agency, thus loosing “sight of the fact that people create meanings and practices” (Bevir, 2010, p. 431).

Such counter-conducts are well documented in the realm of social entrepreneurship. Studies from England have demonstrated that practitioners’ linguistic practices and identity formations were often at odds with the strategic intentions of the organisations which fund, promote and coach them. For instance, Howorth, Parkinson and McDonald (2011) show that the language being employed by policy-makers, social entrepreneurship incubators and the like is not in accord with how practicing social entrepreneurs perceive their realities. Baines, Bull and Woolrych (2010), studying initiatives intended to advance entrepreneurial and business-like approaches in the realm of public service delivery, show that government authorities (i.e. public sector commissioners) and third sector organisations often face difficulties in relating to the other party’s world view and assumptions. Conducting interviews with participants of a social enterprise network leads Seanor and Meaton (2007) to conclude that most interviewees come to reject the prevailing image of the heroic leader and even deny wanting to become social entrepreneurs. Parkinson and Howorth (2008), inquiring into the language conventions of social entrepreneurs, provide evidence that practitioners’ linguistic references differ both from those of business entrepreneurs and from UK social enterprise policies. Though the analysis revealed that social entrepreneurs’ discursive accounts do, in part, echo the political context in which they work, it also showed that business terminology was often framed negatively. Parkinson and Howorth (2008) provide evidence that social

entrepreneurs' articulations are at odds with UK social enterprise policies, which rely on a managerially defined rhetoric of enterprise that promotes efficiency, business discipline and financial independence. In a similar vein, Froggett and Chamberlayne (2004), using a biographical account, document how practitioners' stories sidestep New Labour discourses of social enterprise in England, which stresses individualism and a consumerist and modernisation-oriented model of community development.

As these investigations evidence, the 'art of governing' takes on an entirely different meaning if studied on a local level, that is, at the level of the 'witches' brew' of actual practices (Brownlie, 2011). In this context, social entrepreneurs do not necessarily reproduce and perpetuate political subjectivities and systems of knowledge (Curtis, 2008), they also contribute "to their displacement and transformation" (Jones, et al., 2009, p. 881). That social entrepreneurship does not operate as muscular discourse which more or less deterministically 'makes up' its subjects (Hacking, 2002) is summed up eloquently by Parkinson and Howorth (2008) who claim that "discursive shifts [towards dominant entrepreneurship discourse], driven by policy-makers, funders, the sector and academics alike, do not necessarily infiltrate ideology at the level where the action is located" (p. 305). Practitioners in the social sector are well capable of decentring the norms associated with 'social entrepreneurship'. Yet, this does not mean that practitioners can autonomously choose who and what they want to be. Their agency is not total, but situated (Bevir, 2010), meaning that agency is enacted as practitioners in the social sector choose, or creatively combine, discourses which are available to them at any given time. Such discursive processes can be seen as acts of resistance as practitioners achieve to appropriate the initial intent of 'social entrepreneurship' so as to produce alternative forms of identity (Dey & Teasdale, 2013). Consequently, although it may be impossible to completely step outside of the influence of 'social entrepreneurship', practitioners in the social sector might nevertheless find ways to create meaning which transgresses the programmable reality of governmental reason.

DISCUSSION

In light of what has just been said, it might appear as though studying the 'art of governing' from the top or from the bottom might produce largely incompatible insights. Where the macro-perspective of governing seems to suggest that the subject is fully caught up in the process of his/her own subordination, a micro-perspective seems to imply the exact opposite: resistance is everywhere (Nealon, 2008). However, the problem is not one of incommensurability, but is precisely related to the fact that researchers often treat the two

levels of governing separately, thus either focusing on the interventions that seek to redefine the role and responsibilities of the individual through strategies of self-control, or emphasising the ubiquitous instances of micro-resistance on the local level. A productive way of sidestepping this fallacy is to conceive of the two levels as belonging together. Hence, rather than studying governing exclusively on the somewhat abstract ‘program of conduct’ level or the level of local speech and identity formation, the level of analysis at the interface of these two strata would precisely be tensions or ‘struggles’ (Fleming & Spicer, 2008). In this view, governing and resistance are inseparable, standing in an agonistic relationship of ‘permanent provocation’ (Foucault, 1982). Combining studies of governmentality with qualitative inquiries of micro-resistance makes it possible to bring to the forefront the contradictory nature of governing, notably by unravelling the “messiness, complexity and unintended consequences involved in the struggles around subjectivity” (McKee, 2009, p. 465). Such a focus might lead to the realisation that the dialectic struggle between governmental programmes and policies aimed at transforming individuals in the social sector into social entrepreneurs and the resistance of these discursive stipulations at the level of everyday practice is on-going. In our scholarly research on social entrepreneurship, it must be emphasised how practitioners in social organisations learn to juggle competing ideologies (Bull, 2008), and to account for their choices by negotiating “their own understanding within their own particular worlds” (Cohen & Musson, 2000, p. 44).

Studying the complex lines of resistance and acceptance in the social sector will allow for a more nuanced understanding of how social entrepreneurship disorganises and reorganises the social sector which in turn opens up new opportunities for alternative modes of individual and collective existence.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Contrary to those who construe neoliberalism as a totalitarian project that aims to perpetuate extant relations of power, thus relying on “a set of mechanisms that can be controlled at will by a few selfish, omniscient individuals” (Hilgers, 2011, p. 357), Foucault abstained from judging neoliberalism with regard to its moral righteousness, let alone suggest better ways of governing society. This is not to say, however, that studies of neoliberal governmentality are merely descriptive in nature, thus lacking any critical currency whatsoever. As I have tried to demonstrate in conjunction with social entrepreneurship, the critical contribution of Foucault’s work on ‘the art of governing’ is located in its ability to disclose the discourses and polymorphous practices that are at the heart of, and thus sustain, seemingly natural

interventions into the social body (Guattari, 2009). Governmentality's contribution to a critical understanding of social entrepreneurship (Dey & Steyaert, 2012) is revealed in how seemingly necessary and inevitable reforms of the social are dismantled as cunning human achievements (Hacking, 2002). Foucault's work on the 'art of government' serves as a reminder that social entrepreneurship is not so much a pragmatic solution to wicked social problems based on the application of "result-oriented methods of a business entrepreneur" (Hsu, 2005, p. 61), but a deeply contingent and controversial endeavour aimed at regulating social conduct in particular ways. As elaborated above, apart from asking what sort of reality social entrepreneurship gives rise to, and to what kind of problems it is offered as a solution, the prime objective of a study of governmentality is to shed light on how social entrepreneurship tries to get "inside of people's mind" (Foucault, 1982, p. 214). It is by studying the recursive relationship between the polyvalent discourses of social entrepreneurship (Teasdale, 2012) and the sort of "shaping" they imply for institutions and subjects in the social sector that governmentality studies support us in cultivating a sensitivity for the dangers entailed in political usages of social entrepreneurship (Steyaert & Dey, 2010). However, a study of governmentality must go beyond inquiring what social entrepreneurship signifies or what kind of self-optimising subjects it implies so as to account for the concrete effects it creates at the level of actual practices. It is precisely because reality is more than a simple implementation of a plan that "disaster is never ineluctable" (Gordon, 1991, p. 47). As critical researchers, the task in front of us is to denaturalise the 'programmable reality' of social entrepreneurship by highlighting the ongoing tensions and dialectic struggles between the relations of power that try to transform the social sector into a governable terrain and the many counter-conducts which constantly transgress politically codified modes of self-optimisation (Foucault, 1998).

REFERENCES

- Alcock, P. (2010). Building the big society: A new policy environment for the third sector in England. *Voluntary Sector Review*, 1(3), 379-89.
- Baines, S., Bull, M., & Woolrych, R. (2010). A more entrepreneurial mindset? Engaging third sector suppliers to the NHS. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 6(1), 49-58.
- Bevir, M. (2010). Rethinking governmentality: Towards genealogies of governance. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 13(4), 423-441.
- Binkley, S. (2009). The work of neoliberal governmentality: temporality and ethical substance in the tale of two dads. *Foucault Studies*, 6, 60-78.
- Blair, T. (1994). Sharing responsibilities for crime. In A. Coote (Ed.), *Families, children and crime* (pp. 85-91). London: IPPR.
- Brownlie, J. (2004). Tasting the witches' brew: Foucault and therapeutic practices. *Sociology*, 38(3), 515-532.

- Bull, M. (2008). Challenging tensions: Critical, theoretical and empirical perspectives on social enterprise. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 14(5), 268-275.
- Burchell, G. (1996). Liberal government and techniques of the self. In A. Barry, T. Osborne & N. Rose (Eds.), *Foucault and political reason: Liberalism, neoliberalism and rationalities of government* (pp. 19-35). London: UCL Press.
- Carmel, E., & Harlock, J. (2008). Instituting the 'third sector' as a governable terrain: Partnership, performance and procurement in the UK. *Policy and Politics*, 36(2), 155-71.
- Cho, A. (2006). Politics, values and social entrepreneurship: A critical appraisal. In J. Mair, J. Robinson & K. Hockerts (Eds.), *Social entrepreneurship* (pp. 34-56). Basingstoke, Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Clarke, J., & Newman, J. (2012). The alchemy of austerity. *Critical Social Policy*, 32(3), 299-319.
- Cohen, L., & Musson, G. (2000). Entrepreneurial identities: Reflections from two case studies. *Organization*, 7(1), 31-48.
- Cook, B., Dodds, C., & Mitchell, W. (2003). Social entrepreneurship: False premises and dangerous forebodings. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 38, 57-71.
- Cotoi, C. (2011). Neoliberalism: A Foucauldian perspective. *International Review of Social Research*, 1(2), 109-124.
- Curtis, T. (2008). Finding the grit makes a pearl: A critical re-reading of research into social enterprise. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 14(5), 276-290.
- Dart, R. (2004). The legitimacy of social enterprise. *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 14(4), 411-424.
- Dean, M. (2008). Governing society: The story of two monsters. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 1(1), 25-38.
- Dean, M. (2010). *Governmentality: Power and rule in Modern society* (2nd d.). London: Sage.
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Foucault*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Dey, P. (2007). *On the name of social entrepreneurship: Business school teaching, research, and development aid*. University of Basel, Switzerland.
- Dey, P., & Steyaert, C. (2012). Social entrepreneurship: Critique and the radical enactment of the social. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 8(2), 90-107.
- Dey, P., & Teasdale, S. (2013). Social enterprise and dis/identification: The politics of identity work in the English third sector. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 35(2), 249-271.
- Edwards, M. (2008). *Just another emperor? The myths and realities of philanthrocapitalism*. New York: Demos.
- Eikenberry, A. (2009). Refusing the market: A democratic discourse for voluntary and nonprofit organizations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38(4), 582-596.
- Ferguson, J. (2010). The uses of neoliberalism. *Antipode*, 41, 166-184.
- Fleming, P., & Spicer, A. (2008). Beyond power and resistance: New approaches to organizational politics. *Management Communications Quarterly*, 21, 301-309.
- Foucault, M. (1980). Two lectures. In C. Gordon (Ed.), *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977* (pp. 78-108). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject of power. In H. L. Dreyfus & P. Rabinow (Eds.), *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics* (pp. 208-226). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, M. (1984). *The Foucault reader*. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.

- Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. H. Martin, H. Gutman & P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self: A seminar with Michel Foucault* (pp. 99-120). Amherst, USA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* (pp. 87-104). Hemel Hempstead, UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Foucault, M. (1998). A preface to transgression. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Aesthetic, method and epistemology* (pp. 29-52). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (2000). Truth and power. In J. D. Faubion (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (pp. 111-133). Toronto, Canada: Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, territory, population: Lecture at the Collège de France, 1977-1978*. New York: Palgrave.
- Foucault, M. (2008). *The birth of biopolitics: Lecture at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Basingstoke; UK: Palgrave.
- Froggett, L., & Chamberlayne, P. (2004). Narratives of social enterprise: From biography to practice and policy critique. *Qualitative Social Work*, 3(1), 61-77.
- Gane, N. (2012). The governmentalities of neoliberalism: Panopticism, post-panopticism and beyond. *The Sociological Review*, 60, 611-634.
- Gordon, C. (1991). Governmental rationality: An introduction. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault effect: studies of governmentality* (pp. 1-52). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Grant, S. (2008). Contextualising social enterprise in New Zealand. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 4, 9-23.
- Grenier, P. (2009). Social entrepreneurship in the UK: From rhetoric to reality? In R. Ziegler (Ed.), *An introduction to social entrepreneurship: Voices, preconditions, contexts* (pp. 174-206). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Guala, F. (2006). Review of Michel Foucault's the 'birth of biopolitics'. *Economics and Philosophy*, 22, 429-439.
- Guattari, F. (2009). *Chaosology: Texts and interviews 1972 – 1977*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Hacking, I. (2002). *Historical ontology*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Hervieux, C., Gedajlovic, E., & Turcotte, M. F. B. (2010). The legitimization of social entrepreneurship. *Journal of Enterprising Communities*, 4, 37-67.
- Hilgers, M. (2011). The three anthropological approaches to neoliberalism. *International Social Science Journal*, 61(202), 351-364.
- Hilgers, M. (2012). The historicity of the neoliberal state. *Social Anthropology*, 20(1), 80-94.
- Hindess, B. (2005). Politics as government: Michel Foucault's analysis of political reason. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 30(4), 389-413.
- Holzer, B., & Sørensen, M. P. (2003). Rethinking subpolitics: Beyond the 'iron cage' of modern politics? *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20(2), 79-102.
- Howorth C., Parkinson C., & Macdonald M. (2011). Discursive chasms: An examination of the language and promotion of social enterprise. In A. Southern (Ed.), *Enterprise, deprivation and social exclusion: The role of small business in addressing social and economic inequalities* (pp. pp. 249-260). London: Routledge.
- Hsu, C. (2005, October 31). Entrepreneur for social change. *U.S. News and World Report*, 63(16), 63-66.
- Isin, E. F. (1998). Governing Toronto without government: Liberalism and neoliberalism. *Studies in Political Economy*, 56, 169-191.
- Jones, R., Betta, M., Latham, J., & Gross, D. (2009). Female social entrepreneurship as a discursive struggle. *AGSE*, 871-885.
- Jones, C., & Spicer, A. (2009). *Unmasking the entrepreneur*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

- Lemke, T. (2002). Foucault, governmentality, and critique. *Rethinking Marxism*, 14, 49-64.
- Levander, U. (2010). Social enterprise: Implications of emerging institutionalized constructions. *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 1(2), 213-230.
- Lyotard, J. F., & Thébaud, J. L. (1985). *Just gaming*. Minneapolis, USA: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mair, J. (2011). Social entrepreneurship: Taking stock and looking ahead. In A. Fayolle & H. Matlay (Eds.), *Handbook on social entrepreneurship* (pp. 16-33). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Marens, R. (2008). Getting past the “government sucks” story: How government really matter.” *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 17(2), 84-94.
- Mason, C. (2012). Up for grabs: A critical discourse analysis of social entrepreneurship discourse in the United Kingdom. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 8(2), 123-140.
- McKee, K. (2009). Post-Foucauldian governmentality: What does it offer critical social policy analysis? *Critical Social Policy*, 29, 465-486.
- McNamara, P., & Hunt, L. (2007). *Liberalism, conservatism, and Hayek’s idea of spontaneous order*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nealon, J. T. (2008). *Foucault beyond Foucault: Power and its intensification since 1984*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Newman, J. (2011). *Participation, responsibility and choice: Summoning the active citizen in western European welfare states*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Nicholls, A. (2010). The legitimacy of social entrepreneurship: Reflexive isomorphism in a pre-paradigmatic field. *Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice*, 34, 611-633.
- Nicholls, A., & Cho, A.H. (2006). Social entrepreneurship: The structuration of a field. In A. Nicholls (Ed.), *Social entrepreneurship: New models of sustainable social change* (pp. vii-xxiii). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nicholls, A., & Young, R. (2008). Preface to the paperback edition. In A. Nicholls (Ed.), *Social entrepreneurship: New models of sustainable social change* (pp. vii-xxiii). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- O’Connor, E. (2006). Location and relocation, visions and revisions: Opportunities for social entrepreneurship. In C. Steyaert & D. Hjorth (Eds.), *Entrepreneurship as social change: A third movements in entrepreneurship book* (pp. 79-96). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Paden, R. (1987). Foucault’s anti-humanism. *Human Studies*, 10(1), 123-141.
- Parkinson, C., & Howorth, C. (2008). The language of social entrepreneurs. *Entrepreneurship and Regional Development*, 20, 285-309.
- Peredo, A. M. (2011). Social entrepreneurship. In L.-P. Dana (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of entrepreneurship* (pp. 410-414). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.
- Powell, J. L., & Steel, R. (2012). Policy, governmentality and governance. *Journal of Administration and Governance*, 7(1), 1-10.
- Rose, N. (1996a). Governing ‘advanced’ liberal democracies. In A. Barry, T. Osborne, & N. Rose (Eds.), *Foucault and political reason: Liberalism, neoliberalism and rationalities of government* (pp. 37-64). London: UCL Press.
- Rose, N. (1996b). The death of the social? Re-figuring the territory of government. *Economy and Society*, 25(3), 327-356.
- Rose, N. (1999). *Powers of freedom: Reframing political thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Scandrett, E. (2010). Editorial. *CONCEPT: The Journal of Contemporary Community Education Practice Theory*, 1(2), 1-2.
- Seanor, P., & Meaton, P. (2007). Making sense of social enterprise. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 3(1), 90-100.

- Seanor, P., & Meaton, P. (2008). Learning from failure, ambiguity and trust in social enterprise. *Social Enterprise Journal*, 4(1), 24-40.
- Sending, O. J. & Neumann, I. B. (2006). Governance to governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, states, and power. *International Studies Quarterly*, 50, 651-672.
- Springer, S. (2012). Neoliberalism as discourse: Between Foucauldian political economy and Marxian poststructuralism. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 9(2), 133-147.
- Steyaert, C., & Dey, P. (2010). Nine verbs to keep the social entrepreneurship research agenda 'dangerous'. *The Journal of Social Entrepreneurship*, 1(2), 231-254.
- Teasdale, S. (2012). What's in a name? Making sense of social enterprise discourses. *Public Policy and Administration*, 27(2), 99-119.
- Teasdale, S., Alcock, P., & Smith, G. (2012). Legislating for the big society? The case of the public services (social value) bill. *Public Money & Management*, 32(3), 201-208.
- Wacquant, T. (2010). Crafting the neoliberal state: Workfare, prisonfare and social insecurity. *Sociological Forum*, 25(2), 197-220.
- Ward, K., & England, K. (2007). Introduction: Social justice and neoliberalism. In A. Smith, A. Stenning & K. Willis (Eds.), *Social justice and neoliberalism: Global perspectives* (pp. 1-15). London: Zed Books.
- Ziegler, R. (2009). Introduction: Voices, preconditions, contexts. In R. Ziegler (Ed), *An introduction to social entrepreneurship: Voices, preconditions, contexts* (pp. 1-20). Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.