

# Chapter 5: Social Entrepreneurship Becoming Part of the Economy (2009–2014)

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## 5.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 3, the empirical analysis identified three different periods in the social entrepreneurship (SE) discourse(s) in Germany between 1999 and 2021 and this chapter will present the results of the empirical analysis for the second period, spanning from 2009 to 2014. In the media representation, SE is now increasingly understood as part of the economy, as taking place *in* the economy – which is an important difference to the first period, when SE was mainly seen as part of the welfare-producing ‘social’ infrastructure. For this second period, the findings are based on the analysis of 76 newspaper articles. In principle, the analysis followed the same guidelines for all periods (as described in Chapter 3). However, due to the strongly ‘open’ or inductive approach, each chapter follows its own structure, doing justice to the most relevant categories and themes of the respective period. The structure of this chapter thus, is not identical with the structure and sections of the previous chapter, in order to better focus on new themes and on changes and developments that may stand in contrast to the first period (1999–2008) and allowing me to present the results in dialogue with the previous chapter.

First, I will focus on the ‘sectoral’ perspective, arguing that, different to the first period, SE is now portrayed as a phenomenon that occurs mostly in the economy (see 5.2). I argue that this may be regarded as the main shift between the two periods, marking the beginning of the second period. Linked to this main shift, it was found that SE is more often embedded in a discussion of business ethics, as I will explain in Section 5.3. In addition, SE appears connected to the search for meaning or purpose in the work life, and becomes a career (option), especially for young people (5.4) Focusing on explanations, actors and value statements, Sections 5.5 to 5.7 will show that SE becoming part

of the economy entails various multi-layered and ambiguous aspects. Finally, 5.8 discusses the links between SE and the political context, including the role of the financial crisis of 2008.

## 5.2 Social Entrepreneurship as Business and Economy

As I have explained in the previous chapter (4), SE in the first period (1999–2008) was mainly presented as a phenomenon that is situated in the areas of the state and non-profit organisations and, therefore, mainly as part (and reform) of the social infrastructure and welfare production. In the second period (2009–2014), however, the analysed articles position SE mostly within the economy. A<sub>50</sub> is an example for this positioning, more precisely, describing SE as part of

[the] socially and ecologically sustainable economy (...) [and] the already existing scene of ethical business (A<sub>50\_taz\_20.03.2010</sub>).

A similar situating is found in A<sub>37</sub>, where SE is explained as a topic ‘of the economy’:

Social Entrepreneurship, or SE for short, has (...) become the ‘it’ topic of the economy. Its image has long left the dirty corner of hopeless idealists and self-proclaimed do-gooders (A<sub>37\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_24.07.2009</sub>).

Interestingly, the positioning here is contrasted with ‘the dirty corner of hopeless idealists and self-proclaimed do-gooders’ – most probably referring to people working in traditional social fields (or activists). This derogatory language about the social sector strongly reminds of the first period. However, the sectoral positioning of SE is different in this article, given that SE has left the social sector for the economy, so the argument goes.

Supporting this view is that SE organisations are now more often explicitly described as businesses, as for example in A<sub>44</sub>. Drawing on scientific authority (by referencing ‘researchers’), the article explains that:

researchers agree that social enterprises are primarily companies and not charitable organisations (A<sub>44\_Handelsblatt\_12.11.2009</sub>).

This situating of SE within the economy can also be observed in the relations that are drawn between social entrepreneurs or enterprises and other actors or institutions. In Chapter 4, I have demonstrated that, in the early period (1999–2008), narratives of SE often included state institutions and non-profit organisations. Instead, SE is now more often being compared to traditional companies (private sector businesses), as in A\_44, where it is claimed that:

[s]ocial entrepreneurs initially face greater challenges than traditional company founders (A\_44\_Handelsblatt\_12.11.2009).

A similar account was found in A\_70, explaining that in the SE field,

companies make a larger proportion of advance payments than in conventional sectors (A\_70\_Die Welt\_01.10.2011).

These articles, therefore, contrast the (business) practices of social enterprises against the business practices of commercial enterprises.

As in the first period, it should be noted that there is no uniform view of SE in the media representation in the second period (2009–2014). The dominant perspective of the first period – i.e., SE as a reform of the social infrastructure – does not completely disappear. For example, A\_65 still expresses this narrative quite vividly, explaining the need for SE as following:

There is no question today that social entrepreneurs are a great complement to government provision systems, welfare associations, self-help groups, or initiatives that are built on donations and compassion. They overcome things that until now have often prevented social change: poor management, political dependencies, a lack of professionalism and, above all, the lamenting about the evils and injustices in the world (A\_65\_Die Zeit\_28.04.2011).

This example, therefore, is holding on to the image of a deficient state and social sector that was so emblematic for the first period (1999–2008). However, this narrative definitely loses relevance in the second period, with this article (A\_65) being an exception instead of the dominant perspective. Furthermore, even in this example (which is the most explicit for this perspective in the second period), SE is presented as a *complement* to existing institutions of social welfare – and not as a *replacement* of these institutions. The tone is less dis-

missive of the state and of the actors and institutions of the 'social' sector, as compared to the first period.

These more moderate narratives may also come with descriptions of SE that are more down-to-earth, acknowledging that SE may not be the messianic solution to everything. In turn, different approaches and actors may have different strengths – and SE may be appropriate in some but not in all situations or fields. This is, for example, expressed in A\_94:

one [needs] to move away from the idea that social enterprises can solve every societal problem without requiring taxes or donations. After all, none of these companies function without income. "With a project for victims of abuse, however, you wouldn't want the abused to pay for themselves. Something like this can only be organized on an entrepreneurial basis if the state pays for the social services," says Beckmann. Things such as short-term emergencies after natural disasters, too, can only be bridged with donations (A\_94\_Welt am Sonntag\_28.04.2013).

Moreover, an idea of partnership between social enterprises and established institutions and actors (such as the state) is introduced here. This idea of partnership – sometimes including public institutions and sometimes private companies – was found in several articles in the second period (including A\_37, A\_51, A\_52, A\_72, A\_79, A\_81, A\_86). Article A\_79, for example, portrays a social entrepreneur (Dopstadt), who collaborates with different actors – both private companies and non-profit organisations:

Dopstadt (...) convinces companies to offer donations that non-profit organizations can then apply for: an electricity supplier donated a solar system, a newspaper publisher donated professional CD recordings and the evangelical magazine *Chrismon* several gifts of money (A\_79\_Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung\_12.05.2012).

An emphasis on partnerships was often found in articles on social enterprises in the field of (international) development. A\_71 provides a good example for this, telling the story of a former development aid professional turned social entrepreneur (Collenberg):

For (...) Collenberg it was clear early on that he would dedicate his career to development (aid). However, he did not find the right answers in the German development aid system. (...) The more experience he gained, the

stronger his conviction became that for an initiative to be self-sustaining in the long-term, ultimately only a locally managed company with an international network would work successfully (A\_71\_Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung\_07.10.2011).

The article goes on, explaining how Yunus's *Grameen Bank* as well as *Sekem* (another internationally known social enterprise) have served as role models for Collenberg's social enterprise *Kaite*, which consists of a company and a trust, complementing each other. About *Kaite*, the article then describes:

Ideally, the company should earn enough money to (...) finance the accompanying social tasks. However, this still exceeds the financial capabilities of the company. The trust is therefore dependent on donations from the German *Kaite Association* and on funds from international project partners such as the *United Nations Development Program* (UNDP) or the German development aid program. In cooperation with the *Weltfriedensdienst*, it was possible to secure a project commitment of almost half a million euros by the *Ministry for Development Cooperation* (BMZ). Collenberg invests a lot of time and effort in this project acquisition. But the effort is worth it, because "collaborating with good international partners is immensely important for companies and trusts, since the partners have different requirements, which oblige us to critically analyse our position time and time again, and which help us to move forward," emphasises Collenberg (A\_71\_Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung\_07.10.2011).

So, while Collenberg, the social entrepreneur, expresses his (personal) discontent with established forms of development and he certainly celebrates the 'new' and 'different' SE approach, represented by *Sekem* and the *Grameen Bank*, the way forward for him does not lie in a complete replacement or dismantling of the existing (development) field and its institutions. Instead, Collenberg's SE project functions in partnership with established actors (such as UNDP and BMZ), and they are described as necessary. As noted above, this is a different rhetoric as in the first period, when established institutions and actors (of the state and the 'social' field) were often depicted as entirely incompetent.

Moreover, it was found that (international) development as a field or area of SE is quite prominent in the second period, which brings me to the findings on specific examples and fields for SE that are portrayed in the media articles. As for the first period, all examples and references for SE or social entrepreneurs were identified and clustered into fields of action or areas of work. The identi-

fied fields further substantiate the sectoral shift between the first and the second period, showing that SE is now being increasingly presented as part of the economy.

For the second period (2009–2014), the most frequently occurring examples and references for SE are from the fields of ‘poverty reduction and development’ as well as from ‘sustainable production and goods’, both occurring 19 times in the articles. These fields are usually considered to belong to the economy – as compared to fields of the traditionally public or social realm, such as ‘education’. ‘Poverty reduction and development’ usually refers to activities in the Global South. The microcredit concept and in particular Yunus and the *Grameen Bank* have a prominent role here.<sup>1</sup> ‘Sustainable production and goods’ includes cooperatives and ventures around organic farming, food, fair trade, or sustainable clothing, among others. However, social enterprises that address work integration (e.g., for people with disabilities) or education, which were the most frequently represented fields in the first period, do not disappear: across the articles, there are 10 examples for work integration and 14 for education. Nonetheless, the rise of the field of sustainable goods and production to 19 examples is quite remarkable, since only one example from this field was included in the articles of the 1999–2008 period. Other fields of action for SE (but with less examples) are: health, support of self-employment or entrepreneurship, family and youth support, etc. Interesting, too, are a (few) ‘historic’ examples of SE that are referenced in the articles. In A\_105, for example, a comparison of SE is drawn to Carl Mez and Max Gütermann, two German entrepreneurs during the industrial revolution with a pronounced social responsibility agenda. In sum, the specific examples and portrayed fields of action in the media representation mainly position SE as part of the economy. This sectoral shift between the first and the second period comes with various key developments, which I will address in the following sections.

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1 As I have addressed in the previous chapter, Yunus was already a reference in several articles in the first period. The media attention for Yunus and the *Grameen Bank* is particularly high in the years after having received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006.

### 5.3 Social Entrepreneurship as Business Ethics and Reform of the Business School

An important finding for the second period is that SE often occurs within wider narratives that are concerned with business ethics. As I have explained in Chapter 4, even in the first period, SE was sometimes embedded in a discussion around business ethics, but this perspective was rather marginal. In the second period, instead, this is a main narrative – which may not come as a surprise, considering the wider political and social-economic context. In 2008, the financial and economic system was experiencing one of the most severe crises in recent history, in turn causing discontent with the global model of financial capitalism (e.g., Hart et al. 2010; Castells et al. 2012; Aigner et al. 2018), as I will further address in Section 5.8. Several articles (A\_36, A\_48, A\_50, A\_55, A\_59, A\_66, A\_91, A\_103) establish a direct link to the financial and economic crisis of 2008 and argue that the crisis and the need or demand for business ethics is the very reason for the existence of SE, or for why it is gaining popularity. For example, in A\_36 it is argued that there is a direct causality between the crisis and the raise of SE:

The economic crisis is causing that social entrepreneurship is gaining relevance. More and more MBA students question the previous economic models of profit maximization. “Many want to build careers in a more socially responsible way” (A\_36\_Handelsblatt\_06.03.2009).

A very similar explanation is offered in A\_103:

In recent years, the idealism of SE has found a lot of support and has gained popularity, above all as a result of the developments triggered by the financial crisis (A\_103\_Aachener Zeitung\_02.04.2014).

Sometimes, the articles include quite fundamental and substantial critique of the economy or the economic system, as in A\_68:

Social entrepreneurship is a hot topic. It meets the spirit of the time, which is looking for alternatives to the capitalist market economy, for beacons of an alternative way of doing things (A\_68\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_28.05.2011).

This idea of SE as an ‘alternative’ is also voiced in A\_76, where SE is framed as an:

alternative to the classical economy, as a ‘grassroots movement’ striving for a ‘new we-culture’ (A\_76\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_21.01.2012).

Similarly, A\_108 claims that SE is proposing a different way of organising the economy, as being part of or leading towards an:

economy of the future [which] will rely on cooperation instead of competition (A\_108\_Frankfurter Rundschau\_24.10.2014).

However, these perspectives that offer a systemic critique of the current economic (capitalist) model, presenting SE as an alternative to it, remain the exception. In most articles, the critique of the current economic model (capitalism) is rather moderate. Most importantly, even if the crisis is alluded to and even if the need for some sort of reform of business and the economy is expressed, the critique remains mostly on an individual – not on a systemic – level, as I will explain in the following paragraphs.

It was found that when SE appears in business ethics narratives, most of the time, SE appears linked to business education, in particular to MBA (Master of Business Administration) degrees – such as in the quote from A\_36 that was already included above. The reform that SE represents in these instances, therefore, is primarily a reform of the business school and of business education. This includes the way that business professionals are trained, but not necessarily the foundations or structures of the economic model as such. This is nicely presented in A\_48, quoting a high-ranking businessperson (Sattelberger) who is also described as an ‘MBA critic’:<sup>2</sup>

Since the beginning of the financial crisis, MBA education has stood in the pillory. MBA critic Sattelberger even considers misguided education as “a very important intellectual catalyst” of the crisis. After all, many of the responsible financial managers have an MBA degree (A\_48\_Die Zeit\_11.03.2010).

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2 Interestingly, Thomas Sattelberger, who at the time was a member of the board of directors at *Deutsche Telekom*, went into politics as a member of the German *Bundestag* for the liberal party *FDP* in 2017. He later became one of the main high-ranking politicians advocating for social entrepreneurship and social innovation.



After outlining the problem (the state of MBA education) and arguing that for a ‘new generation’ of students, money is not the main focus and that they have other priorities, a current MBA student (Corinna Thomassik) is quoted as following:

Corinna Thomassik can confirm that. “Many are concerned about the social value that their future job should have,” observes the 28-year-old, who began her MBA studies at *Saïd Business School* in September. She, too, decided to go to Oxford because there she could intensively study social entrepreneurship (A\_48\_Die Zeit\_11.03.2010).

SE – in this perspective – is presented as a reform of business education, which is considered to be under pressure. SE offers a way out for business schools and for MBA students and graduates, it allows the MBA system to remain current and to adapt to the changed (post-crisis) circumstances. A\_61 focuses on a specific business school: the *European Business School*.<sup>3</sup> The article is titled:

‘NOBLE – AND GOOD. THE EUROPEAN BUSINESS SCHOOL WANTS TO CHANGE ITS IMAGE’ (A\_61\_Die Zeit\_30.12.2010)

and then describes how the school wants to overcome its image. The article addresses the school’s allegedly elitist student body and a recent incident of students engaging in excessive drinking that apparently had made it into the news. Once more, a reference to the crisis of 2008 is made, with the argument that something needs to change in the business education system, which relies too heavily on returns on investment and shareholder value. The title, however, seems quite revealing, foregrounding the *image* of the business school. Arguably, the question remains, whether the proposed reform of business education – e.g., by integrating SE into the curriculum – is only aiming for a cosmetic image change or whether there is a more substantial concern about structural reform as well.

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3 The *European Business School* (EBS) was the first business school in Germany established after the US role models, i.e., private, expensive, and pursuing the aim of educating a future business elite.

## 5.4 The Search for 'Purpose' in Work – Social Entrepreneurship Becoming a Career (Option)

To some extent linked to the narrative around business ethics and business education, another important theme develops in the second period, namely: SE related to the search for meaning or purpose in the work life. The newspaper articles in the second period (2009–2014) often present 'purposeful' or 'meaningful' work as the reason for why SE exists – as the 'need' or justification for the SE phenomenon. It is often argued, such as in A\_91, that a widespread public discontent with the economic model has catalysed a quest for meaning – and that SE opens up a perspective for finding such meaning or purpose in work:

It's big words that social entrepreneurs play with in their company names and on their websites. Quite as big as the promise of social entrepreneurship itself (...). This idea has become increasingly popular over the past ten years, reinforced by the financial crisis, which is causing young people in particular to look for meaningful jobs (A\_91\_Die Zeit\_27.12.2012).

The claim that the quest for 'meaningful jobs' can be attributed especially to 'young people' and students in particular is a recurring theme. In A\_79, an academic (Beckmann) explains this as following:

Beckmann sees the reason for this rush [on SE] in a change in values: "Today, students define careers differently," says the researcher, "more and more well-trained graduates are primarily concerned with doing something meaningful in their jobs." (A\_79\_Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung\_12.05.2012).

Providing a similar narrative, focusing on students and their career expectations, the head of *Ashoka Germany* is quoted in A\_55:

"Many students ask themselves: What type of career do I want to pursue?" says Felix Oldenburg, Managing Director of *Ashoka Germany*. The global organization has been supporting social entrepreneurs since 1980. "The prospect of changing the world with economic concepts and still earning money at the same time is like the Holy Grail." (A\_55\_Die Zeit\_30.09.2010).

Focusing on a different demographic (not students) is article A\_102, unfolding the story of a former (music) manager, who has started his own social enter-

prise (selling cakes in cafés while employing a work integration model). The article initiates a debate around work, asking the question –

But how does someone end up giving up a well-paid dream job and trying something completely new? (A\_102\_Frankfurter Neue Presse\_25.03.2014).

– to then reveal:

“Working in the music industry was great,” the ex-manager recalls. “But there came a point in time when I wanted to do something more substantial.” (...) Those who are searching for meaning are mostly between their early 30s and mid-50s, says Scheidt. “Then you realize that not only life but also professional life is finite.” ‘Social entrepreneurship’ is the keyword (ibid.).

Here, SE is introduced – by a psychologist and career coach (Scheidt) – as the ‘keyword’, as the ‘solution’ to the problem, i.e., young professionals wanting to do ‘something more substantial’. In many ways, this explanation is similar to the symbol of the ‘Holy Grail’ that is included in A\_55 (see above).

These perspectives are interesting, because they imply a critique of work, claiming that the idea of working for a ‘conventional’ (for-profit) company is lacking purpose or meaning. This may be seen as a systemic critique of the (neoliberal) capitalist economic model, as it seems to fail to provide people – young people in particular – with meaningful jobs. On the other hand, the critique here remains focused on the individual. The proposed ‘solution’ to the capitalist crisis of meaning is not a systemic reform of the economy. Instead, it is suggested that individuals (young people) should merely look for different jobs. SE then offers an escape, a way out, especially for a certain group of people (degree educated) of a specific generation, so it is argued. SE serves as a promise, a promise to find meaning in work and being able to build a purposeful career – but still *within* the capitalist economy and according to its principles.

The promise of SE providing meaningful work (in particular for young university graduates) is sometimes even presented as some sort of competitive advantage, as a means to attracting young people, who are in the pursuit of meaning. In A\_108, for example, it is argued that businesses must take notice of this development, having to meet the expectations of this new meaning-seeking generation in order to recruit talent:

companies are increasingly competing for the brightest minds. And for them, sustainability orientation is extremely important. This topic will therefore become important for companies, considering the shortage of skilled workers. This includes things such as the vegetarian canteen, meaningful work and social commitment (A\_108\_Frankfurter Rundschau\_24.10.2014).

This 'competitive advantage', again, is sometimes connected to business education and MBA degrees, as demonstrated in the quote above by MBA student Corinna Thomassik (A\_48). Even more explicitly, this case is made in A\_55, where another MBA student (Grace Sai) is portrayed. According to the article:

She [Grace Sai] knew exactly where she wanted to do her MBA. "For me, only the *Saïd Business School* came into question," says the Malaysian student. Because the school, which is part of the *University of Oxford*, is considered one of the leading European schools for managers in the field of 'Social Entrepreneurship'. And this is exactly what the 26-year-old wants to expand her knowledge in and to establish a network with like-minded people. (...) The *Skoll Center for Social Entrepreneurship* was founded in Oxford as early as 2003 (A\_55\_Die Zeit\_30.09.2010).

A\_63 also supports this view of SE as 'competitive advantage', for meeting the expectations of the current MBA student generation:

Maybe so many students are interested in the subject because of the positive image – at *Insead* around a tenth, at the *Saïd Business School* of the *University of Oxford* already more than half of the MBA class. "More and more students are considering social entrepreneurship as a career option and already come to us with an interest in it," says CASE Managing Director Nash. (...) "In the past, these students would have gone to a political science school" (A\_63\_Handelsblatt\_11.03.2011).

The framing of SE as a 'career' or 'career option' – as in this quote as well as in some of the other quotes above – is highly interesting. Based on the analysis of the corpus, I argue that this is a new perspective, which is developing in the second period, as I will explore in the following paragraphs.

In the first period (1999–2008), SE was not yet portrayed as a potential 'job' or 'career'. In the second period, it is now possible for job aspirants to point at more examples for 'social entrepreneurship' – or at more people using this

term, or labelling themselves as ‘social entrepreneur’. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, social entrepreneurs are usually celebrated (internationally and nationally) – almost without exception, the media representation was overwhelmingly positive in the first period. It can be assumed that this creates a strong appeal, making SE an attractive option, in order to follow the footsteps of the celebrated first generation of social entrepreneurs.

Moreover, SE being increasingly understood as ‘work’ or ‘career option’ entails various ambiguous aspects. It was found that, in some articles, the focus of the stories seems to shift slightly. In the first period, the main focus always lied on the social activity or ‘mission’ – i.e., what the social entrepreneur or enterprise *does for others*. The ‘job’ in the sense of organising and performing the SE activity in itself received little attention. In the second period, instead, there is a stronger focus on the SE activity as such. There is a more explicit and more profound discussion of SE as ‘work’, and what it means for the people ‘working’ in this field, including what SE means *for the entrepreneur*.

Some articles discuss that social entrepreneurs also need to make a (decent) living from working in a social enterprise and pursuing a social mission, as in A\_84:

Most social entrepreneurs are not concerned with the highest possible returns, although, of course, they want to be able to make a decent living from their business idea (A\_84\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_30.08.2012).

In A\_74 a social entrepreneur is quoted, also expressing this concern:

“Of course, I also want to pay myself a salary and maybe build a house later. But the decisive question for me is how I earn this money.” (A\_74\_Welt am Sonntag\_04.12.2011).

The most extensive discussion is included in A\_65, which interestingly, is the first article in the corpus written by a social entrepreneur himself (Andreas Heinecke).<sup>4</sup> Heinecke addresses the dilemma of keeping a balance between fair pay and social goals – i.e., paying oneself a decent salary while upholding to the

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4 As I have laid out in the previous chapter, Andreas Heinecke is one of the most prominent social entrepreneurs in Germany and has staged in many articles in the first period, too. However, this is the first time that an article is actually written by a social entrepreneur. In the first period, the included guest authors were academics or representatives of the wider support ecosystem, such as *Ashoka*.

social mission. What is more, Heinecke discusses fair payment both for the entrepreneur(s) and for their employees:

Social entrepreneurs dedicate their lives to an idea and take a risk. They give up careers. It often takes decades for an idea to turn into a business. Social entrepreneurs also attract other people who also incur large losses. These alliances of social idealists are often based on self-exploitation. The present is mostly grey, but they hope for better times in order to achieve financial stability next to the social impact. When that point is reached, social entrepreneurs are faced with the question of how to use the profits. Can they accrue to the social entrepreneur, a first proper wage after many years? The answer is: yes and no. Social entrepreneurs certainly have a right to recoup their expenses in building the business. (So, it's good if they keep records on this.) Moreover, profits should be used to pay employees, doing justice to their performance. Civil service pay is a good guide for this. But if a social enterprise turns out to be so successful that it makes high profits over the years, if it is lucratively sold or even publicly traded, then the profits should be used to found new social enterprises or to support other projects committed to the common good (A\_65\_Die Zeit\_28.04.2011).

Heinecke's statement is interesting, because it also includes a critical view, acknowledging that there can also be hardship involved in SE ('self-exploitation') – an aspect that is often disregarded among the cheerful praises of SE and the exceptional, almost 'super-human', features that are attributed to social entrepreneurs. This hardship is shared – from a different perspective – in A\_70, in which the journalist begins the article with describing how tired the portrayed social entrepreneurs are:

Benjamin Itter looks pretty exhausted. He repeatedly has to suppress a yawn and has rings under his eyes. His co-founders are hardly better off (A\_70\_Die Welt\_01.10.2011).

A\_83 quotes a social entrepreneur, who has left a well-paid job to open up her social enterprise – finding herself in a less comfortable position than before, in her previous job:

"I had a well-paid job, life could have been easier for me," she says. Now she has been working up to 20 hours a day without a salary for two years. "But I'm happier than ever." (A\_83\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_20.07.2012).

This quote is interesting because of its ambiguity: while the quoted social entrepreneur expresses that it is not all shiny and glossy in the SE world, and that there is hard work involved – apparently up to 20 hours a day – she also claims to be ‘happier than ever’. To some extent, this claim seems to support the strong desire people have to find ‘meaning’ in work and that social entrepreneurs have their own reward system or ‘currency’ – favouring ‘happiness’ or ‘meaning’ over a good salary and decent working conditions. However, the question seems to remain as to whether a 20-hour workday can be a good basis for long-term happiness. Certainly, it can be concluded that working conditions around SE are more often addressed and problematised in the second period – the media representation goes beyond an (unrealistic) ideal world of SE, in which everything is positive (and seemingly easy).

Moreover, I argue that there is also a problematic aspect related to the more explicit focus on SE as ‘work’ or ‘career’ – as compared to the first period, when the media representation almost exclusively foregrounded the social mission. There seems to be a risk that this shift of the focus might also entail a certain shift in the priorities of SE: the ‘career’ of the social entrepreneur receiving more attention, possibly at the expense of the social purpose. The representations of SE in various newspaper articles seem to support this concern. In A\_70, for example, a group of entrepreneurs (who in the quote above were described as being exhausted) are quoted as following:

“We always wanted to do business in India,” says Jan Holzhauer. Like his colleagues, he knows the country very well, having studied there for a while. “It was clear that we would do something with social entrepreneurship” (A\_70\_Die Welt\_01.10.2011).

The starting point for these entrepreneurs is to ‘do business in India’ and to ‘do something with social entrepreneurship’. The SE activity is initiated not because of a specific pressing social injustice or concern at hand, but because of the wish of the (prospective) social entrepreneurs to engage in SE. Among others, Papi-Thornton (2016) has criticised that this wish to *become* social entrepreneurs (often by young graduates) sometimes may overshadow the real-world problems that SE is supposed to address. While the desire of wanting to be a social entrepreneur is not morally problematic as such, it does raise questions about the priorities. SE and the idea of building a career as a social entrepreneur becomes an end in itself – at the risk that the social concern or mission might lose relevance.

Such a shift in priorities seems reflected in A\_64, an article on ‘An Austrian in Hyderabad’, as the subtitle recalls. The Austrian protagonist is quoted here, explaining that:

“The city of Hyderabad is the ideal ground for me” (A\_64\_Die Zeit\_24.03.2011).

This focus on Hyderabad as the ‘ideal ground’ for the entrepreneur (‘for me’) – i.e., for his personal and professional development – appears problematic. To an extent, the image that is invoked here is even a somewhat neo-colonial one: a European (entrepreneur) exploiting an ‘ideal ground’ in the Global South, in order to pursue his (career) ambitions.

**5.5 Social Entrepreneurship as Business:  
Ambiguous Developments**

The focus shifting towards the economy in the second period, which also comes with an increased understanding of SE as work can also be observed in the explanations of SE. In addition, explanations of SE often address the relationship between profits and social goals, as I will address in this section. In the first period (1999–2009), there were six main approaches of explaining SE: SE as a mix or combination of two worlds, SE as the creation of social value, SE as the solution to social problems, SE as social change, explaining SE through the sector and explaining SE through the person/agent (the social entrepreneur) (see Chapter 4). These six approaches also apply for the media representation in the second period, however, extended by a seventh: explaining SE as business or company. The following table shows how often the seven different approaches appear in the articles for the second period (2009–2014):<sup>5</sup>

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5    It should be remembered that frequencies are only indicative in my analysis. In addition, the approaches are not mutually exclusive, and some explanations might combine several approaches.



Table 6: Approaches to Explaining ‘Social Entrepreneurship’ in the Newspaper Articles (2009–2015)

approach to explaining SE	example (translation)	number of ex-amples
1. SE as a mix or combination of two worlds	<i>Social entrepreneurs are people or organizations that provide social services or products, but doing so in an entrepreneurial manner and not depending solely on donations or grants. In short: a cross between Mother Teresa and Bill Gates</i> (A_75_Badische Zeitung_16.12.2011).	3
2. SE as the creation of social value	<i>It's called social entrepreneurship. Founding [a company] with social added value, regardless of pure profit orientation</i> (A_63_Handelsblatt_11.03.2011).	7
3. SE as the solution to social (and sometimes ecological) problems	<i>Social entrepreneurship means an entrepreneurial activity that is innovative and pragmatic in solving social problems</i> (A_66_Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 04.05.2011).	15
4. SE as social change	<i>A social entrepreneur is someone who achieves social goals through entrepreneurial means. The primary goal is not monetary success, but sustainable, positive social change</i> (A_44_Handelsblatt_12.11.2009).	1
5. Explaining SE through the sector	<i>Roughly speaking, social entrepreneurship refers to companies that work in the areas of environmental protection, human rights, the integration of people with disabilities, etc.</i> (A_106_Nürnberger Nachrichten_06.09.2014).	2
6. Explaining SE through the person/agent (the social entrepreneur)	<i>The ‘social entrepreneurs’, a new type of entrepreneur, do not want profit, but social added value</i> (A_91_Die Zeit_27.12.2012).	14
7. Explaining SE as business/ company	<i>‘social entrepreneurship’, as companies and organizations with particularly social goals are called</i> (A_47_Trierischer Volksfreund_16.02.2010).	14

The overview shows that ‘SE as social change’ and ‘SE as being linked to specific sectors’ are rather marginal in this period. Little relevance, too, has the rather vague explanation of ‘SE as a mix or combination of two worlds’;

as stated in Chapter 4, this approach already became less important over time during the first period. 'SE as the solution to social problems' appears as the preferred approach to explaining SE. The previous chapter has discussed the strong focus on the social entrepreneur in the first period – explanations of SE were often linked to the person, but 'wider' narratives, too, were propagating a quite person-centred version of SE. While this person-centred approach remains important in the second period (with 14 times being one of the most frequently used approaches), at the same time, SE is now often explained foregrounding the organisation: SE as business or company (also employed 14 times).

SE being increasingly explained and understood as business or company is very much in line with the main development for the second period (2009–2014), namely that SE is now more often presented as part of the economy (from a sectoral perspective). Even in the first period, the media representation occasionally emphasises the organisation (instead of the person) and social enterprises were sometimes compared to businesses, as in this article from 2006:

Initiatives such as *Ashoka* and the *Schwab Foundation* are driving forward a new concept of (social) charity in Germany: social entrepreneurship. The benefactors should run their projects like companies (A\_19\_Die Welt\_17.11.2006, emphasis by the author).

However, SE organisations were not businesses yet. This is different in the second period, as can be observed, for example in A\_55:

Social entrepreneurship is concerned with how a company can solve a social or societal problem with innovative business models and at the same time generate financial profit (A\_55\_ Die Zeit\_30.09.2010, emphasis by the author).

SE is not merely 'like' companies or businesses anymore – *SE has become* business now. This is similar in A\_44, which actually combines the approaches of explaining SE as a company and explaining SE through the entrepreneur (person), moving back and forth between the two:

This competition is just one example of the boom that the idea of social enterprise is currently experiencing – companies that function according

to economic principles but that do not pursue monetary goals, and instead want to make the world a better place. (...) Scientists are still arguing about the definition, there is still no consensus among economists about what exactly constitutes a social enterprise. There are over 20 different competing definitions, shows a team led by Shaker A. Zahra from the *Carlson School of Management* at the *University of Minnesota*. However, the researchers agree that social enterprises are primarily companies and not charitable organizations. “Social entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs with a social mission,” says Gregory J. Dees of *Stanford University*, summing up the scientists’ lowest common denominator. Unlike in traditional companies, “the goal is to fulfil a social task”, adds Günter Faltin, professor of entrepreneurship at the *Free University of Berlin*, “and not to generate surpluses” (A\_44\_Handelsblatt\_12.11.2009).

This excerpt from A\_44 highlights another important aspect. It shows that SE is a contested phenomenon and that there are different (to some extent competing) definitions for it. What is more, several articles point out different explanations or models for SE that may differ according to their profit orientation. The relationship between (financial) profits and social goals becomes an important criterion – one that serves for identifying and delineating different models of SE. Referring to different social enterprises, A\_37 explains that:

Some of them are profit oriented, others only seek to break even. The thing they have in common is the goal: namely to eliminate social, economic, medical and ecological ills with the help of economic mechanisms (A\_37\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_24.07.2009).

The diversity of SE and different models for SE is also emphasised in A\_63. The article explains that there are different views – and also different representatives in the SE field – with various attitudes towards profit. For some, SE entails ‘not only profit’ (implying that profit is not merely acceptable, but even a primary goal), while for others, SE must be ‘non-profit-oriented’:

The discipline is so young that there is no uniform definition, yet. “In principle, social entrepreneurs can be anyone whose main business goal is not only profit,” says Pablo Martin de Holan, professor of entrepreneurship at Spain’s *IE Business School* in Madrid. “Innovative solutions to social problems” is how Matthew Nash from the *Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship* (CASE) at *Duke University* in the United States defines the demands placed

on social founders. And at the French *Insead*, which launched an initiative in 2006, the aim is primarily to meet social demands. “A social enterprise always prioritizes this over profit,” says Christine Driscoll of *Insead*. These approaches have one thing in common: social entrepreneurship does not have to be non-profit per se or non-profit-oriented, as Muhammad Yunus, for example, demands. (A\_63\_Handelsblatt\_11.03.2011).

The relationship between economic and social goals was already relevant in the first period (see Chapter 4) and, therefore, continues to be a main theme in the second period. Overall, the four main types of describing this relationship that were identified in the first period apply to the second period as well. However, adding to this is a fifth view, which highlights the diversity of the different models:

- Profits and social goals are described as being mutually beneficial,
- Profits and social goals are presented as coexistent,
- Profits and social goals are seen as coexistent but with a hierarchy (one domain being more important than the other),
- Profits and social goals are described as in conflict with each other.
- There are different SE models that differ based on their profit-orientation.

In the first period, overall, there was an equal weight between the view that profits and social goals are coexistent and the view that they are in conflict with each other. For the second period (2009–2014), it was found that the representation of financial gain and social goals as coexistent is now (by far) the dominant one: occurring 23 times (compared to 9 accounts of financial and social goals as conflictive). Interestingly, at the same time, the view that profits and social goals may be mutually beneficial (in a ‘win-win’-relationship) also loses relevance. The perspective that emphasises different SE models, which differ based on their profit-orientation, occurs 13 times in the second period.

Furthermore, it was found that the coexistence between profits and social goals is described differently in the second period. On the one hand, the discussion focuses less on the fundamental and moral aspects about the relationship between profit (money) and the social cause and goals within SE. A more pragmatic and sometimes a more concrete discussion takes place. The articles then explain why the financial profit is necessary. Sometimes they also explain the rules for how these (financial) profits must be used, as demonstrated in the following excerpt from A\_72:

Social entrepreneurs also want to operate profitably and efficiently in order for their companies to survive on the market. But unlike other companies, they don't siphon off profits, instead reinvesting them straight into solving social problems (A\_72\_Die Welt\_25.10.2011).

A pragmatic argument is provided here: profit is described as necessary, in order for the social enterprise to persist on the market. In addition, it is explained that extracting these profits for private gain would not be allowed and that, instead, they must be reinvested into the company.

A similar perspective on the role of profits can be found in A\_84:

There is no official definition, but I would explain it like this: social entrepreneurs share their profits with their employees and their environment, combining the social with the entrepreneurial. But that doesn't necessarily mean that the profit is donated, for example it also has to be reinvested in the company (A\_84\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_30.08.2012).

Certain rules are prescribed here for how profits may be used: i.e., sharing them with employees or reinvesting them into the social enterprise (as well as donating to other social projects). Therefore, an interesting connection – that may also be interpreted as a justification for the readers – is established here between profits and the salaries for both the entrepreneurs as well as their employees. As seen in Section 5.4, fair payment and working conditions have become (more) important themes in the second period. What is not included is a more fundamental (moral) debate whether or not the generation of profit is at all compatible with the SE phenomenon and its social goals *per se*. Arguably, this may be interpreted in different ways: on the one hand, the debate is more pragmatic and allows a more realistic account of working (and working conditions) in social enterprises. On the other hand, this could also be seen as a reduction of the discussion, disregarding the (potential) moral aspects (and concerns) entailed in combining economic and social logics.

## 5.6 More Voices 'Speaking' and Social Entrepreneurs are Not All 'Heroes' Anymore

In the first period, I have identified three main groups of actors in the corpus: the portrayed social entrepreneurs, beneficiaries or target groups of SE and

organisations and people of the wider 'ecosystem' (or support system) of SE. These three groups remain relevant in the second period. However, there are also a few differences in the media representation of actors of and around SE, as this section is going to address.

In the first period, it was found that the social entrepreneurs are predominantly portrayed in a very positive light. This is very much the dominant perspective in the second period, too; with a few articles making an exception, e.g., A\_42 or A\_108, where social entrepreneurs are placed in a somewhat esoteric corner. For the most part, though, social entrepreneurs are presented as skilled, capable, and able to achieve success where many others have failed. However, as I have already addressed in different sections of this chapter, a new aspect is developing in the second period: namely that the story of SE may involve hard work and even hardship. While this does not involve a fundamental critique of the SE phenomenon, it does cast a little shadow on the otherwise very rosy image of SE. Furthermore, this gives room to a more balanced – and also more realistic – view of SE activities and of the working conditions surrounding these.

In addition, it should be noted that in the second period, for the first time, the reader encounters an article (A\_65) written by a social entrepreneur – therefore giving (a representative of) this group a low-mediated, more direct voice to 'speak' in the SE discourse.<sup>6</sup> This low-mediated speaker position in the first period was reserved only to the actors of the wider support system or experts (such as academics or leading figures of organisations such as *Ashoka*); however, since this is only one of 76 articles, it clearly remains an exception.

When it comes to the beneficiaries or target groups of SE, it can be said that there are a few more glimpses of the idea of SE as 'empowering' – which is an aspect that is often addressed in academic literature on SE (see Chapter 1) – compared to the first period. Even though it is not a main theme in the second period either, there are a few articles (A\_67; A\_94; A\_106) that emphasise the fact that the beneficiaries or target groups of SE are at eye-level with other stakeholders. They portray the idea that within SE there is an exchange between equals, instead of one group doing something for the other – and, therefore, a hierarchical relationship, as, for example, in traditional charity. In A\_67, a beneficiary of *Glovico*, a development project and online language

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6 However, even guest contributions are mediated and not a completely 'direct' way for the author of reaching the audience, with journalists and editors curating and editing the text.

school, explains that he prefers working for this company (over other language schools), not only because of the flexible hours and higher pay:

“That’s why I now work mainly with *Glovico*.” “With” and not “for” – that is important to him: “I’m treated as an equal, I’m trusted.” (A\_67\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_16.05.2011).

On a more formal note, it is also remarkable that, in this example, the beneficiary is represented in direct speech, allowed to ‘speak’ in a low-mediated way – giving him a certain degree of agency over the media representation.

As for the third group of actors, the field of support or wider ecosystem of SE, in the first period, it was found that this group – as it is presented to the reader in the articles – primarily consists of wealthy individuals, foundations, corporations, universities and research institutes. Representatives of this group were sometimes authors of guest contributions, therefore, often ‘speaking’ to the audience in a low-mediated way. This mainly applies to the second period as well, even if there are a few noteworthy developments that I shall address here. Perhaps, the most remarkable finding is that *Ashoka* and the *Schwab Foundation* lose their dominance in the corpus – and, therefore, their interpretive authority over SE (*‘Deutungshoheit’*) as the main actors, who shape knowledge around SE. *Ashoka* and the *Schwab Foundation* certainly remain important actors, but now, not almost every article is connected to one of these organisations, as it was the case in the first period.

On the other hand, actors (within this third group) that are becoming more important are business schools and universities. One reason for this, certainly, is that SE in the second period is often introduced in the context of business education and MBA programmes. The main story of some articles are particular schools or programmes and the changes that were made, or which are planned, following the financial crisis of 2008 (see also Sections 5.3 and 5.4).

Another important finding is that, slowly, a few political actors and institutions are appearing in the media representation around SE – although, these still remain rather marginal. A German ministry, the *Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development*, is mentioned for the first time in the corpus in A\_71 (in October 2011), as partner and funder of a portrayed social enterprise in the development field. Shortly after, A\_72 (also in October 2011) announces the introduction of a programme to support SE – the first of its kind in Germany – by the *Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth* in cooperation with the state-owned investment and development bank, *Kred-*

*itanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW).*<sup>7</sup> The article (A\_72) also mentions that *Ashoka* was involved in the design of the programme – which shows that despite losing its near absolute authority over SE, the organisation is still very influential.

In Chapter 4, I have raised that it is remarkable that the newspaper articles and journalists do not really comment on or problematise the strong links between SE and business elites, who seem to be the (main) supporters of SE in Germany in the first period, according to the media representation. In the second period, on the other hand, one article (A\_56) points out this proximity to economic elites – already in the headline:

GEW AGAINST ASHOKA: “CONSULTANTS WANT TO INSTRUMENTALISE YOUNG PEOPLE” (A\_56\_Rhein-Main Zeitung\_01.10.2010).

The article then explains:

The union *Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW)* warns against cooperation with a youth initiative by the organisation *Ashoka*. Last week, representatives of the initiative invited the youth organisations of the political parties and the city school council to take part in a ‘Youth Changemaker City’ event (...). The project is backed by companies of the consulting industry who “want to exploit young people’s social commitment for their own interests in a casting show,” stated the *GEW* district association yesterday. (...) The *GEW* points out that *Ashoka* is supported by consulting firms such as *McKinsey*. However, the union rejects a ‘problem-solving culture’ promoted by the consultants (ibid.).

This is an interesting perspective – and one that stands out. While the article establishes a certain distance to the critical position – given that the critique is placed in (direct) quotes by the union’s representative – it gives room to a view that is very critical of SE (at least of the type of SE associated to *Ashoka* and its corporate funders). The article, therefore, shows that there can be different views and opinions on SE and of the actors involved in this field – and that not everybody engages in the cheerful praise of SE. Above all, the article brings attention to actors and interests involved in the SE field – and that these are linked to certain power structures and relations.

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7 This programme may be seen as the first policy engagement with SE on the federal level in Germany, which, however, did not result in a long-term commitment (see Chapter 2).



A\_76 is another article that stands out in this regard. It introduces and compares two books on social business and entrepreneurship with different views on the phenomenon. One book is described as following:

The authors see social business as an alternative to the classical economy, as a 'grassroots movement' striving for a 'new we culture'. The basic attitude of the authors is characterized by economic scepticism. And so, they also see the approximation to the world of large companies, who are stretching out their hand in the name of corporate social responsibility, as a danger for the young movement, which is still in the experimental stage (A\_76\_Süd-deutsche Zeitung\_21.01.2012).

The other book offers a different position:

Peter Spiegel sees it completely differently. In his book, which is driven by forward-thinking optimism, the head of the Berlin *Genisis Institute*, himself one of the most important players in the scene, drafts an economically compatible model of social business. With profit as the sticking point. More precisely: the question of whether a social business may generate a return for investors. Why not, says Spiegel, pleading for tearing down the barrier that Yunus built into his model (A\_76\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_21.01.2012).<sup>8</sup>

The descriptions included in A\_76 are interesting, because they demonstrate that SE is a contested phenomenon. Different actors have different ideas about the SE movement and who should or should not be involved in it. The first quote makes the relationship between SE and (commercial) companies explicit – and warns against a too close relationship between the two. Instead, the second quote presents a position that considers a close relationship with companies or investors as unproblematic. In addition, it argues against the principle that SE must operate on a non-profit basis (here described as the model promoted by Yunus).

A\_56 and A\_76, therefore, are some of the few articles that engage in an explicit and overt discussion of actors around SE, with regards to different interests and the social and power relations involved. Overall, however, this is a blind spot in the media representation. Usually, actors (of the wider support

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8 Paul Spiegel and his *Genisis Institute* were mentioned in Chapter 2 as the organisers of the first *Vision Summits* in Germany (since 2007).

system of SE) are mentioned rather matter-of-factly – without a deeper analysis of these actors, their (potential) interests or position in wider social structures. It is remarkable that these aspects are of such marginal interest in the articles, given that, in fact, it should be the role and function of newspapers to precisely engage in controversial debates – to address, reveal, or even question social and power structures. Arguably, the most significant finding is that articles like A\_56 and A\_76 appear as such a glaring exception.

## 5.7 Complex and (More) Ambiguous Logics and Value Statements

Complementing previous sections in this chapter, this section will discuss selected findings on the ('economic' and 'social') logics as well as on the value statements (i.e., what is presented as positive or negative) in the articles for the 2009–2014 period. Section 5.2 has already demonstrated that some articles still draw a critical picture of the state and the social sector – but this is, by far, not as pronounced as in the first period. There is less direct 'state-bashing' or 'bashing' of the established social sector. A greater emphasis lies on the idea of partnership between SE and the established actors and institutions. Nonetheless, SE is sometimes still described as the 'better' form of engagement. However, the differentiation to other forms of engagement or activism now appears more subtle.

SE is still often described as (positively) different. But this argument is made in a more subtle way, for example, via the individuals (the social entrepreneurs), who are given positive attributes – in contrast to other activists and people pursuing social aims. This includes value statements on their attitude, their *habitus*, or on outright superficialities. A\_74, for example, positively remarks the appearance of two social entrepreneurs:

Saskia Ludwig and Frank Dose don't necessarily look like social romantics. In shirts and jackets, the two founders sit in the tasteful (...) lounge (...) and talk about their business idea (A\_74\_Welt am Sonntag\_04.12.2011).

In A\_79, a similar observation even makes it into the title of the article, describing social entrepreneurs as:

'DO-GOODERS WITHOUT WOOL SWEATERS' (A\_79\_Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung\_12.05.2012).

The sub-title reads:

THEY WANT TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE WITHOUT CHAINING THEMSELVES TO RAILS (ibid.).

This is definitely a reference to (other) forms of activism<sup>9</sup> – and judging from the wording and the implicit value statements, SE is valued higher than these other forms.

A similar example was found in A\_111. Here, the social entrepreneur (Caroline), whose venture seeks to work with new sustainable materials (made of bananas), is pictured as following:

Caroline calls the banana substance a “meaningful product”. But she doesn't want to approach it with a naive do-gooder idea. And she doesn't want to sacrifice herself (A\_111\_Welt am Sonntag\_28.12.2014).

Even if the other – apparently less valuable – form of activism is not explicitly named here, it can be supposed that by ‘naive do-gooders’ the article refers to activists or people working in social professions. Assuming that these others are ‘naive’ and ‘sacrificing’ is clearly a (negative) value statement. Thus, on a different and somewhat more subtle level, traces of the dismissive representation of traditional social fields of the first period (1999–2008) are still there.

The same goes for elements of the ‘state failure’ logic. State and welfare institutions are still sometimes contrasted to the ‘better’ or ‘more flexible’ social enterprises, even though this is usually more nuanced than in the first period. A\_72 provides a good example for this perspective. While the article emphasises an idea of partnership and explicitly says that *social entrepreneurs should not replace the social systems, but complement and change them*, it nonetheless comes with a critique of the established institutions:

The small companies (...) are much more agile and creative than the unwieldy welfare state and the big welfare companies, they bring in new ideas from the most diverse corners. And this is precisely what the state is increasingly dependent on: social entrepreneurs should not replace the social systems, but complement and change them: What can entrepreneurs

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9 This is very likely a reference to activism against nuclear power, since blocking railways to prevent the transportation of nuclear waste has been a popular form of protest in Germany for several decades.

do better, what should the state take over? What can the market solve and what not? (A\_72\_Die Welt\_25.10.2011).

A\_46 establishes a contrast between a social enterprise and the UN climate summit (which in 2009 took place in Copenhagen) – presenting the social enterprise as a response to the unsuccessful approach of politics (by the UN and the heads of state):

While the heads of state of the world were looking for solutions to the impending climate catastrophe in Copenhagen and only found hot air, René Eick is sitting in his gym in Prenzlauer Berg in a black polo shirt and jeans, and is thinking. (...). Because what the summit in Denmark desperately tried to do on a large scale, the mechanical engineer in Berlin has long since tackled on a small scale. According to him, he runs Europe's first green fitness studio (A\_46\_Berliner Morgenpost\_22.12.2009).

SE as the niche and small-scale approach is positively connoted and juxtaposed to (international) politics here: (international) politics as formalised and established, but unable to achieve its goal – and, on the other hand, the imaginative, more casual 'doer', who is operating locally and within the niche.

A similar 'either-or'-logic, contrasting SE to political or activist approaches was found in A\_89. A social entrepreneur, whose social enterprise is concerned with bringing financial literacy to young people, explains that:

"We find ourselves in a large system. Nothing can be changed overnight." With the turbulences currently affecting the financial world, it is more effective in the long term to impart knowledge and to create awareness than to call for bank break-ups (A\_89\_Die Zeit\_25.10.2012).

In this view, instead of emphasising partnership or a complementary relationship, the social enterprise's approach is presented as a 'better' or 'more effective' alternative to politics or activism, i.e., 'calling for bank break-ups', which is clearly a reference to demands by different social groups following the financial crisis of 2008.

Another theme that needs to be addressed are the value statements around (commercial) businesses in the second period (2009–2014). In the first period, the picture was quite clear: the (private) business sector was almost always presented as a positive example or role model, up to a degree of a near glorifica-

tion of the business world and of its methods and people (managers and entrepreneurs). The transfer of economic logics into social realms was proposed as a popular (and always applicable) ‘solution’ for public and social institutions to achieve ‘better’ and ‘more professional’ results. In the second period, the picture is slightly more complex and ambiguous, as I will explain in the following paragraphs.

On the one hand, the glorification of business can sometimes still be observed (e.g., in A\_79, A\_85, A\_110). Aspects of economization, i.e., transferring economic logics into social fields, continue – for example, in the framing of social fields as ‘markets’ (e.g., A\_57, A\_64, A\_65, A\_72, A\_79). An emblematic example is provided in A\_72, where a researcher describes the barriers for social enterprises in Germany as following:

“The practice of awarding contracts in the social sector favours the big ones, smaller and younger social enterprises with unusual concepts hardly seem to have a chance there.” *Caritas, Diakonie* and others dominate the market (A\_72\_Die Welt\_25.10.2011).

In the next paragraph, the article then quotes the director of *Ashoka Germany* (Oldenburg):

*Ashoka’s* boss Oldenburg therefore calls for “real competition” in the social sector as well. It’s about more than a few government handouts for do-gooders – it’s about the best solutions to social problems being able to prevail on the market (ibid.).

Arguably, this may already represent a next stage of economization – of viewing and understanding social phenomena and the social sector through the eyes and language of business and the economy.

On the other hand, the overall media representation does not show the same degree of glorification of business, its people and methods as in the first period. As explained in Sections 5.2 to 5.4, many articles in the second period also include critical views of the business sector and of the economic model. What is more, some articles engage in a critical discussion on the organisational level, arguing that SE may also challenge economic certainties and business practices. SE then questions the methods of commercial businesses. For example, in A\_44 it is argued that:

social entrepreneurs (...) do not fit into the thought and analysis patterns of traditional business administration. Because social missions are difficult to squeeze into its usual formulas and patterns of analysis (A\_44\_Handelsblatt\_12.11.2009).

A\_88, too, provides an interesting account; a social entrepreneur (Porter), whose social enterprise combines a flying school with the delivery of medical supplies in Ghana, is quoted here:

"I teach a lot of businesspeople to fly. They tell me that I first have to know where I can get the money for such a venture. That's the way business works," says Porter. "But if that means that opportunities go untapped, then business is simply wrong." (A\_88\_Welt am Sonntag\_23.09.2012).

At first glance, this reflects a recurrent narrative of the social entrepreneur 'against all odds'. But at the same time, SE is not just about transferring or applying elements of the business world here, but rather about questioning economic certainties and the logics of business, too (see also A\_70, A\_83, A\_108, A\_110).

In A\_83, a social entrepreneur (Trinkwalder), explains her 'unconventional' human resource and marketing practices:

She [Trinkwalder] primarily employs women with "multiple placement obstacles", as it is called in *Jobcenter*-language. On her team is a hearing-impaired alcoholic. "She can come and go as she pleases," says Trinkwalder. "This works out." Trinkwalder completely goes without advertising campaigns. "These are a waste", says the former agency boss. "I save the money and prefer to give it to my ladies and to the suppliers" (A\_83\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_20.07.2012).

A\_70 provides an example on pricing: a social entrepreneur explains how his company's pricing policy differs from the usual practice in the (commercial) fashion industry (which is known for its tough pricing conditions):

The prices are fixed for a long time. "We don't pass on any pressure, no matter how big customer XY is, or how much power they had to push us to do it." In the organic niche, business is done differently, says Christoph Malkowski. Companies make a larger proportion of advance payments than in conventional sectors (A\_70\_Die Welt\_01.10.2011).

Apart from the glimpse into the ‘alternative’ pricing practices of this social enterprise, this excerpt is interesting for another aspect: the social entrepreneur here embeds his social enterprise in a wider field of ‘organic’ production. In fact, social entrepreneurs sometimes try to build on more established traditions and labels, such as ‘organic’ or ‘fair trade’ – as can be observed, for example, in A\_71, A\_74, A\_108, or A\_110. In A\_108, it is explained that these established traditions and labels may help social entrepreneurs to differentiate themselves from commercial companies (which also increasingly claim to act in a socially and environmentally conscious way) and to prevent accusations of ‘greenwashing’. However, some of the portrayed social entrepreneurs also decide against these established certifications, arguing that while they welcome the idea behind them, they find them too expensive and that they would prefer to pay more money directly to the producers, instead of spending it on certificates (A\_110 and A\_111).

## 5.8 Critiquing but also Stabilising the Capitalist Economy After the Financial Crisis of 2008

Many important aspects of the second period (2009–2014) can be linked to its principal development: SE being increasingly understood and presented as part of the economy, which represents a ‘sectoral shift’ from the first period, when SE was mainly understood as a (re)form of the welfare infrastructure. This development can be observed not only in the specific examples and fields of SE that are pictured in the articles, but also in wider societal debates, now embedding SE more often in a discussion of business ethics, and less in a discussion of social infrastructure (reform). Different narratives are linked to this, e.g., the representation of SE as a ‘meaningful’ career (option), especially for students and degree holders.

There is, as always, no single view on SE and its ‘wider’ meanings. Aspects of the dominant discourse of the first period remain, as I have highlighted throughout the chapter. Yet, important changes were identified. The strong person-centricity of the first period loses relevance – together with *Ashoka* and the *Schwab Foundation*. Although some articles hold on to the image of inefficient or deficient public and social institutions, overall, these are not constantly ‘under fire’ as this was mostly the case in the first period. Even when institutions of the social infrastructure are criticised, the tone is usually more moderate, and established social institutions are often presented as partners for so-

cial enterprises. SE is not necessarily a replacement of the existing institutions and not *per se* 'better', but rather introduced as coexisting and complementing each other. Moreover, the private sector and businesses in general, to some extent, have lost their 'messianic' charm. The promise that everything will turn to the better if organisations (in the public and social realm) would only apply business tools somewhat fades in the second period.

This is hardly surprising when taking into account the wider socio-economic and political context. The second period (2009–2014) falls into the aftermath of the global financial crisis of 2008. On a global scale, the 2008 crisis was the most dramatic financial crisis since the *Great Depression* of the late 1920s and early 1930s. Above all, the crisis came unexpectedly and shook many in their world view. As a result, people increasingly started to question the sustainability of the economic model and capitalism more generally as well as the (mainstream) economics discipline, which had failed to see the crisis coming (Acemoglu 2009; Krugman 2009; Hart et al. 2010; Harvey 2011; Castells et al. 2012; Aigner et al. 2018). According to Hart et al.'s (2010) analysis, "whatever place the financial crisis eventually finds in economic history, one certain victim has been free-market economics" (2010: 4).

Today, this might seem a little overstated. In spite of the severity of the crisis, the neoliberal capitalist system was preserved, without undergoing notable change (Crouch 2011; Adamati & Hellwig 2013) – and the economics discipline still relies widely on neoclassical theory and mathematical models (Aigner et al. 2018). Nonetheless, the established business world – or parts of it, especially banks and the financial sector and big corporations more generally – have lost some of their legitimacy in the public eye. What is more, in the years after the crisis there seemed to be a short intellectual momentum – including more critical views on (neoliberal) capitalism and a newly revived debate about potential alternative economic models (Castells et al. 2012). Arguably, this ideational impact of the crisis is partly reflected in the analysed corpus. It stands out that many articles in the second period (2009–2014) connect SE to the crisis and to the need for different business ethics and principles.

As in the first period thus, the articles manage to establish narratives around SE that neatly fit into the wider socio-economic and political environment – even if it is a different one than in the first period, when large parts of German society shared the view that the labour market and social security needed reform. In the second period, following the financial crisis of 2008, there is an increased public awareness for business ethics and for businesses' social and environmental responsibility. This also includes a more critical per-



spective towards profit-orientation and towards commercial companies, more generally. Interestingly, A\_78 contrasts these developments to the teachings of Milton Friedman:

The Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman used to be able to say that the ‘social responsibility’ of companies lies solely in making profits. No manager would dare to say that today. Almost every larger company has formulated a ‘corporate philosophy’ and is committed to ‘Corporate Social Responsibility’ (A\_78\_Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung\_13.02.2012).

The media representation of SE then connects these wider developments to SE – or embeds the SE concept and phenomenon within them. Explaining the SE phenomenon and justifying the need for why it exists appears linked to the more general public call for business responsibility and ethics. Against the first period thus, SE in the dominant representation becomes a vehicle to reform the economy (instead of one to reform the welfare infrastructure).

However, I argue that for the most part, the critique of the economy and the calls for more social responsibility remain rather moderate, rarely proposing structural change in the economic model. Structural and radical critique (in the original sense of the word, i.e., targeting the roots of the problem) remains the exception (e.g., in A\_50 or A\_76). This could be observed, for example, when it comes to the critique of business schools (see 5.3). On the one hand, business schools and their narrow focus on profit and shareholder value are the target of the critique. But at the same time, they are presented as part of the solution to the crisis – not least, in the form of SE. The impression is given that by adding one or a few SE courses, the problem of business education can be fixed. What is more, SE is introduced mainly as an attractive career option for a certain generation of MBA students. SE may even be a ‘competitive advantage’ for a few business schools on the MBA market. Such a take on SE then remains deeply rooted in the neoliberal idea of competitiveness (Davies 2014a). According to Nicholls (2010), the three most influential academic SE programmes at the time were located in the business schools at *Harvard*, *Duke* and *Oxford*. This not only raises questions of inclusiveness. It also begs the question whether ideas for structural reform of the economic model may come from such high-priced business schools with strong links to the corporate world and business elites. Or whether SE in these contexts is reduced merely to a means to polish the image of an elite circle and its institutions.

Furthermore, through the focus on business education and ‘meaningful’ work, the critique is primarily centred on individuals. Or put differently: it is diverted from the economic system or model to the individual level. The media representation of SE rarely criticises the structures of the economic system or model as a whole – let alone does it put forward specific proposals for reform or regulation. Instead, the critique in the articles mostly revolves around managers and their behaviour, education, or attitudes. As a result of the 2008 crisis, the ‘old’ economic figure of the manager has lost its appeal (Heidbrink & Seele 2010). But a new economic figure offers a way out, showing that it is possible to ‘do business’ and still be morally and socially accepted: the entrepreneur, and in particular the social entrepreneur (Heidbrink & Seele 2010). Paradoxically, perhaps, SE may then open up a way out for economic agents in the capitalist economic system and, in turn, also legitimise it. Through strictly differentiating the concept of ‘business administration’ from ‘entrepreneurship’ – as entrepreneurship theory often does (Faltin 2012) – and their respective agents (‘managers’ versus ‘entrepreneurs’), it becomes possible to criticise the economic system, concentrating the critique on one specific agent (the manager) and then to point towards a (different) agent in the system as the solution: the (social) entrepreneur.

This diversion of the focus to the individual level could also be observed in other instances. An interesting example (also quoted above) is provided in A\_89, on a social enterprise that provides ‘financial literacy’. The social entrepreneur explains:

“We find ourselves in a large system. Nothing can be changed overnight.” With the turbulences currently affecting the financial world, it is more effective in the long term to impart knowledge and to create awareness than to call for bank break-ups (A\_89\_Die Zeit\_25.10.2012).

The capitalist economic model is criticised here. Yet, the ‘solution’ that is proposed is an individual one. Financial literacy is presented as ‘more effective’ than political proposals for reform of the financial sector. The proposed solution, therefore, means adapting to the system (on an individual level) – instead of changing it.

As I have outlined in Section 5.5, another important theme in the second period is the relationship between ‘economic’ and ‘social’ logics and the role of profits within social enterprises. Overall, the dominant perspective considers that economic and social goals can coexist. Arguably, SE is making a contri-

bution to ‘normalising’ this relationship, showing that it is possible for organisations to combine the two domains. Against the first period, the discussion becomes less fundamental and more pragmatic, sometimes also more specific. In the first period, the main concern is whether profits and social goals are at all compatible; in the second period, the main questions revolve around the adequate balance and how this relationship may be organised. Aspects such as decent pay and working conditions for entrepreneurs and employees are now included in the debate.

I argue that this ‘normalisation’ of the relationship between financial and social goals, is ambiguous. On the one hand, it can be viewed as another form of economization: it becomes (or has become) increasingly acceptable that social organisations now apply business methods, or even that they pursue profits – and that commercial companies also may pursue social goals. These processes (on the organisational level) can be seen as part of the blurring of the boundaries between the public, private and third sectors, described, among others, by Ridley-Duff & Bull (2011). On the other hand, I argue that (more strongly) adopting an economic perspective may also introduce new topics and discussions: for example, about the functioning and operations of the enterprises, the salaries of the people working for them, (critical) human resource or marketing practices, or aspects of organisational governance. In addition, the media representation in the second period is more explicit about the diversity of the SE field – when it comes to different social enterprise models, which sometimes have different positions towards profits. Perhaps most importantly, these debates show that the contestation and discussion about SE and the meaning of the ‘social’ (as well as the practicalities of organising it) is ongoing.

Furthermore, I argue that there are interesting and ambiguous aspects in the debate around SE as work. As said earlier, this debate now often addresses working conditions and salaries. For example, in A\_84 it is argued that:

Good work costs money. This is true for business, but unfortunately not for the social sector. (...) It is a misconception that solving social problems and earning money have to be mutually exclusive. Motivation and recognition are good, but you also want to start a family at some point (A\_84\_Süddeutsche Zeitung\_30.08.2012).

What is remarkable is the fact that the discussion on fair payment and working conditions goes beyond SE here. Via SE, the article – or the social entrepreneur – initiates a wider discussion about payment in social profes-

sions. This is, indeed, a theme and argument that entails political potential and one that may resonate with different social and political actors. Yet, 'wider' proposals of this sort still remain an exception in the second period.

In sum, the main development from the first to the second period, the 'sectoral shift' leading to SE being increasingly understood as part of the economy seems rather simple. Yet, this development entails a set of complex and widely ambiguous processes. Some of these seem to discursively challenge and other rather to stabilise neoliberal capitalism. Around 2015, two different and somewhat competing strands of SE become more pronounced, as I will explore in the next chapter.