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A life in social entrepreneurship: exploring my learning, beliefs and my future through autoethnographical, institutional, motivational and critical lenses

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A LIFE IN SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Context Statement submitted to Middlesex University in
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Professional Studies by Public Works

Craig Dearden-Phillips

Student Number: M00649602

Exploring my
learning, beliefs
and my future
through
autoethnographical,
institutional,
motivational and
critical lenses

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the supervisory team, Middlesex University or the examiners of this work.

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Current Role: I presently run three related ventures: Social Minds, a specialist advisory company on social business; Social Club, a peer-support network for social entrepreneurs and Social Business Builders, an engaged ‘Angel’ funder backing commercial businesses that also create exceptional social impact.

Selected works: My three public works are: **VoiceAbility**, a social enterprise incorporated in 1996 and left in 2010, **Stepping Out**, a specialist advisory business that created new ventures from the public sector set up in 2010 and wound-down in 2018 and **HM Pasties Ltd**, a food business that aims to provide training and employment for former offenders, which I incorporated in 2019.

Critical Lens: In this submission, I utilise autoethnography, bricolage theory and hybridity theory, which is a branch of Institutional Theory. I also selectively utilise critical theory where this is helpful to understanding.

Ethics statement: a few individuals are named in this work and can be identified. I have received permission to use their names for the purposes of this research and for any open publication. Where the mentions are only in passing I have used an alphabetical code which can be found in the Glossary.

Introduction: This introduces myself as the practitioner-researcher as such I am part of the context I which the public works were created.

Chapter 1 introduces the Public Works and defines myself as a social entrepreneur in the context of the shifting landscape of social enterprise over the last quarter-century.

Chapter 2 presents the layered contexts in which the works were created and which exerted varying degrees of influence on them.

Chapter 3 introduces the theoretical lenses I use to review and re-appraise my three public works: bricolage theory, hybridity theory and, more selectively, critical theory.

Chapter 4 focuses on my first public work, VoiceAbility, which was my first and most successful social business which I founded in my mid-20s and left in my late 30s. This section draws on my book 'Your Chance to Change the World' (2008) which has been sent out to examiners.

Chapter 5 explores my second public work, Stepping Out, which co-created new ventures from the public sector which I ran from 2010 to 2018 and which formed several new 'spin out' businesses. This chapter draws heavily on my book 'How to Step Out' (2011) which has been sent out to examiners.

Chapter 6 examines HM Pasties, my most recent public work which was incorporated in 2019.

Chapter 7 discusses the meaning of these public works in the context of the social enterprise sector and their implications for the trajectory of future public works.

Glossary

Abbreviation	Meaning
AJ	Adrian Johnson
B2B	Business-to-Business
B-Corps	Benefit Corporation
CIC	Community Interest Company
DC	Doug Cresswell
DDCMS	Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

DH	Dawn Hewitt
DH	Differentiated Hybrid
ESG	Economic and Social Governance
IH	Integrated Hybrid
KB	Kevin Bond
JP	Jonathan Parsons
LH	Linda Harris OBE
M	'Michael'
PM	Phil McEvoy
SD	Scott Darraugh
SS	Stephen Sloss
TB	Tony Butler

Abstract

This Doctoral submission uses an autoethnographic approach alongside the academic frameworks of Bricolage Theory and Hybridity Theory (a branch of Institutional Theory) to reappraise a trio of my public works as a 'social entrepreneur' over a period of 25 years. This reappraisal depicts me as an archetypal 'bricoleur', or handy-person, improvising with the resources to hand, successfully synthesising resources from the disparate worlds of the business, public and third sectors. Exploring both my formative drives and the external contexts in which I built my public works, I suggest how I may have acquired my sense of identity and motivation - my particular way of seeing, interpreting and relating to the world. As I delve into the selected public works, I draw upon literature on Institutional Hybridity to examine the operational and cultural tensions that inevitably arise in businesses that interlace a social mission and a commercial approach. I characterise the finding of creative ways to manage and these tensions over time as a defining attribute of social entrepreneurship in all its forms. I also explore the strategies available to lessen or offset these tensions over time using examples of how my own public works were operationally and culturally re-calibrated over extended periods to in an attempt to rebalance social and commercial objectives over time. To support my analysis, I utilise autobiographical accounts of my own actions and interactions during the development of my own public works. I splice this with a rich body of formal research on bricolage and hybridity in social enterprise plus occasional insights from critical approaches. I conclude with a discussion of what this means for both my next public work and for tomorrow's social entrepreneurs and I make suggestions for fruitful areas for further academic research.

Introduction

“I don’t know where I am going from here, but I promise it won’t be boring”

David Bowie

We all get labelled. The one pinned on me tends to be ‘Serial Social Entrepreneur’. I blush whenever I hear it. It sounds slightly grandiose. I hope I am not, but I do recognise that I am probably atypical for I have created or co-founded 25 social businesses in the same number of years (listed in Appendix J) and I have selected three of these – an early, mid-point and recent venture - as my public works. These are respectively **VoiceAbility**, **Stepping Out** and **HM Pasties**.

This Doctoral submission seeks to re-examine each of these public works in time sequence using a trio of theoretical frameworks. The first is autoethnography: using my own story before and during the production of my public works to help explain the genesis of each one. In short, autoethnography asks three related questions:

‘How did my life up to the creation of my public works inform what they became?’

‘How have I been shaped by the relational and contextual engagements forged in their creation?’

‘How, in turn, have I shaped the context in which I operated and what did this interaction produce?’

Ellis (2004) describes autoethnography as research, writing, story and method that connects the autobiographical and personal to the social, cultural and political. On a similar note, Wall (2006) outlines it as an emerging, non-traditional research method that allows the author to extract from his or her own experience to enhance understanding of a social phenomenon.

This submission is in itself a form of autoethnography: a piece of qualitative research that tells my story and uses self-reflection and writing to explore anecdotal experience, whilst connecting an autobiographical account to wider social and cultural understanding.

The second theoretical framework I use in this Doctoral submission is the concept of bricolage (‘the art of making do’) as an explanatory framework for social entrepreneurship. Bricolage Theory is credited to the French anthropologist Levi-Strauss (1962) who brought into usage the idea of ‘bricolage entrepreneurship’ as he attempted to show that aboriginal people were just as entrepreneurial as those in more technologically advanced societies. Levi-Strauss contrasts the ‘bricoleur’, who ‘makes do’ with the material at hand to concoct a project, with the ‘engineer’, who plans ahead and gains access to all necessary resources prior to commencement. Bricolage Theory

touches very closely on theoretical approaches to knowing and knowledge. According to Kincheloe (1998), the bricoleur draws on a multitude of different ways of understanding the world:

Indeed, the bricoleur is aware of deep social structures and the complex ways they play out in everyday life, the importance of social, historical and cultural analysis, the ways discursive practices influence both what goes on in the research process and the consciousness of the researcher and the complex dimensions of what we mean when we talk about understanding (pp 4-5)

I ask whether Bricolage Theory, specifically the works of Levi-Strauss (1963) and Kincheloe (1998) sheds helpful light on the essential nature of social entrepreneurs. Does it convincingly describe the ways in which we set about our business? Can it help explain why social entrepreneurs chose the lives we do?

The third framework I utilise is Hybridity Theory. This is a sub-set of Institutional Theory (Battilana & Lee, 2012) and forms the primary theoretical backbone of this Doctoral submission, within which I explore what is perhaps the defining feature of social enterprise organisations (Vickers et al, 2017) in whichever sector or nation they exist.

Hybridity Theory conceptualises social enterprises as ‘hybrid’ organisations that meld competing imperatives, or ‘logics’ (for *both* social impact *and* commercial success) into a new type of firm in which both logics are utilised into what the originators of these ventures hope become a novel institutional form in which these competing logics are successfully reconciled. I explore in this submission how this all played out for me - whether competing institutional logics predicted by Hybridity Theory were eventually happily reconciled into a new ‘logic’ of social enterprise, or whether the tensions between social and commercial logics could, at best, be mitigated as part of a continuing effort to blend two irreconcilable organisational drivers.

In the concluding discussion, I explore what my findings of this means for myself, my future public works and those of other social entrepreneurs. In doing this I try to map out the common themes and connections across all my public works that are afforded by the various theoretical lenses worn during this extended period of reflection.

	Main Academic Frameworks Used			
Public Works and Chronology	Auto-ethnography	Bricolage Theory	Institutional (Hybridity) Theory	Critical Approaches (selective)
VoiceAbility 1994-2010	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stepping Out 2010-2018	✓	✓	✓	✓
HM Pasties 2019-2022	✓	✓	✓	

Past Imperfect: Me as part of the context

An autoethnographic approach to my public works commits me to a quest for the deepest possible understanding of myself as both directly agential – how and why I have shaped my own world - and how my later agency has been influenced by my earlier environment.

It is this early environment that I want to start for reasons that will become apparent. I was born in Bolton in July 1969 to parents who had left secondary modern school at fifteen without qualifications but were nevertheless ambitious for themselves and their children. I attended local state schools in nearby Bury and did well enough at A-level to move away to Newcastle University at 18 to study economics and politics.

Troubled Teens

In my teenage years I went through some traumatic experiences of abuse in and outside of school at the hands of a male teacher who was recently convicted and sentenced for historic offences against school age children. These experiences left a mark. I intentionally use this more neutral term rather than 'scar'. I mention it because I believe that its motivational legacy forged the direction of my public works as an adult. And in this sense, this troubling period of my life may be recast in a more positive, way, imbuing me with an early sense of vocation that may otherwise have remained concealed or found negative expression.

At university I struggled at first both academically and socially, dropped economics and then excelled, in politics, gaining the best set of finals marks in my degree year. I stayed after my degree for three years teaching undergraduate students and assisting in research. I moved to Cambridge in 1994, aged almost 25, and I then founded or co-founded on average a new business every year for the next 25 years. Many have survived, some have done exceptionally well and a few have disappeared (See Appendix A). Nearly all are 'social enterprises' – businesses that use commercial methods to address social problems (Austin et al, 2006).

Twenty-five years into my journey, at age 50, I sensed that I needed to reconsider what I was doing. I felt dissatisfied. Social enterprise still felt niche and difficult. Blending together commercial and social imperatives was intellectually and practically exhausting. I wondered to myself whether I had taken the right track and was trying, in vain, to reconcile the irreconcilable, to mix oil with water.

On a personal level, I was feeling fatigued, a bit lost. So I enrolled on the Doctoral programme at Middlesex to make renewed sense of my past, figure out my best future and, hopefully, help a coming generation of social entrepreneurs to optimise their impact. This inevitably led me towards a deeper examination of the practice of social entrepreneurship, my own motivation and my historic ways of operating. It has also led me to consider how my own strengths and ingrained ways of 'seeing' might positively shape my future too.

In terms of motivation, I have a fairly good idea why I became a social entrepreneur rather than a conventional, 'for-profit' one – or indeed an employee. My teenage traumas manifested themselves in a powerful motivation to create something good that would not otherwise have happened. I discuss this more in Chapter Four. The literature on social entrepreneurial motivation, while not really touching on the role of trauma, does point clearly to the role that both empathy combined with a sense of personal efficacy play in the motivations of people who choose social over classical entrepreneurship (Bacq & Alt, 2018). I very much see myself reflected in that theory, as my capacity to connect to others' difficulties expanded as a consequence of my own experiences.

But, putting that to one side, briefly, I am, in common with all entrepreneurs, driven deeply by a desire to meet opportunities (Ardichvili et al, 2003) to demonstrate my own capabilities and to make my mark (Billingsley et al, 2021). On top of this, I am captivated by the 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) that comes from venture creation and growth. This is when I feel most alive. Finally, I find 'bricolage', the 'making-do' in enterprise creation (Levi-Strauss, 1963), to be enthralling and something I find naturally easy to do. I turn to this in more detail later.

Reflections: Sediments and Sentiments

With each of these public works, I have been progressing as an individual in a 'sedimentary' fashion, adding 'layers' of learning through the process of creating each new public work. In these layers can be seen the formative socio-cultural influences acting on me and, in turn, influencing my creations. To summarize these layers, my public works reflect, respectively, the extreme individualism of the 1980s, the 'third way' ideology of the '90s and early 2000s (Giddens, 2013), the idea of Big Society communitarianism in the 2010s and, latterly, the 'zeitgeist' to recast capitalism in a way that secures a more just society and the environment in the long-term.

There are also, running vertically through each sedimentary layer, core elements that define me as an individual and inform the precise ways I have responded to my environment. Certain of my formative experiences from 12-19 which were traumatic, I think, have influenced the way I have gone about my public works. Extreme forms of individualism – borne of a feeling of isolation - were defining traits arising from this, not just from the wider environment. I needed to know that my future contribution would be clearly credited to *me* – not for reasons of simple vanity, but for it to be known that I had justified my place in the world. This may sound melodramatic now, but that feeling was particularly powerful in my 20s and even into my 30s as I struggled with damaging views of myself from which I was actively seeking remedy. The wounded healer metaphor was very much applicable, particularly in relation to **VoiceAbility**.

Thanks to therapy, these feelings softened greatly in my late 30s and 40s. I no longer felt the need to act alone, heroically, and that my contributions to others' ventures would come to feel sufficient. I had, by 50, reached a point where a collaborative approach was now actually my preferred mode and I could be quite happy in the background. My second and third public work – **Stepping Out** and **HM Pasties** - and my emerging one – **Social Business Builders** - were very much joint-ventures with social entrepreneurs whose profile and standing exceeds my own. This reflects, I believe, a long-term healing process and also the learning that far more social impact can be achieved through others than directly oneself.

A Participant Observer

Of course, I do not come to social entrepreneurship as a neutral academic observer. I am immersed in my world. This transdisciplinary Doctoral programme attracted me precisely because it encourages personal and subjective approaches to epistemology and ontology as a complement (or alternative) to a more positivist, purportedly neutral, detached or values-free academia.

To quote George-Fredrich Gadamer (in Warnke, 2013):

‘He or she belongs to the subject matter he or she is understanding. Everyone who understands something understands him or herself in it. (p.29)’

But, as I came to the larger questions I seek to address in this Doctoral submission, I both trusted myself and the validity of my experience - and I did not. As both the subject and object of this work, I recognise that, while I bring valuable insights, I also carry serious cognitive and emotional biases that come with having lived a particular life and invested in a particular version of the truth. In undertaking this work I have had to face the fact that my truth may change, which is not a comforting thought at this stage of a career.

A Transdisciplinary Practitioner?

One of the themes of this Doctoral programme has been the ‘Transdisciplinary Practitioner’. To what extent would I count myself in this category? This is a subjective view, but below I seek to illustrate this in terms of Augsburg’s (2014) schemata, against which I rate myself, using a RAG rating, in which green indicates where I feel I correspond closely, red where I do not and amber where I am unsure or feel ‘between two poles’.

Skills and Traits	Risk-Taking and Transgression	Transdisciplinary Practices & Virtues	Creative Inquiry & Cultural Relativism
Mutuality & Trust	Intellectual risk-taker	Respect interspectivity	Inquiry based
Builds networks in unfamiliar environs	Humble in face of immensity of knowledge	Able to see community of perspectives	Trans-paradigmatic
Engages in meaningful dialogue	Engages new modes of thought and action	Authentic embeddedness	Integration of inquirer into inquiry process
Social conscience	Inwardly feel need for others' points of view	Courage to abandon home discipline	Creative inquiry
Think in complex inter-connected terms	Appreciates relationships	Cultivation of art of abandonment	Complex thinking
Modest positionality	Confident in professional and self identity	Acknowledges pain of moving out of comfort zone	Cultural relativism
Co-producer of hybrid knowledge	Able and willing to share responsibilities and knowledge	Able to acknowledge dependence	Avoids solipsistic and narcissistic traps
Appreciate importance of intellectual freedom	Able to transgress disciplinary borders	Issue-driven	Goes against traditional ways of thinking

As can be seen, on a self-appraisal, I come out with challenges around the ability to move out of my own mindset, at lack of intellectual courage (at times) and tendency to be overly self-reliant. This Doctoral programme has been a big challenge in this respect, particularly the parts which encourage us to look closely at the nature of knowledge, knowing and how we see the world. I also struggle with vulnerability to others and dependence. My proclivity is to sail alone. But this does not mean I do not collaborate. I am just more comfortable when I know I am in charge of my own choices.

Signposting the Work

Chapter One is, in effect, a brief introduction to me and my three public works. Chapter Two goes into greater detail about the context (personal, social, political) around my public works. Chapter Three outlines the theoretical frameworks against which I chose to review each public work. Chapters Four, Five and Six are each a deep-dive into one of the public works, in chronological order, each with a full critical appraisal of each using my chosen theoretical lenses. Chapter Seven, the discussion, seeks to draw out the academic learning from the preceding sections, point to areas for further research and draw together insights for tomorrow's social entrepreneurs.

Chapter 1: A Brief Introduction to my Public Works.

A Life in Social Entrepreneurship: Living Between Sectors

I have spent most of my career both founding new social enterprise organisations – or helping people to do so. I started my first public work, **VoiceAbility** at 24 years old and my latest, and third public work, **HM Pasties Ltd** (HM Pasties), in late 2019. In between these two I created my second public work, **Stepping Out Business Development Services Ltd** (Stepping Out) which co-created several ‘spin out’ ventures from the public sector. During that time, I have also moved from relative youth to early middle age - with many of the changes, both external and interior, that typify this journey: from the vaulting ambition of an anxious, eager young person to a more reconciled fifty-something embrace of my corner of the world as an active enabler of social entrepreneurs.

Social Entrepreneurship Defined

What, briefly, is ‘social entrepreneurship’? The term was first introduced in the USA by Banks (1972) and serious work on it started in the research community in the early 2000s (Conway Dato-On & Kalakay, 2016) to the point where social entrepreneurship is now an established interdisciplinary specialism in peer-reviewed journals (Bacq & Janssen, 2011). Social entrepreneurship remains a contested concept with disagreement about its boundaries and validity (Choi & Majumbar, 2014) and its definitions (Dacin et al, 2010) but five core ideas tend to permeate the literature.

Primary aims or intentions. According to Austin et al (2006), social entrepreneurship concerns itself primarily with the identification, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities which result in social value rather than personal wealth. The success criteria for the social entrepreneur is to be judged, first and foremost, in the social impact of the venture (Austin et al, 2006) although private benefits may also accrue as a secondary impact (Zahra & Sapienza, 2006).

Methodology. Social entrepreneurs, under nearly all contemporary definitions, set up trading or commercial models to achieve their goals, which distinguishes them from charities or activists whose primary income model is philanthropy (Alter, 2007; Mair, 2010).

Bricolage. Social entrepreneurs are also ‘bricoleurs’ (Kinlechoe, 2004), handymen and women who bring disparate, redundant resources together into innovative new combinations to create social value.

Empowerment. This applies to consumers, beneficiary groups and workers (Haugh & Talwar, 2016; Mongelli et al, 2018). While there are distinct spatial variations in the way social entrepreneurship is practiced (Defourney & Nissens, 2008a), these differences appear to be blurring, facilitated by a more global dialogue around definition (Bacq & Janssen, 2011).

Hybridity. Social entrepreneurship represents a bringing together of at least two distinct institutional logics, one ‘social’, the other ‘commercial’ into a single organisation (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Doherty, Haugh & Lyon, 2014; Vickers et al, 2014). Successful reconciliation of competing logics is a key leadership skill of the successful social entrepreneur.

All of the three public works I have created conform to the five elements listed above, particularly in terms of their hybrid nature.

Context, Mission, Resources, Deal

My public works also fit theoretically into Austin et al’s (2006) framework for distinguishing social from commercial enterprises - adapted from Sahlman’s (1996) generic model. Hence, all of my public works have been characterised by:

- *A context* of market failure – where benefits are failing to accrue to those who need them
- *A mission* that is prevalingly social – where the venture is judged primarily in terms of its social impact.
- *Resources* being limited – where there is not a super-abundance of investment or talent available to address a problem.
- *A deal* - where appraisal of performance is made more complex by the challenges of evaluating social impact in relation to other forms of success.

It would also be correct to say that two of my three public works have functioned more like charities or public sector organisations than commercial ones in their initial institutional logic and operations. Commerciality, in the case of **VoiceAbility** and the ventures co-founded by **Stepping Out** was, in truth, a later force, often superimposed over time upon a pre-existing set of institutional norms from the charity or public sector. This is a phenomenon identified in the literature (Vickers et al. 2017). I turn to this in more depth in by examination of each of the public works in Chapters 4, 5 and 6..

Looking in Unlikely Places: My Search for Social Impact

At the heart of the social entrepreneurship idea is the allegation that it is possible to forge a successful merger between the distinct worlds of commercialism and social impact and that the two can be brought into harmony within new-style organisations. This is in contrast to a view expressed most famously by Milton Friedman (1982) that these are strictly separate realms.

While any reader would pre-suppose that I fall firmly into the one camp, when I look back critically on my three main public works, I still, to this day, ruminate on the question of whether I could have made a larger social impact – in the sense of total benefit to society - if I had expressly set out to build large for-profit ventures that subordinated social impact to wider commercial success. Why do I ask such questions, a quarter-century into a career? This is because social entrepreneurship has been a struggle for me. Combining the twin logics of social impact and business excellence has felt, at times, like a leadership challenge too far, like mixing two very different things and actually be a recipe for ‘mission drift’ rather than mission accomplishment! I have asked many times ‘Might there be an easier way?’.

How do we better manage hybrids organisations?

While the tensions between commercial and social objectives and the associated risk of mission-drift have been addressed extensively in the literature (Doherty, Haugh & Lyon, 2014; Ebrahim, Battilana & Mair, 2014; Alter, 2007,) and are covered later, the specific question about how to best manage commercial and pro-social logics in social ventures is central to my efforts and, despite a burgeoning literature, is certainly still in need of further research (Vickers et al, 2017).

These questions matter to me at this stage because I am asking whether, as an investor and mentor of social entrepreneurs, whether I should encourage ventures down the road of the kinds of dual-purpose organisations I set up – where there is, certainly at first, constant ‘jousting’ between commercial and social objectives in pursuit of a new blended set of institutional norms - or guide these towards models where there is actually an existing prevalent logic, either social or commercial, thereby keeping tensions to a minimum.

So before I jump full square into next public work, **Social Business Builders** (Appendix 2) I wanted to read more widely, reflect upon and re-interpret my experience and learning in light of available academic frameworks and research on social entrepreneurship and explore any ‘cracking thoughts’

(Petranker, 1997, p. 56) that might arise. Later on, in Chapter 6, I draw these discussions together and their implications for the future.

Chapter 2: The Context in Which the Works were created.

“Everything that’s been, has passed, the answer’s in the looking glass”

Noel Gallagher

The Socio-Political Context of my Public Works

The 1990s and 2000s: Britpop, Blair and the Third Way

All of my public works embody a particular set of personal beliefs and prejudices about how change can be made to happen in the world. Central to my mindset has been the notion of entrepreneurship, as a means of not only delivering economic benefits, but also social progress.

The entrepreneur was conceptualised in the nineteenth century by Jean-Baptiste Say as one who ‘shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and yield’ (in Dees, 2001, p. 231). Joseph Schumpeter (1934) built on this idea with his conception of entrepreneurship as ‘creative destruction’, with entrepreneurs as a driving force of progress and change.

As I came to maturity in the 1990s, there was a new focus on a cohort of people who employed entrepreneurial methods and commercial models to drive social progress. They did not have a name in this country until Charles Leadbeater, then an adviser to the UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, published ‘The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur’ in 1997. This new language spoke powerfully to my own desire as a young man to achieve social change by creating new ventures.

Reflecting back now, I can see that as a politically attuned young person growing up and studying politics as an undergraduate in the ‘80s, I had imbibed the idea, strong in Margaret Thatcher’s Britain, that entrepreneurs were critical to progress, necessary to disrupt markets by bringing about the ‘creative destruction’ spoken of by Schumpeter. I had devoured Adam Smith, Fredrich Hayek and a wave of popular writing about economics and business. These were ideas I imbibed just as I witnessed Britain emerge from post-industrial gloom into a more digital, services-driven age. This was also the era when liberal capitalism displaced state socialism and Francis Fukuyama’s famed ‘End of History’ (1992) had finally arrived.

In the 1990s, whatever the future was to be, it did not, look ‘socialist’, plus the surface of politics was changing too with the advent of New Labour from the mid-1990s and a resurgence of the centre-left across the developed world. Leadbeater (1997) - drawing heavily on Giddens (1989) - posited a ‘third way’ between the naked commercial of the 1980s and the statism of the public realm and showcased

, as an alternative a new generation of non-state actors – ‘social entrepreneurs’ – who were creating commercial but pro-social alternatives to traditional public services in health, education and care.

I was transfixed by Leadbeater’s analysis as it exactly mirrored my own instincts and experiences. I actually visited several of the ventures profiled in his (1997) book and was indeed impressed by the vitality, innovation and effectiveness of many of these new companies like the *Bromley by Bow Centre* in East London and *Kaleidoscope* in Kingston-Upon-Thames.

What distinguished these ventures when I went to them was their apparent ability to co-create services that engaged the people receiving them, how much their staff seemed empowered to make decisions, how very little bureaucracy there appeared to be, how quickly these ventures turned ideas into action and how a culture of positivity and ‘can-do’ seemed to emanate from those leading the business.

All this contrasted with the tired, fear-driven timidity and defensiveness I tended to see in the public services I had encountered to that point. Here, I perceived that many agencies of the state seemed, without malice, to operate *against* the interests of the most vulnerable, always seeming to put the needs of their own institutional systems ahead of the rights of individuals to speak up and shape their own lives. This annoyed me and fuelled my view in the ‘90s that we needed social entrepreneurs to shake up the public realm just as much as we needed private entrepreneurs in the 1980s to kick-start a sclerotic economy.

This was the backdrop to which I developed **VoiceAbility** (see Appendix C), my first public work, a pioneering charity that started to put power and resources back into the hands of people with disabilities. **VoiceAbility** was the first thing I created and, arguably, the most successful. It was created at a point in time when the rights of disabled people were being recognised by governments around the world. My book based mainly on this, ‘*How to Change the World the No-Fibbing Guide to Social Entrepreneurship*’ (2008) – was both a call-to-action and a guidebook to emerging social entrepreneurs everywhere (a copy is included for examiners).

When read today, my first book can look slightly naïve about the ‘magic’ of markets and choice as a mechanism for improving public services and the ways in which private sector modes and methods (e.g. New Public Management) can miraculously improve public services. Experience has told us that free markets and outsourcing have serious limitations when imposed onto a public service context (Cooke, 2006; Andersson & Jordahl, 2019). Some of my other public writings from that time (‘*Let private firms compete for healthcare*’, The Guardian - see Appendix F) also can look institutionally naïve when they hypothesise the social entrepreneur as a solution to complex institutional challenges of change and the political dimensions of public service reform.

2010-19 – Cameron, Big Society... and Meeting John.

The socio-political context in which I was operating shifted dramatically as I approached the end of my time in **VoiceAbility** and was considering my next steps. The 2008 financial crisis washed away the footings of a comfortable neo-liberal consensus (Nicholls and Teasdale, 2017). Concurrently, public finances were under pressure, as was the notion that continual real rises in public spending were sustainable.

Against expectation, the financial crisis led to the election of governments of the centre-right across the developed world, including, in 2010, in the UK, with a remit to bring down public spending, control budget deficits, promote private sector recovery and, specifically in the UK, enhance the role of 'society' in solving social problems in the face of a popular narrative of failure of the state do so (Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017).

While I had some concerns about potential harms from 'austerity' in the public realm, the Conservative-led government's 'Big Society' agenda, in which civil society fills the gap left by the over-engineered state, appealed to me both intellectually and emotionally. I was actually rather excited by it, an embarrassing admission in light of its lack of traction thereafter.

Why the excitement? Well, while Labour had achieved significant reforms in office, utilising 'New Public Management' and the choice agenda in public services, I was disappointed that this had translated primarily into a much larger public sector and many new schools, hospitals etc, it had done relatively little, in my view, to actually empower citizens and communities to improve their own lives. Increased government investment had not, in my view, been accompanied by the institutional and structural reform of public services needed to transform our society and fully modernise the country. I saw this profoundly in the lives of disabled people whose lives were still blighted by provider-captured public services.

A Right to Provide

One specific planned reform, which formed one plank of the early 'Big Society' agenda, was the continuation of a policy pioneered towards the end of the Labour era called 'Right to Request', which the Conservative-led coalition government named 'Right to Provide'. Public sector workers were permitted in law to seek to create new, employee-owned businesses which could immediately enter commercial contracts with the state. These would operate, in the main, as employee-owned social enterprises. These ventures would be primarily for social purpose with no space for private gain beyond limited forms of employee ownership (Hall, Miller & Millar, 2012).

My response was to design a venture, **Stepping Out**, my second public work, as an enabler of people in the public sector to become social entrepreneurs. This was timely. The political agenda to set up

'spin-out' ventures lasted for about five years until the end of the Coalition Government, during which about 120 Public Service Mutuals were created, employing about 35,000 people and turning over about £1 billion in revenues. Studies since have deemed them a mixed success, albeit with some qualifications and reservations. (Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, 2019).

The agenda to set up new public service companies started to run out of steam after 2015 when a Conservative-majority Government was elected. The diversion of political energy from the public services agenda was total following the Brexit referendum and debilitating to the kind of reform to which I had appended **Stepping Out**. So in 2018, I wound down the business and re-launched it as 'Social Minds', a more generic social business consultancy.

2019-2022 – Pasties and Profit: A Commercial Path to Impact?

These three years, dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic and other geopolitical worries, most recently in Europe, have also had an effect on the socio-political context in which social entrepreneurs have been operating (Bacq & Lumpkin, 2020). The election of successive Conservative governments since 2016 has not stopped a move 'leftward' in fiscal and public policy to the point where, at the time of writing (April 2022), public spending is at its highest level as a share of GDP since the late 1940s (HM Treasury, 2021). The geopolitical shifts in Europe during 2022 will probably see another significant move in state focus and spending with consequences for priorities elsewhere.

Shifting Corporate Priorities?

Another significant observable shift during the 2010s and early 2020s has been in the way people are viewing work and careers (Guan, Deng and Zhou, 2020). This trend, which pre-dates the pandemic, has created an identifiable and vocal body of business leaders and entrepreneurs for whom profit and purpose are more closely interlinked (Dees, 2012). Concurrently, there has been a significant move, rhetorically at first, but now increasingly evidenced in the behaviour of many large companies and pension funds, of a bolder social commitment, a significant move on from earlier concepts of 'corporate social responsibility' (Bianci, Reyes & Devenin, 2020).

One of the most powerful manifestations of the restoration, in the public discourse, of the tradition of more socially responsible strain of capitalism has been in an emergent B-Corp movement which includes among its members the Danone corporation in Europe and Unilever plc. B-Corps status commits these companies to higher levels of social and environmental contributions than is legally required (Saiz-Alvarez & Vega-Munoz, 2020). In addition, we have seen major institutional investors (eg. Legal and General) actively (and publicly) disinvesting from certain companies with poor environmental or social records.

There are also signs of a recognition at the highest level of western capitalism that a broader conception of the purpose of the company, beyond that of creating shareholder value, is needed if the long-term future of the planet and its people is to be secured. For example, the Round Table of America, the US version of the CBI, in 2018 called for a renewed 'stakeholder capitalism' which would see it incumbent on the CEO and Board not only to offer returns to shareholders but also to communities, employees, societies and the environment (Gelles and Yaffe-Bellany, 2019). While a lack of action since then has led to accusations of 'greenwash', these agendas are slow-moving and may need to be given a decade before final judgment is passed.

This wider movement in socio-political sentiment, towards a 'kinder capitalism', to which the pandemic has arguably added impetus, has influenced me too. It has forced me to reflect on the question of how future social entrepreneurs should orient themselves when it comes to the three main sectors. Where, in short, could we most usefully have an impact? Will a 24-year-old today make most impact setting up small non-profit as I did at **VoiceAbility**? Or would they make a bigger difference in the world by setting up a pro-social commercial businesses?

While the answer to this is specific to the individual context (we may equally need both), this is nevertheless a question worth considering. I suspect, given how the lines between sectors have blurred, that my 24-year-old self would now be setting up a socially responsible commercial business (rather than a charity) as a vehicle to do good. Such has the climate changed in 25 years.

A desire to explore all of these questions led to my third public work which is a relatively new venture (incorporated in 2019), **HM Pasties Ltd**. I formed this business in partnership with a former offender, Lee Wakeham, who had developed and piloted the idea while working for a charity and, with the charity's agreement, we separately incorporated it in 2019. This business is explored more fully in Chapter 6.

My Sector (and its many definitions)

Broadly, this could be described as the social enterprise sector. However, this sector does not have quite the same kind of stable and settled identity as, say, the charitable, public or private sector, which tend to be defined by a single legal form (Aiken et al, 2021).

A social enterprise in the UK can take one of many legal forms. Some are charities, indeed my first one, **VoiceAbility**, was a charity and a company limited by guarantee (meaning it had no share capital). Other social enterprises are 'Community Interest Companies' (CICs) either with no formal shares and incorporated as limited-by-guarantee companies, in common with most larger charities. Indeed, most of the public service mutuals I discuss in Chapter 5 have no formal share capital, with nominal control of the business exercised through a Membership restricted to employees. Interestingly, the great

majority of CICs are privately held ventures. These are generally smaller, employing one to four people. (Teasdale, Baldock and Lyon, 2015). They are more likely to be led by women, people from minority backgrounds and younger people (Social Enterprise UK, 2021).

This debate on the extent to which ordinary for-profit businesses can legitimately call themselves 'social' businesses and their founders 'social entrepreneurs' was played out extensively (and exhaustingly!) in the UK in the 2000s and 2010s. It settled on a broad notion of trading companies with a primarily social mission, restricted profit distribution and clear independence from the state (Bull & Ridley-Duff, 2019). This was validated by the UK Department for Trade and Industry and the sector's trade body, Social Enterprise UK, in the early-mid 2000s with the new instrument of the Community Interest Company as the intended primary vehicle for social enterprise growth (Bull & Ridley-Duff, 2019)

The exact number of social enterprises in the UK is a topic of some debate (Teasdale, Lyon & Baldock 2013). The UK Government in 2017 claimed 471,000. However, this includes a large number of private sole-traders who are officially counted as social enterprises due to the self-definition of these business owners. This led, critics claim, to a massive inflation of the number of much lower number of 'true' social enterprises. This, they say, quite correctly, supported the political agenda at a time when the Government was promoting social enterprise as an alternative to state provision of services (Bell, 2018). By removing sole-traders from the number the estimate goes down significantly (Teasdale & Lyon, 2013).

Different Global Approaches

This conception of social enterprise in the UK has been distinct to that prevalent in both the United States and Europe where the definition of social enterprise reflects wider cultural norms (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). In the USA, social entrepreneurship is very much about 'the heroic entrepreneur' and it is expected that social entrepreneurs strictly follow the institutional logics of business in their pursuit of purpose (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010).

In Europe, the social enterprise sector is far more rooted in a co-operative tradition that is community-based and rooted in collective ownership and operates with different institutional logics from business or the state (Hulgard, 2010). The UK social enterprise sector contains elements of both these logics but it has, arguably, been weighted more towards the European approach than the American one in the way its institutional logics operate in practice (Haugh, 2005). This has meant that, in the UK, the social enterprise sector developed in a peculiar way, with the support infrastructure being mainly aimed at a relatively limited number of 'asset-locked' social enterprises with very little support directed at the majority of more commercial social enterprises (Lyon & Sepulveda, 2018).

Has Social Enterprise Delivered on its Early Promise?

While it may be too early to judge, it is not controversial to say that the hopes invested in social enterprise in the first decade of this century have not been realised, as the sector tended to integrate itself with the third or public sectors (Aiken et al). Social investment, the main recent thrust of Government policy from 2012-20, has enjoyed limited success with far less funds deployed than anticipated (Dearden-Phillips, 2020 – see Appendix K). Moreover, the UK Government's interest in social enterprise has dropped markedly since 2016 with no significant new policy on social enterprise at all since 2019. Many commentators have argued that without some broadening of the support infrastructure for a social business so that it caters for commercial, non-asset locked companies, the sector is doomed to stay small. Leaders of private social enterprises are poorly catered for in the UK.

Leadership Bricolage

Unsurprisingly, my views on the leadership requirements of social entrepreneurship reflect what I have witnessed in each of my three major public works. My own leadership style follows in the tradition of bricolage which involves marshalling disparate resources in novel ways, assembling them but then moving on to the next entrepreneurial thing. Sticking around, leading 'steady state' is not my leadership strength, nor that of most entrepreneurs I know. Although I can manage others, I find I am strictly average and it does not animate me on any level. I grow quickly bored and tend to feel that I am needed elsewhere. Where I really do come into my own is the sighting of opportunity, pulling the resources together and acting as 'midwife' to something new. I do not mind if this takes time (it normally does), but it is the creative element where I find myself best in terms of leadership. This stage completed, I prefer to leave ongoing leadership to more capable managers.

Working in Solitude and Moving Between Worlds

What lies behind my leadership style? There are a few things going on here. One is that, despite a sociable, eager-to-please nature, I prefer at one remove and on my own terms. I have, since youth, felt a sense of separation, probably reinforced by life events and I prefer not to feel 'captive' or dependent and to curate groups of others to work with on my own terms. Part of this, I know, is about feeling psychologically safe, keeping 'dangerous' people at bay.

Another dimension is that I am able, on perhaps an uncommon level, to move quite seamlessly between worlds, assimilating but not fully joining any particular tribe. I am a chameleon of sorts. This is not about deception, probably more about adaptation, possibly related to my background where I had to act like nothing was wrong when massive problems were occurring. I can, consequently, fit in virtually anywhere, adjusting the way I use language, accent and body language to assimilate. Over time this has probably softened as I have become more confident, learned to trust people more and

become able to collaborate more readily, from where I am, without necessarily feeling the compulsion to assimilate.

A third element in my leadership style is restlessness. I am eager to move to the next thing once my work is done. I am quickly bored and gravitate toward empty space that I see waiting to be occupied. If someone else is taking care of it, I look elsewhere. I try to fill a void, be useful. So as well as being chameleon-like, my leadership style is out-front and opportunity-driven.

My particular gift, if we are to use this language, is that I am probably better at seeing opportunities for social impact than I am opportunities for personal enrichment. I have no interest in any business whose growth does not exceptionally enhance society or the environment. Hence my choice to remain a social entrepreneur as I will judge my life's success, at its end, in terms of the impact I made on society rather than my accumulated assets. The only regret I have from this choice is the lack of personal capital from my career to date to invest in more new social ventures and constantly needing to call on the resources of others as I go about my work.

Starting Young, Going it Alone

Back to the story. I founded **VoiceAbility**, a disability charity, at 24 rather than pursue a conventional career. I had a paid job from 24-26 years of age, with the charity CSV (Community Service Volunteers) and, while it was enjoyable, I found employed life not to be for me. After running **VoiceAbility** as a side-project for two years, I left CSV to pursue my start-up full-time, with no funding yet in place. A year later, we had funding. After 13 long years leading **VoiceAbility**, as well as three further start-ups in which I was involved as Chair, I embarked on another new venture – **Stepping Out**.

Supporting Others to 'Step Out' of the Public Sector

My purpose in creating **Stepping Out**, my second public work, was to build a set of supports for people setting up new social enterprises from the public sector. This was something I believed, probably naively, at the time would be transformative within public services. Again, my focus and desire were twofold.

The first was to work with people with the 'chutzpah' and personal drive to leave the security of public sector institutions to create a better venture in the form of a social enterprise. My second motivation was ideological: to play my role in breaking the hold of monopoly public services, which I saw, at the time, as inhibiting innovation and change. Over the coming decade, I helped to create and grow many such ventures, mostly in health and social care (see Appendix A).

A third and equally important additional motivation as I founded **Stepping Out**, was the realisation, at 40 approached, that I had to think more seriously about money, probably for the first time in my life. Up to the age of 30, I had been happy to survive on little to no money. My own joke to myself was

that I survived on cigarettes, caffeine and running (the former two now long renounced!). It had been far more important to progress my independent social ventures, even if this meant going without a decent car or my own house. By 40, running a non-profit, working up to 80 hours a week and having babies just was not working. I was slowly slipping into debt, particularly once my partner gave up work. So I needed a new venture that would, I hope, halve my hours and also double my income.

My Shift to Commercial Social Enterprise

Over a decade on, as I turned 50, my focus shifted again. I had, by now, come to believe, over a long period, that the social enterprise sector in the UK was possibly *always* going to be too small and marginal in its ability to address social problems at any kind of scale. This was in part, I felt, due to the particular nature of the 'institutional logics' (Vickers et al, 2017) of these organisations, of which I speak in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. I felt that the UK social enterprise sector has become a de facto part of the third sector and to be both closed and ideological in its mindset and limited in its ambition. It didn't feel like the force in the land it had promised to become.

By this point, I was instinctively far more drawn to American conceptions of social entrepreneurship that accentuate for-profit ventures that also build in social impact as a major part of how they work. The American approach, while often naïve about critical role of the state in the roll-out of social innovation, did better manage, in my view, to marry zeal for social change with a commercial mindset (Bacq & Jansen, 2011)

It was at this point, in 2019, that I engaged in some experimentation and decided to see whether it was possible to create a pro-social commercial business in a traditionally not for profit domain – work integration for offenders, **HM Pasties**. This became my third public work and a deeply instructive one in terms of my own development as an enabler of social entrepreneurs. It was also the inspiration for my next public work, Social Business Builders which seeks to address serious social problems through for-profit ventures. Next we look at the frameworks through which I look at the different approaches I have taken in my social entrepreneurial journey to date.

Chapter 3: My Organising Frameworks

“Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful”

George Orwell

Autoethnography is defined by Adams, Jones and Ellis (2015) as the use of a ‘researcher’s personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices and experiences’, showing ‘people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live and the meaning of those struggles’ (Adams et al, 2015). Within my own story, motivation is key, so, in this section, I explore my own drivers and those espoused by others across all of three of my public works and review these against the leading academic theories about entrepreneurial motivation. Bricolage Theory, the art of ‘making-do’ provides a helpful theoretical frame when applied to all my public works and I explore here how it has applied differently in each of the public works I describe. Theories of hybridity and mission drift (drawn from Organisational and Institutional Theory) form a very important component of this submission, not only as a powerful explanatory tool in my three existing public works but as a predictive one for my future ones. Finally, I apply, selectively, a critical lens to each public work as an illuminative counterweight to my own in-built defensiveness of my achievements.

Autoethnography: understanding motivation and action.

This submission is, to a large degree, about the complex relationship between myself as an agent of or researcher on social business and the temporal context in which I have lived and worked in this space which include events from the local through to the global. One of the ideal outcomes of this piece of autoethnography will be is a set of insights into the ways in which those works were both influenced by their context and, in turn, created their own impact on the way social entrepreneurship in the UK was thought about and practiced.

Motivation as an Embedded Theme

This Doctoral submission is very much about myself as part-and-parcel of my public works. Therefore, it feels necessary to explore my perceptions and drivers themselves through theoretical lenses developed to understand motivation. I am very conscious that my ‘ground state’, to recall Shank (1998), comprising the precepts I bring to everything to which I apply reason is a powerful one, very much shaped by a host of earlier, formative influences.

In embracing my personal feelings and reflections on life as a social entrepreneur, I am electing to place a subjective approach on a par with a positivist, hypothesis-based one. This is in recognition that my experience as an absorbed actor has validity alongside formal, peer-reviewed research. Indeed, all academic research, to some degree, reflects the mental constructs of persons doing it (and critiquing it) and therefore is not, somehow, at one removed or 'neutral' (Ellis et al, 2011).

These views resonate with those of Shank (1998) who points to 'abductive reasoning' – the role of our mind's experience in how we perceive 'facts' on which we then deduce or infer other 'facts'. Abductive reasoning starts with a 'ground state', which can be described as our normal, 'default' mode of seeing and understanding things. Shank's point is that it is only when we synthesise this unmediated, ground-state experience of the world with more formal thinking processes of deduction (inferring a fact from observed phenomena) and induction (predicting wider phenomena from a fact) that a more rounded view can be achieved.

Of particular interest to me on the academic side is research on differences and similarities between conventional and social entrepreneurs and the extent to which this speaks to my own experiences. According to Krueger and Brazeal (1994), 'Entrepreneurial intention can be defined as the commitment of a person towards some future behaviour which is projected towards starting a business or organisation' (pp 203-204). But entrepreneurial intention isn't all directed, as is often assumed, towards personal enrichment. McClelland (1961) focused on the entrepreneur's need for achievement, Hisrich and Brush (1986) on their desire for independence and Brockhous (1980) on the entrepreneur's propensity and need to take risks.

Research into the origins of entrepreneurial motivation has focused on different aspects of the phenomenon. In McClelland's (1961) model, entrepreneurs were influenced by either by the need for achievement, for power or for affiliation. I can certainly relate to the first of these, and also the third very strongly.

In relation to social entrepreneurs specifically, Bacq & Alt (2011), Dees (2012) and Mair & Nobia (2006) highlight empathy as a key trait distinguishing social from conventional entrepreneurs. Bacq and Alt (2011) specifically argue that studying the link between the 'pro-social' trait of empathy in social enterprise and associated impact-outcomes suggests a 'pro-social' predisposition among social entrepreneurs that traditional 'entrepreneurial intent' theories do not accommodate. These authors link empathy in the social entrepreneur to complementary ideas of self-efficacy (a sense of one's own competence and agency) and social worth (which concerns feelings of connection to and regard for others), ideas absent from earlier theories of entrepreneurial motivation.

I find myself in sympathy with Bacq and Alt's (2011) theory when I refract my own experience of entrepreneurial motivation through it. My perception coming into this work was that the motivations of traditional entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs were strikingly similar and I do think that McClelland's model is deeply relevant. But the framework of Bacq and Alt (2011) build helpfully onto this and I want to examine in Chapter 7 in the Discussion where this takes me as a practitioner.

Bricolage Theory and Motivation

"O for a life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts!"

John Keats

Baker and Nelson (2005) note that bricoleurs are unwilling to accept the limitations of their environment and are comfortable to go beyond socially constructed ideas of what is possible. What attracted me to Bricolage Theory as I began reading for this Doctoral submission is the deep resonance it has with my own way of operating. While I cannot boast an outstanding IQ, my mind is unusually adept at seeing relationships between disparate resources in order place them in in service of social goals. Twenty-five social businesses in as many years suggests that something in the way my brain works that isn't particularly common. Exploring bricolage theory helped me to understand that this is actually a form of intelligence rather than just a weird quirk in the way I see things.

Bricolage has been directly applied in the field of entrepreneurship and, latterly, social entrepreneurship, and forms a significant theme in the literature. Bacq et al (2015) studied the role of social entrepreneurs' bricolage behaviour in enabling their organisations to scale up. Across a sample of 123 social ventures, they found a positive correlation between entrepreneurial bricolage and the scaling of social impact. Di Domenico et al, (2010) identify three further bricolage constructs that are particularly associated with social entrepreneurship: social value creation, stakeholder participation and persuasion. All rely on bricolage and I related strongly to all of them in the context of my own story.

Bricolage Theory also interests me because it offers a helpful predictor of entrepreneurial potential of individuals. Put plainly, if someone cannot or will not learn to perform bricolage – if they need everything in place before they start - they are far less likely to become a successful social entrepreneur.

So we next turn to hybridity theory which attempts to theorise this relationship – and also brings together my own motivation to do good while also doing well commercially.

Institutional Theory, Hybridity Theory and Social Entrepreneurship

“A businessman is a hybrid of a dancer and a calculator”

Paul Valery

The Literature

Richard Scott (2004)) posits that institutions are social structures that have attained a high degree of resilience (and) are comprised of cultural-cognitive, normative and regulative elements that together with associated activities and resources provide stability and meaning to social life. Institutional Theory, and its derivative, Hybridity Theory, form the spine of this Doctoral submission. This is because Hybridity Theory is perhaps the defining feature of social entrepreneurship (Battilana & Lee 2014, Vickers et al, 2017).

In the last 30 years, there has been a resurgence of interest in understanding how competing demands can be reconciled within a single organisational setting (Cappellaro & Tracey, 2020). This is an issue defined within Institutional Theory as coping with ‘multiple institutional logics’. A specific focus of this work has been on ‘hybrid’ organisations that incorporate two or more logics (Battilana & Dorado, 2010) and which are presented as a way of ameliorating complex social challenges beyond the capabilities of traditional ‘single logic’ organisations (Jay, 2013).

In a review of the social entrepreneurship literature, Doherty et al (2014) identify hybridity, the pursuit of the dual mission of financial sustainability and social purpose, as the defining characteristic of social businesses. They also assess the impact of hybridity on the management of the social enterprise mission, on the way organisations attract financial and human resources and then go on to present a framework for understanding the tensions and trade-offs arising from hybridity.

The idea of fusing two distinct organising logics in a single organisation has obvious resonances with social entrepreneurship, with its two equally valid measures of success – one social, the other commercial. I will be using this framework to review each of my own public works and as a pointer towards how future social entrepreneurs can most effectively manage the tensions associated with the existence of multiple institutional logics.

I am particularly interested in Hybridity Theory as speaks powerfully to the observed blurring of organisational boundaries between sectors over the last 40 years that has been written about extensively by, among others, Billis (2010) and Gillett et al (2018). Vickers et al (2017) write specifically about hybrid social enterprise providers of health and well-being, and this work directly references the types of organisations I helped to establish in my second public work, **Stepping Out**.

What I find particularly fascinating about Hybridity Theory is that it cuts to the heart of the biggest question about social enterprise which is this: By bringing together multiple, competing institutional logics, are social entrepreneurs going to find it inherently harder to succeed in creating social impact than if they founded single or predominant-logic organisations? Put simply, to borrow from the most cited article on social entrepreneurship (Austin and Wei-Skellern, 2009), is it easier to be commercial OR social, rather than trying to be both? And if it is harder, should social entrepreneurs give up trying to blend the two logics in a new one and go back to a simpler theory of change - or work hard to mitigate the tensions that inevitably arise between a set of contrasting institutional drivers?

Literature Meets Experience

My experience as a social entrepreneur is that running competing institutional logics involves far greater challenges than I believe I would have faced had I adopted a singular set of institutional norms. However, my experience has also been that over time, strategies of mitigation can be developed and new institutional logic, that marries the two imperatives within the single venture can be developed.

I examine these experiences here, alongside insights from the literature. These insights include those of Battilana & Dorado (2010) who indicate that particular approaches to hiring, onboarding and the crafting of a new 'combined' organisational identity (for instance around ideas of operational excellence) can inject a new over-riding institutional imperative when logics.

I also explore in depth the related lens of 'mission-drift' (Ebrahim, Battilana & Mair, 2014; Cornforth, 2014) which sit adjacent to Hybridity Theory. I examine the allegation of Cornforth (2014) that the twin logics of social enterprise seldom live together easily in organisations, with one often vying with the other, leading to mission-drift, a constant requirement for recalibration and seldom finding true conciliation either strategically or operationally. In the UK, we have arguably seen many examples of mission-drift in social enterprises. This has taken the form of enterprises either veering too far in a 'social' direction, and losing commercial focus, or, conversely, being 'taken-over' by commercial imperatives, leading to an eclipse of social purpose (Vickers & Lyon et al 2017).

Critical Approaches to Social Entrepreneurship

"A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest"

Michel Foucault

Social entrepreneurship has been a contested concept since its arrival in academia in the late 1990s (Eppler, 2012). It therefore feels helpful here to look at what critical approaches bring to the table and how they have influenced me. Therefore, at selected points throughout this submission, I adopt a critical lens in my examination of social entrepreneurship. Although my use of the critical lens is secondary to my application of Bricolage and Hybridity Theories, this lens is nevertheless important. This is because the ideas contained within it run strongly counter to my own and thus provide necessary challenge to my own narrative but also because the critiques themselves are powerful, well-constructed and merit discussion.

While the literature on social entrepreneurship, certainly early on, tended to be positive, even acclamatory, there are now a number of excellent critical articles which not only challenge the ideological underpinnings of social entrepreneurship (Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017) and the prevalence of social enterprise itself (Teasdale, Lyon & Baldock, 2013) but also its very validity as a viable academic concept (Eppler, 2012).

Critical theory has its origins in the 'Frankfurt School' (Horkheimer, 1937) of social-philosophical thought and has spawned a plethora of variants and approaches. At the heart of all of them is a critique of society and culture that reveals and challenges existing power structures. Critical theorists have made several powerful critical points about social entrepreneurship. Common to most of these is the idea that social entrepreneurship is essentially a 'neo-liberal' idea that undermines the rightful role of the state (Teasdale & Nicholls, 2017), which is dominated by a small number of wealthy, powerful actors (Nicholls & Cho, 2006) and which brings the dominant logic of heroic entrepreneurs, markets and commercialism to problems which demand larger solutions based on alternative logics (Arthur et al, 2006).

As social entrepreneurship gained currency in the context of UK government policy, the third sector and business in the first two decades of the century (Aiken et al, 2020), there emerged a body of critical work which, as a practitioner at the time, I tended to avoid or dismiss. However, this submission offers an ideal opportunity to refract two of my three of my public works through the lens of critical approaches and appraise what this offers in terms of new understandings.

Calling Out the Heroes

According to Bull (2008), a critical reflection on social entrepreneurship views its rise primarily in terms of the political context of declining state involvement in public services coupled with an US-inspired emphasis on heroic social entrepreneur (Nowak, 2017). This promotes the notion of the atomised individual, self-reliance and personal responsibility (Scase & Goffee, 1992) for social change rather than its existence as a collective responsibility. Other writers point to the importation of models and

'ideologies' from business and management (Eikenberry, 2009), the move from grant-giving to competitive tendering and the privatisation of welfare states generally (Pearce, 2003; Nicholls, 2006). This leads, critics argue, to a sector originally built on trust, community and togetherness being contorted by trends towards 'business-like' practices (Dart, 2004; Pharoah et al, 2004) and 'managerialism' (Turnbull, 1994; Hulgard & Spear, 2006).

Critics like Arthur et al (2006) believe that fusing 'social' and 'enterprise' is inherently problematic because it assumes that 'social' and 'enterprise' are mutually inclusive and that success in the market will mean that social goals will somehow take care of themselves. The truth, argue Goerke (2003) and Pearce (2003), is that real-world social sector organisations do not work like this, that one or other tend to be prioritised, leading to organisational dynamics that do not support the equal and happy pairing of social and commercial goals. This marriage of 'social' and 'entrepreneurship' is a 'leap of faith', which does not necessarily work in terms of how organisations operate and the critique here is that the synergy of social and enterprise is more reconcilable in theory than in practice (Bull, 2008).

Challenging the Narrative

This critique is elaborated further by Seanor et al (2013) who challenge the 'grand narrative' of social enterprise, which they see as encouraging third sector organisations being goaded to move along a continuum towards commercialism by deploying a range of thought processes and actions that are 'entrepreneurial' in nature, with the implicit (but unproven) logic that greater commerciality offers greater potential for social impact.

Seanor et al also call attention to the contradictions and paradoxes of the term social enterprise. The term, they argue, is theoretically dubious, because, when scrutinised in empirical research, the narrative of the 'journey' from social to economic does not, as a metaphor, correspond to the real experiences of social purpose organisations: 'There (in the research) appear contrasting narratives and differing paths in transition, not simply a linear journey towards commercialisation'. Furthermore, they argue that 'there' and 'here', in the context of the movement from social to commercial, are more complex places than much of the acclamatory literature suggests (Seanor et al, 2013 pp 25-26).

Social Enterprise as 'Clothing'

Interestingly, when Seanor et al (2013) interviewed social sector leaders, there were a very wide-ranging views on social enterprise. Narratives ranged from enthusiasm and acceptance of the social enterprise agenda to views that social enterprise was the 'dark side' to be avoided or a buzz-word to be used on a 'smash and grab' necessary-evil basis (the counter-narrative). There were also more nuanced 'narratives of practice', with suggestions that some social leaders saw themselves as wearing

‘entrepreneurial hats’ and ‘clothes of the entrepreneur’, recognising that ambiguous identities were inherent to their interactions with others and there were merits to fitting into the power of the grand-narrative.

It therefore does not appear that practitioners necessarily view social enterprise as a harmonious hybrid between the social and economic. However, neither did their responses suggest that language and ideas from the business world were undermining social priorities. Their stories (and images) are of social organisations oscillating between the social and economic, evolving from the traditions of the third sector and anticipating direction towards social goals (Seanor et al, 2013). As such these stories differ from both the grand and counter-narratives, rather pointing to ‘tactical performance’ in wearing different hat and managing the ‘impression of being enterprising’ whilst the everyday culture, though split, was still more social. This suggests that, within this group, the meaning of being entrepreneurial differs from traditional notions.

Social Enterprise as ‘Tactical Mimicry’

The research by Seanor et al is echoed by the work of Dey & Teasdale (2015) which used the concept of ‘tactical mimicry’ to describe the behaviour of third sector actors ‘enterprising up’ as part of a ‘parasitical engagement with governmental power geared towards obtaining public money’. These authors argue that third sector organisations ‘play the game’ to fit the dominant ideas of the day, covertly seeking to subvert newly fashionable agendas to their own longstanding ends, a behaviour described by Courtpasson et al (2012) as ‘productive resistance’. This comes into play strongly in my first public work, VoiceAbility, which is discussed next,

Chapter 4: VoiceAbility – My First Public Work (along with my book ‘Your Chance to Change the World’ – The No-Fibbing Guide to Social Entrepreneurship’ - being sent to examiners)

“The idea that we could control the course of our lives through rational choices is as absurd as a fish trying to control the ocean in which it swam’

Elif Shafak

Description and Context

VoiceAbility (1994-2010) was my first fully realised social enterprise venture. It is probably the most personal and possibly most successful, given that it is still operating today as a more substantial and impactful venture than the one I left after standing down. I am mostly proud of what it has achieved for people who need its services.

Having already sketched out the 1990s and 2000s context in which **VoiceAbility** was formed and grown, I will now share the story of its creation in more depth. **VoiceAbility** emerged from a confluence of my own needs, beliefs and skills. After university, I had a full mental breakdown, partly as consequence of my experience of psychological and sexual abuse from age 13, and entered therapy. Part of getting better was doing something different and new. This took me to a charity in which I volunteered during my early 20s in Newcastle called Skills for People (‘Skills’) that worked on self-advocacy skills for people with learning difficulties.

The Interview That Changed Everything

I arrived at Skills as a 22-year-old with only a scant understanding of the mission of the organisation, but I was quickly enthused by the positivity and the rights-based culture and methodologies of the organisation. Without fanfare, Skills were, 30 years ago, doing incredibly progressive work with people with learning disabilities. Moreover, this was in a mainly working-class city where many learning-disabled people were still fully or partly institutionalised. It was utterly captivating and deeply interesting. Indeed, I was interviewed to become a volunteer by three learning-disabled people in whose gift, I now realise, my future was laid.

I got through the interview and in my early volunteering at Skills, I mainly watched, listened and learned. It was also my job to make the tea and help people to use the bathroom if necessary. Around this time, I felt something moving in my being, the ‘finding a life to which you can say “yes”’ alluded to by Gadamer (1960), knowing, in the sense of having crystalline certainty, what I was to become.

This experience brings Gadamer to mind again who in his writings on theories of interpretation (hermeneutics) writes:

‘Knowing is a direct intuition, a matter of divine grace’ (in Binding & Tapp, 2008, p. 136))
something that cannot be separated from ourselves or reduced to scientific method.

Truth, for Gadamer, comprises, ‘words spoken to us by being’ and ‘all understanding [being] ultimately self-understanding’. Once we do understand something, we appropriate the truth and it becomes part of our being (in Binding & Tapp, 2008, pp 139-141).

This period also brings to mind the concept of ‘cracking thoughts’ written about by Petranker (1997, pp 20-21). This where a collection of stimuli, almost like mini explosions, reshape or redirect our thinking. My experience also brings to mind Hannah Arendt’s (1963) description of how we can ‘re-make ourselves in action’, for in action is the freedom to turn the private self into something public. For somebody carrying a lot of shame, the idea of harnessing this negative energy and turning it into something useful to others felt redemptive and cleansing. It made me feel like someone new, different and ‘good’.

Enter the Bricoleur

As my confidence grew, I approached the Director of Skills and asked if I might initiate a new self-advocacy group, which I organised with support from staff colleague. Within this new group, I was free to work creatively alongside its members and this culminated in a new film and video that was funded by a new foundation set up by the pop musician George Michael and which premiered at the Tyneside Cinema. I raised the money, wrote the script and organised production, all in conjunction with the group. The film was unusual in that it was both informative and entertaining in equal measure, with huge lashings of Geordie humour! It subsequently sold many hundreds of copies and was used for years afterwards by a burgeoning self-advocacy sector of the 1990s

Inhabiting Myself

This was an incredibly powerful period for me. I learned what I was good at: hustling, raising money, developing creative projects, working across various sectors and bringing together people and resources in new ways. I was good at ‘bricolage (to which we return shortly). This was a lifetime first. Up to this point I had been a half-decent university teacher and researcher - but I had had no sense of direction

Psychotherapy was critical to all this as it helped me to interpret my experiences in a novel way and make life at the time more tolerable and less haunted. It also showed how therapy can help to rebuild faith in other people, which, at some level, had, for me, been damaged. I had seen too much of the very worst in people, too early in life and much of this darkness was most of what I ‘knew’. Thanks

to therapy, I was able to re-interpret my life in terms of the wider forces that had acted upon it and re-set it with new experiences, including the therapeutic transfer of unconditional empathy, kindness and non-judgment (Rogers, 1980). I experienced a form of love and realised how little of this particular type of love I had experienced up to that time.

This felt like a 'crucible' time. While still a troubled young person at 22, prone to setbacks, I had suddenly acquired both a larger sense of purpose and an accompanying belief that my life would slowly get better. I also entered a good relationship with a young woman which, while relatively short-lived, signalled that I was now ready to move forward in my life.

What I had discovered, although I did not use this language at the time, was that I was, quite naturally, a social entrepreneur. I could see opportunities, I could act on them and bring together resources around them, which is not something everyone can do. I could also satisfy a drive for a valuable identity and do so in accord with my social conscience. My particular focus was work alongside people with learning difficulties, though I believe that if Skills for People had worked with homeless or older people, my lifetime focus may have been on these groups.

Time to Move On

Therefore the formative period of my development probably took place between the ages of 22 and 24. But at 24, I was barely making ends meet. I therefore applied for jobs and soon found myself moving to Cambridge, working for a national charity (Volunteering Matters) in my first, and, to this day, only full-time paid job. In retrospect, this may seem an odd move, given the forward momentum I had acquired while with Skills for People. But, by 24, I needed to try to 'kick-start' the next phase of my life and this job felt like a way forward. I had been in Newcastle since I was 18. At 24, I needed a job and a new place in which to define myself.

To Cambridge and My First Venture

The job was fun but did not meet my entrepreneurial needs. Within three days of arriving in Cambridge for my new job, I had met SM a young social worker who knew the learning disabilities sector in Cambridge really well. We clicked and between us we were soon thinking about how we could fill a gap, for there was no Skills for People equivalent there. While working full-time at Volunteering Matters, I developed, during evenings and weekends, the early beginnings of Voice-Ability, then called 'Speaking Up'.

This involved piecing together the funding, the support and, of course, the people who would become our first self-advocacy group. This happened within a few months of arriving and I borrowed lock-and-stock from Skills in terms of ideas and methods. I then had a stroke of luck in that a young

woman who had worked with me at Skills, moved to Cambridge following her marriage and was also able to help me with the emergent organisation. Another act of bricolage was in play.

Housing Benefit and Spending Money – Back to Basics

Two years from arriving in Cambridge, I resigned from Volunteering Matters, signed on for housing benefit and gave myself the next year as ‘make or break’ on the new venture. A year later I had secured Lottery and other funding for two roles, my own and a learning-disabled man. I spent the next five years developing Speaking Up (as it was called until 2012) as a regional charity. I recruited a mainly local board and about 20 mostly younger staff, many, like myself, unconventional.

We attracted a lot of grant funding and were able to innovate with this, beyond the Skills for People template. We created the first ‘Service User Parliaments’ for learning-disabled people, an alternative to traditional day services called Next Steps and we did some highly innovative work with younger people with learning disabilities. Further to this, we were being asked, increasingly, to bid for contracts to deliver statutory advocacy services. We did this once or twice, were successful, so added this to our portfolio.

Hitting the Buffers

Despite lots of success, five years in, our new charity had hit a sustainability problem. All of our funding was short term grants. I was exhausted and I felt we would be out of operation within another couple of years if we did not change tack. We had to find a way to make a difference that ran beyond grants and, quite typically for the time, we entered the emerging contract-culture.

Under New Labour, our sector was opening up. Councils, the NHS and even the private healthcare sector were commissioning services from third sector organisations (Vickers, Lyon et al, 2017). While we did not give up on grants to fund innovation, I could also envision a way of making enough money on contracts to cover all of our core costs, rendering grants simply a supplementary form of funding. While the contract work to provide statutory advocacy services was more about competence than innovation, it would secure the organisation - if we got it right.

Our Pivot to Social Enterprise

This ‘pivot’ to contracting was assisted by support from a new venture-philanthropy organisation, Impetus Trust, that was formed in the early 2000s by two private equity entrepreneurs. To build a ‘social business’, I needed a larger, stronger team. Impetus’ model was based on venture-capital, but without the shareholding. Impetus would invest significantly in the mission and its return would be chiefly social in outcome, measured by our growth and the number of clients we helped. Impetus Trust was informed by ideas imported from the US, where venture-philanthropy had originated in the 1990s.

The idea of venture philanthropy was to apply the logics and techniques used in the expansion of high-potential businesses to charities. This was to back high-potential ventures over an extended period, make them grow and help them dominate their 'marketplace'. In the US, venture philanthropy had provided long-term backing to scores of organisations and Impetus Trust's founders wanted to bring the venture-philanthropy model to the third sector. **VoiceAbility** was to become their first investee.

Dalliance with the VCs

As a social entrepreneur, what I loved about Impetus was the supportive attitude that it brought to growth in the social sector, including the insistence on funding only core costs. However, my enthusiasm for venture philanthropy was not universally shared in my organisation and some of my colleagues (rightly, it turned out) were cautious about mission-drift, the potential dilution of our mission of radically empowering disabled people by new commercial growth imperatives.

I, on the other hand, was fairly unstoppable in my enthusiasm for this approach because I wanted dramatic growth, had become worn-out with perpetual fundraising and could not see any other way to sustain the organisation without an entirely new approach. I also saw around us so many charities in an unending struggle to stay alive, let alone make an impact.

Charm, Persuasion and the Railroad

As founder, I put my foot down, used all my charm and persuasion and drove my board and team headlong into the contract culture. This was probably a prima-facie example of founder-syndrome, described by Block & Rosenberg (2002). The majority of my board were sceptical but they may have sensed a 'back me or sack me' moment.

I had mixed feelings about this. Privately, I knew Impetus investment also played powerfully into my deeper-seated psychological need to make my own mark and secure massive personal impact. This was, to a degree, 'about me' and a couple of people had the courage to call this out privately. But I was on a mission: I wanted to be the head of a fast-growing social business backed by venture philanthropy, carve out a name for myself and exemplify a new approach to social mission. Nothing and nobody were going to stop me.

The Impetus experiment was, on its own terms, extremely successful. We recruited a handful of brilliant people from outside our sector who helped to transform the organisation's commercial capabilities. Resultingly, we grew our turnover from £500,000 in 2000 to getting toward £5m by the time I left in 2010. It subsequently rose to £10m. And we were touching not just hundreds of lives but, by now, many thousands.

No Longer a Happy Ship ...

However, there were downsides. We felt like an organisation in an argument with ourselves once the Impetus money had landed. The attempt to overlay a new set of logics over an existing set was only partly successful. Many of the early recruits felt let down. One valued trustee resigned telling me 'this is not why I joined'. I recall going to his house, asking him, in vain, to reconsider. Despite the growth, **VoiceAbility** experienced mission-drift, without any doubt. Innovation suffered. Our radicalism and creativity declined as we reshaped ourselves to an agenda driven by commissioners. All as predicted by my critics. Our better energies were now going on winning and mobilising standard contracts.

Moreover, the work we were doing, while mostly of good quality was, arguably, work that would have happened anyway, under a different contractor. We maintained some of our innovation by shielding a group of talented young social innovators in our organisation, but the subordination of creative new work to 'cookie cutter' contracting was probably the story of my later time with the organisation. In addition, the sustainment of the organisation itself had, in some way, come to preoccupy us at least as much as the question of whether we were making a unique difference or not.

Leaving (Mostly) Well

My time in **VoiceAbility** concluded in 2010. By 2009, I knew I needed to plan my exit. I had written a book about social entrepreneurship (Dearden-Phillips, 2007 – sent to examiners) and I was limbering up for the next challenge, unaware of exactly what this would be. In 2009, I had built a relationship with another organisation, Advocacy Partners (AP), whose CEO I felt, would be able to steward what I had created as part of a merged organisation. Although AP was smaller than us, it had a different geographic footprint and was also deeply into the contract culture. I felt that while the CEO was not necessarily disposed to flair and innovation, he would nevertheless deliver growth and, crucially, not 'crash the car'. In a self-involved way, I felt that my personal reputation as a social entrepreneur required a successor who would steward the business without taking silly risks. Founder-syndrome again. By 2010 I had taken on an Executive Chair role, for a twelve-month period, with the new CEO, to smooth his transition and in 2011, I left **VoiceAbility** for good, never to return.

Challenges, Successes and Insights which emerged

How do I reflect back on **VoiceAbility**? On the one hand I am proud of building something that worked and was sustainable. These were, in hindsight, my most creative years and I feel that not for my initial push, **VoiceAbility** would never have happened. This said, most of the really interesting work we did no longer exists and the organisation today is mainly contract-based.

And it has moved some way from the founding vision – of radical empowerment . The tensions between business imperatives and social mission (Battilana & Dorado, 2010) were strong and I tended to go with the former, following the rationale that if we were not in business there would be no chance of future impact.

My reflection on that time is therefore mixed. On the one hand, I built something that stood the test of time. On the other, a lot of the innovative work I initiated died as the contract-culture took over. I am reminded of how very challenging it is to combine innovation with sustainable growth in the social sector, when there is actually a limited market for new approaches (Mumford & Moertle, 2003). I am also aware of how the organisational imperatives: survival, solvency, workforce, governance and growth can quickly eclipse one's focus on social impact (Battilana & Lee, 2010). By the end, I was just relieved to still be in business nearly 15 years in. However, our focus on the empowerment of people had somehow been 'crowded out' by the organisation's imperative to survive.

Bricolage as my 'A Game'

As I have already alluded to, the formation of **VoiceAbility** and many more innovative projects are well explained through the lens of bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1963). Research indicates that social ventures rely on bricolage since they seek solutions to social problems by using the resources at hand (Desa & Basu, 2013; De Domenico, Haugh & Tracey 2010; Molecke & Pinkse, 2017).

A resource-constrained environment is not the only factor that makes the ideas of social entrepreneurship and bricolage actually very close to each other. More relevant still is the ability of the social entrepreneur and bricoleur to marshal resources in an innovative way (Janssen, Fayolle and Wuillaume, 2018). Indeed, according to Nicholls (2009), a resource-starved environment fuels social innovation. In stark contrast to the idea that innovation requires ever-more resources, the bricolage approach rather follows the well-known adage that 'necessity is the mother of invention' (Senyard et al, 2014).

Cambridge, March 1994 - A Whirlwind Month of Bricolage!

To illustrate the applicability of the concept of bricolage to my experience of **VoiceAbility**, I relate an early, quite simple story of early bricolage during my first month in Cambridge. I arrived in the City on Sunday. By Tuesday I had met a social worker who knew many learning-disabled people in the city. We struck a chord and went for many coffees. Her boss was also interested in our ideas and, having met me on Thursday, put up a small amount of money for us to explore a self-advocacy group for Cambridge. A health commissioner offered a small pot of money the following Monday. In the meantime, a colleague at had donated a computer. Another connected us to a local community organisation who let us use their facilities and later rented us an office. The early operating model

was borrowed lock-and-stock from Skills. Within a month, we were operating. There were many other 'bricolage moments' during the journey but this is one good example.

Research by Stinchfield, Nelson and Wood (2013) suggests that social entrepreneurship and bricolage are conceptually very similar because 'bricoleurs' tend not to be necessarily materially or economically driven, *even in conventional entrepreneurship*. This certainly describes the early **VoiceAbility** to me. Scarcity was the prevailing feature of our early years (1994-2002) and this was also probably the period of our greatest creativity for which we won several awards in recognition.

Bricolage and Innovation

According to Senyard et al (2014), two primary mechanisms explain why companies or individuals engaging in bricolage tend to innovate more. Firstly, most firms actually prefer to do nothing when faced with opportunities for which a response seems expensive. Meanwhile bricoleurs 'tinker with what is at hand and have a bias for action' (Senyard et al, 2014, pp 302). Secondly, firms and individuals that use bricolage recombine available resources for other purposes than those for which they were intended. (Senyard et al, 2014).

I can reflect on many examples of this in the early **VoiceAbility**, not least our use of the life-experiences of learning-disabled people (not regarded as a 'resource' in any traditional sense) to create new training and awareness products for clinical psychologists, police forces and other professionals, something we did for 10 years.

Later on in the life of the organisation, in a more munificent environment, VoiceAbility's levels of bricolage were far lower (possibly non-existent) as there were more resources to hand, particularly after the Impetus Trust investment of £500k. Our response to opportunity became more muted, more cautious, we started to use formal criteria to assess new opportunities. Our willingness to act became conditional upon new funding, 'capacity' and fairly high levels of surety about risks. All of this contributed to a far less innovative environment. I was less happy, which corresponds to the findings of Baker and Nelson (2010) who posit that, in contrast to steady-state organisations, bricoleurs do not tend to see opportunities in prior-defined terms.

Bricolage and Me

What about 'bricolage and myself' in the context? At the individual level, the bricoleur is described by Stinchfield, Nelson and Wood (2013) as someone whose identity is closely tied to 'making it work' whatever the implications. She or he is animated by a strong determination to solve the targeted problem even at his or her own cost. They combine available resources for the sole purpose of finding a solution. He or she is a problem solver. And these resources are often easily available or free, because those possessing these spare resources often do not value them.

This represents a highly accurate description of myself in the context of the early years of **VoiceAbility** and arguably in the period leading up to its conversion to a trading social business. After this, with the business operating to a plan, my own bricolage skills became decreasingly important and less valued in my own organisation, indeed I became increasingly viewed by my colleagues as ‘difficult’ due to my tendency, in their eyes to ‘just go off and do things’. I recall many difficult conversations with my new executive team who opposed my ‘improvisational’ approach. They wanted a plan, ideally with a bow on it! As time went on, I felt increasingly a stranger in my own organisation which is one of the many reasons why I decided to move on.

Bricolage and Others

What do these insights about bricolage tell us about how social entrepreneurs can best deploy their efforts in the future? It is clear to me that bricolage is a ‘signature behaviour’ of social entrepreneurs. It is also clear from my experience and the literature that as ventures develop and grow that unless such behaviours are intentionally recruited and nurtured, the organisational outlook will be less conducive to improvisation (Smolka & Kroezen, 2014).

The logic here is that social bricoleurs should be encouraged to create new ventures and then to let them go to those more suited to running them in order that their talents as bricoleurs can be utilised in new ways. CEOs tend, in most cases, to be about creating stability within their organisations rather than disruption or uncertainty. Evolution not revolution is normally their way. What this tells me about myself is that I am probably best placed in life working in early ventures, at the more intuitive, relational, uncertain stages, either as founder or alongside one, until a point comes when the need to formalise a venture becomes an imperative. In short, the day when the board needs a paper to start doing anything new is probably the day I outlive my usefulness.

VoiceAbility as a ‘Hybrid’

Hybridity theory can be helpfully applied as a lens on my experience of developing **VoiceAbility** over a long period time. Earlier on **VoiceAbility** was prevalingly a not-for-profit and was initially registered as a charity to reflect this. Most early income was grant-based and we conformed predominantly to many of Billings’ (2010) idealised features of a not-for-profit organisation. However, we became a more recognisably ‘hybrid’ once we made a decision to enter the contract culture, take on ‘venture philanthropy’ and adopt a nakedly commercial approach to growth. The balance between traded income and donated income changed over time for **VoiceAbility**, as did other things, including the way we were managed. Managing the tensions arising from this was something for which I was neither prepared, nor able to do particularly well, on reflection.

Mixing Oil and Water? Hybridity Over Time

'**VoiceAbility 2.0**', my name for the creature the organisation became once we entered the world of largescale contracting, was a very conscious attempt to graft together a pre-existing social purpose to borrowed logics and concepts from commercial venture capital, including service differentiation, superior unit cost, customer benefit, market-share, competitor analysis and strategies for market-domination.

These logics sat beside a set of pre-existing values and behaviours around co-operation and community development (Lumpkin et al, 2013) coupled with an implicit hesitancy about commercialism, leading to a combination of organisational logics that was not always harmonious. This led, as I alluded, to a certain level of conflict and confusion, particularly among people who had only worked in charities before or who had ambivalent feelings about commercial business in relation to social objectives.

This led to a constant discourse in the organisation about the 'trade-offs' between social and commercial imperatives and the risk of 'mission drift'. Many employees saw the more commercial direction of the organisation as making us less 'for good'. Others, including myself, saw our commercial goals as enabling of us to reach a higher attainment around mission.

The literature is interesting here. Austin et al (2006) acknowledge a trade-off between economic and social objectives, but others, including Wilson and Post (2013) and Dacin (2010), posit that success in the one enables success in the other. The latter was a view to which, at the time, I would have been sympathetic but am now less sure.

Mission Drift in VoiceAbility

Recent studies of the pursuit of dual mission have explained how hybridity may lead to mission-drift (Pache & Santos, 2010) where the social goals of a business are sacrificed to achieve financial sustainability (Eikenberry and Kluver, 2004). This does indeed speak to my experience of '**VoiceAbility 2.0**' both in the way we configured our strategy and ran the organisation. Survival and commercial growth tended to become dominant logics. While we never stopped being 'pro-social' we spent far more time and energy on becoming a 'successful social business': growing, profitable, winning in our marketplace.

This was 'locked-in' by our deal with Impetus Trust. Put very simply the deal was they would invest £500,000 in cash and time over five years and we would work together to grow the organisation tenfold in turnover over the same period. This tied us by our funding agreement to growth targets and all the accompanying organisational requirements that demands. This included a lot of external help

on the commercial side, me completing an MBA and, inevitably, a neglect of social needs where there was not a clear and obvious 'market' in the form of 'effective demand', in other words a contract!

Raising the Temperature

This all increased the degree of hybridity – and internal tension - by several notches. We had moved, over a couple of years from a classic third sector organisation, informed by third sector institutional norms to one in which two logics competed side-by-side. This has indeed been one of the most powerful wider patterns in the third sector over the past forty years with its steady rationalisation and marketisation documented by several academic studies (Eikenberry & Kluver, 2004; Mair & Hehenberger, 2014; Hwang & Powell, 2009). Charities like VoiceAbility whose main activities have been premised on social objectives have been increasingly adopting practices that are typically associated with the commercial sector (Frumkin, 2002) and generating substantial revenues from the sale of goods and services (Child, 2010). In addition, third sector organisations have experienced a growing move to the adoption of business practices such as strategic planning, financial auditing and performance management (Brest, 2012, Hwang and Powell, 2009). This sector-wide trend is typified by the growth of social enterprises which aim to blend achieve a social mission through the use of market mechanisms (Mair & Marti, 2006)

Clashing or Complementary? Commercial vs Social Logics

The hybrid of dual objectives (Santos, 2012) embodied in social enterprise is *supposed* to be an enabler, an alternative route to impact that brings the best of commerce to the service of social objectives. However, many have pointed out the risks this creates of mission drift: losing sight of social mission in efforts to generate revenue (Fowler, 2000; Jones, 2007; Weisbrod, 2004). This reflects a long tradition in organisational scholarship illuminating the risk for organisations becoming distracted from their purpose in the battle for survival and efficiency (Selzick, 1949; Weber, 1952).

Mission drift has been a particular focus in research on social sector organisations and their governance. Ebrahim, Battilana and Lee (2014) argue that this risk is particularly acute for social enterprises for two reasons. Firstly, the dependence on commercial revenue for survival makes this a focus that can displace social imperatives. Secondly, this focus can completely eclipse the *raison d'être* of the organisation. Social enterprises face the distinct governance challenge of handling the tensions between these two objectives.

This can be made harder when each set of objectives have different internal and external stakeholders, which is commonplace. In the case of '**VoiceAbility 2.0**', our backer, Impetus, had different evaluation criteria than most other funders, our staff and our users, as a case in point. When you add to this the complexity of evaluating social outcomes alongside financial ones, the governance

challenges became increasingly complex (DiMaggio, 1983; Paton; 2003). This pattern of divergent stakeholders, some of whom are more influential than others, creates an inherent set of tensions in social enterprise organisations which are far less likely to be found in organisations where there is a more unitary focus (Dalton et al,2007).

Navigating the Tensions

Does the literature point to helpful ways to navigate these tensions? Ebrahim, Battilana & Lee (2014) distinguish helpfully between ‘integrated hybrids’ (IH) and ‘differentiated hybrids’ (DH). While each presents distinct governance challenges, an IH delivers social impact *directly* through its commercial activities while in a DH the social impact and commercial activities are *separated*. The risk of mission drift, they argue, is greater in the DH, less in the IH. While this is a helpful distinction, I would not necessarily agree that managing tensions is easier when the commercial and social mission are integrated. **VoiceAbility** 2.0 was actually nearer the IH model, but tensions were still felt between the commercial and social dimensions of our work.

Exploring the Counterfactual

Could it have been different? An expanding corpus of research explores the conditions under which social enterprises can maintain their hybridity over time (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2013). These studies have suggested particular organisational processes and recruitment and socialisation systems that support rather than undermine hybridity. These include finding an alternative, common focus such as ‘excellence’ which spans all activity, commercial or social (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). At **VoiceAbility** we actually did this by making successful outcomes for individual clients an agreed aim across all of our work, whether it was commercially sold or charitable in its origin. This, arguably, helped to ‘bridge’ the distinct elements of our hybrid organisation.

Summing Up

It is clear to me that **VoiceAbility** was a hybrid, but one very much originating in the third sector (**VoiceAbility** 1.0) which added novel institutional logics from the business sector in its 2.0 phase (Vickers & Lyon, 2017). However, rather than compartmentalising our different parts, e.g. into a new venture, we kept our charitable organisational form and aims and managed the tensions between a commercial drive and our historic tendency to innovate around perceived community need. The resulting tensions were more keenly felt on the board, but were also apparent in the wider organisation where there was a clear line between the more commercially minded people and those wedded to our origins in the self-advocacy sector.

On reflection, it is possibly not a model I would repeat because of the complexity of over-laying one set of institutional norms over another over time and finding a happy marriage between the two. The

challenges this entails in governance and management terms are high and this, I think, delimits the potential of this particular type of hybrid organisation.

Today, I would probably have set up the commercial side of VoiceAbility as an operating subsidiary, a differentiated hybrid, that ported profit to the charitable side. This said, one reason the commercial side succeeded was due to the legitimacy handed to it by our achievements in our earlier stages, so full separation may not have been wise. All said, I would suggest to future social entrepreneurs that a variant of DH may result in fewer tensions than the version of IH that we tried. But there is certainly a need for further research on the temporal dimensions of these two different types of hybridity.

A Critical Perspective on VoiceAbility

Teasdale's (2015) piece discussing 'tactical mimicry' in social enterprise resonates with my experience of growing **VoiceAbility**. In that world, I had to be chameleon-like, presenting different 'colours' to diverse stakeholders: to traditional funders I would be the social visionary; to Impetus I would be the growth-obsessed social entrepreneur; to staff I would be mission-driven leader and to my board I had to be all of these at different times and stages. So the metaphor of chameleon – and this itself being, a form of entrepreneurship – rings true for me. This also, of course, links powerfully back to bricolage, 'making do' with the resources at hand, including one's own chameleon-like ability to sense the needs of others and respond to them.

New Insights/synthesis

The three theoretical lenses applied to **VoiceAbility** all shed interesting new light on this as a public work. Its formative stages are described well by Bricolage Theory. The development of the organisation from its early to later, more conflicted stages can be explained by Hybridity Theory and the associated concept of mission-drift. Critical approaches demonstrate that the grand narratives around social entrepreneurship are somewhat self-serving and that the realities, certainly my reality, involved an ability to present a different face to different institutional actors.

Learnings from VoiceAbility for Future Public Works

What does the **VoiceAbility** experience tell me about the larger questions concerning my future public works? Two things stand out. The first is that the particular form of hybridity that I created in **VoiceAbility** (where a commercial logic was superimposed onto a pre-existing social logic), was that this creates tensions that are difficult to manage. There is clearly a destabilizing effect when a new logic is introduced on top of an existing one (Cappellaro & Tracey 2020). Competing logics, where both are held on an equal footing are draining (Battilana & Lee) and can lead to mission-drift as the organisation is pulled in all sorts of directions. The second is that I would EITHER implement more of the measures detailed by Battilana & Dorado (2012) to create a single culture and ways of working OR

to entirely separate logics into new different organisations. Without such measures, there is an argument that a hybrid organisation can, without care, become a *hydra*, with too much to manage and too little internal coherence.

Chapter 5: Stepping Out: My Second Public Work... (along with my book 'How to Step Out – Your guide to leading a mutual or social enterprise spin-out from the public sector' - being sent to examiners)

“No one can tell what goes on in between the person you were and the person you become. No-one can chart that blue and lonely section of hell. There are no maps of the change. You just come out of the other side. Or you don't”

Stephen King

The Context for Spinning Out: Always Political

My second public work is **Stepping Out**, a new venture formed with the explicit purpose of providing the necessary technical and personal support to public sector leaders to start and run a new social enterprise comprising their former services as a 'public service mutual' – meaning, in most cases, a staff-owned social enterprise company. There was a significant amount of policy support for the setting up of public service mutuals from governments of all parties in the years after 1997. (Hazenburg & Hall, 2016). This was in a wider policy context of the 'third way' (Giddens, 1998) and the general marketisation of public services, particularly in the local authority sector (Simmons, 2008). Specifically, this included investment of £10 million in a 'Mutuals Support Programme', a comprehensive package of support for mutuals established in December 2011 which linked back to an 'Open Public Services' White Paper (Cabinet Office, 2012), which positioned public service mutuals at the heart of public service reform. Coupled with the Localism Act (2011), which created a 'Community Right to Challenge' for groups, including staff, seeking to run local authority services, there was an intention to create a clear route map for those seeking to create new ventures from the English public sector (Hazenbergs & Hall, 2013).

The 'theory of change' that undergirded this new spin-out sector drew a purported causative link between these new organisational forms and innovations and an increase in efficiency and cost-effectiveness in the delivery of public services (Vickers, Lyon et al, 2017). There was also increasing cognition of the opportunities afforded by the empowerment of front-line public sector workers and of multi-actor collaboration as a source of innovation in public service delivery (Hall & Holt, 2008, Pestoff et al, 2012).

My Response – Stepping Out

It was in the context of this political narrative that my second public work, **Stepping Out**, was born. **Stepping Out** was different to **VoiceAbility** in two main ways. First, the venture stood at one direct remove from the front line of social need as its aim was to provide the technical and personal support to entrepreneurial leaders in the public sector. Second, it was privately owned, though social as well as commercial in its intention (with some profit going to a new *Stepping Out Foundation*).

Therefore, when I speak of **Stepping Out** as a ‘public work’, I refer not only to the company I created but its achievements in securing the creation of many new ventures emerging from central government, councils and the NHS, for which I use the term ‘public service mutuals’.

I also chose to narrate this time (2010-11) in a book published just under two years after I founded the business. *‘How to Step Out – Your guide to leading a social mutual or public sector spin-out from the public sector’* (Dearden-Phillips, 2011) documented the learning of the people who were setting up new ventures from public services and turned it into a book to help others. I use published and directly attributed excerpts from that book in this section of this Doctoral submission as they provide referenced material that adds life and expression to what I am describing. A hard copy is provided for examiners.

Public Service Mutuals – Why This, Why Now?

Stepping Out, in its formative stages, felt deeply resonant with my own views and purpose, as well as being attuned to the political tailwinds of the time. While a lifelong Labour supporter to that point, I had come to despair of the public sector, despite support for social enterprise from certain Labour Government Ministers. Many of the problems I still cared about seemed to be immune to the efforts of public bodies to fix them, including many of the structural challenges still holding the country back, such as social inequality, low skills, low educational achievement and poor health.

Few public services, it appeared to me, could innovate quickly enough. Change tended to be painfully slow. Local politics proved obstructive to progressive reform even in the face of central government fiat. Culturally I thought there remained in the public sector a toxic mix of caution, fear and protectionism of the status-quo that the general public tended not to see, particularly in the NHS. For these reasons, I grew to actively dislike many parts of the public sector and hoped for a more radical approach from the following Conservative-led government. While I had misgivings about the Conservatives, I welcomed their ‘Big Society’ programme led by the Cabinet Office, to allow a ‘Right to Provide’ for public sector workers.

A Call From The Blue...

This was also a time when my life changed very quickly. One day, towards the end of my tenure at **VoiceAbility** in 2010, I had a call from the Department of Health telling me about a man called John Niland who was creating a new 'spin out' venture in NHS community health services and asking would I like to be his paid mentor? I sat on it for a few weeks, unsure, then called John. He seemed stressed, very talkative, but I liked him and we agreed to meet. I drove to Essex and John shared with me his vision for his nascent venture, Provide CIC. I was captivated. He described to me what he wanted to create to improve health outcomes in his area of Essex and the new approaches and the can-do attitude necessary to achieve it. By the end of the meeting I had decided that this was the moment to create a proper offer to support public sector people, like John, who wanted to 'step out', as social entrepreneurs. Without this meeting, I doubt whether I would have entertained the idea of working with public servants at all. John opened my eyes to that fact that it is possible to dig down and find 'rare earths' like John who want to transform things.

However, I had little idea of what the technical practicalities of 'stepping out' of the public sector would look like. While I understood the rudiments of starting a business, I did not know much about the intricacies of extricating an organisation from the public sector and making it work as a commercial enterprise. Fortunately, few others knew either, including the lawyers and accountants advising John at the time! I therefore had a few months in which to test-and-learn, alongside John, to help fashion an offer of the help around him he needed.

Snakes, Ladders... and the Public Sector

What I found out was that the capabilities needed to create a spin-out venture from the public sector were not quite as I expected. Yes, we needed lawyers, accountants, business plans and personal support for the leadership of the venture. But we also needed an exceptional level of political skill to convince the various parties – NHS bureaucrats, trade unions, staff and clinicians - to press 'go' on any new business. Institutionally, there were always many stakeholders to carry, all with their own support criteria based on their organisational interests, and each holding an effective veto (Hazenber & Hall, 2016). Therefore, people like John had not only to show great potential as a business leader with a compelling plan for success, but they also had to be adept at dealing with the 'snakes and ladders' of the institutions they were exiting.

The other thing I had not anticipated when I started was just how chronically under-prepared most public sector leaders were for life on the outside. Often nobody in a new venture had previously worked outside the public sector. What this meant, often, was a whole senior team running an independent venture of, perhaps, £30 million with zero commercial experience. Coupled to this, their staff were suddenly part of brand-new organisations, with new names and logos and which did not

always feel that different to their old public sector employer, as old habits and cultures lived on, often unchallenged, but were now being overlaid by new notions around commerciality.

Letting a Thousand Flowers Bloom?

So, my business, **Stepping Out**, which set off with the idealism of letting a 'thousand flowers bloom', saw itself tending a few slow-budding roses, some of which desperately needed a skilled gardener. Altogether, **Stepping Out** was involved in about 30 attempts at creating public service mutuals of which only about 15 ever came to fruition. Over time our own business model had to switch from focusing on creating genuinely strong commercial strategies to helping people like John produce a political form of words about the future business that all stakeholders could sign up to and then quietly prepare, in a darkened room, for real life on the outside.

This is described are the words of KB, whom we helped to create Navigo CIC:

'The process for leaving the NHS is designed by highly bureaucratic people and organisations who do not understand flexible' (Dearden-Phillips, 2011, p 32)

This meant for KB that much of the process for leaving was laborious and unhelpful for preparing for the future.

People like LH of Spectrum CIC responded by 'playing the game', producing projections that would keep NHS stakeholders happy.

'In our Integrated Business Plan [for the NHS] we played safe in relation to strategy. We talked about measured growth and realising our mission' (Dearden-Phillips, 2011, p 123).

DC, founder of Pure Innovations said, similarly:

'We had to push, nobody wanted us to go! We had to work very hard at being given permission to leave' (Dearden-Phillips, 2011, p 17)

.Crudely speaking, what public sector institutional stakeholders wanted to hear was how businesses like Navigo CIC, Pure Innovation Ltd and Spectrum CIC were low risk, high return ventures and would not be a discredit to any of the senior bureaucrats and politicians permitting it to happen. This meant that people spinning out of the public sector needed two business plans, one for the consumption of internal stakeholders and one for when they were out of the gate. These views are corroborated by a separate study by Hazenberg & Hall (2016) which states that

'Perhaps the biggest challenges that the participants articulated was engaging and gaining support from senior management teams which if not managed could present insurmountable obstacles to the spin-out' pp. 185-6)

Once **Stepping Out** had a crop of social businesses out of the public sector, then (and only then) could we focus on helping them to make a success of it. Most of these businesses were assisted by a large three-year gifted contract to give new ventures like John's a chance to prepare for the procurement marketplace.

In truth, most of the new businesses needed this breathing space. It was apparent that the resources needed to transform these former public sector bastions into strong commercial businesses were massive and that the process of culture change and operational transformation would take longer than anyone expected. Here is DC, again, from Pure Innovations:

'Once you are out, the learning curve is steep for everybody. You have to put lots of stuff in that helps people to develop and grow. Some people do grow but some are too far out of their comfort zone to keep up'. (Dearden-Phillips, 2011 p 32),

What were the immediate benefits of spinning out, according to those that did it? Interestingly these were mainly concerned culture and autonomy. Jonathan Parsons, CEO of Chime CIC, said

'We're less at the mercy of others' priorities. Being more in control, that's what feels different'. Dearden-Phillips, 2011, p 102)

PM, who established Six Degrees said:

'The biggest gain so far has been the opportunity to do things that are difficult to do within the NHS... which can be an enabler and a constrainer....[A recent project with a school] took two meetings to set up as opposed to two years in the NHS' (Dearden-Phillips, 2011, p103).

Finally, DH, of CHUMS CIC said this:

'Just the freedom. We feel as if a big weight has been lifted. As a team and a business owned by staff, we can take the service where we want to go' (Dearden-Phillips 2011 p. 103)

Interestingly, the path taken by the group of businesses we supported varied enormously. A small number, like John's new business, Provide CIC, grew rapidly, as did Linda Harris' Spectrum CIC. Both ventures posted turnover exceeding £70m in 2021, having started out with a fraction of that.

Relatively quickly, John and his senior team developed a new identity, culture and outlook. External hires were made both at Executive and NED level. According to John, at the time:

'[The business] has a clear structure but we are re-looking at all of it so we can dispense with unnecessary baggage' (Dearden-Phillips, 2011 p. 117).

Others grew more slowly and did not appear to transform nearly so much. There is definitely a 'fast-lane' of public service mutuals that seemed to become commercially capable more quickly than others

(Aiken et al, 2020). The differences I noticed were twofold. Firstly, strong long-term visionary leaders, like John, seemed to have a very powerful effect on their new organisations. This is supported in a paper by Addicott (2011).

Secondly, the more successful organisations invested heavily in culture change, developing not only a new brand and messages, but new values, behaviours and expectations. In the case of John's business, Provide CIC, the values of autonomy, kindness and can-do were adopted, partly to contrast with the command culture and 'learned helplessness' of many staff and managers in parts of the NHS.

In the very best of the public service mutuals I also saw an intentional reversal of the ultra-caution of the former organisational logic. One of ventures, Social Adventures CIC, opened a 'social supermarket' in 2019. Another, Possibilities CIC, a former local authority day service, created an ice-cream making business in 2015, all things that would have been unlikely to have been originated and signed off in the public sector, according to CEO, RL (interview with the author, 2021).

Challenges, Successes and Insights which emerged

Overall, **Stepping Out**, and the sector it played a helping role in creating, was a qualified success. Not nearly as many spin-outs were created as the Government hoped. Early talk was of a million public sector workers (Cabinet Office, 2010) moving into spin out ventures, a figure that ended up being more like 35,000 (Lyon & Sepulveda, 2018). Nor were many of the public services mutuals as successful as anticipated, due to a great extent to the uphill nature of the change-challenge represented by spinning out into a marketplace. Many also struggled, culturally and structurally, to realise the 'mutual' goals of employee or user engagement in the governance of the organisation (Lyon & Sepulveda, 2020).

Reflecting back, I was relatively naïve about the difficulties involved, not least those concerning the powerful role of institutions and culture (Vicker & Lyon, 2017) on the new companies we helped to create. Here, I discovered how difficult it is for social entrepreneurs from within public institutions to change the fundamental operating models of public services where cultures, despite a new sign above the door, do not immediately align with a new set of espoused values and ambitions.

Radical or Incremental Transformation?

Of the public service businesses I have helped to either create or grow, only a relatively small proportion have achieved what I would term a radical transformation that made a large material difference to public services.

Why so? Firstly, social entrepreneurs 'stepping out' from the public sector tend to face a set of tasks for which they have little-to-no experience in their former roles as public servants (Hazenberg & Hall, 2013; Burns 2012, Simmons, 2008): attracting investment, finding new talent, getting staff to work in

a 'different way', business strategy and planning, reshaping organisations and leading rapid culture change.

Secondly very little in a public sector manager's experience equips them to do these things well in a more commercial context. This does not mean that success cannot happen – it can and does. Nor does this mean that the policy of encouraging social entrepreneurship in the public sector was 'wrong'. I simply believe that it was not expedited with sufficient insight on the part of anyone involved, including myself, about the scale of the institutional challenge.

Thirdly, these ventures were often just left to get on with it, often taking years to develop decent commercial skills. If something similar is to happen in the future, it would be advisable that such ventures are undertaken as joint-venture partnerships, involving external organisations with the deep commercial capabilities needed to transform organisations at pace, working alongside social entrepreneurs from the public sector, complemented by experienced commercial leaders rather than existing public sector managers. Indeed, this would probably have been the right format for Stepping Out, in hindsight – as a capitalised venture partner bringing money, talent and skills on a permanent basis rather than a short-term (1-2 year) advisory input.

Institutional Hostility to Public Service Mutuals

One of the really interesting and unexpected things about the whole idea of social enterprises coming out of public services was the hostility of wider public sector stakeholders (Hazenberg & Hall, 2016). While the idea of a social enterprise spin-out is relatively benign and public-spirited, we were often met with the kind of opprobrium reserved for the most ruthless private sector outsourcers. I lost count of the number of times the phrase 'privatisation by the back door' was levelled at us.

This was particularly acute in the NHS, where critics struggled to see that the new organisations had social purpose burnished into their founding articles as Community Interest Companies. The situation was slightly easier in English local authorities where there is a stronger tradition of external provision. However, our challenge in local authorities was that, rather than set up an independent social enterprise, the council would sometimes prefer to spin out a company that it owned and controlled itself, thus feating the object of an independent venture that could set a different direction. This happened twice on mutuals projects in which I was personally involved, both in 'Old Labour' council areas.

Insights

My principal criticism of the public service mutuals, ten years on, was that, despite impressive leadership from some excellent former public sector people (like John), the organisations that were

created were sometimes dreadfully similar to the entities they were in the public sector. Public sector mindsets were often glacially slow to change and reluctant to embrace a different way of doing things.

To compound this, the ventures were mostly set up as 'limited by guarantee' Community Interest Companies or co-operatives. There meant there was no actual share capital for employees, just 'membership' of the company, making the concept of proper employee ownership too abstract to mean enough to the staff. These non-share structures also closed the door on certain forms of external growth finance (we couldn't create new shares) which meant, in nearly all cases, the ventures were under-capitalised to undertake growth without taking real risks to service quality and staff well-being (Hazenberg & Hall, 2016).

This all said, formal evaluation by the UK Government (DDCMS, 2019) gives a positive account of the impact of public service mutuals, claiming that 96% were profitable, productivity went up by 3.7% compared to 0.6% in the public sector, that 50% of their leaders were women, that 88% of the organisations believed that becoming a public service mutual had resulted in more responsive services and that 68% had developed new products or services in the last year (2018).

[Intrapreneurs or Entrepreneurs?](#)

One question I challenged myself with as I developed **Stepping Out** was whether people like John and others in my book were actually 'social entrepreneurs' in the true sense? On the one hand, John was a financially secure senior manager who was taking a risk on a new venture with no guaranteed success. On the other, John was also handed a three-year, £30 million contract and left the NHS on protected terms, including pension, in the face of major budget cuts had he stayed.

However, from where I stood, people like John *were* social entrepreneurs, but not in the traditional sense, perhaps more corporate intrapreneurs, who lead ventures from within an existing entity (Hadad & Cantaragiu, 2017) or even what Tracey and Stott (2017) call 'extrapreneurs' - people who facilitate a process of interorganisational action that brings about alternative configurations of resources to address social challenges.

As people, however, leaders like John did fit powerfully the recognised profile of the social entrepreneur – people who create and lead new socially motivated ventures (Wei-Skillern et al, 2009), who in addition are energetic, hungry, willing to take risks and fired by a desire to improve things for the most vulnerable. For many it was simply that their early career choices as a medic or social worker had drawn them into the public sector as the predominant employer of such professionals.

However, few of these professionals, John included, were fully prepared for the sheer challenge of leading a large new entity to commercial success. Hardly any of the people interviewed for 'How to Step Out' had the ability or networks to bring in new talent or know-how, to find new investment or

initiate business growth or diversification. Existing public sector cultures beneath them were often left unchallenged due to a dearth of knowledge about how to deliver transformational change. These factors mean that many of these ventures remain only a qualified success, despite the many good things achieved by this particular new type of social entrepreneur.

Bricolage? – Yes (of a kind)

How well is ‘spinning out’ of the public sector explained by Bricolage Theory, with its accent on scarcity and ‘making do’? On first inspection, there are few similarities between, for example, my own experiences of setting up **VoiceAbility** and that of John and the other founders depicted in *‘How to Step Out’* (Dearden-Phillips, 2011).

However, this would overlook three important factors. Firstly, those founders faced significant impediments to business formation which most entrepreneurs do not: a recalcitrant public sector bureaucracy; trade union opposition; and a lack of internal expertise (Hazenberg & Hall, 2016). So there was, arguably, ‘scarcity’ of a different kind – of enthusiasm, of stakeholder engagement and the right kind of talent. Their acts of bricolage, in this context, were to marshal support in their organisations to clear the way for them to lead the business out.

Here’s KB, again, from Navigo CIC:

‘...we had to work with the talent that we already had...we were able to get some one off funding which enabled us to bring in some external talent to get past the transition....we had no infrastructure of our own previously’ (Dearden-Phillips, 2011 p 107)

Likewise, LH, of Spectrum CIC, said this about her nascent team pre-spinning out:

‘[they were] drawn from existing players supplemented by people who liked us and joined us along the way, some were ‘reluctant helpers’ while other subsequently stayed because they became more and more interested and committed to the vision and mission’ (Dearden-Phillips, 2011, p. 67)

In this sense, these founders were ‘bricoleurs’. The literature on public sector mutuals is relatively silent in relation to bricolage. My argument is that the theory of ‘making do’ based on the resourcefulness of leaders like John was a key differentiator between them and those who I spoke to in the book who did not actually complete their journey to forming a new enterprise from the public sector.

Almost a Bricoleur – the Story of ‘AJ’

A case in point was ‘AJ’ a social care manager in a Midlands Council. AJ was liked by staff but did not have the trust of senior management, despite being a respected figure more generally. He was not

seen as 'up to it' and rather than engage actively with his sceptical bosses, AJ dug in and stopped properly communicating his case effectively. He pulled together part of a coalition and some excellent resources (including us) but struggled enormously to do what John and others had done and 'work the channels'. As a bricoleur, AJ had some capability, but not enough to use all of the resources available to him. Despite a strong business plan and considerable staff backing, AJ's spin-out business was vetoed by his bosses.

Hybridity of Incumbent vs Challenger Institutional Logics

The concept of hybridity in public service social enterprises has been the subject of academic attention, including Vickers et al (2017), Millar & Lyon (2016), Aiken et al (2019) and Hall, Millar & Millar (2015). In healthcare, Allen et al (2011) examined a range of healthcare providers in England and found that rather than belonging to the public, private or third sector, they are in fact hybrids with attributes of all three sectors. Looking specifically at the role of mutuals and social enterprises in healthcare, these writers contend that these organisations include elements of 'private' (trading in markets), 'public' (funding) and 'third' (embedded in civil society) sectors (Allen et al, 2011).

Anderson's Framework of 'Publicness'

Hall et al (2015) in a qualitative study of spin-out enterprises in healthcare explore the degree to which these ventures manage to combine institutional attributes of public, private and third sector attributes. To assist them, they utilise Anderson's (2011) framework of 'publicness', which ascertains the degree to which an organisation holds to the institutional norms of the public sector even once outside its immediate embrace.

Briefly, Anderson conceptualises three dimensions of 'publicness'. The first he terms 'core publicness', which refers to the legal status of an organisation (who owns it, essentially). The second is 'dimensional publicness' which refers to the degree to which an organisation is subject to direct political authority. The third is 'normative publicness' - the extent to which organisations adhere to and achieve public service values (Moulton, 2009). The table offers a commentary on how the public service mutuals fit into Anderson's conceptual frame of publicness.

	Main Question	Spin Outs	Hybridity Dimensions
Core Publicness	Do they see themselves as belonging to the public sector?	Constituted outside the state as CICs, charities and co-operatives. So not core.	Despite adopting third sector formats these organisations do not identify as third sector but something ‘in between’. This adds power to the conclusion that the health and care social enterprise spin-outs are very much hybrid organisations (Billis, 2010; Battilana & Lee, 2014), located at the intersection between the public, private and third sectors.
Dimensional Publicness	To what extent are they subject to political and economic authority?	Most see themselves as politically and economically independent but also recognise the compromises this involves (Tenbesel et al, 2014)	To reduce dependence on the public sector most try to diversify income (Hall et al, 2014).
Normative Publicness	To what extent do values and objectives reflect those of the public, private or third sector?	Interestingly all in their study emphasised that they were not part of the private sector but many saw their values and objectives as being in broad alignment with the public sector.	Many see their ventures as a better way of achieving public service goals, with a significant alignment of public service values but a very different set of organisational values and behaviours.

In essence, these businesses were both ‘public’ and ‘not public’ on a variety of dimensions. This was also reflected in my own public work on **Stepping Out**. Here is SS, who founded Salvere CIC from Blackburn Council in 2011:

Local government and the NHS are institutions. Social enterprise is still an emerging institution. You have to foster it as an institution – if you want the social benefit back them’ (Dearden-Phillips, 2011 p 42).

Similarly, SD of Social Adventures said this:

What I found was that the NHS wasn’t able to respond quickly enough to make really sustainable interventions to the challenges service users faced...The process [spinning out under ‘Right to Request’] was tough but I knew I wanted to create an organisation that was dynamic, free from red-tape and made those that were delivering public services directly accountable to those who used them’ (Dearden-Phillips, 2011 p 7).

Creatively Combining “Challenger” Institutional Logics

The notion of hybridity in public service mutuals is expanded on by Vickers, Lyon et al (2017) who examine how an ‘incumbent’ public sector institutional logic is augmented by two ‘challenger’ logics,

one relating to *markets and competition* and the other to *civil society*, social value and engagement with staff and users of services.

Specifically, Vickers, Lyon et al (2017) examine *how* these differing logics can be ‘creatively combined’ such that different cultural beliefs, goals, norms and practices can be fused together in novel ways to address societal needs in innovative ways. They conclude that the creative interplay between these logics can and does have a recognisable effect on innovation, notably through the mechanisms of greater service user and staff engagement (both being ‘civil society’ logics), more commercial relationships with commissioners and funders (both being ‘commercial’ logics) wedded to the incumbent public service logic brought with them from the parent organisation (Vickers, Lyon et al, 2017).

Many of the organisations in this study are well known to **Stepping Out** and we were ‘midwife’ to at least three of them. I find the institutional logics lens extremely helpful in understanding the nature of public service mutuals. My own assessment of these organisations based on my own reading and experience is that, within parameters, many did succeed to blend both commercial thinking with a new culture of staff and, in some cases, community ownership.

On the point of culture, here is DH from CHUMS again:

‘It began to happen before the spin-out ...[our] people thinking in different ways, looking at differing possibilities for the future, ways of generating income. Now? They are noting every penny, what it costs to buy things. There’s more energy now for making this work and reaching more children’ (Dearden-Phillips, 2011, p. 101)

Similarly, TB of the Museum of East Anglian Life said this:

‘The culture of the museum is very different. People see it as a community resource. It’s more active than it’s ever been before. There were times when it was empty at the end of the season....Our standing with the local authority has much improved.’ (Dearden-Phillips, 2011 p. 105)

Others in my experience have really struggled precisely because they have failed to wed competing logics effectively. One of these, arguably is Anglia Community Enterprise CIC (ACE). This organisation struggled to succeed in developing diverse income streams and did not achieve sufficient innovation for commissioners to deem the organisation necessary in the healthcare economy – and its contract was not renewed in 2020.

Compared to its near-neighbour, John’s Provide CIC, ACE CIC did not succeed in actively recruiting leaders and managers, as observed by Vickers et al who could ‘*selectively apply elements of co-existing*

logics through their styles of management and communications with others'. Therefore, I think there is validity in Vickers' et al's framing, in successful mutuals, of the creative interplay between incumbent' public service logics and 'challenger' commercial and civic logics.

However, I do, ten years on from my book 'How to Step Out' (Dearden-Phillips, 2011) have reservations as to the extent to which public service mutuals have been truly successful over the long-term. Despite an acclamatory report by the DDCMS (2019) into public service mutuals, there are questions in my mind around how successfully these 'challenger logics' have been fully embedded. Many of the organisations I featured in 'How to Step Out' retain some of the less helpful aspects of 'publicness' ten years into their existence and the challenger logics of commercialism and connection to civil society remain subordinate, in many organisations, to their 'dimensional publicness', in my observation.

A Mutual Future?

What future do public service mutuals have in the future of public policy? The focus of central government since 2019, and particularly since Covid-19, has switched away from questions of public service reform and a policy drive to create mutuals is now largely gone. Formal evaluation of these programmes (DDCMS, 2019) is on balance positive, but there is a reality here that mutuals remain a relatively small sub-set of public services, whose numbers are not being augmented and whose success-rates differ quite significantly.

Public Service Mutuals Through a Critical Lens

Public Service Mutuals were controversial from the beginning. The most common critical lens on public service mutuals is that which conceptualises them as a creature of a political project designed to reduce the obligations of the state and reinforces the domination of a neo-liberal economic agenda (Ganz, Kay & Spicer, 2018).

The most manifest, critics say, in the rise of New Public Management (Barzelay, 2001), a set of approaches to public services that promoted greater use of the market in the delivery of public services, a switch in the role of the state from direct provision to procurement and the importation of concepts and practices from the corporate world (Ridley-Duff & Bull, 2011). This found expression during **Stepping Out** in everyday phrases such as '*privatisation by the back door*' and the allegation that public service mutuals offered a way for government to undermine collectively won benefits for public sector workers by placing them in arms-length organisations that then depress terms and conditions to enjoy commercial success (Myers, 2017).

More interestingly, the critical lens is influenced by a Foucauldian 'governmentality perspective' (Foucault, 2008). This lens suggests that government exercises a control covertly at a distance through the co-option of non-government actors. One way this has happened, according to Dey & Teasdale

(2013) was the notion the 'Big Society' with a narrative around the 'liberation' of front line innovation, initiative and energy in place of the hierarchy and sclerotic nature of the public sector.

What is my appraisal of the applicability of these critical lens on public service mutuals? I have to be careful here, because my own outlook is undeniably biased. I am 'emotionally' in favour of moving provision of public services into organisations that can specialise and focus free of direct political interference'.. There is sufficient evidence from the literature and from my own experiences in **Stepping Out** that there are much better ways to create direct public benefits than through direct state provision (Andersson & Jordahl, 2011; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Public service mutuals represent an imperfect, but superior (in my view) way of doing this that imports institutional norms from the commercial sector and third sector to complement those of the public sector (Doherty, Haugh & Lyon, 2014). Gains are asset-locked and mostly socialised. To my mind, this 'hybrid' represents a superior middle ground between a failing state and a private sector that too often engages in rent-seeking behaviour at the expense of the citizen or service.

New Insights: Right Idea, Wrong Execution?

What has re-appraising my work with **Stepping Out** through the lenses of Bricolage Theory, Hybridity Theory and a critical approach added to my existing understanding? Three points come to mind.

Firstly, Bricolage Theory confirms my views that although the people who set up public service mutuals are probably intrapreneurs as well as 'social entrepreneurs', their ability to 'make do' and be creative with the resources available is a key to their success.

Secondly, a form of Hybridity Theory, which characterises the public services mutuals as comprising an 'incumbent' public sector logic augmented by new 'challenger' logics (Vickers et al, 2017) is a strong explanatory frame for the types of organisations I created and helped to grow. However, this also framework also accounts for why many of the public service mutuals did not meet or exceed expectations. This was because the blending of institutional logics requires an uncommon level of managerial capabilities (Hazenbergh & Hall, 2016) to overcome the tensions generated and to convert them from a potential drag factor into the 'creative interplay' spoken of by Vickers, Lyon et al (2017).

Finally, I feel confirmed in my previous dismissal of the critical perspectives, not because they lack insight or are even entirely untrue in places, but because, they default, in many cases, to a statist logic which in my experience is naïve about the realities of the public sector.

Bringing this second public work back to the personal context, I view the creation of a number of public service mutuals as a worthwhile investment of my time between 2010 and 2020. Many of the people were inspirational and some of the businesses they created were superb examples of what can happen when institutional logics are blended together with skill.

My Disappointments

However, this judgement comes with two major caveats. One is that I am disappointed that after a strong start the agenda petered out within Government by 2017 (Aiken et al, 2020). The other is that the public service mutuals programme barely used pre-existing external capabilities to de-risk the process of spinning out and prepare new organisations for earlier and more rapid growth. Only in a handful of cases was business partnering used (the Behavioural Insights Team, My CSP) and the result was, arguably, much better.

Secondly, this agenda was dependent on the existence of entrepreneurial 'outliers' like John and the people quoted in this section. I worry that there are not enough leaders like the ones profiled in 'How to Step Out' (Dearden-Phillips, 2011) to be found in the public sector. These were, in reality, rare people. You cannot, in my view, build a public policy strategy on finding brilliant mavericks within state institutions. To do this at scale, we probably need to 'fly in' teams to co-lead new entities alongside brilliant public sector people. This would mean it took months not years to stand a business up and get it competitive.

Chapter 6: HM Pasties Ltd

“Chaos was the law of nature: Order was the dream of man”

Henry Adams

Context and Description

A Weight of Expectations

In the first decade of this century, social enterprise was often bombastically heralded within the sector as the ‘saviour’ of the public and private sectors (Evert, 2001; Westall & Chalkley, 2007) and the answer to worklessness, social isolation and inequality (OECD, 2006). Unsurprisingly, there was interest from governments across the world and the UK developed the most advanced institutional infrastructure in the world. This included a new corporate form for social enterprise (the Community Interest Company) from 2005, a new Social Value Act (2012) to ‘bake’ social enterprise into public sector commissioning and a new architecture of social investment in the form of Big Society Capital (Hazenberget al, 2016).

In academia, we have seen a significant growth in interest in commercial social enterprise as the preferred vehicle for addressing certain social problems (Cooney & Shanks, 2010; Prahalad, 2004; Yunus, 2010). According to Child, Witesman & Braudt (2014) this discourse is ‘anti-charity’ and characterizes non-profits and philanthropic efforts as ‘unsustainable’, reliant on ‘handouts’ and ‘inherently inefficient’ compared to market-based social enterprises characterized by being ‘more tightly run’, ‘sustainable’, ‘honest’ and ‘cleaner’ than traditional charitable efforts (Child, 2016).

The Rise of ‘Stakeholder Capitalism’

Concurrently, there has, since 2008, been a reappraisal of liberal capitalism following the exposure of its shortcomings in the financial crisis of that year. This has been manifested in three ways. The first has been a growth in the number of mainstream ventures that are privately owned but presenting publicly as ‘mission-based social businesses’ (Forbes, 2018 ‘The Rise of the Social Enterprise: A New Paradigm for Business’).

The second has been growth in the number of medium-sized and larger private companies looking to make social impact part of their measured purpose (Deloitte Human Capital Trends 2018). This is also seen in the evolution of the ‘B Corp’ movement globally (now 4000 strong) and in the UK where there are 500-600 (Chen & Kelly, 2015).

Thirdly, there has been a tangible move towards the Economic, Social, Governance' (ESG) agenda as part of the balanced scorecard of big business, with pension funds in particular moving away from companies with poor ESG ratings (Ruggie, 2020). While the latter may not really indicate a growth in social business, what is hard to deny is that business more broadly is needing to concern itself to a greater extent with social issues, or at least be seen to do so.

A very good example of this, as a source of personal inspiration to me, is the UK company Timpsons who recruit 10% of their workforce are recruited from British prisons. A family-owned firm, Timpsons takes its social responsibilities seriously while tying these closely to the success of their business, a point made powerfully by CEO James Timpson at a meeting of Social Club, my social entrepreneurs club, in November 2020. In other words, the social good of employing 500 ex-prisoners is also, in James Timpson's view, 'good for business'. To this end, Timpson finds the most talented people he can find in the prison system, puts them through a rigorous selection process then, finally, if they make the grade, gives them a Timpsons shop to run.

In terms of my personal context, a more socially driven capitalism resonated with where I had reached by the end of **Stepping Out**. I had seen the limits of non-profit social enterprise with **VoiceAbility** (Blundell & Lyon, 2015) and hit hard into the buffers of a calcified public sector with public service mutuals, which have been a qualified success (DDCMS, 2019).

As 2020 approached, I was beginning, with slight desperation, to explore better ways for social problems to be successfully addressed using a more commercial approach. I had long been attracted to companies like Divine Chocolate which that were able to create social impact at scale using a business model that stood up in the commercial marketplace (Doherty & Tranchell, 2005). I was also conscious of the rise in 'impact' and 'purpose' as discourses in the private sector (Muruviwa & Akpan, 2020) and felt attracted to explore this further.

A Journey to Manchester...and Meeting Lee

I first came across **HM Pasties** when scrolling through Twitter in January 2019. Intrigued, I tweeted its founder, Lee Wakeham, and found out that **HM Pasties** was actually a project run by a North West charity that was operating it at a very small scale. I invited Lee to a business dinner I had organised for social entrepreneurs in Manchester that month.

At the dinner, Lee shared his personal story with me (which is in the public domain). Following a difficult childhood mostly spent in care and foster homes, he had served two long jail sentences in his youth, both for crimes of violence, being finally released at 24. In prison Lee had entered therapy and successfully found employment on release and been successful at work, in recruitment-sales.

In his 30s he had gone on to work with offenders in the third sector and joined the founding board of Survivors Manchester, an organisation offering help to men who have experienced abuse. Latterly, Lee, in 2017 set up '**HM Pasties**' as a route to employment for offenders. Lee felt the business could grow, but the charity, the regional arm of a national federated organisation, did not have the resources, skills or, finally, the inclination, to help him to do this, he told us. He was looking for partners. After the dinner, we talked late into the evening, found we had some deep common ground in our life-experiences, and I came away totally convinced that I wanted to work with this person.

I tell this story because it explains not only how this business first came to be but because it illustrates how I tend to operate: very much on instinct and my sense of another person's drivers. However, there remained the initial 'beachhead' challenge of turning **HM Pasties** from a charity project into a business.

A Non-Meeting of Minds

This was not to prove straightforward. I approached the charity Lee worked for and asked if they would like to incorporate **HM Pasties** as a joint venture with Lee and myself as the other shareholders. I would find other investors and the charity would be free of further funding obligations. Initially, the charity was enthusiastic but backed off quite quickly. **HM Pasties** had, in their estimation, 'lost money' – i.e. it was not yet self-sustaining and had burnt through £30k of charitable funds and a lot of staff time. Plus they did not think Lee was someone they wanted to back in a business. So it was not a risk they not could, on reflection, entertain, even as a minority partner. So, instead, we did a licencing deal with the charity to get the name and Lee left the organisation.

Our timing, however, could not have been worse. In March 2020, shortly after we had found premises, signed a lease and started production, Covid-19 struck and forced us to mothball the business for several months. At this point we considered giving up, but instead used the first lockdown to plan a reopening which we did in Autumn 2020 and have remained open thereafter. We capitalised the venture through a business loan of £45,000 plus £40,000 in funding from three investors (including myself) and a lot of freely given time from all involved.

Incorporating Privately – a Different Logic

We both wanted to create a social business – but not one that left us with nothing to show at the end for all the risk, hours and stress. On my own part, I had left **VoiceAbility** with a few months' salary. And Lee had no assets and desperately wanted to buy a house and save for a pension. So we made an early decision to create a private company limited by shares, with each of us owning 50% of the new business. We discussed forming a Community Interest Company - but this placed restrictions both on the returns investors could expect and on what happened to the proceeds if we ever sold the business

(which we thought might be an eventual outcome). So, despite a pro-social mission to train and employ hundreds of former offenders, we decided not to utilise the most obvious social enterprise ‘wrapper’ to signify that we were a mission-based business. We also knew that **HM Pasties** would eventually require large scale investment and did not want to put any investor off by placing an asset-lock on the business, restricting the returns on what would be a risky investment for any new third party.

So, our espoused purpose was to create a business that thought and acted commercially from the get-go and achieved its social purpose by growing a successful business in the first instance, some of the proceeds of which would help our former-offender employees to learn and grow on the job. Rather like Timpsons in fact. Going back to earlier discussion we wanted to create an ‘Integrated Hybrid’ where our commercial and social goals were achieved at the same time. It was also important to Lee and myself that mainstream investors, the biggest pool of future capital, could invest in **HM Pasties**, not as an act of philanthropy, but because they saw us as a growing business that would eventually deliver a decent return.

Challenges, Successes and Insights

2021 was a bumpy ride operationally and commercially. While Covid-19 played havoc with our marketing and sales, so too did our recently paroled workforce, who, on a good day, made about a third of what we needed to be making and on a bad day could be so distracted as to produce very little. Very quickly, we were losing £5000 per calendar month. Our ‘Integrated Hybrid’ was not working. Despite good sales, very happy customers and some prestige clients (Manchester City Football Club, University of Manchester, RHS Bridgewater, etc), the business was not working as we intended.

Despite a vow to be ‘commercial-first’, we had, almost unconsciously, drifted towards prioritising social over commercial outcomes. We were definitely not acting like enlightened capitalists in the tradition of Timpsons! Like Timpsons, Lee and I cared deeply about our trainees and staff, but to the point, unlike Timpsons where we allowed this to become a massive distraction from getting production days completed and balancing the books. The tension between the two drivers was being resolved, time and again, in favour of our social purpose over our commercial viability. This reflected our inability, at first, to put an espoused set of commercial values ahead of an actuated set of social values in the way we managed the business.

Naive Errors

Due to over-optimism about the capabilities of our employee group, we fell into a naïve trap into which work-based social enterprises sometimes fall, which was to fail to insulate the commercial side

of the business from its social side. At **HM Pasties**, our desire to put people straight into employment was based, we realised a year on, on an incorrect theory of change. Our research (when we tried to understand what had gone wrong) told us that most successful work-based social enterprises have about 15% of the target population in the core workforce and the rest of the staff without significant additional needs. We were at more like 80%. On top of this, successful work-based ventures tend to run a separate training and development arm, with its own funding streams, which, like Timpsons, drip-feed the best trainees from its 'Timpsons Foundation' into the business for work-based training before becoming an official part of the business.

On the Canvas – But Not Counted Out

A year into **HM Pasties**, Lee was personally struggling with aspects of the business. He had never run a venture before and, despite having many of the core skills of a social entrepreneur, he did not know much about the financial and compliance aspects of running a company. In the summer of 2021, we reached an impasse: twist or quit (sticking was not an option). We decided to twist and brought on another external investor and employed a general manager to work alongside Lee. For a while the losses continued, but by the third quarter of 2021 these were down to a very low level and we felt able to plan for the next stage of the business and are now fundraising for growth.

Learning the Hard Way

What did we learn during the first years of this business? Firstly, that it is often extremely difficult to reconcile high levels of social purpose with aggressive commercial goals in a single business operation. Had we copied Timpsons and employed the most capable former offenders we could find, we may well have met our targets and not lost money. And we might have created a stronger platform for future social impact. However we would not then have employed any of the men and women furthest from the labour market, which was a core part of Lee's vision. This felt like a dilemma, but it would not have seemed such a big dilemma if we had taken a longer view at the outset about the capacity of the business to work with people whose needs we could not accommodate while remaining profitable.

Secondly, I learned that even with a fantastic group of directors and supporters, it is really challenging to work with a social entrepreneur who is both fundamentally mission-driven and has a traumatic and complex personal history. Lee, while a brilliant talent, has been forced in life to mask certain things, including some trust issues as well as certain skill deficits, having missed important chunks of learning beyond 16. His strategies for dealing with difficult decisions or conflict often reflect his learned behaviours which can be experienced as 'difficult' by his colleagues. As a result, the non-executives

have been required, at times, to go well beyond their brief and support Lee to run the business while seeking to help him to acquire new knowledge and skills quickly.

Thirdly, I have learned a great deal about how hard it is to deliver social enterprise in a consumer-facing business (having only done B2B and services). Food markets are extremely competitive and unforgiving. Margins are tight and the day-to-day operating risks are high (it is easy to harm people with incorrectly prepared or stored food). Having a workforce with high additional needs augments these risks and can make it feel impossible to both 'do good and do well'. Timpsons, in other words, probably have got the balance right, in successfully marrying commerciality with social contribution. But Timpsons also, quite openly, leave the highest need offenders untouched, which perhaps illustrates some of the limitations of enlightened capitalism.

Turnaround Time

These problems, by late 2021, caused a major rethink. Lee's laudable vision was to work with the 'harder-end' of the offender job market, not to 'cherry-pick' those offenders who can leave prison and find jobs easily. Equally, Lee wanted to have these men and women not just in the training room but in the front line of the business, making and selling our products. Our mounting losses made this a difficult circle to square and Lee now accepts the need for extended pre-employment support for anyone wanting to work at **HM Pasties**.

An important next step, therefore, will be to put this into place. To this end, we are setting up a charity - the **HM Pasties** Foundation - which will run our 'Pasty Academy' as a pre-employment initiative with 'work-experience' in the **HM Pasties** business and, for the best trainees, a job in the business. The rest will be brokered into other jobs or further education. This is closely modelled on Timpsons. This frees the main business to operate on a commercial basis and build its workforce of former offenders over time. In terms of work-integration social businesses, this is now a more conventional model.

However, what it does do is allow the **HM Pasties** main business to attract more commercially minded investors, because our mission with offenders will no longer be a practical impediment to our capability to produce and sell. A significant portion of future profit from the business will be reinvested into the HM Pasties Foundation and Academy and commercial investors and shareholders will, if they choose to take it, achieve a fair return on their investment over time. It is also possible that the business could be sold, but this would only happen if an aligned buyer who supported our social mission and made financial guarantees to the Foundation. We would, in the event of a trade sale, also ensure that the Foundation received either a windfall payment or a portion of shares going forward to secure its future.

Bricolage in HM Pasties

Bricolage theory offers a helpful lens in understanding the development of **HM Pasties**, both in its original form in the charity and in its eventual incorporation. The bricoleur in this case was Lee, who combined three assets in an original way.

Firstly, Lee used his personal experience and identity as a former offender to give distinctive credibility to his venture. Early sponsors were drawn to his 'story' and he was able to leverage this to attract resources. Lee's life story is extraordinary and his ability to relate this in a powerful, serious way is exceptional (See Appendix G). Lee was further able to leverage his life experience in his choice of business name, **HM Pasties**, which cleverly linked the company to Her Majesty's Prisons.

Secondly, Lee used his knowledge of cookery to create a range of distinctive products which immediately captured attention, including the chef Angela Hartnett and Radio 4 'Food Programme' presenter Sheila Dillon, both judge of the BBC Food and Farming Awards 2021, who ensured Lee's products made the final for 'Best Food Supplier'. And in March 2022, Lee won a Gold Award at the British Pie Awards (yes, in Melton Mowbray!) for his vegan pies.

Thirdly, Lee is exceptionally good at bringing people together. He was able to construct an alliance of people inside and beyond the charity to support the venture as a pilot. Later, he identified the need for external expertise and drew in myself, with my extensive personal network of valuable associates. Combined, this got **HM Pasties** off the ground and into corporate form.

Lee's bricolage skills were probably most valuable during these early phases. Since that time he has tended to find aspects of running a day-to-day business really difficult and has not always been able to assemble the resources required, tending to rely on old allies and contacts, rather than being able to see the need for new and different resources.

Nevertheless, Lee's bricolage skills, his ability to construct something out of nothing, is the reason this business exists and a powerful explanatory frame for his survival to date. There is further supporting evidence to suggest that bricolage may have helped Lee. In a study of 2489 Finnish entrepreneurs who started businesses between 2005-2010, Stenholm & Renko (2016) found higher levels of bricolage in among those whose businesses survived that period. Furthermore, their analysis revealed that entrepreneurs who are passionate about their ventures and are more likely to engage the 'make-do' behaviours of bricolage keep their businesses afloat (Stenholm & Renko, 2016).

Hybridity and HM Pasties: Clash of the Logics

Emerging insights from **HM Pasties** from Hybridity Theory are front of mind as the business moves from its early stage (2021) into either a new growth stage (2022-25) - or imminent commercial failure. The task of calibrating social and commercial logics in **HM Pasties** has, so far, proved far from easy (as

described earlier) with daily tensions between competing institutional logics (Cooney, 2006; Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Gidron & Hasenfield, 2012).

As outlined, we set the business up intentionally as a for-profit venture, believing that this would be the fastest way to bigger social impact, achieved through both scale and commercial success. But in practice, the commercial impediments in the way we designed the business (with the offender-development and commercial arms fully integrated) have been profound. This has meant that the business struggled to take off commercially (losing £60,000 in 2021) and has been held back by the pastoral needs and unpredictability of our ex-offender workforce, with production disrupted for some time most days in 2021.

Mission-Drift in HM Pasties

Mission-drift has been defined (Bennett & Savani, 2011; Man, 2013) as a process of organisational change where an organisation diverges from its primary purpose or mission. The term is often invoked in relation to an organisation that has a social mission from which they diverge or 'drift' into other concerns. Weisbrod (2004) argues that commercialisation has been a common source of mission drift in US non-profits. Jones (2007) adds, correctly in my experience, that this extends to any organisation that is dependent on a dominant funder or customer.

Mission-drift at **HM Pasties** has been rather different to that portrayed in the literature. Our 'mission drift' has been in reverse, from an espoused commercial mission towards a greater emphasis than originally intended on short-term social goals. Young et al (2012) point out that mission drift resulting from too great an emphasis on social goals may weaken the organisation as a business and lead to commercial collapse.

Drawing on institutional theory, Cornforth (2014) developed a conceptual framework to help explain the pressures that produce mission drift and he suggests a possible means to steer a course between mission drift and financial failure. He contends that there remains a significant danger of mission drift unless active governance and constitutional measures are adopted to manage the tensions that grow out of different institutional logics.

These steps can be separated into two broad types. One is to compartmentalise or 'loosely couple' the different logics into separate parts of the organisation and another is to integrate or 'selectively couple' the different logics by either finding compromise or a new, over-riding institutional logic.

What Compromise?

Young et al (2012) suggest that it may be hard for social businesses that try to give equal weight to social and commercial objectives to achieve a stable equilibrium. They point to the metaphor of a hill

with a valley on both sides. In one valley, commercial purposes dominate. In the other, social purposes prevail. Equilibrium for a business, they say, is more likely to be achieved by standing 'in one of the two valleys' - rather than standing on the hill in the middle.

What they are getting at here is that it is much easier to run a business with a dominant institutional logic than one which tries to meet in the middle. Social enterprises tend to operate 'on the hill' rather than 'in the valley', making it very hard to successfully combine institutional logics.

However, critics of this (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006) suggest that this is too deterministic. What is increasingly seen in business, they say, is 'institutional pluralism', a state where multiple institutional logics compete, complement and combine in a variety of ways. Kraatz & Block (2008) contend that 'institutional pluralism' may have both upside and downside implications for organisations. Negative consequences include the potential for goal ambiguity, fragmentation, conflict and instability, certainly something we saw at **HM Pasties**. Positive possibilities include complementarity between different institutional imperatives (Cornforth, 2014). At **HM Pasties**, we found more negative than positive consequences, it is fair to say.

Strategies for Coping with Multiple Institutional Logics

Kraatz & Block (2008) point to four methods used by organisations to adapt to plural institutional logics like those we experienced at **HM Pasties**.

The first is to eliminate pluralism, by suppressing one logic at the expense of the other, potentially leading to mission drift. This is when, for example, social mission is given precedence over business success in a social business, as happened in **HM Pasties** '1.0'.

The second is to compartmentalise the separate logics so that different parts of the venture contain separate institutional logics and attend to differing demands in a social business. This would obtain if, for example, we separated (as we plan to do) the training and development of offenders from the commercial side of **HM Pasties** operation. This is a common practice in charities and their trading subsidiaries (Cornforth, 2014).

A third approach is compromise, where you manage the competing views and logics so that different parties, or logics, understand each other and reach some kind of accommodation (though Kraatz & Block acknowledge that tensions are likely to remain in this scenario). This probably describes what we did unsuccessfully in **HM Pasties** 1.0 resulting in a jarring tension between the needs of our mission and those of the business.

A fourth (and more integrative) approach is to forge a brand-new identity that combines institutional logics, which gains a wider legitimacy, creating a new organisational field, supplanting competing

logics and turning them into a single new one. This is where there is a happy marriage between commercial and social imperatives. Examples cited are The Big Issue and fair trade businesses, like Café Direct or Divine Chocolate where the commercial and social dimensions sit together more comfortably.

What does the literature tell us about the merits compartmentalisation and integrative strategies? Looking at charities with separate commercial trading arms, Cooney (2006), Chew (2010) and Spearing et al (2007) revealed that tensions, post-separation, often remain between the two arms of the organisation, meaning that compartmentalisation did not eliminate intra-organisational tension. That points to some of the risks of 2022 as **HM Pasties** creates a distinct trading arm which operates separately from our core business.

In terms of the merits of 'integrative strategies', Tracey et al (2013) point to helpful action at three levels: the micro, the organisational and the macro-level. Two important 'micro' level strategies are recruitment and socialisation (Lodahl & Mitchell, 1980: 191-197). Similarly, Aiken (2006) underlines the importance of 'protective entry strategies', including careful recruitment, induction and mentoring as a way of reproducing values in the social enterprises he studied.

In terms of macro-level strategies, Tracey et al (2013) suggest that more ambitious social enterprises can successfully link their enterprise to wider political discourses and engage in building relationships with actors perceived to have a high degree of public legitimacy in order to gain mainstream endorsement for their model. Examples here would include Change Please, which offers employment support to homeless people and the Eden Project which uses an exceptional visitor attraction to pursue its purpose of environmental sustainment. To date, **HM Pasties** has drawn a powerful narrative around employing-ex offenders and the possibility of this making for a fantastic business - problematic though we know this to be in reality.

Cornforth (2014) concludes that that it can be really challenging for alternative forms of commercial enterprise to achieve both social and commercial success. There is an always-present risk of mission drift and a perpetual struggle between competing institutional logics. Cornforth suggests that it is an important future research challenge to gain a better understanding of these dynamics and this study attempts to do this.

Learning

The story of **HM Pasties** so far has suggested that competing logics that are unmitigated are a recipe for operational difficulties. The corrective path at **HM Pasties** is a the planned compartmentalisation of the business such that the commercial side and the social side are operated separate though mutually supportive operations with a small overlap (in the form of work experience placements)

rather than the full integration of offenders in the business we have had to date. This will mean recruiting more staff from the general workforce to render **HM Pasties** profitable while founding a 'Pasty Academy' as part of the business to prepare offenders for work, give them experience and then broker them into jobs, with only the very best people getting jobs in the **HM Pasties** commercial arm. This is not what we originally envisaged, but the competing logics coupled with needs of our workforce meant we needed to adapt.

Critical Approaches to HM Pasties

Are We Seeing Reality?

Applying a critical lens to **HM Pasties**, there is a view that our quest to combine profitability and social purpose is a futile one. In a study of six work-integration social enterprises, Teasdale (2012) debunks the idea of impact-maximisation through profit-maximisation by pointing out that ventures like ours are in fact always going to bring together resources from other parts of the economy (the state, philanthropy etc) to meet the additional costs of employing vulnerable people. Teasdale claims, in effect, that our field will tend to be more accurately characterised not so much as 'business plus mission' as hybrid of business and the activities of the welfare state.

So these are our big questions: Can we *both* alter the path of difficult, traumatised lives *and* build a brilliant commercial food business? Is it possible to hold both objectives in approximate equivalence? Does one need to be subordinated to the other?

These are some of the hardest questions to answer when running a social business, for there can be clear and obvious trade-offs between objectives on an almost daily basis, as we found in the early **HM Pasties**. This is because holding two sets of 'equally important' objectives creates complexity and personally taxing dilemmas on an almost daily basis, particularly in relation to employees' conduct and productivity. It simply is not always obvious what the right thing is to do when your twin objectives run into constant conflict.

A Different Corner?

While social goals have by no means been pushed to the edges in **HM Pasties** recent times, the insight that has emerged for me is if social businesses they are to grow their long-term effectiveness, they need to be open to placing commercial considerations in a separate psychological and, at times, physical, space to social ones. Otherwise, the tensions can become too challenging to manage with the risk of failure both socially and commercially.

New Insight / Synthesis – A new Compartmentalised Business model?

What emerges from all of this in terms of new insight about **HM Pasties**? What I have learned from my engagement with the literature is that hybrid organisations in the work integration sphere are rarely going to escape the tensions of a social purpose combined with a commercial model.

One Business, Two Operations

On reflection, it was probably mistaken to set **HM Pasties** along the lines we did. Of the available corrective strategies set out by Krasse & Block (2008), the one we are most likely to adopt is compartmentalisation, with the creation of a new charitable entity that can offset the costs of our social mission, while freeing the business to behave according to commercial logics.

While the interplay will still not be tension-free, it will make it easier than it has been to have the ‘creative interplay’ described earlier (Vickers et al) than the jarring conflicts that have beset the business so far.

To illustrate this change, in late 2021, one of our employees was really struggling with alcohol dependency and his attendance started to decline. He was also a talented chef and the business needed him every day. As an Integrated Hybrid we had a problem. We could not afford the time or support to help him through this difficult period in his life. Nor could we meet production targets when he was incapacitated. We were failing our employee, our customers and our business.

A move in January 2022 to ‘Differentiated Hybrid’ model saw us being able to support people like him through a funded foundation while production would be undertaken by a regular chef, supplemented by him as and when able. None of this stopped us winning the British Pie Award 2022 for our vegan pasty. Proof that managing institutional tensions well is perhaps the hallmark of a successful social enterprise.

Conclusion

The synthesis of all this, rather like elsewhere in this Doctoral submission, is that hybridity, while a growing feature of all sectors as boundaries become blurred between them, is actually a double-sided coin. It can provide a really powerful blending of institutional logics but this only really works, it appears, when the logics can be successfully combined, free of major conflict.

Creating a novel, unifying logic among everyone in the business that dissipates or overcomes the contrasting logics is possible but in practice not that common. So the solution for **HM Pasties** will likely be a new production facility with no more than 15% input from our beneficiary groups and a new, charitable ‘Pasty Academy’ which will train and prepare vulnerable people from the workplace. Profits from the food business will contribute to the costs of the Academy. Only small numbers of offenders will make our food. This is not because we do not care about our social mission, it is because

we cannot stay in business to help offenders in the long term if we do not find a new settlement between institutional logics.

Chapter 7: Discussion & Conclusion

An Autoethnography of Social Entrepreneurship – What is to be Learned?

The purpose of an autoethnographic approach is to connect the autobiographical and personal to the social, cultural and political (Ellis, 2015). This is a two-way, iterative process in which we are both the recipient of influences and then, like a musician, play back those influences in our own public works which, in turn, create a new genre which then, if we are lucky, influences others. Comprehending where we sit in this back-and-forth of influences, what was important and what is valuable for others' understanding of our field is the task here.

Three powerful strands stand out from my own story as important and influential. The first is the potential influence of trauma and subsequent mental ill-health on the decision to become a social entrepreneur. This was not only about developing empathy but also the resultant drive for independence, achievement and clear value to others, which research from McClelland (1961) and other has shown to be strong traits in entrepreneurs, whether social or commercial.

Whether the genesis of my own social entrepreneurship was unique to me, I do not fully know. But my own experience of working with a wide variety of social entrepreneurs (including Lee Wakeham and John Niland, who also spent periods of his childhood in care) suggests that the question of early life trauma in social entrepreneurs may be worthy of further research if we are to understand more about the motivation of this group. While social entrepreneurs are, without doubt, 'altruistic' – in the widest sense of being prepared going beyond self for towards others - there is a particularity to this altruism that merits further inquiry.

The second strand that stands out is the influence on me of a particular set of cultural and political events associated with the 'neo-liberal' economic and social agenda in the UK and US between the 1980s and 2010s (Nicholls & Teasdale, 2017) which saw both the championing of entrepreneurs plus a diminution of the state as a force for good in the face of intractable social challenges. This was the soundtrack of the life of anyone born between 1965 and 1980 and it is hard to fully comprehend how deeply this has been impressed on the minds of my generation of social entrepreneurs.

This scepticism of the state and lionisation of markets and entrepreneurs is deep in our cultural DNA and we may already be judged by the coming generation as enslaved to a set of ideas (neo-liberalism, New Public Management, the Third Way) whose time has been and gone. For this reason, social entrepreneurship, in the forms currently practiced, may find itself newly out of fashion as the electoral appetite returns for a larger more powerful state. Research on the effects of shifting social attitudes to the state and the effects this is having on the coming generation of social entrepreneurs would be a fertile area for further study.

The third autoethnographic strand I want to explore, with humility, is the influence of my own public works. While I am one of a cast of thousands in the field of social entrepreneurship (and far from the most successful), I have both longevity and the experience to write and reflect on an area of social discourse I have lived through from its heady beginnings in the 1990s, through its peak in the 2010s and into its days of uncertainty in the 2020s.

My public works reflect this diversity: the bricolage of **VoiceAbility**, the limited state idealism of **Stepping Out** and the hybrid of enlightened capitalism and social action that is **HM Pasties**. All of these public works may, in 20-30 years time, look simply like figments of their time, like the 'Theosophy' of the 1930s or the punk rockers of the 1970s.

Equally, they may look like valiant and prescient early attempts at the kind of social and economic change that, by 2050, is then the prevailing norm. I am not vain or confident enough to believe the latter, but I do hope that at least one of my public works is ahead rather just of its time.

A final point on the autoethnographic dimensions of my public works is that all of them connote the importance, in one's worldview, of the individual to the achievement of social change. Social entrepreneurship normally describes the work of single actors, not collectives. Social entrepreneurship inherently privileges the idea of 'I' over 'We' and the power of individual initiative over collective deliberation and action.

While I am a deeply committed democrat and civil-society communitarian, I do link social entrepreneurship to individual freedom of action and expression, part of a flourishing entrepreneurial society in which individuals matter as much as collectives or the state. A society without social entrepreneurs, however rich or successful, would feel like a society that has also lost an important part of its freedom.

[Social Enterprise: Managing the Tensions](#)

My central contention from each of my three public works is that acknowledging and addressing the tensions arising from operating two or more competing institutional logics is perhaps the core capability of the social entrepreneur. Strategies for doing this are many and their appropriateness will depend on the context. There is no one-size approach to this. Leadership in social enterprise is about facing the different logics head-on and a successful hybrid venture is one that can combine and navigate the tensions as a whole organisation. This is more easily said than done.

It is possible, as Vickers et al (2017) suggest, to blend a variety of institutional logics in novel ways across a single operation. One can do this, as with **HM Pasties**, **VoiceAbility** and the public service mutuals, by supplementing a 'prevailing logic' – the default, go-to guide to thought and action - with a strong 'challenger logic' that manages, if not an 'comfortable accommodation' with the existing

logic, but at least a workable co-mingling of both. The 'Diversified Hybrid' (where two parts of the same business work to different prevailing logics) represents another such compromise, one that that has worked well for **HM Pasties** as it moved from a failing Integrated Hybrid model that just was not suited to the commercial pressures faced by the business.

By contrast, **VoiceAbility** switched dominant logics over time rather than, as it probably should have done, started a distinct commercial services arm that would not have subsumed the original social focus. Managing the hybridity challenges of **VoiceAbility** was a significant leadership challenge that, in hindsight, I just about scraped through to manage.

Likewise my experience through **Stepping Out** of the public service mutual agenda was that these ventures tried to blend entrepreneurial start-up logics with those imbued in their public sector legacy. This was difficult and many of these businesses have taken years to gain traction, with some, like John Niland's Provide CIC and many others, eventually setting up separate commercial arms to guarantee a stronger business logic. This means that some of these businesses have become, in effect, Diversified Hybrids. Finally, **HM Pasties** found the tensions of combining two different logics to be unsustainable from a management perspective, with the result that the business is now being compartmentalised into two parts.

Implications for Future Public Works

I now turn to the question as to how this this Doctoral submission has influenced my thinking about my future public works and, in particular, my emergent venture 'Social Business Builders' (see Appendix E). Overall, I believe my reading of the literature and the application of academic theory to my own experience has generated three important 'pointers', one from each of the different theoretical lenses I have used.

1. Bricolage Places Me in Early Ventures

The first crucial pointer is that I am, at my core, a 'bricoleur' who is probably most skilled and motivated by working with others with similar attributes. This is where my 'flow' comes from. Helping Lee to set up **HM Pasties** probably gave me more pleasure than any of the public service mutuals, not least because his acts of bricolage were more audacious, imaginative and brave. Therefore, Social Business Builders, my next venture, will work in the earlier periods of a business' life (years 0-5) where bricolage arguably plays a larger role.

2. Commerciality-First

The second is that I will position Social Business Builders as working primarily with commercial-leaning business which produce exceptional social outcomes. Where the tensions, if they exist at all, I will select ventures where these manageable and where the commercial logic is predominant in

determining operational decision-making. This decision is based on the difficulties of holding competing priorities equally in mind without a simple, easy means of arbitrating them. Most people, I observe, find holding two sets of competing priorities really difficult and distracting tensions easily arise (Battilana & Lee, 2010; Pache & Santos; 2010). While some people cope better than others with these tensions, it appears that organisations find it easier to function in one of the valleys rather than on the hill when there is a prevailing single logic. I am probably one of them.

3. For Profit & For Good

The third decision emanating from this Doctoral thesis is that Social Business Builders (my next venture) should work mainly with for-profit social enterprises. What then happens to those profits is the decision of shareholders, but a strong profit-drive is a clear signifier of a commercial business. The social dimension of the ventures we support will be either in the way profit is deployed (in the case of **HM Pasties** with a significant re-investment in the Pasty Academy) or in the actual social impact of the business itself as a commercial concern.

Am I worried about the subordination of social to commercial goals in Social Business Builders? Actually no, because, to use **HM Pasties** as an example, a brilliantly successful commercial business will create far greater social impact than a struggling small operation that uses offenders as its core workforce. On a macro-level, I want to create more commercial ventures that can create impact at scale.

Is this Still 'Social Enterprise'?

Do these decisions mean that I will still be building 'social businesses'? Conway Dato-on, M. (2016) would probably say no, claiming that there is a material difference between a social enterprise that holds social goals in equal or greater primacy than commercial ones and a conventional firm with pro-social goals.

Frankly, I am not convinced by this thesis, as the definition of social business is and will always be contested and environmentally dependent. That said, it would indeed be desirable to me if the mainstreaming of pro-social objectives into ordinary business were to become as normal in the future as it is exceptional today.

A social business should, I believe, be judged by its outcomes more than its intentions or its legal form. Any business that achieves extraordinary social impact should merit the term 'social business'. While measuring impact will never be easy (and we must be cautious with this as the language of social business becomes mainstream), we need to remember that the terms 'social business', 'social enterprise' and 'social entrepreneur' are attempts to describe practical things, not theological ideas..

Barking Up the Wrong Tree?

My research and analysis raises the question I alluded to in the Introduction as to whether, during my career, I have been ‘barking up the wrong tree’, albeit with mostly benign results? Creating a charity – **VoiceAbility** - that tried itself into a business was successful on one level, but created tensions that were never successfully resolved. Supporting the establishment of public service mutuals through **Stepping Out** did indeed create a new breed of public service provider. However, the sector overall could not meet the expectations and hopes of its political sponsors around commerciality and innovation and for this and many other (unrelated) reasons policies were therefore abandoned. Finally, setting up **HM Pasties**, a commercial food business with a group of high-needs employees and expecting to make a profit was naïve at best, cost investors’ money and, time will only tell, whether we can undo the damage.

Looking back, I often wonder whether my personal social impact may have been higher if I had grown a group of pro-social for-profit businesses that achieved strong impact on the margins, but across a larger economic canvas, thereby actualising more net impact. Looking forward, I am gearing up Social Business Builders to invest in high potential, pro-social ventures: businesses that can scale, that can operate within commercial parameters, attract impact-minded investors. There are now £5 billion in impact funds under investment in the UK today compared to £1.6 billion just a decade ago (Big Society Capital, 2021).

The implication of this is that the ventures Social Business Builders decides to support need to be constructed in a way that their dominant institutional logic is clear – commercial - and the challenger logics – social - play a constructive, complementary role in the venture, never a competitive one.

Conclusion – On Motivation, Mission and My Next Public Work

I started this Doctoral submission with an ambition to understand myself better as a social entrepreneur and to shed light on how I want to use the next stage of my life. I have explored and reflected on what brought me to each of my selected public works and tried to re-examine these in light of a range of academic frameworks. I see myself as someone who went into social entrepreneurship, in part, to save myself. This done and finding myself reasonably good at it, I stayed, enjoying, for the last two and a half decades, a form of entrepreneurship that gave me both peace and pleasure.

Am I different to a conventional entrepreneur? I think so. Bacq and Janssen (2011) allege that a social entrepreneur is very similar to a commercial one bar one thing, their capacity for empathy and sense of personal efficacy project them in a different direction to the more traditional entrepreneur. I am

still ruminating on this as I contemplate a more commercial type of social business. Will I be able to do it, or might I just feel out of step with who I really am? The only way to find out is to do it and see.

Where I feel most confirmed is in the sense of myself as a social bricoleur, with an unusual knack of bringing disparate resources into new configurations. A simple metaphor I come back to is 'joining the dots'. Another I lean towards is, as I said, the 'chameleon', moving between worlds, assimilating then changing colour to blend into the next group I need to deal with. This sense of separateness coupled with an ability to fit in anywhere is linked to my own way of 'seeing' and perceiving which is very much informed by both my make-up and formative life-experiences.

I conclude this Doctoral submission re-inforced in my view that social business is an important, emergent institutional form that will become more important during my lifetime and beyond, as the boundaries between traditional sectors slowly erode and acts of 'creative interplay' between formerly separate institutional logics become more normal, particularly in the commercial sector.

Where I have felt more challenged has been what the literature has told me about some of the things I have been trying to do within my businesses. It has opened my mind up to the fact that I have, at times, been trying, at times, to manage conflicting institutional logics in some spectacularly unsuccessful ways, including latterly with **HM Pasties**. But I will continue to operate as a social entrepreneur, mainly through for-profit social business, but also remain active and involved across the whole continuum of social entrepreneurship, including in the third sector, where it all started for me.

Wish me luck.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Personal Biography – Key Details

Name and dates	Short description	Further info
2019-2022	Founder and Managing Director of Social Minds	http://socialminds.org.uk
2021-2022	Founder and Managing Director of Social Business Builders	http://socialbusinessbuilders.com
2019-22	Founder and Chair HM Pasties Ltd	http://hmpasties.com
2016-2022	Founder and Chair of Social Club	http://socialclubuk.com
2010-2019	Founder and Managing Director of Stepping Out	http://socialminds.org.uk
1996-2010	Founder and CEO of VoiceAbility	http://voiceability.org
1994-1996	Volunteer Director, Volunteering Matters	http://volunteeringmatters.org.uk
1992-1994	Volunteer, Skills for People	http://skillsforpeople.org.uk
1990-1994	Teacher and Researcher, Department of Politics, Newcastle University	http://newcastle.ac.uk
Books and Academic Output	<p><i>Your Chance to Change the World – the No-Fibbing Guide to Social Entrepreneurship</i>: London: Directory of Social Change</p> <p><i>How to Step Out: Your Guide the Setting Up and Running a Public Service Mutual</i>: London: NESTA</p> <p><i>How to Change the World: A Handbook for Social Sector Leader</i>: Wymondham: Turnpike Press.</p> <p>“The Future of Social Finance”: in Mark Salway et al, “<i>Demystifying Social Finance and Social Investment</i>” London: Routledge</p>	
2001-2006	Masters in Business Administration, Open University (Merit)	http://open.ac.uk
1987-1990	BA Honours in Politics, Newcastle University (Upper Second Class)	http://newcastle.ac.uk

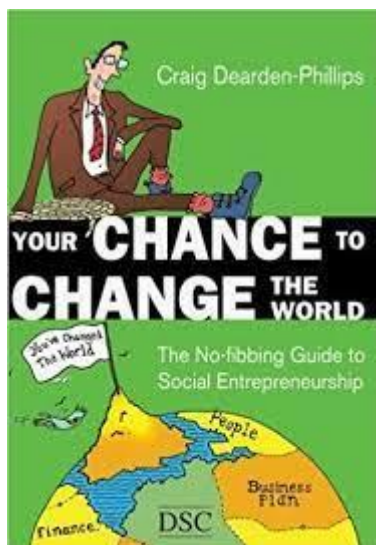
Appendix B TEDX Talk by Lee Wakeham, HM Pasties Ltd

[TEDxUniversityofManchester | TED](http://www.tedxuniversityofmanchester.com)

Appendix C. VoiceAbility – Website Impression <http://voiceability.org>



Appendix D. Your Chance to Change the World (2008) (4 x hard copies of book separately supplied)



Appendix E. Social Business Builders –

<http://socialbusinessbuilders.com>



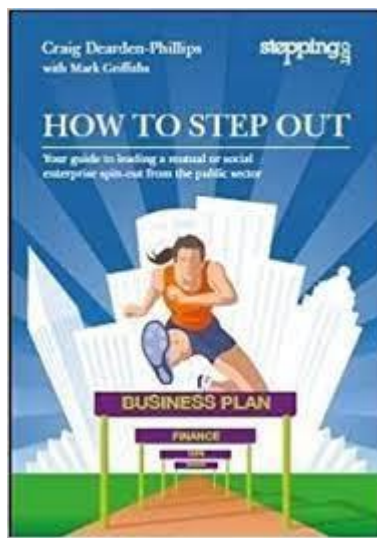
Appendix F. Guardian article

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2008/apr/16/voluntarysector.socialenterprises>

Appendix H HM Pasties – <http://hmpasties.com>



Appendix I. How to Step Out (2011) Image of Cover (4 x hard copies of book separately supplied)



Appendix J – List of Organisations Founded /Co-Founded 1996-2022

1. VoiceAbility Ltd (incorporated 1996) – <http://voiceability.org>
2. Opportunities Without Limits Ltd (incorporated 1998, no longer trading)
3. Aspire Group (Cambridge) Ltd (incorporated 1999, no longer trading)
4. Stepping Out Ltd (Incorporated 2010 – now trading as Social Minds: <http://socialminds.org.uk>)
5. Independence Matters Ltd (incorporated 2015) <http://independencematters.org.uk>
6. Persona Care and Support Ltd (incorporated 2016) <http://personasupport.org>
7. Navigo CIC (incorporated 2011) <http://navigocare.org.uk>
8. Provide CIC (incorporated 2011) <http://provide.org.uk>
9. HM Pasties Ltd (incorporated 2019) <http://hmpasties.com>
10. Sensory Specialists Ltd (incorporated 2021) <http://sensoryspecialists.com>
11. Signapse Ltd (incorporated 2022) <http://signapse.ai>
12. Social Club UK (not incorporated) <http://socialclubuk.com>
13. Youth First CIO (incorporated 2016) <http://youthfirst.org>
14. Zion Eagles FC (not incorporated, no longer trading)
15. Catalyst Choices CIC (incorporated 2014) <http://catalystchoices.org.uk>
16. The Stepping Out Foundation (incorporated 2011) – <http://charitiescommission.gov.uk>
17. Social Business Builders (not incorporated) <http://socialbusinessbuilders.com>
18. Aspire Community Benefit Society Ltd (Leeds) (incorporated 2015) <http://aspirecbs.org.uk>
19. Aspire CIC (Salford) (incorporated 2015) <http://iamaspire.org.uk>

20. CHUMS CIC (incorporated 2012) <http://chums.uk.com>
21. Our Voice (incorporated 1999, no longer trading)
22. East Coast Community Healthcare Services CIC (incorporated 2011) <http://ecch.org.uk>
23. Social and Sustainable Capital Trust (incorporated 2020) <http://socualandsustainable.com>
24. Re-Generate Ltd (incorporated 2020) <http://re-generate.org>
25. Spare Hand Ltd. (incorporated 2021) <http://spare-hand.org>