

If not for profit,
for what and how?

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The Symbiotic Relationship between Social Enterprise and Hybridity

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INTRODUCTION

Students of hybridity and social enterprise share a fundamental problem of making sense of constellations of organisations with competing organisational principles or logics. In this symbiotic relationship, hybridity is a constant theme in social enterprise writing; and for hybridity theorists social enterprise is an important exemplar of organisational hybridity.

Even a modest review of social enterprise literature reveals the increasing depth and importance of the symbiotic relationship. Although used in different ways in this literature, it has been claimed to be its key characteristic (Gidron and Hasenfeld 2012: p.3). Indeed, it can be argued that the search for a robust boundary for the social enterprise venture, is dependent on clarifying its relationship with the notion of hybridity. Conversely, the development of an increasingly useful theory of hybridity will need to get to grips with the increasingly complex social enterprise organisational forms. Exploring the relationship between hybridity and social enterprise is a broad purpose of this paper; more specific research questions are posed in the following section.

Overall, the research approach can be summarised as problem-driven collaboration with organisations in the development of usable theory. This approach underpins the development of the concepts and models used later in this paper which have twin purposes: to provide usable theory for better understanding the identity challenge of social enterprise and, to test and sharpen the utility of the current stage of a particular "prime accountability" theory of hybridity in responding to that challenge.

The paper begins by exploring some of the main themes of the symbiotic relationship in order to present four more specific research questions which provide a framework for the paper. The core theoretical part of the paper is then presented, followed by a discussion of the theory and concepts in action, before the final summary and conclusions.

1. THE GROWTH OF THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP

Interest in social enterprise has increased dramatically over the last decade or so. Policymakers, academics and practitioners increasingly use the term, literature has burgeoned, and University and other teaching and research initiatives are now well established. The process of institutionalisation continues its steady growth with the rise of local and national coordinating associations, and the establishment of a Social Enterprise Journal. Many advocates now regard these organisations as constituting a "sector" (editorial statement in [Social Enterprise](#)).

The rise of social enterprise is now well documented and analysed, for example, Austin & Seitanadi 2012; Defourny 2001; Defourny & Borzaga 2001; Defourny & Nyssens 2012; Nyssens, Adam and Johnson; Pestoff 1998). Within the literature there are significant differences in approach, for example between those who approach issues from a "traditional" third sector position, and those who come from the more pro-market entrepreneurial stance¹. Many authors have also pointed to the different approaches to social enterprise, particularly between the US and Europe resulting from the different histories, cultures, politics and economic development of diverse countries (Kerlin 2006). Others have commented on the tendency to concentrate in the literature on the heroic leader/entrepreneur; whilst failing to point to the failures of social enterprise (Teasdale 2012, and 2012a).

¹ It is beyond this brief review to embark on a textual analysis of the different approaches.

The view from recent academic literature confirms the view of a contested boundary with lack of internal clarity regarding its identity (Ridley-Duff Bull 2011; Seanor & Meaton 2008; Teasdale 2012). Even the Social Enterprise Journal editorial concedes that "it is also debatable whether we have a robust and agreed 'map' of the sector". It seems that growth has brought with it an ever-increasing number of initiatives and claimants for inclusion as social enterprises. The identity and boundary dilemmas have consequently intensified, and Young (2012) suggests that social enterprise is in fact a "mishmash of old and new legal forms, projects within organizations and partnerships and alliances among organizations. " (p. 21).

The study of hybridity, the other partner in the symbiotic relationship, has a longer, although less systematic and dramatic growth. When confined to the study of organisations it has been used to describe contradictions between different aspects, for example general organisational structures such as size and functions (Powell 1987); or conflicting institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio Eds (2008). The main interest of this paper is on hybrid organisations defined as those that possess significant characteristics of more than one sector. For the moment, this will serve as a working definition.

Despite its patchy and less systematic development, writing on hybridity has a long history, with some of the most interesting material found in the writings of public administration scholars concerned with their boundary with the private sector. Frequently, they also noted the prevalence of "blurring" on the sector boundary and in some cases referred to this as "hybridity". More recently, public administration scholars have returned to the boundary issue with the private sector, this time clearly discussing the problem in terms of hybridity (Karre 2012; Koppell 2003; Kosar 2008; Mulgan 2000; Rainey & Chun 2005). A growing body of literature is also emerging from the business and organisational journals, for example, Battilana, Lee, Walker and Dorsey. 2012; Borys & Jemison 1989; Brinckerhoff 2000; Courpasson & Dany 2003; Dees & Elias 1998.

Writers in the broad third sector field - buffeted by their neighbouring sectors - have been particularly sensitive to the boundary problem of messiness and blurring in third sector organisations (TSO's) and it has naturally been a fruitful field for work on hybridity, for example: Billis (1991, 1993, 2003, 2010); Bode, Evers and Schulz 2006; Brandsen, Donk and Putters. 2005; Chew 2008; Cornforth 2004; Evers (1995; 2005; Evers & Laville 2004; Nyssens, Adam, and Johnson 2006).

An important strand within this body of writing is represented by scholars who see hybridity as intrinsic to the very nature of social enterprises. Amongst these might be mentioned (Laville & Nyssens 2001 pp 325 - 326), who argued that "hybridisation provides a consolidation strategy, for social enterprises whose identity has already been formed" (325). They emphasise that this does not mean that social enterprises mix an equal amount of market, non-market and non-monetary resources; it is only a consolidation strategy. A step beyond this appears to be taken by other writers from mainland Europe. Thus Brandsen, Van de Donk, and Putters. (2005) question the existence of a third sector containing organisations with a distinctive identity. They suggest that there is no evidence of an "ideal type" comparable to the state and market; albeit that these also are simple and increasingly unrealistic. Indeed, boundary problems, fuzziness and changeability, i.e. hybridity, may be a defining characteristic of the third sector (p.750). One inference from this is that social enterprises are essentially part of a broader third sector characterised by its hybridity.

The approach to hybridity taken by Evers (2010:280) is to doubt the notion of a third or voluntary "sector" and to conceive it as an "intermediary field", or a sphere, "beyond the core areas of state, market and community". The term third sector, which he uses "just as a working tool" is not regarded as having the same central principles as these other core areas and is continually influenced in various degrees by those core areas, hence they are hybrids. A number of organisational examples are used to demonstrate that in every case elements from the state, third sector, community and markets are present. He points to the presence of hybridity, particularly in the public sector and suggests that social enterprises are hybrids. The issue of sectors is discussed in the following section.

Finally, there is the "EMES approach" (Defourny & Nyssens 2012) which epitomises the extent to which the symbiotic relationship with hybridity has become embedded as a natural part of the discourse. Drawing also on the work of their colleagues, particularly Pestoff (1998; 2005), they present social enterprise as "a combination of various actors, logics of action and resources" (p. 11). Again, the notion of the third sector as an "intermediate sector" which is not "fully separated" from the private and public sectors, is central to the presentation.

So far, the issues that emerge from theory and practice might be summarised as a number of broad interconnected clusters of research questions:

One. What is the definition of a formal organisation and its place as an essential building block in the definition of sectors and hybridity?

Two. What is the definition of sectors and the role of organisation? Is there such a thing as a "third sector"?

Three. Can the theory of hybridity coexist with the idea of a strong sector?

Four. What concepts within this theory might be helpful in analysing social enterprise?

From this brief review of the symbiotic relationship and emerging questions, it is evident that at the heart of the discussion is a mutual concern with formal organisations. Although the role and influence of the state and market provide an inescapable backcloth; it is their public and private *organisational* manifestations which occupy the battleground in the search for solutions to social problems. Organisations are also at the heart of any discussion including those social enterprise scholars for whom the concept of a "third" sector is questionable. The following section responds to the first two questions of the above list

2. FORMAL ORGANISATIONS AND SECTORS

Early third sector research was also preoccupied by the search for the defining features and boundary of a disparate group of organizations described by different names in different countries, and even within countries. In this search it became clear that understanding and defining formal organisations was an essential precondition to establishing a boundary to the "nonprofit" sector, hence the great effort undertaken by members of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project. In fact, the nature of formal organisation is not just a distinctive characteristics of nonprofits, but is a widely and long-discussed idea and can be traced back at the very least to the classic book by (Barnard, 1938) with numerous other writers approaching this from a variety of perspectives. In the search for a working definition, I have drawn both on my own research in all three sector (Billis 1984;1991) in addition to key texts from the formal organisation literature.

However, the working definition developed here has also drawn on preliminary research into 17 book clubs, the purpose of which was to test the boundary between formal organisations and informal "invisible" groups. It appears that participants perceive a clear divide between their own nameless groups and those that are regarded as "real" organisations and have a public persona. This additional perspective, largely absent from the writings on formal organisations, led to the working definition that a formal organisation is an *independent* group of people who have come together to respond *systematically* to their own, or other people's problems. To do this the minimum requirements are agreement on:

A sustainable, way of "running"² the group;

The nature of the problems/goals to be addressed;

An arranger³ of activities who accepts accountability⁴, and can be changed if required;

A unique name which enables them to distinguish members from non-members and to engage with the broader society.

Table 1 utilises this and also the writings of the early public administration scholars. The Table lays the "ideal type" organisation to be found in each sector. These are the:

Generic elements of all formal organisations (1) ownership (2) governance (3) operational priorities (4) human resources (5) other resources.

Distinctive principles or "rules of the game" with respect to each of the five core elements.

Table1: Ideal Type Sectors

CORE ELEMENTS	PRIVATE SECTOR PRINCIPLES	PUBLIC SECTOR PRINCIPLES	THIRD SECTOR PRINCIPLES
1.Ownership	Shareholders	Citizens	Members
2.governance	Share ownership size	Public elections	Private elections
3.Operational priorities	Market forces and individual choice	Public service and collective choice	Commitment about distinctive mission
4.Distinctive human resources	Paid employees in managerially controlled <i>Firm</i>	Paid public servants in legally backed <i>Bureau</i>	Members and volunteers in <i>Association</i>
3.Distinctive other resources	Sales, fees	Taxes	Dues, donations, legacies

The definition of "sector" is therefore that it comprises the accumulation of all those organisations that function according to these principles. For the purposes of this paper, the ideal type follows a broad Weberian approach (Weber and Parsons 1964). The pure ideal type might rarely exist but it must draw sufficiently from real organisational experience so that can also be used in both practice and policy making.

Most importantly, this chain of interacting principles is underpinned by clarity of organisational accountability. This might be somewhat unclear or confused in reality, but the ideal model provides a benchmark against which dysfunctional organisations can be compared, reformed or penalised. The principles also provide the justification for the development of distinctive attributes which become part of the case for legitimacy of each type of organisation.

² In larger organisations the more familiar term would be "governance".

³ In larger organisations with the emergence of hierarchies, titles would again change and would see the emergence of "coordinators" and "managers".

⁴ In smaller organisations "responsibility" rather than the harsher term "accountability" may be employed.

The organisational case for the existence of a third sector, laid out in Table 1 reflects a more fundamental proposition about the nature of the response to social need. If we start from the vantage point of the individual who faces a continuous stream of problems in their daily life, there are a number of ways to get help in resolving those problems. These are not in order of priority but depend on the nature of the problem, its severity, the availability, and personal choice.

The first of these ways is not organisational. It is to turn to friends, family, neighbours and other sympathetic individuals or the "personal world" (Billis 1993: 159-160). In order not to complicate the argument it is sufficient to consider this "world" as all the individual interactions outside the realm of formal organisations. Responses are not normally based on contractual arrangements but overwhelmingly on individual qualities and values such as loyalty, affection, love, and so on.

The arena of personal relationships is all very different from the world of formal organisations where there are 3 possibilities. One choice (dependent on personal resources and market availability) is to seek help from the private sector, set up to make a profit.

Alternatively, it is possible to seek the help of one of the myriad of associations which operate in most areas of everyday life. The scale and wide variety of such groups again varies from society to society. These associations are set up to respond systematically to their own or other people's needs. Many of these needs may be classified as being in the category of "social discomfort" rather than "social breakdown" (Billis 1984:63-80). Nevertheless, meeting these less severe needs are an essential part in the development of social capital (Putnam 2000) and a healthy civil society.

Finally, there are the organisations provided by government. Elsewhere, it has been suggested (Billis and Glennerster 1988) that the three formal sectors have distinctive comparative advantages with regard to different categories of need. However, the approach of this paper is more relaxed, and is that these different alternatives exist, and that under different circumstances different choices may be made. This does not negate the proposal that fundamentally different principles and logics may exist; or indeed that different sector organisations may well possess distinctive advantages.

All three sector organisations vary in the degree to which they meet the ideal model. Certainly, the global growth of the interpenetration of the different sectors and the rise of sector hybridity has had dramatic results even on the private and public sectors, usually seen as the closest manifestations of ideal models. Both public and private sectors now contain wide varieties of organisational forms. In the private sector these might range from the market stall, small local family run shop, the high street independent retailer, the supermarket chain; right through to the huge multinationals employing hundreds of thousands of staff. They may be classified, and vary, according to geographical areas, functions, industries, types of workforce and so on. The organisations falling within the purview of the public sector are hardly less complex. Indeed, one of the reasons for the difficulty of introducing change into public sector agencies in the UK has been the almost insurmountable complexity of their organisational arrangements and structures.

This section has begun to address the first two questions by providing ideal models of all three sectors and demonstrating their distinctive principles in relation to the core organisational elements of all formal organisations. What might be called the practical "normal ideal model" of all three sectors contains a wide and increasing variety of complex hybrid structures. So far, in this limited exposition, the third sector shares this normality with the public and private sectors.

3. BOUNDARY HYBRIDITY AS PART OF ALL THREE "NORMAL" AND STRONG SECTORS

The fact that the sector is heavily influenced by both public and private forces is extensively documented, and is an integral part of third sector literature. So much so, that (Brandsen, Donk and Putters (2005) have proposed that hybridity is both permanent and inevitable. As noted earlier, a broader case appears to be made by other authors who suggest that the entire sector comprises hybrids which occupy a "space" between the real sectors of public, private and community. In contrast, this section proposes that (a) all normal sectors are prone to hybridity, (b) despite hybridity the sector concept remains powerful in policy and practice, in addition to the more theoretical case made so far.

Since sector hybridity is by definition a multi-sector phenomenon, any discussion of hybridity and social enterprise must also be sensitive to the phenomenon as it appears in both the public and private sectors. Even a cursory look illustrates its spread and longevity.

3.1. Hybridity in the normal ideal model of a sector

In the public sector hybridity is a phenomenon that can be traced back at the very least to the 17th-century establishment of what Ferguson (2004: 19) called the "state-licensed monopolies" of both the Dutch and English East India Companies. Today, the power of large companies and multinationals on governments is significant and well documented, if not always transparent. Governments in democracies can also be strongly interwoven with third sector associations such as political parties and trade unions; and heavily influenced by countless local, regional and national associations and pressure group organisations.

The private sector is interwoven with national governmental policies which can make conditions for its success or failure more or less likely, can provide contracts and subsidies, and can, if it wishes, help or hinder in many different ways. In a world of globalised companies, it can be overseas governments which are the most powerful influences on private sector companies. They can make entry into their own country difficult or even impossible, they can enact restrictive employment laws, offer subsidies and in general utilise a panoply of policies on external companies. These types of actions both internally and externally are mirrored by the activities of the TSOs. With the rise of social media, consumer, ecological, political, economic and other groups, have an increasing ability to put pressure on private companies from the local community, through to national and international level.

In common with the public sector, private sector organisations have also been subjected to criticism for what is regarded as the inappropriate prevalence of the "old boys network" of interlocking directorships in many different companies. Less prominent is the interaction with the personal world in the existence of a vast number of small family "businesses" including street-level enterprises, market stalls, family corner shops, and the small cafe or restaurant perhaps employing a paid member of staff.

In democracies sectors do not exist in isolation, but are mutually dependent; each occupying a "space" which reflect the changing power and influence of its neighbours. Thus, this brief analysis - utilising a more inclusive definition of the third sector - has illustrated the dependence of the public and private sectors on the "third" sector. The "normal" third sector does not occupy "a space" which is conceptually different from the private and public sectors. The concept of hybridity reflects part of that dependency.

3.2. The continuing strength of the sector concept.

In the light of the growth in hybridity in all three sectors it is tempting to argue that the idea of separate "sectors" based on organisations with distinctive set of principles or "logic", is passé. Yet, perhaps rather perversely, in the real world of policy and practice the idea of organisations with different principles appears deeply rooted in everyday life in many democratic countries. What is felt to be "appropriate" for each sector varies over time and place, but the sense of difference can be firmly held in the psyche of different countries. Thus, few British politicians dare make a frontal assault on the National Health Service, which is seen as a "national treasure". Whereas the existence of nationalised health provision may be seen as unacceptable socialism in the United States. British political debate remains dominated by the notion of sectors despite (unsuccessful) efforts to express the discourse in terms of "the Third Way" and more recently "the Big Society".

For much of the time, we may care very little about the nature of sector organisational principles. This is likely to be the case in benevolent socio-economic conditions. However, it is at times of organisational crisis, arising from both internal and external causes, that the relevance and power *prime sector principles, accountability* and identity, tend to emerge. Hence, it was the confused boundaries between the public and private sectors, that led to the most notorious example of hybrid failure - the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac disaster (Koppell 2003). The significant role, led to the realisation that the lack of transparency and confusion of sector ownership/principles was unsustainable. Where sector boundaries are confused, for example in the case of the part governmental ownership of banks, then there is substantial unease. This particular hybrid has not accrued support as a long-term model. "Why should we, the taxpayer fund the excesses of the private sector banks", is a popular and powerful cry. Other high-profile hybrid organisations have also been in the firing line for confused accountability sometimes linked with what is seen as inappropriate entry into the territory of neighbouring sectors. For example, in the UK a charity of the Prince of Wales, Railtrack, the NHS, Universities, and the BBC; have all been criticised for confused accountability and inappropriate actions for third sector organisation.

Where does the third sector and social enterprise fit into this explanation? I argued that when placed in the context of other sectors it is difficult to find any major conceptual differences. All sectors are characterised by complexity of organisational arrangements and by the presence of hybrid characteristics on their borders, including that with the personal world of family and friends. Although there are significant national differences, each is increasingly influenced by its neighbouring sector organisations, and despite the fact that hybridity appears to be increasing, the notion of distinctive sector principles remain strong. Looked at this somewhat differently, the difference between the third sector concept and the other sector concepts is not one of quality but quantity; of its apparent lesser economic role and contribution, rather than its role as one of the three main organisational responses to social need.

The following section discusses the contention that the central principles of the third sector are as described in table 1, and that these principles provide the roots, legitimacy, and heartland of the sector.

3.3. The association-organisational basis of the third sector

The assertion that the core of the ideal model of the third sector is based on membership groups is organisationally consistent, and reflects a distinct social role accompanied by appropriate governance and operational principles. It is also empirically and historically soundly based.

This paper is not intended to be a statistical analysis but if we examine the scale of what can reasonably be included in the third sector, then a quite startling statistic appears in the UK National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) 2012 Annual Handbook on Civil Society. It calculates

that no less than two thirds of the total number of 900,000 UK civil society organisations are "unincorporated organisations". These are defined by the UK government as an organisation which is not a legal structure, and set up as an agreement between a group of people who come together for a reason other than to make a profit, e.g. a voluntary group or sports club. Although the NCVO statistics are admittedly not completely reliable, they are the best that we have available. It is also not clear how many of the approximate 600,000 unincorporated organisations are formal - and therefore legitimately seen as part of the third sector - and how many are more appropriately seen as part of the personal world. From the limited examples given, such as sports clubs, it does however seem that a large proportion would satisfy the working definition of a formal organisation provided earlier in the paper.

Furthermore, it is highly likely that many of the remaining third of the total number of clearly formal organisations are likely to be heavily dependent on the utilisation of members and volunteers; the National Trust has nearly 4,000,000 members!. And, just over 50% of the UK active voluntary organisations were defined as "micro" (the smallest of their five categories of income) with an annual income of less than £10,000; and 32% were classified as "small" with an annual income of less than £100,000. Statistics from the United States for 2010 depict a broadly similar picture with 45% of public charities in the lowest of their six categories of income (NCCS website).

These figures are not unexpected, but they provide a reminder of the vast scale of third sector organisations which are based on an agreement between individuals to "do something" in a systematic fashion. Many will be seen as an integral part of the ideal model of the third sector based on "associational relationships" (Warren 2001:54-56).

Historically, many TSOs, including some of its most prominent representatives, have their origins in the desire of one, or a few people, to respond to social need. This is true also of "pioneering social enterprises, which informally invent new responses to social demands, often relying on volunteering in the first place" (Defourny & Nyssens 2012:12).

4. TOWARDS A THEORY OF ORGANISATIONAL HYBRIDITY

This section addresses the third of the main starting issues of this paper: can a theory of hybridity coexist with the idea of a strong sector? As noted earlier, an essential part of the ideal model is clarity of accountability. This is essential for stakeholders and particularly for those, often vulnerable citizens, who may be in receipt of services. The strength of the model is the provision of a template for the clarity, and consequent transparency of governance systems. Citizens know where to go for answers to problems: to the representatives of government, the company directors, or to the third sector committee, board or trustees.

We need to know whether contradictory principles, or rules of the game, will affect the way the elderly receive care in residential establishments, who really owns the homes that we rent or purchase, whether medical decisions in hospitals or other forms of medical care, will be based on market principles, public policy or mission-driven priorities of a particular third sector organisation. These can literally be matters of life and death. In the case of one pregnancy advisory organisation, the real anti-abortion principles of the TSO were made "less than transparent" in the search for funding from a government taking a very different approach. The end result was confusion at the front line, loss of legitimacy with the different funders, and despair and eventual resignation of many trustees who were unaware of the frontline contradictory decision-making of staff towards abortion.

Sliding into *opaque hybridity* has its costs. If hybrid organisations are, as some argue, likely to replace sector-based organisations, we would require a set of governance and operational principles which are as equally coherent and transparent as the current sector model (for all its faults) is for policymakers, stakeholders and practitioners. That may happen, but it is unclear what the new organisational logic would look like. In any case, the development of a prime sector accountability

theory offers an alternative approach since it does not conclude that social enterprises are an independent sector.

4.1. Principal owners and prime sector accountability

If an involuntary slide into an organisational swamp of opaque hybrid organisations is to be avoided then two conditions need to be fulfilled. First, the best possible map must be available. Second, we need to be very sure who is really steering the organisational ship.

As far as a map to avoid the swamp is concerned, I have proposed that as a first step towards its development, the working hypotheses that organisations have primary adherence to the principles of just one sector, or prime sector accountability. This concept will be further fleshed out in considering the second condition which requires the identification of the "principal owners/members", or those steering the ship. It necessitates taking a step beyond the skeleton of the ideal model presented in Table One and requires further exploration of the nature of ownership.

So who are the principal owners in the third sector organisation? In Table 1 "ownership" is seen as being in the hands of "members". This immediately conflicts with the approach of much of the nonprofit literature which contends that they do not have owners. This is usually based on the economic definitions of ownership in which the notion of residual returns and residual decision rights are paramount⁵. Although this definition may hold in the market, it appears to have less practical utility when applied to the third, and indeed public sector.

If however the focus is only on decision-making then it is possible to arrive at a more realistic approach to ownership. In organisations it is usual to find several distinct layers of decision-making groups: formal, active and principal. (In fact the same three levels can be identified in both the private and public sectors). In the third sector, the least involved group are those who have formal rights, perhaps in elections, but do not exercise those rights and have little interest in the decision-making processes of the association. More likely perhaps is that this formal/legal group makes a financial contribution in return for services such as a regular magazine, and/or entry into historic grand houses or museums. Their membership, however, should not be denigrated since, despite the obvious personal benefits received, the annual membership contract can reasonably be assumed to be at least a minimum statement of support for the organisational mission, be it conservation, animals, political approach, or whatever.

Of more interest is the category of active members who do vote in elections when given the opportunity. In small associations, these will be the people who do turn up at meetings and have their say. A significant part of the active membership may also be volunteers. Finally, the critical group for the analysis of hybridity is that of the *principal owners*. These are the members who *in effect* can as close the organisation down, or transfer it to another sector (Weisbrod 1998 refers to this as "conversion". They can also change the fundamental boundary and mission of the organisation through mergers or other actions. These are the real "owners" of the organisation.

From a methodological practical point of view the identification of the principal owners represents a critical step from the ideal model to the realm of organisations and organisational change. It is not necessarily a complicated step providing that the organisation itself realises that it has a problem, perhaps collaborating in an action research project that utilises a transparent and tested methodology (Billis 1984, Rowbottom 1977). The essence of these approaches is usually to identify the individuals whose participation is essential if major changes are to be analysed and proposed. The difficult part - of courses - is the analysis, but for the purpose of this paper, all that is required is to suggest the principal owners do exist, it is a useful concept, and that it has ramifications for all third sector organisations, including social enterprises. (See discussions on leaders and stakeholders in Garrow and Hasenfeld 2010:140-142).

⁵ This is discussed in greater detail in Billis 2010 chapter 3.

Experience suggests that - providing the governing body is dominated by mission-driven members - the principal owners will usually include the chair-person and key members of the governing body, management committee and trustees, depending on the particular nature of the governance structure⁶. It will also usually include, if there are paid staff, the chief executive plus a few important other staff. Beyond this there may be influential past members, and others. In hybrid organisations in which the governance system may contain people, such as representatives whose prime adherence is to the public or private sector principles, the identification of the principal owners is not necessarily more complex, although the analysis is likely to be more contentious and fraught, particularly in enacted hybrids.

The acceptance that paid staff may often be principal owners of third sector organisations, contradicts the ideal model of a third sector organisations, *only if it is assumed that they cannot also be active members*. This is not necessarily the case and clearly, as Bacciega and Borzaga (2001: 274) suggest in their analysis of social enterprises, "incentives for workers are not based exclusively on monetary rewards; rather, they derive mainly from workers involvement in shaping and sharing the organisation's goals and mission".

Rethinking the nature of ownership on the basis of decision-making accountability, and introducing the concept of principal owners/members, provides one explanation for the phenomenon of a strong sector coexisting with hybridity. By defining ownership and indeed membership on the basis of decision-making it emerges that there are more useful contributing members than a strictly democratic voting model might suggest. Membership, in the sense of commitment and contribution to the mission will exist amongst many paid staff, in addition to the obvious members who also have roles as trustees, committee members, financial supporters and volunteers right down to the less active roles of the annual ticketholder. It is the broad base of membership of all categories, all of whom can exercise varying degrees of influence, that comprises the "roots" of the organisation, and contributes to its *legitimacy* in the wider environment⁷. This goes some way to explaining the strength of the mission-driven third sector organisation, and the collection of organisations that we understand as a "sector".

5. HYBRIDITY THEORY AND ASSOCIATED CONCEPTS

It now becomes possible to address the fourth research question and return to the main theme of the paper: exploring the interrelationship between hybridity and social enterprise. This section begins the process of clarification.

5.1. The three sector model

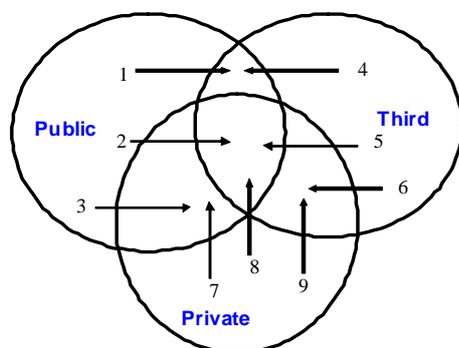
The first building block of the approach to hybridity was an analysis of "non-hybrid" formal organisation as outlined in Table One. The working definition of a formal organisation provided earlier, stresses its independence, sustainability, and its ability (even in situations of collaboration and partnership) to maintain a boundary between itself and the external environment.

Figure 1 presents a three sector map of independent organisations and their hybrid zones. The three circles are not meant to demonstrate either size or importance. According to this model, organisations retain *prime accountability* to the principles of one sector even if they draw some of their resources, including governing body participants, from one or both of their neighbouring sectors.

⁶ Even in large organisations the number of principal owners of major change is not usually more than 20 people in the project, although advice would be sought from many other sources.

⁷ For a discussion of social enterprise and "pragmatic" and "moral" legitimacy see Dart 2004; and for the relationship between networks and legitimacy see Huybrechts 2013.

Figure 1
The three sectors and their hybrid zones



Key: The hybrid zones and their principal owners (underlined)

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Public</u> /Third | 4. <u>Third</u> /Public | 7. <u>Private</u> /Public |
| 2. <u>Public</u> /Private/Third | 5. <u>Third</u> /Public/Private | 8. <u>Private</u> /Public/Third |
| 3. <u>Public</u> /Private | 6. <u>Third</u> /Private | 9. <u>Private</u> /Third |

The model demonstrates that hybridity is a complex phenomenon and that a concept such as social enterprise, which is characterised by hybridity, will not be easily deconstructed. For example, it suggests that hybridity is a two-way process. Thus, third sector organisations may be "persuaded" to accept public or private representatives on the governing body, but equally they may provide their own participants in the governance structures of public or private sector organisations.

However, an ideal organisational "normal" model, requires some additional concepts if it is to reflect the ebb and flow of organisational change in real life. This section provides two pairs of concepts to achieve this: (a) shallow and entrenched hybridity, and (b) organic and enacted hybrids.

5.2. Shallow and entrenched hybridity

Hybridity in all its manifestations is a phenomenon which is probably as old as the study of the third sector itself. Often, the initial step into what might be called "shallow" hybridity occurs with the appointment of the first paid staff funded from external sources. Tensions may arise with volunteer owners/members, but the paid staff role may segue into one of the membership categories. Although it may be an uncomfortable process, the limited research (Rochester and Torry 2010) suggests that TSOs succeed in maintaining their core mission.

Entrenched hybridity is of more relevance for social enterprises. This most often occurs when income from government and private sector sources: grants, contracts, sales; become a flow of reliable resources sufficient to maintain a hierarchical level, or levels, of management. A move to this situation is not inevitable. But, should it occur, it brings with it significant changes, since it requires embedding alien features of the firm and bureau into the TSO. In order to maintain a staff structure more resources have to be found, and the language of operation and organisational policies inevitably change. Formal job descriptions will be required, the notion of managerial accountability will arrive, sanctions and reward systems introduced, systems and procedures will need to be "bureaucratized", volunteers may be seen to be "unprofessional", the organisation will become more complex, and there may be pressure to place specialist professionals on the governing body.

It is likely that the paid staff will also become active members, and the senior staff principal members/owners. It is not an easy balance to achieve, but without this there is the risk that the TSO is run primarily for the benefit of its staff and is taken in a direction far from its agreed mission. The

relevance of shallow and entrenched hybridity and social enterprises is more evident when combined with an additional pair of concepts; that of organic and enacted hybridity.

5.3 .Organic and enacted hybridity

The study of change in organisations is a vast field and this paper has the limited objective of illustrating how the concept of hybridity might be relevant for social enterprises. Despite the growth since the 1970s of academic and consultancy resources available for TSOs, is probably fair to suggest that for much of the period most TSOs have slowly slid into change. As discussed earlier the vast majority have remained within, or perhaps moved into the "normal" ideal model which can now be typified as possessing a few elements of shallow hybridity. This *organic* move was typically unplanned and, with the notable exception of the appointment of the first paid staff, not unduly stressful.

However, in the more recent decade of organisational experimentation there has been a dramatic rise in *enacted* organisations. These are established from day one as hybrids, sometimes by individuals but more frequently by other organisations. Enacted hybrids are not new. Governments have a long history of establishing them in the form of nationalised industries. These would be prime examples of occupants of zone 3 in figure 1 and can now be described as *enacted entrenched* hybrids. They are clearly enacted, but are equally entrenched since they were established as large multi-levelled hierarchical structures, with enormous resources. There was never any doubt about who were the principal owners. It was the government who could, and did, close or sell them depending on political ideology. There is, I suggest, a potential lesson for social enterprises that are heavily dependent, or in fact owned (in principle decision making terms) by government.

The following, penultimate part of this paper draws briefly on the work of those who have utilised this theory to explore its relationship with social enterprises. In so doing they have usually employed the concept of principal ownership, hybrid zones, and the categories of hybridity illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Categories of Hybrid TSOs

State \ Type	Organic	Enacted
Shallow	organic shallow	enacted shallow
Entrenched	organic entrenched	enacted entrenched

6. THE SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP IN ACTION

This section reflects on the relationship between hybridity and social enterprise utilising some of those studies that have critically explored the ideas expressed in this paper to analyse social enterprise. Many have employed a case study methodology which seems particularly appropriate to the complex nature of social enterprise.

6.1. Case studies of hybridity in social enterprise

The work of Mike Aiken (2010) is especially relevant. He begins by drawing attention to the fact that practitioners within social enterprises have pointed to the internal challenges of a conflict in culture between care and business within their governance and operations. He considers the implications of considering three social enterprises as hybrids which draw on different operating sector principles (p 153). His key points are extremely helpful in this exploration of the symbiotic relationship. In effect he uses the concepts to arrive at successive levels of greater understanding by getting beneath the manifest or apparent assumptions about each social enterprise. The concept of principal ownership emerges as a valuable tool. Thus, he was able to propose that one of the case studies was a third/private hybrid, the second was a public/third , and the last study was a private/public/third sector hybrid. Aiken considers these not just as descriptive labels but as offering clues to their organisational origin and possible trajectory. "The notion of principal owners enabled us to consider influence beyond the formal owners and look at the role of various actors in addition to the official boards" (p. 169). Beyond this, Aiken uses the concepts in Figure 2 to consider the depths and process of hybridisation to analyse change over time in a work integration social enterprise, and the way in which logic/principles can shift from one sector to another.

Housing associations considered as social enterprise have become a fruitful area for the analysis of hybridity. These have been analysed in a number of different countries. For example, David Mullins and Hal Pawson (2010) were the first academics to use principle owner theory in analysing associations in England and the Netherlands. Their particular concern was whether housing associations were perhaps agents of public policy or for-profits in disguise. They concluded that in both countries paid staff have become the principal owners, and that associations are characterised by entrenched hybridity. They note that tensions have risen in relation to governance with respect to the different assumptions held by non-executives and executive directors, perhaps over the issue of principal ownership. They illustrate a point made earlier in this paper by noting the manner in which, in times of severe crisis such as the current economic crisis, the clarification of sector identity and principal owners become significant issues for associations in both countries. In the Netherlands they have become private/third sector hybrids and, conscious of the danger of becoming "for-profits in disguise", have cultivated a social entrepreneurial identity. In contrast, the English sector seems closest to the public/private/third zone of figure 1 and the authors suggests that this explains their robust defence against the danger of simply becoming agents of public policy.

Entrenched hybridity in public housing agencies in the USA is the subject of a detailed case study of the Charlotte Housing Authority (CHA) in North Carolina (Nguyen, Rohe and Cowan (2012)). They suggest that the CHA is a public/private/third hybrid (zone two in Figure 1) which has roots in the public sector and is governed by a Board appointed by local elected officials with one tenant member. This case study illustrates an additional degree of hybrid complexity since the CHA has created a wholly-owned nonprofit subsidiary which in turn has created a wholly-owned for-profit subsidiary. Given that the principal ownership remains with the CHA these subsidiaries can be treated analytically as "dependent divisions" of the main governmental hybrid organisation.

An Australian study (Gilmour and Milligan 2012) uses the full range of concepts in order to analyse different types of Australian hybrid housing organisations. The core elements appearing in Table 1 are used as the basic analytic tool combined with the concepts of principal ownership, shallow and entrenched, and organic and enacted, to dissect and compare Australian hybrid housing organisational types. They demonstrate the way in which Figure 1 can be extended by the additional use of these concepts. Thus, of those housing associations that have become to be part of the "traditional" welfare third sector, one type has organically moved into shallow hybridity whereas the other type has enacted "dependent divisions" (projects) in an entrepreneurial fashion to move into housing development activities. At this stage in its development it is probably a shallow enacted hybrid. The third type comprises enacted public sector associations that adopt market-based development approaches and are seen as occupying zone 2 in Figure 1. This group can be

contrasted with a few housing associations enacted by the private sector, with their tenant profiles tending to pay higher rent. The final group analysed consists of a mixed bag of independent and controlled associations enacted by nonprofits in order to undertake and "quarantine" more commercial activities.

Several tentative conclusions might be taken forward to the following concluding section. They concerned the relationship between hybridity and social enterprise and mainly surround the challenges of understanding identity and mission; change and stability; accountability and legitimacy.

7. DISCUSSION

Clearly, the notion of social enterprise is now arousing considerable interest in the policy/practice/academic community. Whether or not the term has internal coherence, practical advantages or longer term sustainability remain, as is generally agreed, uncertain at this stage. This section contains some brief reflections on identity and accountability; critical considerations for sustainability.

7.1. Organisational identity

The prime sector approach with its focus on formal independent organisations, and the previous case studies, provides initial confirmation for the hypothesis that many social enterprises are likely to be hybrids with their principal ownership in the public, private or third sectors as illustrated in Figure 1. In addition, there are numerous organisations that are "dependent" on principal owners in a specific distinct parent organisation. Sometimes a group of third sector organisations might join together in establishing a dependent hybrid. In this case, sector identity would be clear, although other boundary conflicts on the governing body might arise. Whatever the legal situation, these examples are best regarded as a single hybrid. This reflects the organisational reality and helps to declutter the debate.

Probably less frequently, a single organisation might set up a genuinely independent hybrid organisation which could be analysed in its own right, although on the face of it is difficult to see what the advantages would be to the parent organisation. More complex is a situation when a group of organisations from different sectors establish a dependent social enterprise hybrid. These enacted hybrids are especially vulnerable since such partnerships often involve a mixed governance arrangements (Cornforth and Spear 2010), and even mixed operational management. A study by Howard and Taylor (2010) of a Centre established to address local health inequalities, illustrates the complex governance arrangements between the public and third sector which led to widespread uncertainty about its identity and nature of its governance. It also illustrated the way in which the mixture of human resources from both the public sector and third sector and the lack of clarity in accountability led to "organizational paralysis" (p. 183), and eventual closure.

There are many areas in all three sectors which also are also included in the social enterprise galaxy, but which are not independent organisations. These include projects, programmes, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in its various guises. Projects, are typically set up by one or more organisations to achieve time limited objectives. Market-based projects and programmes, which are of particular relevance for social enterprise, share the typical characteristics of projects. As such, they have a temporary lifespan, and are usually part of the activities of the founding organisations/s and can be considered part of those organisations, and analysed as previously discussed in the housing examples. If they are enacted to provide a sustained systematic response, then they would probably require a governance system and become some form of dependent organisation, also discussed above. CSR is clearly taken seriously by many organisations in the private sector, particularly by those large respected companies for whom an ethical public reputation is often historically an essential part of their approach (for example Unilever and the Leverhulme Trust). It would nevertheless be difficult to argue that as a general rule the growth of CSR has changed the core identity of private sector organisations. Indeed the wider its acceptance as a normal part of business life, the more difficult it is

to claim CSR or its associated titles, as part of any unique social enterprise sector or approach. More intriguing, as Aiken's work, noted above, demonstrates, is the way in which the private sector can be instrumental, and remain the principal owners, in the establishment of a hybrid form of social enterprise.

8. TRANSPARENT ACCOUNTABILITY, LEGITIMACY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The growth of hybrid organisations with mixed forms of governance and operational systems, challenges clarity and transparency of accountability. Riding the three horses of market, government and third sector can provide the seductive prospect of a triple-win result. When the wind is blowing in the right direction it is certainly possible. Hybrids can flourish over many decades and become, to all intents and purposes, an apparently permanent organisation. Important example of these are those that attain the status of "national, or local treasure". To achieve this they require widespread public legitimacy. An interesting example is UK universities which have been able to draw on the support of successive governments of different political hues, are seen as essential to social mobility and personal success in large swathes of the voting population, and have increasingly moved into market type activities including the sale of services and the establishment of their own dependent private sector research companies. Others would be the "household name", the major, longer established charities.

But for those organisations who have not such a treasured status, conflicting sector logics are much nearer the surface. The triple-win, or even double-win, is a more hazardous venture. And this group represents the vast majority of hybrids. How do they ensure sustainability? In a study of faith-based organisations Rochester and Torry (2010) have demonstrated how strong adherence to a mission can ensure the continuation of legitimacy, and help to avoid a slide into becoming an agent of public policy.

A similar case can be made for nonprofits and social enterprises as potentially successful hybrids. The first precondition is the presence and primacy of a strong mission-driven principal owners/members including staff. In such circumstances the troika can be led in the desired direction. Support can be secured from all three sectors, but only one can set the longer term direction. The second precondition is transparency of accountability. This is true even for national treasures such as the BBC which has found itself embroiled in a series of disasters on this issue. For the average nonprofit, engagement in a short-term political branding exercise which obscures accountability, is a risky tactic. At a recent seminar presentation by the charismatic director of a fairly new social enterprise, the ability to be close to government, to passionately embrace private sector principles, and to combine this with charitable status and to be governed by a Board of Trustees, was all highly impressive. But how long can it be sustained?

Clarity of principal ownership is an essential precondition for transparent accountability and legitimacy. Stakeholders will need to know where their resources are going. For example there are numerous private companies collecting unwanted household goods who highlight the name of the charity to which they give some of their income. It is often far from clear that these businesses are not themselves charities. Greater transparency of ownership might cause donors to prefer to give to the "old-fashioned" charity whose mission, governance and accountability is clear. Failure to clarify and make transparent the nature of accountability in hybrids is one of the major risks for sustainability.

9. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The symbiotic relationship between social enterprises and the study of hybridity is evident in the need of the former to have better theories of hybridity to clarify its own dilemmas, particularly that of organisational identity; and the need of students of hybridity to be capable of responding to the challenge presented by the rise of complex organisations including social enterprises. In order to understand the relationship four issues/questions were posed: the role of formal organisations, the

existence of the third sector, the possibility of a strong sector coexisting with hybridity, the production of usable concepts.

In response, the paper argued that sectors may be considered as collections of organisations with distinctive principles, with each sector representing a different way of responding to social need. The paper consequently began with a discussion of formal organisations which lie at the heart of the social enterprise dialogue. The case was made that each sector has significant hybrid territories on its boundaries and that the third sector is therefore not unique in its hybridity. The "normal" ideal model of the sector is consequently one that also includes a degree of hybridity. The third sector itself was more broadly defined than is usually the case; with both its size and basis for legitimacy emanating from the ideal model. The key concept in this approach is that of prime sector accountability: organisations adhere primarily to the principles of one sector, but the tensions and possible crisis of organisational identity are exacerbated at times of severe problems. In order to answer the demands of usable theory, further concepts of shallow and entrenched hybridity; and organic and enacted hybridity were presented. These were illustrated in the works of other academics who have utilised some of this work.

Social enterprise and the study of hybridity are both old, and also new initiatives. Both can trace their roots back many years, but it is only in the last few decades that they have witnessed systematic development. Both share the fragility of newness; the need to demonstrate their own legitimacy and worth to the academic/policy/practitioner communities. However, the symbiotic relationship is best exemplified by the similarity of many of their core problems, for example the need to clarify: the issues of conflicting organisational identities; the role of sectors, and whether they exist; accountability in complex organisational structures; and the nature of organisational change in such structures.

The research approach upon which this paper has been built has the objective of producing usable theory. A start has been made to that end, but there are obviously significant parts of the social enterprise initiative that have not yet been covered. At this stage of the exploration of the relationship, the theory of hybridity appears to have achieved at least in part one the objectives of any usable theory, that is to ask relevant questions which uncover a further depth of organisational understanding. In that respect, there are implications for practitioners, as was noted in several of the reference case studies, for the management and planning of organisational change, and the consequences of unplanned sliding into deeper hybridity. For public policymakers, there is the usual challenge of translating high-level, often vague, ambitions into realistic implementation.

For academics, there is the challenge to continue to develop, or reject concepts of hybridity; and in both cases to provide better theories for understanding, developing or rejecting social enterprise. Will it to develop into a coherent and sustainable, major theoretical and practical contribution? Or will you be seen as a faddish gadfly?

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