A Research Career in Social Entrepreneurship

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Overview

- Who am I and what does the University of Northampton do?

- Why engage in a career in social enterprise research?
    - What is your driver?

- Links in to wider agendas globally on sustainability, both socially and environmentally.
    - Sustainable Development Goals; Caring Economy.

- Going beyond theory – the joy of being a 'pracademic'.

- Delivering impact through your research.

- Summary of my experience – the good bits and the challenging bits.

Who Am I?

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- Professor in Social Innovation @ University of Northampton.

- Director of the Institute for Social Innovation & Impact.

- Undertaken research into social innovation and enterprise across Europe, Asia, Latin America and the UK.

- Associate Editor for the Social Enterprise Journal & the Journal of Social Entrepreneurship.

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Why a Career in Social Entrepreneurship?

- Social entrepreneurship delivers (positive) *economic, social & environmental* impact.
  - A career in SE therefore allows you to make a difference.

- SE also *exists across many sectors*, including in the public, third and even private sectors.
  - Potentially broad and diverse focus.

- This is crucial for the future of modern economies if we are going to build a *sustainable, circular, caring economy*.

- Links into the *United Nation's Sustainable Development* agenda, as well as growing desire to deliver impact through research.
  - Sets a framework for your research impact.

SDGs Overview

- The Sustainable Development Goals provide 17 impact areas of focus to run to 2030.
  - They provide a *"…a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future"* (UN 2021).
  - Build upon the Millennium Development Goals that preceded them and Agenda 21 before that.
  - 17 SDGs, 169 targets, one holistic pathway to sustainability.

Social Entrepreneurship

- Need to **distinguish** between social entrepreneurship & social enterprise.
  - The latter is a specific **type of enterprise**, the former is an **activity/process** that can occur in any sector/organisation.

- Social entrepreneurship:
  - "…encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define and exploit opportunities in order to **enhance social wealth** by creating new ventures or managing existing organisations in an innovative manner" (Zahra et al., 2009:519).

- Social enterprise:
  - **Self-reliant, independent** organisations that deliver **social value** (Dart et al., 2010) using market-based solutions.

- Social intrapreneurship is also an interesting potential area of study:
  - Individuals **within organisations** who restructure previously separate institutional boundaries whilst maintaining legitimacy (Kistruck & Beamish, 2010).
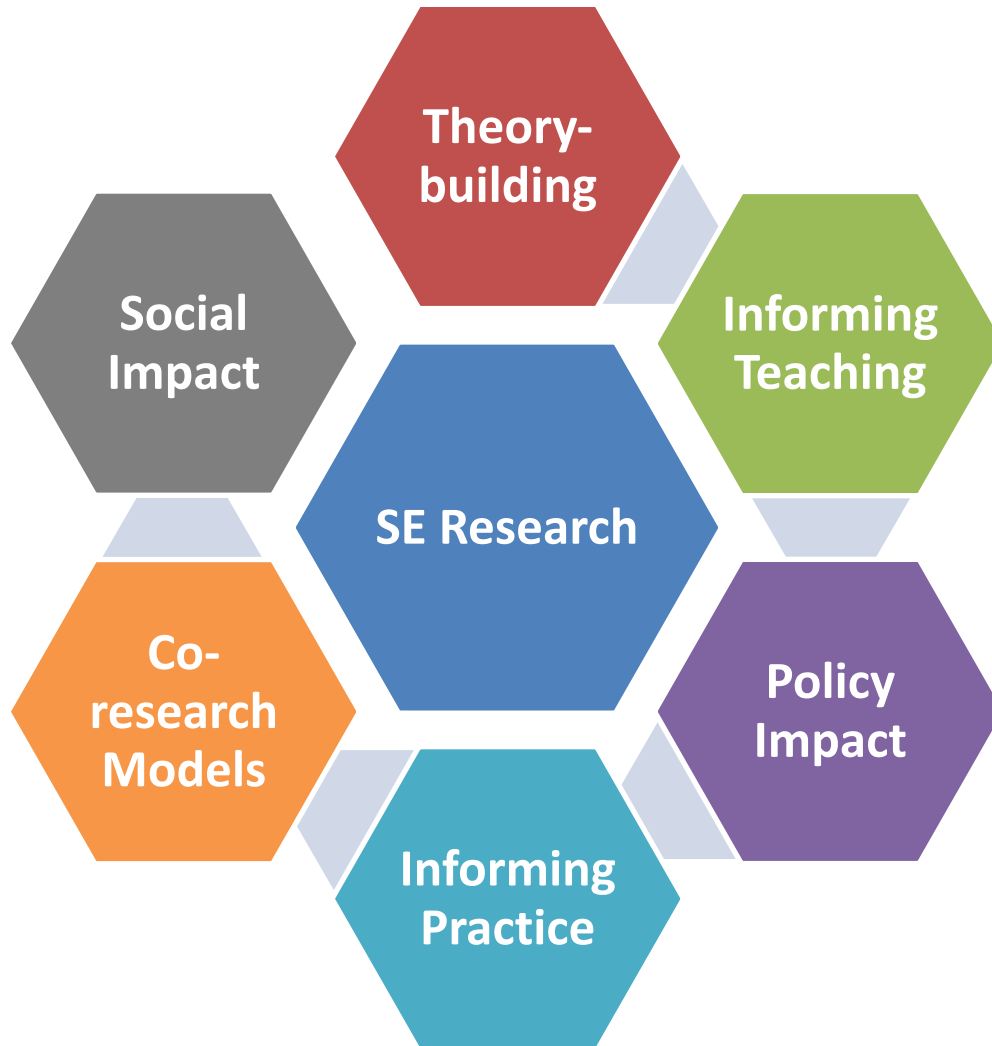
SE Research Strategies

- *Cultural relativism* offers theoretical variety & multiple original contributions.
  - Potentially reduced isomorphic tendencies in the research field.

- As researchers SE research provides a *rich area of enquiry*, within which we can develop innovative approaches to *research excellence*.

- *Quantitative gap* – Still a relative paucity of quantitative research. Large-scale statistical studies that can test/extend theory are essential.

- *Co-researchers* – A growing area of research, in which non-academic stakeholders are directly involved in the research.
  - Essential for understanding local, bottom-up innovations.

- *Diverse funding* opportunities:
  - SE research not just about government research grants. Funding is also accessible from NGOs, private/third sector organisations & supra-national funding streams.

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SE Research Impact Hexagon

social
business
creation

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- Theory-building
- Informing Teaching
- Social Impact
- SE Research
- Co-research Models
- Policy Impact
- Informing Practice

*Your research should achieve **ALL** of these six outcome pillars where possible*

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Going Beyond Theory

- Theoretical academic papers provide the ***cornerstone*** of intellectual attempts to understand the world around us.
  - This needs to continue, as theory in SE research is critical (Haugh, 2012).

- However, we need to acknowledge that the development of the SE sector also needs research that isn't just ***'blue-sky thinking'.***
  - There is a need for research that also delivers practical, policy & community impacts within SE ecosystems.

- As academics we ***must not forget*** this critical role within our work!

- Conducting research that has tangible impact, with practical and policy implications is a positive of working in SE.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Opportunities include:
  - Still a relative **nascent field** with lots of areas of inquiry.
  - Exciting area of activity at the **nexus of theory/policy/practice**.
  - Global reach and alignment with **key development issues** (SDGs; environment).
  - Clear alignment with **research impact** agendas.
  - Good **career progression** opportunities.
  - **Diverse fields** that SE can be applied to (health, education, ecology, development etc.).

- Challenges include:
  - Not always **truly embedded** in established fields.
  - **Interdisciplinary nature** of research can complicate publication strategies.
  - Perhaps not the **zeitgeist** in policy/funding fields it once was.

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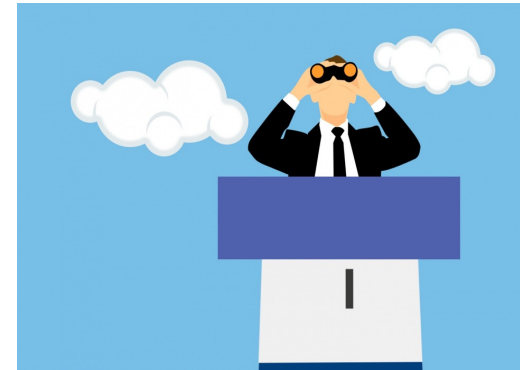
My Experience

- My roles over the last 14 years:
    - PhD Researcher: Feb 2009-Jun 2012
    - Researcher in Social Enterprise: Jun 2012-Aug 2013
    - Senior Researcher in Social Innovation: Sep 2013-Nov 2014.
    - Principal Researcher in Social Innovation: Dec 2014-Aug 2017.
    - Professor of Social Innovation: Sep 2017 to present.

- I have found SE to be an excellent field to work in:
    - Passionate people committed to driving change.
    - Feeling that research creates real-world impact.
    - Collegiate and supportive community of scholars.
    - Lot's of opportunities for networking outside of academia.
    - Globally relevant field.

- Most of all though, it has been fun! ☺

Publishing SE Research

Prominent Journals for Social Entrepreneurship Research				
Journal Title	SJR	H-Index	Average Citation Count*	Country of Origin
Entrepreneurship Theory & Practice	4.32	185	14.20	US
California Management Review	4.17	147	19.50	US
Public Management Review	2.16	87	7.76	UK
Entrepreneurship & Regional Development	1.77	106	8.09	UK
Journal of Business Ethics	2.59	229	10.04	Netherlands
Non-Profit & Voluntary Sector Quarterly	1.17	96	4.38	US
Journal of Social Policy	0.89	74	3.28	UK
Non-profit Management & Leadership	0.91	62	3.44	US
Journal of Social Entrepreneurship	0.81	35	4.33	UK
Voluntas	0.90	60	3.33	US
Sustainability	0.66	136	4.65	Switzerland
Community Development Journal	0.43	49	1.46	UK
Voluntary Sector Review	0.25	12	1.23	UK
International Journal of Social Economics	0.41	44	2.31	UK
Social Enterprise Journal	0.62	14	3.24	UK

Hazenberg (June 2023): Data from www.scimagojr.com * 4-year citation count.

Summary

- A career in SE research (or even social entrepreneurship itself) is ***rewarding, interesting and challenging***.

- As researchers we can use ***innovative methods*** & engage ***multiple-stakeholder*** types.
  - Need to ***drive impact***, but theory is still important.

- Still a relatively nascent field, that allows for diverse research focus and career progression.

- It is an ***exciting time*** in the development of the SE field of research!

Thank you for listening

Any questions?

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