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The contradictory faces of social enterprise: impression management as (social) entrepreneurial behaviour

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Abstract

This paper demonstrates that social enterprises can exhibit multiple faces to different stakeholders in order to access resources. The research involved a longitudinal case study of a group of Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers producing a theatrical play based upon their collective experiences. Participant observation enabled a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation. The approach to analysis was inductive, drawing out themes for further investigation. This paper focuses upon one particular theme: the role of organisational impression management in resource acquisition. Key findings are that the social enterprise is seen and presented in different ways by different internal stakeholders; social enterprises can use organisational impression management to demonstrate multiple faces to different resource holders in order to acquire resources; however the resource holders are not passive recipients of impression management. Each has a strategic interest in the social enterprise being presented in a particular way and the social enterprise needs to be seen to conform to these impressions.

Introduction

This paper demonstrates that social enterprises can exhibit multiple faces to different stakeholders in order to access resources. Although this 'impression management' is not unique to social enterprises, it is argued that their hybrid nature characterised by multiple goals and resource mixes make this behaviour an important (social) entrepreneurial strategy, particularly when setting up new ventures. Examining the role of impression management in resource acquisition sheds new light on the relationship between the social enterprise and its wider environment.

Social enterprise is a construct that has been conceptualised and defined in different ways cross-nationally (Kerlin 2006) and by different actors within the same country (Sepulveda 2009). While on both sides of the Atlantic there is a minority tradition that equates social enterprise with any innovative approach to tackling social needs (Defourny and Nyssens 2006), the definitional debate is beginning to settle around the common ground of social enterprise as an organisation that trades in the market place in order to fulfil social goals.

The sociological concept of 'impression management' (IM) was developed by Erving Goffman (1959) who uses the analogy of the theatre to demonstrate that individuals are actors who try to manage the impressions of the audience. IM has been defined as 'the process through which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them' (Gardner 1992: 34). IM has more recently been applied to organisations as well as individuals. Hence Organisational Impression Management (OIM) has been defined as:

> 'any action that is intentionally designed and carried out to influence an audience's perceptions of the organisation' (Bolino et al. 2008: 1095).

This paper is structured as follows. Following the introduction, the key concepts of social enterprise and OIM are outlined to help understand the role of impression management within social enterprises. Next a preliminary typology to differentiate between different types of social enterprise and to understand organisational behaviour over time is introduced. The second section introduces the case study organisation which is the focus of this research, Global Theatre Productions (GTP) – a social enterprise initiated by a group of Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers. The methods section outlines the case study approach and participant observation methods used in this research study, and describes the grounded theory approach to data analysis.

The penultimate section presents the key findings. Firstly contradictions between the collective 'group' face the social enterprise presents to the outside world and the more individualistic face of the organisation are identified. Second it is identified that different internal stakeholders see the same social enterprise in different ways. Third it is stressed that each internal stakeholder has a strategic interest in portraying the social enterprise as a different entity to external resource holders. In this context OIM is a form of entrepreneurial behaviour calculated to gather resources from the different audiences or resource holders. However these audiences are not static recipients of these strategic impressions. Instead they play a role in the construction of the impressions presented by the social enterprise. This has important consequences for those seeking to understand the multi-faceted nature

of social enterprises. The degree to which these findings can be generalised beyond the single case are discussed in the concluding section.

Social enterprise

The construct of social enterprise emerged in mainland Europe and in the United States (US) in the early 1990s (Defourny and Nyssens 2006), although some of the organisational forms associated with social enterprise have been in existence since the industrial revolution. However definitions attributed to the construct vary cross nationally. In the US, social enterprise is usually used to refer to market based approaches to address social issues (Kerlin 2006). Hence:

> *'Social enterprise describes any non-profit, for-profit or hybrid corporate form that utilises market-based strategies to advance a social mission.'* (Kickul et al. 2009).

In mainland Europe social enterprise is also usually equated with organisations trading for a social purpose. However most commentators agree that social enterprises are part of the third sector, also including voluntary and community organisations (nonprofits) (Di Domenico et al. 2009). Most 'for-profit' bodies would be excluded by European commentators.

The different meanings attributed to the term social enterprise have been attributed to the different national contexts within which they operate. Kerlin (2009) builds on social origins theory (Salamon 2000) to argue that the prevalence and organisational type of social enterprise is dependent on the relative strengths of a country's state, market, civil society and the degree of dependence on international aid. This is perhaps a necessary oversimplification. However Kerlin ignores a central feature of Esping Anderson's analysis of welfare regimes upon which social origins theory is based: the balance of power between different social classes (Esping-Andersen 1990). Examining the United Kingdom (UK) in isolation, Amin et al. (2002) find that different cities have different levels of social enterprise activity dependent in part upon the relative power of the middle and working classes. Hence in the UK context at least, the prevalence and type of social enterprise may vary as much within a country as cross nationally.

Within the UK the government provides a broad definition of social enterprise as confined to the Third Sector and:

> *'…a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are primarily reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profits for shareholders and owners'* (OTS 2006: 10).

Included within this broad definition is a diverse range of organisations including co-operatives, the trading arms of voluntary organisations, social businesses and community owned village shops. Peattie and Morley (2008) note that a wide range of commentators make claims about the characteristics of social enterprise based on a limited subset of organisational forms. However the only common characteristics of these different forms are the primacy of social purpose coupled with a reliance on trading to achieve income (Peattie and Morley 2008). Teasdale (2009) identified four

broad traditions from which these commentators derive: non-profit; community enterprise; social business; and community business (See Table 1).

Table 1: Traditions of social enterprise

Tradition	Characteristics of social enterprises	Exemplar	Trade Body
Non-profit enterprise	Social enterprise as an activity – trading for a social purpose	Voluntary organisation delivering public services	NCVO
Community enterprise	Social enterprise as bottom up response to local need	Local Exchange Trading Systems	Community Development Foundation
Social business	Organisations trading wholly in the market to achieve social purpose	The Big Issue	Social Enterprise Coalition
Community business	Social enterprise as democratic and collectively owned organisations that distribute surpluses to their members or reinvest them in the business	Worker co-operative	Co-operatives UK

These four traditions can be distinguished by their positioning relative to two primary dimensions, the social – economic; and individualistic – collective (Teasdale 2009). Bringing these two dimensions together gives rise to a grid (See Figure One) which can be used as a conceptual tool to distinguish between types of social enterprise and understand change over time (Pharoah, Scott and Fisher 2004).

Figure 1: Forms of social enterprise: a preliminary typology
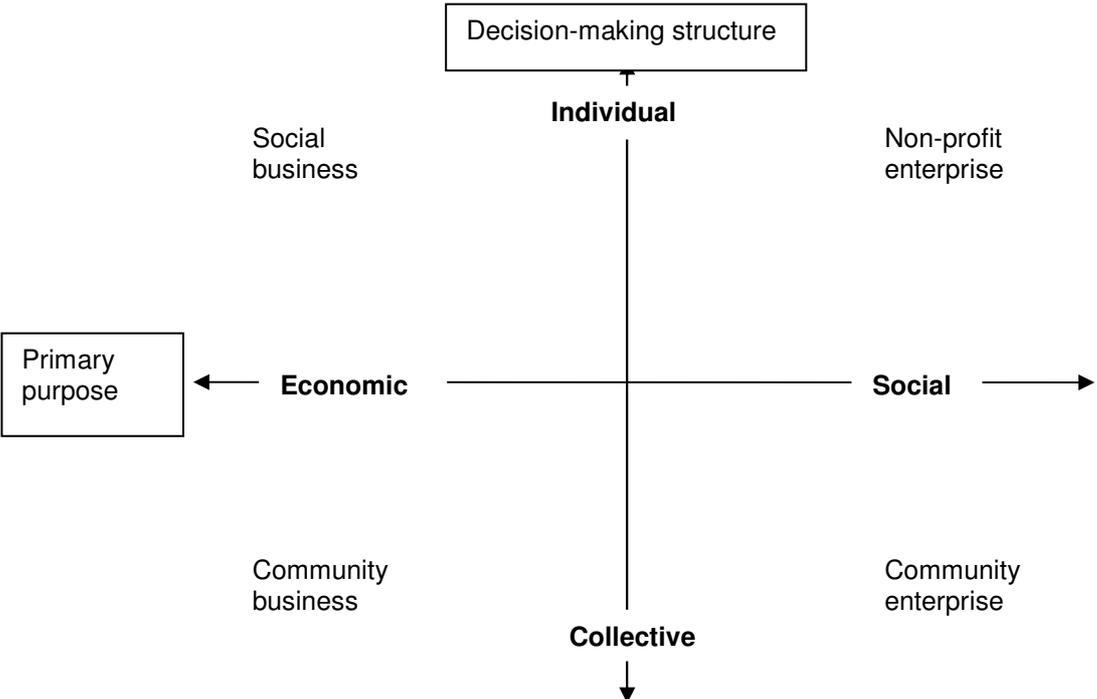
Impression management

The sociological concept of IM was developed by Erving Goffman who used the existential metaphor of the theatre to demonstrate how the interaction processes between actor and audience enabled the actor to present an agreed impression of him / herself. As the process of interaction varies over time and across different audiences, the impression presented adjusts correspondingly (Goffman 1959). By ensuring 'audience segregation' the actor is able to present different faces to different audiences, knowing they will not comprise the same individuals that he / she presents to in the future (Goffman 1956). The impressions presented to the audience represent the 'front stage' persona of the actor. Behind this is a backstage persona where the actor develops his/her front stage impressions, safe in the knowledge that the audience can not intrude (Goffman, 1959).

IM has been further developed within different academic disciplines, particularly sociology and psychology (Leary and Kowalski 1990). From a sociological standpoint Tseelon (1992) argues that IM is learned intuitively and involves semi-conscious behaviour rather than calculated strategies. Xin (2004) finds that the propensity to impression manage may vary by ethnic group. It is also widely accepted that women are less likely to impression manage than men (Guadagno and Cialdini 2007).

Organisational researchers took up the concept in the 1980s, predominantly as a means of understanding citizen behaviour in the workplace (Bolino 1999). Bozeman and Kacmar (1997) further develop the notion of consciousness, noting that the actor may process a series of events automatically, using 'scripts' he or she has relied upon previously in similar situations. If the 'script' backfires then the actor is likely to revert to an alternative script based on his / her conscious / unconscious understanding of the audience's perceptions. Thus an actor may adapt or develop a script over time based upon perception of how the audience is receiving the script. The actor's perception may derive from verbal or non verbal cues from the audience. Hence the role of the audience is not necessarily passive (Bozeman and Kacmar 1997).

More recently organisational impression management (OIM) research has attempted to understand strategies pursued by internal stakeholders to manage the impression of organisations formed by external stakeholders (Bolino et al. 2008). OIM is usually seen as a form of rational choice behaviour. Thus conscious and calculated strategies are designed to manage audiences' impressions in order to maximise utility. For example, in a widely used taxonomy, Mohamed et al. (1999) classify OIM strategies as assertive or defensive and direct or indirect.

A possible consequence of perceiving OIM as rational choice behaviour is the neglected aspect within the OIM literature of the role of the audience. In a wide ranging review of the OIM literature, Bolino et al. (2008) identified just three studies that have investigated the role of the audience. The most widely cited study, by Ginzel et al. (1992) identifies OIM as an iterative process of negotiation between the actor (top management) and the organisational audiences(s). The authors reduce this process to a series of steps. Firstly the actor develops a script in response to an event that may damage organisational legitimacy. In turn the audience reacts to this account. Finally a process of negotiation between actor and audience aims to resolve conflict over this account (Ginzel et al. 1992). While the authors note that the relative power of the different audiences may impact upon the OIM process, they do not pursue this further. Bansal and Kistruck (2006) argue that the greater the power

conveyed by the audience, the more likely that the actor will attempt to convey a script that conforms to their perception of what the audience desires. However the role of power differentials between organisational actor and audience has not been fully developed in OIM research.

Bolino et al. (2008) note that a complicating factor in OIM research is that there are a variety of actors and audiences. Thus CEOs, public relations personnel and a variety of other staff may all be engaging in Impression Management at the same time and using different strategies all aimed at different audiences. Hence it becomes almost impossible for the observer to discover an objective reality beyond the different images or impressions conveyed (Alvesson 1990; Goffman 1959). Thus the field of OIM research raises three important questions:

- To what degree is impression management a conscious (or unconscious) strategy?
- What is the role of the audience in the impression management process?
- Can the 'real' organisation be identified?

The role of impression management in social enterprise

Although no studies have focused on impression management within social enterprises, it is noticeable that there are a number of studies looking at 'nonprofits'. For example, in one of the earliest studies of OIM, Elsbach and Sutton (1992) examine how illegal actions by new social movement organisations mark the first steps towards acquiring organisational legitimacy. A range of OIM tactics is later used to draw attention away from the illegal actions, or to deny responsibility. O'Keefe and Conway (2008) surprisingly found that nonprofit aid agencies did not use defensive OIM to respond to criticism of the relief effort following the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, and suggested that nonprofits may act differently to for profit organisations as they have different stakeholders. Additionally there are studies looking at the role of OIM in responding to criticism of an organisation's environmental policy (Bansal and Kistruck 2006). Although not explicitly stated, the focus of these studies would suggest that where an organisation faces multiple social economic and environmental goals, or relies on a wide range of stakeholders, OIM can be a particularly important tactic.

According to resource dependency theory, organisations are dependent on the wider structural environment for resources. However organisations will attempt to manage these constraints by shaping the wider environment (Pfeffer and Salancik 2003). It is widely accepted that social enterprises are hybrid organisations operating between the more clearly defined non-profit, market and state sectors (Dart 2004; Di Domenico, Tracey and Haugh 2009; Kickul, Gundry and Griffiths 2009; Peredo and Mclean 2006). While this hybrid nature presents definitional problems, it provides opportunities for social enterprises to draw upon the resources of the multiple stakeholders to achieve their social, economic and environmental goals (Campi et al. 2006). Thus although most OIM research has focused on IM as a response to an event threatening organisational legitimacy, the study of social enterprises within their wider structural environment is likely to prove a fruitful arena for understanding the role of OIM in resource acquisition from multiple stakeholders.

Institutional theory suggests that organisations wishing to gain resources can achieve legitimacy by positioning themselves as conforming to wider social beliefs (Zott and Huy 2007), and more specifically by constructing a narrative (or impression) that meets the 'expectations, interests, and

agendas of potential stakeholders' (Lounsbury and Glynn 2001: 552; Golant and Sillince 2007). Dart (2004) persuasively argues that the construct of social enterprise has achieved moral legitimacy as a consequence of the values of the market permeating into civil society. Hence being perceived as a social enterprise can demonstrate organisational legitimacy. However there is considerable ambiguity around the meaning of, and the social benefits provided by, social enterprise. It is accepted by OIM researchers that an organisation has greater scope to manage the audiences' impressions in conditions of ambiguity as stakeholders are unable to place a value on the product offered (Bansal and Kistruck 2006). Thus a successful entrepreneur is able to utilise impression management to negotiate ambiguity and access start up funding (Zott and Huy 2007).

Following on from the above, OIM is likely to be particularly important in the uncertain structural environment inhabited by social enterprises, where the value of the product offered cannot be defined solely in financial terms. The role of the social entrepreneur in developing an embryonic social enterprise would seem the ideal place to shed light on the three important questions identified in the previous section.

Introducing Global Theatre Productions

This paper draws upon data from a study investigating the impact of different forms of social enterprise upon exclusion (Teasdale 2006; Teasdale 2009). As part of this wider research four case studies were selected, each initially conceptualised as approximating to one of the ideal types of social enterprise identified in Figure One. This paper draws upon data from the first case; a community enterprise (See Table 2) named Global Theatre Productions (GTP). An ironic coincidence is that the embryonic social enterprise is a theatre company and the social entrepreneur an actor.

Table 2: Selection of case study organisation and approximation to ideal type

| Ideal Type | Case Study Organisation | Social - Economic | | Individual - Collective | | |
		Primary purpose	Main income source	Decision making process	Degree of user involvement	Initiative created by
Community enterprise	Global Theatre Productions	Social – to involve Kurdish refugees in producing a play	Voluntary effort	Collective	High	Kurdish refugees facilitated by community development worker

Global Theatre Productions

There was a strong element of serendipity in my gaining access to GTP. I was introduced to the co-ordinator (Ahmed) by a friend, Laura, who had become involved with a group of refugees and asylum seekers wanting to produce a play based upon their collective experiences. Over time we built up a close relationship originally based on mutual dependency - I needed him to help me research a case study and he needed me to help complete funding applications and monitoring reports in order that GTP could develop into a social enterprise able to pay himself and other key staff. When we first met Ahmed told me he had been employed as a theatre director in Kirkuk, a Kurdish city in Northern Iraq. He explained he had been imprisoned and tortured for criticising the regime of Sadaam Hussein and his family had paid for him to escape to England.

Although he was obviously familiar with acting, my own observations were that Ahmed's skills were more suited to motivating the group and outsiders to help him. He approximated to the notion of the social bricoleur, gathering together whatever resources came to hand in order to achieve his social goals (Kickul et al. 2009; Mair and Marti 2009).

The other key figures within GTP were Jasmine, Laura and Farsal. Jasmine was a choreographer who had been hired by Ahmed to co-ordinate the dance scenes. Laura was a community development worker. Farsal had known Ahmed in Kirkuk, and lived in a nearby town where he worked informally as a hairdresser. The rest of the group consisted of eight young Kurdish refugees and one English born girl.

External environment

I identified four external resource holders with an important role in the development of the group. All were umbrella groups funded by the state to provide support and advice to social enterprises and other third sector organisations. Together they provided assistance to GTP through the provision of grant aid, start up funding, business advice and physical space.

A strong early influence on the group was Jane from an organisation called 'Local Arts'. Jane told me she had helped initiate the group as part of her role in refugee development work. Local Arts provided GTP with space for rehearsals and limited funding to help with travel expenses for members. Also influential in the initial stages were 'Community Group Network'. They gave Ahmed advice on setting up a formal organisation in order to attract future funds, and provided a small amount of start-up funding. Another resource holder was 'Refugee Support Body'. They helped Ahmed on a personal level (for example with legal matters relating to his claim for asylum) and also provided small amounts of funding to GTP. Finally, 'National Arts' provided GTP with a substantial grant to help them develop as an organisation with the aim of becoming financially sustainable over time (through ticket sales). National Arts had little day to day contact with GTP. However the grant they provided had numerous conditions attached which GTP had to demonstrate they had adhered to through regular monitoring reports.

Conceptualizing Global Theatre Productions

When I first met Ahmed, he showed me a professional looking document outlining the constitution and aims of GTP. This constitution stated that GTP was a non-profit distributing body, organised on a collective basis with each member having a single vote on managerial decisions.   Ahmed told me that GTP was a collection of refugees and asylum seekers, co-ordinated by himself, whose aim was to produce a play based on their common experiences. The group's constitution along with preliminary conversations with Ahmed and Laura suggested a collective body rather than one that was highly individualised.

GTP initially relied on donations of rehearsal space from Local Arts, and the voluntary input of their members. At first no money was involved. However Ahmed told me he wanted to access start up grants to help buy equipment and pay wages to key staff, and that over time they aimed to derive income through selling tickets to their productions. Thus I initially conceptualised GTP as a community enterprise in the social / collective quadrant of the typology, as represented by Figure 2 and Table 2.

Figure 2: My initial conceptualization of GTP
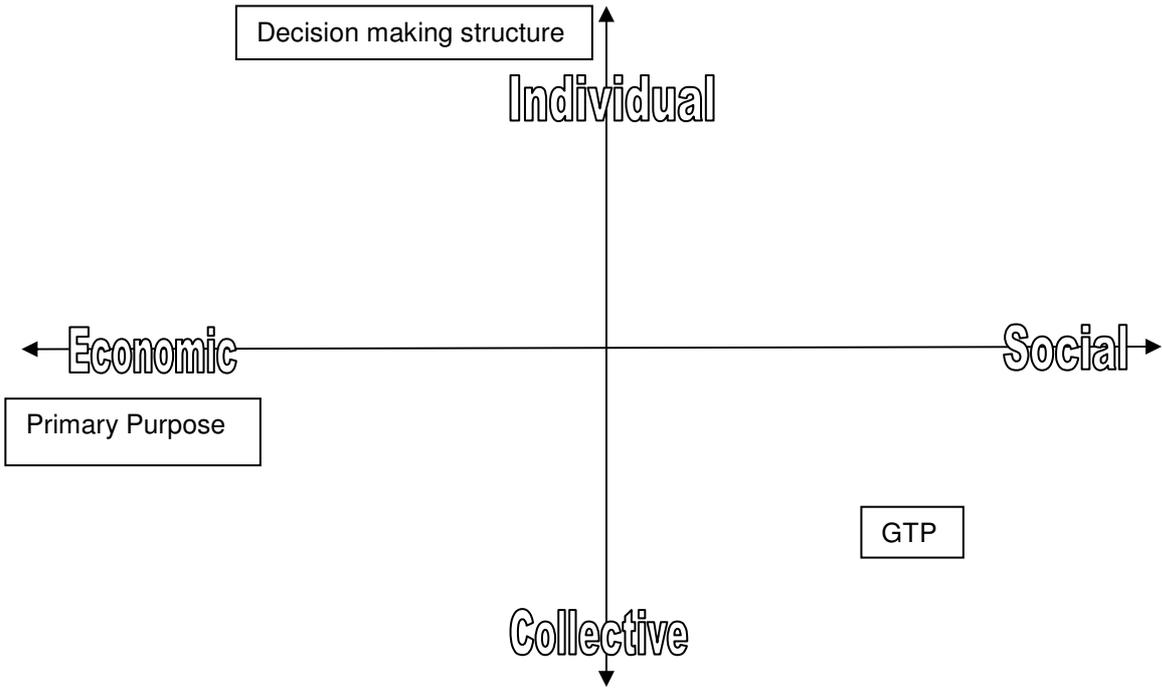
Methods

The case study was exploratory and aimed to develop generalizations to be tested in subsequent cases (See Yin 2003). This paper examines the development of one of these themes in particular: the role of OIM in resource acquisition. This section outlines the methods used in the research process, and the approach taken to analysing data.

Data collection

The case study aimed to generate understanding of the dilemmas and tensions faced by actors managing embryonic social enterprises. In short my aim was to try and understand the world in which social enterprises operated from the viewpoint(s) of those involved. As noted earlier in this paper, it is difficult for a member of the audience to discover the backstage persona of the actor. Gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation necessitated joining the backstage cast. I felt that participant observation would provide an insight into these dilemmas and tensions, from a position approximating as closely as possible to the subjects of my study in their natural backstage environment.

Over a six month period I followed the organisational development of GTP. I attended ten rehearsals and met separately with Ahmed on a weekly basis. I also attended meetings between Ahmed and external resource holders. During this time my role moved away from researcher as observer and towards researcher as participant. On six occasions I went out with group members as they socialised after rehearsals or productions. My data came from one to one interviews with group members (initially unstructured, and later semi-structured); observation of, and participation in, group discussions; and observations. In my role within GTP I also had access to data relating to income and expenditure that would not have been obtained if I had taken a less participatory stance. The performance of the first play marked a natural end to my involvement with GTP on a formal level. However I continued to follow the progress of GTP for 12 months after the initial fieldwork was completed. During this period I conducted several informal interviews with group members and external resource holders to discuss and refine my findings. Interviews were not recorded due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. For similar reasons I did not take field notes while acting as participant / observer. Instead I wrote up my notes each day after leaving the field.

Approach to analysis and reporting

I adopted a grounded theory approach to analysis. This involved continually moving backwards and forwards between data and emerging propositions (Bryman 1989; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Hence data collection and analysis were linked through an iterative process. This enabled me to develop and test hypotheses as they emerged from my observations. Speaking to individual group members gave me a picture of how they perceived GTP (or how they wanted me to see them perceiving the group). I also spoke to external resource holders to gather their perspectives on GTP (or the impressions they wanted to convey) in order to triangulate my key observations. This opened up alternative interpretations to pursue. Once I had refined my analysis following a process of negotiation with group members, I developed assertions about the case.

As Becker (1958) notes, observational research generates vast amounts of data which is difficult to analyse systematically, and leads to well documented problems in convincing other researchers of validity. It is impossible to present in one paper all the data that led me to my conclusions. Instead, following on from Becker (1958), I have chosen to present the 'natural history' of my conclusions. Thus the following section begins with a description of the initial puzzle, and presents the evidence at

each critical stage of the conceptualization of the problem. The reader is then able to follow the process of analysis and to assess the adequacy of proof in order to evaluate my conclusions.

Findings

This section outlines the development stages of the typology with reference to a particular puzzle identified in the case study of GTP: the contradictions between the face the group presented to the outside world and its internal working practices. In the process it is demonstrated that there were a diverse range of motivations and values within the social enterprise. Ahmed was able to use this multi-faceted nature of the group to demonstrate different faces to different external stakeholders in order to access resources.

The puzzle

Over time, I came to realise that GTP's behaviour bore little or no relation to the constitution identified in section 3.3. It became apparent that Ahmed made all the decisions on behalf of the organisation, with limited consultation involved. For example, meetings to discuss organisational matters involved only Ahmed and one or more of Laura, Jasmine and myself.

From my conversations with Ahmed I deduced that he could not have put together the constitution himself as his command of English was still quite poor and he did not understand many of the technical terms. He later told me that he had been helped by Community Group Network. It appeared to me that Community Group Network had misunderstood the aims of the group and imposed an inappropriate organisational structure upon GTP.

The puzzle began to piece together at the first group rehearsal I attended. Whereas I had initially portrayed Ahmed as naive, my interpretations soon shifted. I watched the young Kurds immediately stop playing around as Ahmed entered the room. I then observed Ahmed leading a traditional Kurdish song as the group warmed up. He appeared to have a natural authority within the group. However, I also observed the group engage in debate over how to develop the storyline of the play.

I found it simplest to conceptualise GTP as consisting of both a less formal group producing a play, and a more formal organisation developed to attract resources to facilitate this. Placing GTP as a fixed point on the typology proved impossible. Whereas the group was organised on a more collective basis with democratic input from members around the development of the play, the organisation operated on more hierarchical lines. Ahmed as leader of the organisation had the final say in all decisions. A second tier including Jasmine, Laura (and later myself) was able to influence these decisions to some extent. The young Kurdish refugees were not involved in organisational aspects.

Similarly while the group was more socially orientated –aiming to involve the young refuges in theatre production, the organisation aimed to generate sufficient resources to pay wages to Ahmed and Jasmine. Thus I perceived the organisation represented by Point A on Figure 3 as reflecting a more hierarchical non-profit enterprise. This contrasts with my impression of the wider group as a community enterprise, represented by Point B.

Figure 3: Contradictions between the organisational and group faces of GTP
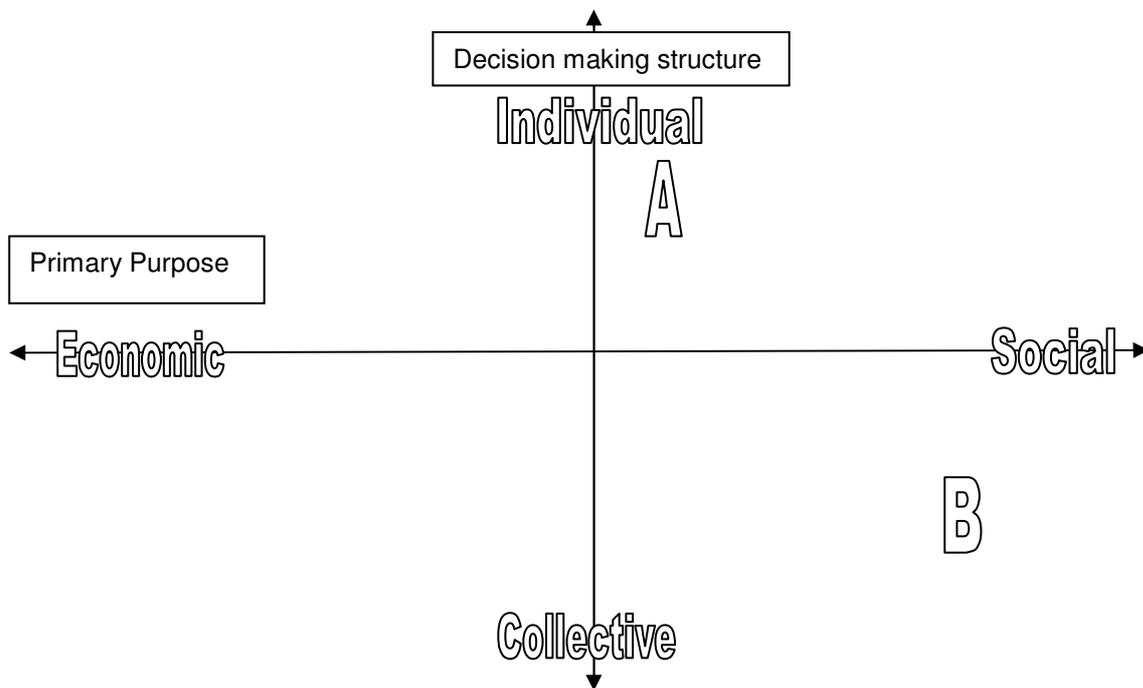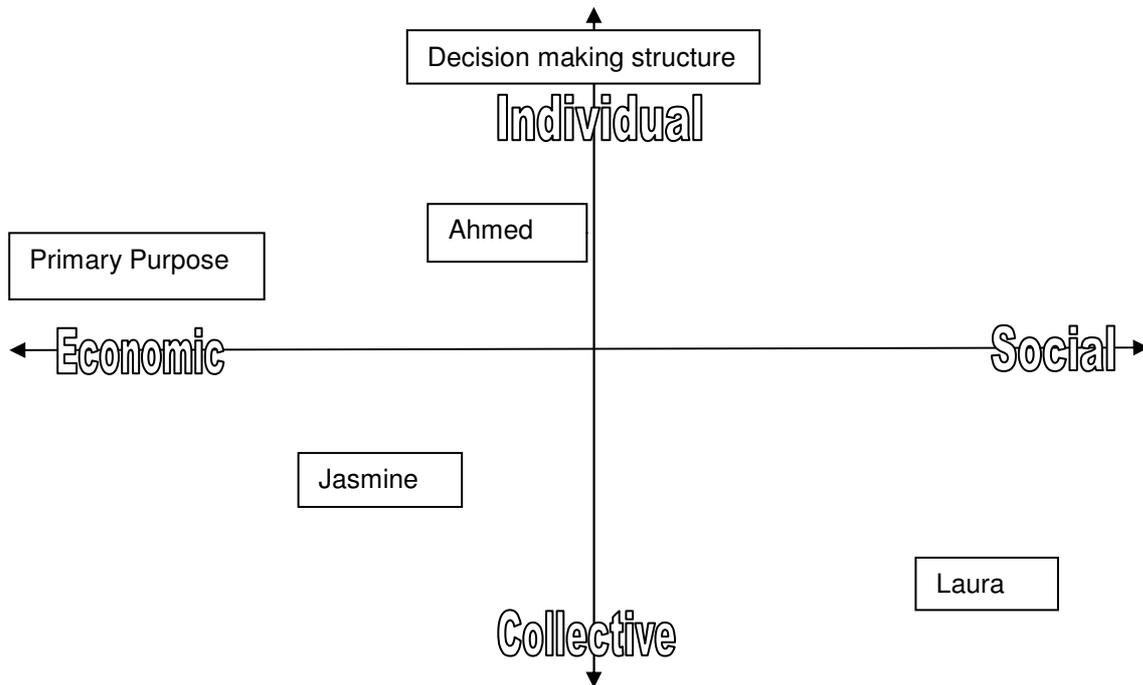

The multi-faceted social enterprise

Social enterprises may have a greater divergence of perspectives within the organisation because of greater democratic governance. Moreover motivations for participating in the SE are diverse. This gives rise to the multi-faceted social enterprise.

When I attempted to triangulate my emerging findings by discussing them with the group members a new picture began to emerge. It became apparent that GTP was portrayed differently by three of its internal stakeholders: Ahmed, Laura and Jasmine.   Discussions with Jasmine highlighted her impression of GTP as a business that provided her with employment. She presented herself as involved in a decision-making capacity; hence her impression suggested a collective and economically focused organisation. Conversely, Laura told me she saw GTP as a collective and socially orientated group. Laura conveyed the impression of a collective decision-making process and argued that the group's primary purpose was to benefit the younger refugees and asylum seekers.   Ahmed's perspective was less fixed. He was the only person who made a distinction between the group and the organisation. My observations suggest that he saw the organisation as his own personal creation over which he had sole control. He told me that he also desired a more economic orientation as he wanted to make enough money to pay himself and other key staff for their work. Thus GTP did not have a single mission. As noted by Varman and Chakrabarti (2004), opportunities for democratic governance give rise to variety of perspectives and motivations for participation. The boundaries reflected by these three perspectives suggest that most observers would see GTP as occupying a position within these three points at this point in time (See Figure 4).

Figure 4: The multi-faceted nature of GTP

The role of organisational impression management in resource acquisition

Social enterprises are able to utilise their multi-faceted nature to present different aspects to different stakeholders in order to access resources.

At the meetings with external resource holders that I attended with Ahmed, I was struck by how he portrayed a different impression of himself and GTP depending on who he was talking to. For example, when we met with a representative from Local Arts, Ahmed portrayed himself as a naïve refugee playing on the notion of exclusion to attract sympathy and hence free rehearsal space and travel expenses for GTP. In contrast, at meetings with Refugee Support Body that I attended, Ahmed wore a suit and portrayed a more professional side to GTP, presenting them as a theatre company able to train young refugees and give them something useful to do. Thus the shape of the group presented by Ahmed altered to fit each differing situation the organisation might find itself in, or each resource holder to whom it was being presented.

As I became more deeply embedded within GTP, I came to realise that the different faces of GTP presented by Ahmed to external resource holders were not solely motivated by a desire to conform to the wider structural environment, but also a form of OIM calculated to gain resources. At this stage I felt that Ahmed was an actor manipulating the different audiences in order to lead them to his desired conclusions. Thus in order to maximise resource acquisition at the start up stage, social enterprises may need to portray themselves as different entities to different resource holders. This multi-faceted nature helps them gather multiple resources within a complex arena populated by multiple resource holders.

The strategic interests of the audiences

Each resource holder has a strategic interest in the social enterprise being seen to behave in a certain way.

The penultimate stage of my research involved attempting to triangulate my findings with the external resource holders. Interviewing Jane at Local Arts I began to understand the benefits to her personally from being seen to help with the development of GTP. Much as I had initially seen (and sympathised with) GTP as collective response to social exclusion, Jane told me about the benefits to herself and Local Arts of being associated with GTP. As head of refugee involvement Jane wanted to demonstrate to her managers that she had been able to facilitate the development of a local refugee community group. She had a strategic interest in presenting the group as a collective entity needing assistance in becoming more financially sustainable.

I then interviewed somebody from Community Group Network who explained that their role was to provide small funds and advice to community groups. Like Jane they had a strategic interest in the group being seen as a collective response to social exclusion. They were also particularly keen to boost the diversity of their membership. In particular CGN had an interest in developing the group as a community enterprise in order to build bridges between refugee groups and host communities.

The representative from Refugee Support Network that I interviewed had a different strategic interest. He knew Ahmed personally and was keen to see GTP develop professionally in order that it might provide Ahmed with paid employment. He also had a strategic interest in GTP developing to provide opportunities for other refugees to occupy their time.

Finally the representative of National Arts that I interviewed was more open about her role in funding the group. She explained that they had a pot of money ring fenced to help refugee groups develop financially sustainable businesses. She was keen to see GTP develop along this route.

Together these four resource holders formed the different audiences and can be conceptualised as making up the wider environment within which GTP was situated. Each resource holder had a strategic interest in GTP presenting itself in a certain way. Figure 5 characterises the positions of the resource holders on the typology. GTP existed within the boundary suggested by these different expectations, and needed to demonstrate that the organisation conformed to the expectations of these different resource holders. Taking into these structural constraints of the wider environment, the multi-faceted nature of GTP can be explained. GTP was constrained by the demands of resource holders. However the process of OIM gave GTP room to manoeuvre within these structural constraints.

Figure 5: The wider environment inhabited by GTP
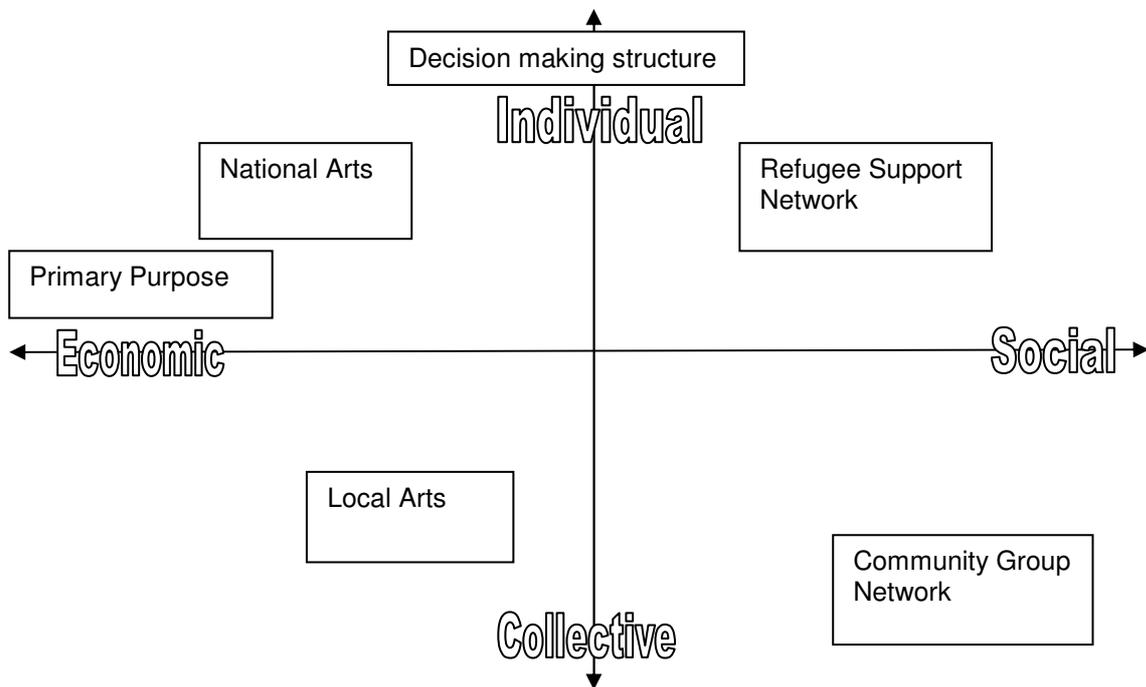
Organisational impression management revisited

I interviewed Ahmed more formally in order to discuss my findings. I felt he finally invited me 'backstage' as he laughed at my initial naivety. Of course he represented GTP in different ways to different resource holders he explained. He was trying to gain resources to help the group develop and would do whatever necessary to achieve this. We discussed the example of an early rehearsal I had attended at the headquarters of Local Arts in order that I might understand the processes of OIM.

I asked Ahmed whether he employed deliberate strategies. He explained that he spoke to different people to find out as much as he could about the resource holders before meeting them. Ahmed would attend meetings with a broad idea as to how to represent GTP but would adapt this over the course of the meeting based on his perceptions of what the resource holders expected of him.

Lending support to Bozeman and Kacmar (1997), an iterative process of interaction between audiences and actor led Ahmed to an implicit understanding of the audiences' expectations. As outlined by Baron and Markman (2003) Ahmed's social perception (of what the resource holder wanted) and social adaptation (his ability to adjust to the changing nature of the situation) were key to gaining resources through OIM.

The process of OIM also included what Zott and Huy (2007) describe as symbolic action in order to gain resources. That is the use of symbols to convey meanings beyond their intrinsic value. For example, Ahmed had shown me the constitution document and invited me to attend rehearsals in order to demonstrate that GTP was a formal organisation relying on the democratic participation of members. On reflection I also felt that Ahmed also used other group members as a form of symbolic management. I recalled that he would take me with him to meetings with those resource holders where he wanted to demonstrate the professional nature of GTP, particularly National Arts. When he

attended meetings with Jane at Local Arts he would take one or more of the young Kurds. When he visited Community Group Network he took Laura (a community development worker). He often took Jasmine with him when he visited Refugee Support Network, presumably in order to demonstrate the professional nature of GTP and its ability to train and include young refugees.

Ahmed was not deceiving the resource holders. Instead he accentuated those aspects of the organisation or group that he felt the audience would be sympathetic to, and omitted to mention those aspects he felt would not be favourably viewed. Ahmed recognised the multi-faceted nature of GTP and made use of it to portray different faces to different audiences. Thus Ahmed should be seen as a social entrepreneur maximising the internal resources available to him in order to acquire external financial resources from different audiences. The impression management processes loosely approximated to a series of steps in order to gather resources (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: The processes of impression management in resource acquisition

Re-conceptualizing Global Theatre Productions

Returning to the typology, I realised that I was just one of a number of external stakeholders with a strategic interest in GTP. I concluded that Ahmed had attempted to convey an impression of GTP that he felt would attract my sympathy and support. His perception of what I (as audience) had expected had probably been facilitated by preliminary conversations with Laura.

My conceptualization of GTP had to be adjusted again to incorporate the impression management I (and other stakeholders) had been subjected to. Thus each of the positions and trajectories incorporated into the earlier figures represented only the impressions presented to me by the different group members. It was not clear the extent to which they were managing my impressions or

presenting what they saw as the 'real' GTP. While I felt that there was a backstage GTP behind all the different impressions presented, this was different from the front stage group and from those aspects of the organisation presented to the different audiences. It changed constantly over time. It was seen and portrayed in different ways by different (internal and external) stakeholders. All I had been able to do was to collect a range of impressions presented to me.

Nonetheless, I felt this research provided a greater insight into GTP than other methods would have permitted. A key methodological issue arising from my research was that the actors I was studying became more trusting over time. This opened up new perspectives to me as they invited me backstage and became more open about their experiences. In the process I moved from a position in the audience to one approximating more closely to one of the cast. I realised that without being embedded into the group to a certain degree, I would just have been left grasping whichever impression Ahmed chose to present to me.

For the researcher, this has important implications. To gain an understanding of the backstage organisation, it is necessary to examine it from the perspective of various stakeholders. If this is not possible, it is important to be aware that the impression obtained may have a strategic underpinning, and is only one of many. Although social enterprises are able to use OIM to appear as different entities to different audiences, this typology is still useful as a means of understanding organisational behaviour over time and the role of different internal and external stakeholders (as demonstrated by this paper).

Discussion and conclusions

This paper has demonstrated that social enterprises can exhibit a diverse range of perspectives. In turn this offers opportunities for them to exhibit multiple faces to different stakeholders in order to access resources. Thus OIM can be used as a form of entrepreneurial behaviour by social enterprises.

The paper has also shed light on three important questions raised by the concept of OIM. First, in the case of GTP, OIM was a form of conscious behaviour. However while the aim to manage impressions formed by the audience was conscious, any 'strategies' employed were unconscious. That is the intuitive 'tactics' of impression management varied by audience and structural context.

Second, it is important to stress that the role of the audience was not passive. Ahmed as actor entered the 'game' with existing impressions of the other party (and hence how to perform). An iterative process of interaction between audiences and actor led Ahmed to an implicit understanding of the audiences' expectations. In turn, Ahmed used his social skills and symbolic management to present impressions of GTP as an organisation able to meet these expectations. Thus OIM can also be used to create space for resistance (Brown and Coupland 2005), in this case to resist pressure from the wider environment to conform to a singular model of social enterprise.

The democratic governance structure within the group (if not the organisation) provided space for a diverse range of perspectives and impressions. Each internal stakeholder may perceive the social enterprise as a different entity. However it is also likely that each was attempting to manage my

impressions, of them as an individual, and also of the organisation. This complexity makes it difficult to capture a unified organisational identity.

This case examined the social enterprise within its wider social structure. The different audiences making up the structure were more powerful than GTP. Existing organisational theories posit a complex relationship between organisational actors and their wider environment. It is likely that the relationship between structure and agency is context dependent. It may be that as the social enterprise becomes more powerful in relation to the external stakeholders and derives more income through trading, the relative dependency on external stakeholders is reduced. Perhaps at this stage the actor becomes more of an agent able to shape this wider environment?

Generalising from the case

This paper has focused in depth upon the role of OIM in resource acquisition by one social enterprise. By drawing upon multiple sources of evidence to disclose bias and taking an iterative approach to analysis - jumping back and forth between data and concepts - I have improved the comparative reliability of this study. I have demonstrated the validity of the study within this paper by presenting the data and my analysis at each critical stage of the conceptualization of the problem.

However the degree to which these findings can be generalised is limited due to the reliance on a single case. While the challenges and dilemmas faced by GTP in raising resources for start up funding are likely to be similar for many social enterprises, there are a number of variables that may be unique to the case.

First, the social entrepreneur (and most of the group), had recently arrived in the UK from the Kurdish region of Northern Iraq. Thus, perhaps my findings may be unique to the specific cultural and ethnic context of GTP, and this learned behaviour originated in the Kurdish regions of Iraq.

Second, Ahmed's own personal history is likely to have had an effect on his private and public selves. I was unable to verify the 'truth' of the story behind his leaving Iraq. It may have been another attempt to manage (my) impressions. However studies of Iraqi refugees escaping traumatic circumstances (See for example Gorst-Unsworth and Goldenberg 1998) would support the view that Ahmed may have entered into the role of actor as a form of escapism from his past circumstances.

Third, GTP was a start up social enterprise. It would seem reasonable to hypothesise that more established social enterprises are less able to present multiple impressions as the social and economic value of their offering is more widely known.

Fourth, high levels of OIM exhibited by GTP are expected to relate to the hybrid nature of social enterprise. Chew and Osborne (2009) note that whereas conventional for profit businesses have one external audience: customers, charities have two: beneficiaries and funders. Social enterprises may have three external audiences: beneficiaries, funders AND customers. It is reasonable to hypothesise that, *ceteris paribus*, the greater the number of external audiences an organisation must satisfy, the greater the potential role of multiple impression management. As an addendum, the more homogenous the expectations of the different audiences are, the stronger the likelihood of being able to convey a single strategic impression. Finally, the more powerful the audience (relative to the actor) the more likely that the actor will attempt to convey the impression of conforming to what the audience expects.

Implications for future research

Scott (2004) is optimistic about the future for organisational studies as sociological perspectives further permeate the discipline, and encourage scholars to look beyond traditional for-profit firms, while ecological theorists have widened the focus of the discipline still further to focus on all types of firms rather than simply the largest and best known. This study demonstrates that the emerging field of social entrepreneurship and social enterprise offers rich promise in strengthening existing theories of OIM. It also suggests that other organisational theories may need to be adapted to fit with that large part of the economy which is often ignored.

Studying the relationship between organisational actor and institutional audience within the context of social enterprise also raises wider questions. As Di Maggio and Anheier (1990) noted twenty years ago, the study of nonprofits is in general the domain of academics whose values led them to take an uncritical stance and neglect the structural environment within which nonprofits were situated. Today the study of social enterprise and entrepreneurship is often equated with individuals and organisations attempting to 'change the world' (See Bornstein 2004). Perhaps more attention should be given to whether the construct of social enterprise has been produced by actors battling to change the wider structural environment, or whether this wider structural environment is shaping the construct of social enterprise to suit its own purposes. This paper tentatively suggests that as the study of social enterprise begins to move away from studying larger and more successful initiatives, the pendulum may swing towards the latter understanding.

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Social enterprise

What role can social enterprise play within the third sector? This work stream cuts across all other research programmes, aiming to identify the particular characteristics and contribution of social enterprise. Our research includes theoretical and policy analysis which problematises the concept of social enterprise, examining the extent to which it can be identified as a distinct sub-sector. Quantitative analysis will map and measure the social enterprise sub-sector, and our qualitative case studies will contain a distinct sub-sample of social enterprises.

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