



## Social Enterprise Journal

Research in the Social Enterprise Journal- from the margins to the mainstream

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## *Research in the Social Enterprise Journal- from the Margins to the Mainstream*

### **Early Years of SEJ (2004-2008)**

In 2004 Social Enterprise London (SEL) launched the *Social Enterprise Journal* (SEJ) and their head of policy Sabina Khan was the first editor. Sabina edited the first issue published in 2005 and the second issue in 2006, with the foreword for the second issue written by then Minister of the Third Sector Ed Miliband (former leader of the Labour party). In the first issue an article authored by Helen Haugh (Judge Business School, University of Cambridge) became the most cited paper in the history of SEJ with 112 citations. The paper titled, 'A research agenda for social entrepreneurship' identified eight research agenda themes including; defining scope, the environmental context for SE, opportunity recognition and innovation, modes of organisation, resource acquisition, opportunities exploitation, performance measurement and training and education for social enterprise (SE).

In 2007 Emerald Publishers acquired SEJ and I (then at Liverpool John Moores University Business School) became the first Emerald Editor of SEJ. Both myself and Professor John Thompson (Huddersfield Business School) had co-edited a special issue of *International Journal of Social Economics* (Vol 33, Issue 5/6) titled 'Social enterprise management'. The popularity of this first special issue on this topic prompted Emerald to make the SEJ acquisition from Social Enterprise London. Although a number of high profile papers on social enterprise were emerging across disparate journals, social enterprise was a relatively under-developed field of knowledge and thought (Alter, 2007). The top business and management journals had not published a single article on social enterprise or social entrepreneurship at this time (Desa, 2007). It was clear from the significant practitioner interest in the topic, and from the growing number of academic conferences such as (the Social Enterprise and International Social Entrepreneurship Conferences that later merged to become ISIRC) that there was a gap for SEJ to fill. I set to work building an editorial board from pioneer academics in this field including UK leaders; Alex Nicholls (Oxford), Mike Bull (Manchester Metropolitan University), Fergus Lyon (Middlesex), Roger Spear (Open University), Alex Murdoch (London South Bank), Ken Peattie (Cardiff), plus members of the EMES European social enterprise research network including, Jacques Defourny (Liege), Marthe Nyssens (Louvain) and Carlo Borzago (Trento), coupled with USA academics such as Janelle Kerlin (Georgia State). John Thompson (Huddersfield) provided mentoring support to help put structures and processes in place. Emerald publisher Simon Linacre (still at Emerald and now acquisitions manager) also provided invaluable publishing advice during this set-up period.

These initial SEJ issues were focused on conceptualising (Seanor and Meaton, 2007) and understanding social enterprise, understanding performance management, and assessing the impact of SE using models such as balance and Social Return on Investment, which moved beyond simple profitability and efficiency metrics (Bull, 2007; Rotheroe and Richards, 2007). In 2008, Peattie and Morley published a landmark SEJ article titled, 'Eight paradoxes of the

social enterprise research agenda'. This was a research monograph produced for the ESRC (Economic Social Research Council) as a prelude to the funding of the Third Sector Research Centre. This paper identified two clearly defining characteristics of SE, namely the primacy of the social aim and the activity of trading goods and services (page 95). Peattie and Morley (2008) also explained that applying methods of the private sector, to achieve the types of primary social aims associated with the public and voluntary sectors, makes SE a form of organisational hybrid, thus opening a future research agenda on SE and hybridity which is now popularised in leading business and management journals. Peattie and Morley (2008) suggested this hybrid paradoxical nature of SEs makes them particularly challenging businesses to manage and to research. They identified the need for finer grained research on the diversity of SE in terms of origins, aims, organisational characteristics, ways of operating and managing, development paths and market sectors. Other papers in 2008 investigated SE in a range of sectors including; health, social care, creative industries, renewable energy and fair trade just to name a few, showing the diversity of SE.

This early period of growing interest in SE in the UK was also influenced by governmental support for SE, demonstrated by two UK government social enterprise strategies: Strategy for Success (2002) and Scaling New Heights (2006), which aimed to build the capacity of the SE sector. The role and impact of SEJ in UK policy was demonstrated in Volume 5 issue 2 of 2009 when Daniel Shah, former policy officer at the UK's leading SE think tank, the Social Enterprise Coalition, (now Director at RCUK, India) chose SEJ as the outlet for a SE thought piece titled; 'A UK policy perspective: thought piece from the UK Social Enterprise Coalition'. The purpose of the article was to inform a UK Ministerial Summit on social enterprise, held on the 12 March 2009. The article mapped out the important role SE could play in a rebalanced economy post the financial crisis. Days after the summit a new Office of the Third Sector was announced. A new Ministerial working group, chaired by Liam Byrne, then Minister for the Cabinet Office, was set up to ensure a level playing field for SEs and charities in competing for public service delivery contracts. Additional measures deriving from the summit included a new government commitment to create 25,000 new jobs in social enterprises and charities; the setting-up of a cross government "social enterprise growth and development forum", a guide for public procurement officers on social impact and finally a new Future builders Investment Plan. This set out how £45.6 million of public money would help social enterprises deliver public services, through a new fast-track investment process.

The early years of the journal had focused on conceptualising and defining social enterprise, and understanding their role in and impact on the economy and society. By 2010 the journal had begun to develop a more differentiated understanding of their characteristics, and to develop a more comparative understanding with public and private sector organisations. Our first SEJ special issue titled *Governance and Social Enterprise* edited by Chris Mason (now at the Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University, Melbourne, Australia) investigated the nature and challenges of governance in SE when working with a range of stakeholders, including beneficiaries. Most boards of directors (or indeed trustees) in SEs are volunteers, with often a significant personal interest in the social outcomes the organization strives to produce. Potentially, SE boards could be enhanced by the presence of "professional" board

members, that is, individuals with either past or current functional expertise (say financial accounting or marketing). By working with SE boards, these professional skills and knowledge can (perhaps) be transferred and effective operational strategies developed and put into place. However, there are real difficulties inherent in attempting board member recruitment of this kind, as well as securing the financial resources to invest in such development. So, should the board accept as a necessary risk the dilution of the organization's social orientation in favor of developing their entrepreneurial capabilities? To reiterate the earlier point, to what extent can we make social progress, while promoting transparency, to ensure accountability to our most important stakeholder groups? One of the highlights of this special issue was the paper by Rory Ridley-Duff (2010), Sheffield Hallam, who presented an empirically grounded analysis of communitarian governance structures in the Mondragon worker cooperative (Basque region of Spain). One of the major findings in Ridley-Duff's work, that norms of governance practice supersede language commonalities, persuasively argues for recognition of the power of (social) values in governance structures. The strength of SEs is the presence of a specific, shared social values system which is a feature of their distinctiveness.

### **Internationalisation of the Social Enterprise Journal**

At the end of 2008, SEJ published a paper by Defourny and Nyssens (2008) titled 'Social enterprise in Europe: recent trends and developments, which outlined the breakthroughs by SE in different European country contexts and their key challenges. This paper is the second most cited paper in the history of SEJ with 106 citations. The paper proposed a very helpful way of positioning regional geographical differences in SE. They explained that in the US, SE discourse is dominated by market-based approaches to income generation and social change, whereas in Europe, SE is located in the cooperative tradition of collective social action. The UK borrows from both traditions, as was apparent in the UK government definition which states that an SE is a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximize profit for shareholders and owners' (DTI 2002, p.13).

During 2009, it became apparent that a genuine step-change in the focus of SEJ had occurred, moving from a predominantly UK focused journal to volume 5(3) where all the papers were authored by non-UK based academics investigating international contexts of SE; in Senegal (Minard, 2009 now at School of Business D'Amore-Mckim, Northeastern University, Boston, USA), worker integration social enterprises (WISEs) in Flanders (Van Opstal et al., 2009), social care in Japan (Laratta, 2009) and the health sector in Sweden (Tillmar, 2009). During 2009 -2010 SEJ published a number of papers from other European territories and North America. Then in 2011 this growing international interest culminated in a special issue titled 'Social Enterprise in Eastern Asia'. Guest editors Jacques Defourny (Professor, University of Liege) and Yu-Yuan Kuan (Professor of Department of Social Welfare at National Chung Cheng University, Chiayi, Taiwan) produced a ground-breaking SEJ special issue with papers on SE in Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan. In fact this special issue has recorded the most downloads of any SEJ special issue. The issue identified

specific dynamics for SE in Eastern Asia including; the importance of state influence and driving forces linked to public policies that make these models rather different from the typical US social enterprise; as for the role of civil society, it seems weaker than in Western contexts but is growing significantly. Co-operative movements also play a significant role in shaping some social enterprise models in Eastern Asia. Finally, two conditions identified as critical for the development of SE a “condition of necessity” and a “condition of shared destiny” – seem to be valid in Eastern Asia. Moreover, state power, which is strong in these countries, has been playing a key role in the emergence and development of SEs, not only in terms of regulation but also as a driving force in shaping models, through related policy measures and associated funds. At the same time, market forces have also played a critical role, as many public policy measures tend to push SEs closer to the regular market and various initiatives were also launched in partnership with traditional private companies.

To demonstrate the internationalisation of SEJ, figure 1 shows the top countries by downloads and it is interesting to note the appearance of China, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia in the top 10.

[Insert Figure 1]

Further, international research pioneered by SEJ resulted in a special issue edited by Janelle Kerlin in 2013 (volume 10, issue 2). This issue explored Kerlin’s macro-institutional social enterprise framework for understanding social enterprise in relation to the country social enterprise models. Kerlin offers a conceptual framework for country social enterprise models that allows countries to retain their unique understanding of social enterprise and better understand the factors influencing its development. The special issue provides support for the framework showing the size of the social enterprise sector can be attributed to countries-level factors. The issue also concludes the size of the social enterprise sector varies by economic competitiveness rank, size of the welfare state and collectivist cultural orientation.

The Belgian Science Policy Office funded Jacques Defourny and Marthe Nyssens to carry out their “International Comparative Social Enterprise Models” (ICSEM) project. From the outset, some, 100 participating researchers from 25 countries decided to get involved. One of the outputs has been a special issue of SEJ by Defourny and Nyssens (2017) on Mapping Social Enterprise models (volume 13 issue 4), which identifies a number of different social enterprise typologies. From a geographical point of view, the issue gathers contributions from Australasia, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Asia. From a political perspective, they also cover a very broad spectrum, from the United Arab Emirates and Rwanda to mature Western-style democracies. As to cultural and religious influences, the scope is even larger, with Islam (UAE), Judaism (Israel) and Confucianism (South Korea), Maori traditions and values (New Zealand) and traditional community practices (Rwanda), without speaking of the historical role of Christian missionaries and NGOs in several of these countries.

## Critical Perspectives

From its inception until 2012, SEJ apart from a few exceptions (Amin, 2009) had taken a mainly uncritical approach to SE. As is common in emerging research fields, early work in SEJ had relied heavily on descriptive case studies, often based on exemplars of “good practice”. This may partly be down to those researching organizations whose values they sympathize with, and who fail to maintain a critical detachment. But in the longer term it was felt as an editorial team that an uncritical stance may harm the development of the field of research. It was with this in mind that we asked Simon Teasdale our new editor in chief, then Research Fellow at the ESRC Third Sector Research Centre at the University of Birmingham, now Professor of Public Policy and Organizations at Glasgow Caledonian University, to edit a special landmark issue on critical perspectives (Volume 8, issue 2). Dey and Steyaert (2012) in this special issue proposed, four broad and overlapping approaches: myth busting taken for granted assumptions; critiquing the power effects which shape and control individuals, groups and organizations; normative critique whereby moral judgements of social enterprise are made; and critiques of transgression which identify how practitioners appropriate authoritative discourses for their own ends (or those of the group they represent). The second paper in this special issue, by Sunley and Pinch (2012), perhaps most closely approximates to myth busting. They show that policy initiatives in the UK such as Big Society Capital are based upon a premise that there is high demand for loan finance from social enterprises, but that conventional lenders will not lend to social enterprises as they do not understand them. However, these authors found limited demand for loan finance. Indeed most of their sample would not be able to afford the interest on these loans, and prefer to draw upon charitable and public sector funding. The third paper, by Mason (2012), might be classified as a critique of power effects. The author applies critical discourse analysis to social enterprise and third sector policy documents and speeches produced between 2002 and 2008 in the United Kingdom. Mason shows how the policy language exploits power relations, to build an artificial construct of the business-like social enterprise. The policy emphasis on financial traits and differentiation from traditional charitable activity leads to policy measures targeting artificially created needs of social enterprises. This is perhaps particularly relevant given the findings by Sunley and Pinch (2012).

The fourth paper, by Palmas (2012), critiques the taken for granted Schumpeterian assumptions prevalent in much of the social entrepreneurship literature. Palmas reviews the notion of the “social” provided by Schumpeter as a pre-existing structure or container which is separate from the individuals it contains. So from a Schumpeterian perspective the social entrepreneur creates social change by re-shaping the social containers. But Palmas convincingly argues that a critical understanding of social entrepreneurship might better be served by drawing upon the sociology of Gabriel Tarde, which sees no separation between the individual (social entrepreneur) and the social container. Instead the activities of individuals (read social entrepreneurs) constitute the construction of the societal organization. Palmas then moves to critique Schumpeterian perspectives on entrepreneurship as applied in social entrepreneurship studies. Here the pursuit of social profit (or goals) is the motivation for social entrepreneurship. But a Tardeian analysis sees entrepreneurship as just one element

of a wider dynamism inherent in the increasingly networked economy. So the social entrepreneur is no longer the charismatic hero popularised in the literature, but rather a person who plays final host to wider social innovations with a life of their own.

SEJ has continued to provide a home for papers which critique more established perspectives and open up space for debate. Our interest in papers which depart from the norm extends to methodological approaches. SEJ has published papers that draw on a wide range of methods, and as the journal develops further we would like to explore how different methods may lead to different findings. A recent special issue on social enterprise and ethnography (Social enterprise as lived and practiced) edited by Stefanie Mauksch, Mike Rowe and Simon Teasdale, suggested that ethnography offers a way to understand how structure and agency interact at the micro-level.

### **SEJ Network**

By 2013 SEJ had established itself as the number one global journal in the field, being asked by the EMES network to support a special issue on global perspectives on current research in social enterprise. The EMES research network is a European research network which focuses on social enterprise in the context of the social economy and civil society (see: [www.emes.net](http://www.emes.net)). The network was established in 1995 and has been organizing international research conferences since 2001. Guest edited by Roger Spear (Open University) SEJ (volume 9, issue 2) selected the best papers presented at the biennial EMES research conference on social enterprise “Social Innovation through Social Entrepreneurship in Civil Society”, held in July 2011 at Roskilde University, Denmark.

The stand-out paper in this special issue by Huybrechts and Nicholls (2013), addresses issues of legitimacy for social enterprise–corporate partnerships in an important field of social enterprise: international fair trade. Their study takes a life cycle perspective on collaboration, exploring legitimacy issues at each phase of the collaboration. The paper reveals the risks to social enterprise of such collaborations in the context of asymmetric power relations - mainly isolation, and isomorphic tendencies towards market behaviour. However, such an evolution of cross-sector partnerships is not inevitable, and considerations of organisational legitimacy help reveal alternative possibilities.

By 2013 SEJ had come of age. As well as being the leading journal in the field of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship, it was becoming recognised as a major player in the wider business management and entrepreneurship fields. In 2013 SEJ was identified by Stewart and Cotton (2013) as the top performing new entrepreneurship journal over a 5-year period.

SEJ has achieved much over the last ten years, but there remains much too still to be accomplished. We have accumulated many detailed descriptions of the historical development of individual social enterprises, developed understanding of the policy frameworks associated with country level support of social enterprise activity, begun to understand how hybridity and paradoxes caused by combining social purpose with

enterprise leads to unique organisational challenges, and opened a window into the wide range of governance and legal structures and evaluation tools used by social enterprises.

### **SEJ Growth**

Both the citations and downloads have grown internationally since 2005. Figure 2 shows the download's increasing in recent years from 15,342 in 2013 to 36, 810 by 2016.

[Insert Figure 2]

Furthermore, citations have also increased impressively from 153 in 2013 to 451 in 2017 thus far (see figure 3). Those journals citing SEJ articles the most include, Journal of Social Entrepreneurship, Voluntas, Journal of Business Ethics and International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour Research showing interesting inter-linkages.

[Insert Figure 3]

### **What Next for SEJ**

Helen Haugh in her 2012 paper titled, 'The Importance of theory in social enterprise research identified a perceived tension between research that is oriented towards developing theory and that which aims to improve practice. Practice, in the sense of the act of doing something, is traditionally contrasted with theory as an abstraction of ideas about a phenomenon. In the academy, theory tends to be put on a pedestal and elevated above practice. However, as Haugh identifies, theory devoid of practice can be perceived as dry and irrelevant: "there is nothing so practical as a good theory". The legitimacy requirement that research in the social sciences is also socially relevant requires that theorists delineate the practical implications of the new theories they develop.

Further special issues on SE in Australasia, Social Enterprise Networks and Food Poverty and Social Enterprise Responses are planned for 2018 and 2019. It is fair to say the majority of social enterprise research has been undertaken within the field of management studies. As the visibility of social enterprise has increased we have seen considerable policy interest in developed and developing countries. Social enterprise has been recognised as having potential to contribute to more sustainable economic development, as well as tackling social issues in fields such as; health, housing and more community-orientated approaches to public service delivery. As well as soliciting critical, theoretical, empirical and review articles tackling the impact of such initiatives, the editorial team now led by Professor Simon Teasdale is keen to develop contributions exploring how processes of social innovation are enacted through social enterprise, or understanding of the societal implications of social enterprise's enhanced role in public service delivery. SEJ will continue to welcome articles and special issue proposals deriving from original themes connected to social enterprise, particularly those that develop our comparative understanding of social enterprise.



As the *SEJ* builds its profile as a leading outlet for publishing research and sharing case studies about social enterprise with colleagues, it is increasingly important that we are explicit about our engagement with, and extension and development of new, theories to explain and predict social enterprise. The challenge therefore, is to ensure that we raise the profile of theory development in social enterprise research, and communicate clearly the connections between our theoretical contributions and the practice of social entrepreneurship.

### **Acknowledgements**

The establishment and growth of SEJ has been a huge collective effort from a range of well-meaning talented people including; my original mentor Prof John Thompson, associate editors Simon Teasdale, Chris Mason and Janelle Kerlin all of whom have been guest editors of special issues, All the first class reviewers who never said no; Rory Ridley-Duff, Roger Spear, Alex Murdock, Mary O'Shaughnessy, Richard Hazenberg, Kai Hockerts, Fred Seddon, Fergus Lyon, Michael Roy and Mike Bull. Plus the great guest editors who had the vision to craft landmark special issues in international aspects such as Jacques Defourny, Marthe Nyssens and Janelle Kerlin. Finally, all the authors particularly those who have provided highly cited works such as Helen Haugh, Ken Peattie, Jacques Defourny and Marthe Nyssens plus all the very helpful supportive team at Emerald including; Simon Linacre, Richard Whitefield, Patti Davies, Helen Alexander, Sean O'Dowd, and Rebecca Rozenberg.

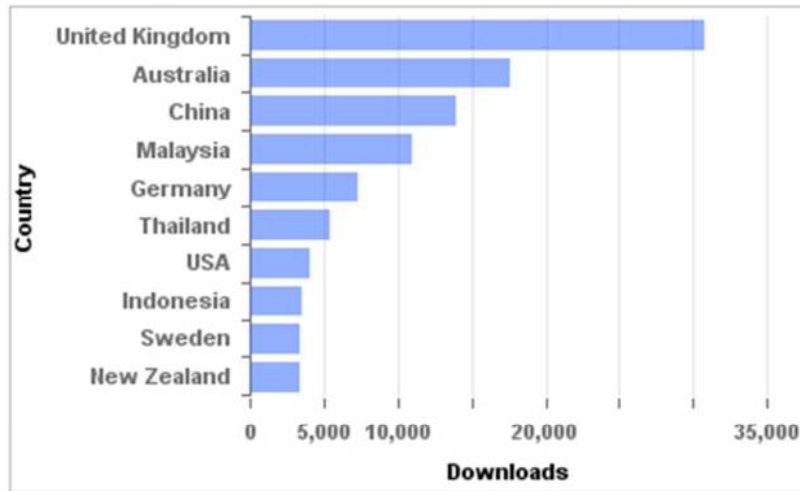
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**Top Countries by Downloads:**

The chart below shows the top 10 countries by the number of articles downloaded by customers in those countries:



SEJ Top Countries Downloads

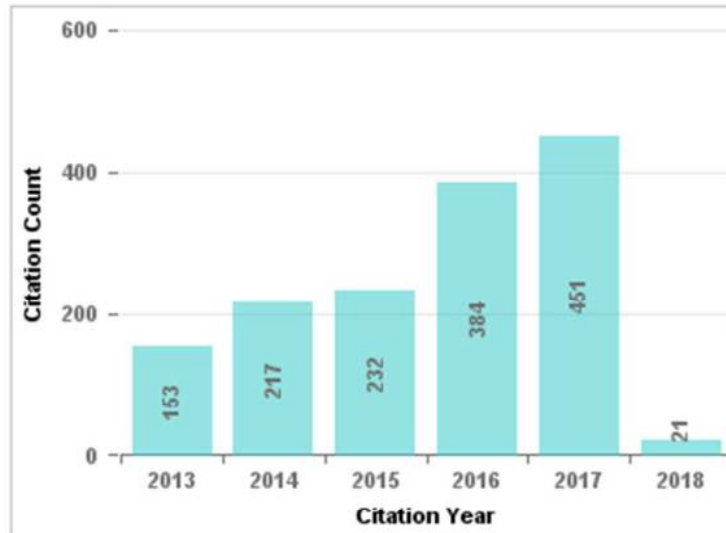
The following report details the usage, CrossRef citations and authorship of SEJ. The report is limited to usage by customers. It therefore excludes search engine crawler usage, usage by Emerald staff, LOCKSS crawler usage and free usage.



SEJ Growth in Downloads 2013-2016

### CrossRef Citations:

The following chart shows the number of citations per year



### Top Citing Journals:

This table shows the top 5 publications citing articles in SEJ

Publication Title	Citations count
Social Enterprise Journal	247
Journal of Social Entrepreneurship	92
VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonpr	76
Journal of Business Ethics	48
International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Resea	40

SEJ Growth in Citations 2013-2017