

Institutional change as a labour of definition:
A theoretical and analytical framework applied to “social
enterprise” in the UK

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Abstract

Title: Institutional change as a labour of definition: A theoretical and analytical framework applied to “social enterprise” in the UK

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As market relations have expanded beyond the limits set for them within the post-war consensus, institutional theorists have sought to better understand how such change occurs. Despite important theoretical advances across the various institutional approaches, many avenues remain unexplored. One such avenue concerns the role of definition in institutional change. Although definition has attracted little scholarly attention, perhaps due to its everyday banality, this thesis argues that it plays an essential role in establishing institutions and provides a mechanism by which actors can change them. A claim of this nature is significant since contemporary theorizations of institutional change point to actors strategically manipulating the meaning structures underpinning institutional regimes. An investigation of definition illuminates how such change is achieved. Drawing on several theoretical resources, this thesis provides a detailed exploration of that process. While the thesis is primarily a contribution to the theory of institutional change, it substantiates the key arguments through an analysis of “social enterprise”, a concept which rose from complete obscurity, prior to 1980, to become one of the most lauded economic concepts across much of Europe in the early 2000s. By the decade end, it was the term used to describe and commend the first privately run hospital in the NHS. Concentrating on the first few years of its emergence, the analysis illustrates how diverse actors competed and cooperated in a *labour of definition*, a social process in which the descriptive and normative dimensions of the concept were fixed. Knowledge of this particular case, together with the theoretical framework upon which the analysis is based, provides the grounds for a dialectical understanding of definitions and institutions. Not only do actors seek to alter the conceptual basis of institutions through ‘defining work’, but those efforts are, themselves, guided by ‘logics of definition’ that, in turn, stem from ‘institutional definitions’.

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List of Abbreviations

BITC	Business in the Community
CDI	Community Development Initiative
CFI	Community Finance Initiative
CoA	Criteria of application
DETR	Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EEC	European Economic Community
IPPR	Institute of Public Policy Research
LIF	The Local Investment Fund
NEF	New Economics Foundation
NSNR	National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
PAT3	Policy Action Team 3
PIU	Performance and Innovation Unit
RoR	Range of reference
SAP	Speech act potential
SBS	Small Business Service
SEL	Social Enterprise London
SEnU	Social Enterprise Unit
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SITF	Social Investment Taskforce
TSER	Targeted Socio-Economic Research
VoC	Varieties of Capitalism

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Understanding institutional change as a labour of definition

When Socrates first invented the practice of definition over 2000 years ago, he understood himself to be engaging in the pursuit of knowledge for the sake of living a good life (Dancy, 2004). A definition, properly formed, would cut through confusion and partisan disagreement to tell us the true nature of virtues, such as ‘piety’, ‘courage’, and ‘justice’. Though the practice has changed markedly as it has travelled down through the ages, contemporary books of logic still routinely present definition as our surest defense against the dangers of ambiguity (Copi and Cohen, 1990). Today, when people find themselves in disagreement about the meaning of a word, they instinctively turn to the dictionary for a definition. Those definitions are then taken as objective facts and, thereupon, the disagreement is settled, since to quarrel with a dictionary would be seen as absurd (Williams, 1983). Owing to its everyday banality, definition *per se* is rarely considered in its own right. Is it possible, however, that this banality blinds to the dangers of definition? Might it be the case that one of our most basic tools for achieving clarity in communication is also one of our most decisive weapons in distributional struggles and politics more generally? Could it be that our social world is simultaneously held together and changed by means of multitudinous acts of definition and redefinition? This is precisely the conclusion that can be drawn if we accept the assertion, which this thesis puts forward, that definition is a central mechanism of institutional stability and change.

The crux of the argument is put together in the following way. Taking a lead from Boltanski (2011), Searle (2005; 2008) and Berger and Luckmann (1975), institutions are approached, in the first instance, in terms of their semantic character. Approached in this way, two semantic functions stand out: the *indexical* and the *deontic*. In the indexical mode, language is used to link concepts to their referents (conduct and/or states of affairs) and vice-versa. In the deontic mode, language commits the concepts and referents to an attitude, typically ranged along a continuum with condemnation at one end and commendation at the other. When we speak, for example, about the ‘*institution* of democracy, we are not referring only to a particular ‘token’ (such as the U.K. political system and government) nor to a ‘type’ (such as the set of common attributes instantiated in any case of democracy), but to the rule in virtue of which it is possible to connect the token to the type and, in doing so, issue an evaluative status (i.e. that such an arrangement is to be

commended and respected and whatever other evaluative attitudes are permissible). As Searle (2005, 2008) would say, the rule is constitutive of the institution.

Boltanski's (2011) important claim is that, against the backdrop of radical unease at the fragility of reality, institutions are delegated the power to state the 'whatness of what is' (the indexical), in the sense of what counts as an instance of something else; and 'what matters' (the deontic), in the sense of being *worthy* of admiration or derogation. Both Searle (2005; 2008) and Berger and Luckmann (1975) can be understood to have similar understandings of institutions. Understood in this way, all institutions have a semantic/conceptual basis consisting, minimally, of indexical and deontic elements. The qualitative character of those elements, however, vary from one institution to the next. In some cases, these elements are highly elaborated, in which case there is little leeway for interpretation. In other cases, where these elements are only weakly elaborated, there is considerable scope for interpretation. In this sense, it is the character of the indexical and deontic elements that help determine the degree of institutional ambiguity, an issue which is currently preoccupying several institutionalists (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010).

The meanings of institutions, as expressed in terms of these semantic elements, are often communicated and stored in definitions (Boltanski, 2011; Meyer, 1977). The major reason for this is that, historically, a central function of definition is precisely to fix (in the twin senses of fastening and mending) these semantic elements for the purpose of communication (Rey, 2001). Those definitions can also differ in qualitatively significant ways. Some may be inscribed in legal texts, while others, like the definitions of "institution" *per se*, may be stored in academic journals. Whereas a breach of the latter may result in the denial of publication, a breach of the former may result in the removal of one's liberty. Once institutionalized, institutions attain a *power* through which "defining effects" are exerted. This power parallels the structuring force Durkheim attributes to mental categories and systems of classification. That is, they become "solid frames that confine thoughts" and which also structure the moral texture of contemporary social life (Douglas, 1966). From there, it becomes possible to conceive of institutions, as do both Bourdieu (1991) and Boltanski (2011), as "instruments of domination" (Bourdieu, 1991:166). To the extent that institutions can be understood as instruments of domination, and to the extent that the meaning of institutions are stored in definitions, we have grounds for approaching definition in a way that is more alert to its potential dangers.

However, definition is both a product (i.e. the kind of thing that can be stored in, say, legal texts) and a practice (i.e. the act of defining). As such, to the extent that the meaning of an institution is stored and stabilized in definition, the institution itself is susceptible to change through a corresponding change in the definitions. This is precisely the sense in which Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) suggestive notion of *'defining work'* is taken up and developed in this thesis. However, owing to the weight of vested interests (i.e. those that benefit from a prevailing institutional arrangement) and the holistic, interlocking character of institutional matrices, alterations in the definitions of institutions can rarely be achieved through a single, isolated act of definition (i.e. a single instance of 'defining work'), no matter how much creativity is brought to the fold. Rather, what is required to achieve this kind of institutional change, is better captured by the notion of a *'labour of definition'*, a social process by means of which the indexical and deontic dimensions of the conceptual basis of institutions are fixed.

Again, the *labour of definition* is also one which can differ in qualitatively significant ways, depending, in large part, on the constellation of actors involved. One reason for this, is that actors not only seek to use definition to steer the indexical and deontic elements in particular directions, but they engage in different definitional practices. This is to take up a point of longstanding, since, as Cicero cautioned his audience of *jurists* over 2000 years ago, using the definitions of orators and poets would be to "abandon the language proper to the object and to [their] profession" (Cicero, 1949: 407). Another way of putting the point is to say that actors bring to their acts of definition distinctive *'logics of definition'* and the character of a corresponding *labour of definition* will reflect, in part, the aggregation of these logics, particularly those of the most dominant actors. These *logics of definition* are, themselves, the products of institutions which set limits, often adhered to unconsciously, on the conduct of particular categories of actors. In this sense, it is meaningful to speak of a *dialect of definition*, since actors' attempts to alter institutions through a labour of definition are guided by logics of definition which, themselves, have an institutional basis.

This highlights how actors, when engaging in acts of definition that are both creative and strategic, are constrained and enabled by institutions. In addition to the constraints and enablements associated with *"logics of definition"*, there is a power-relational dimension to the labour of definition. As Dezalay and Garth (1996) have demonstrated in their research on "commercial arbitration", definitions can be understood as 'stakes' in professional competitions (see also Bourdieu, 1991). Therefore, the labour of definition is a contested process in which the actors involved bring different 'powers', or 'skills', into play. These powers can be conceived in two major ways: the

stick (coercion) and the pen (persuasion). The ability to alter the meaning of the concept, through an act of definition, is circumscribed by the ability of other actors in the field to effectively contest or ‘veto’ others’ definitions. This is not simply a matter of who has the ‘bigger stick’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1975), since, “there is always the possibility”, as Berger and Luckmann (1975) note, of actors “convincing each other without recourse to the cruder means of persuasion” (1975 :127). In other words, there will always be rhetorical skill demonstrated in the formation and alteration of a definition and in securing its uptake within the field (Schiappa, 2001). This latter point indicates the crucial role that rhetorical and persuasive speech play in the labour of definition.

If this argument holds good, it has the potential to make an important and original contribution, to the theorization of institutional change at a moment when it appears to invite it. Across the various institutionalist traditions (rational choice, historical, sociological, discursive and rhetorical), there are developments which suggest the relevance of the argument presented above. First, Suddaby (2010) has argued that future research in institutional theory should examine more fully the ideational and symbolic aspects of institutions, and has further suggested that a focus on *categories*, *language*, and *work* would be well suited to this task. Second, within historical institutionalism, there is a growing appreciation of the important role of *meaning* and *ambiguity* in processes of institutional change (Mahony and Thelen, 2010). In that literature, it is argued that the formal rules which constitute institutions are rarely enacted perfectly because ambiguity allows ‘rule-takers’ to interpret the rules in different ways. However, although ambiguity has been associated with a greater likelihood of change, the understanding of institutional ambiguity remains somewhat underdeveloped. Third, Green and Li (2011) have suggested that institutional theory can break the trend of oscillating between structural and agency-based accounts of institutional change by turning to an analysis of *rhetoric*. Central elements in the notion of the labour of definition are the persuasive use of language, and also the embeddedness of defining work in the form of logics of definition.

1.2 “Social enterprise”: An institution founded on a labour of definition

Although the thesis is presented for evaluation primarily in terms of its contribution to the theorization of institutional change, the basic argument is both tested against and developed through an examination of the labour of definition that animated the rise of the concept of “social enterprise” in the UK.

The rise of social enterprise is a remarkable story, but as a case of institutional change there might be few to rival its personalities and plot. Prior to 1980, there was no mention of “social enterprise” in the UK. Nowhere did that term appear, not in popular press, academic journals or governmental reports. Yet, by 2005 the UK was reported to be home to 15,000 social enterprises, generating some £18 billion in annual turnover and employing over 775,000 people. Only five years later, in 2010, ‘social enterprise’ was the term used to describe the first privately run hospital in the NHS, after Circle Health Limited was awarded a contract, worth an estimated £1 billion in revenue over ten years, to run Hinchingsbrooke hospital.

Crucially, at every step along the way, the emergence of social enterprise was animated by colorful clashes over its definition, as actors from opposing positions sought to manipulate it in ways they deemed preferable and/or advantageous to themselves. One protagonist, writing an excoriating critique in a national newspaper, portrays, in rather colorful terms, something of the character of the social enterprise *labour of definition* saying:

“I have never seen a sector so often caught up in so much over-intellectualised jargon-based debate around a set of competing definitions of social enterprise, most of which are inherently useless to anyone but their authors. The result is an almost Pythonesque gaggle of commentators and organisations scrabbling to claim the Holy Grail of an absolute definition of the term, and thereby determining who can or can’t join the club” (Jenkins, 2010).

The labour of definition began in earnest in 1996 when a network of European academics commenced work on an ambitious EU funded project. The lead researchers had spent the previous decade conducting research on economic initiatives that lay neither in the traditional sphere of private economic interest, nor in the realm of ‘public organisation’. This economic ‘space-between’ was conceptualised in various ways in different countries. The French and Belgian researchers within the team conceptualised the space in terms of the “social economy”, for others, mainly of US origin, it was conceptualised as the “non-profit sector”; UK scholars, in contrast, tended to identify that space principally in terms of the “voluntary sector”. A year prior, an International Society for *Third Sector* Research had been set up. The category of ‘third sector’ was intentionally chosen as a superordinate concept that could subsume all the differences in the various national conceptualisations (Defourny *et al.*, 2001).

What brought these researchers together in the summer of 1996 was a growing sense that a new phenomenon was developing in that ‘space-between’. Not much was known about the phenomenon, but it was reported to exhibit a character quite unlike anything captured by the prevailing terminology. Its distinguishing feature was a new ‘spirit of enterprise’, though this too was only vaguely perceived at that moment in time. Some European researchers, for example, had noticed increasing activity among commercial enterprises whose primary aim was to reintegrate workers into the labour market, while some US researchers spoke of a rise of ‘enterprising non-profits’ in contrast to a historical reliance on public donations and philanthropic funding. The reported feeling among the research team, was that there was something systemic about the emergence of this phenomenon, such that they would find evidence of it throughout the EU once they started looking. As confirmation of that hunch would be an important research finding in its own right, their research project duly set out to determine the extent of the phenomenon. The phenomenon needed a name. They called it “social enterprise”¹.

To determine just how widespread this new ‘social enterprise’ phenomenon was across the European Union, they first had to create a *working definition* on the basis of which the network’s researchers could look, with consistency, for evidence of existence in their individual national contexts. Accordingly, a definition was created by amalgamating features associated with a stereotypical ‘enterprise’ with those of ‘third sector organisations’. From the concept of ‘enterprise’ they extracted the notions of continuous trading activity, a high degree of autonomy from the state, economic risk taking, and a degree of paid work. To these attributes, they added the differentiating properties associated with the concept of the ‘third sector’: an explicit aim to benefit the community; an initiative undertaken by a group of citizens; power not based on capital ownership; limited profit distribution; and participation involving the people affected by the activity (OECD, 1999). Though originally formed as a *working definition*, it was a formula of remarkable prescience since the network found evidence of ‘social enterprise’ across all corners of the EU. The findings were published five years later as *The Emergence of Social Enterprise* (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001), a book which did much to establish, as a matter of factual record, the existence of the phenomenon it had itself named. The network was named EMES, taking its name from the French title of its research project, “*L’Emergence de l’Entreprise Sociale en Europe*” (The emergence of social enterprises in Europe).

¹ One of the lead researchers, Jacques Defourny, noted in the introduction of the book that they were concerned with the “increasing numbers of economic initiatives *we will call ‘social enterprises’*” (2001:2).

Defined in such a way, the emergence of social enterprise was a cause of considerable celebration. The phenomenon was exciting not only on a theoretical level but also in real terms (Laville and Nyssens, 2001). Social enterprise stood for economic solidarity, democracy, empowerment, and innovation. Participation in decision making within a social enterprise was a democratic affair, not one based on share ownership. As such, social enterprise was a mechanism by which social capital was developed in people and within communities in the course of organising. Moreover, while profits were sought, this was primarily so that they could be redistributed for the benefit of the community for which the initiative had been set up. The term was standardly applied to organisations working to reintegrate some of the most excluded segments of the labour market, for example, helping reskill individuals with learning difficulties or from multiple generations of unemployment.

Social enterprise seemed to represent the kind of social re-embedding of which Polanyi (1944) had spoken in his seminal work *The Great Transformation*. Polanyi had described how the extension of market relations had created savage inequalities and conflicts in the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century. He then documented how, in response, a great wave of ameliorative institution building was undertaken, largely by collective actors, to check the expansion of markets and mitigate inequality (Morgan, 2016). This was certainly the view taken by some of the early academic researchers engaging with the concept. Social enterprise involved markets; but in a tamer, more humane, more socially beneficial way. Before long, the concept of social enterprise and its near synonym, social entrepreneurship, were being extolled as a “transformational benefit to society” (Martin and Osberg, 2007), “our best hope for the future of humanity” (Skoll, 2006: v), the “democratization of power” (Skoll, 2004, quoted in Drayton, 2006: 49), the “economic engine of the future” (Harding and Cowling, 2004: 5), and even the key to “a world without poverty” (Yunus, 2008).

In the UK, various policy making bodies were also finding reason to celebrate social enterprise. One influential policy team (PAT3), which was made up from an unusually large number of experts outside the civil service, espoused the positive role social enterprise could play in tackling some of the most intransigent forms of economic deprivation. They lauded the achievements of organisations like Kennington Cleaners, a co-operative set up in 1978 by ten cleaners living on the Kennington estate who were seeking to improve their working conditions; Tara Fruit and Veg, a small shop, also set up within a disadvantaged London housing estate by residents and staffed by

volunteers in order to secure access to cheap groceries for residents of the estate; and The Social Entrepreneurs of Blaengwnfi, a co-operative set up by senior citizens in a Welsh ex-mining village so as to avoid the closure of the only shop for 12 miles. Although relatively small scale, PAT3 called for such social enterprises to be “recognised as a group of businesses deserving support” (PAT3, 1999:113), a task that was delegated to the Small Business Service (SBS). The problem for the SBS was that it had no clear idea what “social enterprise” meant, so they hurriedly commissioned a team of academic researchers to explain it (Smallbone *et al.*, 2001), and a leading policy consultant to tell them what it could be made to mean (Westall, 2001).

Among a network of think-tanks and policy units (including Demos, the Institute for Public Policy Research, New economic foundation, and PAT3) there was near unanimous support for social enterprise. Yet, there was also general confusion about its meaning. IPPR’s Andrea Westall (2001) published an influential policy paper, heavily supported by the SBS, stating, “...the concept is currently chimerical, shifting according to the context of the discussion and with very loose boundaries” (2001: 23). The EMES working definition was largely confined to their own academic community and had not achieved a mainstream standing. The result was a blend of conceptual ambiguity and moral certitude. It wasn’t entirely clear what social enterprise meant but, whatever it meant, it was unquestionably a good thing. The authors of PAT3, to give just one example, conflated the concepts of social enterprise and social economy, seeing the two as co-extensive. Indeed, the very act of discussing definition was cast, by some, as the labour of a fool. One influential representative body, Social Enterprise London, stated that: “*Trying to define a social enterprise can be like trying to define an elephant, very difficult and not much point, because you certainly know one when you see one*” (Social Enterprise London, 2001). The pursuit of definition appeared to be an unwelcomed, door-closing exercise, when the overriding collective will was not just to keep the doors open, but to remove them all together, since hesitating over semantics only stood in the way of the good that was happening. That was in 2000. Scarcely could one have imagined the altered landscape by the decade’s end.

By 2010, New Labour had lost power to a new Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition. In one of their first acts, the ConDem coalition government published a white paper, *Liberating the NHS*, which spoke of its ambition to create “the largest social enterprise sector in the world by increasing the freedoms of foundation trusts and giving NHS staff the opportunity to have a greater say in the future of their organisations, including as employee-led social enterprises” (Department of Health, 2010). The main problem with this plan was that the definition of social

enterprise espoused by the leading sector body, the Social Enterprise Coalition (SEC), did not include foundation trusts. Andrew Lansley, health secretary, openly challenged the authority of the SEC saying, 'I have looked at the Social Enterprise Coalition's definition of social enterprise and there's a risk of defining social enterprise so narrowly that others are not included' (Hampson, 2010). This was met with a swift rebuke from SEC CEO Peter Holbrook, who stated plainly that foundation trusts 'cannot be called social enterprises' (Hampson, 2010). There was an irony here. SEC was the national outgrowth of Social Enterprise London (SEL), the organisation that, in 2001, had declared definition to be a waste of time. The situation and both of their stances on definition were now very different. Now definition was critical to the defense of the concept against the bogus claims of politicians and businesses. The fear was well justified.

In 2010, at the crest of a wave of privatization within the NHS, NHS East of England set about looking for a new partner to run Hinchingsbrooke hospital in Huntingdonshire. It was a massive contract worth an estimated £1 billion in revenue over ten years. The company they identified as the preferred partner was Circle Health Limited. Many eyebrows were raised because awarding the contract to Circle would represent a landmark in the history of the NHS, becoming the first NHS hospital to be run entirely by a private entity. There was also confusion as to exactly what kind of organisation Circle Health was. 50.1% of Circle Health was owned by Circle Holdings Plc, a company incorporated in Jersey, still a tax haven at that time. Of the 50.1%, a sizeable share was held by profit-hungry venture capitalist and hedge funds, including Balderton, BlueCrest, Lansdowne and Odey European. 5% of the 50.1% was held by the CEO, Ali Parsa, a former Goldman Sachs banker, whose fiduciary duty was to maximise returns for his shareholders. Yet, the other 49.9% of the company was owned by employees. That latter attribute seems to have proved sufficient for the company to pass themselves off as "a *social enterprise* co-owned by employees". They won the contract; undoubtedly aided by the years of laudation New Labour bestowed on the concept of social enterprise. The postscript, however, is that they were forced to exit within five years; unable to keep costs down and unable to extract sufficient profits for their investors.

Viewed in this historical sweep, it is little wonder that David Cameron once described social enterprise as the "great institutional innovation of our times" (2007). What it helped achieve, in only 10 years, is quite staggering. Practically unheard of prior to 2000, by 2005 the UK was reported to be home to 15,000 social enterprises, generating some GBP18 billion in annual turnover and employing over 775,000 people. That, at least, was the somewhat disputed finding of research

produced by IFF Research Ltd under commission by the SBS. By 2010, the number of social enterprises was said to have risen to 232,000; again, according to research by IFF Research Ltd.

In the intervening years, the main public sector unions (UNISON and Unite) had become extremely concerned about the emergence of social enterprise. By 2007, they had already commissioned a report into the increasing presence of social enterprise in the NHS, focussing on problems of ownership and tensions in employment relations. By 2010, UNISON had become convinced that social enterprise was actually part of a larger plot to privatize the NHS, against the interests and even the knowledge of its workforce.² As such, they started legal action against the Department of Health over its refusal to consult on the *Liberating the NHS* white paper. Only a couple of months later the case was thrown out of court.

Whatever the merits of their case, it was clear that “social enterprise” did not mean, for UNISON or, indeed, for Andrew Lansley, anything remotely close to the phenomenon that the EMES researchers thought they’d discovered in 1996, and which prompted such universal exaltation, and moral certainties. The word – social enterprise – was clearly the same, but the concept, the attitudes it invoked, and the kinds of things to which the term could be applied, had clearly undergone some fundamental transformation. What started out as a “modern expression of the principles upon which the early co-operatives were formed” (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453), with the principles of democratic governance and social ownership seemingly inviolable; had, by 2010, come to be seen as a Trojan horse, were such social principles were no longer among its defining characteristics.

As the above overview suggests, the labour of definition is not only a dense tapestry of actors and acts, but it is also one that unfolds gradually and often in unpredictable ways. Indeed, the labour of definition is still ongoing in the U.K. at the time of writing. Therefore, for the purpose of exemplifying the theoretical framework presented in this thesis, the focus of Chapter 7 will be on the first few years when the concept first appeared in the UK and was subject to the first acts of definition. The reasons for this are twofold. First, institutionalist research suggests that the early years in the emergence of a new institution are characterised by a heightened level of activity over the establishment of meanings (Colyvas and Powell, 2006). Second, scholars that have researched the rise of social enterprise in the UK have determined that the initial period, running up to the production of the Government’s official definition in 2002, was one of the most influential in

² A fear that Leys and Player (2011) show was well founded.

terms of establishing the meaning of social enterprise in the UK (Teasdale, 2012; Sepulveda, 2015). By focusing the analysis on this narrower temporal canvas, rather than the great tapestry of the past 20 years, it is possible to look in finer grained detail at the nature of individual acts of definition (defining work) and how they constitute a broader labour of definition.

Having introduced the main argument and provided an overview of the empirical terrain, the structure of the thesis can now be outlined below.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Part I of the thesis, which presents a theoretical framework, aims to provide a detailed discussion of existing literature that might lead to a better understanding of the potential role that conceptual (re)definition can play in processes of institutional change. In total, it contains four chapters. By the end of the fourth chapter, if the earlier arguments are successful, it should be possible to conclude that conceptual definition must be central to the creation and maintenance of many, if not all, institutions; and, by corollary, conceptual redefinition must play a crucial role in at least some instances of significant institutional change. What is left unanswered, however, is precisely how actors put definition to work in pursuit of institutional change. What is required is a better understanding of the *labour of definition*. The structures of the chapters are as follows.

In Chapter 1, the concept and practice of ‘definition’ is discussed, focusing on the diverse practices which have historically counted as ‘definition’. It is demonstrated that different types of definition are used for widely contrasting purposes, are constructed through different ‘methods’, and abide by different rules of adequacy. Despite such diversity, some commonality can be observed in respect of how definition stands to two elements of meaning: the extension (or *‘the range of referents’*) and the intension (*‘the criteria of application’*). Specifically, definition is generally regarded as a statement that clarifies meaning by ‘fixing’ – this term being used in the twin senses of fastening and mending – one of those two elements. This can be termed the two-dimensional view of definition. However, there is a third element of meaning, known variously as ‘tone’, ‘illumination’ or ‘colouring’ (Frege, cited in Dummett, 1981), ‘evaluative accent’ (Volosinov, 1929/1973), ‘emotive meaning’ (Stevenson, 1937) and ‘speech act potential’ (Skinner, 2002), that has been consistently expunged from consideration. This, however, leads to a neglect of an important alternative tradition of thought about definition, stemming from classic rhetoric (Cicero, Quintilian) and continuing under the New Rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969;

Schiappa, 2003), which highlights the persuasive uses of definition and its inherently political character.

Importantly, where this third element is recognized, it is usually condemned as an obstacle to clear thinking and especially to the pursuit of scientific knowledge. This attitude is taken to signal something of the institutional character of definition *per se*, since different forms of definition are considered more or less appropriate in different contexts of use. As Cicero pointed out some 2000 years ago, a form of definition appropriate to a poet will be scorned when used in the court of law. Based on that evidence, the conclusion of the section is that definition *per se* can be regarded as an institution. This also serves as the warrant for beginning to think of definition in terms of ‘institutional logics’, from which it is only a short journey to the idea of ‘*logics of definition*’.

The main implication of this claim, for understanding the role of definition in institutional change, is to show that actors, when engaged in an act of definition (or what shall be termed ‘defining work’ after Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006), are not stepping out of the institutional matrix. Rather, they are invoking one institution (that which concerns the practice of definition) to alter the meaning of another, whichever that might be.

Chapter 2 pushes the argument further in that direction. It provides a detailed discussion of a body of scholarship that approaches definition as a deliberate ‘speech act’, that can be used to alter any one of four elements of conceptual meaning (the *term*, the *criteria of application*, the *range of reference* and the *speech act potential*). The main theorist under discussion is Quentin Skinner (2002). Though little discussed in Organisation Studies, or institutionalist research more broadly, Skinner is an historian of ideas whose work has had a significant influence on political science and has been central to the emergence of a rhetorical turn in that discipline and beyond (Atkins *et al.*, 2014; Finlayson, 2004, 2007, 2012). The main thrust of Skinner’s work is to take seriously disagreements about concepts. More than trivial semantics, he recognizes efforts to alter conceptual meaning, through rhetorical practices of redescription and redefinition, to be one important way in which societies alter their normative structures (i.e. institutions). The decision to focus on Skinner’s work is guided by a sense of compatibility with the basic tenets of institutional theory and several emerging themes in the theorization of institutional change. As Skinner presents a somewhat dismissive account of definition, the final part of the chapter is dedicated to restoring the potential power of definition with respect to conceptual change. This issue is revisited in Section 6.2,

through a systematic elaboration of rhetorical techniques of definition and redescription within a framework based on the four dimensions of conceptual disagreement.

Chapter 3 considers the relationship between definitions, conceptual change and institutional change. Following Campbell's (2010) plea, explicit consideration is given to the ontology of institutions. Four works are reviewed in this section: Berger and Luckmann's (1975) theorization of institutionalization, focusing on the movement from typifications to institutional definitions within the dialectical process of 'objectivation', 'externalization' and 'internalization'; Searle's (2005; 2008) theory of institutions as constitutive rules, focusing on the 'Declarative' format of such rules; and Boltanski's (2011) theory of the 'critique of domination', which presents institutions in terms of their semantic function (to state the 'whatness of what is' and 'what matters'); and, finally, Schiappa's (2003) work within the tradition of 'New Rhetoric' and argumentation theory, which has been explicit in stating the rhetorical and political character of all definitions.

An important point that emerges from Chapter 3 is that all institutions have a conceptual/semantic basis; and that it is through definitions that this semantic character is both 'stored' (Boltanski, 2011:75) at a supra-individual level (e.g. in legal codes) and subjected to change. As with ambiguity and vagueness, definition is a gradational, rather than absolute, quality. The semantic basis of an institution can obtain a state of such entrenchment and taken-for-grantedness that the need for, and visibility of, formal definitions recedes entirely. It is in that sense that the notion of '*institutional definitions*' can be understood anew. This serves as the second element in the dialectic of definition.

Having established the rhetorical and political character of definition, particularly in terms of its use in altering the meaning of concepts, and having established the connection between definition and institutions, Chapter 4 considers the potential relevance of definition for institutional theory and especially the theorization of institutional change. The first step in that direction is to provide an overview of current developments in the theorization of institutional change. Here, Morgan and Hauptmeier's (2014) recent review, which seeks to derive insights from across the main institutionalist traditions, is taken as a guide and source of inspiration. Doing so reveals, not only a set of highly relevant theoretical developments, but also several promising directions for further exploring definition. Of signal importance is the idea, derived primarily from historical institutionalism, that institutions are rule-like distributional arrangements, which, owing to their inherent ambiguity, lead inevitably to contestation over meaning by coalitions of actors.

The view that actors will engage in contestation over the meaning of institutions is further supported by research in sociological institutionalism, especially Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) notion of *institutional work*. The potential role of definition is brought into stark relief through their concept of *defining work* and a detailed evaluation of the concept is provided. Constructivist or discursive institutionalism suggests that social context will alter the nature of the participants in the collective labour of definition; while rhetorical institutionalism both vindicates a focus on the rhetorical potential of defining and reminds us that actors will bring the logics of their respective (multiple) fields to bear on those contests. In this sense, actors not only engage in defining work to alter institutions, but, institutions 'engage' actors by providing the materials with which they conduct their activities. This lends further cogency to the idea of a dialectic of definition.

That marks the transition to Part II. Comprised of two chapters, it illustrates the application of the theoretical and analytic framework to the emergence of "social enterprise" in the UK. Chapter 6 outlines a broad analytic approach by means of which the main propositions can be explored. The centerpiece of the analytic framework is a systematic analysis of definitions and definitional argumentation in terms of four components of conceptual meaning. This, however, is to provide only a 'thin' rhetorical analysis. To adequately understand a labour of definition, and the dialectic of definition more generally, requires a counterpart that thickens the analysis. To that end, inspiration and guidance is found in the methodological principle of *Verstehen*, an approach which seeks to combine the description and explanation of action by providing a rich contextualization of practice in terms of its significance for the actors themselves. Central to this is the sequencing of events and the plotting of actors in terms of their actions, their relations to events, and each other. The chapter continues by outlining how these general principles were put into practice in analyzing the emergence of social enterprise as a labour of definition. Analytic focus was on acts, actors, triggers (or scene), agency and purpose (or intention). This allows any act of definition ('what was done?') to be contextualized in terms of four related dimensions: agent ('by whom?'), scene ('when and where?'), agency ('by what means?'), and purpose ('for what reason?'). In any actual moment of action, judgements as to the character of each of these has a firmly interpretative basis. Yet, it is also an approach that lends itself to verification in the sense that it should also be possible for another researcher to approach the same situation and, deploying the same analytic framework, reach a similar interpretation.

Chapter 7 presents the rise of social enterprise in the UK in terms of a labor of definition. As mentioned above, following the lead of previous institutionalist research (see especially Colyvas

and Powell, 2006; Colyvas, 2007), that highlights the prevalence of meaning-making activity in the initial years of institutional creation, attention was focused on the first four years of emergence. Additionally, research by scholars of social enterprise (Teasdale, 2012; Sepulveda, 2015), has also confirmed that the early years of emergence were the most significant in terms of shaping the meaning of the concept in the UK. The chapter is structured chronologically, with each section detailing one act of definition in terms of the act, the actor involved, the scene, and purpose. The objective is to establish, for each act of definition (or instance of ‘defining work’), a sense of the underpinning logic of definition.

Part III, which is comprised of only one chapter, then returns to the original research question and provides an answer based on the case of social enterprise and broader institutionalist research. Central to the provision of an answer is the elaboration of the *‘labour of definition’* and *‘defining work’* in connection with the notion of a *‘dialectic of definition’*. As such, Chapter 8 sets out several broad propositions about the operation of definition with respect to institutions. Among those propositions are the following: 1) institutions have an inherently conceptual dimension, and that the creation and stability of the institution requires a semantic operation, of which stipulative definition is the case *par excellence*, which fixes reference while assigning worth; 2) the conceptual/semantic basis of an institution can be subjected to a process of (re)definition (*‘labour of definition’*); 3) the labour of definition is, necessarily, a political act in the sense of having distributional consequences (both material and symbolic); 4) the actors involved in the labour of definition (*agents of definition*) will seek to define concepts in ways they believe will maximize their own interests, but not necessarily always doing so effectively; 5) their efforts to do so will be guided by the logics of their ‘subject position’ (*logics of definition*), and within the conceptual constraints of their environment; 6) definition is a rhetorical act in the sense that the actors are required to communicate their ideas in a persuasive way and that this will have a bearing on the success of attempts at institutional change; 7) despite the power of persuasion, attempts at redefinition will require a coalitional basis and success in enforcing conformity to their preferred definition will depend, in large part, on the material power and authority of actors – and their coalitions; 8) that the aggregation of those practices over time can constitute institutional change or institutional maintenance. The chapter, and the thesis with it, concludes by suggesting a range of avenues for future research.

PART I: The theoretical framework

Chapter 2: From the canons of definition to 'logics of definition'

“...no problems of knowledge are less settled than those of definition,
and no subject is more in need of a fresh approach”

Raziel Abelson (1967:664)

2.1 Approaching definition from an institutional perspective

Definition is discussed widely but in no dedicated disciplinary space. As Dubs (1943:566) notes, “Definition is not itself a discipline that exists for its own sake”.³ Studying definition, therefore, is presented with the immediate difficulty of locating an appropriate primary literature, a problem which is exacerbated by the lack of discussion from a sociological perspective.

Historically, philosophy has been the most important source of discussion. A sense of the historical significance of definition is found in Sager’s (2000) *Essays on Definition*, a collection of excerpts on definition taken from the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Isidoro of Seville, Pascal, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley, Kant, Mill, Rickert (his entire doctoral thesis). In recent times (relative to the above list), Robinson’s (1954) *Definition* is often described as one of the only analyses charting the history of the idea. Shortly thereafter, Raziel Abelson offered a synthesising account in his doctoral thesis on the subject (1960), forming the basis of his entry in the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (1967). Perhaps the main contemporary source of writing on definition is to be found in textbooks on logic and/or critical reasoning (e.g. Copi and Cohen, 1990; Hurley, 2005). Yet the treatment therein rarely stretches beyond a solitary chapter and, even then, tends to reproduce, rather than critically evaluate or contextualize, the same doctrines that have been upheld since Aristotle.

The point of that brief overview is both to illustrate the exceptionally wide array of sources of thought on definition and to register the general absence of a sociological account. That claim provides the warrant for embarking on a discussion of definition which begins to lay foundations for understanding its potential role in institutional change. Importantly, the objective is not to determine *what definition is*, but rather to show how, at various points in time, the concept has referred to practices which, though sharing similarities, differ in important respects. A central finding is that, as Aristotelian metaphysics has subsided, definition has come increasingly to be seen as a linguistic practice that influences one of two elements of conceptual meaning: intension

³ Dubs, himself, was principally a sinologist

and extension. However, that conceptualization of meaning typically ignores a third element: the evaluative or emotive aspect of conceptual meaning. The consequence is a de-politicisation of definition generally, and within social science specifically.

Against this tendency, the review seeks to reassert both the institutional and the political character of definitions and defining. The main implication for understanding the role of definition in institutional change, is to show that when actors engage in an act of definition (or what shall be termed ‘defining work’ after Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006), they are neither stepping out of the political nor the institutional matrix. Rather, they are invoking one institution to alter the meaning of another institution, invariably within a context of distributional struggle. This is central to the notion of a ‘dialectic of definition’, the elaboration of which is an important contribution of the thesis (see Section 2.6). This is to take a quite different approach to definition than is typically found in the diverse literature (see below), but considering Abelson’s critical appraisal of scholarship, as quoted at the opening of the chapter, such a departure from orthodoxy may be preferable.

In the section that immediately follows, we shall consider the wide range of practices that are thought to count as instances of definition. Three main *types* are typically presented in the literature: real definition, lexical definition, and stipulative definition. However, as shall be seen, these three rapidly expand into a bewildering morass of practices.

2.2 Real definition and the problem of essence

The first practice of definition, *real definition*, is linked to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. What they share is a metaphysical conviction in the existence of ‘essences’ and a faith that definitions, properly formed, are statements revealing that essence. The concept of essence is notoriously contested. There are those who continue to argue for its utility (Oderberg, 2007), and those that deny it (Heyes, 2000). A simple definition is found in Sayer (1997: 456), who states that essentialism, at least within philosophy, is the doctrine that “objects have certain essential properties which make them one kind of thing rather than any other. In addition to these essential features they may have other accidental properties”.

For Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, the pursuit of real definition, or essences, was considered the highest form of knowledge attainable. For Socrates, once definitions of the virtues had been

established, they could serve as models by which to live a good life. For Aristotle, real definitions, to the extent that they are constructed according to his method of '*per genus et differentiam*' (genus and specific difference), provided both the essence of the thing and an account of its *cause*. It was on that basis that Aristotle considered definitions to form the basis of all scientific knowledge.

It is important to understand that Socrates invented definition as a tool of argumentation with which to counteract the radical scepticism and emerging moral relativism of the Sophists. The Sophists' influence was growing rapidly due to the radically 'direct' structure of Greek (Athenian) democracy. A central feature of this was the selection of officials by the drawing of lots rather than by election. As a result, the affairs of the city were under the hands not of experts appointed on the grounds of technical expertise, but rather officials selected by lots and appealing directly to the assembly by means of speech. To speak well, in this institutional context, was to gain power; to speak poorly was to lose it. As Large (*undated*) notes, "The power of argument is at the heart of Athens social structure, and must be there, because of the radical nature of its democracy".

With skills of argumentation a prerequisite of political power and influence, the Sophists had thrived financially by providing a well-off clientele with precisely these skills. However, to strengthen their own reputation and influence, leading Sophists, such as Gorgias and Protagoras, then began to push their relativist perspective further, arguing there was no universal form to ethical virtues such as justice, only moral codes that were more or less accepted as legitimate in one particular society (or Greek city) but not necessarily in another. The way in which the Sophists argued their case is equally important, since Socrates' opposition was as much concerned with their method as the conclusions drawn. The Sophists had advanced their arguments through a radical nominalism; arguing, for example, that 'justice' in Athens was different to 'justice' in Sparta. They may have shared the same name but there was not one true form to justice as such.

Socrates sought to challenge the Sophists by accepting the argument that the world of the senses was in flux, but, rejecting the conclusion that this meant that there could be no true knowledge of the world. Rather, Socrates maintained that when people spoke of things, or of virtues such as 'justice', there was always an element of commonality in what they spoke of. If both Athenians and Spartans spoke of 'justice' it was because there was something identical, or common, in their uses. True knowledge, he held, was to be discovered in precisely those points of commonality. Socrates used the word *essence* to refer to what is permanent across all instances of a virtue. Locating

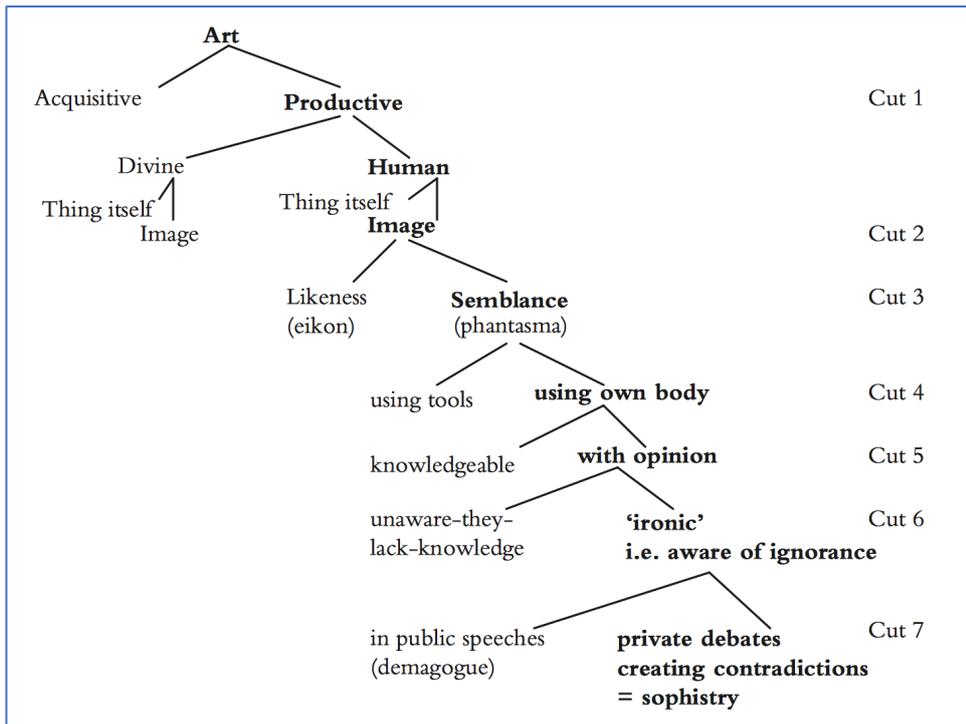
the essence, however, required developing a new form of argumentation and it is this form of argumentation that gave birth to the practice of definition (Rickert, 1888).

Although Socrates did not formalize a method of definition, he did articulate at least three requirements. First, he demanded that a definition be substitutable with what is defined, or, more formally, that “its *definiens* must be substitutable *salva veritate* for its *definiendum*” (Dancy, 2004:80). Again, this rule of definition emerges from the context of argument, and especially the form of argument (nominalism) that Socrates was trying to defeat. Socrates also held that definitions should “give a paradigm or standard by comparison with which cases of its *definiendum* may be determined” (ibid, *emphasis added*); and, third, he demands that the *definiens* “explain the application of its *definiendum*”. (ibid, *emphasis added*). The three requirements are shortened to: substitutability, paradigm, and explanation (Dancy, 2004).

Socrates’ invention of definition is important for many reasons but, perhaps, especially because it provided the foundation for Plato and Aristotle’s approaches to definition; which are essentially attempts to deliver theories of definition that adhere to the requirements laid down by Socrates (Dancy, 2004). Specifically, they elaborate upon the method to be followed in order to reveal the essence.

Plato’s answer (to the question of how to locate the essence) is to do so through a process of dichotomous classification of general kinds into subordinate kinds until no further subdivision is possible (i.e. the point at which you are left only with a set of things which are entirely identical). At that point, when no more divisions can be drawn, the *terminus* has been reached and the essence of the thing can then be read backwards from the sequence of steps or *cuts* one had taken up to that point (see *Figure 2.1*). A definition for Plato, therefore, was a statement detailing the sequence of steps (‘cuts’ or ‘divisions’) required to reach the terminus.

Figure 2. 1: Defining “sophistry” by the method of division



Source: L. Brown (2010) Division and Definition in Plato's Sophist

For Plato, a definition produces knowledge of a form (or idea) in terms of its positions within a pyramid of all things. It is at once subordinated to a higher idea and assigned a 'difference' in respect of which it is separated from other ideas under the same higher idea. There is a clear echo of Socrates' interest in living a good life, since at the apex of the pyramid of all things is the idea of the *good*, and everything else is arranged in terms of its place in relation to the good. The problems with Plato's methods are numerous, but perhaps the most obvious concerns the *principle of division*. In other words, what determines, in the case of art, an initial split into 'acquisitive' and 'productive'. It seems that no answer can be given that does not return to subjective judgement. Aristotle would attempt to resolve this problem with the demand that definition reveal the *cause* of the thing.

Aristotle's engagements with Socrates and Plato range between reverence and ridicule⁴. Aristotle criticised Socrates' focus on ethical matters, which he claimed had neglected "the world of nature as a whole" (Aristotle, quoted in Chiba, 2010:234-235) and, therefore, provided an inappropriate paradigm of knowledge⁵. Plato's *Theory of Forms* is credited for having aimed at mapping the fundamental structure of reality in terms of the universal kinds of which it was constituted; and

⁴ He sarcastically refers to Plato as "the champion of division" (Posterior Analytics, Book II, Part 5).

⁵ This suggests that to understand Aristotle's development of definition it is necessary to understand that his objective was to provide the foundations for scientific knowledge.

there was also something attractive in the principle of hierarchical ordering. However, Aristotle ridicules the method of dichotomous classification, with its rigid dividing of things into two classes, characterised by a single differentia and its opposite (Balme, 1975:185), saying that it guarantees neither the *essence* of the thing nor its *cause*.

For Aristotle, who was constructing the foundations of scientific knowledge, a definition must show not only *what a thing is* (the essence) but also *why it is* (the cause). In *Posterior Analytics* Aristotle clearly states, “Definition is a formula showing *why the thing is*”⁶. Abelson (1967) makes the same observation, “The most noteworthy feature of his many discussions of definition is his insistence that a real definition should provide a causal explanation of the thing defined” (Abelson, 1967). The demand that definition simultaneously reveal the essence and cause is key to understanding Aristotle’s method of definition ‘*per genus et differentiam*’.

However, although Aristotle elaborates on this method of definition, like Plato before, he does not provide a satisfactory answer as to why a particular division should be considered causal. For example, in *Posterior Analytics* he suggests that the process of definition by ‘*per genus et differentiam*’ proceeds by identifying the *genus* (the broader class to which a thing belongs) and its *differentia* (the properties in virtue of which the members of the more specific *species* can be distinguished from the members of the less specific genus). Only when the differentia and genus reflect *essential* properties (the properties that things of that species have by their nature), was the result a *proper definition*. Importantly, in contrast to Plato, who excludes sense perception from the method of definition, Aristotle establishes his method of definition on a firm empirical footing.

For example, In *Posterior Analytics* (Book 1, chapter 13), Aristotle begins to present the method of investigating, or “tracing”, the elements that constitute the essence. He explains that we should begin by “observing a set of similar — i.e. specifically identical — individuals, and consider what element they have in common”. Second, we should repeat this process for “another set of individuals which *belong to one species* and are generically but not specifically identical with the former set”. Again, for this second set we should establish “what the common element is in all members of this second species”. We can do this again for whatever number of other sets. At that point, we must look to see whether the identities in common within the sets are shared across sets. Aristotle’s says we must consider “whether the results established possess any identity”.

⁶ Definition should show the “cause of the thing defined” (Granger, 1976:236).

Anticipating Socrates's requirement of substitutability, Aristotle continues, "of the attributes which inhere always in each several things, there are some which are wider in extent than it but not wider than its genus". These are attributes which, although always present within the definiendum, are not exclusive to it. For example, all humans have eyes, but not exclusively, as many other things, within its genus, that are not human, also have eyes. The task of definition is, Aristotle continues, to determine the "exact point at which [those attributes] are severally of wider extent than the subject but collectively coextensive with it". This "synthesis" of all such attributes, Aristotle explains, "must be the substance of the thing". In short, the essence of a thing is just that synthesis of attributes that "taken collectively" apply "to no other subject".

However, one of the enduring problems with Aristotle's theory of definition is that it is unclear why cause and essence should be simultaneously revealed through the method of genus and difference. In particular, the idea of internal causality seems to imply that the genus is the cause of the thing. Cassirer attempts to shed light on this by saying "the determination of the concept according to its next higher genus and its specific difference reproduces the process by which the real substance successively unfolds itself in its special form of being. Thus, it is this basic conception of substance which the purely logical theory of Aristotle constantly has reference" (Cassirer, 1910:7). Abelson (1967) identifies what he considered the main problem. Specifically, Aristotle presents internal causality as being internal to the thing defined, but he draws on a mistaken metaphor since "essential cause is not "internal" to the thing defined as a kernel is inside a nut, but only metaphorically "inside."". The implication of this metaphor is a view of scientific knowledge comprised only of definitions and that the work of theoretical explanation is completed through a systematic classification. Again, as Abelson (1967) notes,

"If to define a term is, at the same time, to provide a causal explanation of what it denotes and if the classification of a thing in terms of its species and differentia is sufficient for deducing the laws of its behavior, then the work of scientific inquiry is completed when a comprehensive system of classification has been constructed"
(1967:667)

Despite those problems, and the broader decline of Aristotelian metaphysics, the idea that definition, formed in terms of genus and difference, can reveal the essence, continues to find favour (e.g. Kelley, 2014). A clear example is found in Kelley (2014), who defines definition as

“a statement that identifies the referents of a concept by specifying the genus they belong to and the essential characteristics (differentia) that distinguish those referents from other members of the genus” (2014: 28).

For Kelley (2014), two functions are served by definition. First, definition serves to “clarify the boundaries of a concept” by telling us precisely “what is and is not included in a concept by giving us a test or rule for membership” (2014: 26). Second, definitions clarify the relationship between concepts within a genus-species hierarchy. In doing so, they “ward off [the] dangers” posed by different people using the same concept but differing in ideas of what the concept includes, and what “class of things it actually stands for” (2014: 27). Definitions, Kelley states, “keep a concept tied to its referents by relating it clearly to other concepts that serve as links in the chain” (ibid). The third function is to provide information about the referents of concepts. That is why Kelley asserts that a “good definition...condenses the knowledge we have about the referents of a concept, giving us just the highlights, the key points, the essence” (2014: 27).

Since the information provided by the definition concerns the nature of the referent, not just the meaning of a word, Kelley (2014) holds that definition must be formed through genus and differentia. In constructing the definition by genus and differentia, the same logical principles first established by Socrates and developed by Plato and Aristotle are invoked. Specifically, the first step is to identify the genus, then differentia are sought which “states the essential attributes of the referents and distinguishes them from other species of the same genus” (2014: 36). Having done that, you can then “double-check your definition by looking for counterexamples and by making sure that your definition is not circular, negative, or unclear” (ibid).

Additionally, the definition must “state the essential attributes of the concept’s referents” (2014: 31). Kelley (2014) explains that by “essential” he means “fundamental” in the sense that “an essential attribute causes or explains the existence of other attributes” (ibid). However, Kelley has no greater solutions to the problem of the principle of division that plagues essentialism. He even concedes that the selection of essential attributes is, in the final analysis, a subjective matter,

“there is no hard and fast rule for determining which attributes are essential. Our view of what is essential to a class of objects may change as we acquire more knowledge about them, and it may involve controversial issues on which people

disagree. The rule of essentiality means pick the most essential attribute you can, given everything you know, using your best judgment” (2014: 32).

Neither Aristotle nor Kelley (2014) provide a clear explanation as to how, exactly, the essential properties are to be identified and discriminated from the inessential in a way that does not fall back on a pre-existing definition of the thing in question, or some other formula on the basis of which we would already know the species in terms of what is essential to it (Fetzer, 1991). It is for this reason that the idea of essence is often regarded as the least satisfactory part of the Aristotelian theory of definition. Yet, given that Kelley’s (2014) student textbook remains a bestseller, it is clear the theory lives on despite its problems being unresolved.

2.3 Lexical (or nominal) definition: facts of usage or matters of judgement?

The second main historical variety of definition, *lexical definition*, also has a truth value since it purports to provide a fact of usage (Copi and Cohen, 1990). However, unlike a real definition, which claims to provide information concerning things, a lexical definition purports only to facts of linguistic usage. It is concerned with reporting only with the *meaning* a word or concept has for a particular linguistic community. The notion of *lexical definition* originates in the *Posterior Analytics*, where Aristotle states that “in defining, one exhibits either what the object is or what its name means” (Tredennick, 1960: II.7.92b). Here, Aristotle points to two distinct kinds of *definiendum*: things and words. In the first sense, a definition can be pursued for information about the *essential* nature of the *thing* that is “gold”, whereas in the latter activity definition is pursued to determine or report on what the *word* “gold” means. Having divided the *definienda* into things and words, he then attributed the greatest significance to the former, seeing these as the only type of serious importance to the formation of scientific knowledge.

Despite Aristotle’s preference for real definition, the decline of his metaphysics saw the notion of nominal or lexical definition rise in prominence. Today the purest expression of lexical definition is the dictionary (leading some to see lexical definitions as dictionary definitions). One problematic feature of lexical definition, however, concerns the notion of “established usage”, or what Munson and Black’s (2016) refer to as “ordinary meaning”. The determination of ‘established usage’ will always require a judgement as to which usages to include and which to omit. The actual practice of lexicographers illustrates that in compiling a dictionary, the author/editor’s judgement as to the

‘facts’ plays a formative role. Samuel Johnson, for example, described his efforts to compile a dictionary (i.e. create lexical definitions) in the following terms:

“When I took the first survey of my understanding, I found our speech copious without order, and energetick without rules: wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made of the boundless variety, without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority” (Johnson, 1755, quoted in Harris and Hutton, 2007: 78).

In actual practice, Johnson referred (and deferred) heavily to the ‘writers of classical reputation’. To understand the customary meaning of, for example, the concept of “obligation”, Johnson would take the work of a prominent thinker, such as Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, as the ‘correct’ usage. However, as shown below (Section 2.3) when Hobbes stated the meaning of “obligation” in the *Leviathan* he had no intention of reflecting ordinary usage; indeed, his intention was precisely the opposite. Williams makes the point forcefully, stating, in his reflections on dictionary definitions, that

“in a number of cases, especially in certain sensitive social and political terms, the presuppositions of orthodox opinion in that period either show through or are not far below the surface...the air of massive impersonality which the Oxford *Dictionary* communicates is not so impersonal, so purely scholarly, or so free of active social and political values...” (Williams, 1983:18).

Robinson makes a similar observation but uses this to assert that most dictionaries do not provide lexical definition at all but rather stipulation. He states that “the maker of dictionaries sometimes regards himself as a legislator rather than as an historian, as saying how words ought to be used rather than how they are used. So far as he does this, he regards himself as giving stipulative definitions, not lexical ones” (1954:59). That leads us to consideration of stipulative definitions.

2.4 Stipulative definition

The third type of definition considered here, *stipulative definition*, rose to prominence with Blaise Pascal's *The Spirit of Geometry*, a work which argued that geometry was the "only science which knows the true rules of reasoning" (Sager, 2000: 96). The true method is one which would establish "perfect proofs" and it consists of two elements. The first was "never to use a term whose meaning had not been previously clearly determined"; and the second was "never to advance a proposition that had not previously been demonstrated as true by means of existing known truths". Pascal shortened this to the dictum, "define all terms and...prove all propositions". Importantly, Pascal not only differentiated his practice of definition from the real definitions sought by Aristotle, he also redefined 'nominal definition' so that it no longer consisted of reports or explanations of meaning but only of pure stipulations which stated precisely how a word was to be used for the purposes of exposition immediately at hand. This is presented as follows:

"In geometry, only those definitions are recognised which logicians call nominal definitions, i.e. the simple allocation of names to things which have been clearly determined in perfectly known terms. I am referring only to these definitions. Their usefulness and application consists in clarifying and shortening discourse, by expressing, by the one given name, that which could only be expressed by several terms; in a manner, however, that the allocated name remain free of all other meanings, if it were to have any, in order to retain only the one it has been given" (Sager, 2000: 97)

This was, itself, an important act of redefinition, since it was subsequently taken up by Bacon (1561-1626) and Hobbes (1588-1679) when they came to reconstruct knowledge on the grounds of a new scientific language. It was the "wisdom of the mathematicians" they praised and invoked. They did so to remove one of the chief obstacles to their project: the ambiguity of language. Francis Bacon presents the case for the Pascalian use of definition in *Advancement of Learning* (1605) where he states:

"...words, as a Tartar's bow, do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgement. So, as it is almost necessary in all controversies and disputations to imitate the wisdom of the mathematicians, in setting down in the very beginning the definitions of our words and terms that others may know how we accept and understand them, and whether they concur with us or no" (1605: 2. Xiv.11, cited in Harris and Hutton, 2007:5)

It was through these conceptual innovations – literally redefining the concept of definition – that the practice of definition changed fundamentally. While stipulative definition does not necessarily entail an anti-essentialist foundation, it also differs markedly from essentialism in respect of its primary purpose; since rather than attempting to provide information on the essence of the thing defined, it seeks only to state how a particular word shall be used for a task at hand. This practice reaches its purest expression as a notational device in mathematics. In contrast to a real definition, which purports to offer a statement of fact about a thing: a stipulative definition has no truth value at all. As Copi and Cohen (1990:133) explain, as a “proposal or resolution to use the definiendum to mean what is meant by the definiens, or as a request or instruction to do so”, it makes no sense, so the theory goes, to say that the definition is false or, indeed, true. They continue, “Proposals may be rejected, requests refused, instructions disobeyed – but they are neither true nor false” (1990:133).

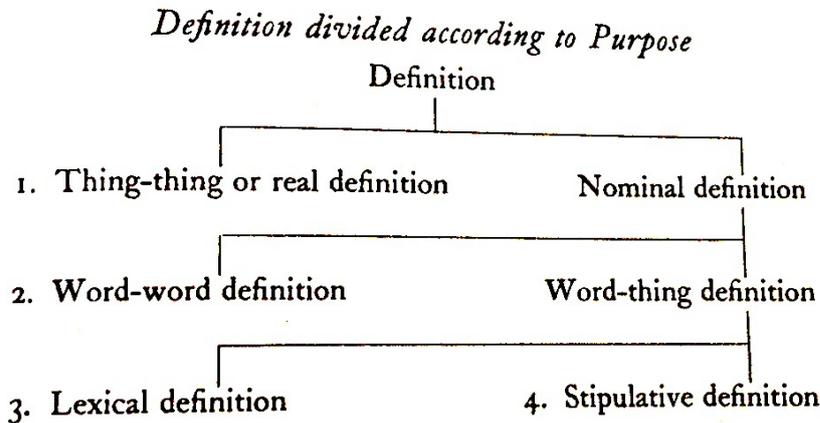
2.5 The diversity of definition

The above account has outlined three major types of definition. However, even a cursory engagement with the literature on definition reveals a much greater array of practices. It even suggests several different ways of classifying definition. One is to divide the practice of definition according to the purpose/objective, another division can be achieved in terms of method, while a third could be attempted in terms of the kind of information the definition provides. It is even possible, indeed standard, to combine these.

One such taxonomy, is Robinson (1954) who distinguishes between *purposes* and *methods* of definition. In terms of purposes, which are defined as “what [it] is trying to do”, the “supreme division”, he suggests, is into *nominal* and *real definition*. This draws on a distinction originally made by Aristotle in the *Posterior Analytics*, where he states, “in defining, one exhibits either what the object is or what its name means”. The purpose of a nominal definition, according to Robinson, is, roughly, “to report or establish the meaning of a symbol” (1954:16). The purpose of a real definition, in contrast, is to reveal the essence of the thing. Robinson then subdivides nominal definition into ‘word-word definition’ (the purpose of which is to define a word to mean the same as another word) and ‘word-thing definition’ (the purpose of which is to define a word to mean a certain thing) and then further subdivides the latter into *lexical definition* (which aims to report on usage) and *stipulative definition* (which aims to establish meaning) (see Figure 2.2). The method of definition is defined as “the means which it adopts to achieve its purpose”, and, here, Robinson

identifies seven varieties, all of which relate specifically to ‘word-thing definition’. These are: *definition by synonym; definition by analysis; definition by synthesis; implicative definition; denotative definition, ostensive definition; and definition by rule.*

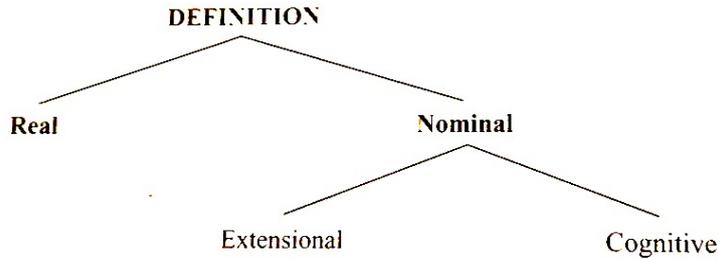
Figure 2. 2: Robinson’s “Purposes of definition”



Source: Robinson (1954:19)

An alternative division is found in Riemer’s (2010) discussion of ‘ways of defining’, formed from the point of view of linguistic semantics. He deploys an opening dichotomy, which splits definitions into two *types*: real definition and nominal definition. The former is then excluded from further consideration, since he is exclusively concerned with word meaning. Nominal definitions are then subdivided according to whether their “*function*” is to “[fix] the meaning or a word...” or “[bring] about an understanding of a word...” (2010: 65). These functions are labelled *extensional* and *cognitive*, respectively. In consequence of this different arrangement, the purpose that Robinson labels *stipulative* is labelled *extensional* by Riemer, and the purpose Robinson labels *lexical* is labelled *cognitive* by Riemer. After setting up those distinctions, Riemer proceeds to list four ‘ways of defining’, or *methods*, capable of fulfilling either function: *definition by ostension; definition by synonymy; definition by context or typical exemplar; and definition by genus and differentia*. Riemer’s ‘ways’ is equivalent to Robinson’s ‘methods’, yet the former recognizes only four varieties, whereas the latter recognizes seven.

Figure 2. 3: Riemer’s “Types of definition”



Source: Riemer (2010:64)

The diversity of definitional practices becomes even greater when classified in terms of *method*. Davidson (1885), who still finds merit in Aristotelian *real definition*, sets out six different “defining modes”: definition *per genus et differentiam* (or *essential definition*); *definition by Partition* or *Analysis*; *Defining by Negation*; *by Description*; *by Etymology*; and *by Example*. Hurley (2005) recognises seven “methods of definition” but these are not the same seven as Robinson’s (see above). His division proceeds from two main types: *extensional definition* (*Demonstrative (ostensive) definition*; *enumerative definition*; and, *definition by subclass*) and *intensional definition* (*synonymous definition*; *etymological definition*; *operational definition*; and, *definition by genus and difference*). Munson and Black (2016) identify only five methods: *synonym*; *genus and species*; *ostension*; *example*; and *complete enumeration*. This drops Hurley’s *definition by subclass*, *etymological definition* and *operational definition*, but reintroduces Davidson’s *definition by example*.

One theme that emerges in respect of the method of defining is the distinction between intension and extension in conceptual meaning. According to Salmon (1963), “The extension of a word is the class of *things* to which the words applies; the intension of a word is the collection of *properties* which determine the things to which the word applies” (Salmon, 1963, quoted in Sartori, 1970: 22). Historically, the dichotomization of meaning has been expressed in different, although generally equivalent, terms. J.S. Mill differentiated between *connotation* and *denotation*; while Frege made a celebrated distinction between *sense* and *reference*. The supposed propinquity of these dichotomizations has led many scholars to group them together. Hurley, for instance, notes that “the **intensional meaning** consist of the qualities or attributes that the term *connotes*, and the **extensional meaning** consists of the members of the class that the term *denotes*” (bold and italics in original, Hurley, 2005:83). Hurley also groups these notions together with Frege’s sense and reference, saying “‘Intension’ and ‘extension’ are roughly equivalent to the more modern terms ‘sense’ and ‘reference’ respectively” (*ibid*).

There are at least three methods of extensional definition: ostensive definition, enumerative definition, listing subclasses. *Ostensive definition* consists of pointing to an object and associating this with a word. The simplicity of this method is, however, matched by its limitations. Ostensive definition cannot convey information about the attributes in virtue of which the label is applied to the thing. It is not just that ostensive definition lacks a “criteria for deciding”, but that the process of pointing is inherently ambiguous. Pointing to even a simple object like a car is also to point to a part of it; perhaps its model, size, shape, colour, type, material. For this reason, some writers have refused to recognise ostensive definition as a legitimate form of definition. Mills, for example, states, that the practice of pointing to an object or person for the purpose of linking a name to a thing “has not been esteemed one of the modes of definition” (System of Logic, Book 1, Chapter 8, in Sager, 2001). Dewey and Bentley (1947), too, rail against continued recognition of ostensive definition as a mode of defining.

Enumerative definition involves listing the objects to which the term can be applied. This can be either a complete or partial enumeration. A complete enumeration would be to define the USA by listing all the states of which it is comprised. A partial enumeration would be to define “colour” in terms of green, blue, and red. The objective of this method is usually to convey a sense of what the term means, the expectation being that the hearer will be able to extract the meaning from the common attributes that appear across the list. *Definition by subclass* is a similar method to enumeration. However, instead of listing objects, it lists subclasses denoted by the term. “Tree”, for example, could be defined by listing oak, pine, elm and maple as subclasses. As this example suggests, this method can also be complete or partial in the extent to which it names.

According to the traditional understanding within logic, the “intension” of a term consists of all the attributes shared by *all* and *only* the objects denoted by the term (Copi and Cohen, 1990). Importantly, central to the doctrine of extension and intension, is the precept that intension determines extension; and not the other way around. The method of definition that aims at assigning meaning to a term by indicating precisely those attributes is termed intensional (or connotative) definition. Copi and Cohen (1990) state that there are three kinds of intensional definition: *synonymous definition*, *operational definition* and *definition by genus and difference*. A fourth, *etymological definition*, has also been added to this list.

Definition by synonym requires the provision of a word or phrase which is equivalent in meaning to the word defined. For example, “flat” can be defined in the following form, “the word ‘flat’ means

the same thing as the word ‘apartment’”. It is said to be one of the most common methods of definition, in large part due to its economy. It is, however, problematic in the sense that no two words are exactly equivalent in meaning. The example of “flat” and “apartment” can be further used to illustrate this. In the UK context, “flat” is usually contrasted to “apartment” with the former referring to relatively basic amenities, whereas the latter tends to connote accommodation which is relatively luxurious and well equipped in term of amenities. As such, defining by synonym, in this case, would not provide an accurate account of meaning.

Operational definition, according to Hurley, “assigns a meaning to a word, by specifying certain experimental procedures that determine whether or not the word applies to a certain thing” (2005:97). Hurley provides the following example, “One substance is “harder than” another if and only if one scratches the other when the two are rubbed together” (ibid). The distinguishing trait of an operational definition is that they prescribe an *operation to be performed* in the application of the term. In Hurley’s example, the operation is the rubbing together of two materials. As with all forms of definition, operational definition has important limitations. For example, Sartori (1975) is critical in his appraisal of the method, saying operationalism “entails a drastic curtailment in the range of properties and attributes of concepts – including their theoretical and explanatory power” (Sartori, 1975:34). Therefore, what operational definition gains in terms of a purchase on reality, seems to come at the cost of a loss of meaning. It is also unclear how operational definition could be constructed for words such as “love”, “liberty”, or “freedom”.

Etymological definition, according to Hurley (2005) “assigns a meaning to a word by disclosing the word’s ancestry in both its own language and other languages” (2005: 107). This is a practice commonly seen in dictionaries, where, for example, we would find among the information for the English word “window” that this derives from the from Old Norse *vindauga*, which is a composite of *vindr*, meaning ‘wind’ and *auga*, meaning ‘eye’. Hurley suggests that etymology is important for two reasons. First, it conveys the “seminal meaning from which all other associated meanings are derived” (Hurley, 2005: 97). Indeed, he thinks that unless a person has knowledge of this “root meaning”, they “often [fail] to place other meanings in their proper light or to grasp the meaning of the word when it is used in its most proper sense” (ibid). Second, knowledge of the root meaning provides access to the meaning of “an entire constellation of related words” (ibid). For example, if it is known that “orthodox” derives from the Greek “*ortho*”, meaning straight and “*doxa*” meaning belief or opinion, then one might grasp more readily that “orthodontist” “has to do with straight teeth (*odon* in Greek means tooth)” (2005:97).

Based on this initial survey (summarized in Table 2.1) we can already identify as many as twenty-seven distinct definitional practices. There are undoubtedly additional nuances connected with each of the various practices, which could then also be given a name, and so the diversity continues to grow. As Robinson (1954) notes, a list of definitional practices cannot be exhaustive, since “the various ways of defining words form a multidimensional continuum, so that between any two empirically distinguished methods there will be intermediate cases, as there are colours between any two empirically specified colours” (1954:94).

Table 2. 1: The diversity of definitional practices

	Name	Function / Purpose	Method	Source
1	Real definition	x		Robinson (1954); Riemer (2010)
2	Nominal definition	x		Robinson (1954); Riemer (2010)
3	Word-word definition	x		Robinson (1954)
4	Word-thing definition	x		Robinson (1954)
5	Lexical definition	x		Robinson (1954); Riemer (2010)
6	Stipulative definition	x		Robinson (1954); Riemer (2010)
7	Extensional	x		Riemer (2010)
8	Cognitive	x		Riemer (2010)
9	Definition by ostension or Ostensive definition		x	Robinson (1954); Riemer (2010); Hurley (2005); Munson and Black (2016)
10	Definition by synonymy		x	Riemer (2010); Hurley (2005); Munson and Black (2016)
11	Definition by context or typical exemplar		x	Riemer (2010); Davidson (1885), Munson and Black (2016)
12	Definition by genus and differentia		x	Riemer (2010); Hurley (2005); Munson and Black (2016)
13	Definition by analysis		x	Robinson (1954)
14	Definition by synthesis		x	Robinson (1954)
15	Implicative definition		x	Robinson (1954)
16	Denotative definition		x	Robinson (1954)
17	Definition by rule		x	Robinson (1954)
18	Definition by Partition		x	Davidson (1885),
19	Defining by Negation		x	Davidson (1885),
20	Defining by Description		x	Davidson (1885),
21	Defining by Etymology;		x	Davidson (1885), Hurley (2005)
22	Enumerative definition		x	Hurley (2005); Munson and Black (2016)
23	Definition by subclass		x	Hurley (2005)

24	Operational definition		x	Hurley (2005)
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2.6 The neglect of rhetoric and deontology in the study of definition

Crucially, however, the array of definitional practices mentioned above is truncated in the sense no attention is paid to the rhetorical tradition of definition. There is no mention, for example, of the detailed engagements with definition by the Roman rhetoricians. Perhaps the best evidence of this is provided by Isidore of Seville’s *“division of definition”*, a list of fifteen types of definition (see **Table 2.2**), that contains some types which are either completely absent from or even disavowed in contemporary classifications. Written in the 7th century, Isidore of Seville’s *Etymologies* drew, uniquely, on the works of Cassiodorus (*Cassiodori Senatoris Institutiones*) and Marius Victorinus (*De definitionibus liber*), both of whom held a strong interest in the rhetorical uses of definition. Aristotle’s notion of *real definition* is given a clear nod of deference, presented as the “highest and proper form”, but around that are several alternatives, many of which serve ends set far apart from the ‘pursuit of knowledge about things’ or providing an account of word meaning. For example, among the uses served by type number 7 – *definition by metaphor* – are warning, designating, praising, condemning. These purposes were directed more towards the pleading of causes, typically observed in courts of law⁷.

Table 2. 2: Isidore of Seville’s ‘Division of the definitions’

	Name ⁸	Description
1	Usiodes (Greek) Substantialis (Latin) * Real definition	This is the classical Aristotelian definition and, as such, is “truly and properly called a definition”. It proceeds by species and differentia to present the essence and “determines fully” what a thing is. E.g. “Man is a rational, mortal animal capable of feeling and discipline”.
2	Ennoematiké (Greek) Notio (Latin)	This definition does not say what a thing is, but rather by stating what a thing does it “guides us by precise indications to the idea of what [a thing is]”. We are given an idea of the thing, but not a “substantial explanation”. E.g. “A man is that which by reasoned understanding and its application is above all animals”. “Cement is a substance that when placed between bricks binds them together”.
3	Poiotes (Greek) Qualitativa (Latin)	This definition indicates what and how a thing is in terms of its qualities, as opposed to essence. E.g. “Man is one who stands out by his intellect,

⁷ A significant reason for this was that Cassiodorus and Marius Victorinus had drawn on Cicero, the greatest of the Roman Orators, who, like Quintilian after him, had turned to Aristotle’s account of definition in *Topics* rather than *Posterior Analytics*. Isidore even notes that “We have to keep in mind that these kinds of definition are rightly associated with the Topics, because they are among some classes of arguments and these are discussed in the Topics”

⁸ It is worth quoting in full the translator’s note here: “The translation is based on the Latin and Spanish versions cited in the bibliography. The punctuation is adapted to modern usage. Since it seems generally assumed that Isidore did not write Greek, a composite Roman transliteration based on Luis Cortés y Góngora has been adopted for the Greek citations” (Sager, 2001:95).

		is distinguished in the arts, who by knowledge of things chooses how he should act, and condemns what his perception indicates to be futile”.
4	Hypografiké (Greek) Descriptio (Latin)	This definition described what a thing is by means of description and enumeration of statements and facts about it. E.g. A dissolute person = “A dissolute person is one who likes unnecessary food, but favours rich and expensive food, indulges in pleasures and is always ready for immoderate passion”.
5	Kata antilexin (Greek) Ad verbum (Latin)	This definition provides the <i>meaning of a word</i> by the use of another “unique and different word”. E.g. “devastated ... is “destroyed”.
6	Kata diaphorán (Greek) Per differentiam (Latin)	This definition provides meaning by offering the difference between one thing and another thing. E.g. What is the difference between a king and tyrant?. “The king is moderate and good-tempered the tyrant is godless and cruel”. In a sense, the definition serves to define two things/words at once by telling them apart, or “from one and the other”.
7	Kata metaphorán (Greek) Per translationem (Latin)	This definition issues a metaphor, as when Cicero defines the beach as “the place where the waves run out”. Isidore notes that this can serve several purposes including warning, designating, praising and condemning.
8	Kata apharesin tu enantiu (Greek) Por privantiam contrarii eius quod definitur (Latin)	This definition works via denial of the opposites in the concept being defined. It is typically used when information is more readily available about the opposite of the thing to be defined. E.g. ‘If good is what is advantageous and honourably is good, what is not so is bad’. Or shortened to, ‘Good is what is not bad’. Today we might term this <i>negative definition</i> . <i>Trans</i> = the denial of the opposite of what is being defined”
9	Kata hypotyposin (Greek) Per quendam imaginationem (Latin)	The translation here is <i>definition by imagination</i> but neither the name nor the examples make particularly clear the distinction form of this definition. <i>Example</i> = “as when one says: ‘Aeneas is the son of Anchises and Venus’. This definition, Isidore explains, always refers to individuals which the Greeks call “ἄτομα”, which is perhaps best translated as “people”. It could, therefore, be a definition which explains a relation between people.
10	Kata analogian (Greek) Per analogiam or iuxta rationem (Latin)	The Latin translation, “according to reason”, suggests that reason is the guiding principle, but the description and examples provided suggest that this type of definition work by providing an example (perhaps even an exemplar) of the object (thing/word) in question. For example, in answer to the question “What is an animal” it can be answered “like a man”. This is essentially the same as Riemer’s ‘definition by exemplar’.
11	Kata elleipés oleokleru homoiu genus (Greek) Per indigentiam pleni ex eodem genere (Latin)	The translation from Latin is “incomplete within the same genus” and the example provided is: if when someone asks ‘what is a third part’ and one were to answer: ‘that which is lacking two thirds to make it a whole’. From this is difficult to establish the distinctive form of the this type of definition.
12	Kata epainon (Greek) Per laudem (Latin)	The translation of this type of definition is “by praising” and involves providing a meaning of a term which is deliberately commendatory. As is, “The law is the mind, the counsel, the spirit and the judgment of the state’, or that other one (Cicero, Phil., 2, 113): ‘Peace is quiet liberty’. Isidore notes, however, that the converse is equally possible. Definitions, he sates, “can also be made ‘by >. As is ‘Slavery is the worst of all evils, which has to be resisted not only with war, but even with death’.
13	Kata to pros ti (Greek) Definitio segundum quid	Here the translation is something like <i>definition by relation</i> . It explains meaning by providing the relation of one thing to another. As in: ‘A father is one who has a son’; ‘A master is he who has a slave’.

	(Latin)	
14	Kata ton oron (Greek) Per totum (Latin)	It is not at all clear what is intended here. The example provided is when Cicero states in <i>In Rhetoricis</i> (Inv.,1, 42): ‘Genus is what covers many parts’. And this one: ‘The part is that which is included in the genus’.
15	Kata aitiologian (Greek) Secundum rei rationem (Latin)	The English translation would be <i>definition according to the reason of the thing</i> . The example provided is “as in: ‘When it is day the sun is above the earth; At night the sun is below the earth’.

Source: Adapted from Sager (2001:91-94)

A central reason for the neglect of the rhetorical tradition arises from the fact that contemporary philosophy and logic have ignored rhetoric more broadly. As Rey (2001:11) notes, “modern accounts and syntheses of definition not only omit reference to all non-western traditions, but, among the western ones, neglect the rhetorical tradition”. This is surprising because, as we have seen, definition was first invented by Socrates as a tool of argumentation (indeed, his opponents were none other than the Sophists!). Additionally, as we shall see in the next Chapter (see section 2.3.4), the ancient scholars of rhetoric, such as Cicero and Quintilian, approached definition principally in terms of its utility in winning argument through persuasion.

However, another reason for the neglect of rhetoric is, that accounts of definition have come to focus centrally on the intension and extension of concepts in a way that remove an important third element of meaning. As noted above, most accounts of definition distinguish between extension and intension, and the various methods of definition are then positioned in relation to either one of these. The trouble with this account of conceptual meaning, however, is that it is, at best, incomplete, and at worst, erroneous. Specifically, the view of conceptual meaning as comprised of intension and extension excludes a third element of meaning. For example, although Frege is celebrated for the distinction between *sense* and *reference*, he also spoke of “tone” as a third element of meaning, but this enjoys nothing close to the prominence of the latter two dimensions.⁹ Frege was by no means alone in discovering a third element of conceptual meaning. William James, one of history’s most important theorists of meaning, spoke of the “fringe of meaning” (Boothby, 2015:29); while Volosinov, one of the leading semioticians of the 20th century, asserted that the “evaluative accent” was an inherent feature of meaning. Volosinov even makes such an emphatic claim as,

⁹ Sinn (sense), Bedeutung (reference) and Farbung (tone).

“any word used in actual speech possesses not only theme and meaning in the referential, or content, sense of these words, but also value judgement: i.e., all referential contents produced in living speech are said or written in conjunction with a specific *evaluative accent*. There is no such thing as a work without evaluative accent” (Volosinov, 1929/1973: 103).

Despite the weight of these claims, logical positivists such as G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell, expunged this *third dimension of meaning*, seeing it as an unhelpful semantic unit when the task (of philosophy and science, respectively) was to establish the truth value of proposition. Copi and Cohen (1990) even acknowledge this element of meaning only to dismiss it for the purposes of logic,

“It is a confusing fact that the word “connotation” has other uses, in which it sometimes refers to the total significance of a word, emotive as well as descriptive, and sometimes to its emotive meaning alone. Thus, a person who is cold and harsh may be described as not human – where the word ‘human’ is plainly being used to communicate an attitude or feeling, rather than to provide a biological classification. In such uses “connotation” refers to more than intension, but in logic we use the word “connotation” in the stricter sense. In our usage connotation and intension are part of the information significance of the term only” (Copi and Cohen, 1990:147).

What is implied in this statement, is that the third element of meaning carries no informational load, but this position is erroneous. The evaluative accent of a concept is an element of meaning that is every bit as important as the others, both in general and even in respect of assessing the truth value of a sentence. Not only would two sentences, differing only in respect of this third dimension, be accounted a difference in meaning; but a mistake in respect of tone or evaluative accent would also, ordinarily, be accounted a misunderstanding of meaning (Dummett, 1981:84). Someone who does not understand the subtle difference between “cop” and “police”, for example, would be said to have failed to appreciate the meaning of both. The controversy that arose when US President Obama stated that “we tortured some folk”, was as much with the use of the term ‘folk’, which is generally used to express an attitude of endearment or approval, as the truth value of the statement (Coleman, 2014).¹⁰

¹⁰ https://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-coleman/torturing-some-folks_b_5645919.html [Accessed: 05/03/2019]

Crucially, as discussed more fully in the next section (2.3.2), it is only by reinstating the *evaluative accent* of concepts that we can fully understand the importance of definition in institutional change. Once we accept that definitions are devices that simultaneously fix reference and express an evaluation, we can begin to understand more fully why definitions are frequently the subject of contestation. Importantly, to state the deontological character of definition is not a new argument; it is only to reclaim a dimension of definition that was central from the beginning, in the Socratic dialogues (which sought models for living a good life) and the writing of Plato (who arranged all things hierarchically in accordance with the ‘good’), but which has subsequently been expunged by modern scientific formalism. Incidentally, Aristotle’s development of the concept of essence does not strip definition of deontology, since, in the end, the determination of the essential and the inessential will always be a matter of judgement based on the values and objectives of the definer (Rickert, 1888).

A final point to take, from the neglect of the rhetorical tradition for the conduct of social science, is the fact that different practices of definition enjoy different degrees of legitimacy (so long as they abide by the relevant rules of use) in certain spheres of social life, while verging on disrepute in others. Dubs notes, for example, that “usually...definitions suitable for scientific purposes are too technical to enlighten the person who knows little about the subject, for whom the dictionary definition is framed” (1943:567). Before that Davidson (1885) had observed that, “The defining modes...are manifold and various, and a mode that is satisfactory and proper in one instance may be quite inapplicable in another” (1885: 40). The same point is even made by Cicero several centuries earlier, when he cautions his audience of jurists against using the definitions of orators and poets, since to do so would be to “abandon the language proper to the object and to [their] profession”.

2.7 Chapter summary

There are two main points to take from this section. First, there is a bewildering array of practices that count as definition. While the differences between some are slight, for others they differ fundamentally, both in terms of information provided and the method of construction. One can well understand why Rickert (1888) stated that “Among the various forms of scientific thought there is hardly another about which opinions diverge as widely as about definitions”; or why Dewey and Bentley’s (1947:286) discussion of definition states that “Today logic presents...many

varieties of conflicting accounts of definition, side slipping across one another, comprising and apologizing, with little coherence, and few signs of so much as a beginning of firm treatment” (Dewey and Bentley, 1947:286). Second, the rhetorical character of definition has been systematically downplayed and/or neglected from discussions within logic. Where it does appear, it is presented as an enemy of logic and clear thinking generally. However, understanding the rhetorical character of definition is prerequisite to understanding the role of definition in institutional change. In the next section, an argument shall be made for the view that all definitions are rhetorical.

Chapter 3: Rhetoric, conceptual change and social change

“to the extent that our social world is constituted by our concepts, any successful alteration in the use of a concept will at the same time constitute a change in our social world”

Quentin Skinner (2002:117-118)

3.1 Quentin Skinner’s redirection in the study of political concepts

Quentin Skinner’s work can be located within the intellectual tradition of historical political analysis which first developed in Cambridge in the late 1960s (Norval, 2000). Here, a group of scholars led by John Pocock,¹¹ and heavily influenced by Foucault and the ‘ordinary language philosophy’ of Wittgenstein and J.L. Austin, took language and context to be central to the analysis of political ideas. Their *anti-foundationalist* approach was in direct opposition to those that sought to understand the history of political thought in terms of canonical texts addressing themselves to perennial questions and unchanging “unit ideas” (such as liberty, right, justice etc.). Whereas these more positivistic, or even Neo-Kantian minded, scholars aspired to “halt the flux of politics by trying definitively to fix the analysis of key moral terms” (2002:177), Skinner sought to introduce a radical contingency into the history of thought by presenting the alteration of political concepts as nothing less than politics itself. For Skinner, not only was language understood to be constitutive (as opposed to merely descriptive) of reality, but also an inherently social activity, both creatively engineered, yet constrained by prevailing conventions, shared vocabularies, conceptual distinctions, and so on.

At the root of Skinner’s reorientation is the crucial insight that the application of the terms comprising a society’s normative vocabulary is not merely a matter of *describing*, but also of *evaluating* that to which the terms were applied. Following J.L Austin’s speech act theory (a redirection in the philosophy of language around the performative function of language in everyday use), Skinner sees the function of language as not simply to *communicate* ideas, nor to *describe* things, but rather, to perform various kinds of acts. In the classical texts of political philosophy, Skinner claimed, the author’s intention in using language was typically to perform one of two contrasting speech acts: speech aimed at commending and/or condemning (or, in more institutional parlance,

¹¹ Norval (2000) lists John Dunn, James Tully and John Pocock as Skinner’s most notable associates

legitimizing and/or delegitimizing) particular practices or conduct. That being the case, the proper task of the history of political thought was not to uncover the timeless essence of concepts employed by eminent thinkers, but rather of understanding the social and intellectual context in which their ideas were put forward and altered, with a view to better understanding what those authors might have hoped to achieve by doing what they did. Skinner declares that every instance of political language "is inescapably the embodiment of a particular intention, on a particular occasion, addressed to the solution of a particular problem, and thus specific to its situation in a way that it can only be naive to try to transcend" (Skinner, cited in Nederman, 1985).

An exemplification of these principles is found in Skinner analysis of Hobbes's *Leviathan*. According to Skinner, Hobbes' articulation of the concept of "obligation" needs to be understood as a response to the ideological debates that were immediately present to him during the English Civil War. Specifically, we need to appreciate the significance of the "Engagement Controversy", which concerned the grounds of obligation to government and which arose from the partisan needs of Presbyterian and Royalist actors; to legitimize a shift in allegiance from the English Crown to the *de facto* authority of the Commonwealth. The main objective of those protagonists was to convince "the Presbyterians and even the Royalists of their duty to obey the new government" (Nederman, 1985:343). Their arguments eventually succeeded in producing the assertion of the right of a *de facto* power to rule over loyal subjects by virtue of conquest (Nederman, 1985: 343). Skinner takes this as evidence that the controversy not only provided Hobbes with essential, primary source-material, but also constituted the context for Hobbes's intentions in composing the *Leviathan*. As Skinner asserts, Hobbes was not engaging in detached political philosophy, rather he "intended his great work precisely as a contribution to the existing debate around the rights of *de facto* powers" (Skinner, quoted in Nederman, 1985:343) In short, Hobbes's *Leviathan* was itself a significant political act and the history of political thought is errant if it does not approach it as such.

We can see in this example how, by assimilating the development of a concept ('obligation' in the *Leviathan*) to a particularized intention, occasion and problem, Skinner introduces a strong measure of contingency, in opposition to the essentializing tendency of some of his contemporaries. We can also see how Skinner's work relies heavily on linguistic analysis, hermeneutics and rhetoric. His central claim is that for an historical account of a political text to be satisfactory, it must recover the author's intention in writing what they wrote. The main way in which the author's intention is recovered is by setting the text within the context of the ideological debates and conventions of

its time. Importantly, Skinner construes ideology as “the normative vocabulary available to any given agent for the description of his political behaviour” (2002:174). This insistence is significant for having marked a shift in attention away from the classic concepts of political philosophy towards the “entire normative vocabulary” (Skinner, 2002: 175). This expansion in the object of analysis is important because it opens Skinner’s approach to applications beyond political science.

The redirection towards the performative function of language and his focus on the evaluative dimension of meaning, led Skinner to concentrate, as suggested above, on two contrasting speech acts: those aimed at commending and condemning. The importance of these speech acts, Skinner argues, is that when they are deployed in relation to our normative vocabulary, the outcome might be the creation, maintenance or disruption of a society’s moral complexion.

It is this assertion that signals the first point of relevance to institutional theory. There is, for example, a clear connection here to Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) framework of institutional work, which highlights the importance of “changing normative foundations”, an activity, they suggest, that is dedicated to “Re-making the connections between sets of practices and the normative, moral and cultural foundations for those practices” (2006: 221). As we shall consider in more detail below, Skinner’s work helps us appreciate precisely how this is achieved in terms of distinctive rhetorical techniques. Skinner states, for example, that “It is by describing and thereby commending certain courses of action as (say) honest or friendly or courageous, while describing and thereby condemning others as treacherous or aggressive or cowardly, that we sustain our vision of the social behaviour we wish to encourage or disavow” (Skinner, 2002:149).

The main point to take from this short introduction is that, for Skinner, studying conceptual change is inherently a study of political and social change. Indeed, the core argument advanced in his important essay *Moral principles and social change*, is that an understanding of the evolution of the capitalist economic system requires at least some reference to the moral principles by means of which it gained legitimacy. One of the objectives in reviewing Skinner’s work is to assess the extent to which his method for studying conceptual change might also be a method of analyzing institutional change. These points are explored further below.

3.2 The innovating ideologist as an agent of legitimation

Skinner's interest in speech acts designed to legitimize questionable forms of social and economic behaviour led him to Max Weber's historical studies of capitalism, especially to the legitimizing endeavours of the early capitalist entrepreneurs. Skinner extends Weber's historical insights in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* by demonstrating how "innovating ideologist", the exemplary case of which were the early capitalist entrepreneurs, harnessed the moral vocabulary of Protestantism to increase the legitimacy of capitalism and to steer its development in particular directions (Skinner, 2002: 157). One obvious motive for the capitalist entrepreneurs devoted to large scale commercial undertakings in early-modern Europe, was the expectation of considerable profit. The trouble, however, was that the religious and social standards of their time were such as to place their conduct in a "morally and even a legally dubious light" (Skinner, 2002:147).

In a context of widespread condemnation, it was necessary for the entrepreneurs to attempt to defend and even justify their behaviour by describing it "in such a way as to repulse or at least to override the widespread accusation that they were behaving avariciously and dishonestly" (Skinner, 2002:147). They achieved this, in large part, by representing their behaviour "in terms of the concepts normally used to commend an ideal of the religious life, emphasising their dedication to their calling and their careful and painstaking lives" (2001: 150). The move was successful because,

"The Protestant conception of the calling echoed their own worldly asceticism, and there were many affinities between the distinctively Protestant ideal of individual service and devotion to God and the commercial belief in the importance of duty, service and devotion to one's work" (150-151).

In this sense, Skinner brings some clarity to the notoriously enigmatic notion of *elective affinity* in Weber's work. Skinner avoids the idealism often attributed to that notion by showing that it was not that Protestants were somehow drawn towards capitalist practices, but rather, that certain ideals within Protestantism served as resources for rhetorical acts aimed at legitimizing the conduct of the early capitalist entrepreneurs, who had clear material interests in doing so.

Beyond the obvious point of connection to institutional theory, in respect of the latter's aim to understand the evolution of capitalism (Morgan *et al.*, 2006), there appears to be a strong link between Skinner's figure of the innovating ideologist and the notion of an institutional entrepreneur. According to DiMaggio (1988), institutional entrepreneurs are actors that create or change institutions when they have sufficient resources to imagine and realize interests that they

value highly (DiMaggio, 1988). Fligstein (1997) pushed this argument further with his notion of “social skill”. Here, institutional entrepreneurs were construed as agents leveraging their social skills to ‘motivate cooperation in other actors’ and, ultimately, to change or reproduce institutional structures in ways believed to be conducive to their interests (Fligstein, 1997:398). The figure of the institutional entrepreneur comes closer still to that of the innovating ideologist with the growing recognition that the ability to manipulate language is a key ‘social skill’ for the institutional entrepreneur. As Green and Li (2011) note, many scholars now “see language as a pragmatic tool to manipulate the connotative and multiple meanings inherent in many social structures, fields, identities, and actions” (2011:1670). As such, the focus of research has increasingly shifted to how institutional entrepreneurs manipulate meaning through linguistic activities and, in the course of doing so, instigate and realize endogenous change.

Skinner’s work is not only relevant to a theory of institutional change but also shares important assumptions with it. One clear example is the shared assumption regarding the social necessity of justification for practices of a dubious character. A central tenet of institutionalism, for example, is that new institutions arise only when they have a basis in the prevailing standards of legitimacy. Skinner’s work helps demonstrate how this connection is made. Additionally, anticipating emerging institutionalist arguments that institutional environments contain significant degrees of layering, and that change can result from the recombination or rearrangement of the institutions already present in a given context, rather than the importation of institutions or the creation of new institutions (Thelen, 2010), Skinner holds that agents are not free to justify their actions in any way they please. They must manage their speech carefully, working with the normative vocabulary of their age. For Skinner, the creative efforts of innovating ideologists, no matter how revolutionary, are constrained by the need to legitimize their actions by “showing that some *existing* favourable terms can somehow be applied as apt descriptions of their behaviour” (Skinner, 2002: 149). It is for this reason, Skinner notes, that “All revolutionaries are...obliged to march backwards into battle” (Skinner, 2002:149-150).

Additionally, in a stance that anticipates important recent adjustments in institutionalism that attempt to re-empower the actor without attributing some kind of Archimedean rationality (see especially Thelen, 2010), Skinner does not assume that innovating ideologists will somehow apply to their behaviour the evaluative vocabulary best adapted to legitimizing it, but only the vocabulary that “they happen to believe is best adapted to that purpose” (Skinner, 2002:150). In other words, actors are assumed to be rational, in the sense of wishing to make the best of their situation, but

this does not entail the further commitment that they, in fact, do so. They will assess their options with the hope of constructing the most plausible and persuasive appeals, but as Skinner notes, actors are always liable to making mistakes or irrational choices in assessing the best means to achieve their goals. Skinner's claim, that our analysis of innovating ideologists must begin with the assumption of rationality while allowing always for evidence of irrationality, is consistent with several prominent historical institutionalists, (Streeck and Thelen, 2005; Thelen, 2010).

Perhaps the stance that suggests the most striking relevance to institutional theory is Skinner's insistence that conceptual change is not a mere *reflection* of broader social change but the very *engine* of it. He explicitly states, for example, that in tracing the applications of our evaluative concepts "we shall find ourselves looking not merely at the reflections but at one of the engines of social change" (2002:178). In the section below, we shall examine more closely the basis of this claim, which rests on Skinner's understanding of our normative vocabulary. This will serve as a basis for the eventual argument; that in tracing out the contours of definitional contestation over evaluative concepts, we will find ourselves looking at one important mechanism of institutional change.

3.3 Evaluative-descriptive terms as an engine of social change

Over the course of two important essays (*Moral principles and social change*, and *The idea of a cultural lexicon*), Skinner sets out the semantic basis of conceptual contestation and illustrates how such disputes are not matters of 'mere semantics' but alter large tracts of social life. Skinner's starting point is the unique semantic character of 'evaluative-descriptive terms'. The most explicit examination of this class of terms takes the form of a critique of Raymond Williams' influential text *Keywords* (Skinner, 1979/2002). Williams' central claim, according to Skinner, is that we can build an understanding of social and political change from a close examination of "variations and confusions of meaning...in and through historical time" (Skinner, 2002:158). Skinner's complaint is not with this contention *per se*, but rather with Williams' failure to elaborate on the object of analysis beyond a reference to 'certain words' of a 'strong' and 'persuasive' character. Skinner argues that if these words are to afford any insight into ideological disputes and social change, what we really need to know is the requirements to be met if these terms are to be "understood and correctly applied" (2002:161).

Skinner's subsequent discussion of these requirements (of which there are three) is crucially important, since the parameters of disagreement about the meaning of evaluative-descriptive terms

underpins his later writing on the rhetorical techniques available to the innovating ideologist; which, essentially, involves manipulating some combination of the three dimensions of meaning. A later section of the thesis (Section 6.2) provides a more detailed examination of the various rhetorical techniques they afford. Our focus here is on the three dimensions to such argumentation (and, hence, manipulation), which will now be considered in turn. These can be stated briefly as:

1. The nature and range of criteria for application (henceforth *Criteria of Application*¹²)
2. The presence or absence of criteria in a given case (henceforth *Range of Reference*).
3. The range of potential speech acts (henceforth *Speech Act Potential*)

Firstly, in order to understand correctly the meaning of a concept, we are required to know the “nature and range of the criteria in virtue of which the word or expression is standardly applied” (Skinner, 2002:161). For example, if someone wishes to know how the term *courageous* is to be used correctly then, according to Skinner, “a good reply would surely mention various criteria that serve to mark the word off from similar and contrasting adjectives, so providing it with its distinctive role in our language of social description and appraisal” (2002:161). He continues, by explaining that “When listing these criteria, we would surely need to include at least the following: that the word can be used only in the context of voluntary actions; that the actor involved must have faced some danger; that they must have faced it with some consciousness of its nature; and that they must have faced it heedfully, with some sense of the probable consequences of undertaking the action involved” (ibid.).

The idea that the criteria of a concept can become the subject of disagreement finds an important precedent in W.B. Gallie’s (1956) thesis concerning ‘*essentially contested concepts*’. Gallie’s main argument was that people are liable to construe shared concepts in different ways if they are already committed to discrepant assumptions and ideas. So, although they may share the same concept of, for example, ‘democracy’, or ‘work of art’, in the sense of applying it similarly in several instances (what might be called the ‘clear cases’), they will, in other instances, deny each other’s claims that the concept properly applies. The denial may be outright or a matter of degree. In either case, when the disagreement hinges not on different readings of the evidence – what might be called the ‘facts of the situation’ – the dispute can be characterized as *conceptual* (as opposed to

¹² I capitalize these names to indicate that they are all technical terms.

factual). Gallie examined the distinctive character of such conceptual disputes and advanced the thesis that when the concept at the root of such disputes was *appraisive*, by which he meant that the state of affairs being described was a highly-valued achievement (here, the broader notion of *evaluative* more adequately captures both this and the reverse – a highly denigrated merit), when the practice or state of affairs was *internally complex*, in the sense that its characterization requires reference to several dimensions, and when the criteria of application are, themselves, relatively open, allowing disputants to interpret even those discrepantly as new and/or unforeseen situations arise, then the concept in question is an “essentially contested concept” (Connolly, 1993:10). By describing concepts as *essentially contested*, Gallie was taking the position that such disputes were inherently insoluble, a position that led some to accuse him of having a relativist thesis.

Connolly’s (1993) summarizing example of ‘democracy’ is illuminating. He states that, as used in Western industrial society, the concept of ‘democracy’ is almost universally considered a highly-valued achievement, but the “commonly accepted criteria of its application are weighed differently by opposing parties, and certain criteria viewed as central by one party are rejected as inappropriate or marginal by other” (Connolly, 1993:10). Whereas some may hold the central criterion of democracy to be the power of citizens to choose their government through competitive elections; for others, this criterion is either unnecessary or of less importance than the criterion that all citizens enjoy equally in the possibility of attaining positions of political leadership; or, to take another criterion, that there is continuous participation of citizens at various levels of political life.

Importantly, such a conceptual dispute proliferates because the concepts used to express the various criteria (such as ‘power’, ‘equality’ and so on...) are, themselves, open to further (even ‘essential’) disagreement. Additionally, arguments about the relative significance of various criteria can be based on equally reasoned argument and yet full and definitive resolution remains unlikely, if not impossible. Again, it is this last claim that led many to accuse Gallie’s thesis of amounting to moral relativism (Gray, 1977). The crucial point here is to recognize, *pace* Skinner, that such disputes often hinge on the extent to which a given criterion is necessary for its application to actual situations or instances.

Returning to Skinner, the second requirement for the correct application of an appraisive term is knowledge of its “range of reference”. In other words, we are required to know what the term can and cannot be applied to. It is this knowledge that allows us to perform the “mysterious skill of relating the word to the world” (2002:162). As Skinner explains,

“For instance, someone might call it courageous if I faced a painful death with cheerfulness. However, it might be objected that strictly speaking no danger is involved in such circumstances, and thus that we ought not to speak of courage but rather of fortitude. Or again, someone might call it courageous if I stepped up from the circus audience to deputize for the lion tamer. But it might be countered that this is such a heedless action that it ought not to be viewed as courage but rather as sheer recklessness. Both these arguments are about the reference (but not the meaning) of 'courageous': both are concerned with whether a given set of circumstances—what a lawyer would call the facts of the case—are such as to yield the agreed criteria for the application of the given appraisive term”.

As Skinner notes, it is commonplace to see the range of reference as being the logical consequence of the criteria of application. It is certainly a view of long standing within logic and logical semantics that the intension of a term largely determines its extension. Copi and Cohen (1990) state that the “*criteria for deciding*” serves as the basis for deciding, of any given object, whether it “falls within the extension” (1990: 141). Hurley concurs, saying “the intensional meaning of a term serves as the criterion for deciding what the extension consists of” (Hurley, 2005:84). The relationship is, however, not unidirectional, since, as Skinner himself notes, the application of the term to a “new range of reference may eventually put pressure on the criteria for applying it” (Skinner, 2002:167). Indeed, it seems to me to be essential to Skinner’s vision of rhetorical redescription that the range of reference can be altered without any corresponding change in the criteria.

The third requirement, according to Skinner, is that we need to know the range of attitudes the term can standardly be used to express. As Skinner explains, no one can be said to have grasped the correct application of the adjective ‘courageous’ if they remain unaware of its standard use to commend, to express approval, and especially to express (and solicit) admiration for any action it is used to describe. To call an action courageous is not merely to describe it, but to place it in a specific moral light. “I can praise or rejoice at an action by calling it courageous”, Skinner explains, “but I cannot condemn or sneer at it by describing it in this way” (Skinner, 2002:162).

This third dimension is perhaps the least commonly understood as it falls outside the traditional dichotomous separation of meaning into ‘sense and reference’, or ‘intension and extension’

(Riemer, 2010). Skinner's use of the inelegant phrase 'speech act potential' also provides a poor signal of its connections to existing thought. It is, therefore, worth noting that William James pointed to a similar element of meaning with the expression "fringe of meaning". So too did Volosinov (1929/1973), a renowned Russian linguist and Marxist semiotician, who points to the inviolable presence of the "evaluative accent" in human language.¹³ Indeed, there is a sense in which the term 'connotation', standard in semantics, identifies the same broad feature of meaning as Skinner's evaluative dimension. Riemer (2010), for example, states that connotation refers to, "those aspects of meaning which do not affect a word's sense, reference or denotation, but which have to do with secondary factors such as its emotional force, its level of formality, its character as a euphemism" (Riemer, 2010:19).

As suggested at the top of this section, Skinner's interest in these three dimensions of disagreements is not that of a semanticist. In his view, these semantic disagreements are important because they are always liable to escalate into disputes that can drive social change. Disputes over any one of the three elements of conceptual meaning, Skinner asserts, constitute the basis of "disagreements about our social world itself" (2002:163); since what is at play are "rival social theories and their attendant methods of classifying social reality" (ibid.). One example can be found in the debate that flamed with some infamy over whether to apply the term "art" to the coat-pegs and lavatory bowls that Duchamp framed and hung on the walls of galleries. For many, these items could not be considered instances of art since they insisted upon the minimum *criteria* that a work of art must be 'deliberately created'. Something did not become a work of art simply by calling it so, or by hanging it on the wall of a gallery. The agreed criteria, whatever they were, had to be satisfied but in the case of Duchamp's work they had not been (according to the arguments of his critics). Whatever the merits or outcomes of the argument about the correct criteria in that case, what fueled this debate was not a concern for correct linguistic usage, but rather something much more significant. Something larger was at stake and that is precisely what explains the controversy that was generated. As Skinner explains, what is at stake in this and equivalent cases is "whether or not a certain range of objects ought or ought not to be treated as having a rather elevated status and significance. And it is obvious that a great deal may depend on how this question is answered" (1979:211; 2002:163). The 'stakes', to use a Bourdieusian notion, are both symbolic and material.

¹³ This was linked to Bakhtin's notion of "emotional-volitional tone" and Erdmann's notion of the "emotional tone".

There are, again, striking parallels between this view and Mahoney and Thelen's (2010) emerging understanding of institutions as distributional struggles; and, similarly, to Blyth's notion of economic ideas as weapons in distributional struggles. There are also interesting overlaps with the findings of sociological institutionalism over several decades. One clear example is DiMaggio's (1987) study of 'classifications in art'. We might think also of Rao *et al's.* (2003) research into the efforts of elite chefs to legitimize the "nouvelle cuisine" movement in France; or Dezalay and Garth's (1996) research into disputes over the definition of 'arbitration' and 'mediation'. Although these disputes arise at the linguistic level, they have major distributional implications, indeed that is precisely why they become struggles rather than topics of lighthearted debate.

To summarize, the objective of this section has been to outline the main semantic units of conceptual change and to illustrate how these can be understood as mechanisms of broader social change. Having done so, we shall now turn our attention to the various rhetorical techniques by means of which such change can be achieved.

3.4 Strategies of rhetorical redescription

In order to understand precisely how innovating ideologists seek to legitimize questionable conduct, Skinner has turned increasingly to ancient rhetoric (Palonen, 1997). Of central importance is Quintilian's notion of *paradiastole*, a technique which consists of "replacing a given evaluative description with a rival term that serves to picture the action no less plausibly, but serves at the same time to place it in a contrasting moral light" (Skinner, 1996: 139). This is a versatile technique in the sense that it could be used both for legitimating hitherto condemned actions or delegitimizing hitherto commended actions. Importantly, as we shall discover, Skinner often presents the techniques of rhetorical description in terms of the three semantic components identified above. At times, this is helpful. At other times, it appears a source of confusion. In the discussion below the various techniques are presented in terms of the technical terminology introduced above.

Skinner suggests that the techniques of rhetorical redescription can be grouped into two broad strategies and several associated tactics. Both strategies and their associated tactics can be reversed if the rhetorical objective is to delegitimize conduct. The first broad (legitimizing) strategy consists in manipulating the "speech act potential" of terms normally used to express disapproval of the behaviours you seek to commend. Here the first tactic, Skinner suggests, actually attempts to

circumvent the prevailing terminology, since it involves coining an entirely new term and then applying this to the conduct you seek to legitimize. Skinner states that although this is a rather crude device which is rarely used, one historical example is the invention of the word “frugality” at the end of the sixteenth century.

The more common tactic of the strategy is to take an existing neutral term and transform it into a commendatory term that can then be applied to the action you wish to see commended. This, Skinner suggests, was a prevalent strategy among the ideological defenders of early-modern commercial life. Words such as *discerning* and *penetrating*, he suggests, were transformed in this way to describe and commend a range of talents and practices. The third tactic linked to this strategy involves taking an existing unfavourable term, one normally used to express disapproval, and applying it in such a way as to neutralize it. A clear example of this, Skinner suggests, is the term *ambition*, which in contrast to contemporary meaning, was used exclusively to express disapproval prior to early-modern commercial life.

The final, and more audacious, variation of this method is to take an unfavourable term and reverse its speech act potential entirely. This, Skinner suggests, was the case with the terms *shrewd* and *shrewdness*. Used exclusively as terms of disapproval and even contempt before the early seventeenth century, their appraisive force (or *Speech Act Potential*) gradually reversed, allowing them to express approbation of commercial good sense. Interestingly, Reinhard Bendix, whose work laid important foundations for modern institutionalism, also observed the strange reversals of meaning that Skinner describes. In the case of the legitimation of authority in Russia, for example, Bendix (1956) notes “the paradox that the ideas with which the effects of industry were condemned have been incorporated in ideologies of management which today prevail within the orbit of Russian civilization” (1956: 4).

As Skinner notes, it is possible to employ a mirror image of these tactics if the objective is to delegitimize an activity or state of affairs. First, a new and unfavourable term can be coined to challenge accepted norms. This, Skinner suggests, happened in the case of the concept of “*being a spendthrift*” and “*squandering one’s substance*” in the mid sixteenth century. Both phrases came into use to “express a new distaste for the aristocratic ideal of conspicuous consumption” (2001: 152). Second, a neutral term can be pushed – by metaphorical extension – towards the condemnatory end of the spectrum, as happened (again, during the mid-sixteenth century) in the case of the notion of behaving *exorbitantly*; a word, Skinner asserts, “that first acquired its metaphorical (and

hence evaluative) applications in the early seventeenth century as a means of condemning obvious failures of godly parsimony” (2002: 152). You can also try to reserve the speech act potential of an existing commendatory term. Examples of this include the use of the terms *obsequious* and *condescending*, which shifted from expressing approval in the sixteenth century to expressing disapproval “once the underlying ideal of an aristocratic and hierarchical society began to be widely challenged” (Skinner, 2002:153).

Skinner suggests a second broad strategy (again, for legitimizing conduct) which, in his view, is much simpler and of greater significance. The crux of these techniques is to manipulate “the criteria for applying an existing set of commendatory terms” (Skinner, 2002:153). Skinner explains that the objective here will be to insist that, “in spite contrary appearances, a number of favourable terms can be applied as apt descriptions of your own apparently questionable behaviour” (ibid). Since the terms are already favourable, there is no need to alter their *speech act potential*. Rather, the innovating ideologist focuses on urging their audience to accept that they may be “failing to recognise that the *ordinary criteria* for applying a range of favourable descriptions are present in the very actions they see as questionable” (ibid: *emphasis added*).

Though little studied, Skinner states that this practice was extensively used in the justification of new commercial activities in the evolution of capitalism in the mid sixteenth century. Specifically, the technique was employed by the defenders of the practices of early modern commercial life, when those who wished to “commend the successful exercise of care and foresight in monetary affairs” succeeded in having their “apparently miserly conduct” seen, instead, as “a commendable working of providence and hence as a *provident* form of behaviour” (Skinner, 2002: 153). In this way, the term “providence”, Skinner notes, “began to be applied to refer simply to acting with foresight about practical affairs” (2001:153).

Despite the clarity of Skinner exposition, there is an element of ambiguity, since he appears to be suggesting, on the one hand, that these tactics are essentially about *manipulating criteria of application*, yet on the other, the description he provides suggests that the innovating ideologist is doing the exact opposite; deliberately *maintaining* the ordinary criteria of application. Specifically, in the example above, what changes is not the criteria for applying a term (“providence”) but rather the range of things to which the term could be applied (care and foresight in monetary affairs). In the technical terminology stated above, this technique appears to involve taking terms with strong commendatory *speech act potential* and, while seeking to preserve that force, convincing the opponent

that those terms can be applied, just as they are (i.e. in virtue of their standard criteria), to the activities you seek to defend. Skinner states, for example, that the early capitalists succeeded in justifying their activities by presenting their conduct in terms used to “commend an ideal of the religious life, emphasizing their dedication to their calling and their careful and painstaking lives” (Skinner, 2002: 150). Therefore, this was less a matter of manipulating criteria, and more of utilizing a different set of commendatory terms.

This confusion is surprising since Skinner elsewhere stresses that disagreement over “whether a given set of circumstances can be claimed to yield the criteria in virtue of which [a] term is normally employed” (165) is of “an entirely different character” to those relating to the criteria for applying a term. He even chastises Stuart Hampshire for conflating the two in Hampshire’s account of a hypothetical debate between a liberal and a Marxist over the sense of the word “political”. Whereas Hampshire presents the debate as hinging on a disagreement about the criteria of application, Skinner stresses that, for the argument to even be a genuine one at all, it is “crucial that the Marxist should be able to claim with some plausibility that he is employing the term in virtue of its *agreed* sense” (2002: 166 *emphasis in original*). If they are employing the concept of ‘political’ in virtue of different criteria, then they are not really debating the concept at all but rather talking past one another by using one word for two different concepts. By way of example, Skinner explains that if the Marxist,

“is genuinely trying to persuade the liberal to share or at least acknowledge some political insight, he needs in effect to make two points. One is that the term political can appropriately be applied to a range of actions where the liberal has never thought of applying it. But the other – which his application of the term challenges the liberal to admit – is that this is not in the least due to a disagreement about the meaning of the term, but rather to the fact that the liberal is a person of blinkered political sensitivity and awareness” (Skinner, 2002: 166).

The task, in short, is to gain acceptance of an altered *range of reference* precisely in virtue of the prevailing criteria and the existing direction and intensity of *speech act potential*.

Having considered the role of rhetorical redescription in social change we shall now consider the rhetorical potential of definition.

3.5 The rhetorical character of definition

Skinner notes that the classical theorists of eloquence saw two main ways of exciting the emotions of the audience in order to bring them to our side: *redefinition* and *redescription*. As documented above, Skinner's own work has focused almost exclusively on the latter. What is concerning, however, is that Skinner does not just opt for a focus on *redescription*, he explicitly dismisses the rhetorical potential of definition, stating that even "the Roman theorists appear to recognise", that the "manipulation of definitions obviously constitutes a somewhat crude and inflexible rhetorical device" (Skinner, 1996: 142).

The task of this section is to reassert the potential of definition in the face of this dismissal. Before proceeding one concessive observation should be made. Skinner's dismissal of the rhetorical potential of redefinition is largely in relation to the task of elevating the emotions of the audience for the purpose of altering the evaluation (trans-valuation) of some action or state of affairs. Although the dismissal of definition on those grounds can be questioned, the main thrust of my defense of definition is that its utility lies, not narrowly in its scope for trans-valuation, but more broadly in its potential for altering conceptual meaning (of which trans-valuation is one form).

Given that caveat, perhaps the best place to begin to consider the rhetorical potential of definition is Skinner's own account. Skinner addresses the potential of definition in relation to the rhetorical objective of offering a redescription of an action or state of affairs, with the intention of exciting the audience's emotions and bringing them to agreement with us. Definition comes into play when the orator claims that the existing description should be rejected on the grounds that the terms used to state it have been misleadingly defined. Aristotle is credited with offering the first outline of this technique in *The Art of Rhetoric*. There, Aristotle describes how a man "accused of an offence may be able to admit the facts while denying the description underpinning the charge" (Skinner, 1996: 140). More concretely, a man may admit that he took something while denying that this was an act of 'theft'; he may accept that he killed another man while denying that this was an act of 'homicide'; he may concede that he had sexual relations with another man's wife but deny that this was an act of 'adultery', and so on. Aristotle also notes that the accusing side, for their part, will anticipate and seek to foreclose this form of defense by gaining agreement at the outset about the proper definitions of the relevant terms.

The significance Aristotle attached to definition was subsequently appreciated and repeated in the works of the Roman rhetoricians. For example, in *De inventione*, Cicero notes that "One

controversy about the name to be given to an act arises when there is agreement about a fact and the question is by what name the fact should be described' (cited in Skinner, 1996:140). Like Aristotle, Cicero notes, that if we are to avoid letting our opponents get the better of us we shall need, at the outset, to “define what constitutes theft, what constitutes sacrilege, and to show by our own description that the act in question ought to be called by a different name from that which our adversaries have assigned to it” (Cicero, cited in Skinner, 1996:140). The same broad advice reappears in Quintilian (Book VII of *Institutio Oratoria*), who notes that “he who is unable to prove that he has done nothing wrong will try, in the next place, to make it appear that he has not done that which is laid to his charge”. He too, follows Aristotle’s examples. Suppose you find yourself in a court of law facing a charge of sacrilege – a much more serious offence than ordinary theft - after being caught stealing private money in a temple. You also face an advocate that has marshalled such evidence as you can neither deny having been in the temple nor having stolen the money. In this situation, Quintilian notes, “There is no doubt about his guilt”. As such, Quintilian explains, the accused must attempt to throw doubt on the question of what, precisely, his is guilty of. The situation he must aim to bring about is a fundamental challenge as to “whether the name given by the law applies to the charge”. Success will depend on the extent to which the accused can convince the judge that the act, the fact of which everybody agrees, does not constitute “sacrilege”.

Going beyond Skinner’s assessment for the moment, we can note that Quintilian adds the useful insight that recourse to definition allows for two different options: First, an argument can be developed in terms of “*what* a thing is”; and, second, an argument can be developed in terms of “whether it is *this*”. According to Quintilian, the two options should be pursued in that order because, “When it is decided what a thing is, the question, whether it is this, is almost settled”¹⁴. This, I take to be an ancient formulation of the view, common in contemporary logic, that intensional meaning largely determines the extension. We find Quintilian illustrating the point in the scenario of the accused below.

The accused begins to engineer uncertainty with an argument about “*what* a thing is” (in this case, ‘sacrilege’). You are aware that the “accuser employs [the term “sacrilege”] on the grounds that the money was stolen from a temple”. This allows you to anticipate their definition and prepare your defence, which will be set up “on the grounds that the money stolen was *private* property”.

¹⁴ An alternative translation is “The invariable order in definition is what a thing is, and whether it is this; and in general there is more difficulty in establishing the definition than in applying it to the matter in hand”.

The definitional contest would then unfold as follows: Having anticipated your opponent's definition on the basis of the grounds of the charge, you demand that the prosecutor define "sacrilege"; and they give the following definitions, "*It is sacrilege to steal anything from a sacred place*". In a sense, you have set them a trap as you now proceed to offer your counter definition which, by manipulating the *criteria of application*, will allow you to argue that your action, the factual account of which is not in dispute, now falls outside the range of reference. Specifically, you state your definition as, "*It is sacrilege to steal something sacred*". A large measure of the persuasive force of this definition stems from the fact that the accuser has already accepted as much as that, since they have already committed themselves to the view that "to steal a sacred object is undoubtedly sacrilege". At this point, you can then move to the second strategy - "whether it is *this*" - arguing that the charge of sacrilege cannot be applied in your case, since what you stole was not *sacred* but only *private property*. The fact that it was "from a sacred place" may be deplorable, but it does not make you guilty of sacrilege (because that has now been removed from the definition). Armed with other rhetorical techniques (*paradiastole*), you might be able to further lessen the unfavourable light cast on your actions, by arguing, for example, that, since the person from whom you stole property was themselves a notorious thief, your act was more a measure of restitution. Without further argumentation, you will accept the lesser charge of "theft", and you will have done well given the facts of the case.

According to Skinner, a fourth reference to the rhetorical potential of definition appears in *Ad Herennium*. Here, the author (who remains unknown but is widely thought to have been Cicero), notes explicitly that the technique of 'elevating' or 'depreciating' actions by challenging definitions should be classified as an aspect of *ornatus*. This is significant since, as Skinner notes, in classical Latin the term *ornatus* was ordinarily used to describe "the weapons and accoutrements of war" (1996:49). Therefore, to be properly *ornatus*, was to be "equipped for battle, powerfully armoured and protected" (ibid). The metaphorical extension of this to the realm of speech was to see *ornatus* in terms of "the weapons an orator must learn to wield if he is to have any prospect of winning the war of words, and thus of gaining victory for his side of the argument" (1996:49). It was the view of the Roman rhetoricians, Skinner explains, that the main value of *ornatus* was to provide the orator with a "means to arouse the emotions of an audience" (1996:139).

Skinner notes that *Ad Herennium* offers an insightful example into "how one can hope to raise questions about definitions in such a way as to augment or extenuate the alleged significance of a particular action or state of affairs" (2001:141). This time, the example taken up is that of

“courage”. A situation is imagined in which an action has been appraised as courageous on the grounds of “the agent's willingness to suffer dangers in the manner of a gladiator without any consideration of the pains involved” (Skinner, 2002:141). This description can be challenged by retorting that “this act you are describing is not in fact a case of courage but rather of sheer temerity, because what it means to be courageous is to show contempt for toil and danger with a clear understanding of the usefulness of the act and a consideration of its advantages” (ibid). The rhetorical intention of the proposed redefinition, Skinner explains, is that “it serves to place the action in a new moral light...We not only come to see that the term used to evaluate it was misleadingly applied; we also come to see that the action falls under a different description which evaluates it in a much less favourable way”. (Skinner, 2002:141-142)

Having set out those uses of definition Skinner then proceeds, somewhat laconically, to dismiss the practice saying that the manipulation of definitions “obviously constitutes a somewhat crude and inflexible rhetorical device” (1996:142). This evaluation needs to be understood as a relative one, since Skinner contrasts redefinition to redescription, the latter of which he presents as being “of cardinal importance” to the Roman rhetoricians. But what is the difference between the two and why should the latter be so much more revered? The main reason why Skinner describes definition as somewhat crude is, I think, because it typically involves drawing explicit attention to the nature of the rhetorical act: definition. It is true, that many instances of definition and redefinition raise the ‘definitional flag’, so to speak, whereas redescription is more subterranean. In argumentation about definition it is common to use the actual word ‘definition’ or ‘define’. However, the extent to which the argumentation is crude, or not, will also depend on the rhetorical skills of the orator. Even rhetorical redescription can be conducted in a cumbersome way which both announces itself and exposes vulnerabilities.

Skinner suggests a more categorical difference between the two practices. Redescription, in contrast to redefinition, involves arguing that an action has been wrongly evaluated not because the terms have been mis-defined but rather because the action itself has a different moral complexion to that which the terms used to describe it suggest. In other words, whereas redefinition is centrally a matter of debating and shifting the meaning of a word which is being applied to a state of affairs; redescription, Skinner suggests, is about altering the quality of the act or state of affairs *per se*. For example, a dispute may arise as to whether an act ought to be appraised as courageous as a result of a disagreement over the definition of the term courage; however, even

when the participants have reached agreement about the definition, they might continue to disagree over the appraisal of the act as courageous.

In that latter situation, Skinner asserts, what is in dispute, is not the definition of the term but the nature or *quality* of the act or state of affairs. For example, they may agree that “genuine courage always presupposes heedfulness...” but “disagree about whether the action in question can properly be said to have been done with heed” (Skinner, 2002:143). In this type of argument, the orator must focus on describing the act in such a way as to “establish that the action embodied a sufficient degree of forethought” (ibid). By doing so, the orator can arouse admiration for the act in his audience. Contrastingly, by taking the reverse approach; describing the action as ‘mere gladiatorial and inconsiderate temerity’, she can diminish the value of the act.

For this reason, Skinner notes, again drawing on Quintilian, that redescription cannot be thought of as simple word substitution (switching ‘courageous’ for ‘temerity’), since the claim is that the actual behaviour (the *res*) possesses a different moral character than what has been ascribed to it. Skinner states that, at least according to Quintilian, we ought rather to “speak of substituting one thing for another, *res pro re*”. However, this is a somewhat unhelpful phrase since what Skinner himself appears to see as distinctive and important in this technique, is not the switching of *things* but the switching of *evaluations* of things; not in the sense of changing a definition of a single word but utilizing a range of different terms. This is borne out in his subsequent discussion of the techniques, which states clearly that,

“Redescriptions serve in every case to re-evaluate what was done... We simply replace whatever descriptions our opponents may have offered with a different set of terms that serve to describe the action with no less plausibility, but place it at the same time in a different moral light. We seek to persuade our hearers to accept our redescription, and hence to adopt a new emotional attitude towards the action involved - either one of increased sympathy or acquired moral outrage” (Skinner, 2002:145).

By this account, it is not the thing that changes, but rather the character of the words used to describe it. In any case, Skinner’s dismissal of definition as being excessively crude or inflexible is itself somewhat overstated. It is certainly not the case (and Skinner, to be fair, does not attempt to make it), that redefinition cannot be used for the purpose of trans-valuing conduct of states of

affairs. Several examples have already been given where definition is utilized for altering the appraisal of an act or state of affairs. Indeed, if we advance in time from the writing of the Roman rhetoricians to more recent times, we find definition being attributed precisely the kind of subtle powers that Skinner attributes to rhetorical redescription. A clear instance of this is Stevenson's notions of *persuasive definition* and *persuasive quasi-definition*¹⁵. We can explore further Stevenson's account of persuasive definition.

In *The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms*, Stevenson (1937) elaborated the distinction between "emotive meaning" and "descriptive meaning". The point of the distinction was that descriptive meaning and emotive meaning were independent, in the sense that one could change without the other. Indeed, this was precisely what characterized most ethical judgment. A year later, Stevenson then published a paper, entitled *Persuasive Definitions*, that further demonstrated how it was possible to use *definition* not only to alter the meaning of a concept but also to change "the direction of people's interests" (1938:331). Such a technique, which he coined *persuasive definition*, worked by altering the customary conceptual meaning of a term without altering its emotive meaning in the process.

In the terminology that we applied above, the orator seeks to manipulate the *criteria of application* and/or *range of reference* of a term while maintaining the standard *speech act potential* (what Stevenson termed 'emotive meaning'). As Stevenson states, "in any 'persuasive definition' the term defined is a familiar one, whose meaning is both descriptive and strongly emotive. The purport of the definition is to alter the descriptive meaning of the term; [...] but the definition does not make any substantial change in the term's emotive meaning" (Stevenson, 1944: 210). Contrastingly, the *persuasive quasi-definition* seeks to alter the *speech act potential* of a term while maintaining the standard *criteria of application* and/or *range of reference*.

Stevenson provides an example of *persuasive definition* in the case of "culture", which is worth quoting in its full original form, both because of the clarity of Stevenson's exposition and to help illuminate the similarities between this and Skinner's notion of rhetorical redescription (which we shall examine in the next section):

¹⁵ Skinner's relatively dismissive comments about definition are odd since he almost certainly had awareness of these rhetorical forms and even saw them as central to his own thinking. As a prelude to his discussion of rhetorical uses of the terms comprising our evaluative-descriptive language, he notes that "To focus on this body of words is to take over an insight developed by the so-called emotivists in moral philosophy, who contrasted the 'emotive' with the 'descriptive' components of ethical terms" (2002: 148). He points directly to Stevenson in the corresponding footnote.

“There was once a community in which "cultured" meant widely read and acquainted with the arts. In the course of time these qualities came into high favour. If one man wanted to pay another a compliment, he would dwell at length upon his culture. It became unnatural to use "culture" in any but a laudatory tone of voice. Those who lacked culture used the word with awe, and those who possessed it used the word with self-satisfaction, or perhaps with careful modesty. In this way the word acquired a strong emotive meaning...Men who were not cultured, literally, were often called so, particularly when they were admired for having some of the defining qualities of "culture"...

...Let us now suppose that one member of the community had no wholehearted regard for mere reading, or mere acquaintance with the arts, but valued them only to the extent that they served to develop imaginative sensitivity...It was his constant source of regret that such mechanical procedures as reading, or visiting museums, should win instant praise, and that sensitivity should scarcely be noticed. For this reason, he proceeded to give "culture" a new meaning. *"I know"*, he insisted, *"that so and so is widely read, and acquainted with the arts; but what has that to do with culture? The real meaning of 'culture', the true meaning of 'culture', is imaginative sensitivity."* He persisted in this statement, in spite of the fact that "culture" had never before been used in exactly this sense.

It will now be obvious that this definition was no mere abbreviation; nor was it intended as an analysis of a common concept. Its purpose, rather, was to redirect people's interests. "Culture" had and would continue to have a laudatory emotive meaning. The definition urged people to stop using the laudatory term to refer to reading and the arts, and to use it, instead, to mean imaginative sensitivity. In this manner it sought to place the former qualities in a poor light, and the latter in a fine one, and thus to redirect people's admiration. When people learn to call something by a name rich in pleasant associations, they more readily admire it; and when they learn not to call it by such a name, they less readily admire it. The definition made use of this fact. It changed interests by changing names” (Stevenson, 1938:331-333).

We see in this example, how the word “culture” underwent a redefinition such that the customary *criteria of application* (being ‘well read and versed in the arts’) was essentially removed and replaced by ‘imaginative sensitivity’. Importantly, with this manipulation of the criteria there was no corresponding change to the customary *speech act potential* (a term of commendation). Indeed, the whole point of the persuasive definition is to transfer the commendatory force to the alternate practices the orator valued, while simultaneously denying such an appraisal to the practices of being well-read or frequenting museums.

To conclude, although Skinner is somewhat dismissive of the rhetorical potential of definition, there is abundant evidence that definition can be used to alter precisely those three elements of conceptual meaning that Skinner identifies as being central to ideological debate and as an engine of social change. In the section that follows, we shall attempt to elaborate upon these practices by outlining and utilizing a common analytic framework based on the three components of conceptual meaning discussed earlier, and with the addition of a fourth to account for changes of the term itself.

3.6 Chapter summary

This section has presented an overview of Quentin Skinner’s approach to understanding and analyzing conceptual change. The importance of Skinner’s work to this thesis rests largely on the significance he attributes to disputes over conceptual change. Specifically, it was shown that Skinner views conceptual change in terms of three crucial semantic dimensions and, crucially, that a change to any one of these can turn rapidly into an engine of social change more broadly. We have also discussed the characteristics of two rhetorical practices (redescription and redefinition) that can be utilized in altering conceptual meaning.

A major claim advanced throughout the section concerned the relevance of Skinner’s thought to institutional theory. This was especially the case in the sense that both Skinner and institutionalists see the justification of new or questionable action as a crucial element of social life. Whereas Skinner presents the labour of justification in terms of the activities of the innovating ideologist, institutionalist scholars have pointed to the role of the institutional entrepreneur. In both cases, the work of legitimation is presented as one involving considerable skills. For Skinner, the skill is primarily of a rhetorical character, and this is the view that institutionalists are now also coming to

accept; seeing rhetoric as a fundamental element of the broader ‘social skills’ required for achieving institutional change (Green and Li, 2011). There are also important overlaps in respect of the constraints facing actors. Specifically, there is a shared conviction that actors are generally forced to fashion change out of preexisting ideas which themselves are not infinitely pliable. The historical process of semantic concentration places limits on potential for change and so too does the presence of opponents who may seek to overthrow redefinitions.

Having restated the warrant for considering Skinner’s work, I wish to conclude the section by pointing to two important limitations, at least from the point of view of utilizing his concepts in a study of institutional change. The first point of concern is the weight placed on the innovating ideologist as opposed to what we might term a more *collective labour of definition*. This is a criticism that has also been leveled against the concept of institutional entrepreneurship (even in the limitations of Skinner’s work, there continues to be a resonance with institutionalism). As we shall discuss below (section 5.4), Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) have sparked a major reorientation in institutional theorizing by challenging the degree of agency attributed to the institutional entrepreneur. Specifically, the concept of institutional entrepreneurship, they argue, risks allocating a hyper-muscular power to this figure, when most instances of institutional change are not so much the results of towering individuals, but, rather of the protean contributions of many actors working in tandem or in isolation, but nevertheless, often pulling in the same general direction of change. This is precisely the dynamic they sought to capture in their influential notion of ‘institutional work’.

It is helpful, therefore, to view definition not as an individual act but rather as one moment within broader *collective labour of definition*. We see, for example, in Bendix (1956) that the justification of the sudden expansion in the exercise of power, by the managers of very large commercial enterprises, was achieved, not by a single powerful rhetor, but by a chorus of acts and actors including “employers, financiers, public-relations men, personnel specialists, general managers, engineers, economists, political theorists, psychologists, government officials, policemen, political agitators, and many, many others” (1956: 2). While those actors were not all involved in justifying the new managerial exercise of power, they were all embroiled in the debates pertaining to the new relations between workers and employers. The point is that we ought to approach definition in terms of the constellation of agents involved in the debate and how this constellation might play a crucial role in shaping both the nature of the argumentation and the outcomes. This suggests two crucial questions to be explored in this thesis: 1) *which agents are most prominent in the labour of*

redefinition, and 2) how does the character of 'defining work' (see section 5.4) relate to the structural location of the actors involved?

The second point of concern is with Skinner's preference to deal only with the illocutionary act rather than with the associated work required to ensure uptake (what Austin referred to as 'perlocutionary force'). As an historian of political thought, it is understandable that Skinner would limit his analysis to illocutionary acts, but if his approach is to be carried forward in the analysis of institutional change, then we need to consider the more 'sociological' dimensions; such as the broader social context in respect of which certain definitions come to have a more fateful impact, or secure a higher degree of conformity, than others. As we shall see below, in the discussion of the theorization of institutional change, there is a growing appreciation that the success of any idea in influencing the direction of institutional change will depend crucially on the resources that its exponents can bring to bear in the debate (see especially section 5.3). Decades of institutional research have documented how certain actors, such as professions and, even more so, the State, are able to impose their definitions with more authority than others.

Perhaps what the section has attempted to show most thoroughly, is that definition is a distinctive type of speech act and that it is fundamentally linked to conceptual change, in the sense that it seeks to fix or alter some combination of the three semantic components that constitute concepts. What we have left unexamined so far, however, is the linkage between definitions, institution and concepts. In the next section, we shall explore the work of scholars that have attempted to make those connections clearer.

Chapter 4: The entanglement of definitions, institutions and concepts

“...definitions matter. The definition of an institution has major implications for how researchers can study institutional change and how much institutional change they find”

Campbell (2010:108)

4.1 Definition and the ontology of institutions

We turn now to what is perhaps the most difficult part of the theoretical discussion, since it attempts to connect definition to the kind of conceptual change which interests Skinner, and from there to make a further connect to the kind of socio-economic changes that interest institutionalist scholars, namely ‘institutional change’. Our task, simply put, is to relate definitions, conceptual change with institutional change. Linking these three concepts in a way that is both elegant and thorough would be a herculean task, and one well beyond the current skills of the author. Even Searle’s monumental achievement in *The Construction of Social Reality*, which sets out the nature of institutions and their relationship to language, is presented as a work in progress rather than a final account. As such, what follows is a discussion with a provisional character.

Some of the complexity of the task, in respect of “definition”, has already been covered (Section 2.2). The situation with the concept of “institution” is not dissimilar. There is no single definition that all scholars are agreed upon (Streeck and Thelen, 2005). Within economics, the notion of an institution points primarily to “*ex ante* agreements about a structure of cooperation’ that economize on transaction costs, reduce opportunism and other forms of agency “slippage” and thereby enhance the prospects of gains through cooperation” (Shepsle, 1986:74, cited in Djelic, 2010:25). Within organisational sociology, which has drawn heavily on the phenomenology of Berger and Luckmann (1975), institutions are more closely associated with “wide cultural and symbolic patterns” (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). These, moreover, are understood as “chronically reproduced” in the sense of not needing repetitive action to secure maintenance (Jepperson, 1991). Historical institutionalists, the main approach within political science, conceive of institutions primarily in terms of formal rules or “regularized practices with a rule-like quality in the sense that the actors expect the practices to be observed: and which...are supported by formal sanctions” (Hall and Thelen, 2009:9).

Not only are there important differences across these definitions but these differences have major implications for how institutional change is conceived (Campbell, 2010). If institutions are

conceived as formal rules then change will require some form of rule change or displacement. However, if institutions are conceived as taken-for-granted routines embedded in normative understandings, then it is possible to observe change simply by marking change in the routine behaviours or the normative basis of action. If institutions are accepted simply as ‘the rules of the game in a society, or more formally, as the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction’ (North, 1990: 3), then, as D’Andrade (2006:31) notes, “driving on left and putting the knife on the right become institutions”. At issue, is the question of whether the concept of institution applies only to formal rules, where departures are routinely sanctioned, or whether institutions also extend to cover informal conventions, where there are behavioural expectations but no sanctions in the case of breach. A further point of dispute is whether institutions are comprised only of material objects, such as laws or organisational arrangements, or whether they are also comprised of purely symbolic elements, such as cognitive scripts and “reciprocal typifications” (Berger and Luckmann, 1975).

To connect definitions, concepts and institutions, therefore, it is necessary to elaborate a clearer ‘ontology of institutions’ (Campbell, 2010). To that end, we can turn to four important works: Berger and Luckmann’s (1975) *Social Construction of Reality*; John Searle’s writing on institutions and social ontology; Luc Boltanski’s recent engagement with the ‘sociology of institutions’; and Edward Schiappa’s work on definition and the politics of meaning. This is perhaps an unorthodox combination, but what they share in common is the view of institutions as fundamentally underpinned by language. Since definition is also fundamentally concerned with language (for example, as Schiappa (2003) has shown, there is no definition in pre-linguistic societies), there appears, in all four works, a clear connection between definition and institutions. Discovering this shared connection will be our task in what follows.

4.2 Berger and Luckmann: From typification to institutional definitions

“To understand the state of the socially constructed universe at any given time, or its change over time, one must understand the social organization that permits the definers to do their defining”.

Berger and Luckmann (1975:134)

Building on a phenomenological account of everyday knowledge, Berger and Luckmann (1975) approach the world as an open system of immense complexity. Indeed, the world is so complex

that man's natural cognitive abilities cannot cope with it. As Berger and Luckmann (1975) note "the human organism lacks the necessary biological means to provide stability for human conduct" (1975:69). This being the case, we encounter a conundrum; if humans were thrown back on their 'organismic' resources, they would find themselves in a state of chaos, yet rather than chaos we find order. The question then arises as to where the order comes from if not from the biology of man? Berger and Luckmann's answer is that social order is the result of an "ongoing dialectical process composed of the three moments of externalization, objectivation and internalization" (1975:149). These three moments are not ordered in a temporal sequence; but rather at the level of society, they operate simultaneously (though, at the level of the individual there *is* a temporal order, beginning with internalization in early childhood). Understanding this dialectical process is important for at least two reasons. First, because it contains one of the most influential accounts of institutionalization; and second, it begins to picture the role of definition in that process.

Language plays a fundamental role in each of the three moments. *Objectivation* is largely the process through which objects are apprehended and become meaningful. Central to this is the process of *typification*. The term is borrowed from the work of German phenomenologist Alfred Schutz.¹⁶ According to Schutz, typification is the primary medium through which we apprehend the subjects and objects of the lifeworld¹⁷. Schutz states, for example, that "the unquestioned outer world is from the outset experienced not as an arrangement of individual unique objects dispersed in space and time, but as 'mountains,' 'trees,' 'animals,' 'fellow-men'" (1962:74). Furthermore, our consciousness is always *intentional* in the sense of being directed towards *something*; and as we direct our intentionality to those objects, we 'typify' them as 'mountains', 'trees' and 'animals'.

Importantly, typification is neither anterior to, nor independent of the societal influence. To typify something as a *type*, say as a 'tree' as opposed to a 'bush', I must have already acquired a minimal concept in virtue of which something is filed as one, as opposed to another, type. Again, this signals the primacy of language (and its acquisition), in establishing the basis of typifications. Indeed, Schutz holds that the primary source of typifications is language, stating, "[typifications]

¹⁶ Indeed, most of the first chapter of Berger and Luckmann's work reproduces a chapter co-authored by Schutz and Luckmann at around the same time

¹⁷ Schutz's (1964) states, for example, that successful human interaction is underpinned by "the establishment of a congruency between the typified scheme used by the actor as a scheme or orientation and by his fellow-men as a scheme of interpretation," and that this occurs when "the scheme of typification is standardized, the system of pertinent relevancies institutionalized" (1964, p. 238, quoted in Kim and Berard, 2009).

...are handed down by the typifying medium *par excellence*, namely, common language..." (1962:5).¹⁸ Berger and Luckmann (1975:35, *emphasis added*) maintain the same position,

"I apprehend the reality of everyday life as an ordered reality. Its phenomena are prearranged in patterns that seem to be independent of my apprehension of them and that impose themselves upon the latter. The reality of everyday life appears objectified, that is, constituted by an order of objects that have been designated as objects before my appearance on the scene. *The language used in everyday life continuously provides me with the necessary objectivations and posits the order within which these make sense and within which everyday life has meaning for me*".

Importantly, one basic way in which language provides necessary objectivation is through concept acquisition in childhood. A child points to an object and asks, "What is this?", and is given a linguistic answer, "a radiator". Alternatively, an adult or competent language user, intending to teach a child the meaning of a concept, might utter the word "radiator" while pointing to the object. It is not insignificant that this linguistic act is termed "*ostensive definition*", and it is one of the basic means by which concepts are acquired, both in early childhood and even in adulthood. Importantly, if the child later points to a picture, in virtue of the object being rectangle and/or hanging on a wall, and utters the word "radiator", a competent language user will typically correct their (mis)application (or 'overextension') of the concept, by providing a differentiation between a picture and a radiator, and thereby sharpening the child's typification. This highlights how even the language used in everyday life for routine objects has a rule-like character, such that breaches can and frequently are sanctioned. Berger and Luckmann state the point more emphatically saying, "I encounter language as a facticity external to myself and it is coercive in its effects on me. Language forces me into its patterns" (1975: 53).

A central feature of the typifying process, and language more generally, is that it is intersubjectively meaningful. Berger and Luckmann (1975) note that "Language...typifies experiences, allowing me to subsume them under broad categories in terms of which they have meaning not only to

¹⁸ In another passage Schutz states, "The typifying medium *par excellence* by which socially derived knowledge is transmitted is the vocabulary and the syntax of everyday language. The vernacular of everyday life is primarily a language of named things and events, and any name includes a typification and generalization referring to the relevance system prevailing in the linguistic in-group which found the named thing significant enough to provide a separate term for it. The pre-scientific vernacular can be interpreted as a treasure-house of ready made pre-constituted types and characteristics..." (1962:14)

myself but also to my fellowmen" (1975:53). Indeed, this intersubjective character is central to the process of institutionalisation as such. According to Berger and Luckmann's classic account, when a situation arises wherein many other people share my typification (i.e. so that it is reciprocal) of an action/actor, we can say that this action/situation has become institutionalised. Although typification covers the entire domain of human intentionality, Berger and Luckmann (1975) attribute special significance to one category of typification: those relating to actions, situations and roles. This is the basis of Berger and Luckmann's (1975) definition of "institutionalization" as occurring "whenever there is a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by types of actors" (1975:53). In short, "any such typification is an institution" (ibid). As such, institutions carry an important informational load. Specifically, they posit that "actions of type X will be performed by actors of type X" (1975: 72). If, for example, I observe a woman in uniform writing down the details of a car parked on double yellow lines and proceeding to place a sticker on the windscreen, I will probably typify the action as a "traffic warden issuing a parking fine". But my ability to do so, presupposes both the institutionalization of the "traffic warden" and my own socialization into that institutional context.

Institutionalisation marks a transition between objectivation and *externalization*, in the sense that institutions, as defined above, are experienced as "possessing a reality of their own, a reality that confronts the individual as an external and coercive fact" (Berger and Luckmann, 1975: 76-7). In such a situation, "the objectivity of the institutional world 'thickens' and 'hardens'...The 'there we go again' now becomes 'this is how these things are done'. A world so regarded attains a firmness in consciousness"(ibid). In this way, Berger and Luckmann again stress the controlling character of institutions and even assert that control is "inherent in institutionalization as such" (1975:72). In a phrase that suggests the important role of definition, Berger and Luckman argue that, when something becomes institutionalized "a thing is what it is called, and it could not be called anything else" (1975: 77). It is worth noting here the propinquity to Boltanski's understanding of institutions, as that to which is delegated the authority to state the 'whatness of what is' (see Section 4.4).

Berger and Luckman present a process in which *ad hoc* conceptions and mental 'pre-definitions' eventually thicken and harden into institutional definitions. The social world rapidly becomes one which is "institutionally defined". Such a world is not ontologically separate from the human activity that produced it. The relationship between man (the producer) and the social world is a dialectical one, and this leads to the third element in the dialectical process. The concept of

institutional definition appears strikingly in DiMaggio and Powell's (1991) theory of 'organisational fields'. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) argue that organizations of a common *type*, such as art museums or business firms, are driven toward bureaucratization (and organizational change in general) and homogenization not from competition or concerns about efficiency, but rather, from the processes of "institutional definition" within organizational fields (1991:65). They are, in other words, pushed towards conformity with the social definition of which they are a type. The concept reappears in Tolbert and Zucker's (1983) work on the adoption of civil service reform in the United States, which argues that the early adoption of civil service reforms was related to internal government needs, whereas later adoption relates more to "institutional definitions of the legitimate structural form for municipal administration" (1983: 22).

Internationalization is the process by which the "objectivated social world is retrojected into consciousness in the course of socialization" (1975:78-79). Here, again, language is central. Berger and Luckman (1975:153) state that "language constitutes both the most important content and the most important instrument of socialization". It is the process of internalization that raises the need for *legitimation*.

As the social world hardens into institutions (sustained through institutional definitions), the original meanings of institutions become inaccessible to future generations. In such a situation it can become necessary, especially if contradictions are felt, for the meanings of institutions to be interpreted through legitimating formulas, which themselves will need to attain a degree of consistency if they are to be successful. "It follows" Berger and Luckmann note, "that the expanding institutional order develops a corresponding canopy of legitimations, stretching over it a protective cover of both cognitive and normative interpretations" (1975:79). Again, it is through language, or to use another of Berger and Luckmann's terms, 'conceptual machineries of universe-maintenance' (1975:122), that the canopy of legitimations is expressed and institutional reality maintained.

Finally, central to the maintenance and change of conceptual machineries and symbolic universes are the theories put forward by 'experts'. As they note, "The experts in legitimation may operate as theoretical justifiers of the *status quo*: they may also appear as revolutionary ideologists" (Berger and Luckmann, 1975:146). "Consequently" they note, in a point which lends support to Skinner's work, "social change must always be understood as standing in a dialectical relationship to the 'history of ideas'. (ibid). It is also significant that the success of conceptual machineries is strongly

influenced by the power possessed by those who operate them, a point which is increasingly recognised in contemporary institutionalist research (e.g. Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). Berger and Luckmann see power as central to the maintenance and change of conceptual machineries. They note that, in the confrontation of alternative symbolic universe, the winner "...will depend more on the power than on the theoretical ingenuity of the respective legitimators" (1975:125-126).

In summary, Berger and Luckmann (1975) present a theory of social order in which typifications are liable, under specific conditions, to become institutionalised. As typifications are inherently classificatory, and since definition is inextricably linked to classification, it is clear that definition can play an important role in establishing 'what a thing is called'. In this sense, although Berger and Luckmann do not specifically discuss definition *per se*, they describe a dialectical process into which definitions clearly fit. They describe the process of institutionalization as one which generates "institutional definitions". That, one might conjecture, is why so much of their imagery of the social is presented in terms of 'definitions of social reality' and of social reality as being "socially defined". Indeed, it is for this reason, we might further venture to suggest, that definition plays such an important role in the imagery of institutionalism.

4.3 John Searle: Constitutive rules and status function declarations

Central to Searle's understanding of institutions is his broader views on the relationship between language and social reality. Indeed, he argues strenuously that before we can think properly about institutions, we need to "analyze the role of language in the constitution of institutions" (2005:2).

At the risk of over simplifying, Searle's position on language can be summarized in the following way. Human language is an extension of pre-linguistic forms of intentionality. Our intentional states are always directed at some object or state of affairs and we typically attach propositional content to those objects. Most importantly, our intentionality attempts to express three propositional forms. We aim to *represent* how things are in the world; how we would *like* them to be; or how we *intend* to make them be. These three functions have three different ways of "fitting reality". The representation of how things are in the world, is characterized as a "mind-to-world" direction of fit; while desires and intentions are a "world-to-mind" fit, since the state of the world is supposed to follow on from how we wish things to be.

Hypothetically, such intentionality can be found in pre-linguistic thought. What is distinctive about modern human language is that it is also involves collective intentionality, conventions and commitments (or ‘deontologies’); all of which serve as the bases for making ‘status function declarations’, which, in turn, are the type of speech act that create institutions. This is one reason why only human society can be said to have an institutional character. Specifically, the success of collective intentionality is massively improved by the development of conventions and meanings for the contents of communication. This, Searle notes, “enables both speaker and hearer to have a reasonable expectation both that the speaker means something identifiable by the utterance and that the hearer can reasonably be assumed to understand the utterance” (Searle: 2008:448).

Importantly, human language also develops expressions that can be used to refer to things, in the sense of their corresponding to objects, and for describing or characterizing their varied features. This also allows for predicating expressions. The development of referring expressions, presupposes the development of commitments. It is especially this element that distinguishes human language from pre-linguistic forms. More importantly, once a language has evolved conventions around referring expression, particularly for the communication of content about objects, we get ‘commitments’, such as rights, responsibilities, authorizations obligations, permissions, and entitlements. As Searle (2008:449) explains,

“...if I am using conventional sentences of a language to make a statement explicitly and intentionally to someone else that it is raining, then ... I am, at the very least, committed to the truth of what I say, I am committed to sincerity, that is, to not lying, and I am committed to being able to provide reasons for my claim”.

Searle terms these commitments ‘deontologies’, and describes them as “the glue that holds society together” (2008:449). They do so by imposing a certain type of function, or what he terms ‘status functions’, on people and objects. In elaborating this point, Searle links the ‘different directions of fit’, noted earlier, to different types of ‘Speech Act’. ‘Statements’ and ‘descriptions’ that are meant to *represent* how things are (that have a word-to-world direction of fit) are categorized as Assertives; Both ‘orders’, and ‘promises’ and ‘vows’ have a world-to-word direction of fit, since they are intended to alter reality so that it matches the content of the proposition. They are categorized as Directives and Commissives, respectively. A final category, one with a ‘double direction of fit’, are speech acts that “make something the case by representing it as being the case” (2008: 451). These are termed Declarations. For example, provided the contextual conditions are

right, we can adjourn a meeting simply by saying ‘this meeting is adjourned’. From the point of view of understanding institutions, Declarations have a special significance, since, as Searle states emphatically,

“...all of institutional reality is both created in its initial existence and maintained in its continued existence by way of representations that have the same logical structure as Declarations” (2008:451).

It is on this basis that Searle proceeds to his oft-quoted assertion; namely, that institutions are created when a status function is assigned based on a constitutive rule taking the form ‘*X counts as Y in context C*’. For example, though simplifying somewhat, a ‘dollar bill’ (X) counts as (is) ‘money’ (Y) in the US (context C); ‘taking someone’s car’ (X) counts as (is) ‘theft’ (Y). These are what Searle describes as institutional facts as opposed to social facts. Again, language is central to this process, both in the sense that “there is no fact of the matter about the X term having the Y status function, other than the fact that we do so represent it” (Searle: 2008:452), and also because the creation of institutions such as ‘money’, ‘government’, and ‘marriage’ require the “iterative application of constitutive rules of the form “X counts as Y in C” (Searle: 2008:452).

A point of crucial importance is that the linguistic form through which institutions are created is the Declarative speech act. This is important because definition, in particular stipulative definitions, are widely regarded as Declarative speech acts. For example, Declaratives characteristically have an explicit ‘performative verb’, which enables the speaker to perform the act named by the verb. Searle (2008:451) provides the following examples (“I now *pronounce* you husband and wife”; “war is hereby *declared*”; “I *promise* to come to see you on Wednesday”). It is clearly possible to add the act of definition to that (I *define* X as Y). Indeed, Vanderveken (1990: 204, *emphasis added*) even notes that,

"To define is to *declare*, by way of stipulating, the meaning of a word in a certain linguistic context (e.g. a text or a conversation). From the moment of utterance, the word or phrase defined is taken to have the meaning thereby given (propositional content condition). [...] A definition can fix the sense as well as the denotation of a linguistic expression."

That is important, since it offers perhaps the clearest signal yet that definition plays a fundamental role in the constitution of institutions, by virtue of its role in fixing meaning, a process by means

of which constitutive rules are formed. That might be in codifying the ‘X term’ or the ‘Y term’ themselves, or the entire constitutive rule. For example, ‘marriage’ is often presented as a classic case of an institution. By Searle’s account, marriage is an institution *because* there is a clear constitutive rule which expresses what is to count as marriage (in the US) and what pattern of conduct is to be followed for it to be realized. In most countries, there are rules, generally inscribed in law, that state what marriage “is” and what pattern of behavior must be followed, by whom, for there to be a marriage. These rules are standardly expressed by means of definition, and it is by means of redefinition that they change. As McConnel-Ginet’s (2006) research on the definition of marriage attests, “debates over the definition of marriage and family illustrate instrumental defining activity. They are not just about the words *marriage* and *family* but about the institutions of marriage and family” (2006:217). That being the case, we have a firm grounding for linking definitions to institutions

4.4 Luc Boltanski: Qualifications and definitions

“[Institutions] do not make do with establishing dictionaries. They prescribe definitions, ignorance of which entails sanctions. In their case, semantic work and police work go together”

Boltanski (2011:79)

Luc Boltanski is not traditionally considered an institutionalist, nor is he widely regarded as a theorist of institutions. He is, however, recognized as one of the most important contemporary social theorists and so his recent engagement with the ‘sociology of institutions’ warrants consideration (Dansou and Langley, 2012). The fact that his engagement also explicitly links institutions to definitions provides the main reason for reviewing his work. However, given the limitations of space, we can neither hope to outline Boltanski’s broader social theory (for such a review see Honneth, 2010), nor fully evaluate his work on the critique of domination (see Susan and Turner, 2014), which is where his engagement with the ‘sociology of institutions’ appears (Boltanski, 2011). What we can hope to achieve is a basic description of his engagement with the ‘sociology of institutions’ and a discussion of how this links to the practice of definition. The basis of the link arises from Boltanski’s conceptualization of institutions (and domination) in terms of their *semantic* function, which is to state the ‘whatness of what is’. Definition then becomes an important mechanism, both for fixing certain semantic components of institutions, and also for achieving change through critique of definition. In this sense, there are significant overlaps with Skinner (2002).

Prerequisite to understanding Boltanski's approach to institutions is understanding his social ontology. Like Berger and Luckmann (1975), Boltanski (2011) draws a distinction between the world-as-it-is and the world as it is constructed through language, or 'how things stand'. The latter is largely consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1975) social constructed reality, whereas the former is understood in the Wittgensteinian sense of 'all that is happening'. The distinction is important because it provides the basis for Boltanski's claim that the possibility of critique depends on cracks and tensions between the two. Indeed, this is one clear context in which the concept of definition appears, as he states that actors are capable of "drawing from the world arguments and examples that do not fit in the qualifications, *definitions*, and test formations on which current social reality is based" (Boltanski, 2011: 50, *emphasis added*).

The reference to cracks and tensions in reality points to another important component in his understanding of institutions. Boltanski argues that the "fragility of reality" creates uncertainty and unease in everyday life to such an extent that it constantly threatens social arrangements. He criticises previous research on "institutions" for assuming that agreement is the default position, while underplaying the "uncertainty and unease which, tacitly, continually haunt social life and that become clear in situations of dispute" (2011:55). Indeed, one of the main functions of institutions is to help ameliorate the unease of this fragility.

On this basis, he sets out on a 'thought experiment', imaging the social world from an *original position* of radical uncertainty. In such a scenario, the "organization of social life must confront radical uncertainty as regards the question of *how things stand with what is*" (2011: xi, *emphasis in original*). Crucially, the uncertainty is both semantic and deontic. That is, it concerns both the "whatness of what is" and also "what matters, what has value, what is right to respect and look at twice" (2011:56). Here, there is a clear link to Searle's notion of institutions as status functions with deontic power. Indeed, Boltanski explicitly references Searle on that point. There are also similarities with Skinner, in the sense that both the indexical and evaluative are seen as inherent features of conceptual meaning.

The above outline helps lay the grounds for his subsequent conceptualization of institutions in terms of their semantic function. Specifically, he asserts that the function of institutions is to state the "whatness of what is" (2011:56). In a passage which again explicitly connects institutions to definitions (and ultimately to the continuity of economic systems), he states, "To institutions thus

fall all the tasks that consist in *fixing reference*, especially when it bears on objects whose value is important and whose predicates must be stabilized by *definitions*. Without these tasks ... something like capitalism would simply be impossible” (2011:76, emphasis added). The point, which is worth quoting in full, is developed in the following way,

“Institutional operations are necessary not only to affix things - material or immaterial, like titles - to persons or organizations, in such a way that they can be transmitted, but also to define their properties - which transforms them into *products* or *goods* and enables the establishment of markets. For supply and demand to be able to coincide, and a market then to be established and operate (more or less), information about goods must be concentrated in prices. But for this process itself to be possible, the goods must previously have been subject to a labour of definition, or rather the relations between goods and the words that designate them, or the names given to them, must have been stabilized by a *determinate description*” (Boltanski, 2011: 77, *italics in original; emphasis in underline added*)

The reference to definition is not a one-off remark. Elsewhere, he notes that the creation of institutions is, fundamentally, about the “establishment of types” and that these need to be “fixed and memorized in one way or another (memory of elders, written legal codes, narratives, tales, examples, images, rituals, etc.) and often *stored in definitions*, so as to be available, when the need arises, to qualify, in a situation of uncertainty, states of affairs that are the object of ambiguous or contradictory usages and interpretations” (2011:75, *emphasis added*). In this sense, Boltanski goes further than Berger and Luckmann (1975), by explicitly positing the role of definitions in codifying the relationship between symbolic forms (i.e. concepts) and their referents.

The centrality given to definition stems from the importance Boltanski attached to the notion of *indexicality* – the semiotic process by which a sign refers to something. Boltanski also explicitly draws on developments within cognitive linguistics concerning processes of categorization (Ungerer and Schmid, 1996), especially Rosch’s work on the proto-typicality. That is why he attributes such a significant role to the cognitive acts of typifying and categorizing, and the correlated social acts of “qualification, *definitions*, standards, test format, rules, selection procedure, etc.” (2011:49). It is through these practices that *reality* is constituted and organised (2011: 59).

Boltanski's work is of additional value for linking definition to domination and the critique of domination. Building on the distinction between 'how things stand' and 'what is', he reconceptualises domination as being "directed at the field of the determination of what is - that is to say, the field in which the relationship between what (borrowing terms from Wittgenstein) can be called symbolic forms and states of affairs is established" (2011:9). By conceptualizing domination in terms of its *semantic* character, the critique of domination then takes on a similarly semantic form. Specifically, he claims that critique of domination is based largely on the "establishment of qualifications" (2011:9). Importantly, 'qualifications' are linguistic processes "which indivisibly fix the *properties* of beings and determine their *worth*" (2011:9). Once again, Boltanski states explicitly that the process of qualification entails "formats or types, invariably combined with *descriptions* and/or *definitions*, which are themselves stored in various forms (such as regulations, codes, customs, rituals, narratives, emblematic examples, etc.)" (Boltanski, 2011: 9, *emphasis in original*). In short, one way in which the process of qualification is achieved, is by means of definition and redefinition.

Finally, Boltanski draws a distinction between two modes of consciousness: the *practical register* and the *metapragmatic register*. The distinction is interesting because it sheds light on two different ways in which definition can be viewed in connection with institutions. The *practical register* is characterized by a relatively routinized or automatic processing of sense perceptions. In this register we are not, for example, engaged in asking 'what we are doing' and 'why we are doing it'. Boltanski links the notion of a practical register to Alfred Schutz's notion of the *background*. Here, there is a "tacit adherence to reality as it presents itself in the course of ordinary activities" (2011:51). Language use in the practical register is 'highly indexical', in the sense that reference to objects is largely unquestioning. More generally, the relationship between "*symbolic forms* and *states of affairs* is not envisaged in its own right, whether to compare them or contrast them" (2011:66, *emphasis in original*). In other words, there is rarely talk of what a word really means, of where the boundaries of a form truly lie. The practical register is typically the most common format of consciousness since it brings significant cognitive advantages, a point which echoes Berger and Luckmann's (1975) understanding of the role of habitualization. However, by the same token, it is also the register that is most unfavorable to the development of critique, since the question of the truth or meaning of what we do, or what we are told, is rarely in the foreground.

The practical register is contrasted to the metapragmatic register. Here, there is not only an increased level of reflexivity, but consciousness is directed away from the question of "the task to

be performed” (2011:67), towards the question of “how it is appropriate to *characterize* what is happening” (2011:67, *emphasis in original*). Attention is directed towards the very nature of what one is doing and “how it would be necessary to act so that what one is doing is done in *very truth*” (2011:68, *emphasis in original*). At this point consciousness turns towards the *rule* to be followed. More specifically, the question arises as to whether ‘what we are in the process of doing’ (the ‘token situation’) is really a genuine instance of it (the type situation). As Boltanski explains,

“Take, for example, a situation we are familiar with: a meeting of teachers to examine student profiles. Everyone participates, but with a covert concern for saving time: not to tire oneself out; not to get into a conflict with colleagues; to finish before 6 o'clock because it is necessary to go and collect the kid from school, and so on. Ten files have already been examined and twenty remain. No coffee break, you go on, it is necessary to finish the work, and so on. But at a certain point a colleague starts to speak, with a serious air, and raises the question of whether we are actually following the same rules and the same procedures for each file. We then stop examining the files and everyone is coordinated in this new regime. We ask: 'but what in fact are the procedures? ' Are there even any procedures? And what are we doing? What is the collective we form? Does it merit the name of jury?’” (2010:68)

The raising of the question, ‘is this a genuine jury?’ is precisely what Boltanski terms ‘qualification’. At the core of qualification is a questioning of the relationship between the ‘symbolic form’ (or the concept of jury), the ideal type of it, and the nature of the state of affairs in question.

Language is clearly important in the metapragmatic register, just as definition is central to the operation of qualification. For example, one way in which the power of institutions can be challenged, according to Boltanski, is by aiming to undo the “generally accepted relations between symbolic forms and states of affairs” (2011: 109). This is achieved when actors present new examples or counterexamples that “endanger the completeness of established *definitions*” (Boltanski, 2011: 109, *emphasis added*). A more explicit statement is then provided, in the legal context, which states that,

“By affording new examples that do not fit with the accepted definitions, they make it possible to challenge the law and, often by adopting a rhetoric of change,

to denounce it as a ‘dead letter’ that no longer corresponds to the present state of affairs The law is thus caught out when it calls a man who takes bread (from a rich crook) to save his children from hunger a ‘thief’; when it calls a young girl who has had an abortion after being raped by her boss a ‘criminal’; when it characterizes this mother who, torn apart by the inhuman suffering of her hemiplegic son, gives him (at his request and with the agreement of a doctor) a lethal injection as a ‘murderer’, and so on” (2011:110).

Without mentioning it explicitly, Boltanski is describing, in almost identical terms, the kind of rhetorical techniques around redescription and definition which the Roman rhetoricians describe and which Skinner discusses in connection with the process of conceptual change (see especially sections 3.5 and 6.2).

There is a great deal more that could be derived from Boltanski’s engagement with the sociology of institutions and his broader work, not least his important monograph on the rise of “les cadres” in France, since it also explicitly refers to a “labour of definition”. The important point to take, for the present purpose, is simply that if institutions are understood in terms of their semantic function, then definitions become both an important component of the institutional fabric (by fixing the relationship between symbolic forms and states of affairs, both in the sense of *what is* and *what matters*), and a key mechanism for realizing institutional change. To this extent, there are important links to Skinner’s view of social change as driven by rhetorical practices of redescription and redefinition, aimed at shifting the criteria of application and/or normative character of concepts, for the sake of (de)legitimizing actions and states of affairs.

4.5 Edward Schiappa: From the ‘natural attitude’ to ‘definitional ruptures’

“Interests always are served by definitions; the only question is whose interests”

Schiappa (2003:88)

In the works discussed above, the significance of definition needed to be excavated or made explicit, since the authors’ original works tended merely to mention definition without providing an explicit analysis of it. This contrasts strongly with Schiappa’s (2003) *Defining Reality*, a book that collects his theoretical and empirical writings on the rhetorical and political character of definition *per se*. Schiappa’s main objective in engaging with definition is to provide a framework for

evaluating competing definitions. To that end, he argues that definitions should be approached, not as statements of *'what X is'*, but rather as statements of *'what X ought to be'* given our interests in defining it. Underpinning this claim is a strong social constructivist thesis. It is also significant that Schiappa holds to the view that since definition is a learned linguistic operation, it is one that can be refined and improved through training. As such, he sees the goal of his own work to be the betterment of definitional practice. Just how far his 'pragmatic approach to definition' takes us in avoiding the more disreputable and injurious uses of definition cannot be fully evaluated here (for such a discussion see West, 2011). What we will focus on, is the linkage he draws between definition and the social world.

Schiappa construes definitions as "rhetorically induced social knowledge" (Schiappa, 2003:3), in the sense of providing a shared understanding of the world, especially when they become part of law or formal policy. The reference to 'rhetorically induced', signals that definitions are the product of "past persuasion" (2003:167) and provides a resource for future persuasion. Importantly, for the vast majority of time, he claims, we adopt a "natural attitude" towards definitions (2003:167), a term he borrows from Alfred Schutz and Thomas Luckmann (note the parallel with Boltanski, 2011) and which is characterized by the "belief that the objects of our world (including language) are simply "there" and can be taken for granted" (Schiappa 2003:7). We also tend to accept that definitions provide us with factual knowledge. Rarely do we question the nature of that fact. Indeed, we even tend to conflate the two different factual pretensions of definition (facts of essence and facts of usage). As Schiappa explains, "established definitions are assumed to represent the way things "really are" (facts of essence) as well as current linguistic practices (facts of usage)" (Schiappa, 2003: 167). When we use the word "death" to describe the cessation of life, it is assumed that that is because the cessation of life is what death really is and what it is rightly called.

It is only in contexts which he describes as a "definitional rupture" (2003: 167) that actors explicitly problematize the definition of particular words. The surest sign of a definitional rupture is that different definitions are presented as superior, and typically the claims will appeal to one of the two kinds of facts. One side, typically taken up by 'experts', assert their claim to superior knowledge of what X really is (a fact of essence), while the other side appeals to what X means for the average language user, or according to some other linguistic tradition (a fact of usage). Here, it is useful to note the continuing parallels to Boltanski's distinction between the practical and metapragmatic registers. Specifically, it is possible to see adherence to mundane definition as

occurring in the practical register, while definitional ruptures appear to be firmly within the terrain of Boltanski's the metapragmatic register. Between the natural attitude toward definitions and definitional ruptures are 'definitional gaps' (Schiappa, 2003:89). These are situations in which an unfamiliar word is encountered or when a familiar word is used in an unconventional way. In such a case, we might ponder the meaning and whether the word is correct but the 'gap' can be settled relatively easily by, for example, checking a dictionary or consulting some other definitional authority. Importantly, the process of definition *per se* does not become the subject of dispute.

Definitions are presented as having a strongly socially constructed basis, rather than a grounding in 'reality'. This claim is underpinned by Schiappa's embrace of a strong social constructivist position, both in general terms and specifically in his portrayal of definition. He states, for example, that "When we define objects or things, we participate in a process of socially constructing an understanding of reality" (Schiappa, 2003:152). By the same token, he also explicitly positions his approach in oppositions to essentialism and realism. The rejection of essentialism is significant since the basis of essentialism is the Aristotelian notion of 'essences', the discovery of which was held to be the goal of '*real* definition'. The very idea of a real definition is rejected outright and even characterized as dangerously mistaken (including when it is used within the pursuit of scientific knowledge). He explains that, "Definitional questions in the form of "What is X?" are problematic because they encourage a search for so-called real definitions—articulations of what X really and truly is" (2003:168).

There are two main problems Schiappa attributes to the idea of a real definition aimed at identifying the unchanging essence or nature of things. The first is the Kantian idea that we have no direct access to things-in-themselves (noumena) but only things as experienced (phenomena). Therefore, when scientists attempt to distill the essence of a thing in terms of an eternally true nature, what they are actually doing is picking out those features of the thing which appear to them as relevant. This applies whether or not the 'kind' in question is 'natural', such as "planet" or "life", or of a more obviously social character such as "rape", "marriage", or "work". Second, because definitions are linguistic operations, there is no way to escape the "historical contingency of any particular definitional proposition" (2003: 168). Schiappa (2003) states that definitions are stated in the language and terminology of theories, which themselves, are a product of the beliefs that are held within a particular historical context and subject to possible revision. This point is articulated clearly by Kuhn (1983), who states that, "'Planet' and 'star' now categorize the world of celestial objects differently from the way they did before Copernicus, and the differences are

not well-described by phrases like ‘marginal adjustment’ or ‘zeroing in’” (Kuhn, 1983, quoted in Schiappa, 2003:71)

Once we have rejected essentialism, and real definitions with it, we are left with a view of definition as “symbolic constructions, involving a host of value judgments, designed to serve particular social ends and are therefore assessed for their utility in carrying out social programs” (Chesebro, 1985, 14, cited in Schiappa, 2003:168).

In consequence, when disputes arises over ‘*What is X*’, these need to be restated in a way that does not continue to assume essentialist metaphysics. Specifically, they should be restated as, “How ought we use the word X given our needs and interests?’, ‘What is the purpose of defining X?’, and ‘What should count as X in context C?’” (Schiappa, 2003: 168). By doing so it becomes possible to bring to the foreground the purposes for which a definition is being offered and the values that underpin it. As Schiappa states, this is to openly acknowledge that “definitions emphasize aspects of social realities that serve particular interests” (Schiappa, 2003: 168). There are intriguing links that could be drawn between this position and the anti-foundationalist approach to social science defended by Flyvbjerg (2001), which calls on researchers to foreground their convictions as to *how things ought to be* given our interests.

Having removed the grounding of definitions in reality itself, the act of definition is then presented in terms of its rhetorical character. The persuasive intention of definition is captured by the notion of ‘*denotative conformity*’ (2003: 168). In an earlier work Schiappa (1993) states, “Definitions are rhetorical in the sense that they function as strategies of social influence and control. Definitions tell us when it is “proper” or “correct” to use words in a particular way and, in doing so, they tell us what is in our world. The specific form of social control that definitions induce can be described as “denotative conformity” (Schiappa, 1993:404-405). All definitions aim to persuade in the sense of convincing their audience to alter their linguistic behaviour accordingly. Even something as allegedly impartial as a dictionary definition aim to “bring our understanding and linguistic behavior into line accordingly” (Schiappa, 2003:30). Even within the system of formal education, “a major task” Schiappa states, “is to socialize students into denotative conformity. Virtually every class a student takes introduces a vocabulary that the student must learn to use “correctly.” If a student calls Nazi Germany a “democracy,” then the teacher is likely to claim that the student does not yet understand what a “democracy” is” (Schiappa, 1993:406). Likewise, when scholars present a novel definition in the course of theorizing, we can assume that it is because

they believe that their theory ought to be believed and, to that extent, their definition should be followed. That highlights the issue of power and politics. For Schiappa, since all definitions are ‘interested’, and since defining is centrally about what is or is not part of our shared reality, then it follows that all definitions are inherently political. He recognises, however, that not all acts of definition are equally significant in terms of their political implications. Some definitions matter more than others, and the degree of ‘rupture’ is usually a reflection of that extent.

4.6 Chapter summary

To better understand the relationship between definitions, concepts and institutions, this section has reviewed four important works. Although there are fundamental differences between the works reviewed, they share a conviction that language is central to the construction of social order. For Berger and Luckmann (1975), language was presented as the primary system for objectivation by underpinning the cognitive process of typification. Special significance was attributed to reciprocal typifications concerning the actions of particular categories of actors. These were presented as institutions. Definition can be seen as one way in which such typifications come to be reciprocated. Searle (2005) provides a more explicit discussion of the relationship between language and institutions, presenting the latter as the outcome of the former; in the sense that all institutions are created from linguistic acts that have the logical form of a Declarative speech act. Given that the act of definition, at least in the form of a stipulative definition, is widely considered to be a Declarative speech act, it is plausible to conclude that definitions can play a role in the creation and change of institutions by fixing or altering some element of the formula that expresses the constitutive rule. Boltanski’s (2011) engagement with the sociology of institutions starts from the postulate of radical uncertainty and institutions are subsequently positioned as the human creations that help ameliorate our unease. Specifically, institutions are delegated the task of stating the ‘whatness of what is’. This explicitly semantic conceptualization of institutions leads Boltanski (2011) to highlight the important role of definitions both in confirming institutions (e.g. ‘this is a genuine marriage because it is XYZ’), and in launching critique (e.g. ‘is XYZ genuinely present in this supposed instance of marriage?’). The section ends with Schiappa’s understanding of definitions as ‘rhetorically induced social knowledge’, in the sense of providing a shared understanding of the world and also being the product of past persuasion and the material for future persuasion. Though definitions are not problematized most of the time, they are always vulnerable to a potential ‘definitional rupture’. At that point, argumentation ensues and distinctive interests are served as actors seek to ensure denotative conformity.

Having reviewed those works, we are now in a better position to return to the concept of institution as it is used in contemporary institutional theory. The section began by noting that there is much disagreement about the concept of institution. However, in a recent review of definitions, Djelic (2010) has argued that there is now an emerging consensus regarding the three main elements of institutions. First “rules” are understood as providing stability and meaning but their nature is multidimensional. They can be formal and informal; external structures such as laws, or internal cognitive structure such as scripts and classificatory schemas. Second, an essential element of institutions is their rooting or stabilizing influence. Third, institutions are ‘historical aggregations’ resulting from the activity of multiple actors while, at the same time, constituting an external constraint on individuality (Djelic, 2010:33). This is a useful conceptualization, since it is possible to locate definition within all three of these elements.

We have already considered, drawing on Searle (2005; 2008), how definitions have a rule-like character, particularly when they are inscribed in law. Indeed, in that respect, we can more adequately think of definitions in terms of a continuum from informal to formal. The degree of formality is a function of the nature and weight of sanctions that can be brought to bear when a definition is breached. At the formal end of the continuum are the concepts constitutive of the legal-cum-economic system, while at the other end it is possible to envisage concepts constitutive of the arts as having a more informal character. For example, at the informal end we might find a “verbatim play”¹⁹ that introduces substantial fictional text. This is unlikely to be met with the same kind of sanction or contestation as, at the formal end of the continuum, a “final salary pension” scheme that introduces substantial dependence of average earnings. One key difference is that only the latter concepts, those constitutive of final salary pensions, are formally defined in the sense of being backed by the weight of law. In both cases, it is possible to see that the concepts are also inherently normative, in the sense of being infused with values and valuations.

While we may wish to refrain from asserting that every definition creates an institution, a strong argument has been developed above that every institution is underpinned by a conceptual basis and some element of this will be held in place by definition. In short, to match the panoply of institutions within any institutional regime, there is a corresponding matrix of concepts and definitions. Some of these definitions will be informal and some will be highly formal. Typically,

¹⁹ Verbatim theatre is a form of documentary theatre in which plays are constructed from the precise words spoken by people interviewed about a particular event or topic.

those that carry the greatest significance in terms of distributional outcomes, will be subject to a greater degree of contestation.

Chapter 5: The theorization of institutional change

5.1 An interdisciplinary approach

Having established the rhetorical and political character of definition, particularly in terms of how definition can be used to alter the meaning of concepts (section 3.5), and having grounded the connection between definition and institutions in their linguistic basis (Chapter 4), we are now in a better position to consider the potential relevance of definition for institutional theory and especially the theorization of institutional change. Unsurprisingly, the theme of language and meaning will feature heavily.

The theorization of institutional change was identified as a problem of institutional theory over 30 years ago (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). Since then, numerous scholars from several disciplines have attempted to refine our understanding through conceptual and empirical research. As a result, there is now such a vast literature on institutional change, that perhaps the best means of reviewing it effectively is to rely on the reviews and even meta-reviews of other scholars. Fortunately, there are several such reviews available, some of which have been completed by the most eminent scholars in the field (Djelic, 2010; Campbell, 2010; Meyer, 2008; Morgan and Hauptmeier, 2014; Suddaby, 2010). Additionally, while many important developments have emerged in our understanding institutional change, there has also been a growing separation between different disciplinary approaches. This has led to silos, duplication of effort and even inconsistencies. In contrast to many researchers, who limit their engagement to one discipline (e.g. Greenwood *et al*, 2008), Morgan and Hauptmeier's (2014) helpful review seeks to build interconnections and interdisciplinary dialogue by assessing how each of the four main traditions of institutionalism (rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and constructivist institutionalism) lead to different understandings of the nature and evolution of institutional regimes generally, and how those understandings might direct research on employment relations, specifically.

Given that our interest in definition is relatively exploratory, Morgan and Hauptmeier's more interdisciplinary approach is an appropriate format for this review. As Morgan (2014) notes elsewhere, "Innovation, theoretical and conceptual, arises from the challenge of confronting difference not from laying down orthodoxies" (2014: 936). Hall (2010) has made a similar point saying, "With respect to issues of institutional change, fruitful synthesis is surely the most promising way forward" (Hall, 2010: 220). As such, the following review outlines the four main

types of institutionalisms, focusing on how the concept of institution is defined, and how institutional change is explained, before turning to consider how a study of definition may be both relevant and revelatory. In addition to the four traditions covered in Morgan and Hauptmeier's review, we shall consider the recent emergence of 'rhetorical institutionalism'. Taken together, these provide both a theoretical basis for focusing on definition when thinking about institutional change (as discussed above) and several promising avenues for research. These contributions are summarized at the end of the chapter.

5.2 Rational choice institutionalism

Rational choice institutionalism is most closely associated with the discipline of economics, and has heavily influenced the conceptualization of institutions. Douglas North classically defined institutions as "the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, are the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (1990:3). Shepsle (1986), an influential political scientist, provides a more elaborate definition, stating that institutions are "*ex ante* agreements about a structure of cooperation" that "economize on transaction costs, reduce opportunism and other forms of agency 'slippage' and thereby enhance the prospects of gains through cooperation" (Shepsle 1986: 74). In both cases, institutions are seen as resting on a 'hierarchy of rules' ranging from the constitutional level to statute law, to common law, all the way down to informal norms and conventions with a rule-like character. Together, these form the matrices for exchange and set out, often in terms of definitions, what actors can and cannot do. For example, North (1990), describes such as matrix in the case of the exchange of residential property in the modern US. Specifically, the institutional matrix of the residential housing market,

"consists first of all of a hierarchy of legal rules derived from provisions of the U.S. constitution and the powers delegated to the states. State law *defining* the conveyancing characteristics of real property, zoning laws restricting which rights can be transferred, common and statute law undergirding, *defining*, or restricting a host of voluntary organizations... Realtors, title insurance, credit bureaus, and saving and loans associations that affect the mortgage market all will be influence....Equally important are informal constraints that broadly supplement and reinforce the formal rules. They range from conventions of neighborhood conduct to ethical norms *defining* degrees of honesty in information exchange between the parties involved" (North, 1990: 62-63, *emphasis added*)

From this short account, it is already possible to see the potential significance of definition, since the rules (especially the more formal rules enshrined in law) will be expressed in terms of definitions which, by setting out what can and cannot be done, helps to stabilize both expectations and actual conduct. Taken in the aggregate, this matrix of formal rules and norms constitutes the institution of residential property exchange. Although some of the rules within this matrix may increase transaction costs, the continuity of the institution depends on a majority of rules lowering them. In other words, to the extent that the market is efficient, it will be constituted, in the main, by institutions that “induce low cost transacting” (1990:63). Another way of putting this is to say that the very existence of an institution assumes functional efficiency. Moreover, institutions are understood to arise from the utility maximizing decisions of rational agents. Specifically, they are the outcome of actions aimed at coordination when market mechanisms fail and stability is thereby jeopardized. Under these conditions, characterized by uncertainty and insecurity, institutions are thought to lower transaction costs by allowing actors to predict how others will behave. However, the continuity of institutions is explained not only in terms of efficiency but also the investments made by actors once they have become committed to them. Actors become ‘locked-in’ to institutional arrangements due to investments which are asset specific and whose value will diminish with the demise of the institution.

Additionally, institutions are held to be self-reinforcing in the sense that the more actors commit to an institution the more returns are generated, since coordination and information costs continue to fall. Indeed, other actors are pushed towards adherence as incumbent actors may not deal with external actors unless they are also conforming to the institution. Within this train of thought, it is deemed possible that the continuity of the institution can come to depend not on technical efficiency but rather sunk investment and the consequent weight of interests in maintaining the status quo. This is the self-reinforcing dynamic that is partially captured by the notion of ‘path dependence’. This situation is often associated with declining scope for innovation and sub-optimal efficiency, a classic example of which is the continued use of QWERTY keyboards despite research which suggests that other layouts might facilitate faster typing. Lock-in effects are compounded by ‘institutional complementarities’, a concept which signals an increase in the effectiveness of one institution through interaction with another. Owing to lock-in mechanisms and institutional complementarities, institutional change is considered unusual and, when it does arise under normal conditions, tends to be of an incremental rather than radical form.

There is clearly a functionalist basis to such a theorization of institutions. Institutions are seen to arise as the solutions to the problems actors face, and then endure because the solutions yield increasing returns. In practice, as Morgan and Hauptmeier (2014) note, this form of theorizing involves identifying an institution and explaining its existence in terms of the problem it first arose (and continues) to solve. In consequence, this leads to a view of institutional change as unlikely, both in the sense that their existence and continuity signals a function being well served, and because of the lock-in effects and associated gains from complementarities. Where change is recognised, this is typically explained in terms of a ‘punctuated equilibrium’ model, whereby an exogenous shock (rather than an endogenous trigger), such as war or recession, suddenly renders existing rationality calculations irrelevant and jolts actors into new calculations. Such a shock opens a narrow window of opportunity for new arrangements to be put in place. The new arrangements may differ (though, typically, they will build on the old arrangements) but, whatever form does emerge, it will do so quickly so that stability for interaction, that economic actors are said to require, is reinstated. Importantly, actors are assumed to have fixed preferences, in the sense of remaining constant even in the face of change, and to act in ways that are both strategic and aimed at the maximization of their economic preferences. It is for this reason that institutions are held to reflect efficiency and rationality, since their creators are themselves pursuing their own ends through extensive calculation.

In summary, rational choice institutionalism conceptualizes institutions as the rules of the game in society and especially those which govern economic transactions. Although scholars in this tradition have not addressed definition specifically, it is possible to see that at least some of the rules that form the ‘matrix’ must have a basis in definition(s). This is especially the case for those that are codified in law. To be consistent with the broader flow of rational choice institutionalism, those definitions must be presumed to be functional, or at least facilitative of functional efficiency, since the institutions is unlikely to endure otherwise. The idea, that these definitions could be comprehensively altered as part of an actor-initiated project of institutional change, appears to be ruled out at a theoretical level, since change is accounted for only in terms of exogenous shocks. This highlights how one of the main limitations of the rational choice approach is the relatively exclusive reliance on the model of punctuated equilibrium and exogenous shocks to explain institutional change (Morgan and Hauptmeier, 2014). This leads to a theoretical blind spot, as it struggles to envisage situations in which change originates from within (endogenous) the institutional regime (such as changing crucial definitions within the rules that form the institutional matrix). As we shall see in the next section, it also struggles to explain change that is incremental

and yet radically transformative. These blind-spots have become increasingly problematic since there is an abundance of empirical evidence of precisely such change. That has led some scholars to suggest that, in certain (limited) situations, institutional reproduction can change the ‘quasi-parameters’ of an institution and lead eventually to collapse as a gradual self-undermining pattern unfolds (Grief and Laitin, 2004). It is largely theoretical reformulations of this kind that has been taken up by historical institutionalism, to which we will turn next.

5.3 Historical institutionalism

According to Morgan and Hauptmeier (2014), the modern origins of historical institutionalism can be traced to a set of essays that sought to place the insights and central concepts of rational choice institutionalism in a wider historical and political context (Steinmo *et al*, 1992). Heavily influenced by the observation of extensive institutional change in the world around them, particularly the rapid and far reaching expansion of market mechanisms beyond the limits set in the post war economic consensus, researchers documented how deregulation and changes in the law were systematically weakening the position of labour.

Today, there are two main strands of historical institutionalism. One is the continuation of the ‘Varieties of Capitalism’ approach and the other, which is increasingly recognisable as a distinctive intellectual project, is articulated in the work of scholars aiming to provide a more satisfactory account of gradual yet transformative institutional change, endogenous sources of such change, and the places of power and politics in such situations of change (see especially Streeck and Thelen, 2005; Hall and Thelen, 2008; Thelen, 2009; and Mahoney and Thelen, 2010). The focus in this section will be on the latter, and especially the contribution of Kathleen Thelen and associated scholars (e.g. Wolfgang Streeck, Peter Hall and James Mahoney, among others), since it suggests some clear points of relevance to definition.

Central to Thelen’s work is a movement between the *Varieties of Capitalism* (VoC) approach, on the one hand, and ‘pragmatic constructivism’, on the other. The VoC approach postulates the relative durability of national models on the grounds of stable and functional core institutions, which enjoy a high degree of complementarity across the main “arenas” (i.e. industrial relations, finance, vocational education and training, and corporate governance). Key political and economic actors (most especially the large firm – i.e. the multinational company) can develop competitive strategies on the basis of these complementarities and this helps ensure powerful ‘feedback loops’ that

further reinforce the distinctive institutional arrangements against pressure for change, either from within (endogenous) or from outside (exogenous). Contrasting sharply with this view is 'Pragmatic constructivism', which, according to Thelen (2010), posits institutional arrangements as 'complex assemblages' characterised not by complementarity but biting contradictions. Therefore, key political and economic actors, far from extracting benefits from stable arrangements, are engaged in an ongoing struggle to reshape institutions to better serve their interests. Whereas the former approach emphasises stability, or 'dynamic resilience', and path dependencies, the latter highlights agency, contradiction, fluidity, and historical contingencies.

Between these two positions, Thelen (2010) formulates an 'alternative historical-institutional approach'. The main weakness she seeks to overcome in the VoC approach, is its neglect of politics, particularly in processes of institutional reproduction. On the other hand, she seeks to go beyond 'pragmatic constructivism' (or, perhaps to not go as far), in respect of the generous freedom it attributes to actors vis-à-vis institutions. However, perhaps the main move beyond these two polarities is on an understanding of institutions, which both VoC and pragmatic constructivism are said to share, as "devised and sustained by actors in order to achieve joint gains through cooperation" (Thelen, 2010:43). This is precisely the view that Thelen (2010) challenges. If institutions are conceived in this way, Thelen (2010) argues, it becomes difficult to appreciate the "power-political, distributional foundations of the institutions of the political economy" (Thelen, 2010:43). In contrast, she holds that institutions are fundamentally about distributional differences and this means that institutions are inextricably bound to the political.

For Thelen (2010), the struggle to reshape institutions is the struggle for power itself and this is key to understanding both stability and change. The beneficiaries of an arrangement (distributional winners), at least when they aren't distorted in their understanding, typically fight for its maintenance, while the marginalized and disenfranchised (distributional losers), agitate for change. In consequence, "considerations of power", Thelen claims, "lie at the centre of historical-institutionalism as an approach to the study of politics, and power-distributional struggles define this approach's distinctive perspective on institutional evolution and change" (2010:43). However, a focus on distribution struggle is not, in itself, sufficient to adequately understand institutional change. Therefore, Thelen (2010) has argued that it is also necessary to add the idea of institutions as rules, since it is only in this way that scholars can address the mechanisms of change.

This important reorientation has been accompanied by a significant reconceptualization of “institutions” *per se*.²⁰ The chief target for critique in Thelen’s (with Mahoney) reconceptualization is the prevailing view of institutions as *self*-reproducing. Mahoney and Thelen (2010) note that most existing definitions of institutions conceive them as “*relatively enduring* features of political and social life (rules, norms, procedures) that structure behavior and that cannot be changed easily or instantaneously” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:4, *emphasis in original*). Here, the idea of persistence is “built into the very definition of an institution” (ibid). That is one reason why so much institutional theory focuses on explaining continuity rather than change.

Moreover, within the tradition of sociological institutionalism, according to Mahoney and Thelen (2010), the tendency is to apply the concept of institution to “noncodified, informal conventions and collective scripts that regulate human behavior” (2010:5). However, conceptualized in this way, institutions are tied to codes of appropriateness that individuals are socialized into accepting as given. It is largely the taken for granted status of these codes that accounts for their persistence. It also accounts for their diffusion, since actors carry these scripts around and apply them in building new institutions in different contexts. While this conceptualization of institutions provides a powerful basis for explaining continuity, it provides few clues as to the sources of ‘endogenous change’.

By relying on the idea of self-reproduction, neither sociological nor rational choice institutionalism are able to account for ‘endogenous change’. Sociological institutionalists, they assert, are pushed to account for change in terms of an exogenous entity or force, such as new interpretive frames being imported or imposed from the outside (e.g., DiMaggio and Powell 1983) or, as Fligstein’s (1996) research shows, through the evolution of broader political, legal, and market “fields”. While these accounts posit actors unsettling dominant practices and imposing their preferred alternatives, they tend to omit “a set of general propositions about what properties of institutional scripts make some of them, at some times, more vulnerable than others to this type of displacement” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:5). Rational choice institutionalism offers no solution to this either, since the dominant trend is to highlight equilibrium as the stabilizing force behind institutions. Institutions are conceived essentially as stabilizing or coordinating mechanisms that sustain particular equilibria. For example, Greif and Laitin state, “A self-enforcing institution is one in which each player’s behavior is a best response. The inescapable conclusion is that changes in self-reinforcing

²⁰ We might consider how Thelen’s redirection of institutional theory is an instance of institutional change in itself and one, more importantly, that is achieved by a subtle labour of conceptual redefinition, since institutionalism is frequently construed as institutionalized.

institutions must have an exogenous origin” (Greif and Laitin, 2004:633, cited in Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:6).

According to Thelen’s evaluation, historical institutionalism has traditionally fared better, but still encounters the same category of problem. Here the concept of ‘path dependence’ has ensured that researchers provide accounts of persistence, or of change, as guided within the parameters of a path. Institutions are typically conceived as the “political legacies of concrete historical struggles” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010: 7). That is why most scholars in this tradition have adopted a “power-political view” of institutions that highlights their distributional effects. However, persistence is accounted for in terms of ‘increasing returns to power’. The more a given configuration of actors extract a surplus of power from a prevailing institutional arrangement, the greater the likelihood it will persist in the face of challenge. In consequence, the historical institutionalist’s account of change has turned to the concept of ‘critical junctures’, moments of contingency when the normal constraints on action are lifted, and actors are more enabled to pursue change perceived as beneficial. This view then envisages history in terms of different weightings in the balance of power between actors and institutions. In revolutionary moments actors are weightier than institutions, whereas in stable periods institutions are weightier than actors (Katznelson, 2003). Construed in this way, institutional change is discontinuous. It happens only in particular moments, usually at critical junctures precipitated by exogenous shocks, rather than as an ongoing affair. The result, according to Mahoney and Thelen (2010), is that we are, again, in a situation bereft of an account of ‘endogenous sources of change’.

Having established their critique of the other institutionalisms, Mahoney and Thelen (2010) advance their reconceptualization of institutions. Institutions, they argue, should be redefined in such a way as to ensure that “their basic properties...provide some dynamic element that permits such change” (2010:7). First, a definition should highlight, “above all else”, their nature as “*distributional instruments* laden with power implications” (2010:7-8). Doing so, they argue, renders a view of institutions as “fraught with tensions because they inevitably raise resource considerations and invariably have distributional consequences” (2010:8). That much, however, does not take them much further than the ‘power-political view’ of institutions noted above. As such, they go a step further in attaching the distributional dimension to the ‘sanctionable’ or *rule-like* character of institutions, and with that the problems of ‘rule interpretation and enforcement’.

By redefining institutions in this way (essentially, as rules with distributional consequence), they argue, we can understand both the source of change efforts and the dimensions in terms of which they change. First, the emphasis on distributional outcomes suggests why institutions are created in the first place. Well-endowed actors are motivated to, and capable of, establishing institutions that “closely correspond to their well-defined institutional preferences” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:8). The actual outcomes may not match original intentions so closely as intra and inter group conflict intervenes. Either way, under this view *there is nothing necessarily self-perpetuating or self-reinforcing about institutional arrangements*. Second, it suggests that institutions are held in place by the repeated defensive maintenance work by the actors that derive advantage from them. Yet, they are also dynamic, in the sense of always being vulnerable to shifts as the coalitional dynamics change.

Change and stability are thereby accounted for through the same mechanism: the activities of coalitions of actors. They note, following Slater (2010), that the durability of an institutional regime, such as authoritarianism in Indonesia under Suharto, is “not a matter of self-enforcement or even of increasing returns to power; rather, this outcome depended on the active creation and nurturing of (over time, different) coalitions and institutional supports for the regime” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:9). It is not, however, a straight-forward case of institutional change occurring only when those that hold the balance of power decide to initiate a change. Environmental circumstances may alter the balance of power and actors may be embedded in a multiplicity of institutions. Resources can also be shifted from one set of institutions to another.

Third, if the definition of institution is changed so that the rule-like basis of distributional issues, not self-reinforcement, is made central, then *compliance* emerges as an important variable. In some cases, the pressure for compliance will be strong, whereas in others this will be weak. This is the foundation on which they emphasize the *inherent ambiguity of institutions*. Institutions, understood as rules, can differ in their “degree of openness in the interpretation and implementation” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:10). Some institutions may be highly codified and yet their ‘guiding expectations’ may remain ambiguous. Regardless of the degree of codification, however, there is always the possibility of “interpretation, debate, and contestation” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:11). In a suggestive comment they note that, “struggles over the meaning, application, and enforcement of institutional rules are inextricably intertwined with the resource allocations they entail” (ibid). The greater the resource allocation, the more it is likely that actors will be locked in contestation.

Additionally, the room for ‘play’ in the interpretation of institutions is typically very large. On this point they dissent from Knight (1992) who, while allowing for ambiguity in rules, argues that this will be greatly reduced over time, or be resolved through the formalization of the rules, or both. For Mahoney and Thelen (2010), in contrast, ambiguity is a “permanent feature, even where rules are formalized” (2010:11). In consequence, actors can exploit this ambiguity at any point in time. By way of example they state,

“As abortion politics in the United States (associated with the defense of “individual rights” and attached to different beliefs on when “life” is taken to begin) amply demonstrates, competing interpretations of one and the same rule can mobilize quite different coalitions” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:11)

By placing rule compliance and interpretation within the conceptualization of institutions, a new set of change dynamics also emerges. In a point which shares striking parallels to Waismann’s (1945) thesis on the open texture of some concepts, Mahoney and Thelen (2010:11) note that “rules can never be precise enough to cover the complexities of all possible real-world situations”. This creates the possibility that institutional change may arise when “new developments confound the rules” (ibid); the institution can then be adjusted to accommodate the new reality. Importantly, this might be achieved through new rule creation or through “creative extensions of existing rules to the new reality” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:11). Here, there is an intriguing parallel to the rhetorical use of definition to extend the range of reference to cover additional or new states of affairs. The rules themselves, as expressed in definitions, become “objects of political skirmishing” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:12).

Ambiguity in the rules themselves now provide critical openings for creativity and agency. Specifically, actors can exploit the inherent openness of rules to establish news precedents for action that then “transform the way institutions allocate power and authority” (Sheingate, 2010, cited in Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:12). Moreover, rules are understood to have an implicit normative quality, in the sense that they codify appropriate and inappropriate conduct. As such, it is possible that instances of institutional change may concern, not the formal rule, but rather the assumption and norms underpinning the rule. Here, I would suggest, there is a parallel in the way definition can alter the evaluative dimension of a concept with or without the denotative dimension. Finally, because rules do not enforce themselves, attention is drawn to the labour of applying and enforcing rules. The ‘enforcers’ must decide when, and how strictly, rules are to be

applied. It is possible that enforcers will permit a degree of slippage through expansive interpretations and applications.

Mahoney and Thelen (2010) are not alone in highlighting the importance of ambiguity. Others have similarly reconceptualised institutions as inherently ambiguous (Jackson, 2010; Kristensen and Morgan, 2012; Morgan 2016; Skowronek and Glassman, 2007; Sheingate, 2007; and Carpenter and Moore, 2007). Jackson (2004), for example, argues that “the meaning of an institution is never completely clear” (2004:3) and this opens a gap for interpretation. It is within such gaps that actors furnish their strategic responses, typically as creative reinterpretation and redeployment for new purposes. Moreover, Jackson extends institutional ambiguity to cover actorhood – or the nature of the actor *qua* category. He notes, for example, that what counts as an actual instance of a ‘shareholder’ or ‘shareholder value’ may differ in different national economic systems. Jackson (2004) suggests that institutionalism has largely neglected the substantial indeterminacy and ambiguity which pervades social life. This clearly relates to Boltanski’s (2011) vision of the ‘fragility of reality’. However, he also cautions against moving so far as to construe institutions as “infinitely pliable”. Following Aoki (2001) he concludes that,

“institutions might be seen as a focal point for actors within an arena—while actors may *define* their identities or interests as being in line with or in conflict with an institution, the fact remains that actors must make these *definitions* ‘with reference to existing institutions’” (Jackson, 2010:81, *emphasis added*).

The reference to definition in this passage is, again, suggestive of the important role definition can play in the process of altering institutions and in placing limits on the act of definition.

In summary, historical institutionalism now places power and politics more central to the analysis of institutional change. They have done so while retaining the original view of institutions as guided, at least in part, by path dependencies and complementarities that place important limits on the nature and extent of institutional change that actors can realistically hope to achieve. The analysis of institutional change involves tracing the roots of new institutional settlements to earlier struggles and coalitional formations, particularly those which serve to sustain the coalitions themselves. As Morgan and Hauptmeier (2014) note, the key issue for historical institutionalists is increasingly the “degree to which institutions are changing and evolving while the underlying

logic of coalition remains intact or whether in situations of change, this coalition itself and its key supporting institutions are starting to break apart” (2014: 199).

Perhaps the most important development, at least in relation to this thesis, is the significance now attributed to ambiguity and the possibility of institutional change that works through a change in meaning, particularly as expressed in rules. Given Mahoney and Thelen’s (2010) reconceptualization, contestation over meaning and compliance is not only an inherent feature of institutions but a basic mechanism of change. Understanding institutional change now requires attention to both the features of the overarching political context and “the properties of the institutions themselves” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010: 31). Among such properties of institutions are those of a semantic form that both Boltanski (2011) and Searle (2008) have highlighted. It is the argument of this thesis, that the three elements of conceptual meaning can be addressed in such a way.

5.4 Sociological institutionalism

As with the other institutionalist traditions, sociological institutionalism upholds the basic tenet: that institutions stabilize social interactions. However, they standardly reject the idea, held by rational choice institutionalists, that institutions are rooted in actors’ rational calculations around coordination problems. For sociological institutionalists, actors are guided not by a ‘logic of instrumentalism’, but by a ‘logic of appropriateness’. This underpins the central claim that organisations seek to act in a manner which they deem appropriate to their cultural context, even when those practices may not increase organisational efficiency or reduce costs (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Zucker, 1977). Meyer and Rowan (1977: 340) expressed this argument in the following terms:

“organizations are driven to incorporate the practices and procedures defined by prevailing rationalized concepts of organizational work and institutionalized in society. Organizations that do so increase their legitimacy and their survival prospects, independent of the immediate efficacy of the acquired practices and procedures” (1977: 340).

As that quotation suggests, the concept of legitimacy plays a crucial role in sociological institutionalism, and new institutions are seen to arise only when they are seen as ‘natural, rightful,

expected and legitimate' (March and Olsen, 1989, quoted in Morgan and Hauptmeier, 2014:202). However, the normative standards of legitimacy are not universal but can differ both in time and space, and this can lead to contradictions. One of the most influential accounts of this appears in Friedland and Alford's (1991) notion of "institutional logics".

Their account of institutional transformation, as "a potentially contradictory interinstitutional system" (Friedland and Alford 1991: 240) postulates that, "each of the most important institutional orders of contemporary Western societies has a central logic - a set of material practices and symbolic constructions - which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate" (1991: 248). For example, the institutional logic of capitalism is the "accumulation and the commodification of human activity" (1991: 248); the institutional logic of the state is the "rationalization and the regulation of human activity by legal and bureaucratic hierarchies" (1991: 248); the institutional logic of democracy is "participation and the extension of popular control over human activity" (1991: 248-249); the institutional logic of the family is "community and the motivation of human activity by unconditional loyalty to its members and their reproductive needs" (1991: 249); the institutional logic of both religion and science is "truth, whether mundane or transcendental, and the symbolic construction of reality within which all human activity takes place" (1991: 248). These logics serve as constant guides to actors' behaviour – including symbolic, meaning making acts (Thornton *et al.* 2012). The logic of capitalism guides commodity producers to attempt to "convert all actions into the buying and selling of commodities that have a monetary price"; the logic of the state guides governmental agencies to attempt to "convert individual situations into the basis for routine official decisions"; the logic of democracy guides parliaments and electoral institutions to "convert the most diverse issues into decisions that can be made either by majority vote or consensus among participants..." (Friedland and Alford 1991: 249).

Increasingly, scholars are approaching institutional logics in terms of their embeddedness within particular institutional fields. Institutional fields have been defined at different spatial levels (local, regional, national international), and in terms of different types of organization (educational/ legal/ manual/ public/private etc.) (Morgan and Hauptmeier, 2014). However, whichever spatial metaphor is invoked, the key point is that actors acquire frames of meaning, cognitive schema, and normative templates as to which forms of conduct are legitimate in particular fields and what form of sanctions can be imposed for those that breach them. This serves to pattern the nature of organizing and conduct within those fields. The idea of distinctive logics, linked to different fields,

suggests some intriguing connections to the argument, stated above, concerning the appropriateness and function of definition in different social contexts (or what we might now term ‘institutional field’).

Specifically, it suggests that distinctive institutional logics might guide the practice of definition in those contexts. One potentially illustrative example is the practice of definition in the field of law (Rickert, 1888; Harris and Hutton, 2007; McConnell-Ginet, 2006; Bayles, 1991). Bayles (1991), for example, suggests that the guiding logic of definition in law is the maintenance of a “justifiable legal system” (1991: 63). Rickert’s (1888), too, hints at the same guiding logic of definition in law when he states, “one of the tasks jurists have to perform is to ensure that the will of the legislator is always expressed...” (Rickert, 1888, cited in Sager, 1991: 219).

Another important recent development in the theorization of institutional change has advanced from Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) concept of *‘institutional work’*. Institutional work is defined as “the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions” (2006: 215). This concept was developed as an extension of DiMaggio’s (1988) celebrated notion of ‘institutional entrepreneurship’, and Oliver’s (1991, 1992) influential discussion of strategic responses to institutional processes and processes of deinstitutionalization. DiMaggio’s (1988) and Oliver’s (1991) contributions represented early and significant changes in the direction of institutional theory. Up to that point, the main thrust research had been in drawing attention to the features of organizations’ external environment (norms, ideologies, regulations etc.) that commanded particular patterns of behaviour. Failure to abide by these prescriptions was seen to result in de-legitimation, making organisational survival highly unlikely in the long run.

From this perspective, organizations were largely construed as passive rule-takers. This offered a powerful explanation for why organisations adopted increasingly similar structures and practices, but it ran up against the problem of accounting for change, evidence for which was increasingly difficult to ignore. The problem was construed not only as a matter of empirical neglect, but rather of theoretical inability. Generally referred to as the paradox of embedded agency, scholars asked how do institutions ever change, if institutions are self-reproducing patterns of actions, and if actors (individual and organisational) abide by institutions in an apparently unconscious manner (as cognitive schema)? Short of exogenous shocks (e.g. economics crises or wars), there were no plausible explanations. The actor had not, at that point, been theorized in a way that provided a critical distance to institutions or a capacity to oversee change. Indeed, that question was rarely

raised. Most scholarship had only concerned itself with the durability and cultural persistence of institutions and had tended to assume that the only direction in which the organisation / institutions nexus travelled was the forward march of greater institutionalization.

It was this heavy imagery of the 'iron cage' and an agency-free march towards bureaucratization and rationalization that DiMaggio (1988) sought to counter. The cornerstone of his reproach and redirection was the concept of 'institutional entrepreneurship'. Specifically, this concept drew attention to the "manner in which interested actors work to influence their institutional contexts through such strategies as technical and market leadership, lobbying for regulatory change and discursive action" (2006:215). Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) notion of institutional work is simultaneously an extension and critique of this concept. They commend DiMaggio's argument, but argue that the notion has encouraged a narrow focus on the practices of single and often powerful individuals, at the expense of practices of a more distributed and varied nature. One primary objective in developing the notion of "institutional work" is, therefore, to break free of 'hyper-muscular' accounts of institutional change. Whereas DiMaggio and Powell (1983) had cast the state and the professions as new architects of institutional change, Lawrence and Suddaby's work sought to present a much wider cast. A more satisfactory basis for thinking about institutional change, they urged, was in terms of the "work on the part of a wide range of actors, both those with the resources and skills to acts as entrepreneurs and those whose role is supportive or facilitative of the entrepreneur's endeavors" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 216).

Oliver's (1991) research pushed in a similar direction. Reversing the usual picture of organisations as rule takers, her work advanced a systematic typology of organisational responses to institutional pressures, taking into account situational (political, functional, and social) influences on the likelihood of those different responses. With this framework, it becomes possible to think about firm behaviour as exhibiting degrees of strategic responsiveness along a continuum from acquiescence, to compromise, to avoidance, to defiance and, finally to blatant manipulation. The shift in the imagery was substantial. From Oliver's (1991) work, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) borrowed the important observation that agents can, and very frequently do, act strategically vis-à-vis the institutions constituting their external environment. They also sought to carve out a clear conceptual space, in which 'institutional work' could involve not just creation and maintenance, but also the disruption of institutions, in "tearing them down or rendering them ineffectual" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 217).

Although DiMaggio and Oliver had introduced a means of thinking about agents in a more satisfactory way, they had not done so in a way that was entirely consistent with the core tenets of institutionalism. In attributing to institutional entrepreneurs an almost hyper muscular capacity of change institutions, the paradox of embedded agency had been bypassed rather than solved. To address this, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) position their concept of institutional work in the lineage of practice sociology, particularly that associated with Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1993), Michel de Certeau (1984) and Anthony Giddens (1984); all sociologists that sought to collapse the structure agency dualism.²¹ In doing so, they signal a subtle shift in the conceptualization of institutions. Specifically, they move away from a conceptualization based on the substance of institutions (i.e. the kind of thing that they are), to a conceptualization based on the how they come to be. They point approvingly to Jepperson's (1991) definition of institutions as "the product (intentional or otherwise) of purposive action", and as "an organized, established procedure" that reflects a set of "standardized interaction sequences" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 216, quoting Jepperson, 1991:143-5.). Such an approach, they maintain, suggests an understanding of institutions as "the product of specific actions taken to reproduce, alter and destroy them" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 216).

Whereas a dominant 'process-oriented' approach in institutional theory has focused on "a sequence of events that leads to some outcome" (2006:219); their 'practice perspective' "describes the intelligent activities of individuals and organisation who are working to effect those events and achieve that outcome" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006:219). Furthermore, whereas processual descriptions of institutionalization focus on what happens to institutions, how they transform, what states they take on, and in what order; a practice orientation focuses on the "world inside the processes...the work of actors as they attempt to shape those processes, as they work to create, maintain and disrupt institutions" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 219). In this sense, however, they have not so much solved the paradox of embedded agency head on (i.e. in terms explaining the possibility of embedded of agency), as pushed it further down the track by describing, in so many different ways, the activities of actors vis-à-vis institutions. It remains possible to ask, of any type of institutional work, the question, 'if institutions are self-reproducing patterns of actions, and if actor's abide by institutions in an apparently unconscious manner, then how is that *institutional work* possible? It is in regard to this problem that the merit of exploring definition as a dialectic is to be found.

²¹ Though they offer quite sparse discussion of the nature and extent of connection between their concept of a 'practice sociology' and the works of the scholars they reference.

That point notwithstanding, an influential feature of their work, at least in terms of initiating wider research, is the wide range of types of institutional work they derive from a review of empirical institutional research published since 1990 in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Academy of Management Journal* and *Organization Studies*. Specifically, they generate 17 types of ‘institutional work’ and organize these in three categories: work aimed at ‘creating’ (9), ‘maintaining’ (5) or ‘disrupting’ (3) institutions (see Table 2.1).

Table 5. 1: Types of Institutional Work

Creating	Maintaining	Disrupting
Advocacy	Enabling work	Disconnecting sanctions
<i>Defining</i>	Policing	Disassociating moral foundations
Vesting	Deterring	Undermining assumptions and beliefs
Constructing identities	Valorizing and demonizing	
Changing normative associations	Mythologizing	
Constructing normative networks	Embedding and routinizing	
Mimicry		
Theorizing		
Educating		

Importantly, one type of work that is of special relevance for this thesis is described as *‘defining work’*, the character of which is derived from their sample of institutional research. In this case, five articles are presented as providing the basis of the concept, which includes: 1) Meyer *et al’s* (1997) analysis of the “nation-state”, where, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) suggest, ‘defining work’ can be seen in the “way in which citizenship rules and procedures confer status and membership” (2006: 222); 2) Lawrence’s (1999) own work on institutional strategy, of which the definition of membership rules and practice standards are the two major instances of ‘defining work’; 3) Fox-Wolfgramm *et al’s* (1998) analysis of institutional change in two commercial banks, where the instance of ‘defining work’ is seen as consisting in the “formalization of rule systems, by bank examiners, to construct definitional categories of compliance” (2006: 222); 4) Guler *et al’s* (2002) study of the emergence of ISO practices, where ‘defining work’ is seen as underpinning the ‘certification of actors’; and finally, 5) Russo’s (2001) analysis of the creation of a new field of independent power production, which is considered to contain an example of ‘defining work’ in the form of “the definition of standard exchange rates between utilities by the federal government” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 222).

Based on these five works, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) define *defining work* as, “The construction of rule systems that confer status or identity, define boundaries of membership or create status hierarchies within a field” (2006: 221). Importantly, it is also presented as a type of work aimed at creating institutions as opposed to disrupting or maintaining them. Relatedly, they assert that, “most defining work focuses actors on the creation of ‘constitutive rules’ or rules that enable rather than constrain institutional action. In contrast to the prohibitive nature of most regulatory activity, defining is directed more often toward establishing the parameters of future or potential institutional structures and practices” (2006:222). It is also grouped alongside “vesting” and “advocacy”, as a type of institutional work which is “overtly political” because “actors reconstruct rules, property rights and boundaries that define access to material resources” (2006: 221).

As only one of sixteen different types of institutional work, Lawrence and Suddaby’s (2006) presentation is intended only as an initial sketch of what might be involved in 'defining work'. Any criticism of their conceptualization of defining work must recognize this point and the relatively small space the concept takes up in the context of their larger contribution. Having made that concession, it is important to assess the concept and to determine how robust it might be in pursuing our research question. Before assessing the limitations, it should be noted that the concept of defining work is, perhaps, the most explicit invocation of the concept of definition within any of the institutionalist traditions. While Mahoney and Thelen (2010) call for attention to the properties of institutions, in particular rule-like features; and while Boltanski draws attention to the semantic function of institutions, neither explicitly discuss the role of definition nor defining as a mechanism of change. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), in contrast, do so in clear terms. Of particular importance is the linkage drawn between defining and the actual features of institutions that defining *works on*. As is stands, however, there are several limitations in their conceptualization that require further consideration.

The first problem arises from the sharp distinction drawn between work aimed at institutional creation versus institutional disruption. They argue that institutional work aiming at the disruption of institutions is *a distinct process with its own antecedents*. “We...believe”, they assert, “that the disruption of institutions involves institutional work that is distinct from that associated with the creation of new institutions...the description of such work in the empirical literature are consistent with this belief” (2006: 235). This is a problem in their broader concept of institutional work, but it is especially apparent in the case of defining work, which is positioned as a form of work

primarily engaged in *creating* institutions, rather than maintaining or disrupting them. This sharp demarcation suggests that there is an underlying theoretical reason that definition is not likely to be seen in connection with institutional disruption, but a reason is not given. This, I would suggest, is because the claim cannot be made to hold up against the evidence (easy to find), where this form of work is driving not just instances of creation, but maintenance and disruption too.

Indeed, evidence can be found within Lawrence and Suddaby's own schema. In a subsequent discussion of the range of work aimed at disrupting institutions, definition features prominently. They note, for example, that actors can "work to *disrupt* institutions by undermining the *technical definitions* and assumptions on which they were founded" (2006: 236, *emphasis added*). To avoid a contradiction here, it might be argued that work aimed at undermining a technical definition ought not to be considered an instance of *defining work*, but there would be no compelling reason to limit the concept in that way. Further evidence of their difficulty in maintaining this distinction, is found in the discussion of Holm's (1995) study of Norwegian fisheries, which is presented as an example of institutional work aimed at disrupting institutions. Here, they note how the government adopted a 'science-based recommendations' of the total allowable catch, which undermined the existing 'Main Agreement' (the dominant regulative institutions). They summarize the process as, "a *redefinition* of the basis on which the permitted catch was calculated disrupted the regulative basis of the institutional arrangement of the sector" (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 236, *emphasis added*). Again, inadvertently, defining work is seen to play a disruptive role.

A second limitation arises from counterpoising defining work and the creation of regulatory constraints. They suggest that defining work is more often *enabling*, in virtue of its role in creating 'constitutive rules'. However, 'constitutive rules' are equally liable to constrain action. For example, if we consider Greenwood *et al's* (2002) research on the shifting boundaries of "chartered accountants", we see, first, that definition is centrally involved and, second, that while this new identity did enable certain practices, it also introduced new restrictions and jurisdictional constraints. Additionally, though at a more abstract level, a form of work that is enabling in virtue of *including* certain practices or states of affairs (say, within a new definition of "chartered accountants") must simultaneously be constraining in respect of what it is *excluding*. Those excluded from a highly valued social category have surely not been 'enabled' by the act of defining, at least not in the conventional sense of the word. As Starr (1992) notes of social category boundaries more generally, "Some cause damage; some advantage" (1992: 274). Therefore, defining work

ought to be considered as liable to constrain as to enable, with the actual direction of influence left to empirical research to determine.

A third limitation is, that they have not discussed the connection between defining work and conceptual meaning. Yet, if we examine institutionalist research, we find that, very often, the object of definition is conceptual or terminological meaning. For example, Fiss and Hirsch (2005) describe the struggle to define the concept of ‘globalization’ in the following terms, “Far from being the property of the social scientist...[globalization] is being defined by claims-making and contention in the public realm, exemplified through influential books by journalists ...” (Fiss and Hirsch, 2005: 33). Additionally, Inoue and Drori (2005) illustrate how the emergence and evolution of a global health system required considerable defining work so as to expand the meaning of the concept of ‘health’. They discuss how the World Health Organization played a lead role in framing ‘health’ as a social concern, by “expand[ing] the definition of health beyond non-illness - to health as a ‘state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (2005). Dezalay and Garth’s (1996) analysis of the emergence of a field of business dispute resolution, demonstrates how the concepts of “arbitration” and “mediation” were both fiercely contested through competing definitions. They describe the contest to define those categories as a professional competition, and state that “Success in making one or another definition accepted as legitimate or pushed aside as illegitimate is key to winning the competition” (1996: 287). It is important to understand this link, since most defining work is likely to be orchestrated through the manipulation of conceptual meaning underpinning the institution.

A final limitation follows on from the previous one. Although Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) provide an outline of three broad objectives of defining work, they do not discuss the semantic features of this. However, without examining the semantic basis of defining work, particularly in terms of conceptual meaning, we cannot understand how these objectives are achieved. Importantly, it is precisely this issue which can be illuminated by drawing on the three dimensions of conceptual contestation discussed above (in Section 3.3). For example, Greenwood *et al* (2002) describe an important case of institutional change in the field of Canadian professional business services. The key element of change was “jurisdictional migration”, which was achieved through the redefinition of the role and identity of a professional accountant. Specifically, from 1977 to 1997 a fundamental shift occurred in the “*authoritative definition* of services provided by firms associated with the [chartered accountancy] profession and in the way the profession presented

itself to others within the field of professional business services” (2002: 64, *emphasis added*). Firms offered services beyond their traditional borders, moving from accounting, narrowly defined, to business advisory services. The standard organizational template became the multidisciplinary practice. Chartered accountants were not merely ‘accountants’ but ‘business advisors’. They argue, “the professional associations of accountancy engaged in discourse that legitimated a significant adjustment in what accountants “do” and thus in the definition of what it meant to “be” a CA.” (2002:76). The basic form of this practice, *pace* Skinner (2001), was one which involved manipulating the *criteria of application* for the concept of ‘chartered accountant’, so that the term could be applied to a new and expanded range of practices (i.e. *range of reference*); specifically, the provision of business advice (i.e. consulting). Central to this redefinition was the preservation of the commendatory *speech act potential*, since the objective was to legitimize the expansion of ‘chartered accountancy’ rather than rename the practice itself.

As this example illustrates, despite the limitations in the concept of defining work, which are rectifiable, it remains of considerable interest. Not only does it explicitly describe definition as a mechanism of institutional change, it also provides an ‘agentic’ counterpart to the more ‘structural’ notion of ‘institutional definitions’. By utilizing the concept of defining work, we can think of definition in a more dialectical way, even linking it to Berger and Luckmann’s (1975) dialectic of objectivation, externalization and internalization. Alongside the broader notion of ‘institutional work’, the idea of ‘defining work’ helps steer attention towards ‘interpretive struggles’, or “the complex, ongoing struggles over meaning among numerous actors, the outcomes of which are not necessarily predictable or controllable” (Hardy and Maguire 2008: 205, cited in Morgan and Hauptmeier, 2014). It helps elaborate a view of institutions as the outcome of strategic manipulation of meaning structures and legitimation claims of institutional entrepreneurs and broader coalitions of actors.

5.5 Constructivist Institutionalism

A fourth form of institutionalism is ‘discursive’ or ‘constructivist institutionalism’. Although discourse, ideas and language have been increasingly important research themes in sociological institutionalism, the distinguishing characteristics of this fourth approach are: 1) the extent to which it aims to take “ideas and discourse seriously” (Schmidt, 2010); and 2) a strong focus on the questions of how, and by which mechanisms, ideas become constituted into policies, programmes, practices and institutions. It is worth noting that this approach gives a rather wide definition to

ideas, seeing these in a broader sense of the 'ideational' and embracing ideology, collective beliefs, values, norms, worldviews, and identities. In consequence, there is a greater emphasis placed on the role of meaning in institutional change than in the aforementioned institutionalist traditions.

Much of the research in this area has taken place within political science (Haas, 1990; Goldstein and Keohane, 1993). One of the earliest idea-based theorizations of institutional change is Mark Blyth's (2001) account of the transformation of the "Swedish model" of economic regulation. Up to that point, most accounts of the fall of the Swedish model, characterized by a guarantee of full employment and a mutual guarantee of private ownership for business, had emphasized the casual role of structural forces, such as the internationalization of business and heightened capital mobility. Other accounts had pointed to domestic causes, such as wage drift and the need for control over inflation. Blyth did not seek to deny these factors but rather sought to suggest that they overlooked, if not ignored, the essential role of "ideational factors" (Blyth, 2001:25). Drawing on archival data and interviews, Blyth (2001) showed how the main representative body of Swedish business (Svenska arbetsgivareföreningen, SAF), had initiated a strategy of weakening labour by undermining its supporting structures. It did this, in large part, through a war of ideas that contested and delegitimized specific institutions and the patterns of wage distribution they made possible. Importantly, these ideational processes foreshadowed capital mobility and domestic inflation.

Blyth's main theoretical contribution rests in a tripartite conceptualization of ideas as institutional blueprints, weapons and cognitive locks. While punctuated equilibrium models of institutional change (associated with rational choice institutionalism) might suggest the conditions under which institutions give-way, they do little to suggest why a given alternative will appear as the most satisfactory in that context. If agent's interests are invoked as the casual reason for the selection of one alternative over others, then that simply raises the question of why agents perceived their interests in that particular way. It is in those moments of uncertainty, Blyth argued, that ideas are postulated to play a significant guiding role. Specifically, in moments of uncertainty, when circumstances are unique, agents' interests and the possible outcomes of pursuing one line of action rather than another, cannot be "satisfactorily derived from structural location" (Blyth, 2001:3). In such a situation, "interests must be defined in terms of the ideas agents themselves have about the causes of the uncertainty they are facing" (Blyth, 2001: 3). Blyth states, "By defining what the economy is, how it operates, and the place of the individual or collectivity within the economy, economic ideas both reduce uncertainty by defining a given moment of crisis and project

the institutional forms that arguably will resolve it” (ibid). It is in this sense that ideas operate as ‘institutional blueprints’.

Seen from this perspective, the possession and promulgation of such ideas also becomes a crucial power resource and an integral component of institutional change (Blyth, 2001). In short, ideas can become weapons. The depiction of ‘ideas as weapons’ results from two antecedent claims. The first, as is expressed in the notion of institutional blueprints, is that “existing economic institutions are the result of past economic ideas” (2001: 4). This links well to the notions of ‘institutional bricolage’ and ‘recombinant governance’ (Crouch, 2005). The second, which anticipates Thelen’s (2010) later work in historical institutionalism, is that all institutional arrangements entail distributional struggles. As Blyth notes, “By offering both a scientific and a normative critique of existing institutions, economic ideas allow agents to challenge existing institutional arrangements and the patterns of distribution that they enshrine” (2001:4).

Finally, ideas as “cognitive locks” highlights the entanglement of ideas in path dependencies. Once ideas become institutionally embedded, policy making “becomes possible only in terms of these ideas. As such, ideas can produce outcomes independent of the agents who originally developed them” (Blyth, 2001:4).

Blyth is careful to avoid sliding too far towards idealism. Indeed, one of his key arguments is that ideas do not do their own labour. Although Keynes famously stated that nothing was as powerful as an idea whose time has come, Blyth’s research demonstrates that SAF, the main business association, had to “mobilize resources, spend cash, restructure its organization, withdraw from corporatist institutions, develop specialist opinion-making organizations, and do a host of other things in order to translate these ideas into policy” (Blyth, 2001:25). Not only did this take a considerable amount of time, it also required significant financial expenditure. Therefore, while Blyth alerts us to the importance of ideas, he is equally clear about the importance of material carriers of ideas. For ideas to have effect, they must be stabilized in texts, communicated effectively and sustained in social networks of actors. The communicative mechanisms that carry ideas across different settings will inevitably reshape the ideas: a process termed ‘translating’ (Czarniawska-Joerges and Sevón, 2005). This also helps ensure that new audiences can appreciate the relevance of the idea to their own setting. Because the translation and diffusion of ideas requires a material basis, the process inevitably turns on issues of power, influence and social networks.

Furthermore, while a certain degree of shape results from the material interests of the actors involved - for example, business and labor will both vie for forms that secure a bigger slice of the economic pie for their side; this does not explain the precise character of the settlement. The more important issue, Blyth argues, is that “when one side or the other can claim an effective intellectual monopoly over the best way to make the pie grow, it is doing more than constructing focal points for convergence, it is redefining what in fact another agent's best interest is” (2001:26). “Structural explanations of change”, he maintains, “are indeterminate regarding subsequent institutional form” (ibid). In consequence, Blyth appeals to researchers to rethink the relationship between ideas and interests (or materials), so that it is less a matter of either/or and more a matter of both/and.

Emerging research in discursive institutionalism also suggests that different national settings give rise to networks of different kinds of actors, who in consequence, engage differently in the process of developing and disseminating ideas (Campbell and Pedersen, 2010; 2015). Among these will be ‘theorists’ (academics and intellectuals who develop new ideas), ‘framers’ (i.e. those actors who develop the sound-bites, the slogans, the images that give a public and political life to ideas) and ‘brokers’ (media organizations, management consultants, trade associations, epistemic communities, educational institutions), all of whom might have a significant impact on ‘decision makers’ and the ‘public’ (consumers, investors etc.). Again, attention must be paid not only to the ideas and their exponents but also to the configuration of the actors involved. This point links well to the growing interest within historical institutionalism in coalitions of actors.

In summary, discursive institutionalism draws on and reformulates several key institutionalist concepts. The concept of path dependency is given an ideational render, in the sense that the formation of ideologies and new ideas is based both on memories and past practices. This ‘imprinting of the past’ informs the evolution and adaptation of ideas and institutions to new contexts. Despite this, dramatic redirections and radical ideas are possible at particular historical junctures, especially the kinds of exogenous crises (war, financial crises and recession) that rational choice institutionalists highlight. At the same time, ideational change can be endogenous, in the sense that social actors are able to reflect on, deliberate and persuade others to pursue particular ideas. Discursive/constructivist institutionalists attribute to actors, now pragmatic and reflexive, the capacity to change their institutional environment by means of discursive and communicative acts. The development of new ideas can lead to policy reform and this, in turn, can lead to

institutional change. The process can be even more direct, in the sense of actors changing the meaning of the institutions *per se*. As Morgan and Hauptmeier (2014) note, this latter possibility “relates to the constructivists’ insight that institutions are not objective structures and need to be interpreted” (Morgan and Hauptmeier, 2014:210). This final point is one which leads well to the final institutional approach considered in this review – rhetorical institutionalism.

5.6 Rhetorical institutionalism

In recent years, there have been calls for a more systematic engagement with rhetorical scholarship in the theorization of institutional change. Lawrence and Suddaby (2006) suggest that a central characteristic of most institutional work is the prevalence of language and especially the persuasive use of language. As such, they recommend that future scholarship adopt forms of rhetorical analysis. Similarly, according to Suddaby (2010) the most promising area for development in institutional theory concerns the “deliberate use of persuasive language to influence the creation and maintenance of cognitive categories” (2010: 17). Suddaby argues that some of the most creative applications of rhetorical theory to institutional change are coming from scholars in disciplines outside organisational theory. One example of this kind of research is Luntz’ (2006) analysis of how certain concepts, such as “welfare”, that were once viewed favourably among the American public, became subject to a targeted ‘campaign of deinstitutionalization’. This process was led by ‘Republican strategists’ who, having exposed a series of serious abuses of the welfare system, termed the abusers “welfare queens”. This case, he suggests, represents a clear instance of “the deliberate use of rhetoric to create surplus meaning in an ideological context with distinct implications for the allocation of resources in society” (Suddaby, 2010: 17) This process, and the example within Luntz’ (2006) work, largely equate with the rhetorical techniques explored above (section 2.2), where a new term is created, invested with condemnatory speech act potential, and then applied to the states of affairs one wishes to see delegitimized.

Green and Li (2011) have perhaps been the most explicit exponents of “rhetorical institutional”. Their principle theoretical aim is to contribute “a robust conception of agency within institutions” (Green and Li, 2011:1663). They define “rhetorical institutionalism” as the “deployment of linguistic approaches in general and rhetorical insights in particular to explain how the strategic use of symbolic practices enable and constrain agency” (ibid:1666).²² Their account begins by

²² There are also interesting parallels with the movement within political science toward what Finlayson (2007) has dubbed “political rhetorical analysis”. At the core of Finlayson’s argument is the recognition that politics increasingly takes place in networks and, as such, a premium is placed on the persuasive communication of ideas.

noting the distinction between structure and agency in institutionalism. Neoinstitutionalism, they suggest, presents two versions of itself: 'structural institutionalism' and 'agency institutionalism'.

Structuralism institutionalism finds the clearest expression in DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) classic 'Iron Cage Revisited'. The core view is, that organisations of a particular population pursue legitimacy and, by doing so, they become embedded in organisational fields. The main consequence of this is increasing isomorphism within the field, due to mimetic, coercive and normative institutional pressures. Given this processual picture, the objective of the researcher is to provide an account of the increase in homogeneity across organisations within a field and the precise points at which institutionalizing pressure is brought to bear (e.g. Palmer et al., 1993; Strang and Soule, 1998; Westphal et al., 1997). A powerful assumption here, is that actors are assumed to pursue legitimacy as a matter of survival. An organisation without legitimacy is likened to a diver without oxygen. They may be able to carry on, but their survival is strictly time limited, in proportion to the legitimacy stored in their tank (Hirsch and Lounsbury, 1997; Lounsbury and Ventresca, 2003). The necessity of legitimacy is ongoing and shapes every aspect of actors' conduct.

Structural institutionalism is highly attuned to the realm of symbols. The environment within which organisations move is heavily laden with institutional myths or ideologies, with vocabularies and rationalized concepts, all of which provide organizational structures and activities with meaning, purpose, and, provided they have conducted themselves aright, legitimacy (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). Some variants, seeing meaning structures as the central element of institutional environments, then seek to provide an account of this structure (Mohr, 1998). The focus, however, remains on how these structures constrain organisations and individual actors within a matrix of legitimacy. Having shackled agency under the weight of symbolic structures, the examination of institutional change then proceeds in terms of exogenous shocks. To return to the analogy of the diver, she returns to the surface not because she's had enough of the experience and now wishes to do something else, but because a shark has appeared on the scene and her survival is once again threatened. In short, the agent acts not from volition but from compulsion.

The contrasting position to structural institutionalism, Green and Li (2011) suggest, is 'agency institutionalism'. Here, again, DiMaggio (1988) seems to have blazed the trail with his discussion

That, Finlayson argues, necessitates a methodological shift beyond interpretivism (which seeks to understand the diverse rationalities by which people pursue different political ideas) towards an analysis of rhetoric (the diverse practices by which preferences are expressed with the aim of securing agreement).

on institutional entrepreneurship. DiMaggio (1988) argued that accounts of the origins, reproduction, and erosion of institutionalized practices and organizational forms, were unpersuasive if they lacked attention to agent's pursuing their interests. As noted above, according to DiMaggio (1988), institutional entrepreneurs are actors that create or change institutions when they have sufficient resources to imagine and realize interests that they value highly (DiMaggio, 1988). Fligstein (1997) pushed this argument further with his notion of "social skill". Here, institutional entrepreneurs were construed as agents putting their social skills to work in order to motivate cooperation in other actors and, ultimately, to change or reproduce institutional structures in ways believed to be conducive to their interests (Fligstein, 1997; 2001).

Under agency institutionalism the imagery is reversed somewhat. Agency now shapes structures. The objective of the researcher also changes. The goal is to elucidate the process of institutional change in terms of the types of institutional entrepreneurs, the social skills they call upon in the course of their efforts at affecting change, and the field conditions that shaped those efforts and their outcomes (Hardy and Maguire, 2008). A key finding from this line of research is that different actors have different capacities vis-à-vis institutional pressures, such that some actors can ignore or avoid institutions, whereas other actors cannot (Battilana *et al.*, 2009; DiMaggio, 1988; Oliver, 1991). The source of differential capacities is increasingly located in the attributes of actors' 'unique organizational positions' that enable the identification of opportunities and risk (Battilana *et al.*, 2009).

Green and Li (2011) state that an important strand of research in agency institutionalism, is the increasing recognition of language as a key social skill or source of agency. This strand of research typically draws on the work that had earlier traced a link between cognition, language and institutions (Berger and Luckmann, 1975; Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Schutz, 1967; Zucker, 1977). There is also a tendency for a more "pragmatic orientation" towards ideas and language, placing "symbolic and linguistic variables into its empirical formulations" (Green and Li, 2011: 1669). Considerable attention is then placed on the heterogeneity of different fields, which present themselves in terms of multiple and sometimes contradictory institutional logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Seo and Creed, 2002; Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). An important development is the conceptualization of institutional fields as contested political arenas, where institutional entrepreneurs, pursuing divergent interests, battle it out for dominance. What wins is not so much the actor, as the institutional logic they drew on (Boxenbaum and Battilana, 2005; Green *et al.*, 2008).

It is now increasingly the case, Green and Li (2011) suggest, that scholars “see language as a pragmatic tool to manipulate the connotative and multiple meanings inherent in many social structures, fields, identities, and actions” (2011:1670). As such, the focus of research has shifted to how institutional entrepreneurs manipulate meaning through linguistic activities and, in the course of doing so, instigate and realize endogenous change. New and alternative institutional arrangements are now seen as being initiated and driven by actors, rather than waiting on exogenous shocks (Creed et al., 2002; Hardy and Phillips, 1999; Lawrence and Phillips, 2004; Maguire et al., 2004; Munir and Phillips, 2005; Phillips et al., 2004; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005; Zilber, 2007).

While Green and Li (2011) welcome those developments, they argue that several problems remain unanswered. The main problem concerns embedded agency or, more specifically, the idea of freewheeling institutional entrepreneurs which posits an “under-socialized and unrealistic conception of actors as agents capable of disembedding and changing the very structures and institutions that condition their intentions, actions, and rationality” (2011: 1670). This was first raised as a problem by Holm, (1995) and subsequently brought into sharper relief by Seo and Creed (2002), Battilana *et al* (2009) and Leca and Naccache (2006). This kind of theorizing is problematic since it abandons one of the tenets of institutionalism. It remains the challenge, therefore, to explain institutional change in a way that does not postulate actors “disembedding from the social world” (Leca and Naccache, 2006: 628).

It is into this problematic space that Green and Li (2011) venture, in the hope of showing how rhetorical institutionalism can resolve the apparent ‘paradox of embedded agency’. In addition to the phenomenological emphasis on meaning and language in institutional processes, their approach draws on elements from classic and new rhetoric. The rhetorical tradition provides the resources out of which they fashion a conceptualization of social structures and agency as “co-embedded and entangled with meanings” (Green and Li, 2011: 1670). The trust of the conceptualization runs as follows: “Structure shapes agency as meanings are taken for granted and unconsciously reproduced by actors. Agency shapes structure as actors use language to deconstruct these taken for granted understandings and consciously shape and create new meanings” (2011:1670). Below, it will be suggested that this conceptualization can be restated in terms of definition, leading ultimately to the notion of a ‘dialectic of definition’.

The key assumption of their approach is that actors pursue meaning because they must optimize and manage their limited cognitive and attention resources in a problematic world. This is to draw down a central insight of phenomenology. One of the underpinning claims of Berger and Luckmann's (1975) social constructivist thesis, is the cognitive necessity of typification, where the meanings of things and states of affairs are gradually subsumed into a stock of knowledge, so that our attention is freed from processing anew the mass of information that meets it from moment to moment. Green and Li (2011), however, venture beyond where phenomenologist insights in institutionalism would ordinarily go, by claiming that actors "optimize or manage their limited cognitive resources through persuasion, or the deployment of symbols, to construct and manipulate meaning" (2011: 1670). As they note, this is a key point of differentiation between their rhetorical institutionalism and the structural and agency institutionalisms previously outlined. In those latter two approaches, it is the pursuit of legitimacy, or of interests, respectively, that drives the agent onwards.

Importantly, in the same way that we can understand the rhetorical potential of definition from the ancient writings of the Roman rhetorician (Cicero and Quintilian), the work of Stevenson (1937; 1938), and Schiappa (2003) in the modern era, Green and Li (2011) draw on elements from classic and new rhetoric in constructing a framework for rhetorical institutionalism. They see the two as necessary counterparts because, whereas classic rhetoric highlights how actors use language in strategic ways to realize their goals, the new rhetoric places more weight on how language uses actors. In the new rhetoric, Green and Li (2011) claim, there is a dialectical relationship between the agency expressed through rhetoric and the structure inscribed through rhetoric. As Green and Li (2011) put it, "agency is embedded inevitably in the web of meaning that is produced by actors' rhetorical practices which, when institutionalized, sets limits and boundaries to agentic manoeuvres and opportunities" (2011: 1672). By adopting this mode of thought it is possible, they argue, to modify the excessive voluntarism found in both classic rhetoric and those branches of institutionalism that have disembedded the agent. By combining the insights of classic and new rhetoric, it is possible to theorize "how language constrains as well as enables actors' thoughts and choices" (2011: 1672).

Finally, Green and Li (2011: 1673) note that there are "many potential ways to integrate new and classical rhetoric with institutional theory". In an earlier article, Green *et al.*, (2009) draw on Toulman (1969) to reconceptualise the process of institutionalization, in terms of changes in the structure of arguments used to justify particular practices over time. They claim that "as a material

practice acquires legitimacy and institutionalizes, the complexity of the argument used to support that practice collapses and becomes more simple” (Green *et al.*, 2009: 11). This simplification in the structure of argumentation is taken as a sign of institutionalization. More recently, Green and Li (2011) have advocated the use of Kenneth Burke’s rhetorical theory of motives which “posits that all institutions exhibit and evolve through some combination of the pentad or five linguistic dimensions to our motives: act, agent, agency, purpose, and scene (Burke, 1969 [1945]). Specifically, they link the development of a vocabulary of motive to the evolution of institutional logics and fields. Institutional fields contain logics which supply “a social resource that individuals within fields use strategically to motivate and justify action” (Green and Li, 2011: 1676). Given the multiplicity of logics and the intersecting character of fields, actors can frequently find themselves in “incongruent or contradictory positions” (ibid: 1676), and this also provides the resources for contestation. However, rhetoric is used to “negotiate, compromise, and reach agreement within the field” (ibid: 1676) as the field institutionalizes. Indeed, the evolution and institutionalization of new fields are the “product of these negotiations and agreements and often entail the rhetorical importation and exportation of institutional logics from one institutional field to another. Over time, field participants may arrive at a dominant vocabulary of motives or set of institutional logics that govern the field” (ibid: 1676).

In summary, rhetorical institutionalism seeks to find a place between overly ‘structural’ accounts of institutional change, on the one hand, and overly agentic accounts, on the other. It emphasizes a dialectic process in which agency shapes structure, as actors use language to deconstruct taken for granted understandings and consciously shape and create new meanings. These new meanings eventually become taken for granted and are reproduced somewhat unconsciously and thereby become the structures that shape future agency.

5.7 Chapter summary

This section has reviewed five traditions of institutionalism, presenting the main conceptualizations of institutions and the consequent understandings of institutional change. First, while rational choice institutionalism permits an understanding of definitions as elements within the ‘hierarchy of rules’ that make up institutional matrices, they become ensnared in broader theoretical commitments, such as the presumption of functional efficiency, and the model of punctuated equilibrium as the only real occasion for change. This is at odds with the growing evidence that changes in the rules can be the source of change, and that this may be both

incremental and cumulatively transformative. That is precisely the view advanced by a wave of scholarship within historical institutionalism. By reconceptualising institutions in terms of their 'rule-like' and distributional features, historical institutionalism can postulate both why institutions are the site of struggles for change and how change can be achieved. Since institutions always involve winners and losers, there is a constant labour of maintenance and challenge by the respective parties. Moreover, a central type of change concerns the rules themselves, which, due to their inherently open texture, always permit a degree of interpretation. The resultant notion of institutional ambiguity opens a seam for creative adjustments, on the one hand, and enforcement, on the other. This development is potentially important to an understanding of definition in institutional change, since a strong argument can be made that ambiguity is the precise problem for which the practice of definition was first invented. It is certainly the case today that, when faced with ambiguity, it is the institution of definition that is standardly invoked as a remedy (Black, 1937). That being the case, there is a warrant for thinking that practices of definition will be fundamental to the interpretation of rules and enforcing compliance.

Within sociological institutionalism we find a growing interest in language and meaning structures as both elements of the institutional structure and also mechanisms of change. Of particular interest is Lawrence and Suddaby's (2006) concept of *defining work*. This concept draws attention to the creative work of many actors in constructing: 1) definitions around the rules that confer status or identity; 2) definitions which establish boundaries of membership and, 3) definitions which create status hierarchies within a field. Although they do not provide a discussion of the semantic basis of defining work, the rhetorical approach developed by Skinner can be utilized to do precisely that. Indeed, Lawrence and Suddaby (2006), themselves, suggest that rhetorical approaches are especially conducive to studying institutional work more generally.

This is also the position advocated by the exponents of rhetorical institutionalism. Specifically, by embracing classic and new rhetoric it is possible to envisage a dialectic process in which agency shapes structure, as actors use language to deconstruct taken for granted understandings and consciously shape and create new meanings. These new meanings eventually become taken for granted and are reproduced, somewhat unconsciously, and thereby become the structures that shape agency.

Constructivist institutionalism draws attention to how material and ideational elements must combine for ideas to influence institutions. Likewise, historical institutionalism has argued that,

since institutions have distributional consequences, the process of change will be animated by coalitions of actors. This is taken to suggest the importance of understanding definition in terms of the constellation of actors involved, focusing on how they co-ordinate their interests and practices over time, in order to achieve advantageous definitions. Rhetorical institutionalism reminds us that defining work is an inherently persuasive act and that success will depend upon the more subtle forms of power, such as effective argumentation. In establishing a definition that is advantageous, and in bringing about denotative conformity, actors must also seek to overthrow the definitions of their opponents either directly or surreptitiously.

PART II: Applying the framework in the case of “social enterprise”

Chapter 6: Analytic framework and method of application to “social enterprise”

6.1 Introduction

The last five chapters have formulated a theoretical framework for understanding the role of definition in institutional change. There are two objectives in this chapter. First, to link that theoretical framework to an analytic framework that has immediate practical utility in empirical research; and second, to detail how some elements of the ‘labour of definition’ might be explored through an application of the framework to the case of “social enterprise” in the UK.

The centerpiece of the analytic framework (set out in section 6.2) is a tool for interpreting practices of definition at a semantic level. This builds directly on Skinner’s approach to conceptual analysis in terms of change to any one of four elements of conceptual meaning. Specifically, this tool facilitates an account of the *definitional act* (e.g. ‘what was done’) in terms of the maintenance or alteration of: 1) *the term*, 2) *criteria of application*, 3) *range of reference*, and/or 4) *speech act potential*.

While that tool helps provide an account of the *definitional act* at a semantic or rhetorical level, it remains only ‘thinly’ descriptive. To more fully understand the definitional act as an instance of ‘defining work’ within a labour of definition, there is a requirement for a greater contextualization of the act. This can be achieved by focusing, minimally, on 1) the nature of the actor *per se* (*Agent of definition*), 2) their likely interests and purposes in engaging in the act of definition (*Motive of definition*), 3) something of the immediate social practice and broader sequencing of events, in terms of which, they engaged in definition (*Trigger and scene of definition*); and 4) some account of the means by which the actor did what they did (*Resources of definition*).

To address these broader requirements, guidance is drawn from Khurana’s (2007) utilization of the notion of *Verstehen*, a methodological tradition associated with Max Weber (detailed in section 6.3). This helps ensure that the analysis is ‘thickened’ out beyond a ‘thin’ consideration of the rhetorical or semantic adjustments relating to acts of definition. After providing an overview of these two approaches, the chapter details how data relating to social enterprise are collected and analysed.

6.2 Analysing the definitional act

A core argument established in Chapters 3 & 4 is that the all institutions have a conceptual basis comprised of at least two semantic functions: the indexical (or ‘referential’) and the deontic (or the ‘evaluative’). It was also suggested that definition can serve to alter either of these elements. We can now analyze more systematically how this happens by means of definition. Before that, however, it should be noted that acts of definition could be analyzed in terms of several other analytic frameworks (see especially, Macagno and Walton, 2008; Walton and Macagno, 2015). The preference for one that focuses on the four semantic dimensions of conceptual meaning, owes largely to the arguments presented above, which directly links these elements to institutions and broader social change.

The main task here is to plot, with consistency, the semantic character of an act of definition. This can be achieved by analyzing an act of definition or definitional argumentation in terms of the impact on any one of the four elements of conceptual meaning: 1) the term, 2) criteria of application (henceforth, CoA); 3) range of reference (henceforth, RoR); 4) speech act potential (henceforth SAP). By setting out those four elements within a matrix of binary options of ‘change/no change’, it is possible to distinguish sixteen potentially distinct definitional moves, depending on how the actor seeks to influence one or some combination of the four elements. These are set out in Table 6.1 (the symbol ‘-’ denotes the absence of change, while ‘*’ denotes change). This forms an inventory of definitional strategies.

Table 6. 1: Basic options for conceptual change through definitional acts

<i>Four semantic components</i>				
Option	Choice of Term (CoT)	Speech Act Potential (SAP)	Criteria of Application (CoA)	Range of Reference (RoR)
1	-	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	*
3	-	-	*	-
4	-	-	*	*
5	-	*	-	-
6	-	*	-	*
7	-	*	*	-
8	-	*	*	*
9	*	-	-	-
10	*	-	-	*
11	*	-	*	-
12	*	-	*	*
13	*	*	-	-
14	*	*	-	*
15	*	*	*	-
16	*	*	*	*

Source: Adapted from Aberdein (2006:5)

Importantly, however, the rhetorical uses of definition (and redescription) is more diverse than the options in Table 6.1 suggests since, for all the four dimensions, it is possible to further differentiate between different types of change. For example, when Skinner refers to techniques aimed at altering a term's 'speech act potential', he suggests that such change can be either in "direction or in intensity" (2002: 180). This is consistent with his view of concepts as enabling the expression of a range of attitudes along a continuum. At one end of the continuum is condemnation, at the other is commendation, with neutrality in the middle. When Skinner speaks of a 'change of direction', I take this to mean an act that seeks to turn the speech act potential towards either end of the continuum. For example, an actor would change the direction of speech act potential, by shifting terms generally used to commend an action or state of affairs along the continuum toward the expression of disapproval, and vice versa. Alternatively, a 'change in intensity' is understood as, the extent to which a term is pushed along the continuum. *Direction* and *intensity*, are analytically distinct in the sense that a change in intensity can be achieved without a change in direction, and vice versa. The determination of such change in an actual text will always be a matter of interpretation and potential debate.

Similarly, a change in the criteria of application could entail an outright dismissal of a particular criterion, in the sense of strongly denying that it should serve as a defining criterion at all, or a more moderate opposition, aiming only to lessen the standing of a criterion or to qualify it in some way. The reverse is also possible. A definition might introduce entirely new criteria, or attempt to elevate the significance of one criterion. I refer to these changes as changes in the *organisation* of the criteria of application. With regards to the range of reference, change could take the form of either an extension, in the sense of allowing for a wider application than hitherto standard, or, working in the opposite direction, a retraction in the standard range of reference. These tactics can be termed changes in *scope*. Additionally, actors may seek to alter the *precision* of the concept's boundary, either by attempting to *sharpen* or *blur* the boundary. As Skinner notes, although we tend to think of these changes as relating to the 'extension' or 'reference' of a term, it is, perhaps, more helpful to understand changes in the range of reference as the consequences of changes to the criteria for applying the term correctly. That is a useful point so long as we keep in mind that definitional argumentation can aim strategically

Finally, the term(s) itself could be an existing term or an entirely new one. Likewise, an act could seek to switch the term, standardly used in connection with any one of the other three elements, for another term or an entirely new one. I group these two tactics under *selection* (see Table 6.2).

Table 6. 2: Extended options for conceptual change through definitional acts

Semantic components	Kind of change	Options
Choice of Term (CoT)	A) Selection	1) Switch 2) Invent
Speech Act Potential (SAP)	B) Direction	3) Celebrate 4) Derogate
	C) Intensity	5) Intensify 6) Dampen
Criteria of Application (CoA)	D) Organisation	7) Elevate 8) Diminish (<i>Neglect, Negate, and/or Qualify</i>)
	E) Precision	9) Sharpen 10) Blur
Range of Reference (RoR)	F) Scope	11) Broaden 12) Narrow

Therefore, in the analyses of acts of definition that follows in Chapter 7, in addition to recording a binary change/no change (i.e. ‘*’ or ‘-’), it will, at times, be helpful to add a more detailed description of the kind of changes (and options) pursued by the actor. For the present purpose, however, rather than attempt to construct a table that covers all possible combinations of the above, it is sufficient to work with the original list of 16 combinatorial options, while allowing for a more open textured description of the kind of change, based on the 12 categories set out in Table 6.2, relating to each of the four semantic components. As an aid to analysis, a series of examples are provided below.

Referring to Table 6.1, Option 1 is a classic dictionary definition which claims to merely report a fact or usage. To the extent that it does perfectly coincide with conventional usage, it can be described as issuing no significant change to any of the four dimensions. It should, however, be noted that this is a rather idealized description of the dictionary definition. As Harris and Hutton (2007) argue, there is always a choice to be made by the lexicographer as to which time and

linguistic community will serve as the reference point. Williams (1983) also stressed how the ideologies of editors are never far beneath the surface in standard dictionary definitions. Therefore, the absence of change, in respect of the four dimensions, does not necessarily mean that the act is inconsequential.

Options 2-4 are exemplified by Stevenson's 'persuasive definitions'. What these three moves share is the deliberate maintenance of the speech act potential, while some other element(s) is altered. As such, the objective is typically to transfer the evaluative potential (whether it be for the purposes of commending or condemning) to some other actions or states of affairs. Option 2 involves altering only the range of reference while maintaining the rest largely as they were. An example of this can be seen in the case of Google, who argued successfully (in the sense of persuading the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA)) that Google computers, in addition to humans, should be included under the definition of "drivers" in the context of autonomous vehicles (Guardian, 2016²³). In doing so they did not alter the criteria of application but rather succeeded in convincing the NHTSA that the term 'driver' could be applied to a computer in virtue of the prevailing definition.

The more generic version of Option 2, and perhaps the most readily observed, is argumentation that the existing definition is not being correctly applied because there is evidence of either an instance that does meet the criteria of application and yet is not standardly accepted as an instance; or an instance that does not meet the criteria of application and yet is standardly accepted as an instance. If the new definition is successful, then the range of reference will be broadened or narrowed, respectively. Readers familiar with introductory logic, will recognise that this definitional move invokes the 'rule' of definition which is traditionally expressed as 'a definition should be neither too narrow nor too broad'. Kelley (2014: 30) for example, states that a definition is too broad "if it includes things that are not referents of the concept", and too narrow "if it fails to include things that are referents of the concept".

In Option 3, the only element that is altered is the criteria of application. Definitions that aim at this kind of change might have as their objective, not the inclusion or exclusion of particular 'tokens', but rather the degree to which the instances are considered exemplary cases of their 'type'. As such, it is principally concerned with directing the existing speech act potential towards

²³ Guardian (2016) 'Google computers qualify as drivers in automated cars, US government says', Accessed on 15/03/16; Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/feb/09/google-computers-self-driving-cars-human>

a particular segment of the existing range or reference. To achieve this, the definer would seek to manipulate the hierarchical order of criteria of application, placing higher (or lower) those criteria that pick out the instances within the existing range of reference that they seek to commend or condemn. We shall see below (see Section 7.7), that that this is precisely the kind of act of definition performed by Social Enterprise London, when they argued for the reinsertion of ‘social ownership’ to the criteria of application, with the intention of re-centering (or elevating the standing of) the co-operative form within the range of reference (i.e. relative to other instances of social enterprise).

Option 4, also frequently observed, is a form of the classic persuasive definition. As noted above, in Stevenson’s example of “culture”, the criteria of application were altered so as to direct the speech act potential to an altered range of reference, both in the sense of including new referents and excluding hitherto accepted referents. Interestingly, Aberdein (2006) positions Imre Lakatos’ concept of ‘monster barring’ within the scope of Option 4. Monster barring consists in the “sometimes deft but always ad hoc redefinition” (Lakatos, 1976: 23) of a term. The objective of this move, standard within a scientific theory, is to eliminate the threat to “cherished conjecture” that is posed by the presentation of a counterexample (ibid). Here, the use of the word ‘monster’ is conducive to incorporation within our framework of analysis, since it implies that the objective of such an act is to defend the commendatory (or otherwise ‘positive’) speech act potential of the concept (or theory) from the threat (of refutation) posed by the counterexample. Evidence of this practice, outside the context of science, can be seen in the efforts of some smaller brewers, within the “craft beer” movement, to redefine “craft beer” in such a way as to exclude the products of global breweries (e.g. MillerCoors’ ‘Blue Moon’ beer).

Under the same option (Option 4), the tactic can be inverted (employing the contrasting metaphor we might call such a move ‘Angel barring’). Here the objective of the redefinition would be to preserve the condemnatory (or otherwise ‘negative’) speech act potential of a concept from the neutralizing effect posed by the incorporation of a counterexample (i.e. the angel).

Indeed, these moves, and the corresponding labels, can be extended further to envisage two additional strategies: ‘Monster capture’ and ‘Angel capture’. The former would aim at reducing the commendatory speech act potential or increasing the condemnatory speech act potential of a term by demonstrating that the term could be applied to the ‘monster’ just in virtue of the prevailing criteria of application; while the latter would aim at increasing the commendatory speech

act potential or decreasing the condemnatory speech act potential of a term by demonstrating that the term could be applied to an ‘Angel’ just in virtue of the prevailing criteria of application. Given that both practices would retain the term, and the existing CoA, but alter both the SAP and the RoR (i.e. capture equating to an extension of the RoR), they would be instances of Option 6.

It is also possible to imagine modified versions of ‘Monster capture’ and ‘angel capture’ being pursued through a change in the CoA, in which case the move would fall under Option 8. An example of the former can be seen in December 2015, when a Holyrood committee argued for a broader definition of “lobbying”. Their concern was that a proposed Scottish Nationalist Party law to regulate lobbying and increase transparency would not achieve its objective because the definition of “lobbying” included only face-to-face communication, which meant lobbying conducted via email or telephone (equal in their status as ‘Monsters’) was not, by definition, lobbying and thereby free from regulation.

A general case of Option 4, where the aim is to avoid ‘capture’ within a ‘Monster concept’ (i.e. one with a condemnatory SAP) from an expanded range of reference, can be seen in the expansion of regulatory reach through the widening of the terms crucial to the enforcement of a rule. For example, in 2016, a group representing people who fly drones as a hobby, challenged the US Federal Aviation Administration on their decision to include “drones” within its legal definition of an “aircraft”. The move would mean that drone operators would be subject to strict aviation regulations, including responsibility for avoiding collisions with manned aircraft. The objective of the definition is not so much one of (de)legitimation, as the expansion of regulatory jurisdiction. Specifically, the US FDA sought to expand their authority by widening the range of reference for “aircraft” to include “drones”, without explicitly seeking to alter the speech act potential, though the wider context of the move directs a degree of condemnation to the concept of “drones”. If the US FDA did so without altering the CoA it would be an instance of Option 2, and, if they did so by altering the CoA, it would be an instance of Option 4.

Options 5-7 are exemplified by Stevenson’s persuasive quasi-definitions. From a rhetorical perspective, the objective in these three options is to alter the speech act potential of a term while maintaining its customary criteria of application and/or range of reference. Option 5 is, perhaps, the purest expression of this, since it attempts to achieve the change in speech act potential without any parallel change in the criteria of application or range of reference. An example of this might be the attempt to rehabilitate the formerly pejorative term ‘queer’. An example of Option 7 would

be the redefinition of ‘pornography’ put forward by the radical feminists Catherine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin. Their redefinition of pornography as ‘the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or in words’ (MacKinnon & Dworkin, 1997: 269, cited in Aberdein, 2006), aimed to criminalize existing pornography. Their definition could be construed as one that altered the criteria of application and increased the condemnatory speech act potential of the term without altering the range of reference.

Option 8 involves maintaining an existing term but changing everything else. One example could be the redefinition of everyday terms by academics, such as Adam Smith’s redefinition of “unproductive labour”. Options 9-16 are all cases where the term itself is changed. Aberdein (2006) suggests that option 13 is linked to the rhetorical technique of euphemism. A new term is coined and invested with a new tone, one redirected towards a commendatory speech act potential, to replace an existing concept, while making no change to the CoA or RoR. It is also possible to place two of Skinner’s techniques of rhetorical techniques within the range of Options 9-16. As noted, Skinner identifies four tactics associated with the strategy of manipulating the speech act potential of a term. The first tactic involves coining a new term, so on that basis, it falls with the scope of Options 9-16. Given that the act also involves investing the new term with a commendatory speech act potential the placement narrows to options 13-16. There is merit in suggesting that definition is most closely connected (though not exclusively), in actual practice, to Options 1-8, while rhetorical redescription is most closely connected to Options 9-16.

In summary, on the basis of the tool presented above, it is possible to analyze, at a semantic level, almost any act of definition in terms of change/no change to any one of four semantic elements. While scholars of rhetoric and argumentation have developed other analytic frameworks for the analysis of definition, there is no orthodoxy of approach (Schiappa, 2001). The merit of conducting the analysis through the tool presented here, is that it helps link acts of definition to broader social change, since, as Skinner (2001) argues, disagreement about any of these elements can constitute a mechanism of social change. However, while this tool facilitates both a fine grained and consistent semantic analysis of definition and definitional argument, it is somewhat limited in the sense that it considers only the act and not the broader social context of the act, nor the social identity of the actor. Therefore, in addition to this robust yet somewhat narrow analytic tool, a sociological ‘thickening agent’ is required that helps contextualize definition. That is the task we now turn to.

6.3 Contextualizing acts of definition and definitional contestation

Understanding the labour of definition (and, more generally, the role of definition in institutional change), requires providing not only an account of the practices of definition at a semantic or rhetorical level, but also a broad account of the context and intentionality of the actors themselves. In other words, we need to extend a descriptive analysis in the direction of sociological explanation. To this end, guidance can be found in the methodological principle of *Verstehen*, or interpretative understanding.

The sociological concept of *Verstehen* (social understanding), which is both associated with and exemplified in the historical research of Max Weber, is based on the argument that an understanding of ‘historical individuals’, such as the emergence and transformation of social enterprise or, in Weber’s research, the rise and transformation of capitalism, requires the researcher to see things from the point of view of their research subject, or to “identify with the relevant social actor (individuals or group) and the motives of this actor” (Khurana, 2007:394). Indeed, according to Khurana (2007), Weber argues that, the interpretative method is the main way in which researchers should seek to understand the emergence and evolution of new social institutions.

Although there are no formal rules that, if followed to the letter, allow us to recreate the rationality of historical actors, there are two steps, or two forms of understanding, that help open a vista into the past in term of the meanings and relevancies presented to historical actors themselves. The first is “*observational understanding*”, which involves “gathering the relevant facts and establishing their sequence” (Khurana, 2007:394); and second, “*explanatory understanding*”, which involves the researcher attempting to “view the world through the actor’s eyes rather than his or her own” (ibid.). The objective in doing so is to uncover a sense of why it might have made sense to the actor to pursue the course of action they pursued, by “reconstructing the situational choices and constraints present at the time” (ibid.).

One exemplary use of *Verstehen* in institutional research is Khurana’s (2007) *From Higher Aims to Hired Hands*. This is an “historically grounded account” of the development and transformation of the American business school, a central institution in modern society. Khurana states that it is important to understand *Verstehen* as a balancing out of “observations of action with a theory of action” (2007:394). The conduct of individuals or groups is not explained in terms of an all-encompassing theory of action (like Marx’s materialism or Smith’s invisible hand). Rather, action

or conduct is understood to emerge “out of the intersection of numerous social forces and interests, including power, status, economics, beliefs, and legitimacy” (ibid.). It is for this reason, that the researchers must be attentive to the diverse patterns of conduct, and give special consideration to how particular choices were evaluated and why one line of conduct, or one approach, was selected over another.

That provides the basis for “explanatory understanding”, which, Khurana states, can only be achieved “by placing the observed action in an intelligible sequence of motivations, *which can be treated as an explanation for the behavior*” (Khurana, 2007:394, *emphasis added*). The emphasis here is important. The claim is not to have found the one and only explanation of conduct, but rather an account that can be taken as having some explanatory weight, but which remains open to revision as new data might come to light. It is this methodological principle and the practice of observing action within an “intelligible sequence of motivations” that distinguishes *Verstehen* from other approaches. It is a “method that seeks to clothe the bare facts with the flesh and blood of social significance, interpretation, and meaning” (2007: 395). To put it in terms more immediately relevant to this thesis, *Verstehen* is a method that clothes the bare facts of an act of definition, with the flesh and blood of social significance. In the following section, I demonstrate how these principles were used to orient the collection and analysis of data in the case of “social enterprise”.

6.4 Applying the framework to “social enterprise”

As noted in the introduction, although the primary contribution of this thesis is to scholarship on the theorization of institutional change, the main elements of the framework are explored through an investigation of the role of definition in the rise of social enterprise in the UK. The overarching research question (i.e. *what role does definition play in institutional change?*) can be pursued in different directions, but four have immediate and general value. Specifically, any instance of institutional change involving a labour of definition can be examined, minimally, in terms of four questions: 1) the nature and range of *actors* involved in the labour of definition, 2) the characteristics of the acts of definition, 3) the purposes or intentions of actors in relation to those acts of definition, and 4) the trigger or scene of definition. There are many more questions that can be asked, but those provide a minimum foundation. As such, it is through these four questions that the labour of definition is explored in the context of social enterprise.

6.5 Data collection

6.5.1 First phase: Event history database and mapping key actors

Preliminary to pursuing an ‘intelligible sequence of motivations’, is establishing a sequence of events and the actors involved in them. Doing so required an initial phase of data collection and analysis that captured both the sequence of practices over time and the position of the actors. As such, the first phase of data collection and analysis was the development of an “event history database” (Van de Ven & Poole, 1990). The compilation of an event history database is a methodological tool that has previously been used in investigating processes of (de)institutionalization (Maguire and Hardy, 2006; Maguire and Hardy, 2009). Ultimately, determining what constitutes a *key* moment or a *significant* actor, as opposed to a minor one, is a subjective judgement. In some instances, a key moment might be the publication of a report by an authoritative agent, or the creation of a new funding body that influences the direction and flow of money to organisations in the field. No strict formula was applied here. Rather, a sense of the significance of moments and actors emerged through immersion in the detail of the data, of adopting an empathic frame of mind, and of close reference to existing research (Teasdale, 2012; Sepulveda, 2015).

The data for this stage were collected primarily from Regeneration and Renewal and Third Sector, the two main trade journals in the ‘third sector’. The use of sector journals was preferred over national broadsheets, as the focus of the former tends to be more concerned with reporting field or industry level developments, rather than offering editorial analyses. These journals were interrogated using the Factiva/DowJones search builder. Specifically, each journal was searched for mention of “social enterprise”. This stage of data collection was supplemented by the addition of M2 Presswire, one of the main carriers of UK government press releases. M2 Presswire was added on the basis of previous institutionalist research which has evidenced the significant role that state agencies play in the process of institutionalization, and also in recognition of the fact that, as previous research on social enterprise has shown, governmental agencies are one of the main actors in the field of social enterprise in the UK (Teasdale, 2012; Sepulveda, 2015; Alcock, 2010; Kendall, 2010). It should be noted, that any attempt to describe a labour of definition in terms of the range of actors involved, must take account of this obvious and unavoidable element of selection bias. In the case of social enterprise, the data collection process elevates, to some extent, the significance of state agencies.

As some of these sources did not fully cover the early stage of the emergence of social enterprise, more adequate coverage was ensured by an additional search, again performed through the

Factiva/DowJones search builder, covering the period from 1997-2001. Again “social enterprise” was the only search phrase across all sources. The only search restriction applied was that the source should be UK based. This provided ample coverage of the observation period. In total, this phase of data collection returned a total of 2672 texts.

Table 6. 3: Data sources and coverage

Source	Date range	Number of items
Third Sector	12 December 2002 – 31 December 2010	1135 items
Regeneration and Renewal	12 April 2002 - 6 December 2010	796 items
M2 Presswire (UK)	26 January 2001 - Current	625 items
All sources	01 Jan 1997 – 31 Dec 2001	116 items

Each item was read and information of relevance was entered in the event history database. As shown in Table 6.4 (for details of the full database see Appendix 1), the event history database had four simple columns for recording information: Date, Scene, Actors and Texts. *Date* referred simply to the data of the event. The *Scene* was captured in the form of a summary description. *Actors* was captured as the individuals and/or organisations implicated in the event. *Text* relates to the documents associated with the event. Table 6.4, shown below, illustrates the way in which information from a textual artefact was captured in the database in this phase of data collection.

Table 6. 4: Example of Historical Event, Actors and Texts database

Date	Scene	Actors	Texts
23 July 2002	Publication of the "Social Enterprise: a Strategy for Success", the Government's first strategy document relating to policy on social enterprise. Calls for the Bank of England to conduct a review into the state of finance for social enterprise, focusing on barriers.	Social Enterprise Unit (DTI)	Social Enterprise: a Strategy for Success
23 July 2002	The Social Enterprise Coalition, the national umbrella body for social enterprise, hold their inaugural meeting on the same day as the "Strategy for Success" document is published	Social Enterprise Coalition	None

May 2003	The Bank of England conducts research into financial barriers facing social enterprise.	Bank of England	The Financing of Social Enterprises: A Special Report by the Bank of England
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This process resulted in 454 entries, which were later reduced to 139 entries. While the objective of the event history database was to provide a broad and accurate chronological record, it made no attempt to provide an exhaustive historical account of the emergence and development of social enterprise in the UK. Rather, it sought only to outline some of the major developments and the key actors in those moments. One reason why an exhaustive historical reconstruction was not the objective of this, or any, phase of data collection, is the conviction that a complete historical reconstruction is not possible. The *past-as-it-really-was* cannot be accessed in a way that is free from interpretation. As Coraiola *et al* (2013) state, historical facts, rather than given *a priori*, are created through an interaction between the content of sources and the historian’s own knowledge or interpretative filters. Historical sources are selected and accessed based on theoretical questions. As such, the choice of sources is trapped within a narrative ‘emplotment’²⁴ (Coraiola *et al*, 2013). Indeed, for that reason, what matters most is, arguably, the integrity of the narrative (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Landman, 2012).

6.5.2 Second phase: Compiling a database of acts of definition and definitional argumentation

To empirically identify instances of definition, and in view of the diversity of definitory practices (see Chapter 2), a deliberately broad definition of ‘act of definition’ was applied for the purposes of the analysis: *talk or text that aims to fix (in the twin senses of fastening or mending) the meaning of a concept, in respect of any one of four elements of conceptual meaning (specifically, the term, the criteria of application, range of reference and speech act potential).*

Rather than collect primary data through interviews with actors in the field, (for example by asking them to provide a definition or to comment on a past act of definition), only secondary data were collected. Specifically, texts were collected which contained definitions of social enterprise and argumentation about social enterprise. Such texts included books, articles, reports, working papers, online resources, such as technical reports, and archival documents within organizations.

²⁴ Emplotment is a concept taken from the work of Paul Ricoeur, for whom it meant the act of making a “coherent sequence out of what was simply succession” (Frank, 2010: 137).

All data were understood in a sociological optic, as artefacts with their own tale to tell in terms of actor, act, scene and authorial intention.

While it is acknowledged that many texts, such as speeches and public communications, may not reflect the true views of their authors, this was not a reason to discount the artefact; since it is the act *per se* that carries historical significance. In other words, even if speeches or texts were purely for ‘impression management’, it remains a fact that their authors felt the need to perform precisely that act and, as Khurana notes, in defence of his own, similar approach, this “provides an important indicator of the prevailing beliefs of the time and the importance of social legitimacy” (Khurana, 2007: 393).

To collect these data, two methods were followed: First, a systematic search was conducted within the DowJones/Factiva database for texts containing “social enterprise” or “social entrepreneur*” within a set distance from *defin**, *mean**, *refer**, and *denot**. The use of these latter search terms helped focus attention on the definitional component of the broader “social enterprise” discourse. As the objective was to gather data both containing acts of definition and argumentation about definitions, the search was limited to a 200-word distance. This followed a similar approach taken by Giroux (2006) who used only a 3-word limit in her analysis of definitions of TQM. After an initial pilot, this was reduced to a 100 words distance. The range was narrowed to 100 by selecting 10 documents containing clear cases of definition. The maximum distance between [social enterprise*] and [Defin*] was then counted, with the highest distance being 87. This was then rounded up to 100. As the objective was to gather as broad and accurate data as possible, no limitations were placed on the date, location or source of texts.

This produced a total of 1009 documents. These documents were then analysed to ascertain their relevance. This was done with the assistance of a computer software (Skim) that isolated the portion of the text with the [defin*, mean*, refer*, denot*] component. In this way, texts could be more rapidly assessed for the presence of defintory practice. This procedure reduced the data to 198 documents. As the Dow Jones Interactive/Factiva database does not include academic articles, this search was replicated on the Academic Search Complete and Web of Science databases. The search was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles and books. Only those texts were included in which ‘social enterprise’ was the focus and, again, included an element of definition. Therefore, articles that merely mentioned these terms, or in which definition did not play a clear role, were excluded.

This second method was an adapted form of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling has been defined as “A technique for finding research subjects. One subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on” (Vogt, 1999). This a popular technique that has been used in such varied research programmes as studies of drug users (Avico *et al.*, 1998; Kaplan *et al.*, 1987); the life cycle of academic management fads (Birnbaum, 2000), and individual buying behaviour (File *et al.*, 1994). An example of the ‘snowballing’ method in the compilation of data is shown below (Table 6.5), where a total of six actors (three individuals and three organizations) would be recorded and subsequently investigated (on this occasion the focus was on ‘social entrepreneurship’):

Table 6. 5: Adapted use of Snowball Sampling

Data Excerpt	Actors identified
<p>“There's no single definition of what makes a person a social entrepreneur. Michael Young, who founded the School for Social Entrepreneurs in east London, has summed it up as 'someone with the heart of a do-gooder but the mind of a businessman'. The Community Action Network, a national organisation co-founded by Mawson, offers the following definition: 'Social entrepreneurs are the equivalent of true business entrepreneurs but they operate in the social, not-for-profit sector, building 'something from nothing' and seeking new and innovative solutions to social problems.' And in his 1997 Demos pamphlet on the subject, writer Charles Leadbeater provided a number of further clues for spotting a social entrepreneur. They are social, he said, because their output is promoting health and welfare; their assets are relationships, networks and co-operation; and they are not driven by profit as their main objective. And they are entrepreneurs because they excel at spotting unmet needs; they are driven and charismatic individuals; and they are usually innovative”.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Michael Young 2. School for Social Entrepreneurs 3. Community Action Network 4. Andrew Mawson 5. Demos 6. Charles Leadbeater

6.5.3 Third phase: Selecting instances of ‘defining work’

Having supplemented the event history database with a database of acts of definition, it was possible to begin to select, for closer examination, acts of definition that exemplified the labour of definition. Given that the objective was not to provide an exhaustive historical analysis of social enterprise, as much as to exemplify the theoretical framework (and in view of the volume of data collected), it was possible to concentrate the analytic focus on a relatively narrow, but exceptionally significant, moment in the emergence of social enterprise. Specifically, the focus was placed on the first six years (1997-2003); when the concept emerged and was subjected to the most intensive

labour of definition. Existing research on social enterprise confirmed that this early stage was both highly formative and characterized by heightened debate over definition (see especially Teasdale, 2012; Sepulveda, 2016).

This decision was further justified by Colyvas and Powell’s (2006) research on the institutionalization of technology transfer practices and the commercialization of public science. Colyvas and Powell (2006) found that, for many of the key terms used in the initial stages of insititutionalisation, such as ‘risk’ and ‘invention’, there was a “considerable lack of understanding and confusion around the definitions” (Colyvas and Powell, 2006:339). They specifically note that, “The definition of inventor [was]... plagued initially by a lack of clarity or standard definition” (ibid) and, in consequence, these terms were subject to “extensive articulation” (ibid). As the practice became more taken-for-granted and acquired greater legitimacy, there emerged a “finite range of possible definitions” (ibid.), in which “the bandwidth of definitions narrows and becomes less contingent, or associated with context” (ibid.). On the basis of that case study, they concluded the road to institutionalization progresses from:

“high elaboration (i.e., details, debates, clarifications) and low classification (e.g., categories, definitions); to low elaboration (little need to spell out how to do things, descriptions are highly condensed) and high classification (e.g., conflict of interest forms, job categories, and intellectual property” (Colyvas and Powell, 2006:339)

Based on that argument, together with the findings of research on social enterprise in the UK, and on the strength of the data collected in phases 1 & 2 above, the analysis was conducted on nine distinctive acts of definition (see Table 6.6).

Table 6. 6: Instances of defining work selected for analysis.

	Name	Actor	Scene of the Act of Definition
1	Charles Leadbeater (Demos)	Think tank	Definition of “social entrepreneurs” in Demos report: ‘The Rise of the Social Entrepreneurship’ (1997)
2	EMES	Academic research network	Definition of “social enterprise” in EU funding cross-national research project (1996)
3	Social Enterprise London	Representative body / Development agency	Definition of “social enterprise” ahead of inaugural conference (1999)

4	Baroness Thornton	Member of the House of Lords	Definition of “social enterprise” before the House of Lords, in the context of supporting draft regulation for credit unions (1999)
5	Policy Action team 3	Governmental policy making team	Definition of “social enterprise” in report recommending policy actions linking enterprise and social exclusion (1999)
6	The Social Investment Taskforce	Quasi-governmental policy making team	Definition of “social enterprise” in report recommending policy actions for increasing availability of finance in areas of socio-economic decline (2000)
7	Social Enterprise London	Representative body / Development agency	Definition of “social enterprise” in context of growing demand for information (2001)
8	Andrea Westall (IPPR)	Academic / Policy consultant	Definition of “social enterprise” ahead of establishment of dedicated governmental unit (2001)
9	The Social Enterprise Unit (Department of Trade and Industry)	Governmental agency	Definition of “social enterprise” in the context of first governmental strategy for social enterprise (2002)

6.6 Data analysis

As discussed above, individual ‘acts of definition’ were analysed by applying the tool devised and explained above (see section 6.2). As the framework for analysing ‘acts of definition’ has already been set out in detail above, we can proceed to the more sociological dimensions, in terms of which the analysis was conducted: Agents of definition, Scenes of definition, and Purposes of definition.

6.6.1 Agents of definition

The task of detailing the agents of definition involves going beyond an identification of ‘who did what’. For example, at any point along the event history database, we can pick out one or two individuals or organisations as the key protagonists. If we point at late 1999, for example, the main organisation is Policy Action Team 3, since they were central in linking the concept of social enterprise (as the solution) to the problem of social exclusion. However, in referring to individuals and organisations as ‘agents’ or ‘actors’, we are signalling the institutional character of their identity. Minimally, to describe Social Enterprise London (SEL) as an *actor*, is to draw attention to its social identity. To use Boltanski’s expression, it is to highlight the *type* of which Social Enterprise London

is merely a *token*. Importantly, it is the rule linking the ‘type’ to a token that constitutes the social identity of the actor and directs their conduct. As Giddens (1984) states “a social identity that carries with it a certain range (however diffusely specified) of prerogatives and obligations that an actor who is accorded that identity (or is an “incumbent” of that position) may activate or carry out: these prerogatives and obligations constitute the role-prescriptions associated with that position” (Giddens, 1984: 84).

Following Mohr and Guerra-Pearson (2005), who focused on the *self-identifications* of social welfare organizations in the US during the Progressive Era, the characterization of *type* is attributed on the basis of an analysis of actors’ self-descriptions; particularly of their operational activities, at the time of the ‘act of definition’. The primary source of these data were the “About us”, “what we do” sections, and/or “press kits”, from the relevant websites, or equivalent information. Where there was no clear self-identification, an actor type was attributed on the basis of the activities the individual was engaged in. To that end, concise descriptive indicators were created for each type of activity. Using those activity indicators, an actor type was assigned to individuals/organizations (See Table 6.7). Where several activities were identified, these were placed in a hierarchical order with the significance of each allocated a weighting.

Table 6. 7: Example of actor type attribution

Selected examples	
Name	Adventure Capital Fund
Original text excerpt	“The Adventure Capital Fund is an ambitious new style of funder for community enterprise... By offering a combination of financial investments and expert support , we help these enterprises to become stable, soundly run businesses that will survive long into the future. But we expect a return on our investment – we hold our investees to account to provide us with results, both social and financial”.
Coding: Activities	1. Financial investments/Equity 2. Boardroom support
Actor Type	Venture capitalist

Name	EMES
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Original text excerpt	“EMES is a research network of established university research centres and individual researchers whose goal is to gradually build up a European corpus of theoretical and empirical knowledge , pluralistic in disciplines and methodology, around “Third Sector” issues. EMES has existed since 1996, when an international group of scholars formed a research network that had been sponsored by the European Union”.
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Coding: Activities	1. Research (theoretical, applied, comparative)
Actor Type	Academic research unit

Name	Institute of Public Policy Research
Original text excerpt	For over 21 years, IPPR’s research and policy ideas have helped shape the progressive thinking that is now the political centre ground... As an independent, radical and progressive think tank we are committed to the following principles...Our approach starts by identifying the policy issues that matter, and then carrying out rigorous and innovative research - locally, nationally and globally

Coding: Activities	1. Creation of policy recommendations 2. Research (policy oriented)
Actor Type	Think tank

The final attribution of an actor type differs somewhat from the notion of a ‘field position’ because, at least within the Bourdieusian framework, determination of ‘field position’ would require establishing the structure and volume of different forms of capital (economic, social, symbolic) (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). While such an analysis would add considerably to the understanding of the labour of definition, given the scope and the purpose of this thesis, which is to offer a basic contextualization of acts of definition, the attribution of an actor type is sufficient.

6.6.2 Scene of definition

In describing the ‘*scene*’ of an ‘act of definition’, we are drawing attention to several contextual factors. At the most basic level, it involves answering the questions of *when* and *where* the act was done. The notion of *scene* is drawn from Burke’s (1969) dramatic pentad. In that context, he makes the instructive point that the frame of reference, or what he terms the ‘circumference’ of a *scene*, can be drawn more or less widely. At a widest circumference, the *scene* of an ‘act of definition’, in the case of social enterprise, could be described relative to broader movements within British politics. For example, when agencies linked to HM Treasury and Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit simultaneously pursued a social enterprise strategy, the *scene* of their respective acts of definition

could be set out in terms of the rivalrous relationship between the Prime Minister (Tony Blair), and the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Gordon Brown). At a narrow circumference, the *scene* of an ‘act of definition’ could be situated in terms of the immediate social practices within which the definition is practiced’? For example, the *scene* of the ‘act of definition’ contained in the DTI’s *A Strategy for Success*, could be described in terms of a governmental unit creating a strategy document. Between these two extremities a middle, or meso-level, circumference could be drawn at the level of the field and its evolution.

There is no right and wrong circumference as such. A wider circumference will capture more circumstantial detail (and drama) but potentially at the cost of fine-grained detail; a narrow circumference might capture the nuance of the immediate context, but may neglect an important broader event (such as a general election). In this thesis, no rigid rule was followed for setting the circumference of the *scene*. In some instances of action, it was the immediate, rather than the broader, context that seemed, from a purely interpretative point of view, the more relevant level. In other instances, it was the reverse.

Having said that, two factors played an important role in determining the *scene*. First, in keeping with the idea of building an ‘intelligible *sequence* of motivations’, a consistent element of *scene* concerned the surrounding events as set out within the event history database (see Appendix 1). Second, in order to address the issue of ‘triggers’, attention was focused on those features of the context to which the act could reasonably be construed as a response. For example, when Professor Smallbone presented the report *Understanding Social Enterprise* to the Small Business Service (SBS), the ‘trigger’ or *scene* was identified in terms of the remit which PAT3 had earlier handed to the SBS to recognise social enterprise as a category of business deserving support and, importantly, the SBS’s confessed inability to do so on the grounds of having an insufficient understanding of the concept. As this example illustrates, the texture of *scene* is heavily depended on the sequence of events.

6.6.3 Purpose of definition

Determining the *purpose* of an act of definition concerns establishing the probable *reasons* for which the act was done. Doing so, however, encounters philosophical difficulties since asserting the reasons for which an actor did what they did, not only presupposes a theory of action but also commits one to the assumption that a theory action *per se* is possible. The post-modern tradition,

for example, would dismiss any efforts to recover the true intentions of the author. All that is meaningful, and indeed, recoverable, is what is within the ‘the text itself’. As discussed below, in this thesis, following Skinner, *purpose* is taken to be the sum of the *intention* and *motive* of an act. As such, purpose is determined, by looking inside the text for plausible evidence of authorial *intention*, and then interpreting *motive* in terms of the what might plausibly have prompted such an intention. One such prompting is the rational calculation of agents given their stake in the concept. As explained below, that does mean that an assumption of rationality is made in the first instance.

Crucially, in neither case (attributing intention and motive) is our task one that involves ‘getting inside the head’ of the actor to unearth the truth of their reasoning. Rather, as Skinner puts it, with his customary clarity,

“To know about motives and intentions is to know the relationship in which a writer stands to what he or she has written. To know about *intentions* is to know such facts as whether the writer was joking or serious or ironic, or in general what speech acts they may have been performing in writing what they wrote. To know about *motives* is to know what prompted those particular speech acts, quite apart from their character and truth-status as utterances” (2001:96, *emphasis added*).

The distinction between *intentions* and *motive* is based on a more fundamental distinction, which Skinner draws from J.L. Austin’s classic analysis, between the “intended illocutionary force” of an utterance, and the “intended perlocutionary force”. The former refers to what it is the actor was attempting to do in writing what they wrote, or saying what they said. For example, a speaker’s illocutionary intention might be to ‘issue a warning’. Whether someone or something becomes warned, in virtue of the act, is irrelevant to the realization of *intended illocutionary force*. Rather the intention is realized simply by executing the act itself (i.e. by uttering the words, ‘John, I’m warning you, the ice is about to break’). To that extent, we are dealing only with that which is in the text itself. The second, *perlocutionary intention*, concerns the consequent state of affairs beyond the speech act or utterance itself. For example, the perlocutionary intention of issuing a warning would be that the man heeds the warning by steering away from the danger posed by the ice.

Skinner links *intentions* to “intended illocutionary force”, and *motives* to “intended perlocutionary force”. Therefore, to speak of intention is to point to what the author was trying to do in writing the text. In practice, determining the intention of the speech act noted above, would require

recognizing that, “arm-waving can count as warning, and that this is the convention being exploited in this particular case” (Skinner, 2002: 97). Therefore, in establishing the intention of a speech act, we are not dealing with “unobservable mental stuff” (Geertz, cited in Skinner, 2002:97), but rather with *the conventional character* of the speech acts being deployed within the text. Therefore, a central requirement in understanding the purpose of an act of definition, or argumentation about definition, is identifying the publicly legible (i.e. inter-subjectively meaningful) character of the act of definition itself. As we have seen above (in Chapter 2) defining *per se* constitutes several distinctive speech acts, and this provides a first dimension in terms of which the intention can be described.

Determining the *motive*, or the intended perlocutionary force, requires engaging with factors standing outside the text that are both antecedent to and contingently connected with it. That signals the importance of the event history database. Skinner himself is much more cautious about determining *motive*, preferring to deal only with intentions. However, in stating that the key task is to “know the relationship in which a writer stands to what he or she has written” (Skinner, 2002:96), Skinner has provided a useful principle upon which to proceed. Essentially, what I take this to involve is, minimally, establishing what is at *stake* for the actor, and what, given those stakes, is likely to have been their rational calculation for best serving their interests. Understanding *stakes* requires understanding the social position from they take up their stance, what brought the actor to engage in the act, and what they stand to gain or lose as a result of the act (or acts to which they are responding). In this sense, understanding motive is fundamentally connected to understanding *agents* and *scene*, with insights on one informing the others until a consistent picture, rich in narrative detail, is established.

Taking this approach with regards to *motive*, is to draw on a basic tenet of most institutionalisms. Specifically, an assumption of rationality is made in the first instance, since actors are thought, generally, to pursue the paths of conduct which they consider advantageous. However, whether the path pursued turns out to be advantageous is an open question and, obviously, unknown to the actor in the moment of the act (Skinner, 2002; Hall and Thelen, 2008). Additionally, actors’ preferences and calculations are fundamentally influenced by their subject position and, because subject positions are neither final nor singular, actors’ preferences and calculations are neither fixed nor free from internal contradiction.

In short, and to summarize, recovering an actor's *motive* for doing what they did, is largely a matter of understanding why a particular course of action might have seemed advantageous to them in that moment. This is consistent with Weber's concept of *Verstehen*, since he opens his *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* with a discussion of motive explanations, which links the understanding of motivation with the process of "placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning" (Weber, 1968: 8, cited in Skinner, 2002: 130). Such an attribution will remain a subjective interpretation, but by linking it to the nature of the actor (their subject position or 'actor type'), the character of the act, and the scene of the act, the risk of misconstruing the situation is both lessened and, perhaps more importantly, made available for other researchers to evaluate for themselves.

Chapter 7: “Social enterprise” as a labour of definition.

"the labour pains at the birth of new concepts"

Ludwig Wittgenstein, (1980:62)

The objective in this section is to discuss the nine acts of definition identified above in terms of the analytic framework set out in Chapter 6. The analysis illustrates how, through a labour of definition, the concept of “social enterprise” was coined, defined and redefined in ways that had lasting implications for the concept and the direction of institutional change. It covers the period from when social enterprise first appeared on the scene, in (circa.) 1997, to when the Government announced its first official definition (2002).

7.1 Establishing the commendatory speech act potential of “social entrepreneur”

Immediately prior to the emergence of social enterprise in the UK, the similar sounding concept of "social entrepreneur" was attracting significant attention. That concept had been circulating in the US for several years before it was used in the UK. Its transatlantic passage, in the late 1980s, owed much to the work of Business in the Community (BITC), which frequently visited the US in search of new ideas for business-led community regeneration suitable for the UK. Although BITC was one of the chief proponents of the concept of “social entrepreneurship” in the UK, it made little effort to give a formal definition. One explanation for this, is they simply didn’t need to as they did not encounter any disagreement over their use of the concept. As such, they were free to deploy informal characterizations of the ‘social entrepreneur’ that emphasized an individual who obtained and channeled resources from widely varying sources (including government, the European Economic Community and private companies) towards "self-help job creation and training schemes at street or neighbourhood level" (O'Brien, 1985).

The emphasis was on the acquisition of various forms of grant funding, as opposed to the income generated through trading activities. This shows a contrast to the UK government’s eventual ‘official’ definition of social enterprise, where income generation from trading would become a central *criteria of application* (see section 7.9).²⁵ Nor did BITC attempt to limit “social entrepreneurs” to a specific sector location, such as the public or private sector. Rather, it was held to be "an

²⁵ This conceptualization was still prevalent in 1995 when Thake notes, “[Social entrepreneurs] are individuals who are skilled at developing local partnerships, assembling public, private, charitable and European funding and delivering projects on the ground” (26/10/1995).

attitude of mind and spirit [and] the mixture of daring, determination and dynamic can be found and applied in all spheres of life" (O'Brien, 1985). They did, however, attribute a clear geographic/scale attribute to the term. Specifically, O'Brien, chief executive of BITC, stated that social entrepreneurs focus on a "narrowly focused geographical canvas".²⁶ The key distinction being made was that social entrepreneurship was not about setting up national or international organizations, but rather it was about more micro initiatives, based in local communities.

The meaning of the concept was developed further through its application to actual individuals. It was used to describe and commend the work of individuals who were trying to ease social tensions and unemployment in some of the most deprived communities of the UK's major commercial centres, such as the leaders of Local Enterprise Agencies, organisations aimed at addressing unemployment at a local level. For example, when Stephen O'Brien wrote an article in the Financial Times, in 1985, heralding the discovery of a "new breed of social entrepreneurs", he applied the term in commendation of Sir Alastair Pilkington. Pilkington had invented float glass technology, a new way of making sheet glass that greatly increased profits but which was putting thousands of people out of work in the company's hometown of St Helens on Merseyside. Exposure to the subsequent social unrest, had led him to establish the Community of St Helens Trust, which was aimed at helping the community cope with the programme of radical downsizing; by providing training, resources and cash required for local unemployed to start their own businesses.

The concept of "social entrepreneurship" remained somewhat marginal to UK politics until it was appropriated by Demos, a centre-left think tank, in the mid 1990s. Here the *scene* is vitally important. In 1992, the Labour Party suffered a surprise general election loss to the Conservative Party. One of the reasons for the loss was attributed to the shadow budget, which proposed to increase benefits through a tax increase on the middle-income earners. This was a toxic combination that fueled the Tory's injurious headline 'Labour tax bombshell'. When John Smith was elected the new leader of the Labour Party, one of his first moves was to 'bury the budget'. This required a fundamental overhaul of policy thinking about welfare and the especially the means of paying for it. A wholesale reexamination of its policies was pursued through the creation of the Commission for Social Justice. However, it was thought that the Party's internal policy formation system was outmoded. Fresh ideas required a fresh approach. To that end, Smith took the unusual

²⁶ . E.g. "They have the kind of skills you'd find in a very entrepreneurial business person, but instead of exercising them to make their fortune, they have decided to use them to improve their community" (O'Brien, 1985).

move of setting up the entire Commission within a think tank, the Institute of Public Policy Research. It was also a symbolic move that was intended to highlight a rupture with past ‘tax and spend’ policy. The Labour Party’s turn toward think tanks is important because it fueled the creation of a market for ideas that, in turn, spurred a wave of young centre-left think tanks (one of which was Demos), that were not as beholden to cherished political concepts.

Much of the intellectual and policy direction of the Commission’s final report had been recalibrated when John Smith died suddenly of a heart attack in 1994. When Tony Blair was elected the new leader of the Labour party shortly after, many of the most important ideological revisions within the Left were already underway. There was also an important change in the way policy was created for the Labour party. It is in this context, that Demos sought to establish its influence. Demos was cofounded in 1993 by Martin Jacques, a former member of the Communist Party of GB and editor of *Marxism Today*, and Geoff Mulgan. The two were part of a network of left-leaning intellectuals that had contributed significantly to a discourse of revisionary socialism. In 1989, Jacques coedited *New Times* with Stuart Hall, a compilation of essays reprinted from *Marxism Today* which carried contributions from the leading lights of the left (e.g. Stuart Hall, David Held, Goran Therborn, Paul Hirst; David Edgar; and David Marquand). With Jacques and Mulgan at the helm, Demos was not lacking in intellectual credibility, but it had not yet achieved the kind of influence enjoyed by IPPR.

Seeing that Blair was not as closely allied to the IPPR as Smith had been, there was an opportunity for Demos to become the new Labour leader’s preferred think tank. To that end, they needed to capture the attention both of Blair himself and the policy teams around him. Among the many flagrant acts of self-promotion, was their placement of open letters in the *Guardian* and *Independent* (1994), addressed directly to “Tony Blair Esq.”, and offering “Some timely advice from Demos, the independent think-tank, to an aspiring Labour prime minister” (Demos, 1994). Included in that advice, was the declaration that long term solutions to social divisions and exclusion, “depend on channeling resources in the direction of the social entrepreneur” (Demos, 1994); and imploring Blair to back “new ideas coming from social entrepreneurs, people working in churches and the voluntary sector or the innovating parts of the public sector” (Demos, 1994).

The concept was positioned as a solution to the question of how welfare provision in the UK could be delivered in the future. Leadbeater’s (1997) Demos report, *The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur*, proclaimed that,

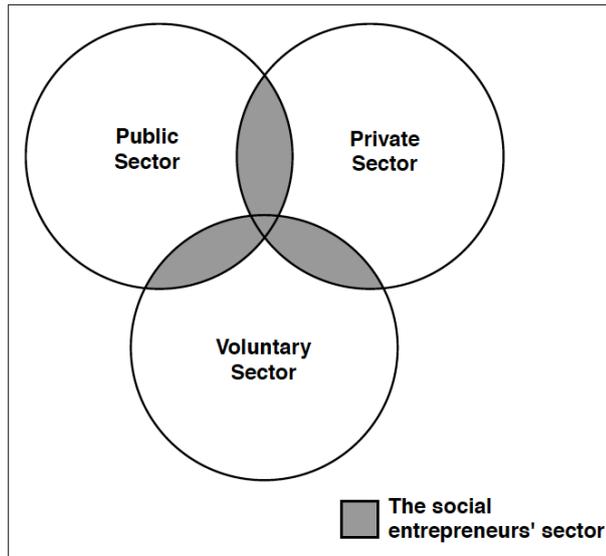
“As a society we are stuck in an impasse. We have a welfare state system that we know is ill-equipped to deal with many of the modern social problems it has to confront. Yet we are unable to sanction radical reforms to make welfare more affordable and more effective” [Leadbeater, 1997].

In the absence of ‘radical reforms’, by which he appears to have meant opening public services to the private sector, social entrepreneurship was a small but marketable policy idea.

Leadbeater’s act of definition largely followed BITC’s loose characterization of social entrepreneurs both in style and substance. The objective of his definition was clearly not to impose sharp boundaries, since the *criteria of application* he advanced, if they could even be called such, entailed significant indeterminacy. Much of the indeterminacy stemmed from the method of definition itself. Specifically, Leadbeater selected five organisations (The Bromley-by-Bow Centre, Mildmay Mission Hospital, Kaleidoscope, Youth Charter for Sport, and the Eldonians) as exemplars and then attempted to specify several commonalities, in respect of which they could be seen as both ‘social’ and ‘entrepreneurial’. Among the ‘social’ commonalities were that: 1) the output of the organisations founded by a social entrepreneur were social (promoting health, welfare and wellbeing); 2) that the individual core assets were forms of social capital; 3) the organisations founded were not shareholder owned; and 4) did not pursue profit as a main objective. In terms of ‘entrepreneurial’ commonalities, they: 1) excelled at spotting unmet social needs; 2) were mission rather than profit driven; and 3) were innovators.

Yet even those commonalities were not presented as strict conditions for the application of the concept. For example, Leadbeater’s definition states “Social entrepreneurs are *often* community entrepreneurs, attempting to regenerate the locality, estate or neighbourhood in which they are based. *However, not all* social entrepreneurs are based in geographically defined communities...” (Leadbeater, 1997:11, *emphasis added*). The open texture of the concept was furthered by Leadbeater’s assertion that social entrepreneurs could be located in the private, public and voluntary sectors (see Figure 7.1). However, this statement contradicted the definition which stated that the organisations founded by social entrepreneurs, “are social also in the sense that they are part of civil society, *rather than the state*. Indeed, they are innovative often because they are at odds with the central and local state” (Leadbeater, 1997: 11, *emphasis added*)

Figure 7. 1: Leadbeater’s “Source of social entrepreneurship”



Source: Leadbeater (1997)

Whatever actual influence Demos' had on Blair, it was clear that by the time Blair came to power in 1997, the concept of "social entrepreneurship" was on the New Labour policy radar, if not high on its agenda. Despite Leadbeater's report, at this stage the concept was not one which had been subjected to an elaborate labour of definition. It was only a general idea pointing loosely to innovative practices, addressing the kinds of social ills that might otherwise go unattended or fall under the auspices of traditional state welfare. The Guardian's 'Glossary for the 90's' captured the informality of the concepts' prevailing meaning with its casual commendatory entry:

“Social entrepreneur: One of the new breed of local activists who believe that energy and organisation can improve a community. To be found organising street patrols to liberate red-light districts, or running local exchange-trading schemes.”

However, in sharp contrast to the significant leeway in terms of the *criteria of application* and *range of reference*, the *speech act potential* of the concept was, by this stage, already firmly fixed. Whatever "social entrepreneurship" meant, it was unquestionably a term of immense commendation. It simply wasn't possible to describe an individual a social entrepreneur, and imply by that something condemnatory.

Table 7. 1: Leadbeater's act of definition (1997)

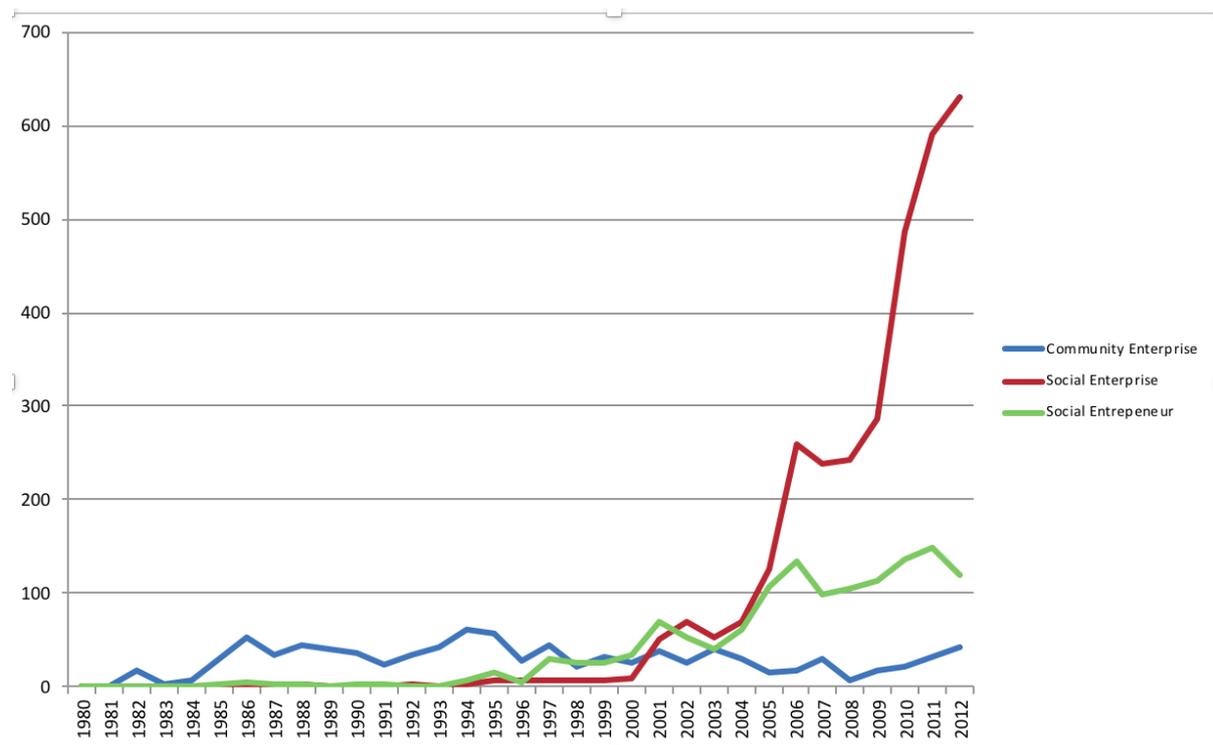
Analytic components	Description
Act	

<i>CoT</i>	*	[Invent] Formed a new term to describe an alleged new phenomenon
<i>SAP</i>	*	[Celebrate]
<i>CoA</i>	*	* These were presented as ‘commonalities’ as opposed to defining criteria. [Elevate] The output of the organisations founded by a social entrepreneur are social (promoting health, welfare and wellbeing) [Elevate] The individual core assets are forms of social capital [Elevate] The organisations founded are not shareholder owned [Elevate] They do not pursue profit as a main objective [Elevate] They excel at spotting unmet social needs [Elevate] Are mission rather than profit driven [Elevate] Are innovators
<i>RoR</i>	*	[Extend] Since the description was based on commonalities
Agent		A newly formed centre-left think tank.
Scene		A competitive market for policy ideas compatible with New Labour’s ‘Third Way’, spurred a wave of new centre-left think tanks. Social entrepreneurship presented as a policy solution to problems of the Welfare state. [Intention] To <i>announce, celebrate</i> and <i>describe</i> the emergence of a type of economic activity that could address alleged failings of the welfare state.
Purpose		[Motives] To strengthen DEMOS’ standing in the market for policy ideas by articulating an attractive and feasible policy idea.

This bespoke of an antecedent conceptual change, since up to that point the commendatory character of the concept was not a given. Before 1979, “entrepreneur” was often used as a term of condemnation, to describe the activities of exceptional and often obsessive individuals exemplified by Freddie Laker, which, was quite distinct from the “pinstriped paragons of decorum [and] gentlemanly good manners” synonymous with the British industrial elite (Hobbs, 1991: 107, cited in Burrows, 1991). That the speech act potential of the “entrepreneur”, had changed so markedly by the 1980s, owes much to the ideological effectiveness of Thatcherism and its goal of building a “spirit of enterprise” in the UK. Burrows (1991) observed that, “the discourse of the enterprise culture...presents itself as *the* justificatory language of social integration for a world characterized by an economic insecurity unknown in the more corporatist and collective work of the 1960s and much of the 1970s” (Burrows, 1991: 27). In short, it was only through the 1980s and 90s that the concepts of “enterprise’ and “entrepreneurship” acquired their commendatory speech act potential, so that by the time social entrepreneurship arrived, the ‘social’ prefix merely accentuated what was already one of the most ennobled terms in the British economic vocabulary.

At the end of the 1990s, all the signals suggested that New Labour would help to usher in the age of the social entrepreneur in the new millennium. However, at just the moment this seemed most likely to happen, the concept was suddenly eclipsed by “social enterprise”, a term which, while superficially sounding like an equivalent, was constituted of quite different conceptual attributes, picked out a different range of referents and was propounded by an entirely different coalition of actors.

Figure 7. 2: The rise of “social enterprise” in mainstream media



Source: Own research – Data drawn from DowJones/Factiva database

Understanding this sudden eclipse requires consideration of at least two important contemporaneous developments: 1) the decline and subsequent rebranding of the co-operative organisational form; and 2) the uptake of new nomenclature within an influential policy unit exploring the potential of small business in addressing social exclusion. Before examining those two moments, it is useful to first consider a parallel development, the ‘discovery’ of social enterprise by EMES, a network of European researchers. Although it is not clear to what extent the EMES’s work might have influenced the development of social enterprise in the UK, it is very instructive in revealing an alternative path of conceptual meaning and its associated act of definition. This was a path along which the UK never quite started, nor ever seriously threatened to do so.

7.2 EMES' theoretical definition for the E.U.

At roughly the same time that Leadbeater (1997) was discovering the “rise of the social entrepreneur” in the UK, a network of EU researchers (EMES) were discovering the “emergence of social enterprise” in Europe. The two processes of discovery followed entirely different logics, leading to the production of strongly contrasting definitions, both in content (which is not surprising given that the concepts of enterprise and entrepreneurship do carry different connotations) and form. It is instructive to consider the EMES definition, both because of what it reveals about the labour of definition generally, and also because it serves to illustrate a contrasting conceptual path to that pursued in the UK.

In the summer of 1996, an ambitious research project got under way with funding from the ‘Targeted Socio-Economic Research’ (TSER) programme of the European Commission (DGXII). It involved no less than 24 researchers working across 15 European nations (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, and the UK). The leading figures within this research network (especially Carlo Borzaga and Jacques Defourny), had developed considerable expertise, over many years, researching new economic initiatives that were neither a part of the public sector nor the sphere of classic private enterprise. Borzaga (1996), for example, had documented the emergence of ‘work integration initiatives’ in Italy, which were mainly organised into co-operatives. This new organisational form developed against a backdrop of insufficient provision of social services within the Italian welfare system. They came to be known as “social co-operatives” and, as early as 1991, were formally recognised and defined in law.

What brought the group together in the summer of 1996, was a collective sense that there was a newly emergent phenomenon, of which the Italian ‘social co-operative’ was a prime example, in this space between the public and private sphere, characterized by a new “entrepreneurial spirit” (Defourny, 2001:20). This was a development wholly to be welcomed. The scholars did not address themselves to an emerging phenomenon that troubled them, but rather one which was the source of excitement and intrigue, a sentiment shared by Directorate-General XII of the European Commission, since it supported the project with funding. Finding no existing term for this apparent confluence of activity, they simply made one up. The term they coined was “social

enterprise”²⁷. In this way, social enterprise was, from the beginning, intended as a term with significant commendatory *speech act potential* but which, otherwise, was largely void of meaning.

Having invented the concept and charged-up its *speech act potential*, it was then necessary to fill in the descriptive content, which, at that point, consisted of little more than a new entrepreneurial spirit in the space which was neither public nor private. The matter of how this was achieved is of considerable importance. The first observation is that, in contrast to Leadbeater’s definition of social entrepreneurship, which largely moulded the concept around a handful of exemplars, the EMES scholars largely moulded a concept around other “conceptual frameworks” (Defourny, 2001:2). These conceptual frameworks were, in turn, linked to different national traditions for categorising economic activity. Specifically, they fashioned a concept of social enterprise by parsing the concepts of ‘third sector’, ‘social economy’, ‘non-profit sector’, and ‘entrepreneurship’.

Understanding why they approached the concept in this way requires an understanding of the nature of the research project itself. The EMES research project was founded on the hypothesis that “social enterprises as new entities and/or as a new dynamic in existing third-sector organisations are likely to be found throughout the European Union” (Defourny, 2001:16)²⁸. However, the project immediately encountered the problem of ensuring that each national research team would be looking for evidence of (i.e. applying the concept) the same *things* in their respective national settings. More specifically, they needed to ensure control and consistency in respect of the *range of reference*. As Defourny recounts,

“the first step of the EMES work was to *define a set of common criteria* which would be used to identify social enterprises in each of the fifteen member states” (2001:16, *emphasis added*).

Since ‘third sector’ was not a concept used with consistency across the E.U. at that time, it would not have been appropriate to select a handful of exemplars from, say, Italy, and derive from these a set of attributes that could then be applied in the search within the UK; since, logically, all that could be found in that approach would be evidence of Italian-styled ‘social enterprises’ in the UK.

²⁷ “the aim of the present work is to expose and analyse a major impetus in this little-known area of our economies, i.e. the increasing numbers of economic initiatives we will call ‘social enterprises’, which bear witness to the development, throughout Europe, of a new entrepreneurial spirit focused on social aims” (Defourny, 2001:2).

²⁸ Anticipating the confirmation of their founding hypothesis, the research project was named “The emergence of social enterprise in Europe”, or EMES for short, and this also became the name of the group. The results appear as Borzaga and Defourny (2001) *The Emergence of Social Enterprise*.

Rather, to conduct the kind of mapping research that would prove or disprove their founding hypothesis, the concept needed to be formed from a synthesis of the conceptual equivalents (for ‘third sector’) across the E.U., rather than some that applied in only some part of it. To that end, they engaged in a highly intensional method of definition (not dissimilar to the Weberian method of creating an ideal-type), that fashioned *criteria of application* from a synthesis of four concepts: ‘third sector’, ‘social economy’, ‘non-profit sector’, and ‘entrepreneurship’).

Importantly, the selection of the first three concepts as the bases for the *criteria of application* was a judgement based less on the nature of the phenomenon, but more on the need for a common denominator across a network of researcher covering 15 EU nations. It was also a judgement that involved excluding some nation-specific concepts and giving priority to others. For example, the concept of ‘voluntary sector’, that would have been the closest U.K. equivalent to the notion of the ‘third sector’ (Spear, 2001), was absent at that stage. Moreover, when it came to defining those constitutive concepts, the selection of the *criteria of application* suggests that external factors were potentially influencing the judgement. For example, with regards to deriving *criteria of application* from the concept of “social economy”, the EMES network drew on the definition adopted by a Belgian research unit named the Conseil Wallon de l’Économie Sociale (1990), with whom Defourny had an existing professional affiliation (see Table 7.2).

Table 7. 2: CWES’ definition of “social economy”

“The social economy includes economic activities carried out by co-operatives and related enterprises, mutual societies and associations whose ethical stance is represented by the following principles:

- the aim of serving members or the community, rather than generating profit;
- an independent management;
- a democratic decision-making process;
- the primacy of people and labour over capital in the distribution of income”.

Source: (CWES 1990: 8, cited in Defourny, 2001:6)

It is important to note, however, that there would have been several alternative definitions of the “social economy” that might have served as the basis for deriving *criteria of application* for ‘social enterprise’. Defourny anticipates precisely that point, as he is moved to justify the selection of the CWES definition, by explaining that it was preferred because it combined the institutional (i.e. relating to legal form) and normative (i.e. relating the four principles) dimensions of the social economy, both of which were important to the theory they wished to build. But, even if that point

is accepted, one can simply ask why those normative commitments, and not some others, were chosen. The concept of the “non-profit sector” was articulated in a similar way; by deference to an authoritative definition with whom the network had some affiliation. Specifically, “non-profit sector” was understood in terms of the definition developed for the purpose of cross-national comparative research, by academics at the Johns Hopkins University (Salamon and Anheier, 1994; Salamon, *et al*, 1999). According to that definition, the non-profit sector consists of organisations with the characteristics set out in Table 7.3:

Table 7. 3: Johns Hopkins University’s definition of “non-profit sector”

“they are formal, i.e. they have a certain degree of institutionalisation, which generally presupposes a legal personality;

- they are private, i.e. distinct from both the state and those organisations issuing directly from the public authorities;
- they are self-governing, in the sense that they must have their own regulations and decision-making bodies;
- they cannot distribute profits to either their members, their directors or a set of ‘owners’. This ‘non-distribution constraint’ lies at the heart of all the literature on NPOs;
- they must involve some level of voluntary contribution in time (volunteers) and/or in money (donors), and they must be founded on the free and voluntary affiliation of their members”.

Source: Defourny (2001:6)

The concepts of ‘social economy’ and ‘non-profit organisation’ were not, however, considered co-extensive with the idea of ‘social enterprise’. There was something different, as Defourny (2001) put it, about “the realities we want to study” (2001:11). What was different, was that the entities they wished to describe through the term ‘social enterprise’ were, in contrast to that which was captured by the three older concepts, “real enterprises” (*ibid.*, 11). However, despite the reference to those ‘realities’, the construction of the *criteria of application* made no appeal to actual organisations. Instead, consistent with their pan-E.U.-ideal-type approach to definition, the enterprising dimension of the concept is set out through an interpretation of Schumpeter’s theorization of “entrepreneurship”. This is operating in the realm of ideas, not empirical realities. It is from this, that the EMES definition derived four ‘economic’ *criteria of application*. The final result was a definition of social enterprise that set out five social criteria and four economic criteria (see Table 7.4).

Table 7. 4: EMES’s definition

Economic criteria:

- A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services
- A high degree of autonomy
- A significant level of economic risk
- A minimum amount of paid work

Social criteria:

- An explicit aim to benefit the community
- An initiative launched by a group of citizens
- A decision-making power not based on capital ownership
- A participatory nature, which involves the persons affected by the activity
- Limited profit distribution

Source: (Defourny, 2001:18)

Given the importance of this ‘original’ act of definition in setting out the criteria of application it is worth considering each in terms of the explanation EMES provided. In terms of the economic criteria, the first criterion, “a continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services”, was intended to differentiate social enterprise from traditional non-profit organisations engaged primarily in advocacy activities or in the redistribution of financial flows (e.g. grant-giving foundations). In contrast, social enterprise involved producing and/or selling goods and services. Indeed, this was one the main reasons for existence. As such, grant-giving/ philanthropic foundations were not seen as being within the range of reference. Second, the criterion of “a high degree of autonomy” was intended to differentiate social enterprise from state agencies and projects ultimately controlled by a private parent firm. Social enterprise could receive public subsidies and private financial aid, but they must have the right to determine their own activities, including terminating their activity. Third, the criterion of “a significant level of economic risk” was intended to differentiate social enterprise from entities, such as public institutions, that had little or no responsibility for their own financial viability. Forth, the criterion of “a minimum amount of paid work” was intended to differentiate social enterprise from traditional non-profit associations which relied almost exclusively on voluntary labour. While social enterprise could involve some voluntary work, there would be a minimum level of paid workers (precisely where the ‘minimum’ lay was not stated).

In terms of the social criteria, the criterion of “an explicit aim to benefit the community” was intended to differentiate social enterprise from activities, such as CSR programmes, where serving the community or a specific group of people was only a secondary aim. The criterion of “an

initiative launched by a group of citizens” was intended to link social enterprise to collective dynamics involving people belonging to a community as opposed to a corporate CSR programme. The criterion of “a decision-making power not based on capital ownership” was intended to reflect the ideal of ‘one member, one vote’, as opposed to a governing body, based of capital shares, with ultimate decision-making rights. The criterion of “a participatory nature, which involves the persons affected by the activity” referred to a democratic management style, with representation and participation of customers and other stakeholders. Finally, the criterion of “limited profit distribution” was intended to allow for the inclusion of co-operatives where profits could be distributed only to a limited extent, thus avoiding a profit-maximising behaviour.

Importantly, the consequence of the above maneuvers, was to place ‘social enterprise’ firmly within a tradition of non-state/non-private enterprising organisational forms, that can be traced to the 19th century (Sepulveda, 2015). As Sepulveda (2015) explains, the process of industrialization linked to the advancement of capitalism had led to widespread social unrest. In this context, relatively novel forms of organizing such as ‘charities’, ‘voluntary organisations’, and ‘co-operatives’ arose as a means of improving the living and working conditions of societies’ most vulnerable members, and to promote a more equitable distribution of reward and wealth. This phase of social development constituted the bases of the ‘social economy’ (Sepulveda, 2015). The organisations constitutive of the social economy did not seek to exit the market, but rather to work within it, in a way that was less driven by capitalist principles of profit maximization and capital accumulation. As such, market-based commercial activity was always a central feature of the social economy, as this was understood to guarantee the sustainability and independence of the organisations (Sepulveda, 2015). Indeed, certain capitalistic practices, such as the redistribution of surpluses to the owners or ‘beneficiaries’, were, not only permitted, but central. However, these practices were attached to significantly altered underlying principles. A central feature of the Co-operative form, for example, was distribution of surpluses to a typically wide membership base. However, the mission to lead an economically successful organisation was subservient to the mission of a thriving community of members.

Table 7. 5: EMES’ act of definition (1996)

Analytic components	Description
Act	
<i>CoT</i> *	[Invent] Formed a new term to describe an alleged new phenomenon

<i>SAP</i>	*	[Intesify Celebrate] Celebrate the emergence of a new spirt of enterprise in the 'third sector'
<i>CoA</i>	*	[Elevate] A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services [Elevate] A high degree of autonomy [Elevate] A significant level of economic risk [Elevate] A minimum amount of paid work [Elevate] An explicit aim to benefit the community [Elevate] An initiative launched by a group of citizens [Elevate] A decision-making power not based on capital ownership [Elevate] A participatory nature, which involves the persons affected by the activity [Elevate] Limited profit distribution
<i>RoR</i>	*	[Broaden] The intention was for the RoR to be broad
Agent		European research network
Scene		The European Commission, DG XII, had published a call for proposals on ‘Research on social integration and social exclusion in Europe’. Social exclusion construed many in terms of exclusion from the labour market.
Purpose		[Intention] To <i>announce, celebrate</i> and <i>measure</i> the emergence of a type of economic activity that could address social exclusion. [Motives] To remain at the forefront of research and to secure ongoing funding for research.

Sepulveda (2015) makes an important claim that the contemporary concept of ‘social enterprise’, “was born within this tradition and was initially associated with the co-operative movement” (Sepulveda, 2015:846). Of crucial significance, according to Sepulveda, was the emergence of ‘social co-operatives in Italy in late 1980s, which were a direct response to the problems pursuant to a rapid increase in unemployment. It is for this reason, Sepulveda claims that,

“One distinctive feature of the social enterprise definition... is that the ‘social’ part of social enterprise concept must be built into any economic activity or, in other words, the very production of goods and services itself constitutes the way in which the social mission is pursued” (2015:847).

In the course of making this argument, Sepulveda refers frequently to a number of influential scholars (Carlo Borzaga; Jacques Defourny; Marthe Nyssens) who, under the auspices of EMES, not only conducted the first large scale research project on “social enterprise”, but, through the same project, claimed to have discovered it. Although Sepulveda (2015) links the scholars to the concept of social enterprise, he does not draw out the contribution of their act of definition to its actual formation. That is precisely what this section has attempted to evidence. Specifically, it explicitly attributes to these scholars an important act of definition which served, both to place the

concept in the consciousness of other scholars, EU policy makers and practitioners; and to set it within a tradition in which the 'social' was imbricated in the mode of production of goods and services *per se*, as per the co-operative tradition.

In summary, EMES coined "social enterprise" as a new term, infusing it with immense commendatory *speech act potential*. They then created a definition that specified, in relatively clear and precise terms, the *criteria of application*. It did so, to ensure that the members of the research network would proceed to research empirical entities (a range of reference) with the consistency prerequisite to comparative research. In establishing those criteria, EMES took relatively little account of the actual character of the organisations they sought to describe, a move that was based on the claim that the phenomenon to which they were referring was newly emergent. The organisations and practices with which the research project was concerned, as Defourny (2001) was keen to assert, were "new entities" (2001:11). However, if the UK phase of the research project is used as a test case, all of the organisations actually identified had been around for several years and were known in terms of a preexisting terminology. Therefore, in an important sense, the phenomenon that was newly emergent was as much conceptual as material. The resultant definition, which has all the hallmarks of a Weberian 'ideal-type', was important in establishing the intellectual credibility of the concept and linking its conceptual roots to a tradition in which the 'social' was imbricated in the very production of goods and services.

7.3 SEL's uneasy first definition

As noted above (section 7.1), towards the end of the 1990s the concept of social entrepreneurship had found favour within the Labour party. When the Commission for Social Justice published its final report, the Guardian noted that, "There are interesting and innovative proposals to boost the effective demand for unskilled, especially male, labour. The commission looks to a whole new network of social entrepreneurs using partly private and partly public finance to employ unskilled men to do socially useful tasks" (The Guardian, 1994). Shortly after that, in 1995, Tony Blair attended an event at Whitehall's Banqueting House, the purpose of which was the promotion of "social entrepreneurship". Other senior figures in the Party were following suit. In 1997, Michael Young, one of the UK Labour Party's most admired members, renowned for having launched the Open University, announced his intention to open a School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE), saying "The phrase 'social entrepreneur' can be dismissed as buzzwords doomed to die or hailed as an

exciting idea with a long life ahead of it. I am loading (or nudging) the dice in favour of the second view by planning a School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE)”.

Despite the hype, it was not social entrepreneurship, but rather “social enterprise”, that came to predominate the policy scene following the Commission for Social Justice. Interestingly, Teasdale (2012) notes that although the Commission for Social Justice’s report nowhere mentioned “social enterprise”, it provided the preconditions, for “a small number of practitioners to use the language of New Labour to push *social enterprise* into the policy arena as a response to market failure” (Teasdale, 2012:108, *emphasis added*). So, what accounts for the sudden eclipse of social entrepreneurship by social enterprise? What or who pushed concept of “social enterprise” in this way and why? One potential answer is found in the earlier efforts of Social Enterprise London (SEL), an organisation which resulted from a merger of two co-operative development agencies.

The *scene* in which this happened is significant. Despite the important role envisaged for worker co-operatives and housing co-operatives in the Commission for Social Justice, and despite the burgeoning social co-operative scene elsewhere in the EU, the 1990s, in the U.K., saw the co-operative movement experience a sharp decline. This was symbolized, if not actually hastened, by Blair’s removal of common ownership from *Clause Four* (commonly called the ‘socialist clause’) of the Party’s constitution. As Kavanagh (2004) notes, Blair and his New Labour allies, considered as antithetical, the “neo-Marxist phrasing of *Clause Four* (with its commitment to the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange) and the rhetoric of economic planning” (Kavanagh, 2004:322). What New Labour felt it needed at that moment, was to be “more positive about the role of the market and of business” (*ibid.*).

This was a significant change from the decade before, particularly in London, where co-operatives had thrived. Between 1970-1980, worker’s co-operatives had grown spectacularly under Ken Livingstone’s leadership of the Greater London Council (GLC), which had invested heavily in co-operative development. However, by the mid to late 1980s the “rate of formation of new workers’ co-operatives was not only falling but had dropped to a level where new registrations were barely keeping pace with the closure of established co-operatives” (Brown, 2002). This downturn placed increasing pressure on the panoply of support organizations that had sprung up to serve the co-operative movement, either through advocacy or training of members.

This was precisely the dilemma faced by two London based agencies – London Co-operative Training (LCT) and London Industrial Common Ownership Movement (LICOM), in 1998, when it was apparent that the London Boroughs Grant Unit would no longer fund them both. A meeting was held, in April 1998, whereupon the two organisations decided to merge. As one of the central figures, Jonathan Bland, recalls, the merger was principally a “rebranding exercise” for which finding a new, compelling name was a central element. Several options were on the table, including variations on the theme of co-operative. Also on the table, though in completely different conceptual register, was ‘social enterprise’. No consensus could be achieved within the larger group so, after hours of deadlock, the decision was handed to a steering group for the new organization. The key decision maker, Malcolm Corbett, was the chair of the steering group (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2011). Corbett had close contact with, and was strongly swayed by, Pauline Green, a MEP with experience of European trends in co-operative development. She was elected President of the 1997 Co-operative Congress, and between 1994-1999 served as Leader of the Parliamentary Group of the Party of European Socialists.

As noted above, at that time there were several innovative co-operative models arising across Europe. Perhaps the best known was in Italy where, in 1991, a new legal form was created for “social co-operatives”. Similarly, in 1993, new regional laws were brought into force in Spain, which recognised Social Initiative Co-operative. In Belgium, too, the concept of “company with a social purpose” was formalized in 1995, and soon after that Portugal and Greece legislated for a “social solidarity co-operative”, and a “social co-operatives with limited liability”, respectively (Defourny, 2001: 14). Across Europe, branches of the co-operative movement were gearing themselves towards the redress of social problems, typically those stemming from labour market failures. For Corbett, and others in the steering group, it would have been clear that the prospects for their new organisation were brightest where they linked themselves directly to the amelioration of social ills and/or labour market failures. Bland, a central figure in the steering group and its first CEO, confirms that such a view applied in his own case,

"In 1998, after spending five years exploring the power of co-operatives and other forms of social enterprise in Continental Europe, I became convinced that businesses could deliver on growing aspirations for social and environmental change – while still being financially successful" (Bland, 2007: 4).

Although much of the innovation in Europe concerned social co-operatives, and although their own background and firm-specific assets were concentrated around the co-operative form of organisation, the feeling within the steering group was that retaining terms like ‘common ownership’ and ‘co-operative’, within the name of the new organisation, would undermine the strategic rationale of the merger. They sought a name that marked a symbolic distance to those concepts and traditions. In searching for an alternative name, it would have been difficult not to notice the rising esteem of social entrepreneurship, which was commending business-like approaches for social ends. However, the connotation of a single individual jarred with the more collective basis of co-operativism. They did not wish to jettison this tradition, but nor did they wish to espouse it too visibly. What they needed was a term that signalled the kind of business-like approach to social problems linked with social entrepreneurship, but which could accommodate the organisational form and traditional principles of the co-operative movement. “Social enterprise”, one of the options on the table, commended itself on those levels.

Specifically, ‘social enterprise’ could easily be made to embrace the ‘trading’ and ‘business’ attributes of the co-operative movement, that the two organisations it had previously served, without giving off too strong a co-operative scent. Bland’s own account of the event again supports this view,

"The French concept of “social economy” was being used in the UK at the time (1997), mainly in relation to the certain organisations funded by the EU structural funds. However, SEL made a deliberate choice to use the term “social enterprise”; to highlight the business nature of the organisations and the achievement of social aims through trading in the market." (Bland 2010:19).

It was in this context, that the steering group broke the deadlock, by agreeing to name the new organisation “*Social Enterprise London*”. Importantly, however, the use of the concept at that point was not one based on a substantive theory of social enterprise as such. It could hardly have been, since no significant theory had yet been developed. It was a concept, therefore, largely devoid of descriptive content. Nor did it carry theoretical weight. Indeed, that was precisely what made it fit-for-purpose. According to Brown, a freelance trainer and consultant involved with the two organizations at the time, there was little discussion about what the term meant; what mattered most was that it chimed well with the rapidly popularizing notion of “social economy” in the EU funding, while also allowing for an ease of association with “enterprise culture” that New Labour

had spoken so fervently in support of. The appropriation of the ‘social enterprise’ concept was, Teasdale (2011: 109) has concluded, a strategic act designed to “capture public and political interest in the work of co-operative development agencies without alienating people through the language of common ownership”.

If it is true to say that SEL had no substantive theory of social enterprise, it is even truer to say they had no formal definition either. All that was determined at that stage, was that social enterprise was intended to be used as a term of commendation (*speech act potential*), and that, whatever else might fall within the *range of reference*, co-operatives were firmly in there. In actual fact, SEL adopted a generally ‘anti-definitional’ stance (see Section 7.7), seeing definitions as, at best, pointless and, at worst, dangerously divisive. They were, however, compelled to issue a definition when, in January 1999, they held an inaugural conference based on the theme of ‘*Social Inclusion*’, the pretext of which was the contribution which social enterprise could make to tackling the problems of social exclusion and urban decay.

Holding the conference was, as before, a strategic move: designed to link social enterprise to the issue of social exclusion, which was rapidly emerging as one of New Labour’s major policy concerns (SEU, 1998). In November 1998, the Social Exclusion Unit had set up a unique Policy Action Team, known as PAT3, (the composition of PAT3 is detailed in Section 7.5), with the remit of exploring how *enterprise* could contribute to reducing social exclusion in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of the UK. At that time, members of PAT3 were travelling the country, meeting experts and holding seminars, in pursuit of ideas and examples for its policy recommendations. Social Enterprise London were aware of that fact and saw an opportunity. They extended an invitation to Patricia Hewitt, Champion Minister for PAT3 and, later, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, to provide the keynote speech at their inaugural conference. She agreed and attendance at the event massively exceeded expectations. Bland (2010) has noted how, following her keynote speech, Hewitt became “a powerful champion of the social enterprise movement” (2010:21) and that as a result, “Interest quickly grew in HM Treasury, which had been tasked to find new ways to encourage enterprise in disadvantaged communities” (2010:21).

Prior to the conference, SEL had strategically widened its focus to include broader ‘social economy’ organizations, particularly those dealing with community regeneration, since, alongside worker co-operatives, the Commission on Social Justice (1994) had identified a raft of non-state/non-private sector organisations, such as development trusts, credit unions, intermediate

labour market organisations, and even Local Exchange Trading Schemes, as playing a potentially significant role in social renewal. From the rich array of organisational forms in the UK, SEL embraced, co-operatives, community businesses, credit unions, social firms and intermediate labour market projects; but neglected voluntary organisations, development trusts, the trading arms of charities, and social businesses (Brown, 2003; Teasdale, 2012). That somewhat arbitrary act of inclusion and exclusion, which is likely to have been based on a strategic calculation for how best to serve their interests, led to some conceptual awkwardness, which showed through in its first attempted definition.

Specifically, when eventually pressed into defining social enterprise, SEL was caught between Scylla and Charybdis. First, it couldn't simply define social enterprise as synonymous with the co-operative model as that would have undermined the rebranding strategy. Yet, it didn't wish to jettison the co-operative form altogether, since that was the group's core expertise and, one would presume, embodied principles to which individual members were genuinely committed. Second, the task of definition was made significantly more challenging by the incorporation of such a diverse and disparate range of organisational types (co-operatives, community businesses, credit unions, social firms and intermediate labour market projects;) under the label of social enterprise. The problem was not just that these types were hugely heterogeneous, but they were also similar in important respects to the types that SEL had chosen not to embrace (e.g. voluntary organisations, development trusts, the trading arms of charities, and social businesses). Having arbitrarily drawn a line in the conceptual terrain for entirely strategic reasons, the best definition SEL could manage in that situation was the following vague formulation:

Table 7. 6: SEL's pre-conference definition of social enterprise

Social Enterprises are businesses that do more than make money; they have social as well as economic aims and form the heart of what is now coming to be known as the "Social Economy". Aims include the creation of employment, stable jobs, access to work for disadvantaged groups, the provision of locally based services and training and personal development opportunities.

Source: (SEL, cited in Brown, 2003)

According to Brown (2003), this definition, perhaps in recognition of its rather uninformative character, though in-line with the strategy of building a membership base, was supplemented by a list of types of social enterprise organisations that included co-operatives, community businesses, credit unions, social firms and intermediate labour market projects.

The *speech act potential* is clearly intended as commendatory. However, viewed in terms of *criteria of application*, this definition could scarcely have been more general. It provided only two *criteria of application*: 1) having social and economic aims; and 2) being within the ‘social economy’. Those criteria could be applied to the various organisational types that it had incorporated under the banner of social enterprise, but there was nothing that would prevent the label being applied equally well to many other activities, including the organisational types that had not been incorporated. Indeed, strictly speaking, these *criteria of application* would permit a *range of reference* covering any ‘business’ within the social economy. As we shall note below, PAT3 appear to have largely followed SEL’s conceptualization in articulating their definition, since they conflated the two concepts of social enterprise and social economy. Indeed, Teasdale (2012) even notes that PAT3 drew on SEL materials on social enterprise to the extent of “paragraphs closely resembling the report from SEL’s first conference” (Teasdale, 2012:109, citing Brown, 2003).

Table 7. 7: SEL’s act of definition (1999)

Analytic components	Description
Act	
<i>CoT</i>	-
<i>SAP</i>	* [Celebrate] Positioned as a solution to social exclusion
<i>CoA</i>	[Elevate] Social as well as economic aims [Elevate] Located in the ‘social economy’ [Diminish by neglect] A high degree of autonomy [Diminish by neglect] A significant level of economic risk * [Diminish by neglect] A minimum amount of paid work [Diminish by neglect] An initiative launched by a group of citizens [Diminish by neglect] A decision-making power not based on capital ownership [Diminish by neglect] A participatory nature, which involves the persons affected by the activity [Diminish by neglect] Limited profit distribution
<i>RoR</i>	* [Broaden] To include co-operatives, community businesses, credit unions, social firms and intermediate labour market projects.
Agent	A newly formed representative body.
Scene	Decline in the fortune of co-operativism; Immediate threat to the survival of the organisation; Emerging interest in social co-operatives in Europe; Emerging interest in small business led solutions to social exclusion in the UK.
Purpose	[Intention] To provide a characterization of social enterprise that was sufficiently informative; which highlighted the policy relevance (to social

exclusion and community regeneration); and to ensure that a predetermined range of existing organisational types were included.

[Motives] To strengthen their membership base and standing in the emerging space for information about social enterprise

In summary, SEL adopted ‘social enterprise’ as a new term for describing and commending the co-operative model which, as a merger of two co-operative development agencies, they had traditionally supported, had built up expertise to do so, and had embodied normative commitments to. Their definition of the concept, which betrayed their explicit antipathy towards definition *per se* (see Section 7.7), faced the challenge of setting out *criteria of application* that covered co-operatives, without making that too obvious or exclusive, since that would undermine the broader rebranding exercise. On the other hand, it faced the challenge of identifying *criteria of application*, in virtue of which the concept could be aptly applied to other organisational types (community businesses, credit unions, social firms and intermediate labour market projects), that they had opted to embrace, equally strategically, to strengthen their position in the context of deep funding cuts to co-operatives and strong funding prospects around the issue of social exclusion and community regeneration.

The suggestion that SEL’s uneasy definition of “social enterprise” was partly a result of their own precarious position as a co-operative development agency, can be given a degree of support by considering the parallel act of definition by a senior Labour Party figure, Baroness Glenys Thornton, who was invited to join SEL’s newly established board.

7.4 Baroness Thornton’s pseudo-lexical definition for the Lords

Baroness Glenys Thornton joined the management board of SEL in November 1998. Not only was she a life-long supporter of the co-operative movement, having become a co-operative member at the age of 16, she also chaired the Co-operative Retail Services London Political Committee, and, by 1998, enjoyed direct access to the highest reaches of government. The point in stating her values and credentials is to suggest that she, unlike SEL, was not in position of having to rebrand herself or tone down her co-operative values. Indeed, her professional standing depended largely in being vocal in her support of co-operative principles. That much was clear when, one week after her appointment, in December 1998, Thornton addressed the House of Lords with a speech that not only mentioned “social enterprise” but unreservedly endorsed it, by describing it as the “modern expression of the principles upon which the early co-operatives were formed” (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453).

The primary purpose of her speech was to appeal to the Lords to consider favourably an overhaul of the legal framework (the Credit Unions Act 1979) for Credit Unions, which she argued was currently forcing low lending limits and short pay back periods. Thornton sought to engender a favourable attitude towards her cause by linking credit unions to social enterprise, and social enterprise to the process of modernising the country's institutions, public services and its economy. Existing research points to PAT3's (1999) report as the first moment in which social enterprise really appeared in UK political discourse (Sepulveda, 2015; Teasdale, 2012; Alcock, 2010), but Baroness Thornton's explanation of the concept to the second chamber of the UK Parliament took place almost a full year earlier. Indeed, in the course of her speech, she even suggests that social enterprise was perhaps a more prominent part of UK policy prior to PAT3 than standardly reported, since she notes her delight that the Government had "taken such an enlightened view of the value and place of social enterprise in our society and has recognized the growing contribution of that sector" (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453).

In any case, the content of Baroness Thornton's speech suggests that, for SEL, the concept of social enterprise was indeed, at that moment, a different term by which they could refer to and continue to advance the co-operative model. However, whereas SEL exhibited considerable reticence in making this referential link too obvious, Baroness Thornton appears unperturbed. "The modernization of our society and economy", Thornton stated boldly in the opening lines of her speech, "must involve the development and growth of new kinds of enterprises, of new ways of doing business, and *the adaptation of old ways to meet new needs*" (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453, emphasis added). It was on this point, specifically on the adaptation of old ways to meet new needs, she explained, that she wished to address her remarks to the Lords. Anticipating that the concept would have been relatively unknown to her audience, she states, "It might be helpful to some if I describe more fully *what is meant by the term 'social enterprise'*" (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453, *emphasis added*), and from there proceeded to define 'social enterprise' in a way that might have stood equally well as a definition of a co-operative:

Table 7. 8: Baroness Thornton's definition

<p>"social enterprises are self-help organisations which bring people and communities together to run their own businesses with the twin aims of economic empowerment and social gain. Specifically, they are democratic in practice and principle; they have explicit social and economic aims and values; and they earn income for their own financial independence and viability".</p>

Source: Baroness Thornton, B. (2008) Lords Hansard text for 1 Dec 1998 (181201-07)

The purpose of Baroness Thornton’s definition was to provide information about the concept, both in terms of its standard meaning and the kinds of things to which the concept could be applied. As noted above (Section 2.2), reference to ‘standard meaning’, or the pretension to lexical definition, is always a case of pointing to what a concept means for a particular user group. In this case, the user group was the one to which she was affiliated, SEL. It should also be noted that Thornton made no attempt to disguise the fact that her definition of social enterprise was essentially an expression of the meaning of co-operatives, since she elaborated the definition by stating, “Those who are familiar with the Rochdale Pioneers and the formation of the early co-operatives will recognise those aims as being the modern expression of the principles upon which the early co-operatives were formed” (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453).

In much the same way that SEL added a list of types to their pre-conference definition, Thornton lists some examples saying,

“The examples of social enterprise today...[are]... common ownerships, worker co-operatives and other types of employee-owned businesses...community-based businesses where local people and organisations have got together and set up a trading organisation managed by them to provide services and create jobs... housing co-operatives in providing affordable homes for people who have difficulty in buying or renting... social firms or projects set up to support the intermediate labour market...LETs (local exchange and trading schemes)” (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453).

Having enumerated those ‘subtypes’ of social enterprise she finished by noting that instances of the definition might also include: “the [Co-operative Retail Services], the [Co-operative Wholesale Society], the Co-operative Bank, the Unity Trust Bank and Co-operative Insurance, Travel and Funeral Services” (HL Deb 1 Dec 1998: Column 453).

Table 7. 9: Baroness Thornton’s act of definition (1996)

Analytic components	Description
Act	
CoT	-

<i>SAP</i>	*	[Celebrate] Celebrate and appeal to support social enterprise in regulation passing through the House of Lords
<i>CoA</i>	*	[Elevate] Democratic in practice and principle [Elevate] Explicit social and economic aims and values [Elevate] Earn income for their own financial independence and viability [Diminish by Neglect] Non-profit distribution [Diminish by Neglect] A significant level of economic risk [Diminish by Neglect] A minimum amount of paid work
<i>RoR</i>	*	[Extend] To include credit unions
Agent		Member of the House of Lords; member of the Labour Party; a life-long supporter of the co-operative movement; former chair of the Co-operative Retail Services London Political Committee; on the management board of SEL.
Scene		Treasury has published a consultation paper proposing amendments to the 1979 Credit Unions Act. Thornton urged for changes to the legal framework for credit unions so as to ease restrictions on lending limits.
Purpose		[Intention] To <i>celebrate</i> and <i>define</i> social enterprise; to highlight its relevance to policy around social exclusion'; to ensure that credit unions were considered within the range of reference of social enterprise. [Motives] To further the interests of SEL and the Association of British Credit Unions, whom she was a representative.

Whether or not this is the first explicit definition of social enterprise in British politics, it is indicative of a subtle change in the way the concept was positioned relative to the tradition of co-operativism. Teasdale (2012) teases out this nuance in his analysis of how the traditional 'capitalist alternative' discourse of co-operativism was softened towards one of 'amelioration of market failures'. Perhaps this is what Thornton was pointing at when she spoke of adapting 'old ways to meet new needs'. The next time the concept was to be uttered in a clear political context came with the publication of PAT3's report on *Enterprise and Social Exclusion* (HM Treasury, 1999).

7.5 PAT3's elevation of the 'business-like' character of social enterprise

Following its creation a year earlier (1997), the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) announced (in Sept 1998) the establishment of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR), a massive policy-making scheme, backed by a £800 million budget to be spread over three years, aimed at tackling social exclusion. Organisationally, the core feature of the SEU strategy was the creation of 18 Policy Action Teams (PATs), that were expected to provide policy recommendations, along with clearly allocated lines of responsibility, and deadlines for delivery. The PATs were novel in

the extent to which they included non-civil servants (Newman, 2001) and even of the views of experts with no formal role.

One of the policy action teams, PAT3, was exemplary of the new, open texture policy making. A third of its membership was made up of ‘external members’ (non-civil servants considered experts in the field of policy under consideration), while a total of 7 government departments were also represented. Among the members of the team appear some names that feature heavily both prior to and after 1999 in connection with social enterprise. Geoff Mulgan, who was now directing the No.10 Policy Unit, had previously co-founded and directed Demos, the think tank that had implored Blair to back social entrepreneurship; Ed Mayo was Executive Director of the New Economic Foundation, a centre-left think tank that, in 1997, had funded and published Stephen Thake and Simon Zadek’s research into community-based social entrepreneurs. Likewise, Andrew Robinson, had founded Community Links and later became the head of community finance at NatWest. In October 1998 he co-authored a book on “social enterprise zones”, a concept which he had helped develop during his time at Community Links. It is also significant that Patricia Hewitt, the Champion Minister for PAT3, was already closely linked to Social Enterprise London. In short, given its composition (See Table 7.10) it is not a surprise that social enterprise would have been high on its agenda.

Table 7. 10: Composition of PAT3

Member	Role within PAT3	External Status
Patricia Hewitt MP	Champion Minister (September 1998-July 1999)	Economic Secretary to the Treasury
Stephen Timms MP	Champion Minister (August 1999 onwards)	Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Philip Rutnam	Policy Action Team Chair	Head of Enterprise Team, HM Treasury
Amanda Jordan	External Member	Head of Corporate Affairs, NatWest Group, and Adviser Social Exclusion Unit
Ed Mayo	External Member	Executive Director, New Economics Foundation
Andrew Robinson	External Member	Manager, Community Enterprise, NatWest Group
Caroline Shah	External Member	Business Analyst and Consultant
Richard Street	External Member	Princes Youth Business Trust
Museji Takolia	External Member	Management Consultant and Chairman, Centre for Employment and Enterprise Development (The CEED Charity)
Sue Walsh	External Member	Watford Borough Council

Atul Patel	Civil Service Official	Social Exclusion Unit
Geoff Mulgan	Civil Service Official	No.10 Policy Unit
Martin Hurst	Civil Service Official	Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions
Amanda Brooks	Civil Service Official	Department of Trade and Industry
Maria Kenyon	Civil Service Official	Department of Trade and Industry
Mark Smith	Civil Service Official	Department of Trade and Industry
Julie Braithwaite	Civil Service Official	Department of Trade and Industry
Eric Galvin	Civil Service Official	Department for Education and Employment
David Alexander	Civil Service Official	HM Treasury
Daniel Storey	Civil Service Official	HM Treasury
Ben Gales	Civil Service Official	HM Treasury
Tim Sharp	Civil Service Official	HM Treasury
David Smith	Civil Service Official (partial)	Department of Trade and Industry
Sue Robinson	Civil Service Official (partial)	Department for Education and Employment
Gavin Bowen	Civil Service Official (partial)	Department of Social Security
David Reardon	Civil Service Official (partial)	Social Exclusion Unit
Matthew Waite	Civil Service Official (partial)	HM Treasury

PAT3 was set up in November 1998 and tasked with providing “an action plan with targets to encourage more successful business start-ups in poor neighbourhoods” (HM Treasury, 1999: 6). Importantly, the remit did not mention social enterprise, so its eventual prominence within its report (*Enterprise and Social Exclusion*), calls for consideration. As noted above, one plausible explanation is in terms of the composition of the team, many of whom were aware of the concept of social enterprise. Another explanation is that SEL were successful in presenting social enterprise as an enterprise-based approach for realising social inclusion and, as such, presented a solution to the policy challenge facing PAT3. Given that Patricia Hewitt endorsed the concept of “social enterprise” at the SEL conference, the link between PAT3 and SEL was clearly strong.

Despite PAT3’s distinguished personnel, its definition of social enterprise appears, in retrospect, somewhat limited, if not confused. Following on from SEL’s approach (see section 7.3), PAT3 approached social enterprise via the concept of ‘social economy’, which it defined (see Table 7.11), as organisations independent of the state, trading for a social purpose and not distributing profit. Although this was also a somewhat truncated definition of the social economy, since it neglected several characteristics traditionally attributed to the ‘social economy’, it served as the basis for

defining social enterprise. It did so, however, in a way which largely conflated the two, just as SEL had done earlier, though in a less explicit way. Specifically, they asserted that social enterprises “together make up the social economy” (HM Treasury, 1999:105).

Table 7. 11: PAT3’s definitions of “social economy” and “social enterprise”

“those organisations who are independent of the state and provide services, goods, and trade for a social purpose and are non-profit distributing. The sector is funded, and achieves viability, through a mix of trade, income generation and grants. The sector needs to make profits (or at least avoid losses) to be viable, but profits are not sought for distribution to shareholders.” (HM Treasury, 1999:105, underline added)

...

“Social enterprises, which together make up the social economy, are in most ways like any other private sector businesses, but they are geared towards social regeneration and help, rather than simply the generation of profits. As such social enterprises do not fall within the standard definitions of private or public sector enterprises”. (HM Treasury, 1999:105, underline added)

Source: HM Treasury (1999) *Enterprise and Social Exclusion*, NSNR Policy Action Team (PAT) 3 Report, London: HMSO.

The result was to define social enterprise as, essentially, businesses geared towards social regeneration. But the conflation with social economy made it unclear whether, a) independence from the state, b) trade-based viability, and c) distribution driven profit making, were defining criterion of both or only of social economy organisations. Even if those criteria were intended to cover both, it still left the definition significantly more open than that espoused by EMES. In particular, in contrast to EMES, PAT3’s definition of social enterprise did not require social enterprise to be an initiative launched by a group of citizens; nor to have a decision-making power not based on capital ownership; nor a participatory governance structure. In this way, PAT3 took substantial steps away from the social economy tradition, while simultaneously conflating social enterprise with the social economy.

It is also important to note that PAT3 exhibited a slightly altered *speech act potential*. Being a social enterprise was not necessarily a cause of commendation in itself. Rather, this attitude was reserved for those social enterprises that survived the discipline of the market. For example, though it explicitly recommended that social enterprises be “recognised as a group of businesses deserving support” (HM Treasury, 1999:113), it moderated this with the caveat that they should be treated “just like any other” (ibid.) business, and that meant expecting and accepting that “some will fail” (ibid.). Even though social enterprise might make a “positive contribution to the regeneration of

deprived areas by helping to provide employment, goods, services and more generally build social capital” (ibid.), the government should not “act to support inefficient social enterprises” (ibid.). Maintenance of market discipline was, therefore, seen as a greater good than supporting social enterprise. For PAT3, social enterprise was, essentially, a small business for whom profit making was mandatory, and only distinguished from other small businesses by the degree (which was unspecified) to which it focused on social regeneration relative to maximizing profit.

Whatever the reason for the appearance of social enterprise in the context of PAT3’s report, the fact that it did appear here, in a Policy Action Team dominated by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and HM Treasury, is of crucial significance, since the definition, and the policies recommended for the advancement of social enterprise, heavily shaped its initial points of contact with the machinery of the state. For example, the Small Business Service (SBS), newly established within the DTI, was handed responsibility to support social enterprises in the same way as other businesses. Likewise, a Social Enterprise Unit (SEnU) was established within the DTI. The fact that primary responsibility was handed to the SBS, itself a new unit within the DTI, and with a point to prove over Business Links (set up by the previous Conservative government), as opposed to the Active Communities Unit in the Home Office, helped load the dice in favour of a small-business conceptualization and the subsequent insertion of commercial elements into the criteria of application.

Moreover, in addition to recognizing social enterprise as a distinctive group, PAT3 issued a series of recommendations. First, to build the potential of social enterprise, SBS was required to conduct a review of legal structures with a view to simplifying them. This was to be completed by mid-2000. Second, the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were tasked with including ‘social enterprise’ in their Regional Economic Strategies with immediate and ongoing effect. Third, the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) was told, first, to develop guidelines on evaluating both financial and social criteria and, second, to research the potential for a “social labelling” scheme analogous to the Fairtrade label. This was aimed at addressing the lack of demand for the goods and services that social enterprises were bringing to market.

The final set of recommendations concerned finance. Due to their potential contribution to economic regeneration, social enterprise was to be explicitly included in funding regimes such as the Single Regeneration Budget. However, in keeping with the ‘no special treatment’ stance, PAT3 warned that grant funding should be used judiciously to avoid a culture of dependency. The

distinct preference was for mainstream finance such as loans as opposed to grants. It was held that the likelihood of a social enterprise actually getting a normal commercial loan would be “considerably enhanced if they can also demonstrate that they are able to service debts” (PAT3, 1999: 115). To that end, PAT3 recommended “all interested parties” to “achieve a change in culture of social enterprises and voluntary sector, away from grants towards loans” (PAT3, 1999: 117). The Local Investment Fund (LIF), an organisation set up by BiTC, NatWest and DETR, to support community enterprise, was identified as a model for providing loan finance.

Table 7. 12: PAT3’s act of definition (1999)

Analytic components	Description
Act	
<i>CoT</i>	-
<i>SAP</i>	* [Celebrate]
<i>CoA</i>	[Elevate] Independence from the state [Elevate] Geared towards social regeneration and help [Elevate] Financially viable through trading activity, income generation and grants. [Elevate] Profits are not sought for distribution to shareholders; Needs to make profits (or at least avoid losses) to be viable. [Elevate] Non-profit distributing.
<i>RoR</i>	[Broaden] Coextensive with ‘social economy’
Agent	A policy team tasked with formulating policy and providing recommendations against a clear remit (enterprise solutions to social exclusion). Policy team headed by Patricia Hewitt, Economic Secretary to the Treasury, and formerly of IPPR.
Scene	The establishment of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR), a massive policy-making scheme, backed by a £800 million budget to be spread over three years, aimed at tackling social exclusion.
Purpose	[Intention] To define social enterprise in a way that highlighted its relevance to the problem of social exclusion. [Motives] To provide ambitious and viable policy recommendations.

In summary, PAT3’s recommendations set in motion a range of institution building activities, but they did so on the basis of a definition that positioned social enterprise as a small business pursuing a social aim through trade. In contrast to the social economy tradition, that it both invoked and construed as synonymous, it neglected several organising features traditionally associated with the social economy (e.g. being an initiative launched by a group of citizens; having a decision-making power not based on capital ownership; a participatory governance structure). As the recommendations fed into the Social Exclusion Unit’s final report (*National Strategy for*

Neighbourhood Renewal), and were subsequently adopted by Government, the relevant parties began to respond. The way in which each party did so forms the next part of the story in the emergence of social enterprise.

7.6 SITF's removal of "social ownership" from the criteria of application

PAT3 had asserted that disadvantaged communities could be regenerated by creating small businesses, rather than persisting with government grants or traditional state-backed economic development. Such a solution was fine in theory, but in practice, there was a lack of access to finance for business in those areas. This was because mainstream banks weren't prepared to make small loans at high risk. This was construed as a market failure to be remedied by government action. PAT3 made several recommendations to that end. First, government should build on the success of Community Finance Initiatives (CFIs),²⁹ such as the Prince's Trust Business Starts, a programme that provided finance (loans up to £5000 and/or grants up to £1500), mentoring, and business support to 18-30 year olds wishing to start up in business. It also made the recommendation that HM Treasury and the DTI should set up a national challenge fund to finance CFIs, a "loan guarantee support for CFIs borrowing from wholesale sources", and, finally, to "consider the case for tax relief on lending to/ investing in charitable community finance initiatives at sub-market rates" (PAT3, 1999: 128).

Ahead of the pre-budget speech, Gordon Brown (acting as Chancellor of the Exchequer), announced a new £30 million investment in the Phoenix Fund, aimed at "boost[ing] enterprise in disadvantaged areas and amongst disadvantaged groups" (Timms, 2000).³⁰ This was a relatively straightforward assignment. The Phoenix Fund had already been created by the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry in 1999, to help promote enterprise in disadvantaged areas and groups under-represented in terms of business ownership. All Brown did was to increase the level of funding. It is important to note that the fund was not specifically for social enterprise, but rather for *enterprise and entrepreneurship in deprived areas*, where obtaining finance was deemed prohibitive for small firms. It was, according to a government press release at the time, about putting "enterprise

²⁹ CFIs are market intermediaries which invest in businesses, typically at start-up stage, which ordinarily would be unable to access finance from an established bank. In 2000 there were between 10-15 such bodies including national players such as Local Investment Fund established by Business in the Community, the Charities Aid Foundation's Investors in Society, and the Co-operative movement's ICOF; and local players such as Aston Reinvestment Trust (Art)

³⁰ Speech by Stephen Timms, MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, at the ART Key Loan Fund launch, 12th January, 2000.

and business at the heart of regeneration” (M2 Presswire, 2004).³¹ It was open to social enterprise but its primary target was any small venture in an area of severe social deprivation.

Taking meaningful action on the other recommendations, in particular instituting a tax relief for investors in Community Development Initiatives (CDIs), required a stronger basis in evidence and planning. To that end, Gordon Brown “launched” the Social Investment Task Force (SITF). As with the Phoenix Fund, the objective of the SITF was not to boost social enterprise *per se*, but rather to consider the range of financial innovations, including regulatory, that might boost ‘entrepreneurial practices’ aimed at, or indirectly addressing, ‘economic regeneration’. The primary tool was conceived as ‘social investment’, a practice which involved venture capitalists making investments where there was the prospect of a social return, broadly conceived. However, in one bold announcement after another, Brown drew a clear connection between the work of SITF and the advancement of social enterprise. First, at the launch of the SITF³², Brown declared, “I want to see more investment in the UK in *social enterprises*. This taskforce will look into how this can be achieved” (Brown, 2000, emphasis added). Then, on a pre-budget tour in Sunderland, he praised the SITF’s important work in exploring “tax incentives for investing in community development projects, like incubators, loan funds, and *social enterprises*” (Brown, 2000, *emphasis added*). The result was to insert the concept of social enterprise into a policy development space where it might not otherwise have been.

It was important to highlight how social enterprise was inserted into the remit of the SITF because the concept was problematic if not inimical to their interests. Certainly, their definition of the concept reveals an ambivalence that remained until the Task Force’s eventual dissolution in 2010. Before exploring the SITF definition, it is instructive to consider the character and composition of the SITF. Although the SITF was “launched” by Gordon Brown, and although it had the external appearance of governmental policy unit, it was an initiative of the UK Social Investment Forum (a special interest lobby), in partnership with the New Economics Foundation (a think tank) and the Development Trusts Association (a membership body). As such, SITF was a private interest group making public policy recommendations (see Table 7.13). HM Treasury held mere ‘observer status’. Unlike most of the Policy Action Teams, it was not headed by a Champion Minister nor a civil servant drawn from Whitehall. Instead, the unit was led by Ronald Cohen, a

³¹ “Griffiths welcomes findings of Phoenix Fund studies; Government programme receives top marks from independent evaluations”

³² At the annual conference of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (9 Feb 2000).

man routinely described as the father of UK venture capitalism, having founded Apax Partners. Cohen was Brown’s personal appointment.

Table 7. 13: Composition of the Social Investment Task Force

Name	External affiliation
Sir Ronald Cohen	Chairman, Apax Partners & Co. (Chair)
David Carrington	Chief Executive, PPP Healthcare Medical Trust
Ian Hargreaves	Journalist and academic
Philip Hulme	Chairman, Computacenter
Geraldine Peacock	Chief Executive, Guide Dogs for the Blind
Joan Shapiro	formerly Executive Vice President, South Shore Bank, Chicago
Tom Singh	Managing Director, New Look

Although SITF had no special interest in social enterprise, Brown’s public commitments to social enterprise meant that the SITF could hardly avoid engaging with the concept. However, as intimated above, there is a sense in which they would have preferred to avoid it if they could. It saw social enterprise as not only marginal to its remit but fundamentally antagonistic to the financial techniques of venture capitalism which it sought to advance. From the point of view of a venture capitalist, an organizational form that entails *social ownership* will inevitably conflict with equity based financial products. They represent antagonistic institutional logics (Thornton and Ocasio, 1999). A venture capitalist typically provides funding to help start up a company, in exchange for some ownership (or ‘equity’) in that company. They are also typically ‘active investors’, in the sense that they look to manage high levels of risk by taking a hands-on role in the running of the business. More significantly, such investors aim for a higher return than ordinary debt finance, and this is standardly achieved through an exit strategy involving the sale of the company, with profit extracted on account of their equity stake.³³ In contrast, however, the central aim of social ownership is to eliminate the distinction between private owners, receiving a passive income from their stake, and workers, who are the recipients of labour income. The coming together of SITF and the version of “social enterprise” that involved social ownership was always going to require something to give way.³⁴ Either social enterprise would have to be defined so that it was possible for equity finance to function according its normal definition, or the very nature of equity finance would need, somehow, to undergo a redefinition for social enterprise to retain

³³ For example, Bridges Community Venture (BCV) explains, “The investment model BCV ... uses is a traditional venture capital approach in which we buy shares in companies for a period of 3-5 years, during which time we work with the companies to grow the businesses and make them more valuable. At the end of this time, we do not typically get repaid by the companies but instead sell our shares by floating the company or by selling it onto someone else” (Bridges Community Ventures, 2004).

³⁴ It is important to note that even though the term was not defined officially or legally, the inclusion of social ownership was upheld by the SEL, who were the main authority on the concept at that point.

its criteria. The SITF was unequivocal about what it considered the necessary casualty in this equation. Social ownership had to go. They pursued this through an act of definition, specifically, by stripping social ownership from the *criteria of application*.

On the 18th October 2000, the SITF returned its report to the Chancellor. It retained the increasingly standard definition of social enterprise as “*a business that trades in the market in order to fulfil social aims*”, but in addition to this, it articulated “*three common characteristics*” that fundamentally altered the kinds of practices possible under that label (see Table 7.14)

Table 7. 14: SITF’s definition of social enterprise

“(A) they seek to be viable trading concerns (B) they have explicit social aims and are accountable to their members and the wider community for their social, environmental and economic impact and (C) they are autonomous organisations, often with governance and ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups or by trustees and with profits distributed as profit sharing to stakeholders or used for the benefit of the community”.

Source: SITF, 2001

What was significant here, was as much a matter of what was present as what was absent. Superficially, it was a definition that looked similar to those before it. Characteristic ‘A’ was consistent with PAT3’s definition, and helped reinforce the idea that social enterprise was about making a surplus from trade. Similarly, characteristic B merely maintained the necessity of explicit social aims and, consistent with other definitions, proffered no limitations on the scope of those social aims. Characteristic C, however, when fully unpacked, served to fundamentally change the *range of reference*. In place of the notion of “common ownership” or “social ownership”, SITF inserted the more ambiguous notion of “*ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups or by trustees*”. Here, ‘stakeholder groups’ was sufficiently pliable so as to apply to venture capitalists (though, perhaps achieved indirectly through a CFI). Playing politics through adverbs, they also inserted the word ‘often’ in front of that characteristic, rendering it non-essential. Second, whereas the PAT3 definition stated, *as an explicit criterion*, that social enterprise “*are non-profit distributing*”, the SITF definition relaxed this requirement by permitting profit distribution to “stakeholders”, which, again, was sufficiently ambiguous as to include venture capitalists.

Notwithstanding the replacement of ‘social ownership’ with ‘stakeholder participation’, what is perhaps most remarkable about the redefinition is its lack of supporting justification. Having set out their definition, SITF bluntly rejected the necessity of social ownership, saying,

“The Task Force takes the view that not all social and community enterprises need to have social ownership. Some are structured as traditional enterprises while still serving a social purpose and placing great emphasis on their accountability to the communities they serve” (SITF, 2001: 31)

They clearly knew that what they were arguing for was going against the grain; so the frank, uncompromising tone of that statement can be understood as a signal of the SITF’s authority or, indeed, of its general disinterest in the concept as it stood, for, as noted, if social ownership was made a defining criterion then the concept was of no value to venture capital. Their stance was like a ‘take it or leave it’ offer. Government could either accept their definition or accept that social enterprise could not be backed by venture capital finance. The fact that the SITF’s remit was broader than social enterprise, meant that it could still fulfil its objective of delivering finance to deprived communities, with or without social enterprise.

Table 7. 15: SITF’s act of definition (2000)

Analytic components	Description	
Act		
<i>CoT</i>	-	
<i>SAP</i>	*	[Dampen]
<i>CoA</i>	*	[Elevate] Viability based on trading in market [Elevate] Explicit social aims [Elevate] Autonomous organisations [Elevate] Distribution of profit to stakeholders or for the benefit of the community. [Diminish by negation] Limited profit distribution
<i>RoR</i>	*	[Broaden] To include organisations not featuring social ownership
Agent		An initiative of the UK Social Investment Forum (a special interest lobby), in partnership with the New Economics Foundation (a think tank) and the Development Trusts Association (a membership body). Led by Ronald Cohen, founder of venture capital firm, Apax Partners. Given a policy advisory role by HM Treasury.
Scene		Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, keen to ensure that his offices were seen to be playing a key role in developing enterprise and entrepreneurship in deprived area. Handed remit to SITF to consider the range of financial innovations, including regulatory, that might boost ‘entrepreneurial practices’ aimed at, or indirectly addressing, ‘economic regeneration’.

Purpose	<p>[Intention] To define social enterprise in a way that made it amenable to financial innovation (specifically, to investment by venture capital).</p> <p>[Motives] To ensure that venture capital could benefit from and contribute to the emerging space for social enterprise.</p>
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As we shall see, the co-operative lobby perceived the risk immediately, and sought to reassert the primacy of social ownership. The government then found itself having to reconcile these two competing interests, which it did by semantically fine-tuning the definition.

7.7 SEL's second definition: "Use them if they help, ignore them if they do not"

Following its inaugural conference in January 1999, Social Enterprise London (SEL) became a national focal point for social enterprise, with government agencies readily taking their advice on the meaning and nature of social enterprise. In 2000, for example, SEL and SBS collaborated (with some involvement by the British Bankers' Association), in a project aimed at producing website materials to help SBS, and Business Links business advisors and bankers, better understand the idea of 'social enterprise'. The DETR also turned to SEL for guidance in fulfilling its remit (stemming from PAT3); to explore a social enterprise labelling scheme. The publication of PAT3, and the uptake of the concept within the SITF review, not only increased interest in the concept but also set down early markers as to the nature of government's interest in it, which was primarily as small businesses operating in areas of socio-economic difficulty and serving to redress those problems through some form of trade.

Although SEL's influence was already in the ascendancy, it sought to strengthen its position by steering more decisively in the direction of small businesses. It did so, principally, by expanding the scope of organisational forms that it represented under the banner of 'social enterprise'. By 1999, SEL had already branched out beyond the co-operative form by incorporating community businesses, credit unions, social firms and intermediate labour market projects. Now, in a reverse of its pre-conference definition, it sought to incorporate, under the banner of social enterprise; development trusts, the trading arms of charities (e.g. the Big Issue), and social businesses (e.g. The Furniture Recycling Company).

However, while forming a broader coalition through the incorporation of those organisations might have helped increase its influence, it had the inevitable consequence of broadening the meaning of the "social enterprise" concept. Specifically, SEL's expansionary move presented the immediate difficulty of maintaining a coherent concept. As the maxim, that 'something which

means everything, means nothing at all' implies, the application of 'social enterprise' to such a wide range of organisations (i.e. such a wide *range of reference*), risked rendering the concept meaningless. It also posed a risk to the centrality of the co-operative form as *the* exemplary form of social enterprise.

Both the necessity and the complexity of maintaining conceptual coherence shows through at several points in the defining work which appeared in SEL's (2001) *Introducing Social Enterprise*. Both in timing and in tone, this document can be read as a strategic response to PAT3's celebration of social enterprise (Section 7.3), and to SITF's attempted *coup de definition* (Section 7.6). In alignment with PAT3, the report presented social enterprise as part of the social economy. Similarly, acknowledging PAT3's definition of social enterprise as a small business, it alluded to the existence of very large social economy organizations, such as mutual finance and insurance organizations, before stating that "the focus of social enterprise is on small business" (SEL, 2001). Still attempting to fit social enterprise closely to the PAT3 policy agenda, it explicitly linked the term to the issues of: 1) social exclusion, stating, "social enterprise can be seen as a key part of the effort to eradicate social exclusion" (2001: 1); and 2) "social capital", stating that "social enterprises bring people together. The experience of successful ventures builds social capital..." (ibid: 2).

Viewed in terms of intended illocutionary force, the document aimed to *inform* an audience of the meaning of "social enterprise", so that the term might be applied to actual organisations. According to Brown (2002), it was a response to growing pressure for SEL to provide information about social enterprise. To that end, however, it needed a more committed entry into the definitional discourse. It did that, initially, through a form of enumerative definition, or definition by subclass (see Table 7.16). This set out 9 different 'types' of social enterprise along with a description and, for each type, indicative examples. The list of types now reflected a diverse mix of organizational and legal forms. Again, Brown (2002) notes that the incorporation of these forms "reflected the growing alliance between SEL and other forms of organisations drawn to the banner of social enterprise" (Brown, 2002: 4). Both credit unions and co-operatives were subject to national regulation specific to their form; while others, such as development trusts and social firms, were subject only to wider company legislation and the dictates of their national representative bodies (the Development Trusts Association and the Social Firms UK, respectively).

Table 7. 16: SEL's "Types of Social Enterprise" and examples

Employee-owned businesses create jobs and preserve jobs as part of economics development strategies.	St Luke's (advertising agency); Tower Colliery
Credit unions and community finance initiatives provide access to finance.	Fairshare Credit Union
Co-operatives are associations of persons united to meet common economics and social needs through jointly owned enterprises.	West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative; The Phone Co-operative
Development trusts are key actors in community-based regeneration.	St. Peter's Urban Village Trust (Birmingham)
Social firms are small businesses created to provide integrated employment and training to people with disabilities and disadvantages.	Forth Sector; Travel Matters
Intermediate labour market companies provide training and work experience for the long-term unemployed.	East Middlesborough Community Venture Rehab Remanufacturing Services (RRS) in Easterhouse (Glasgow); Teleworks (Glasgow)
Social businesses are non-profit businesses, often set up to support the work of a charity or non-governmental organization.	Traidcraft; Oxfam Trading; The Furniture Resource Centre; Day Chocolate Company; Cafédirect; Create; Big Issue
Community businesses are social enterprises that have a strong geographical definition and focus on local markets and local services.	Medcliffe Community Nursery
Charities' trading arms enable charities to meet their objective in innovative ways.	NONE

Source: SEL's (2001) *Introducing Social Enterprise*

However, as with acts of extensional definition more generally, the enumeration of sub-types may aid an understanding of the *range of reference*, but it provides no information about the attributes or *criteria* in virtue of which the concept is applied. Yet, this is precisely what SEL were required to do, in order to provide the degree of meaningfulness expected of them, having assumed the role of representative body for social enterprise. Indeed, the argument I would like to put forward is that SEL first incorporated these diverse forms under the concept of 'social enterprise' and, only then, proceeded to formulate *criteria of application* that would cover just such a *range of reference*. Support for this claim is found in Brown's (2002) retrospective account, where he states, that the SEL typology reflects the alliance it had formed with other promotional bodies, as opposed to an "objective analysis of organisational forms based on a set of agreed criteria" (Brown, 2002: 5). In other words, the definition was being retrospectively tailored to match their broader strategic maneuver.

SEL provided an update on their 1999 definition by articulating three criteria of application: 1) enterprise orientation, 2) social aims, and 3) social ownership (see Table 7.17). In 1999, SEL were content to define social enterprise as “*businesses that do more than make money; they have social as well as economic aims*” (SEL, 1999). Aside from the more formal structure now taken in their act of definition, the most obvious difference is the appearance of ‘social ownership’ as a defining criterion. While this attribute was clearly present in their earlier thinking, as illustrated by Baroness Thornton’s conceptualization, it was not previously an explicit *criterion of application*. Indeed, as argued above, its omission from the vague definition offered in 1999 was a strategic decision.

Contrastingly, Brown (2002) suggests that the appearance of social ownership in SELs definition, at this stage, signalled a weakening of the co-operative tradition within the concept of social enterprise, since it is ‘common ownership’ rather than ‘social ownership’ that is traditionally associated with co-operativism. However, it could be said that the opposite dynamic was at play. The insertion of social ownership, at this juncture, can be interpreted as an attempt by SEL to reassert the centrality of the co-operative form in the face of threatened marginalization posed by the SITF definition. Indeed, it is highly probably that SEL’s *Introducing Social Enterprise* constituted a reaction to the SITF’s exclusion of social ownership, since there is clear evidence of intertextuality between the two documents. Specifically, several passages in SEL’s redefinition (the underlined text in Table 7.17) were copied word-for-word from SITF’s definition. Intriguingly, not a single note of acknowledgement is offered. A close examination of the two definitions shows that SEL made two subtle but significant alterations to SITF’s definition.

Table 7. 17: SEL’s redefinition of social enterprise Vs SITF’s

Excerpt from SEL’s definition (2001)

- 1) “Enterprise orientation – they are directly involved in producing goods or providing services to a market. They seek to be viable trading concerns*, making an operating surplus”;
- 2) “Social aims – they have explicit social aims such as job creation, training or the provision of local services. They have ethical values including a commitment to local capacity building. They are accountable to their members and the wider community for their social environmental and economic impact”;
- 3) “Social ownership – they are autonomous organisations with governance and ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups (users or clients, and local community groups etc.) or trustees. Profits are distributed as profit sharing to stakeholders or used for the benefit of the community”

Excerpt from SITF’s definition (2000/1)

“(A) they seek to be viable trading concerns (B) they have explicit social aims and are accountable to their members and the wider community for their social, environmental and economic impact and (C) they are autonomous organisations, **often** with governance and ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups or by trustees and with profits distributed as profit sharing to stakeholders or used for the benefit of the community”.

*Underlining shows verbatim text

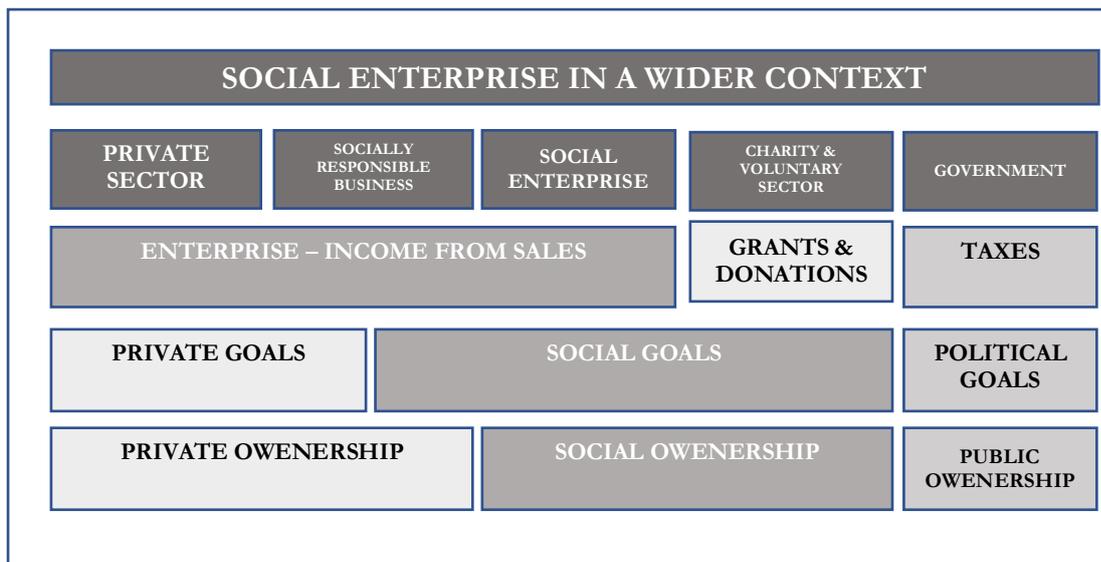
** Bold shows omissions and additions

Sources: SEL (2001) and SITF (2000/1)

First, whereas SITF set out three common characteristics of social enterprise, without three associated headings, SEL set out broadly the same three common characteristics, but under specific headings of; enterprise orientation; social aims; and social ownership. This was the first way in which SEL sought to *elevate* the notion of ‘social ownership’ as a *criterion of application*. Second, whereas SITF inserted the adverb ‘often’ before the characteristic of ‘governance and ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups or by trustees’, thereby rendering the attribute non-essential, SEL removed ‘often’ before the same sentence, with the effect of rendering that characteristic an essential attribute. However, the problem this move (i.e. making social ownership a defining criteria) created for SEL was that many of the other organisational types it had already incorporated under the banner of social enterprise did not exhibit the kind of social ownership associated with the co-operative form. So, the place of co-operatives was assured only at risk of jettisoning everything else.

The only way to resolve this dilemma, was to engineer a degree of semantic leeway in the concept of ‘social ownership’ *per se*. It did this through a further refinement of the definition in terms of sliding attributes along a spectrum (see Figure 7.3). SEL stated that social enterprise could be thought of in terms of a spectrum. While all social enterprises share the three basic characteristics, as noted above, they come in various “shapes and sizes”, the precise form of which depends on their position relative to five key continua: Social ownership; Sources of income; Social goals; Development focus; and Market focus.

Figure 7. 3: SEL’s social enterprise spectrum



For “social ownership”, one end of the continuum was occupied by “trustees”: an ownership structure involving a “small core of individuals who play a role similar to trustees”. These owners/trustees would fulfil the dual role of members and directors on the board but receive no personal profit. At the other end of the continuum was “broad-based membership”: a structure involving “a large number of members who elect a board”. The example of this form was the mutual or self-help organization. In between these two poles could be found “multi-stakeholders”, described as “a wide range of models...sometimes involving a variety of stakeholders being represented by the board”. In this way, they managed to assure the centrality of co-operatives within the *range or reference*, while retaining the other forms of organisations they had already subsumed.

For “sources of incomes”, one end of the continuum was occupied by “sales”, a mode of income described in the negative as “businesses receiving no grants or donations”. This was considered exemplary of the very best “social enterprise”. At the other end was “grants & donations”, those organizations that received “start-up and capital grants”, and who were usually located in disadvantaged communities and/or addressing social exclusions issues. It was clear that the further along this particular continuum in the direction of “sales”, the more an organisation could be considered a ‘good’ case of social enterprise. The other end was exemplified by the voluntary sector, but SEL did not state how much sales-based income was required to be counted as a social enterprise.

For “social goals”, one end of the continuum was occupied by “socially owned”, while the other was occupied by “socially responsible business”. Credit unions were located close to the former and the Body Shop was placed at the latter. Divine Chocolate sat three-quarters along the line towards “socially owned”. Importantly, it noted that the Body Shop was not actually a social enterprise, nor was “socially responsible business” (or Corporate Social Responsibility), more generally. Such businesses, it explained, may “actively manage their operations to minimize and offset negative consequences and optimize positive ones” (SEL, 2001), and they may also be “actively aware of their social and environmental impact” but they were still not social enterprise, because they “have traditional ownership structures”, whereas social enterprise is “socially owned”.

This was a crucial distinction. Although SEL were ostensibly talking about ‘social goals’, what was really at stake was the inherent sociality of different forms of ownership, with social ownership considered *inherently social*, while traditional ownership was being denied this elevated status. In the technical terminology we have been employing, social ownership was attributed a commendatory *speech act potential*, whereas this was denied to traditional ownership. The logical conclusion of this was that it didn’t matter how substantial an organisation’s social contribution might be, if its ownership structure was “traditional”, it wasn’t a social enterprise and it couldn’t draw on the commendatory value of that term. The logical flipside was that it didn’t matter how unsubstantial an organisation’s social contribution might be, if it was socially owned then that was sufficient to be a social enterprise.

This issue became more pronounced (and also more vague) at the midpoint of the continuum. There, you could have a community organization, using a joint-venture arrangement with a “socially responsible business”, but if it retained *some degree* of ownership, then it was still a social enterprise. The example provided was of Divine Chocolate. Even though 20% of the organisation was owned by a “private partner”, the majority stake was held by a “non-governmental organisation and a farmers’ co-operative in Africa”. What if the private partner owned 50%, would it still be a social enterprise? Satisfying the “socially owned” criteria was rendered a matter of percentages, but precisely what percentage was required was not stated specifically.

For “development focus”, one end of the continuum was occupied by “social exclusion” while at the other end was located “business development”. The explanation for this arrangement was particularly thin. “Social enterprises”, it laconically explained, “need to balance their social and

economic aims” (SEL, 2001). Finally, for “market focus”, one of the of the continuum was occupied by “local market”, while the other was “wider market”. Examples of each were Community Café and Cafédirect respectively. This distinction was addressed primarily through the assertion that, in contrast to the 1980s, when community businesses relied on ongoing government subsidy, there was now a recognition that sustainability and viability required finding a wider geographical market. Cafédirect was praised for having upscaled its market; from “church basements” to the “mainstream market place”.

Paradoxically, despite this elaborate labour of definition, SEL retained a deep antipathy towards definitions *per se*. For example, SEL, having engaged in such an elaborate act of definition, then immediately issued the remarkable warning, bordering on renunciation, about all labels and definitions, saying:

"One problem that can bedevil this sector of the economy is the labels and definitions. Trying to define a social enterprise can be like trying to define an elephant blindfolded – very difficult and rather pointless, because you certainly know one when you see one. Worse still can be the problem of labelling and defining the different types of social enterprise...do not be put off by words, labels and definitions. Use them if they help. Ignore them if they do not. Above all, remember that social enterprise can have an important role to play in our 21st century economy and can present good business opportunities” (SEL, 2001: 3).

The account provided above suggests two ways of understanding this position. The first, is their awareness of having engaged in a direct challenge to a powerful new authority, the SITF; and so their renunciation of definition is an attempt to challenge the SITF definition; and second, their own difficulty in figuring out a definitional formula that would permit the application of the term ‘social enterprise’ to those, and only those, organisations it had chosen to incorporate for entirely expedient purposes, while protecting the place of social enterprise from threat of marginalisation. It is likely that both factors played some part.

Table 7. 18: SEL’s second act of definition (2001)

Analytic components	Description
Act	
<i>CoT</i>	-

<i>SAP</i>	*	[Celebrate]
<i>CoA</i>	*	<p>[Elevate] Directly involved in producing goods or providing services to a market seek to be viable trading concerns, making an operating surplus [Elevate] Explicit social aims. They have ethical values including a commitment to local capacity building [Elevate] Social ownership – they are autonomous organisations with governance and ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups (users or clients, and local community groups etc.) or trustees [Elevate] Accountable to their members and the wider community for their social environmental and economic impact [Elevate] Profits are distributed as profit sharing to stakeholders or used for the benefit of the community</p>
<i>RoR</i>		
Agent		The main representative body in the UK for social enterprise.
Scene		Rapidly developing policy around social enterprise following PAT3's report and the creation of SEnU; the threatened marginalization of co-operatives within the SITF's definition of social enterprise.
Purpose		<p>[Intention] To <i>celebrate</i> the emergence of social enterprise; to provide information to an expectation audience of would-be-social enterprises and policy makers. [Motives] To strengthen their power by building a broader membership base; securing the centrality of co-operatives within the category.</p>

In summary, SEL produced a definition which separated social enterprise from; the private sector, socially responsible business, the charity and voluntary sector and government; in respect of three characteristics: income from sales, social goals, and social ownership. In this way it helped reassert the place of social ownership in the face of threatened removal posed by the SITF.

7.8 Westall's expertise in precision looseness

At the same time that SEL published *Introducing Social Enterprise*, an influential policy expert, Andrea Westall, published a report, *Value-Led, Market-Driven* (2001), which set out the various ways in which social enterprise could contribute to the “concerns of a centre-left government” (2001:1). The timing of this report was of crucial significance, since, shortly after its publication, a unit was established within the DTI to lead the government's approach to Social Enterprise. As we shall see below, Westall came to take an influential role in the newly established unit and much of what she recommended in 2001 became the official strategy of the newly established Social Enterprise Unit (SEnU) within the DTI by the time it published its ‘official definition’ in 2002.

At the time of publication, Andrea Westall was Head of Policy at the Foundation for Entrepreneurial Management within London Business School, and an independent consultant. Prior to that, she had been Senior Research Fellow at the IPPR, the think tank that had led the rebuilding of Labour's policies for social and economic reform. Her expertise was wide ranging but focused on entrepreneurship, community enterprise and small businesses. In 1998, she had co-authored *The Entrepreneurial Society*; and, in 2000, had co-authored a report on "micro-entrepreneurs" working at the community level. Both were published by the IPPR, though the latter was partly a collaboration with NEF.

As suggested above, the objective of *Value-Led, Market-Driven* was to set out the potential value of social enterprise in respect of the potential policy goals of a centre-left government. The nature of those goals was explored in several seminars, which formed the core of the report, and covered issues such as reconciling wealth creation and social justice; promoting community activism and self-help; securing equality of opportunity and greater equality of outcomes; the effective delivery of government services; achieving competitive advantage; and regenerating deprived communities.

It is unclear if Westall's report was a direct commission by the DTI, but it was certainly supported by them through their funding of the seminar series during the summer of 2000, that formed the basis of the report. Although the DTI's Social Enterprise Unit had not yet been established, PAT3 had recommended that a future governmental social enterprise strategy should be led from within the DTI, so its support for Westall's seminar series is likely to have been with the eventual creation of a social enterprise unit in mind.

One distinctive feature of Westall's report, and the act of definition contained in it, was the simultaneous pursuit of conceptual clarity and looseness. At several key junctures in the text, Westall stresses that ambiguity around the meaning of the social enterprise represented an opportunity to the government to use the concept to fulfil the widest range of policy goals (see Table 7.19). Yet, at the same time, it was crucial for Government "to be clear about what is or is not a social enterprise...if arguments are to be made that they should be supported, say through tax incentives, finance initiatives or targeted advice and support" (Westall, 2001:23). As detailed below, this was the basis of her attempt to deliver *precision looseness* through definition. By 'precision looseness', is meant a definition with clear but broad *criteria of application* allowing for a wide *range of reference*.

Table 7. 19: Westall’s conceptualisation of social enterprise as an ‘umbrella term’

“...a loose umbrella term which raises awareness of a variety of organisations that are making use of entrepreneurial techniques and the market to pursue social goals rather than primarily shareholder profit” (pg. 1).

“...social enterprise as an umbrella term highlights the many possibilities of socially oriented enterprise but sets out a series of challenges for different groups” (pg. 4).

“...social enterprise is an umbrella term for organisations that achieve a variety of social aims predominantly, but not necessarily exclusively, by trading in goods and services” (pg. 8).

“Social enterprise is a useful umbrella that covers alternative business models and organisations that exist to address a variety of social issues” (pg. 23).

“...it makes sense to see social enterprise as a useful but loose umbrella term which describes organisations that are enterprising in their mode of operation and which exist primarily for a social aim. That is in contrast to a business that distributes all its profits to shareholders” (pg. 25).

Source: Westall (2001)

Westall’s report could not offer its governmental audience an ambiguous or vague concept, since this would undermine the practical value of the report. Her task, therefore, was to clarify the concept, so that it was clear as to where the boundaries might lie, while simultaneously arguing for a broad rather than narrow *range of reference*. She did this through a combination of *extensional definition* and *precising definition*. A precising definition is generally considered a form of stipulative definition, which removes conceptual ambiguity and/or vagueness (Kelley, 2014). A central way in which precising definition is conducted, is through the identification of counterexamples and the subsequent alteration of the *criteria of application* so as to include or exclude the counterexample, as per the interests of the definer.

Westall begins with a form of extensional definition, setting out 12 examples of social enterprise, the majority of which were drawn from the examples presented earlier in SEL’s (2001) report (see Table 7.20). This is important because, at this stage, Westall has not yet formulated any *criteria of application*. Therefore, as with SEL, the *criteria of application* were tailored to the *range of reference*. Westall is not content to merely order the examples into a typology. Indeed, she makes a general criticism of social enterprise typologies, saying these risked inhibiting innovation “since it is describing a status quo rather than opening up the potential for experimentation” (Westall, 2001:

30). Westall also criticised the SEL typology, saying that, while all of the “types” they incorporated under the concept were companies limited by guarantee, industrial and provident societies or companies limited by shares, it was also possible for ‘PLCs’ to be social enterprises too. On this basis, Westall argued that the particular legal form could not serve as a basis for defining social enterprise, and the real test was the relative emphasis on social aims, not the specific organisational model. She stated explicitly that, “The clearest way to distinguish social enterprise is probably by social aim” (ibid.)

Table 7. 20: Westall’s examples of social enterprise

The Day Chocolate Company
Coin Street Community Builders (CSCB)
Candid Arts Trust
Health Enterprise Partnership
St Luke’s Communications Ltd
Greenwich Leisure Ltd
Furniture Resource Centre Group
Walsall Home Care Co-operative
The Wise Group
Medcliffe Community Nursery
Acceptable Enterprises
The Big Issue Ltd
Poptel

Having set out a number of examples, Westall then used these to illustrate both their common characteristics and points of differentiation. First, all of the examples illustrate an organisation pursuing social aims, however the nature of such aims is very diverse. Second, although the social aims are diverse they are all achieved through trading in the market. Third, whereas some organisations are fully self-funding (through market trading), others are reliant on private grants, public donations and ‘public money’ in the form of contracts. Fourth, for all of the examples, the motivation is *not* the pursuit of profit “solely for the good of external shareholders”. Yet, fifth, “outside shareholders” may be involved through an equity stake. Sixth, while ownership and governance are based “more on participation by relevant stakeholder groups”, the surpluses or profits could be “distributed to these stakeholders or used to further the social aims or benefit the wider community”.

Westall attempts to correct the enduring misconception in PAT3, explaining that the concepts of ‘social economy’ and ‘third sector’ are related terms but neither is synonymous with social enterprise. While social enterprise is, indeed, part of the ‘third sector’ it is differentiated by “being

more entrepreneurial and self-financing” (2001: 24). She attempts to further sharpen the boundary of the concept, by stating that organisations existing purely to lobby or represent people would not be social enterprise, nor would organisations which are predominantly grant or donation dependent. In the former case (i.e. lobby organisations), however, she does explain why organisations of those kinds ought to be excluded. Specifically, she explains that, while a grant dependent organisation would not count as social enterprise, it would not be satisfactory to make total financial self-sufficiency a defining criteria since “such a tight definition would exclude some of the most well-known social enterprises such as The Wise Group” (2001: 24). Although they are primarily financed through trading activities, they also make use of government funding for running training programmes for the unemployed. For this reason, Westall concludes, social enterprise ought to be defined in terms of relative independence from “grant funding (particularly for core functioning)” (2001: 24).

On the basis of that discussion, Westall concludes that a definition of social enterprise, if it is to serve as a ‘useful umbrella’ for government, is best stated in the form of only two main *criteria of application*: 1) an enterprising mode of operation, and 2) existing primarily for a social aim. She contrasted the second attribute to “business that distributes all its profits to shareholders” (2001:25). Although she draws a contrast, bordering on mutual exclusion, between ‘existing primarily for a social aims’ and ‘distributing all profits to shareholders’, she notes that there are “hybrids and overlaps” (2001:26), such as “a business that distributes half its profits or surplus to outside shareholders and half to community development projects whether in the UK or overseas” (2001:26). Still, she maintains that a distinction can be drawn in relative terms, since , “a social enterprise does not exist primarily to create profit for shareholders – that the social and environmental policies are not just part of a ‘licence to operate’ but are integral reasons for their creation” (2001:26).

She also acknowledged that social ownership is a definitional criteria for SEL, but implies that they conflate two senses of ‘ownership’ (entitlement to residual profit, and control over the direction of the organisation and its management) and mistakenly claim the definitional necessity of both. On the other hand, she credits the SITF for clearly perceiving this issue in their assertion, that “not all social and community enterprises need to have social ownership. Some are structured as traditional enterprises while still serving a social purpose and placing great emphasis on their accountability to the communities they serve” (SITF, cited in Westall, 2001:28). However, it is not clear how the SITF’s assertion adds any clarity to the concept of social ownership. It simply asserts

that it is possible to serve a social purpose, and emphasize accountability (whatever that might be taken to mean), without a collective entitlement to residual profit. In any case, Westall sides with SITF in seeing social ownership as an unnecessary encumbrance and it is duly omitted from the *criteria of application*.

Westall notes that much of the definitional difficulty stems from “putting a label on a range of diverse activities that could be labelled ‘social’” (2001: 27). She acknowledges that it is a fundamentally political issue, by asking (and leaving unanswered), “Who decides on the legitimacy of a particular social aim?” (2001: 28). Despite the essential contestability of the concept of the “social”, Westall presses on saying that, “Despite the fuzziness of the concept, there are several key reasons for using the term social enterprise” (2001: 28). The main reason, she suggests, is the creation of a “space and impetus for exploring new innovative models including those that may cross the boundaries of private, not-for-profit or public sectors” (2001: 28). On this point she cites, approvingly, Ed Mayo’s (2001) reflections on a social enterprise spectrum where the voluntary sector is at one end and standard business at the other. Whereas much debate concerns the charities moving into trading, at one end, and for-profit firms “doing something on a social dimension”, the real potential of social enterprise is in the middle of the continuum. She states, “actually roughly where we are aiming is the 50/50 position” (2001:28).

Table 7. 21: Westall’s definition of social enterprise

<p>“Overall, then, it makes sense to see social enterprise as a useful but loose umbrella term which describes organisations that are enterprising in their mode of operation and which exist primarily for a social aim. That is in contrast to a business that distributes all its profits to shareholders”</p>

In summary, Westall approaches the task of definition with a high degree of reflexive awareness. She was clearly operating in what Boltanski (2011) terms the metapragmatic register. This is clear from statements that, while “no one likes to waste time on definitions” (Westall, 2001: 23), Government needed to be “clear about what is or is not a social enterprise” (ibid) if it was to develop any policy aimed at supporting them through “tax incentives, finance initiatives or targeted advice and support” (ibid). This, and her role as a policy advisor to government, was the basis of her engagement with definition, which was one aimed at defining the concept in such a way as to invest it with the maximum policy utility to a centre-left government (i.e. her client). It was in this capacity, that she advised Government that, “the concept is currently chimerical, shifting according to the context of the discussion and with very loose boundaries”, before concluding that ,“maybe

that looseness is actually an advantage” (Westall, 2001: 23). Specifically, this looseness presented government with the opportunity to define the term to its advantage, so as to “address a variety of social issues” (Westall, 2001: 23).

Table 7. 22: Andrea Westall’s act of definition (2001)

Analytic components	Description
Act	
<i>CoT</i>	-
<i>SAP</i>	* [Celebrate] Presented a solution to several policy goals of a centre-left government
<i>CoA</i>	* [Emphasize] An enterprising mode of operation [Emphasize] Existing primarily for a social aim [Diminish by Neglect] Democratic in practice and principle [Diminish by Negation] Limited profit distribution
<i>RoR</i>	* [Broaden] By reducing the number of criteria [Sharpen] By discussing several borderline cases in terms of the basis of their inclusion/exclusion
Agent	A policy expert/consultant and academic, specializing in micro-enterprise. Formerly of IPPR.
Scene	Creation of a Social Enterprise Unit in the DTI with remit of creating strategy to support social enterprise. A space of growing confusion and contestation over the meaning of social enterprise. Need for clarification.
Purpose	[Intention] To set out the value of social enterprise to a centre-left government. To bring clarity to the concept, while ensuring maximum policy utility. To provide an authoritative explication and recommendations for defining the concept in an inclusive way. [Motives] To strengthen her standing as a policy expert

Westall also made a series of recommendations, one of which was for the creation of a new enterprise unit in the DTI focusing specifically on social enterprise, with a clear attachment to a ministerial post. That was either prophetic or evidence of her influence, as a new social enterprise unit was set up in the DTI the following year. The likelihood that this was more a matter of influence, is supported by the strong intertextuality between her advice on definition and the government eventual ‘official definition’. We now turn to that final act of definition.

7.9 The Social Enterprise Unit’s draft and official definitions

Two years after its inaugural conference, Hewitt was again the keynote speaker at SEL's annual conference. On this occasion, the conference fell just before a general election and so Hewitt used the occasion to set out three policy aims for New Labour should they be re-elected. The first was the creation of a dedicated unit for social enterprise within the government, the second was to promote social enterprise in connection with the modernization of public services, and the third proposal was to conduct a review of corporate legislation for the sector. None of these proposals were new, but they had hitherto lacked an influential MP with sufficient departmental authority to drive them forward. That, however, is what changed when, only two weeks later, Labour were re-elected and Hewitt was promoted to Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. One of her first acts was to set up (in October 2001) the Social Enterprise Unit (SEnU) within the DTI.

SEnU's remit was to coordinate the government's policies and approach towards social enterprise. In particular, it was expected to take forward the recommendations set out in PAT3. While Patricia Hewitt remained a key figure in the background, Barbara Philips, a civil servant, was charged with setting up the Unit operationally. Philips faced the unusual situation of having a substantial to-do list for social enterprise, but little clarity as to what the concept meant. There was no formal policy on social enterprise at this stage and the definition set out in PAT3 was, as mentioned above, muddled and served as an ineffective basis for policy making. As Philips stated, "here we had an area where there wasn't any government policy, and our task was to develop it. We were starting from scratch..." (Walsh, 2003).

SEnU was initially structured into eight working groups, each focusing on an issue of strategic importance. In keeping with the approach of the PATs, the lead figures were drawn from both Whitehall and external experts (See Table 7.23). The selection of that leadership personnel was significant in steering the initial strategic direction and definition of social enterprise. Andrea Westall, having just published a comprehensive report on the meaning of social enterprise, was handed leadership of the 'Research and Mapping' working group. Andrew Robinson and Ed Mayo, both of whom had been key members of PAT3, were handed the leadership roles for 'Finance/Funding', and for 'Impact evaluation', respectively. Other key roles were taken by Mark Sesnan, CEO Greenwich Leisure (a widely celebrated 'social enterprise'), who was tasked with liaising with the Prime Minister's Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU) around 'Legal/regulatory change'. Steve Wyler, CEO of Development Trusts Association, was tasked with leading on the establishment of 'training and business support needs'.

Table 7. 23: SEnU Working Groups

Title / Focus	Leader
<p>Legal/ Regulatory/ Governance</p> <p>“Working closely with the PIU Review, it will identify the key points on legal/regulatory/ governance issues it would like to see taken into account by PIU in its consideration of legal structures, and propose other routes to change as appropriate.”</p>	<p>LEADER: Mark Sesnan (Greenwich Leisure)</p>
<p>Research/ Mapping</p> <p>“It will carry out a literature survey of what research has already been done on social enterprises in the UK and do a critical analysis of how robust that is, and how safe it is to extrapolate from it to build up a base line and/or a reliable overall picture of the size, scale, spread, type of social enterprise.”</p>	<p>LEADER: Andrea Westall (IPPR, London Business School, now New Economics Foundation)</p>
<p>Business Support/ Training</p> <p>“It will focus on what is needed and members will draw on their own experience of what is available. They will be looking at both mainstream and specialist business support and training.”</p>	<p>LEADER: Steve Wylter (Development Trusts Association)</p>
<p>Finance/Funding</p> <p>“It will look at all aspects of finance and funding for social enterprises including how to access financial assistance for start-up and growth, and to consider what might need to be done in order to make sure that social enterprises are not disadvantaged in obtaining funding streams compared to other businesses”.</p>	<p>Leader: Andrew Robinson (NatWest/Royal Bank of Scotland)</p>
<p>Promotion (perception, quality, branding, websites, awards)</p> <p>“It will look at how social enterprise is currently perceived, both the positives and negatives, and consider what might be done to build on/overcome that and raise a positive profile”.</p>	<p>Leader: Jon Fitzmaurice (Big Issue)</p>
<p>Impact/Evaluation/Social and Economic Indicators</p> <p>“Working through the existing New Economics Foundation/Development Trusts Association Research Group, it will survey the work that has already been done on impact measures and subject it to critical analysis. Members will use that to devise methods of evaluating the social and economic impact of social enterprises that would be rigorous and robust enough to convince lenders and policymakers”.</p>	<p>Leader: Ed Mayo (New Economics Foundation)</p>
<p>Learning from Experience (modelling, case studies, replication, best practice, growth, leadership, networks)</p> <p>“Starting with a survey of what is already known, it will seek to determine whether successful social enterprises have common characteristics that could be replicated. If so, how might these be made best use of and communicated? In the process of arriving at</p>	<p>Leader: Henrietta Moore (London School of Economics)</p>

that, some perceived (and actual) barriers and enablers in the operating environment will also have been identified”.	
Public Procurement “Building on the work already begun by Small Business Service and the Office of Government Commerce, and in the light of the Best Value approach used by Local Authorities, the group will identify what is being done and what more might be done to enable social enterprises compete for and win public contracts”.	Leader: Lydia Hayes (TGWU/Icon-Tact Ltd)

Source: DTI (2002)

One of the first actions taken by the new SEnU was to explore a definition of “social enterprise”. In the absence of prior policy, Philips’ team canvassed opinion across the country, in particular from ‘external experts’, such as think tanks and representative bodies, including the SEL. As she notes, “I did all the research I could find, and talked to all the people who knew about this area, one person led to another, and it helped us work out a definition of a social enterprise” (Walsh, 2003). However, Westall, who was now leading the working group on research and mapping, had already set out many of the key issues in her IPPR report a year earlier, and this provided an immediate default position on definition. In October 2001, while those consultations were still in their infancy, SEnU stated that it saw the “advantages in keeping the definition fairly broad” (Brown, 2002), and, that the focus was on the middle ground (what Westall had previously described, following Mayo, as the the ‘50/50 position’). Perhaps most significantly, it contained the contentious suggestion that co-operatives were not be counted as social enterprise - just in virtue of being co-operative.

Table 7. 24: SEnU’s initial statement on definition

<p>"We see advantages in keeping the definition fairly broad. Most would agree that a social enterprise is a business with social objectives. It combines entrepreneurial skills with strong social purpose. Profits are re-invested in the business or in the community, offering the possibility of effective, sustainable self-help leading to wider benefits.</p> <p>That definition, though, could be applied to many organisations, from struggling businesses run by a couple of people and almost wholly reliant on grants, donations or help in kind, through to large, successful trading companies in employee ownership.</p> <p>While we can learn from both ends of the spectrum, our focus for action should be the middle ground. We should not rule out a business because it has part shareholders [sic], providing its primary purpose is not simply to deliver shareholder value, nor include a business just because it is run as a co-operative. Nor should we exclude those that have been established through grants or donations and use some unpaid help, and continue</p>

to rely in part on such funding and assistance, providing that they aim to generate a surplus through trading and to become increasingly self-sufficient while retaining their social purpose."

Source: Brown (2002)

It is one thing to say, as SITF did, that not all social enterprise entail social ownership, and quite another to say, as SEnU were implying, that co-operatives were not to be automatically counted as a social enterprise. In the former (the position taken by SITF), the primary assertion is, that to be a social enterprise it is not strictly necessary to be a co-operative (or an organisation run in accordance with the Rochdale principles). In logical consequence, the extension of 'social enterprise' can be construed as more expansive than the extension of 'co-operative', since 'social enterprise' includes organisations that do not exhibit social ownership. Crucially, such a statement is not one which necessarily excludes co-operatives. As such, it is still possible, in theory, that all co-operatives are social enterprises. That idea, however, is precisely what the SEnU's statement was now refuting.

Specifically, it was now asserting that, being a co-operative was not a sufficient *criteria* for the applying of the term social enterprise. Whereas the SITF's act of definition constituted a threat to the *centrality* of co-operatives within the social enterprise category (making it more marginal within the range of reference), the SEnU statement constituted an explicit threat to the co-operative movement's automatic *right to inclusion* within the social enterprise category. It is unsurprising, therefore, that this provoked a period of intense lobbying by the co-operative movement, including its apex body the Co-operative Union, headed by Pauline Green, the former MEP and leader of the socialist group in the European Parliament (Brown, 2002).

In July 2002, SEnU published its final, official definition of social enterprise. However, before that, in April 2002, they had produced a draft definition and a supporting list of common characteristics. A close examination of the two texts (see Table 7.25) reveals important alterations.

Table 7. 25: SEnU's draft definition vs its final definition

SEnU's Draft definition (2001)

"**We define** social enterprise as a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to **deliver** profit to shareholders and owners"

With the following characteristics found in successful social enterprises:

- entrepreneurial, innovative, risk taking
- flexible and adaptable
- **striving** for autonomy and independence
- close to their customers and communities
- involving all stakeholders in achieving a common social purpose
- delivering in social and/or environmental as well as financial ways.

SEnU's Final definition (2002)

“A social enterprise 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 *maximise* profit for shareholders and owners”

With the following characteristics found in successful social enterprises:

- ***gaining*** independence and autonomy ***through trading***;
- entrepreneurial, innovative, risk taking behaviour;
- flexible and adaptable practices;
- customers and community focus;
- stakeholder engagement;
- ***democratic and participative management***;
- delivering socially and/or environmentally as well as financially; and
- financially viable, gaining their income from selling goods and services.

Bold and italics indicates an addition

Bold and underline indicates a deletion

Sources: Brown, 2002 and Social Enterprise Coalition, 2002

Some of the differences are more consequential than others. The first important difference concerns the form of definition *per se*. In the draft version, the act of definition announces itself as a stipulative definition with the expression ‘we define’. The final definition, in contrast, removes this signaling device, which has the effect of presenting the definition, less as a stipulation, and more, as a matter of fact. It signals a change in register, from one which is open to discussion and revision; to one which is not. What was being presented by Government in 2002 was not the ‘workings-out’, but the final result. It was an ‘official definition’, backed by the authority of the state.

The second important difference is that the attribute of ‘autonomy and independence’ had been altered from a mere aspiration (e.g. ‘striving’), to an accomplishment *based on trade*. This escalation in the status of ‘financial sustainability through trade’, as opposed to grant donations, was consolidated by the addition of “financially viable, gaining their income from selling goods and

services” in the final definition. The third significant alteration was the addition of “democratic and participative management”, to the characteristics of social enterprise. The most likely explanation for the insertion of these two amendments, was the lobbying activity of the co-operative movement, as noted above. This gain for the co-operative movement was, simultaneously, a relative loss for the SITF who had tried to exclude social ownership as a defining criteria (see Section 7.6).

It is possible, however, to read the new definition as a compromise between the opposing interests of the co-operative movement and the SITF. Specifically, the adverb ‘principally’ was inserted ahead of the requirement for the reinvestment of surpluses. This served to satisfy the demands of both the Co-operative movement and the SITF, since both, though in differing ways, were keen to see a degree of freedom in the distribution of surpluses. However, as Brown (2002) emphatically notes, the insertion of ‘principally’, “completely changes the definition of social enterprise...Instead of excluding investors as stakeholders in social enterprises, the definition allows for the possibility that there may be investors in social enterprises, who will expect a share of the profits in return for their investment risk” (2002: 7).

Finally, the replacement of the word ‘deliver’ by ‘maximise’, in relation to the pursuit of profit for shareholders and owners, served to increase the extent to which profits could be explicitly pursued. The pursuit of profit was, in this way, secured and ennobled within the context of social enterprise. As Brown (2002) notes, this move, together with the insertion of ‘principally’, can be interpreted as a strategic decision to include investors as potential stakeholders in social enterprises. This would not have been a simple case of helping social enterprise access finance. Even in the ‘draft definition’, social enterprise could access loan capital, with fixed interest rates and a fixed repayment schedule. Contrastingly, these semantic alterations, changed the nature and scale of finance that could be accessed. Specifically, the change opened a space for the inclusion of investors that could provide access to long-term risk capital (i.e. social enterprises could raise equity capital with a variable dividend and no requirement on the enterprise to refund the investment).

The most plausible explanation for that decision is that the Government’s ultimate objective was to put social enterprise in a position to compete with private sector businesses for large scale public service contracts. That explanation is given support by the fact that SEEnU’s subsequent publications consistently spoke in terms of ‘scaling-up’ social enterprise for the delivery of public services. Only a year later, in October 2003, Baroness Glenys Thornton, now Chair of the Social

Enterprise Coalition, provided the forward to SEnU’s ‘A progress report on *Social Enterprise: a strategy for success*’ in which she stated that, “There is still much to do if we are to see social enterprise grow to a scale that is proportionate to the policy aspirations set out in the social enterprise strategy. For example, more needs to be done to unlock the potential for social enterprises to deliver public services – we need a major Government push among public procurers to encourage opportunities in this area” (DTI, 2003: 5).

Various governmental branches did, indeed, follow suit. In November 2004, Department of Health published a report (‘Choosing Health: Making healthy choices easier’) which identified social enterprise as a preferred delivery vehicle within the NHS. Then, in February 2005, HM Treasury published report exploring the role of the ‘Third Sector’, which was deliberately redefined to include ‘social enterprise’ for the first time, in public service delivery. A year later, in Jan 2006, the Department of Health announced that it was setting up its own Social Enterprise Unit, which would lead a programme of ‘pathfinder projects’ in 2006–07 and 2007–08 to support “those wishing to set up social enterprise models from within the NHS and local authorities” (DoH, 2006). Unsurprisingly, David Cameron, leader of the Conservative party, could sense an emerging affinity between social enterprise as his neo-liberalizing agenda, and described social enterprise as the “great institutional innovation of our times” (2007).

Table 7. 26: SEnU’s final act of definition (2002)

Analytic components	Description
Act	
<i>CoT</i>	-
<i>SAP</i>	* [Celebrate]
<i>CoA</i>	* [Elevate] Gaining independence and autonomy through trading; Financially viable, gaining their income from selling goods and services. [Elevate] Entrepreneurial, innovative, risk taking behaviour; [Elevate] Social objectives are primary. Delivering socially and/or environmentally as well as financially [Elevate] Customers and community focus [Elevate] Democratic and participative management [Elevate] Stakeholder engagement; [Elevate] Surpluses principally reinvested. Not driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners. [Elevate] Flexible and adaptable
<i>RoR</i>	* [Broaden] Allowed for inclusion of organisations partially owned by venture capitalists

Agent	A newly formed government unit within the DTI, responsible for creating a strategy to lead the government approach towards social enterprise. Led by a civil servant, Barbara Phillips, and composed of several working groups, each with a remit for creating policy in a defined area. One working group, ‘Research’, was headed by Westall.
Scene	PAT3 had handed SBS / DTI the main responsibility for developing policy on social enterprise. There was a lack of knowledge/data relating to social enterprise. There were conflicting definitions both nationally and internationally.
Purpose	[Intention] To set out a strategy for leading the government’s approach toward social enterprise; To provide an official <i>definition</i> on the basis of which policy/strategy could be developed; To ensure that the definition aligned with the broader policy objective of the DTI and government. [Motives] To ensure the relevance of SEnU; To deliver on their remit of leading the government’s approach to social enterprise

There are many more chapters in the story of social enterprise, as a labour of definition, but perhaps the most revealing is that, by 2010, ‘social enterprise’ was the term used to describe the first privately run hospital in the NHS, after Circle Health Limited was awarded a contract, worth an estimated £1billion in revenue over ten years, to run Hinchingsbrooke hospital. Circle Health Limited was an entity far removed from the kinds of community activity envisioned by Stephen O’Brien in the mid-90s. It was also far from the likes of Kennington Cleaners, a co-operative set up in 1978 by ten cleaners living on the Kennington estate who were seeking to improve their working conditions, which PAT3 had depicted in their introduction of the concept of social enterprise. Rather, 50.1% of Circle Health was owned by Circle Holdings Plc, a company incorporated in Jersey, still a tax haven at that time. Of the 50.1%, a sizeable share was held by profit-hungry venture capitalist and hedge funds, including Balderton, BlueCrest, Lansdowne and Odey European. 5% of the 50.1% was held by the CEO, Ali Parsa, a former Goldman Sachs banker, whose fiduciary duty was to maximise returns for his shareholders. Yet, the other 49.9% of the company was owned by employees. After years of tenderizing the definition of social enterprise in the UK, that latter attribute seems to have proved sufficient for the company to successfully pass themselves off as “a *social enterprise* co-owned by employees”.

Circle Health is by no means the final chapter (in 2019, the labour of definition is still ongoing), but it does serve to illuminate the influence of the labour of definition in terms of how a concept, that in the beginning was couched primarily in terms of its value to redressing social exclusion in the nation’s most deprived neighbourhoods, morphed into one that could be used to describe and commend a massive, complex organisational structure, whose dispersed ownership could, in large part, be traced to a network of global hedge funds, whose prime interest was to extract profit from

the provision of a public service. This is ample supporting evidence for the claim that, if we wish to understand how institutions change, we need to appreciate the role played by acts of definition. Certainly, without such an appreciation, it is not possible to fully understand the emergence of social enterprise in UK.

7.10 Case summary

Utilizing the terms of the analytic model presented in Tables 6.1 & 6.2, I wish to summarize the case, by outlining how the definitions of social enterprise changed over the period 1997-2002, which actors were involved at which time points, what they added/subtracted from the meaning of 'social enterprise', and what contextual factors motivated their acts.

In the summer of 1996, a group of European researchers (EMES), which had historically studied organisations and economic activity in the space between the public and private sectors (a space referred to variously as 'social economy', 'third sector' and non-profit sector) heralded the arrival of a new phenomenon, for which they *invented* the name "social enterprise". What was alleged to be new about the phenomenon was the increased significance of enterprise, understood mainly as the trading of goods and services in the market. A probable impetus for the research was a call for proposals on 'Research on social integration and social exclusion in Europe' by the 'Targeted Socio-Economic Research' (TSER) programme of the European Commission (DGXII). This had an influence on the way the concept of social enterprise was defined in the context of their research.

In order to conduct comparative research on the prevalence of "social enterprise", they provided a definition, complete with formal criteria of application, that had been worked out by synthesizing several preexisting concepts (e.g. 'third sector', 'social economy', 'non-profit sector' and 'entrepreneurship'). Those criteria would facilitate the identification of instances of social enterprise in the various European countries taking part in the survey. Specifically, EMES defined "social enterprise" in terms of nine criteria (arranged into social and economic). The economic criteria included: 1) A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services; 2) a high degree of autonomy; 3) a significant level of economic risk; 4) a minimum amount of paid work. The social criteria included: 1) An explicit aim to benefit the community; 2) an initiative launched by a group of citizens; 3) a decision-making power not based on capital ownership; 4) a participatory nature, which involves the persons affected by the activity; and 5) Limited profit distribution.

Applying those criteria, Roger Spear, the researcher representing the UK, identified a long list of organisational types and activities within the UK that could be included within the range of reference: Worker co-operatives; social co-operatives; social firms; mutual organisations; trading voluntary organisations; intermediate labour-market organisations; community businesses; work integration and employment services (e.g. work initiatives (with training) for people with disabilities, and those recovering from mental illness); development trusts; community regeneration projects creating jobs (full and part-time), often run by development trusts; work projects run by multi-project community-based organisations; housing associations; employment, training and advice projects run by housing associations; credit unions; LETS schemes (local exchange trading systems); and ethical trading organisations (e.g. Tradecraft). The capacity of those organisations to build social integration and reduce social exclusion was a central and recurring theme.

Despite the rich array of economic activities captured by Spear, and the numerous criteria of application, when the concept of social enterprise first appeared in the UK in late 1998, it was used, more narrowly, as a near synonym for small-scale worker co-operatives. In a speech (Dec 1998), delivered to the House of Lords, Baroness Thornton, who had just been invited onto the board of Social Enterprise London, defined social enterprise as “self-help organisations which bring people and communities together to run their own businesses with the twin aims of economic empowerment and social gain” (Brown, 2002:5). At pains to emphasize the link to the traditional co-operative form, she stated that “[social enterprises] are democratic in practice and principle; they have explicit social and economic aims and values; and they earn income for their own financial independence and viability” (Brown, 2002:5). Baroness Thornton, made no attempt to disguise the fact that her definition of social enterprise was essentially a synonym for co-operatives, stating that it was the “modern expression of the principles upon which the early co-operatives were formed” (Thornton, 1998). Of the numerous differences between EMES’s and Baroness Thornton’s definitions, the absence of limited scope for profit distribution is perhaps the most significant. That is explained by the practice, central to the co-operative model, of profit distribution based on social ownership.

Thornton listed a number of examples of social enterprise. These included common ownerships, worker co-operatives, employee-owned businesses, community-based businesses, housing co-operatives in providing affordable homes, social firms or projects set up to support the

intermediate labour market, and LETs (local exchange and trading schemes). Of these types, the “largest part”, she stated, “is the consumer co-operatives”, a category, she noted, that included credit unions. The inclusion of credit unions was one of the primary intentions of the speech. Baroness Thornton was not only on the management board of SEL, she was also an advocate for the Association of British Credit Unions. Shortly before the speech, HM Treasury had published a consultation paper proposing amendments to the 1979 Credit Unions Act. These changes were viewed by the Association of British Credit Unions as insufficient in terms of easing restrictions on lending limits. By extolling the virtues of social enterprise, and by ensuring that credit unions were considered within the *range of reference* of social enterprise, Thornton was aiming to bring about a more favourable regulatory framework for credit unions.

Despite the obvious shifting of terms (from co-operative to social enterprise), Thornton had provided what appeared to be a formal definition. It was informative, and it presented clear criteria of application, which allowed for a high degree of specificity in its application. It was also a definition designed to strongly commend social enterprise. Given those characteristics, the question arises as to why only a month later, SEL chose not to adopt Baroness Thornton’s definition? This was somewhat puzzling, since Baroness Thornton was on the SEL Board of Directors and she was also an influence figure within the Labour Party. Instead, when it came to defining social enterprise, for the purpose of their inaugural conference, SEL opted to issue a more *relaxed*, even hazy statement that defined social enterprise as, “businesses that do more than make money; they have social as well as economic aims and form the heart of what is now coming to be known as the ‘Social Economy’” (Brown, 2002). This was at once a much *broader* (in terms of RoR), and offered much less *distinctness*. Compared to EMES’ and Thornton’s definitions, the criteria of application did not include democratic ownership and control, or financial independence through earned income. Furthermore, in contrast to Baroness Thornton, who showed no hesitation in articulating a definition, SEL expressed much more ambivalence about the act of definition *per se*, preferring a relaxed characterization.

The probable explanation for this change in definition, and the uneasy stance towards definition *per se*, can be understood only by considering the situation (the *scene*) as SEL would have perceived it in 1999. Specifically, the analysis presented above has suggested that this peculiar act of definition stemmed, in large part, from the decline in central state funding for co-operative support organizations, and an unreceptive policy environment following Tony Blair’s ascent to the leadership of the Labour Party. Not only did SEL anticipate a harsher environment for co-

operativism, they also anticipated that governmental interest was heading in the direction of other types of small business with clear social aims. The ‘social exclusion’ discourse, that animated New Labour’s early efforts in social policy, had highlighted the increasing role of small business (enterprise) in addressing the problems of social exclusion. SEL knew that co-operatives were not the only, nor the main, organizations conducting work of that nature. Indeed, in that regard, community businesses, credit unions, social firms, and intermediate labour market project were more prominent organisational forms. To further its own strategic agenda, SEL sought to embrace these organizations under the banner of “social enterprise”.

Having done so, however, they could not following Baroness Thornton in defining social enterprise in terms of the practices and principles of co-operatives. A looser, more inclusive definition was required and that is what SEL sought to provide. So it was that, in 1999, SEL espoused a heavily stripped back idea of social enterprise as merely ‘small businesses with social and economic aims’. The concept remained infused with entirely positive speech act potential, intended for use as a term of commendation. However, the definition was now much more informal, providing only a minimal range of differentiating criteria. There was very little debate as to what was excluded from the concept, with most effort focused on describing and commending what was included. To that end, they enumerated several types of social enterprise (co-operatives, community businesses, credit unions, social firms and intermediate labour market projects).

In late 1999, this situation of informal definition changed, with the publication of PAT3’s report on ‘Enterprise and Social Exclusion’. PAT3 had derived much of the core idea about social enterprise from SEL, but sought to furnish it with a greater degree of formality. The need for a more a formal definition stemmed from the nature of the broader social practice in which they were engaging: formulating concrete policy recommendations (such as recognizing social enterprise as a distinctive group deserving support) and attributing responsibility for their realisation. If social enterprise was to be considered a distinctive group, then PAT3 needed to give an initial indication of that *distinctness*. Their efforts, however, were not entirely successful.

Following SEL’s lead, PAT3’s first definitional act was to connect the concepts of “social enterprise” and “social economy”. However, whereas SEL had construed the former as a subcategory of the latter (i.e. that social enterprise was to be found in the social economy), PAT3 conflated the two, implying that social enterprises “together make up the social economy”

(1999:105). The effect of this was that their definition of the “social economy” stood as a proxy definition of “social enterprise”.

It was in that manner that they defined social enterprise in terms of several *criteria of application*. In keeping with SEL’s definition, PAT3 defined “social enterprise” as being essentially the same as “private sector businesses, but ... geared towards social regeneration and help, rather than simply the generation of profits” (HM Treasury, 1999:105). Social enterprise, in short, referred to businesses but with the differentiating character of being “geared towards social regeneration and help” (ibid). Additionally, through the conflation with the ‘social economy’, PAT3 defined social enterprise as “organisations who are independent of the state and provide services, goods, and trade for a social purpose and are non-profit distributing” (ibid). This was the first time since EMES’s definition that another actor had produced a definition that attempted to assert: 1) independence from the state, and/or 2) the non-distribution of profit. Equally significant, PAT3 opted not to preserve ‘democratic in practice and principle’ as a criterion of application. However, establishing the non-distribution of profit as a criterion, while neglecting to attribute such a status to ‘democratic in practice and principle’, was antithetical to the interests of SEL. The fact that PAT3, a unit which SEL had some relations with, could construct a definition that so clearly marginalized the co-operative form, can best be understood as a consequence of SEL’s prior ambivalence about definition *per se*, and their extreme caution in espousing their co-operative origins.

Up to this point, there was relatively little open contestation around definition. For example, SEL defined social enterprise without reference to Baroness Thornton; and while PAT3’s definition acknowledged SEL’s definition, it did not challenge it (in a sense, there was not enough in the SEL definition to challenge given its simplicity). That situation changed markedly with the entry of the Social Investment Taskforce (SITF) into the field definition. Perhaps the most pertinent feature of the SITF was that they were, in a sense, autonomous outsiders with relatively little at stake in the definitional contest. That is why, in contrast to all previous acts of definition, the SITF went to no great lengths to extol the virtues of social enterprise. Its engagement was, at best, ambivalent.

In terms of criteria of application, the SITF continued to elevate the criterion of market trading as a basis of firm viability. They also elevated the criterion of having twin social and economic aims. Likewise, following on from PAT3, they elevated the importance of autonomy. However, in opposition to PAT3’s definition, which elevated the criterion of ‘non-distribution of profit’, the

SITF now sought to reverse that criterion by stating that profits, in addition to being used for the benefit of the community, *could* be distributed as profit sharing to stakeholders. Furthermore, in opposition to Baroness Thornton's definition (and EMES'), the SITF diminished (by qualifying) the criterion of democratic ownership and control, stating that this was merely '*often*' the case and not necessarily so. The word 'often' served to reduce the criterion of democratic ownership to the status of an incidental characteristic, not an essential criterion. The analysis above has suggested that the main rationale for this act of definition was to allow for the involvement of venture capitalism. For that to be viable, the social enterprise definition had to permit (or, at least, not forbid) the possibility of extracting profit and allowing decision making based on capital ownership.

At this point the issues of profit distribution and ownership had become major sources of contestation. It was at this critical juncture that SEL then published a detailed report, *Introducing Social Enterprise*, which responded directly to the PAT3's and the SITF's definitions. Consistent with preceding definitions, SEL continued to elevate the criterion of market trading as a basis of firm viability (what it now termed 'enterprise orientation'), and the necessity of having explicit social aims. However, in opposition to PAT3, though in alignment with the SITF, it defended the possibility of distributing profit to stakeholders or for use in benefitting the community. Yet, in opposition to the SITF, it also sought to reassert the necessity of social ownership (by removing the SITF's use of the qualifier 'often'). It also enumerated some of the stakeholder groups (e.g. users or clients, and local community groups), explicitly leaving out the categories 'investors' or 'shareholders'.

Following PAT3's report, governmental interest in social enterprise was growing rapidly, but as SEL's definition illustrates, there was still considerable uncertainty and contestation about the meaning of the concept. Perhaps in order to bring some impartial expertise to the discussion, the DTI supported a series of seminars which resulted in a report by Andrea Westall, a noted policy consultant and academic.

Westall was highly alert to the unfolding contestation, and the consequences of adopting different criteria of application. Adopting the position of a neutral expert, she set about a project, less of conciliation, and more about maximizing the value of the concept. Doing so, she argued, required resisting tight definitions. Instead, the best way for government (to whom her report was intended) to maximize the policy potential of social enterprise, was to harness the power of

ambiguity. There was no advantage, she argued, in pushing forward a definition with a lengthy list of criteria of application. Doing so would simply risk excluding, from the range of reference, practices and/or organisations that government was likely to want included (e.g. the Wise Group).

Instead, she advised that it was preferable to work with only two broad criteria: 1) an enterprising mode of operation, and 2) existing primarily for a social aim. The consequence (one might say genius) of her act of definition was to simultaneously *broaden* the range of reference while appearing to *sharpen* its distinctness. The criterion of “an enterprising mode of operation” was sufficiently pliable as to permit the inclusion of organizations that relied on private grants, public donations and ‘public money’ in the form of contracts. Therefore, this *diminished* the criterion of ‘market trading as a basis of firm viability’ that both PAT3 and the SITF had elevated. Then, by inserting the word ‘primarily’ into the criterion for social aims, Westall was opening the concept to the possibility of legitimate profit seeking activity for “outside shareholders”, who may be involved in decision making and receive a share of profit through an equity stake. All that was required, was that profit seeking should not be the primary aim. In terms of ownership, she joined the SITF in seeing social ownership as an unnecessary encumbrance and duly omitted it from the *criteria of application*.

When the Department of Trade and Industry’s newly created Social Enterprise Unit (SEnU) came to define the concept of social enterprise, it was faced with the task of reconciling these contending visions and definitions of social enterprise. Westall had been recruited to lead a working group on research and mapping, and her earlier report heavily influenced the Unit’s initial stance on definition. In a statement on a draft definition, SEnU announced that it saw “advantages in keeping the definition fairly broad” (Brown, 2002). It also followed Westall in diminishing the significance of social ownership, saying “We should not rule out a business because it has part shareholders [sic]” (Brown, 2002). Not only did this diminish social ownership, it also elevated the place of ‘shareholders’, which were now mentioned explicitly for the first time. The major criterion, again in line with Westall’s analysis, was that the primary aim of social enterprise should be social, as opposed to delivering shareholder value. However, SEnU went even further in diminishing the criterion of social ownership and democratic participation, by stating that a business would not count as a social enterprise simply in virtue of being a co-operative. Again, following Westall, SEnU stated that it would not exclude an entity simply because it relied in part on grants or donations. The defining criterion, rather, was that there should be an *aim* to generate

a surplus through trading and to become increasingly self-sufficient while retaining their social purpose.

However, only one year after publishing a draft definition of social enterprise, as a “business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders and owners”, SEnU published a revised definition, which inserted important amendments and qualifiers that substantially altered the range of practices (the range of reference) that the term could be applied to. Now, in alignment with SEL and the SITF, the word ‘principally’ was inserted into the reinvestment of surpluses (i.e. “surpluses are *principally* reinvested”). This amendment now permitted a (unquantified) degree of profit sharing with venture capital investors and/or shareholders. This was in opposition to the PAT3’s definition, which had elevated the criterion of “non-profit distributing”. They attempted to mitigate this conflicting position, by adding to the definition the criterion that social enterprise was not to be “driven by the need to *maximise* profit for shareholders and owners” (SEnU, 2002). In effect, delivering profits to shareholders and owners was now acceptable, so long maximizing profit was not the driving motivation of the firm. However, it made no effort to articulate a means of testing if/when profit was being maximized for the benefit of shareholders and owners as opposed to the furtherment of the social aims; an ambiguity that would later become another source of contestation.

In summary, the idea of ‘social enterprise’ first appeared, in the UK, in a speech by Baroness Thornton who, keen to give the concept the greatest degree of commendation and to link it up with credit unions, defined social enterprise as synonymous with co-operatives; as expressing the principles of the Rochdale Pioneers. Then SEL, keen to downplay the linkage to co-operativism, due both to a hostile policy environment and due to its embrace of a diverse range of organizations that were not co-operatives, then stripped the definition back substantially to ‘business with social as well as economic aims’. This allowed the idea to be presented more effectively as a solution to the problem of social exclusion. The idea was then taken up by PAT3, in the context of providing policy recommendations on enterprise solutions to social exclusion. At this juncture, the definition was re-formalized, with one consequence being the creation of the criterion of ‘non-profit distributing’. In this way, and exploiting the SEL’s prior ambiguity, those criteria which were most closely linked to the tradition of ‘co-operativism’, such as social ownership and democratic control, were diminished.

When the idea was subsequently taken up, albeit reluctantly, by the Social Investment Taskforce, the concept was further stripped of the ‘non-profit distributing’ criterion. It remained necessary to be a ‘viable trading concerns with explicit social aims’, but social aims were no longer of primary significance. They were to be ‘autonomous organisations’, in the sense of being free from public sector control, but they could have ownership structures based on participation by investors, to whom profits could now be distributed. SEL then fought back by reasserting the criterion of social ownership (by removing SITF’s use of the qualifier ‘often’), and by permitting control by stakeholder groups, but explicitly omitting venture capital style investors as a legitimate stakeholder. Profit distribution was permissible, since, with the criterion of social ownership in place, this would not extend to venture capital investors. Andrea Westall, keen to present social enterprise in terms of its maximum utility to government, then attempted to sidestep the contestation by offering a minimal definition based only on two criteria: 1) an enterprising mode of operation, and 2) existing primarily for a social aim. This, once again, diminished the importance of social ownership, replacing it with an expanded conception of ‘stakeholder’. This also helped legitimize the distribution of profit, within that expanded form of ownership (i.e. to investors and shareholders), with the caveat that this could not be the prime motivation of the organization. When the concept then came to be given a first official definition by the DTI’s SENU, the decision was taken, heavily influenced by Westall, to reassert the primacy of ‘social objectives’. Crucially, however, there was no requirement for social ownership (‘democratic and participative management’ was noted as a ‘characteristic’ of successful social enterprise, but not a defining criterion); and profit distribution to shareholders and institutional investors was permitted provided that this did not necessitate the maximization of profit.

It was through this sequence of acts of definitions that social enterprise morphed from a concept, that referred mainly to small co-operatives tackling market failures at a community level, to one which could and would eventually be applied equally well to organizations where venture capitalists could take up a significant share of ownership, control and profit (see Table 7.27). It is only in light of this labour of definition that we can understand how it eventually became possible for organizations, like Circle Health Plc, with no recognizable bases in the community, nor any clear role in regeneration, to claim for themselves the exalted status of a ‘social enterprise’, in order to secure billion pound contracts for the delivery of public services and funnel untold sums of money into private hands.

Table 7. 27: Overview of acts of definition focusing on ‘Criteria of Application’

		Dates and Actors								
		<i>1996 (EMES)</i>	<i>1998 (Thornton)</i>	<i>1999 (SEL)</i>	<i>1999 (PAT3)</i>	<i>2000 (SITF)</i>	<i>2001 (SEL)</i>	<i>2001 (Westall)</i>	<i>2001 (SEnU) 1st Draft</i>	<i>2002 (SEnU) 2nd Draft</i>
Criteria of Application	A continuous activity producing goods and/or selling services.				Provide services, goods, and trade for a social purpose.	A business that trades in the market in order to fulfil social aims.	Directly involved in producing goods or providing services to a market.	An enterprising mode of operation.		Gaining independence and autonomy through trading; Financially viable, gaining their income from selling goods and services.
	A high degree of autonomy.				Independent of the state.	Autonomous organisations.			Striving for autonomy and independence.	
	A significant level of economic risk.	Earn income for their own financial independence and viability.			Needs to make profits (or at least avoid losses) to be viable. Achieves viability, through a mix of trade, income generation and grants.	They seek to be viable trading concerns.	They seek to be viable trading concerns, making an operating surplus.		Entrepreneurial, innovative, risk taking.	Entrepreneurial, innovative, risk taking behaviour.
	A minimum amount of paid work.									
	An explicit aim to benefit the community.	Aim towards economic empowerment and social gain.	Social aims.		Geared towards social regeneration and help	Explicit social aims.	Explicit social aims. They have ethical values including a commitment to local capacity building.	Existing primarily for a social aim	Social objectives are primary; Delivering in social and/or environmental as well as financial ways.	Social objectives are primary; Delivering socially and/or environmentally as well as financially.
	An initiative launched by a group of citizens.	Self-help organisations setting up businesses.							Close to their customers and communities	Customers and community focus

	A decision-making power not based on capital ownership (ideally, one member, one vote)	Democratic in practice and principle			Often with governance and ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups or by trustees. Not all social and community enterprises need to have social ownership	“Social ownership – they are autonomous organisations with governance and ownership structures based on participation by stakeholder groups (users or clients, and local community groups etc.) or trustees.		Democratic and participative management	
	A participatory nature, which involves the persons affected by the activity				Accountable to their members and the wider community for their social, environmental and economic impact	Accountable to their members and the wider community for their social, environmental and economic impact		Involving all stakeholders in achieving a common social purpose	Stakeholder engagement;
	At most, only limited profit distribution (avoiding a profit-maximising behaviour)			Profits not sought for distribution to shareholders. Non-profit distributing.	Profits can be distributed as profit sharing to stakeholders or used for the benefit of the community	Profits are distributed as profit sharing to stakeholders or used for the benefit of the community		Surplus reinvested in the business or in the community. Not driven by the need to deliver profit to shareholders and owners	Surplus principally reinvested. Not driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners
			A business	A business	A business		A business	A business	
							Flexible and adaptable	Flexible and adaptable	

PART III: The role of definition in institutional change

Chapter 8: Discussion & Conclusions

8.1 The utility of the theoretical and analytic framework

We have now reached the stage of returning to the broad question which this thesis has sought to answer: *what role does definition play in institutional change?* What, in the end, does the theoretical and analytic framework, including the analytic tool set out in Table 6.1, contribute to our understanding of social enterprise and, more widely, to the process of institutional change? For example, based on the case of social enterprise, what conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between different stages in the process of institutionalization, or the different field positions of actors, on the one hand, and the different types of ‘act of definition’, on the other (i.e. different options set out in Table 6.1)? Do acts of definitions form a ‘labour’, either in the sense of the actors being interlinked, or in the stronger sense of forming coalitions? Can we say anything, based on the evidence of the case study, about the role of power in allowing some actors to define authoritatively? Who, for example, has the legitimacy to define and/or have their definition count, and from where do they gain this legitimacy? Before attempting to consider those questions, it is useful to provide a short overview of the main claims of the theoretical and analytical frameworks.

8.1.1 A brief overview of the theoretical and analytical frameworks

The essence of the theoretical position, advanced particularly through Chapter 4, is that institutions can be approached in terms of their semantic functions and characteristics. This position builds on the works of Berger and Luckmann (1975), John Searle (2005) and Luc Boltanski (2011). Of particular importance is Searle’s influential account of ‘institutional facts’ as statements (or ‘constitutive rules’) taking the form of ‘X counts as Y in context C’. According to this view, all institutions arise and are maintained through the statement of constitutive rules that assign statuses to physical entities and/or activities. To the extent that such statements achieve common acceptance, Searle (2005) asserts, we can point to an institutional fact.

The assignment of status functions relates to the rights and obligations that the status entails, or the behaviour that the status regulates. For example, counting as a social enterprise is associated with certain status functions such as, being *permitted* tax relief, *forbidden* from maximizing profits for shareholders, *obliged* to operate on the basis of democratic management, and so. As that example suggests, a status function concerns that which is permitted (may), obliged (must), and forbidden (must not), in virtue of being counted as ‘Y’. Searle refers to such affordances, rights

and obligations as *deontic*. It is the deontic power of ‘status functions’, within constitutive rules, that accounts for the sanctionable characteristic of institutions. As Hindriks (2009: 254) notes, “status rules concern the enabling and constraining roles of institutions”.

The first building block in the framework is that institutions are systems of statements, taking the form of ‘X counts as Y in context C’, that are both in common acceptance (though, perhaps, only tacitly) and enforceable. The second building block is that such statements are asserted through speech acts that have the same logical structure as declarations (Searle, 2005). Declarations, moreover, characteristically have a ‘performative verb’, which enables the speaker to perform the act named by the verb (‘I *promise* to meet you on Saturday’). Building on that view, this thesis argued that (some) acts of definition can be considered declarative speech acts aimed at establishing and/or altering the structure of the rule statement: ‘X counts as Y in context C’. For example, an actor might declare, “In the UK (Y), a business that trades for a social purpose (X) *is* a ‘social enterprise’ (Y)”. Though slightly rearranged, this statement would, standardly, be recognized as an act of (stipulative) definition³⁵, and it also has the same logical structure as a constitutive rule.

Now, suppose that an actor attempts to unsettle common agreement about that rule, by arguing that ‘to be a social enterprise (Y) in the UK (C), it is not sufficient to merely run a business for a social purpose; it is necessary that a business generates at least 50% of its revenue through trading in the marketplace’. On the argument presented above, such an act (of redefinition) would constitute an attempt at institutional change, since it is seeking to alter the rules determining the attributes that must be present to count as ‘Y’ in context ‘C’. For example, businesses for whom revenue was made up 70% by philanthropic donations, and only 30% by trading (X), would no longer be counted as social enterprise (Y) in the UK (C); with the consequent loss of whichever statuses had been assigned in virtue of counting as a ‘Y’ (e.g. access to state backed funding; eligibility for certain public sector contracts etc.). As this example suggests, any attempt to alter or defend the definition of a ‘Y term’ (i.e. its meaning within a constitutive rule that assigns a status function), would constitute an act of institutional change or maintenance, respectively.

Having set out those foundations, the thesis then developed an analytic tool to capture, in detail and with consistency, the range of ways in which an act of definition might seek to unsettle a constitutive rule, or to create one in its initial existence, particularly with respect to the meaning of

³⁵ Or, ‘in C, Y is X; and X is Y’.

a 'Y term' (Chapter 6). To that end, the thesis drew on the work of Quentin Skinner, which has discussed the various ways in which actors might disagree about and/or seek to alter the meaning of a concept. Skinner's insights were then systematized to set out, in detail, how the four elements of conceptual meaning (term, speech act potential, criteria of application, and range of reference) could all be manipulated through acts of definition (Section 6.2, esp. Table 6.1). This tool was complemented by a discussion of how such 'acts of definition' could be interpreted not just semantically but sociologically too (Section 6.3). That involved relating the act of definition to a contextualized reading of its author (*agent* of definition), the circumstances in which the act took place (the *scene* of definition), and the probable intentions and motives of the act (*purpose* of definition).

The framework was then applied to the case of social enterprise in the UK. Social enterprise emerged in the context of debate about the future of public services and the welfare state. In particular, it arose at a time when greater use of markets and competition within the welfare state was seen as highly contentious. Within the Westminster policy arena, there was considerable interest in the potential contribution of organisations that were neither fully private nor public. Social enterprise was defined as being of just such a character. Social enterprise was chosen as the case study on the basis of being an exemplary case, both in the sense of institutional creation and change (Sepulveda, 2015), and one in which contestation over definition played a well-documented role (Teasdale, 2012). The theoretical framework approached contestation over definition, not as mere semantic wrangling, but rather as an instance of institutional innovation and change in and of itself. It is precisely because those acts of definition contributed to a process of establishing a constitutive rule (hence, an institution), with all the associated enablements, constraints and distributional consequences, that actors actually contested the matter as they did.

8.1.2 The value of the analytic tool

Having reprised the theoretical and analytic framework, we turn now to consider its value in the light of having been applied to the case of social enterprise. At the most general level, by utilizing the analytic framework, it has been possible to confirm that acts of definition do play a role in institutional emergence and change. They do so by contributing to the creation, maintenance and disruption of the various components of constitutive rules taking the form 'X counts as Y in C'. Relating to social enterprise specifically, the analytic framework allowed for a demonstration of how the meaning of social enterprise changed between its first emergence in the late 1990s, and

2002, when it was given an official definition. Among the major changes were: 1) the removal of social ownership as a necessary criterion; 2) a shift of focus from small scale community enterprise to businesses with complex ownership structures, including shareholders and venture capitalists; 3) the introduction of provisions for distributing profits based on ownership; and 4) a shift in emphasis from social exclusion to delivery of public services.

In terms of the analytic tool set out in Table 6.1, it has shown how various actors manipulated one or more of the semantic components of the concept, often in ways that were likely to have been perceived, at the time, as furthering their interests. Baroness Thornton's act of definition illustrates well the utility of the tool in this regard. In 1998, Baroness Thornton introduced the concept of social enterprise to the House of Lords. In the course of doing so, she defined social enterprise by articulating *criteria of application* that applied almost exactly to co-operatives, and she also drew attention to the concept's connection to the ideals of the Rochdale Pioneers. Having elevated the *speech act potential*, both through her actual definition and the supporting commentary around it, she proceeded to explain how credit unions would be considered an instance of 'social enterprise' (*range of reference*). Why did she engage in such an act of definition?

The analytic tool allowed this question to be answer tentatively, through the additional analytic moves of contextualizing the act in terms of 'agency', 'scene' and 'purpose' . It is this contextualization that helps explain the act of definition, and also to position it within a collective labour of definition. For example, in terms of *agency*, it helped reveal that Baroness Thornton was a respected figure within the Labour Party, and a spokesperson for Social Enterprise London and the Association of British Credit Unions. In terms of *scene*, the framework drew attention to the immediate context of her speech to the House of Lords, which was the publication, by HM Treasury, of a consultation paper proposing amendments to the 1979 Credit Unions Act. In terms of *purpose*, the analysis suggested an interpretation of Thornton's primary *intention* as one of encouraging the Lords to consider supporting changes to the legal framework for credit unions, so as to ease restrictions on lending limits. In order to support her case, she described credit unions as clear cases of social enterprise. This cast the former in the favourable light of the latter.

By understanding the act of definition in tandem with those contextual factors, it was possible to enrich the interpretation of Baroness Thornton's act of definition as one that involved four rhetorical moves. First she described social enterprise in highly commendatory terms (increased the *speech act potential*); then she defined social enterprise in a way that highlighted the centrality of

co-operatives (through reorganizing the *criteria of application*); then she explained that co-operatives were, by far, the main type of social enterprise, and inserted credit unions into that space (*range of reference*) as co-operative social enterprises. All of the commendatory potential of ‘social enterprise’ was, in this way, transposed onto ‘credit unions’. The example of Baroness Thornton stands for all the other acts, which were analyzed in the same way, and allowed for an equally rich interpretation.

In terms of contributing to an understanding of the process of institutional change, the application of the analytic tool provides support for Mahoney and Thelen’s (2010) reconceptualization of institutions as “*distributional instruments* laden with power implications” (2010:7-8). It does so, in large part, by setting out some of the “basic properties” that provide the “dynamic element that permits such change” (2010:7). Specifically, the assignment of status functions is central to understanding the *distributional* character of institutions. Status functions are inherently about constraints and enablements (Hindriks, 2009). They establish both what instances of the ‘Y term’ *must, should, and may do*; and also what it *must not, should not, and need not do*.

In the case of social enterprise, the analytic framework helped reveal the precise moments when status functions were being assigned through definitions. For example, when it was stated, within the government’s official definition, that social enterprise *must not* be driven by the need to maximize profit (a negative deontic), and also, in a broader frame, when it was stated (in 2008) that primary and community care organisations in the NHS would be given the ‘right to request’ to become a social enterprise (or, to put it in reverse, social enterprise would be *permitted* as a mode of service delivery within the NHS). Invoking Mahoney and Thelen (2010), it is clear that these constraints and enablements are fundamentally *distributional*. The key point is that definition, by establishing the criteria that determine what counts as an instance of Y, is one mechanism by which these statuses are assigned. The analytic framework has illuminated how this process is accomplished.

The four semantic components of concepts, at the heart of the analytic framework (Table 6.1), also helped to reveal the ways in which actors aim to shift the meaning of institutions in ways which are deemed advantageous. For example, the Social Investment Taskforce (chaired by Ronald Cohen, founder of venture capital firm Apax Partners) argued that social ownership was not a necessary criterion. Given that the SITF’s main objective was to enlarge the scope of financial innovation (and especially venture capitalism), within the sphere of community regeneration, the

concept of social enterprise was only of value to the extent that basic venture capital practices could be deployed. If social enterprise was defined, as others (e.g. EMES) had tried to do, to reflect the ideal of ‘one member, one vote’, then venture capitalists would not have sufficient control over the organization to manage the risk of their investment or to orchestrate an exit strategy. Likewise, when SEnU published a draft definition of social enterprise that threatened the marginalization of co-operatives, Social Enterprise London (an organization created from a merger of two co-operative support agencies), with the backing of the Co-operativesUK (the apex representative body), strenuously lobbied SEnU and succeeded in having the definition amended.

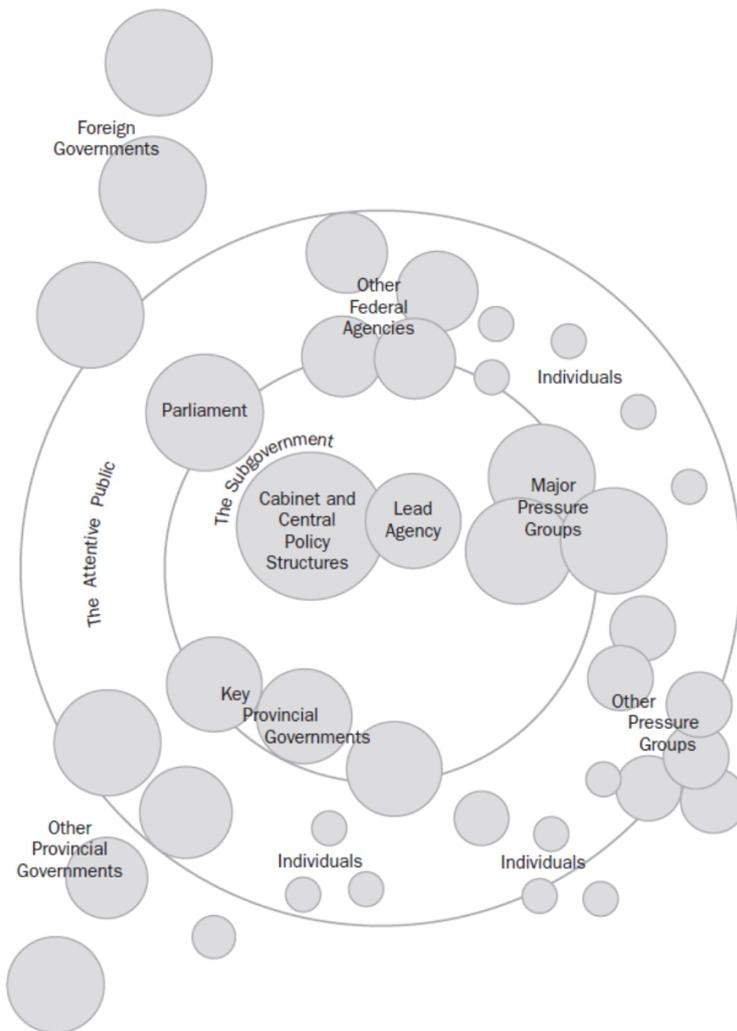
These examples, and the case study more broadly, also suggest support for the view, finding increased expression across the various institutional traditions, that institutions can differ in their “degree of openness in the interpretation and implementation” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:10). Mahoney and Thelen (2010) have noted that even when an institution is highly codified, there is always the possibility of “interpretation, debate, and contestation” (Mahoney and Thelen, 2010:11). The case of social enterprise, and the theoretical model, supports this view. SEnU’s publication of an official definition (in 2002) certainly contributed to the codification of social enterprise, but the scope for interpretation did not vanish. Indeed, shortly after (in 2003), SEnU were compelled to commission an economic consultancy (ECOTEC) to provide further information on how the definition could be operationalized. SEnU’s insertion of qualifiers, such as ‘principally’ and ‘primarily’, into the definition, which they hoped would be beneficial (building on Westall’s advice to harness ambiguity), turned out to create inconsistent interpretations when it came to conducting a mapping exercise of social enterprise across the UK.

8.1.3 The labour of definition as a ‘policy community’.

The analytic framework also helps understand the ways, and extent to which, the acts of definition (and their authors) formed a policy community and/or exhibited coalitional dynamics. According to Pross (1995: 265), policy communities are “groupings of government agencies, pressure groups, media people, and individuals, including academics, who, for various reasons, have an interest in a particular policy field and attempt to influence it”. Central to Pross’ concept of a policy community is actually its function as a insulating device that allows the ‘inside players’ to retain control of the process by keeping the debate within the realm of the technical. This builds on a model of policy communities as structured into “subgovernment” and the “attentive public” (see Figure 8.1). The most important decisions are taken within the space of the

subgovernment, where the major players, typically core government agencies and major pressure groups, actively limit the involvement of outsiders (i.e. the attentive public) to peripheral discussion in conferences, publications, and occasional lobbying.

Figure 8. 1: Pross' Policy Community “Bubble Diagram”



Source: Pross (1995)

The case of social enterprise suggests that the labour of definition did constitute just such a policy community. Although PAT3 and SEnU were, perhaps uniquely, open in their membership bases (see sections 7.5 & 7.9 respectively), drawing heavily on experts from outside the civil service, detailed examination begins to reveal several names reappearing in different roles at different times, but always in the zone of ‘the subgovernment’. A common pathway was movement between government agencies and think tanks. For example, Patricia Hewitt had been Deputy Director of IPPR at a time when it was conducting research into social enterprise. She was then

a supporter of Social Enterprise London, providing the keynote speech at their inaugural conference. As Champion Minister for PAT3, she was instrumental in ensuring consideration was given to social enterprise. Then, as Economic Secretary to the Treasury, she was again instrumental in setting up the SEnU within the DTI. Likewise, prior to publishing her influential report on social enterprise, Andrea Westall had been a senior research as IPPR (at the same time as Patricia Hewitt). After its publication, she then lead SEnU's working group on Research and Mapping. Subsequent to that she became Deputy Director of the New Economics Foundation, a centre-left think tank that, in 1997, had funded and published Stephen Thake and Simon Zadek's research into community-based social entrepreneurs. NEF's Executive Director was Ed Mayo, who also held formal membership positions in PAT3 (External Member) and SEnU (lead of Impact/Evaluation/Social and Economic Indicators Working Group).

The list goes on almost in proportion to the time one examines the case. Geoff Mulgan, who had previously co-founded and directed Demos, the think tank that had implored Blair to back social entrepreneurship, later become the Director of No.10 Policy Unit, which was tasked with carrying out a review of legislation around social enterprise in 2002/2003. Andrew Robinson, who was another Working Group Lead in SEnU, had previously founded Community Links and later became the head of community finance at NatWest. In October 1998, with the support of IPPR, he co-authored a book on "social enterprise zones", a concept which he had helped develop during his time at Community Links.

The consequence was that, within the UK, there was a tightly knit network of 'inside' actors that were involved in establishing the definition of social enterprise. Ed Mayo rightly described the discussion about social enterprise as a 'Westminster village conversation'. This was much to the consternation of 'outside' actors, such as Pamela Hartigan, who criticized the UK social enterprise movement for being too close to government. Interestingly, Hartigan was not an actor devoid of resources. She was the first managing director of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, and then Director of the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. Her frustration, and inability to break into the 'subgovernment', spoke to the way in which the UK social enterprise movement, since as early as 1999, effectively marginalized the concept of social entrepreneurship, focusing instead on social enterprise, due to its greater emphasis on (scalable) business models.

However, those interconnections, and the insulated focus on social enterprise, should not lead to an interpretation of the labour of definition as a process or space in which ‘insiders’ are united in agreement around a common vision for social enterprise. As the example of the SITF vividly illustrates, there were significant polarities within this space, with fundamentally different interests at play. Yet, even actors such as the SITF and SEL, that were locked in contestation over the importance of ‘social ownership’, could find themselves in complete alignment over the criterion of profit distribution. Both argued that this was an appropriate possibility, and neither sought to exclude it through a change to the criteria of application in the way that PAT3 had (perhaps mistakenly) done. Given that the process of definition attempts to condense a whole range of possibilities and meanings, there will always be points of disagreement between actors that, in a broader optic, might be considered in solidarity (equally, there will be points of agreement between actors that might otherwise be seen as antagonistic). This example, shows how the analytic framework can help reveal the multi-textured nature of coalitional dynamics.

8.1.4 Agents of definition, and the power to define

One important advancement in the theorization of institutional change, has been the recognition that institutional maintenance and change is the result of many different actors rather than a single omnipotent force, such as the State. In that context, it is interesting to reflect on the question of who, or which kinds of actors, engage in the labour of definition? In the case of social enterprise, it was seen that the labour of definition involved several types of actor, including think-tanks, representative bodies, policy consultants, academics, a quasi-governmental task-force, and a governmental policy unit. Indeed, had the scope for analysis been greater, the participants to that particular labour of definition would have expanded in proportion.

The case of social enterprise suggests that, as far of engaging in the practice of definition is concerned, there are no barriers to entry, since anyone is free to stipulate a definition. However while there are no restrictions on who can engage in the act of definition (the only restriction really being the cognitive capacity required – which is thought to develop through childhood (Litowitz, 1977)), it is clear that, when viewed in terms of influence, some agents’ work matters more than others. Despite the presence of a policy community, there is little doubting that SEnU (i.e. the lead agency with the authority of the state), once it became involved, exercised the greatest authority over the process of definition. That supports the view, of longstanding, that particular organizations and individuals exert a greater “defining force” than others. Meyer and Rowan

(1977) noted early on, the significance of “important constituents” (1977:343) in terms of “institutional sources of formal structure” and pointed directly to the state, courts of law and the professions.

Lawrence and Suddaby suggest that the notion of institutional work can be used to reintroduce the notion of power into institutional theory. One of the ways in which scholars might address power dynamics is in terms of the distribution of resources required to engage in institutional work. Their suggestion is that although these practices involve the work on the part of many, it is highly likely that the distribution of such work is structured in a hierarchical manner. They note, “many of the forms of institutional work we have highlighted...often require the involvement of the state or other elite agencies with the capacity to rely on force or domination to effect institutional ends” (Lawrence and Suddaby, 2006: 247). The case of social enterprise suggests that defining work is of this character. Although various agents participated in the labour of definition, ultimately the most influential definition was that which carried the authority of the state (i.e. SEnU’s 2002 definition).

One of the most interesting insights to emerge from the case study was that the main challenge, both to the criteria of application and the speech act potential, was launched by the SITF. This was interesting because SITF were, in several respects, somewhat on the edge of the ‘inside’. Although they were handed their remit by Gordon Brown, the initiative stemmed from the UK Social Investment Forum (a special interest lobby), in partnership with the New Economics Foundation (a think tank) and the Development Trusts Association (a membership body). Their interest in social enterprise was best described as ambivalent. Had the concept not been commended with such force by Gordon Brown, they might not have bothered engaging with it at all. It is significant, and almost amusing, to observe their indifference (bordering on condescension) when dealing with social enterprise. For example, at no point in their report did they use the phrase ‘social enterprise’, opting instead to deploy the notion of ‘social and community enterprise’. Then, when it came to defining ‘social and community enterprise’, rather than place the discussion at the beginning of their report (as PAT3, SEL and Westall had all done), they relegated their definition to a small entry in the Glossary at the back of the report, where, like Joseph K in the final pages of Kafka’s *Trial*, it was summarily dispatched.

Though one should be cautious not to draw too strong a conclusion from this example, it does suggest that the most radical challenges to the prevailing definition (i.e. institution) will stem from

agents that have a combination of autonomy, stemming from an independent power base, influence (in the sense of having managed to take up a place within the ‘subgovernment’), and whose interests are fundamentally blocked by the prevailing definition.

Yet, there is a sense in which even such an influential actor as the SITF needed to align themselves with an agreeable or ‘already accepted’ logic. In calling for greater financial flexibility and innovation, the SITF were voicing a logic that had already achieved a great deal of legitimacy. Their task, therefore, was not one of legitimating financial innovation or venture capitalism but rather of extending it into a new domain. This view supports Green and Li’s (2011) argument that the evolution and institutionalization of new fields are the “product of ... negotiations and agreements and often entail the rhetorical importation and exportation of institutional logics from one institutional field to another” (2011: 1676). It also supports the point, attributed to Skinner (2002) (see section 3.2), that agents are not free to justify their actions in any way they please. They must manage their speech carefully, working with the normative vocabulary of their age.

8.1.5 Logics of definition

Following on from the above, the theoretical framework, together with the case of social enterprise, suggests that different actors will engage in different types of defining activity. For example, an organisation that creates industry awards might exhibit a different logic of definition (i.e. for setting the criteria of the awards scheme), compared to an actor aiming to popularize a concept through a marketing campaign. In the former case, the underlying requirement will be to make clear, in virtue of those criteria, who is eligible (and who is ineligible) for the awards. In the latter case, the underlying requirement is more a matter of presenting the concept in the most favourable terms, even at the expense of clarity.

The case of social enterprise broadly supports this idea. Specifically, it demonstrated that the actors involved were not only defining social enterprise to mean different things, but they were engaging in the act of definition for entirely different reasons and purposes. On this basis, it is meaningful to speak in terms of differing *logics of definition*. SEL, who, in the beginning, would have preferred not to engage in definition at all, engaged in definition for the purpose of providing some kind of informative account of the concept at a time when governmental agencies were seeking to understand its potential uses in resolving a public policy issue. It proceeded, thereupon, to issue a definition which spoke clearly to that need and opportunity, but doing so in a way that

sought to protect its firm-level assets, namely expertise in the development of co-operative forms of organisation. In contrast, EMES, a network of European researchers, engaged in the act of definition with the intention of conducting a cross national comparative research project. For that purpose, they needed a definition which all its members might be able to use in picking out similar kinds of empirical objects. A similarly contrasting example is found in Westall's act of definition, which was characterized as 'precision looseness'. Here, the objective was to provide clarity to a governmental audience, while at the same time, leaving the boundaries as wide as they could reasonably be extended, without undermining the coherence of the concept. As a policy expert, whose work was being financially supported by a government keen to utilize the concept to address a range of social policy issues, it made obvious sense for Westall to define the concept in this kind of way.

In thinking about *logics of definition* it is instructive to imagine what it might have looked like had different actors engaged in those different forms of definition. For example, it is quite inconceivable to imagine that a governmental agency, such as the Social Enterprise Unit, that had been tasked with leading the government strategy on social enterprise, could have adopted the kind of frank disdain for definition which SEL exhibited in 2001, when they advocated ignoring definitions if they did not suit. Indeed, such a stance could never be an option for an actor that was responsible for such formal acts as enacting legislation. Westall (2001) was certainly right, in this regard, when she reminded her governmental audience of their need to be "clear about what is or is not a social enterprise (and equally what the different types are) if arguments are to be made that they should be supported, say through tax incentives, finance initiatives or targeted advice and support" (2001:23)

Again, had the analysis of social enterprise been extended to include the period during which legislation was explored for social enterprise (for example, in setting up the Community Interest Company), it is likely that evidence would have been found for distinctive logics of definition associated with the legal/juridical field, where actors pursue definition for the purpose of controlling vagueness (Rickert, 1888; Harris and Hutton, 2007). Indeed, research has shown that the law is an institutional arena, in which a body of experts routinely create and manipulate definitions in order to achieve coherence and consistency. Bourdieu notes that concepts brought into the legal field become "codified" (Bourdieu, 1990:79-80), a process which involves "banish[ing] the effect of vagueness and indeterminacy, boundaries which are badly drawn and

divisions which are only approximate, by producing clear classes and making clear cuts, establishing firm frontiers..." (Bourdieu, 1990: 82).

The findings in the case of social enterprise are supported by broader institutional research. Leca and Naccache's (2006) research shows that ARESE, a social rating agency, contributed to legitimizing and institutionalizing social rating and 'Socially Responsible Investment' as new practices in France. They illustrate how ARESE used the measurement of corporate social performance as a way to help develop those activities, and to manoeuvre themselves into a dominant field position. Interestingly, Leca and Naccache (2006), address the relationship between measurement and definition, and suggest that "Measuring something implies giving a definition of it. In this definition, the measured object will be reduced to its measurable dimensions" (2006:637). The link here is between definition, the kinds of activities that actors are engaged in and the nature of the actors themselves. It is clear that that the character of defining work differs according the actor and the activity being performed.

Since many actors straddle several fields, it is likely that those actors will draw upon different logics of definition. Lawrence *et al.* (1999) illustrate how, in the commercial whale watching industry, for example, a range of institutional fields intersect in dealing with the issue of 'excessive' contact between boaters and whales. Marine biologists argue that there is no 'scientific' evidence that there is a problem, as whale stocks are increasing and whale behaviour appears unaffected; while commercial whale-watching operators argue that the problem is primarily one of 'perception', echoing the scientists' claims of no ill effect; and local citizens claim that the whales are being 'harassed', drawing on the discourse of animal rights (Lawrence *et al.*, 1999).

This relates well to research suggesting the ability to engage in 'institutional work' is greater for agents that span boundaries. Schneiberg (2005) notes that actors, "working at the peripheries or crossroads, transpose or blend elements from different fields and use new models or forms to reframe systems, redefine problems and boundaries, and gain entry into established regimes" (Schneiberg, 2005:100). Likewise, Rao and Sivakumar's (1999) analysis of the establishment of investor relations departments among Fortune 500 industrial firms, demonstrates the agents occupying boundary-spanning positions, can "become prominent actors in constructing definitions" Rao and Sivakumar, 1999: 40). They further suggest that such agents can be thought of as "entrepreneurs who construct definitions of environmental demands, articulate organizational identity to external audiences, prescribe organizational policies, and accelerate the

diffusion of environmentally preferred ideologies in organizational fields” (Rao and Sivakumar, 1999: 40).

In summary, defining work is always performed in connection with a particular activity and a purpose to which it is subservient. It is clear that certain conventions as to how to perform the act of definition are more actively felt and enforced in some contexts than others. Variations in the form, style and content of definition and the degree to which definitions are controlled, monitored and refined, depends on the nature of the field and by whom they are produced. Future research on the labour of definition, looking specifically at logics of definition, might further investigate how different defining practices (or ‘logics of definition’) link to different actors, and how their relations alter, either as actors’ preferences change or the nature of the field changes. It is interesting to note how, in the case of social enterprise, SEL altered entirely their disdainful regard for definition when, in 2010 (by then reconstituted as a national coalition), large commercial entities and even some governmental actors seemed intent on applying the term to activities that SEL considered to be wholly outside the acceptable *range of reference*. At that point, SEL implored the government to clarify the definition.

8.2 Conclusion: A dialectic of definition

Based on the discussion above it is possible to conclude the thesis by elaborating the notion of a ‘dialectic of definition’. The first main element of that dialectic focuses on links between institutions and definitions *per se* and concerns the way in which institutions, as stored in definitions, shape the conduct of actors. The second main element focuses on the link between institutions and actors and concerns the way in which actors can alter the meaning of institutions through a labour of definition.

Since institutions do not speak for themselves, their meaning must be constantly communicated. One important way in which this meaning is communicated is through definitions. This is to elaborate on a point which Boltanski makes only in passing when he states that institutions, as the “establishment of types”, are “often *stored in definitions*, so as to be available, when the need arises, to qualify, in a situation of uncertainty, states of affairs that are the object of ambiguous or contradictory usages and interpretations” (2011:75, *emphasis added*). In short, definitions are one way in which the meaning of institutions are stored and circulated.

But definition is both a product (i.e. the definitional statement) and a practice (i.e. act of defining). As such, to the extent that the meaning of an institution is stored and stabilized in definition, the institution itself is susceptible to change through a corresponding change in the definitions of its constitutive concepts. This is precisely the sense in which Lawrence and Suddaby's suggestive notion of '*defining work*' can be taken up and developed. Specifically, defining work can be defined as the activity of fixing (in the twin senses of fastening and mending) the indexical and deontic elements of the conceptual basis of an institution. A major contribution of the thesis is to have established more clearly the nature of this process.

An associated contribution can be made by linking the notion of 'defining work' to that of a 'labour of definition'. This latter concept, which originates in Boltanski's early work (1987), points to the way in which individual instances of defining work accumulate over time, in the sense of many different actors engaging in parallel defining work. The idea of the 'labour of definition', helpfully draws attention to several likely characteristics of the process (pain, persistence, resistance, longevity etc.). The alteration of institutions through a labour of definition is a highly contest process. One reason for this, as suggested by the institutionalist tradition (especially rational choice institutionalists), is that actors tend to build up competences which favour the maintenance of status quo. The labour of definition will, therefore, always entail negotiation with vested interests. Moreover, because of their indexical and deontic character, institutions have inherently distributional consequences (both material and symbolic). They are, in short, political arrangements. As such, the labour of definition is fundamentally a political process (Skinner, 2002). In another sense, it is also interest-driven, since actors will seek to define concepts in a way they believe will maximize their own interests, but not necessarily always doing so effectively.

The 'labour of definition' is also inherently rhetorical, in the sense that the actors are required to communicate their definitions in a persuasive way, and this will have a bearing on the success of attempts at institutional change. However, notwithstanding the softer powers of persuasion, attempts at redefinition will require a coalitional basis and success will depend in large part on the material power and authority of actors – and their coalitions – to enforce conformity to their preferred definition.

Moreover, as we saw in Skinner's account of conceptual change, the conceptual bases of institutions are not infinitely pliable. As the figure of the innovating ideologist suggests, the labour of definition will proceed in piecemeal fashion, grafting and tweaking ideas from other institutional

arenas and conceptual systems. The same point is brought out by institutionalist research which highlights the role of *bricolage* (Campbell, 2010). Indeed, as the concept of bricolage suggests, the conceptual basis of institutions is not a one-to-one relationship (i.e. 1 concept: 1 institution), but rather a matrix. This is illustrated in North's (1990, see also Section 5.2) description of the residential property market in the US. As that example attests, a dense system of rules with a corresponding panoply of definitions, typically hierarchically arranged, constitutes the institutional matrix of the residential property market. The concept of a labour of definition, helps alert us to how the redefinition of the conceptual basis of institutions is unlikely to be the work of a single individual but rather a rich constellation of actors.

The precise configuration of actors is not fixed but rather evolves continually, and, equally importantly, actors' preferences do so too. In one moment, an actor may be working towards redefining a concept in one direction, only to change that direction in a later moment, as their preferences change. As a corollary, the identity and power of coalitional and oppositional blocs involved in a labour of definition are also likely to shift over time. In the case of "social enterprise", the main representative body, Social Enterprise London, shifted from a position of stated antipathy towards definition *per se* (circa 1999), towards one that called for the urgent provision of a definition (in 2010). The kind of semantic looseness that was advantageous to SEL in the late 1990s, as they sought to build a broad membership base, became a serious threat by 2010, as more powerful actors (including the Conservative/Liberal Democrats coalition government) sought to extend the concept to organisational forms and activities (NHS Foundation Trusts) that SEL saw as incompatible.

Importantly, the labour of definition, itself, is institutional in a second sense (i.e. quite apart from the matrix of concepts being redefined). As we saw in Chapter 2, the practice of definition is rule-bound. There are clear rules of conduct relating to different sphere/actors. For example, a representative body might argue strategically for a definition with vague or general *criteria of application* of the form it represents (e.g. 'social enterprise'), precisely to capture the widest potential membership base (*range of reference*), while expressing the most commendatory attitude (*speech act potential*). However, such a definition would be considered entirely inappropriate for a body charged with defining the same concept within the legal context of a contract, or the passage of a bill. Gunn (2003) makes a neat point when he states, in the case of religion, "While academics have the luxury of debating whether the term "religion" is hopelessly ambiguous, judges and

lawyers often do not" (2003:191). In short, actor efforts at defining will be guided by the logics of their 'subject position', and also by the conceptual constraints of their environment.

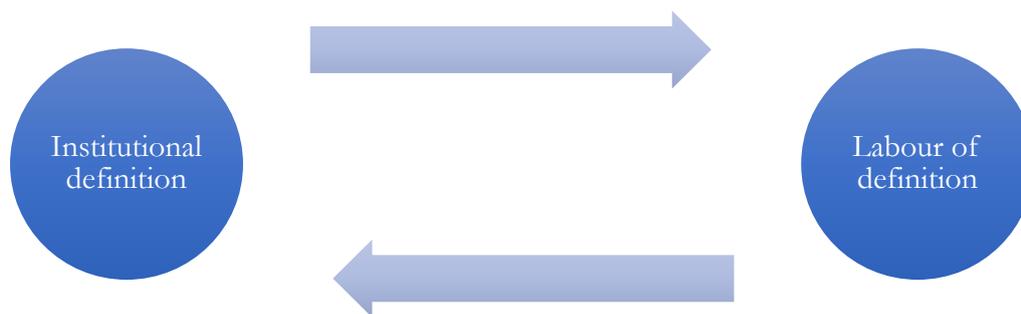
As such, in any contestation over the conceptual basis of an institution, not only the *content* of the definition but also its *form* is likely to change, as a result of the positional logics that actors bring to bear in the labour of definition. In consequence, understanding the labour of definition requires understanding the context of both the act and actor. Jackson (2010) has shown that, what counts as a "shareholder" can change, and this will impact the conduct of an actor so described. Given the tendency of institutions to vary in different national and even regional economic systems, that means the nature of being an actor of a certain type in one context, might differ in another.

That brings the dialectic of definition back to the notion of *institutional definition*. Prevailing institutional definitions exert a *defining force* on actors, establishing the limits of what they can and cannot do. Bourdieu makes a compelling point when he described the "act of institution" as "an act of communication" that,

"*signifies* to someone what his identity is, but in a way that both expresses it to him and imposes it on him by expressing it in front of everyone (*kategorieren*, meaning originally, to accuse publicly) and thus informing him in an authoritative manner of what he is and what he must be" (Bourdieu, 1991: 121, emphasis in original).

Taken together, the ideas of a labour of definition and institutional definition, provide the basis for thinking about definition and institutions in terms of a dialectic. To the extent that actors pursue institutional change (be it maintenance, creation or disruption), through a labour of definition, they do so by invoking one institutional matrix (that associated with the practice of definition) in order to alter the conceptual base of another. This point is brought out clearly in Green and Li's (2011) discussion of rhetorical institutionalism, which also posits a dialectic movement between actors' strategic manipulation of structures through linguistic practices, and linguistic structures manipulating and using the actors. This helps avoid some of the charges which have been brought against institutional theory (Cooper *et al*, 2008). Specifically, the dialect of definition does not require a theorisation of institutional change which involves actors stepping-out of the institutional matrix in order to orchestrate change.

Figure 8. 2: The dialectic of definition



We can now summarize the ‘dialectic of definition’ in the following way: All institutions have a conceptual basis comprised, minimally, of indexical and deontic elements. Institutions differ, with respect to how formally coded these conceptual elements are. This points to the *concept of institutional definition*. However, the semantic elements of an institution are liable to action aimed at their ‘fixing’ (the twin senses of being fastened and mended) through definition. The concepts of ‘*labour of definition*’ and ‘*defining work*’ draw attention to the actors, who by virtue of their positioning in diverse field locations, engage in varied acts of definition, which, by altering conceptual meaning, can result in the creation, maintenance and/or disruption of institutions.

Since institutions are inherently distributional arrangements (both materials and symbolic), the labour of definition is, necessarily, a political process. As such, actors will seek to define concepts in ways they believe will maximize their own interests, but not necessarily always doing so effectively. Actors’ efforts to do so will be guided by the logics of their ‘subject position’, and within the conceptual constraints of their environment. The labour of definition is an inherently rhetorical act, in the sense that, the actors are required to communicate their ideas in a persuasive way. Although the power of persuasion plays a determining role, the success of attempts at redefinition will depend on the material power and authority of actors – and their coalitions – to enforce conformity to their preferred definition. In the passage of time, those new meanings can become institutionalised (again, institutional definitions) and redefine the structures that shape agency. This may include how actors of certain categories partake in the very practice of definition *per se*.

8.3 Last remarks: The broader value of the thesis

Many advanced capitalist economies are undergoing a process of change involving a patterned expansion of market relationships into aspects of social life which go far beyond the levels envisaged in the 'mixed-economy' plans set in the post-war period (Campbell, 2001; Campbell and Pedersen, 2001; Streeck and Thelen, 2005; Morgan and Whitley, 2012). Roundly characterized as a process of increasing liberalization, nations, including the U.K, have engaged in a process of transferring previously state-run services and entities, such as hospitals and pensions arrangements, over to private companies. Scholars associated with institutional theory have attempted to provide clearer accounts of the process through which such change is achieved. Despite many advances having been made, several important areas remain in need of further investigation. One such area, this thesis has argued, concerns the role of definition.

This thesis has attempted to address that gap by considering the role of definition in the process of institutional change. To do so, it investigated the development of the idea of "social enterprise" in the UK. Of central empirical concern was how, why, and to what effect various actors, at different times, engaged in 'defining work' aimed at narrowing, widening, or infusing different values into the meanings of 'social enterprise'. It has shown that 'defining work' and the 'labour of definition' are important mechanisms in the emergence of new institutions.

In addition to a theoretical contribution to institutionalism, the thesis connects to broader developments in 'organisation theory'. Moving beyond traditional conceptions of organisations as physical entities with formal systems and structures, an increasingly important area of research within organisational studies concerns the manner in which diverse social elements (e.g. events, concepts, places, identities - both organisational and individual, etc) become organized through language (Chia, 2003; Westwood and Linstead, 2001) and the political and social implications of such processes (Lilley, 2001; Brewis, 2001). The spirit of this reorientation is well expressed by Chia (2003) who has urged us to, "think about Organisation Studies not as the study of "organisations," but as a sustained analysis of the generic organisational impulses shaping contemporary modes of analysis, codes of behaviour, social mechanisms, dress, gestures, postures, the rules of law, disciplines of knowledge, and so on" (2003:98). Central to what Chia (2003) describes as 'organisational impulses' are a range of practices that share in common both a discursive quality and an ordering effect. These include naming, labelling, classifying, categorising,

cataloguing, listing, annexing and, importantly, defining. Arguably, these acts are among the core organisational processes, by means of which, social reality is systematically constructed, sustained, challenged and modified. This thesis has found much support for that view.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Event History Database

Chronology of key events, actors and texts

Date	Event	Actors	Texts
Summer 1996	EMES, a network of European academics, commences research into 'the emergence of social enterprises in Europe'	EMES Network (funded through 'Targeted Socio-Economic Research' (TSER) programme of the European Commission (DGXII).)	
January 1997	Demos, a think tank, publishes a report on "Social entrepreneurs".	Charles Leadbeater (Demos)	The Rise of the Social Entrepreneur
May 1997	NEF, a think tank, publish report in the UK on "Social entrepreneurs"	Stephen Thake and Simon Zadek (New Economics Foundation)	Practical People, Noble Causes: how to support community-based social entrepreneurs
October 1998	Social Enterprise Zones (SEZs) promoted by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, along with the Institute of Public Policy Research, Business in the Community and Community Links.	Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR); Business in the Community; Community Links	
November 1998	PAT3 established.	PAT3; DTI	
1 December 1998	Baroness Glenys Thornton defines and advocates 'social enterprise' in House of Lords. Presents it as a modern expression of the co-operative values	Baroness Glenys Thornton (Labour Peer)	Text of Baroness Thornton speech (Hansard archive)
2 January 1999	Social Enterprise London (SEL), launched at a one-day workshop on January 27, titled Social Enterprise Social Inclusion	Social Enterprise London	
November 1999	Publication of PAT3's Enterprise and Social Exclusion. Calls for recognition of "social enterprise" as a category.	PAT3 (HM Treasury); DTI	PAT3's Enterprise and Social Exclusion

10 November 1999	£30 million "Phoenix Fund" established to encourage entrepreneurs in disadvantaged areas		
October 1999	Treasury sets up Social Investment Taskforce, headed up by Ronald Cohen, to review ways of delivering finance to deprived communities to support regeneration	Social Investment Taskforce; UK Social Investment Forum; Sir Ronald Cohen, founder and chairman of Apax Partners, one of the largest venture capital firms in Europe.	Enterprising Communities: Wealth Beyond Welfare
December 2000	IPPR publish report on financing small community based "micro entrepreneurs"	IPPR	Micro-entrepreneurs: creating enterprising communities
March 2001	SEL builds on earlier project to develop web materials on Understanding Social Enterprise with the Small Business Service and the British Bankers' Association. Maintains that there is a no point in defining social enterprise.	Social Enterprise London; Small Business Service; British Bankers' Association	Introducing Social Enterprise
March 2001	IPPR/Andrea Westall publish policy-oriented paper advising government on social enterprise (including definition)	Andrea Westall; IPPR; DTI	Value-Led Market-Driven: Social enterprise solutions to public policy goals
30 May 2001	Creation of a "Coalition for Social Enterprise" at the SEL 2001 conference	Coalition for Social Enterprise	
31 May 2001	NEF publish research on finance for social enterprise (prepared for the SEL national conference)	New Economics Foundation; SEL	Homeopathic Finance – Equitable Capital for Social Enterprises
2001	EMES Network publish first major academic text on Social Enterprise (with a contribution by Roger Spear on the UK)	EMES Network; Roger Spear	
3 July 2001	Prime Minister announces a review of voluntary sector law and regulation	Tasked to Performance and Innovation Unit (PIU); taken forward by the Strategy Unit	
July 2001	Team of researchers at Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research, led by Professor Smallbone, publish final report to the Small Business Service	Professor David Smallbone, Dr Mel Evans, Ignatius Ekanem, Steven Butters	Researching Social Enterprise: Final Report to the Small Business Service

12 April 2002	Draft legislation published for the Community Investment Tax Credit , a tax credit to promote enterprise in deprived areas. First proposed Social Investment Task Force's <i>Enterprising Communities</i> ..		
26 July 2002	The Department of Trade and Industry announce plan to open its business support programmes, such as Business Links, to social enterprises.	DTI	
23 July 2002	Government's Social Enterprise Unit publish first official strategy document	Social Enterprise Unit, SBS, DTI	Social Enterprise: a strategy for success
Aug 2002	London Social Economy Taskforce publish report on supporting social enterprise in London	London Social Economy Taskforce	A Social Enterprise Business Support Strategy for London: Time to Deliver
23 August 2002	Jim Brown publishes a critical insider account of definition	Jim Brown	Social enterprise - so what's new?
September 2002	Government, led by Treasury, commence review of the role of the Voluntary and Community Sector (defined so as to include social enterprise) in public service delivery	HM Treasury	1) The Role of the Voluntary and Community Sector in Service Delivery: A Cross Cutting Review. 2) Technical Paper: The Role of Social and Community Enterprise in Service Delivery
September 2002	Government begins exploring a new legal model for social enterprises following reports of regulatory difficulties	The Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office.	Private Action, Public Benefit: A Review of Charities and the Wider Not-For-Profit Sector
September 2002		The Strategy Unit, Cabinet Office.	Private Action, Public Benefit: Organisational forms for social enterprise
8 November 2002	Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) hold talks with the Government to explore how National Health Service spending could be redirected to boost enterprise and employment in deprived areas.	RDAs	Regeneration & Renewal (8 November 2002)

6 December 2002	Home Office launch a £2.5 million venture capital fund for community-led businesses. Part of a pilot project ahead of a large-scale government backed fund for the social enterprise sector.	Home Office; (led by the Active Community Unit and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, with support from the DTA, the Scarman Trust, the New Economics Foundation and the Local Investment Fund	
31 January 2003	The Scottish Executive publish first report on social economy and social enterprise. Laurence Demarco, chief executive of Social Enterprise Network Scotland (Senscot), states disappointment at focus on how social enterprises can help to deliver public services rather than the contribution that the sector can make in its own right.	Scottish Executive; Laurence Demarco (SENSCOT)	The Social Economy Review
7 March 2003		John Pearce	Social Enterprise in Anytown
March 2003	Following the 2002 regulatory review (Private Action, Public Benefit) DTI publish proposals for CICs	DTI	Enterprise for Communities: Proposals for Community Interest Company
March 2003	SEL publish a guidance document advising social enterprise on potential legal forms. The advisory component created by Bates, Wells and Braithwaite	Bates, Wells and Braithwaite and Social Enterprise London	Keeping it legal: legal forms for social enterprises
2 May 2003	The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) published a report claiming that community interest companies (CICs), the Government's new bespoke legal form for social enterprise, may duplicate the function of the already widely used public interest companies (PICs).	IPPR	In the Public Interest? Assessing the Potential of Public Interest Companies
30 May 2003	SEC publish Social Enterprise in the English RDAs, and in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The report produced by Peter Lloyd Associates for SEC by commission.	SEC	Social Enterprises in the English RDAs, and in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland
May 2003	Bank of England publish a report exploring the financial environment for social enterprise	Bank of England	The Financing of Social Enterprises: A Special Report by the Bank of England

	Public health minister, Hazel Blears, publishes report through Fabian Society supporting the transfer of public services to communities and social enterprise	Hazel Blears	Communities in Control: Public Services and Local Socialism
2 July 2003	Update announced at cdfa conference in Cardiff		Enterprising communities: Wealth beyond welfare. - A 2003 update on the Social Investment Task Force
31 July 2003	Ecotec guidance on definition	ECOTEC	Guidance on Mapping Social Enterprise
	SEC publish advocacy report	SEC	There's more to business than you think
October 2003	Government publishes findings of CIC consultation.	DTI	Enterprise for Communities: Proposals for Community Interest Company
3 October 2003	At Labour Party conference in Blackpool, Social Enterprise Coalition chief Baroness Thornton slams the trade unions as 'protectionist' against social enterprise	Baroness Thornton (SEC)	?
31 October 2003	A progress report published this week by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) outlines its achievement over the past year and priorities for the next two years.	DTI	Strategy for Success: A Progress Report
	Jonathan Bland states that a UK-wide social enterprise mapping exercise will be carried out to provide information on the size of the sector.		
Nov 2003		DTI	Public Procurement: a Toolkit for Social Enterprises
16 January 2004	Social Enterprise Unit to be moved into the Small Business Service (SBS), prompting fears that it will lose its focus and influence. Plans met with widespread alarm (Jonathan Bland, SEC; and Andrea Westall, deputy director of think-tank the New Economics Foundation)	Jonathan Bland (SEC); Andrew Westall (NEF)	
23 January 2004	Ministers commit to allowing the SEU to continue with its current remit and scope after meeting with representatives from the Social Enterprise Coalition (SEC) and other industry stakeholders.	SEC; SENU	

31 March 2004	The London Business School publish report showing the number of social enterprises to have 'exploded' over the past three years	Rebecca Harding (London Business School)	Social Entrepreneurship Monitor: UK
20 April 2004	The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) publishes report on Voluntary and community sector (VCS). Claims that organisations that want to become more self-sustaining by forming social enterprises are struggling to do so because of unresolved 'contradictions' associated with these types of businesses. The report recommends establishing a clear definition of what social enterprise means.	Charities Aid Foundation (CAF)	Social Enterprise in the Balance: Challenges for the Voluntary Sector (2004) CAF
		DTI	Public Procurement: A Toolkit for Social Enterprises
26 May 2004	Enterprising Solutions, the National Social Enterprise Award, has this year been extended to charities that run successful social enterprises with a turnover greater than £3m.		
11 June 2004	Liam Black and Jeremy Nicholls publish book on social enterprise		There's No Business Like Social Business: How to be Socially Enterprising
June 2004		Co-operativesUK and Partners	Social Enterprises with a Wide Market Focus
July 2004		SEC	Unlocking the Potential - a Guide to Finance for Social Enterprises
July 2004		BRASS for Triodos Bank	Turning Big Ideas into Viable Social Enterprise
27 August 2004	Abbie Rumbold voices concerns that the legal form may restrict social entrepreneurs' freedom of movement	Abbie Rumbold (Bates)	A tailored straitjacket? Regeneration & Renewal - 27 August 2004
3 September 2004	Christopher Mawdsley and Stuart MacDonald argue that SE should be more about social than about enterprise.		Social Enterprise: Funding the fourth sector
September 2004		Bridges Community Ventures	Equity-like capital for social ventures

17 November 2004	Department of Health publish a report which identifies social enterprise as a preferred delivery vehicle	Dept.of Health	Choosing Health: Making healthy choices easier
February 2005	HM Treasury publish report which explores the role of the 'Third Sector' in public service delivery	HM Treasury	Exploring the role of the third sector in public service delivery and reform: a discussion document
27 May 2005	An academic periodical, the Social Enterprise Journal, was launched last week by sector organisation Social Enterprise London. Carries article by Dr. Helen Haugh calling for agreement on definition	Social Enterprise Journal	A Research Agenda for Social Enterprise (2005)
27 June 2005		Home Office: The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) was research partner	Working with the Third Sector
15 July 2005	The Department of Trade and Industry published its survey of the social enterprise sector results. The survey says there are about 15,000 UK social enterprises - defined as firms with social aims.' Debate as to the adequacy of the definition.	IFF Research Ltd for The Small Business Service	Survey of Social Enterprises Across the UK
2005		GHK	Review of the Social Enterprise Strategy: A Final Report
2005		Steve Schofield	The Case Against Social Enterprise
28 October 2005	A report from think-tank the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) says that the democratic structure of co-operatives - non-profit organisations owned and managed by their members - means they are better placed than private firms to take on childcare services tendered by public agencies.	IPPR for Co-operativesUK	Co-operative social enterprise and its potential in public service delivery
16 November 2005	Social enterprise is a bit of a tricky catch-all, but it's good to have somewhere to put things such as co-operatives, development trust associations, intermediate labour markets and the trading arms of charities,' said Ogden-Newton. 'They are businesses that produce a social return on investment, but to quantify that you'll have to take it on a case-by-case basis.'	Ogden-Newton (SEL)	

30 Jan 2006	A Social Enterprise Unit is set up in the Department of Health to support the development of social enterprises in this area. Plans announced that DH, working with the Office of the Third Sector, would be leading a programme of pathfinder projects in 2006–07 and 2007–08 to support "those wishing to set up social enterprise models from within the NHS and local authorities"	Dept.of Health	Our health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services
March 2006	GHK submit an international literature review on social enterprise to the SBS/SEnU.	GHK (in association with Toby Johnson and Roger Spear)	Social Enterprise: An International Literature Review
26 April 2006		King's Fund	Social Enterprise and Community-Based Care
24 May 2006	Organisations representing charities, co-operatives, housing associations, trade unions and social enterprises have united to form the Third Sector Network. The Third Sector Network will attempt to influence the Government's review of the sector and its role in social and economic regeneration.		
26 May 2006	New third sector minister Ed Miliband begins 'largest ever consultation with the third sector' on delivering the sector's future in social and economic regeneration. The new unit cuts across the Department of Trade and Industry's responsibility for social enterprise, the Department for Communities and Local Government's interest in neighbourhoods, and the Home Office's role in cohesion and civil society.	Ed Miliband (strong links to Brown in HM Treasury); Office of the Third Sector	Comments by Sukhvinder Stubbs, chief executive of the Barrow Cadbury Trust, in Regeneration & Renewal
26 May 2006	The action plan designed to boost the growth of social enterprise is delayed so that Ed Miliband, the newly-installed minister for the third sector can 'put his own stamp' on its contents, it emerged last week. Alun Michael, who was then industry and regions minister, said the plan would attempt to open markets up to social enterprise by working to remove obstacles to the sector's growth (R&R, 27 January, p3).	Ed Miliband; Office of the Third Sector	
26 May 2006	Third sector minister, Ed Miliband, reveals figures showing at least 55,000 social enterprises - with an annual turnover of pounds 27 billion.	Ed Miliband; Office of the Third Sector	

9 June 2006	The Prime Minister writes a letter to Hilary Armstrong, the new minister for social exclusion at the Cabinet Office, stating "'Within a year you should aim to have achieved a step change in the provision of public services by social enterprises, charities and other third sector organisations, particularly in areas such as the National Offender Management Service, children's services, health, employment services and community care'".		
23 June 2006	Sir Ronald Cohen makes a speech to annual Community Development Finance Association conference. He says Britain is about to enter an 'age of social entrepreneurship' - but only if more is done to persuade the private sector to invest in businesses in deprived areas. His speech uses a broad definition of social enterprise, incorporating the regenerative impact of small business growth and the influence of corporate social responsibility objectives on investor decisions.	Sir Ronald Cohen	Text of speech to Community Development Finance Association conference
2006	ACEVO hold annual conference under the theme of 'What's in a name? Social Enterprise versus Charity'	ACEVO	Conference proceedings
July 2006	The Commission on Unclaimed Assets (led by Sir Ronald Cohen) publish report exploring the use of Unclaimed Assets to fund a "social bank"	The Commission on Unclaimed Assets	A Social Investment Bank: Consultation Paper
26 July 2006	A Surrey Primary Care Trust has stalled the launch of the first social enterprise NHS service provider after coming under pressure from a healthcare union.	Surrey Primary Care Trust; UNISON?	
11 October 2006	A group of UK umbrella bodies form a coalition, Enterprise for All, to lobby government on ways in which it can help people launch their own businesses, including social enterprises. Its six members: The Social Enterprise Coalition, the Black Training and Enterprise Group, the Community Development Finance Association, the National Federation of Enterprise Agencies, Prime and Prowess.	Enterprise for All Coalition	Enterprise for all: Progressing the Agenda
2006	CAF publish report (research conducted by NEF) exploring a social stock exchange	CAF Bank Ltd; New Economic Foundation	Developing a Social Equity Capital Market
16 November 2006	Social Enterprise Action Plan launched by Chancellor Gordon Brown with Cabinet Office ministers Hilary Armstrong and Ed Miliband. Jonathan Bland, chief executive of the Coalition, said his key wish was that the Government would promote as a distinct business model.		Social enterprise action plan: Scaling new heights

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