

Abstract

The present master thesis focuses on social innovation, a concept that fuels currently hot debates in academia and in policy-making circles. I employ qualitative methods and spotlight the ways that social innovation is enacted through a social entrepreneurship infrastructure, namely that of Impact Hub Vienna. By analyzing materials collected in site, I sketch out 1) how actors of business models of social ventures are depicted in workshops, 2) the tacit imperatives that are imposed onto target groups and social entrepreneurs 3) as well as the benefits reserved by incubation programs for paying stakeholders. Contrasting my findings with existing theory of Science and Technology Studies on business models, I argue that business models of social ventures entail two main processes: 1) estrangement for target groups and 2) expertization of partners. The second process implies that in this paradigm of social innovation, legitimization of the concept in general and the social ventures in particular stems from funding organizations. I argue that the process of expertization of funding partners signals the emergence of a new model of social governance, in which private organizations assume a more active role in matters with deep sociopolitical content. Finally, by reflecting on the sociopolitical dimensions of this social innovation, I show that the concept cannot be considered as serving a progressive political agenda and a process of positive social transformation.