

## Coming to Terms with the Empowerment-Complicity Tension in Social Entrepreneurship

### ABSTRACT

Despite their emancipatory aspirations, collective entrepreneurial efforts to change organizations bottom-up are often complicit with the power structures they seek to transform. Our study takes a closer look at how workers experience and deal with the tensions between emancipation and complicity and how this can inform the entrepreneurial process. Empirically, we draw from a qualitative single-case study of a private contemporary art museum in Russia, in which museum workers venture entrepreneurial initiatives to create the museum as an inclusive and politicized organization. Engaging with literature on affective embodiment, our findings suggest that vulnerability and critical hope are key in understanding how discomfort about complicity fosters critical reflections that reinvigorates hopeful entrepreneurial efforts for emancipation and new organizational responses. We show how this interplay drives entrepreneurial initiatives, spiraling the entrepreneurial process in an affective movement towards expansion or fragmentation. We contribute to scholarship on entrepreneurship by highlighting the affective and processual nature of dealing with the interlacing of emancipation and complicity, and to scholarship on affective embodiment, by deepening our understanding of the conditions that shape our ability to stay affected by our implication in power relations and harness these experiences in our organizational efforts for better futures.

### ENT Keywords

Critical perspectives on entrepreneurship, qualitative research, social entrepreneurship