

THE ART OF DIS-RUPTION

GROWING SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP
IN THE DISABILITY SECTOR



SEE
DIFFERENTLY.
VALUE DEEPLY.



CREATE
BOLDLY.
INNOVATE
TOGETHER.



INCLUDE
EVERYONE.
EMPOWER
COMMUNITIES.



BUILD
SUSTAINABLE.
TRANSFORM
SYSTEMS.

DISABILITY IS NOT A LIMITATION.
IT IS A SOURCE OF INNOVATION.

The Art of Dis-ruption: Growing Social Entrepreneurship in the Disability Sector

By Andreas Fasoulides, SENCY Informal Framework, Cyprus

Opening

For a long time, society has had one main relationship with people with disabilities: charity.

We've been told that the right response is sympathy, goodwill, and pity.

We've placed disabled creators in specialist galleries and isolated "social corners," far away from where ordinary people shop, celebrate, and live.

I came here today to talk about a different approach entirely.

"The Art of Dis-ruption" it's about combining creative expression with real business thinking.

Not to beg for a seat at the table, but to build something entirely new.

The core idea is simple: disability is not a limitation.

It is a source of genuine innovation , cultural and economic.

Today I want to walk you through a practical way to bring inclusive art into the mainstream market.

Not the charity market.

The real one.



Phase 1: Changing How We Think

Before we change anything in the world, we need to change how we think about it.

The old model says: "I have a disability, so I receive help."

Our model says: "I am a creator, so I create value."

That is a fundamental shift and it matters enormously.

In social entrepreneurship, we're not just chasing profit.

We're working to remove the invisible barriers that stop talented people from reaching the market in the first place and our main tool for doing that is art.

Why art? Because art does something remarkable.

It bypasses people's assumptions.

When someone sees a beautifully crafted ceramic piece or hears a compelling rhythm, they don't think about the medical history of the person who made it.

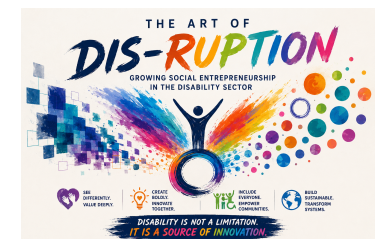
They simply connect with the work itself.

Human diversity is not a problem to manage.

It's an enormous creative resource that most of the economy hasn't even begun to tap.

Different life experiences produce different ways of seeing, making, and solving problems.

Where the traditional system sees a deficit, we see something irreplaceable.



Phase 2: Three Pillars of an Arts-Driven Social Enterprise

Here is how we actually build it.

The first is Creative Activation.

Stop trying to force people into industrial, standardized production molds.

Embrace what I call the "off-center" process , work that deliberately breaks from convention.

For example, think of a ceramic vessel that's intentionally, carrying the visible fingerprints of the person who made it. That's not a flaw. That's the point.

We build workshop spaces , focused on clay, rhythm, adaptive materials, whatever fits the group , where people can explore genuine self-expression without being judged or corrected into conformity.

The second pillar is Universal Design and Material Innovation.

Accessibility can't be an afterthought. It needs to be built into the business from the very beginning.

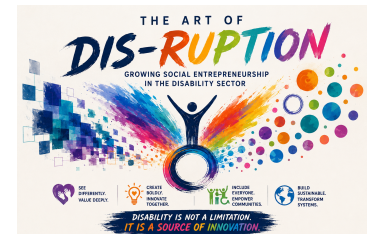
That means adaptive tools, flexible working environments, and setups where everyone can participate fully and safely.

And it connects directly with sustainability.

When we use recycled, upcycled, or locally sourced materials, we're not just reducing waste , we're adding another layer of value to the product.

The modern consumer cares about where things come from and how they're made.

That's an advantage, not an obstacle.



The third pillar is Market Penetration , going "Pop."

This one is critical. Our products must be genuinely excellent. We do not want people buying our work out of pity. We want them buying it because it's beautiful, well-made, contemporary, and worth the money.

Good branding and a strong story are what move inclusive art out of the charity corner and into the mainstream.

That's the goal: not a separate shelf labeled "social enterprise" , but products that stand on their own in any shop, market, or gallery.

Phase 3: The SENCY Framework What We Do in Cyprus

Now, let me get practical.

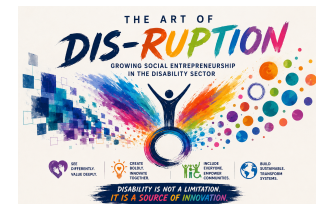
Because I know what some of you are thinking: "This all sounds great, but where do we actually start? Official structures take months to set up. Bureaucracy slows everything down."

That's exactly why we developed the SENCY Informal Framework.

We don't wait for official approval before we start creating value.

We begin as an informal group , lean, flexible, and moving.

Here's how it works, in four steps:



Step 1: Form Co-Design Committees.

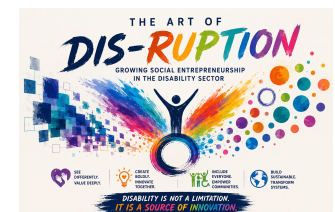
Don't plan this alone behind a desk. Bring together disabled creators, professional artists, designers, and business mentors in the same room. Co-Design your products together. When creators have real ownership and real say in what gets made, the energy of the whole enterprise changes completely.

Step 2: Act as a Bridge.

Stop seeing local government, municipalities, and community councils as obstacles. Position your collective as a professional partner , the link between civil society and public institutions. When you go to them, don't ask for charity. Offer a partnership. Show them what you bring to the table: creative energy, community connection, and a project they can genuinely be proud to support.

Step 3: Secure Grassroots Funding.

Every enterprise needs resources. Map out local and European grants in areas like youth empowerment, social inclusion, arts, and the circular economy. These funds exist , you just need to find and apply for them strategically. Approach local businesses for CSR sponsorships, but frame it well. Don't offer them a logo on a poster. Offer them the chance to be visibly connected to a real cultural movement. And keep your finances completely transparent from the start. Trust is your most valuable early asset.



Step 4: Launch Pop-Up Experiences.

Skip the traditional gallery model.

Instead, curate multi-sensory pop-up events , in cafes, public gardens, markets, festivals.

Take your music, your ceramics, your workshops, and your design to where people already are.

Show the public that inclusion doesn't look like an institution.

It looks like a celebration.

Phase 4: Staying Sustainable as You Grow

As your initiative gains traction, a new challenge appears: **how do you keep going without burning out or losing what made it special?**

First look after your people.

The passion that drives social entrepreneurs is also what can destroy them.

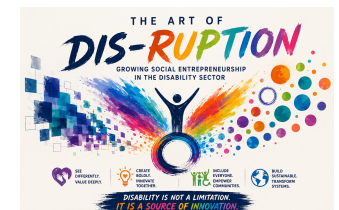
Burnout is real.

Any serious social enterprise must build in time for rest, reflection, and mutual support.

Mentorship networks, regular check-ins, genuine care for the people doing the work , these aren't extras. They're essential.

And Second, when we talk about scaling, we don't mean becoming a large, impersonal organisation. We mean sharing the model.

Take this framework and offer it freely to other communities , other villages, other cities, other countries. Build a cooperative network where groups learn from each other, collaborate across borders, and grow together. That's how a real movement works.



Closing

My friends, this work is more than a presentation topic.

It's an invitation to stop waiting for permission.

**To stop trying to fit into systems that were never designed to include you and
to start building something better with your own hands.**

Use the power of art.

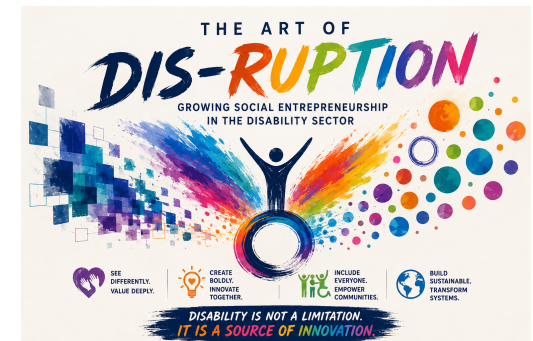
Activate your local communities.

**Work with lean, flexible structures and create a new kind of economy ,
one that's more accessible, more creative, and genuinely more colourful.**

So.

Let's step forward together and build a world that's beautifully off-center.

Thank you.



ANDREAS FASOULIDES · SENCY · CYPRUS

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