

Book Review

Janelle A. Kerlin¹

Philippe Eynaud, Jean-Louis Laville, Luciane Lucas dos Santos, Swati Banerjee, Flor Avelino and Lars Hulgård: *Theory of Social Enterprise and Pluralism. Social Movements, Solidarity Economy, and the Global South*

¹ Public Management and Policy, Georgia State University, 14 Marietta St NW, Suite 356, Atlanta, Georgia 30303, USA, E-mail: jkerlin@gsu.edu

DOI: 10.1515/npf-2019-0062

Book Review of *Theory of Social Enterprise and Pluralism: Social Movements, Solidarity Economy, and the Global South*, Philippe Eynaud, Jean-Louis Laville, Luciane Lucas dos Santos, Swati Banerjee, Flor Avelino and Lars Hulgård (Eds.), New York: Routledge, 2019, Hardback: \$124.00, eBook: \$28.98, ISBN: 9780429291197, 262 pages.

The edited volume, *Theory of Social Enterprise and Pluralism: Social Movements, Solidarity Economy, and the Global South*, offers one of the first critiques of the different global manifestations of social enterprise. Moving past definitional arguments, the authors isolate three types of social enterprise engagement based on prior comparative research, and assess their capacity for transformative institutional social change. They assert that while Northern discourses and practices have given rise to social business and collective forms of social enterprise, this discourse often overlooks the solidarity economy form found in the Global South and the South in the Global North. Drawing on a historical review and empirical and theoretical studies from five countries in the South and North, the authors argue that rather than continue on a path of philanthropic solidarity and capitalist engagement, the social enterprise cause should embrace democratic solidarity activism towards egalitarian systemic change.

In the opening chapter, Luciane Lucas dos Santos and Swati Banerjee, discuss the Western economic colonization of the social enterprise discourse, establishing its lack of economic democracy. To do this they identify five “absences” in the discourse. They first point out how hasty technical answers offered by individual social entrepreneurs to address predetermined goals crowd out better matched solutions and performance expectations determined by collectivities themselves. Speaking again to underrepresentation, they find a second absence in the lack of participation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes, groups whose views, if heard, are often interpreted or edited. A third identified absence is the underappreciation of how the different ways civil societies in the South communicate and organize informally around social enterprise. Fourth, the authors note the need to recognize the economic role of women in reciprocity, redistribution, and householding. The final absence speaks to how marginalized groups cannot fully participate without political autonomy to build their own capacities. Many of these themes are reflected in later chapters and offer a path for the deconstruction of the dominant Western social enterprise discourse and a re-construction of a new discourse.

Jean-Louis Laville and Philippe Eynaud trace the historical alternation of philanthropic and democratic solidarities in chapter two to highlight possibilities for redesigning social enterprise in a democratic solidarity frame. Philanthropic solidarities encompass periods of time when capitalism and economic liberalism dominate and market failures are addressed through social action that is largely charitable in nature, including voluntary giving and the newer forms of corporate social responsibility and benefit corporations. Democratic solidarity, on the other hand, is based on the idea of citizen-based associationism and manifest in combinations of social movements, citizen initiatives and the economy that promote a more egalitarian economy. Relatedly, the concept of solidarity economy linked to social economy in Europe and South America is defined by the authors as, “a set of activities contributing to democratize the economy through citizen’s involvement” (pg. 39) and elsewhere as “a mix between the social economy and social movements” (pg. 45).

Janelle A. Kerlin is the corresponding author.

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In chapter three, the same two authors propose three conceptual versions of social enterprise. The first two are based in part on existing social enterprise schools of thought in North America and Europe: the third sector and social business, which together comprise the first version, and the social economy, the second version. They then argue for a third version, the solidarity economy, which in contrast to the social and collective entrepreneurs of the first two, involves institutional entrepreneurship to promote the development of intermediary public spaces of deliberation towards a more egalitarian society. The remainder of the volume engages in examination and promotion of this third concept, the solidarity economy.

The next six chapters draw on theorized case studies of solidarity-type social enterprises in five different countries. In chapter four, Lars Hulgård and Linda Lundgaard Andersen use “thick description and weak theory” to examine the reconciliation of a growing solidarity economy and continuation of the Welfare State in Scandinavian countries. Chapter five, by Isabelle Hillenkamp and Luciane Lucas Dos Santos, offers a feminist critique of social enterprise in the Global South with case studies from Brazil. They show that women can draw from a domestic base to build solidarity and community economic initiatives that open up alternative political arenas. In chapter six, Swati Banerjee and Abdul Shaban, use examples from India to argue for greater attention to the realities of structural inequality and the grassroots societal context of the Global South and call for bottom-up, people-centric social change through collective action.

Chapter seven, by Genauto Carvalho de Franca Filho, Araidne Scalfoni Rigo, and Washington Jose de Souza, proposes an analytical grid to map how each of the social enterprise versions identified in chapter three reconcile the economic and the social; they then apply the grid to Brazilian social enterprises. In chapter eight, Elisabetta Bucolo looks at the infiltration of the crime economy into the market economy in Italy and discusses how solidarity-type social enterprises can work through their own established networks and political leaders to navigate this terrain. Chapter nine by Pedro Hespana, shows how in Portugal the popular and informal economy, a part of the solidarity economy, has been made invisible through a lack of institutional recognition by government; he calls for its measured acceptance by official institutions.

In a departure from previous chapters, chapter 10 by Flor Avelino and Julia M. Wittmayer, uses a multi-actor, international perspective to discern the transformative potential of the three versions of social enterprise (identified in chapter three) to shift power relations across actors. They find that each of their three case studies manifests elements from at least two of the social enterprise versions, though these can shift; moreover, they each show different kinds of transformative potential in terms of their ability to confront various power relations on micro and macro levels (with social business contained largely to the micro-level). Thus, rather than promote one social enterprise version over the others the authors recommend combining them to create synergies across the strengths of each to effect more powerful transformative change.

The concluding chapter by Lars Hulgård, Flor Avelino, Philippe Eynaud, and Jean-Luis Laville, returns to the discussion in the first three chapters, calling for more engagement with a solidarity economy approach to social enterprise. The authors specifically warn against the continuation of a social business approach including venture philanthropy, corporate social responsibility, and social impact bonds as mechanisms that shore up the current neoliberal capitalist economy that generates inequalities. They maintain that these philanthropic outlays only serve to legitimize, sustain, and intensify the current capitalist hegemony. By contrast solidarity-type social enterprises can become “vehicles for re-embedding the economy in the fabric of society” (pg. 231) towards a more moral economy.

This volume provides a unique critique of three forms of social enterprise most often discussed in comparative texts on social enterprise. While much of the focus has been on American, British, and continental European forms of social enterprise, there is a growing awareness of the politicized social enterprise activities of actors in especially South America (Kerlin 2009). This volume effectively captures this latter discussion and significantly raises its profile and potential for effecting policy and systemic change elsewhere. However, as some other scholarship has shown, differences in social enterprise often evolve based on the particular needs, resources, and constraints of a given context (Kerlin 2017; Young, Searing and Brewer 2016). Thus, while the authors call for the diffusion of a more politicized model of social enterprise for the purposes outlined, it must be tempered by an acknowledgement of the current realities in many countries including those in the Global South and North.

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