



## Social and Solidarity-Based Economy and Territory: From Embeddedness to Co-construction

Xabier Itcaina and Nadine Richez-Battesti (eds): *Social Economy and Public Economy*. P.I.E. PETER LANG S.A., Brussels, Belgium

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The centrality of democratic societies is based on the government's role to provide services and the participation of people in the civic system. However, in recent decades the failure of governments to provide such services has given rise to an alternative system that is based on the free market principles of liberty and individual wills that demands the government to facilitate the operation of non-government organizations (NGOs) and make them the purveyor of welfare services. While this so-called third sector has had a successful growth after World War II, it has also lately become subject of critics for not doing enough for the people in need. This edited volume—*Social and Solidarity-based Economy and Territory*—by Xabier Itcaina and Nadine Richez-Battesti presents a myriad of examples to make a case for the relevancy of the third sector in the modern world. It takes a territorial-based approach to understand the various organizations. The book's contribution is limited by focusing on the existing success stories of NGOs and gives little insights into how to respond to the critiques.

The book is a compilation of 12 chapters on the various aspect of social and solidarity-based economy (SSE)-based organization from the Americas and Europe. The chapters are divided into two sections. The first section addresses the concept of 'territory' within the context of how the organizations navigate political and administrative boundaries to reach out to the public. Here, territory is used as a social construct where it acts as a gathering place for people to attempt to resolve environmental constraint and/

or a shared societal or production problem (p. 14). Furthermore, territory relies on governance where it facilitates the appropriation of resources and distribution. These two themes territory and territorial governance are the topics of the two sections.

The first part of the book, *SSE and territory an answer to the socio-economic political changes* contains six chapters that discuss the linkage between SSE and territory, particularly in addressing food supply, job and economic creation and management of common resources like water. The chapters include case studies of organizations from Canada (territorial network), France (cooperative banks), Spain (cross border experiences) Italy (agri-food center), Romania (social enterprise and social capital) and Venezuela (water). They discuss not only the activities of the organizations but also the challenges facing them within the modernistic view of political boundaries and legal structure of various administrative entities. The second part, *towards new heterogeneous forms of territorial cooperation* also contains six chapters and highlights the need for restructuring of local cooperation strategies across various territorial levels. The chapters attempt to answer the question: What role do civil society and public actors play in these processes, which might result in territorially contrasted forms of institutionalization of SSE as a policy-sector? (p. 18). Each chapter presents example of heterogeneity of relationship the organizations face to sustain their activities and remain relevant: Belgium (inclusive economic participation of labor and consumption), Portugal (comparison of social ventures), Spain (social policy), Brazil (training for people with disability), France (sustainable development) and Canada (solidarity-based economy enterprises). The case studies suggest the interdisciplinary scope of SSE-based organization to intervene on social issues and the necessity of the local

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governments to accommodate the diversity of models to enable multiple agencies to provide resources and services to the local community.

The book presents unique and relevant examples for various territorial organizations. One of the critical aspects of SSE-based economy is the repetition and duplication of Fordist economic structure. The whole third sector was established and promoted as an alternative to the government to provide services to local people; however, in the years after 1990 their numbers proliferated globally creating competition for scarce resources (funding) like private entities in the market sector. Unfortunately, the third sector today operates on the same principles that guide corporations to minimize competition through consolidation and mergers. In addition, as corporations and rich individuals become the major donors funding operations of these NGOs, these organizations just emulate the structural and functional principles from the market sector (where donors

come from). It can be said that they are more likely to focus on economic outcomes than social change in the community. Majority of the examples presented in the book also emphasize on the economic outcomes echoing the ongoing political and economic policies of governments in those countries. To bring social change, which is fundamental in democratic societies, these organizations need to broaden their goals and spread to address wider social issues in addition to economic issues.

The book is a good addition to the literature on territory-based organization; however, it has a limited scope to be adopted in academic settings. Organizational staff might find it useful as a referral for territorial and governance topics. Scholars could use the case studies to conduct similar studies to understand SSE-based organizations.

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