

Stream: Social Co-operatives and the Solidarity Economy

Chair: Dr Rory Ridley-Duff

In this stream, we call for papers on the innovations, challenges and opportunities presented by the rise of solidarity enterprises, social and platform cooperatives. To date, social enterprise and entrepreneurship scholarship has been slow to acknowledge the importance of web technologies that permit widespread co-operation in production and investment activities (Murray, 2010). Lund (2011) has argued that solidarity can itself be a business model through a rejection of the idea that socio-economic progress depends on enterprises professionally managed to meet the needs of a single beneficiary group. In solidarity enterprises, the needs of two or more stakeholders are seen as the nexus for a productive tension that leads to both social solidarity and better outcomes for stakeholders and their host communities.

In many types of social enterprise, sovereign decision-making power is entrusted to an individual (venture philanthropist or social entrepreneur), or a sovereign governing body (board of trustees or directors). Solidarity enterprises operate on a different logic, drawing on the democratic traditions of the co-operative movement, but also updating the notion of the common bond. Under 'new co-operativism' (Vieta, 2010) a wider range of members can share sovereignty within a members' assembly, mass meeting or open co-operative.

There have been various critiques of the challenges of multi-stakeholder governance in both social and private enterprises (Sternberg, 1998; Mason, Kirkbride and Bryde, 2007; Griffith, 2009) alongside studies of governance arrangements and practices that mitigate (or seek to thrive on) the tensions that arise (Vinten, 2001; Ridley-Duff, 2007; Lund, 2012; Mason and Doherty, 2014). Whilst conflicts of interest between stakeholders have been described in theory and practice, the success of co-operative institutions involving both savers and borrowers (in credit unions), producers and consumers (in food and social care enterprises) act as counter-arguments attesting to the capacity of democratic institutions to handle complexity.

In Italian social cooperatives, patients, carers and professionals co-produce solutions and

share power as members (Restakis, 2010). In French employment cooperatives, marginalised and disadvantaged workers run micro-businesses with support professionals that trade not only on open markets but also through internal exchange mechanisms (Ridley-Duff and Bull, 2016). The logics of solidarity have yielded new legal forms, designed to support new approaches to multi-stakeholder engagement in ownership and governance (Conaty, 2014; Ridley-Duff, 2015; Troncoso and Utratel, 2015).

Solidarity enterprises have benefited from internet-based technologies that provide a platform for mutual solutions based on member participation in decision-making and/or crowd-funding / investing (Murray, 2010; Lehner, 2013; Scholz and Schneider, 2016). Members can now engage in a sharing economy that can mix modes of economic exchange (redistribution, reciprocity and market) whilst following Ostrom's (1990, 1999) design principles for collective action. For example Mass Mosaic (<http://peoplepower.massmosaic.com>) provides a co-operatively owned and governed platform for producers and users to exchange, gift, borrow, rent, buy and sell anything.

Theories of solidarity are informed by social capital theory (Laville and Nyssens, 2001; Laville, 2014) and co-operative theory on relational goods (Restakis, 2010). From these perspectives, social enterprises led by social entrepreneurs and/or unitary boards are at a disadvantage if their success depends on the co-creation of goods that depend on high quality relationships for their success (as is the case in health and social care, food production, education and service-based industries). In these cases, mutual relations lead to more satisfying outcomes and the egalitarian norms of organising yield both a cooperative and competitive advantage.

We invite you to submit papers on:

- the theorisation and politics of solidarity
- critical perspectives on solidarity
- solidarity enterprises as a critique of neo-liberalism
- ownership, governance and management in solidarity enterprises
- the application of Ostrom's design principles in the field of social entrepreneurship
- case studies of solidarity within and across organisation boundaries

- social enterprises that engage producers, consumers and/or investors in co-production
- social enterprises that allow beneficiaries to serve on boards
- studies of the survival rates and social impacts of solidarity enterprises.

Email: r.ridley-duff@shu.ac.uk