

**DECODING THE  
DIFFERENCES  
BETWEEN**

**SOCIAL AND  
SOLIDARITY  
ECONOMY (SSE),**

**SOCIAL  
ENTREPRENEURSHIP,  
AND RELATED  
INITIATIVES**

AN ANALYSIS BY YVON POIRIER



**ripess**



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# DECODING THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY (SSE), SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND RELATED INITIATIVES

An analysis by Yvon Poirier<sup>1</sup>

## FORWARD

Ten years ago, I published the paper “Social Solidarity Economy and related concepts. Origins and Definitions: An International Perspective” In that same paper, a section briefly presented the social entrepreneurship movement and other generally corporate-led initiatives, such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or social business (a notion invented by Mohamed Yunus). Considering the important space social entrepreneurship has taken up in the last years, rather than revising the 2014 paper, I thought best to write a stand-alone document and present a synthesis of this older document in section 1, which provides a good basis to understand the difference *between social and solidarity economy and social entrepreneurship*.



RIPESS BOARD OF DIRECTORS, MARRAKECH, MORROCO, APRIL 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is based on personal experience and does not necessarily represent points of view of any organisation in which the author is involved. The paper is strictly based on personal observations, websites, and publications. The author is very grateful for advice and amendments from colleagues and friends.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In a context where prospects of achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) contained in the 2030 Agenda are in serious jeopardy, the adoption of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution [A/RES/77/281](#) “Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development” in April 2023 offers a beacon of hope. It provides global recognition and commitments to support the social and solidarity economy (SSE) as an alternative approach that favours more inclusive and sustainable economic development and socio-political empowerment over decision-making processes and resources, and “can play a key role in eliminating poverty and catalysing social transformation, thus helping to achieve the objective of leaving no one behind and to achieve the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals, while ensuring social inclusion.” Together with the adoption by the International Labour Conference (ILC) of the ILO on June 2022 of the landmark [Resolution concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy](#), this UNGA resolution was the culmination of over 25 years of intercontinental coalition-building of the SSE movement (which has much older historical roots under different names), and which included the establishment of the [UN Interagency Taskforce on Social and Solidarity Economy \(UNTFSSSE\)](#)<sup>2</sup> in September 2013.

Given this increasing visibility and political weight of the SSE movement, a very different movement with distinct historical origins, which this paper terms the “social entrepreneurship movement”, has recently made efforts to claim to be part of SSE, or even the “core” of SSE. This was first manifested through the inclusion of [Catalyst 2030](#) (launched at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos in January 2020 as a “social entrepreneur and innovator-led movement responding to a global call to action for people and planet”). The application process for UNTFSSSE Observer status in July 2020 did not mention social entrepreneurs, but rather social enterprises, which is not the same. A second, significant move by the social entrepreneurship movement was an open letter published by Catalyst 2030 on behalf of the Corporate Leadership Council of the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship in September 2023 entitled “Encouraging Private Sector Engagement with the Social Economy”. The letter, co-signed by corporate leaders such as Microsoft Executive Vice-President Jean-Philippe Courtois, among others, expresses support for the implementation of the UN Resolution and calls for “appropriate representation of the private sector in the planning process”.

In light of these developments, this paper has two main objectives. It aims to:

1. Provide a detailed overview of the history of the social entrepreneurship movement and build a better understanding of the sharp differences that exist between it and the SSE movement; this can be especially useful to anyone who may not understand the existing points of divergence, since some of the objectives and narratives appear similar.
2. Outline elements for constructive dialogue between the social entrepreneurship movement and representatives of the SSE movement both within the UNTFSSSE and beyond.

The paper first briefly outlines the origins and definitions of the social and solidarity economy and related concepts from an international perspective. It then covers the history of the social entrepreneurship movement, reviewing some its leading founders and proponents, who often originate in the corporate world, including Ashoka, Skoll Foundation, Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship (presented as a “sister” organisation of the WEF), the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship, and finally Catalyst 2030 (co-founded by Ashoka, Echoing Green, the Schwab Foundation and the Skoll Foundation). These organizations promote similar visions for

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<sup>2</sup> See [Chapter 1 of the UNTFSSSE’s Encyclopaedia of the Social and Solidarity Economy](#).

change. Like SSE organisations, some identify serious problems in our economic system such as poverty and exclusion. In particular, Catalyst 2030's vision of the systemic problems we face is quite close to some of those identified in the SSE movement. However, this vision does not address the fundamental systemic flaws of the corporate-led neoliberal global economic system and it suggests that more social entrepreneurship is the systemic solution.

What at first sight might appear to be similarities in vocabulary and narrative (such as “addressing systemic causes” or “community”) is compounded by the fact that terms such as “social entrepreneurship”, “social enterprise” and “social economy” are used almost interchangeably by the social entrepreneurship movement. The paper aims to disentangle these ambiguities and explains why these terms cannot be treated as synonymous, especially since they mean different things to different people and in different geographical locations. In particular “social economy” can be understood by some only in terms of social purpose, whereas for others it also includes the notion “social ownership”, in the sense of “collective enterprise”, an overarching notion that covers different approaches such as cooperatives, non-profit businesses, producers' associations, etc. The basic principle is the democratic governance of SSE organisations and enterprises (SSEOs). Thanks to the ILO and UNGA resolutions, we now have a universal definition of SSE that notably emphasizes the primacy of people and planet over profit, constraints on profit/surplus distribution, and democratic and/or participatory governance. The different aspects of the definition help to identify who and what SSE truly is. Even if the social entrepreneurship movement sometimes uses the expression social enterprises, this does not *prima facie* qualify them as SSE entities. Social enterprises are only part of SSE insofar as they meet all the criteria in the definition. In other words, some social enterprises are part of SSE, while others are not.

The paper also reviews some of the main initiatives from the private (often corporate) sector and their limitations, including corporate social responsibility (CSR), inclusive business, social business, public private partnerships (PPPs) and various forms of micro-credit (the latter two not to be confused with public-SSE partnerships and solidarity finance-based microfinance). It examines in particular the limitations of some initiatives promoted by Catalyst 2030, including impact investing and social impact bonds, which have been criticized by the SSE movement and some UN sources.

There are conditions that can be put in place to enable cooperation between the private sector and SSE in ways that do not erode SSE principles, mission and values. However, the author is concerned that, in addition to evident risks of “social washing”, the heavy reliance of social entrepreneurs on financing from the corporate sector may hamper their room for maneuver to address the more fundamental root causes of poverty, inequality, exclusion and environmental degradation. He explains that the SSE movement, while firmly anchored in actions at the local territorial level and carrying out activities that could be similar to social entrepreneurship, has a longer-term vision of aiming to alter the fundamental drivers of the unsustainable corporate-led global economic system – which has always been the fundamental motivation for initiating the global SSE movement since the mid- to late- 1990s. This also requires macro-systemic changes such as the measures proposed by Oxfam International on the eve of the 2024 edition of the WEF. These include improving public services, corporate regulation, legislating for living wages, capping CEO pay, and new taxes on the super-rich and corporations, including permanent wealth and excess profit taxes and democratizing the governance of enterprises.

The paper proposes the following elements for a constructive dialogue between the SSE and social entrepreneurship movements. It may be possible to find agreement in upholding fundamental *individual* human rights, but an agreement can be found on the need to balance these human rights with *collective* human rights – in other words, a balance between *individual property rights* and the right to *collective ownership* (whether at the level of the enterprise or wider public goods, including the “Commons” and which does not in any way necessarily imply State ownership).

Within this prism the paper distinguishes two very different and contrasting economic (and socio-political) phenomena:

1. The overwhelming majority of enterprises or organizations involved in an economic activity fall within the category of micro-, small, medium (or even meso-level) enterprises/ organisations that generate by far the greatest amount of employment on this planet. Some are more or less in alignment with the underlying principles of the ILO Decent Work Agenda and wider sustainable development objectives. When this is the case, they can qualify as “sustainable enterprises” as codified by the Conclusions of the 2007 International Labour Conference (ILC) on this subject. Many of these “sustainable enterprises” around the world are family farms and other cooperative forms of economic activity that practice the underlying values of SSE without necessarily themselves being aware of it.
2. In sharp contrast, another cluster of the global economy could be described as a subset of the private sector (commonly termed as the “corporate sector”) that wields immensely disproportionate political power despite their very limited record of decent work creation in comparison with the previous category. Despite its low proportion of decent work creation, this sector disproportionately affects many aspects of the overall body politic. The governance system (which determines how power is wielded) that is based on a “shareholder” formula lies at the heart of the issue. This formula can appear as a form of “collective ownership”, but it stands far outside the realm of the SEE movement’s vision of democracy, since this formula is not based on one-person/worker-one vote but what could be summarily described as “one-dollar-one vote”.

Can one agree with the SSE movement’s central tenet that democracy is not limited to one-citizen-one vote within the realm of parliamentary representation, but needs to extend to the broader spheres of peoples’ lives, including equal rights to vote and participate in the running of both individual enterprises and the broader body politic, whereby voting powers are NOT in any way related to the weight of capital.

This paper is not a critique of small social entrepreneurs that indeed undertake many initiatives that help alleviate micro-causes of inequality, poverty and exclusion. In that sense, their activities are akin to some of those practiced by the SSE movement, insofar as these activities are democratically governed. The question is whether they would be willing to dig deeper into the root causes, and embrace more macro-systemic analyses and recommendations, such as those provided by Oxfam International? Would the corporate patrons of the social entrepreneurship movement, such as the Schwab Foundation and WEF endorse these analyses and recommendations to rein in fast-growing global corporate power and democratize the enterprise?

The author acknowledges that SSE alone cannot change the world. Providing a better future for all humanity implies a holistic approach to tackle all the issues, step by step, from the local to the global, such as the power-shifting measures proposed by Oxfam. He suggests that all social movements, including social entrepreneurs, endorse this much more macro-systemic approach to the underlying challenges of our time.

# INTRODUCTION

Social entrepreneurship movements have been around, mainly in the English-speaking world, for at least 40 years. They have been quite active in promoting this approach by organising different events/forums on a regular basis. Until recently, they have never claimed to be part of Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), to belong to Solidarity Economy or even to the Social Economy. At most, the expression social enterprise has been used.

After the creation of [Catalyst 2030](#) in January 2020, at the occasion of the World Economic Forum in Davos, they applied for observer status at the [UN Interagency Taskforce on Social and Solidarity Economy \(UNTFSSSE\) in July 2020](#). In the letter or application sent to the Chair of the UNTFSSSE, they affirm *“Like you, we believe that the Social and Solidarity Economy holds considerable promise for addressing the economic, social and environmental integrated approaches of sustainable development”*.

For organisations in SSE that have been aware of social entrepreneurship for a long time, this was and remains somewhat surprising. Was this a sudden conversion? Did they understand what SSE is? Was this an attempt to co-opt SSE? Claims such as “social entrepreneurship is the core of SSE” made by a Catalyst 2030 spokesperson at the 13 December, 2022 event at the UNGA, on a forthcoming Resolution on SSE were astonishing for SSE organisations that have promoted and built SSE for the last quarter century.

Before attempting to understand, analyse, and evaluate this new situation from an SSE perspective, it is important to outline:

- The origins and definitions of the social and solidarity economy and related concepts from an international perspective.
- The history of “social” entrepreneurship and other related approaches.



ALEXANDRA VAN DER PLOEG, HEAD OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) AT SAP, A GERMAN MULTINATIONAL SOFTWARE COMPANY, DURING THE 4TH UNTFSSSE TECHNICAL SYMPOSIUM IN MONTREAL (SOURCE: [HTTPS://UNSSSE.ORG](https://unsse.org))



# SECTION 1: ORIGINS AND DEFINITIONS OF THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND RELATED CONCEPTS WITH AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

(Yvon Poirier, June 2014, a Synthesis)

This section is a synthesis of a paper by the author, published in 2014, which explained the history of the concepts as well as the then current state of the situation in detail. This will help readers understand the differences *between social and solidarity economy* and *social entrepreneurship*.

## SOCIAL ECONOMY

This concept was developed in France by diverse authors such as [Dunoyer](#) (1830), [Le Play](#) (1854) and others. This expression became quite well known in society in general. The 1900 Universal Exposition of Paris had a thematic pavilion on *économie sociale* (social economy). The historic definition of social economy refers to cooperatives, mutual societies, associations and foundations. The key shared defining element is social ownership (by people and not capital).

In the last 50 years or so, there has been an emergence of non-profit “enterprises” such as socially owned day-care centres, cultural organizations such as theatres, and other organisations. They are considered part of the traditional social economy.

In parts of the English-speaking world, another definition exists, and is used mostly in academia; it refers to the “Third Sector”. In this definition, advocacy organizations such as Amnesty International or Greenpeace could be considered as social economy. For the SSE movement, the social economy definition used is the traditional one and human rights or environmental NGOs, unless they undertake democratically managed economic activities with a social purpose, they can be allies of the social economy or SSE movement within a “Third Sector” for common advocacy purposes, but they are not social economy *per se*.

For historic and cultural reasons, the expression “social economy” was mostly used in French-speaking countries. However in the last 25 years, we have witnessed a crescendo in the formalization and recognition of social economy across Europe<sup>3</sup> and in other countries such as Cabo Verde, South Africa, Argentina, Mexico and South Korea.

## SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

This concept was initiated in Latin America and in France in the mid 1980s. It was inspired as a

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<sup>3</sup> See EU [action plan for the social economy](#), adopted in 2021 and [Council recommendation of 27 November 2023 on developing social economy framework conditions](#)

response to neoliberalism which had become the predominant economic paradigm. From the outset, the purpose and vision reached above and beyond social economy since this approach was not only doing things differently in the economy, but also changing society in general, through an economy that puts people before profit. The key aims were to reduce inequalities and provide basic services for all. In other words, there was an explicit vision aiming for a paradigm shift.

The first part of Declaration adopted in the founding international conference of this emerging movement that was held in Lima, Peru, in July 1997 is quite explicit:

*“We, citizens belonging to: grassroots, farmers, natives, women, youth organizations; employers’ organizations; working communities; cooperatives, micro-enterprise associations; associations of the Church; Non-Governmental Organizations; groups of environmentalists, associations of technologists; development networks; groups on social economy and a coalition of 32 countries gathered from 1st to 4th of July 1997 in Lima, Peru declare:*

- 1. We are taking into account that we are under the hegemony of a development model which shows its limits, both in the North and the South, while destroying the planet and generating poverty, exclusion, and ignores the set of human activities which are of paramount importance for the communities, thus representing a threat for the future of [hu]mankind;*

*And in an attempt to react to this situation, that we are committed to a process of building a solidarity-based development that questions the concept which reduces and determines the satisfaction of human needs to cut-throat competition on the market and the so-called “natural laws”. The solidarity economy incorporates cooperation, collective sharing and action, while putting human beings at the centre of the economic and social development.”*

## SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

In France, in the 1998-1999 period, a government-led initiative organized regional meetings of the traditional social economy (cooperatives and mutual societies) and the new solidarity movement which had a more radical approach that had emerged as an alternative to neoliberalism. The two movements did not merge, but the expression social and solidarity economy was adopted and rapidly expanded to other regions such as French-speaking African countries. In Quebec province (Canada) the social economy expression is still widely used, but the common and legal understanding of its principles are the same as the broader SSE concept.

When RИPESS was created in December 2002 at a meeting in Dakar, Senegal, the original proposal was to use “social and solidarity economy”. Since the Latin American participants at the meeting, who had been at the 1997 meeting in Lima, were strong proponents of creating a movement with the original more ambitious vision of solidarity economy, they proposed an amendment to remove “and”. This was to avoid any confusion. For RИPESS, and this is still the case today, the expressions “social” and “solidarity” are inseparable. They are two adjectives that qualify our vision. Box 1 below provides a more detailed description of this process.

## BOX 1: SSE: THE CONVERGENCE BETWEEN SOCIAL ECONOMY AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

*“The gradual construction of collective identity and shared normative orientation among SSE actors around the world has been a slow process of dialogue and mutual learning. To simplify what is in fact a much larger nomenclature, it has been the convergence of two major currents: the ‘social economy’ tradition, originating notably from Europe and Canada; and the ‘solidarity economy’, predominant notably in the Latin American experience, but also increasingly used in other continents. The exchange of experiences and visions from actors across different continents has greatly contributed to this convergence....”*

*The Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of Social Solidarity Economy (RIPESS) is one international SSE coalition that has been instrumental in forging a common identity among strands of social versus solidarity economy. The first in a series of international meetings on the Globalization of Solidarity was held in Lima in 1997, where activists from a wide range of social movements, NGOs, researchers and practitioners from around the world gathered to begin developing the elements of a more concrete global SSE movement. This set the stage for the formal establishment in 2002 of RIPESS, as ‘a global network of continental networks committed to the promotion of Social Solidarity Economy’ in Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Europe, Africa, Asia and Oceania.*

*In the words of former RIPESS board member Emily Kawano, the ‘Social Solidarity Economy is actually a marriage of the solidarity economy and the more radical end of the social economy’. Namely, this refers to social economy actors who see its value in addressing problems such as poverty, unemployment and social exclusion caused by neoliberal capitalism in the short term, but also understand it as a stepping stone toward a more fundamental transformation of the economic system. ‘It is this end of the social economy spectrum that converges with the concept of the solidarity economy’.... This reflects the view of many solidarity economy scholars and activists who argue that the SSE agenda must extend beyond the promotion of SSE principles within an organization or enterprise (limited profit, collective ownership and democratic governance). It should not satisfy itself with solely obtaining legal frameworks that guarantee SSEOs distinct statutory identity without also engaging in the systemic transformation of the prevailing economic system, starting with the promotion of broader solidarity economy ties in the local community and beyond.”*

*Extracts from [Chapter 1](#) of the UNTFSSSE Encyclopaedia of the SSE, co-written by the author.*

*(For more detailed explanations, the 2014 paper mentioned in the preface is helpful.)*

The following two sections provide a brief history of social entrepreneurship and other initiatives promoted by the corporate sector, before turning to a critical analysis in section 4.

## SECTION 2- A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### ASHOKA

Ashoka, the oldest social entrepreneurship initiative, originated in the USA and was founded in 1980. The [website](#) explains their story:

*“Ashoka has pioneered the field of social entrepreneurship, identifying and supporting the world’s leading social entrepreneurs since 1980. Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society’s most pressing social, cultural, and environmental challenges. Social entrepreneurs are ambitious and persistent — tackling major issues and offering new ideas for systems-level change. They model changemaking behavior and catalyze organizations and movements where everyone can be changemaker”.*

They provide an analysis to explain inequality:

*“Much of the world’s population has learned how to contribute to and adapt to change and how to be effective members of the ever-changing, open teams of teams that are how this new reality is organized. Moreover, they help one another become better changemaking players as the game accelerates — because that is critical both for team success and personal happiness. This portion of humanity is doing very well.*

*However, the very large other part of society does not have the changemaking skills needed to play in today’s new reality where everything is changing ever faster.*

*The result: The world is sharply and increasingly divided by a new inequality.*

*Why are income distributions getting worse everywhere? Because there is a bidding war for those with changemaking skills and disappearing demand for those without. (Anyone who has not mastered changemaking’s complex skills will hurt others and will disrupt teams.)*

*The world’s most urgent task — and therefore Ashoka’s core strategic focus — then is to help everyone “see” the new reality and grasp how they all can be contributors, and all be powerful, i.e., all be changemakers”.*

In the history page of the organisation, the intention of the founder is clear and explicit:

*“Bill Drayton founded Ashoka in 1980 based on the idea that the most powerful force for good in the world is a social entrepreneur: a person driven by an innovative idea that can help correct an entrenched global problem. The world’s leading social entrepreneurs pursue system-changing solutions that permanently alter existing patterns of activity”.*

### THE SKOLL FOUNDATION

The [Skoll Foundation](#) is a private foundation based in Palo Alto, California. The foundation, created by Jeffrey Skoll in 1999, provides grants and investments intended to reduce global poverty.

*“The total assets of the foundation (including its affiliated funds) are \$1.127 billion as of the end of 2018. The combined entities made grants totalling about \$71 million in 2018 (and disbursements of \$56M), based on unaudited numbers reported by the foundation. to the most recent audited financial statements, the non-grant expenses for the foundation totalled around \$17M in 2018”.<sup>4</sup>*

The Foundation does recognize fundamental issues facing the world:

*“Our current economic systems are extractive and unsustainable. These systems maximize the wealth of a few over the well-being of all and prioritize short-term gains over long-term sustainability. Billions of people pay for the costs of this inequitable system while relatively few reap the rewards.*

*The Skoll Foundation aims to support a global transition to a new economic paradigm that centers the needs of all stakeholders—people and planet—and takes a long-term view to focus on economic well-being for all. We support social innovators who bridge the actions of established power with the interests of emergent power through **policy and narrative shift efforts that build a larger share of wealth for communities and workers**”.*

The fundamental mission is clear:

*“The Skoll Foundation catalyzes transformational social change by investing in, connecting, and championing social entrepreneurs and other social innovators who together advance bold and equitable solutions to the world’s most pressing problems”.*

Like Ashoka, the logic is based on the premise that the problems created by our *extractive and unsustainable economic system* will be solved by social entrepreneurship!

## SCHWAB FOUNDATION FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The Schwab Foundation was established in 1998 by Hilda Schwab and her husband Klaus Schwab, the Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum. The foundation explicitly affirms that it works in partnership with the World Economic Forum as a “sister” organization.

The foundation was created on the grounds that *“we observed the emergence of a new model for social change: a model that combines the mission, dedication, and compassion to serve the most vulnerable and marginalized populations of society with business principles and the best techniques from the private sector. That model, of course, is social entrepreneurship”.*

Over the years, they have supported access to healthcare, access to education for youth, etc. A key activity is the Social Innovation awards to Social Entrepreneurs, Corporate Entrepreneurs, Public Social Entrepreneurs and Collective Social Entrepreneurs.

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<sup>4</sup> Since Wikipedia articles change over time, this quote, and future quotes in this paper are from the articles visited in January 2024.

## CATALYST 2030

Catalyst 2030 was founded in 2019 and launched at the January 2020 World Economic Forum (WEF). This is explained on their website.

*“[Catalyst 2030](#) is a fast-growing global movement of people and organisations committed to achieving the SDGs by 2030. Launched at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2020, Catalyst 2030 is a social entrepreneur and innovator-led movement responding to this global call to action for people and planet.*

*The movement was co-founded by a diverse group of social entrepreneurs, many as members of our ecosystem partners: Ashoka, Echoing Green, the Schwab Foundation of the World Economic Forum and the Skoll Foundation. In 2019, this global group came together to forge what would become Catalyst 2030.*

*Alongside communities, governments, businesses, funders and others, we are forming inclusive and locally led collaborations, creating connections across borders and cultures.*

*Together, we are implementing bold new strategies and sustainable solutions to achieve a brighter future for all”.*

The summary of the Theory of Change is quite revealing about the vision of social entrepreneurs.

*Three powerful forces hold Catalyst 2030 back from significantly contributing to achieving the SDGs:*

- **Dominant culture:** *Much of the Global North and South are governed by a set of values and activities that focus on exploitation for short-term profit, unsustainable endless growth and benefits for individuals rather than collective prosperity.*
- **Inadequate conditions for collaboration:** *Many people and organisations working on the same issues are disconnected and there is little recognition of their interdependency. In many cases, systems create barriers to collaboration.*
- **Poor understanding of systems:** *Many people and organisations addressing the SDGs focus more on projects or programmes than on changing the underlying systemic conditions that uphold social and environmental problems.*

*The consequences of these factors for Catalyst 2030 are that many social entrepreneurs’ efforts remain subscale and underdeveloped”.*

This vision of the systemic problems we face is quite close to some of those identified in the SSE movement. However, as described in section 3 below, this vision does not address the fundamental systemic flaws of capitalism and it suggests that more social entrepreneurship is the systemic solution.

The governing council identifies four key “ecosystem partners”:

- François Bonici - Schwab Foundation

- Cheryl Dorsey – Echoing Green
- Don Gips – Skoll Foundation
- Diana Wells - Ashoka

The secretariat has about 40 staff, including a few interns.

Most of the members of Catalyst 2030 have a similar definition. The following definition clearly outlines who they are. Even if there are some differences in the definitions of social entrepreneurship, the following definition from Grow Ensemble is useful since it describes the movement very well.

#### **“What is Social Entrepreneurship?”**

Social entrepreneurship, as a movement and as a term, is moving aggressively into the mainstream. And with this rise in popularity, more and more change agents are racing to the scene, as well as racing to define what social entrepreneurship is and who social entrepreneurs are.

In brief, social entrepreneurs are business people who use their business to create social value. These do-gooders are not funnelled into the public sector, but in fact make up an increasing portion of the private sector. In addition to earning a profit, and equally if not more importantly, their businesses respond to social issues or social needs they see in the world around them.

When the status quo isn’t good enough, these change-makers take action and show us (and the world) that when businesses understand social value creation as central to their company’s purpose, that can lead to large scale solutions to local and global problems”.

## GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The [Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship](#) was co-founded in April 2020 by the Schwab Foundation, Ashoka, GHR Foundation, Skoll Foundation and Yunus Social Business. It is an integral part of the Schwab Foundation. The Alliance has over 100 members including large multinational corporations such as Microsoft, Ikea, and many others. The Alliance supports the “100 000 social entrepreneurs of the world”.

The website identifies well the purpose and the mission:

“About,

*The Schwab Foundation's Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship is the largest multi-stakeholder coalition in support of the social innovation sector. Its **110+ members represent over 100,000 social entrepreneurs and bring together a growing ecosystem** of corporations, investors, philanthropists, governments, researchers, media, and industry actors. The Global Alliance is an initiative by the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship in partnership with the World Economic Forum.”*

“Our mission

*We support social innovators to inspire the transition towards the stakeholder economy. Social enterprises explore the frontiers of a fairer, more just, and sustainable economy. As such, they act as an “R&D lab” for society and the economy. By adapting successful social innovation principles into mainstream business and public policy, we enable these innovators to inspire the transition to a*

*stakeholder economy”.*

A key element of the Alliance is the Corporate Leadership Council, composed of 30 corporations, that are mostly multinational corporations (MNCs). At the 2024 World Economic Forum it initiated the [Rise Ahead Pledge](#), a corporate commitment to social innovation. From an SSE perspective, the key elements of the pledge are interesting to examine.

*Signatories commit to starting new initiatives or expanding their existing activities in at least two of the following areas:*

- 1. Providing financial support to social innovators*
- 2. Providing non-financial support to social innovators*
- 3. Buying from social innovators (social procurement)*
- 4. Providing financial support to the social innovation ecosystem organizations*
- 5. Integrating social innovation principles into core business operations*
- 6. Implementing or expanding programs to support employees to develop social innovation initiatives internally.*

Even if the website mentions the letter to the UNTFSSSE, the above-mentioned commitment proposes support to the social economy; the pledge does not even mention the notion of the Social Solidarity Economy. From an SSE viewpoint, this may improve what is only a tiny fraction of corporations’ overall operations, but has nothing to do with SSE, which is a much different type of social innovation. These differences were discussed in detail at [a side event](#) on social innovation and SSE co-organized by the UNTFSSSE, RIPESS and others at the UN’s 8th Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs on 2 May 2023, which emphasized the need to ensure that *“social innovation is understood as a collective [as opposed to individual] transformational agenda that addresses systemic root causes of social and ecological crises”*.

A comment by the author: like Ashoka and Skoll, the more recent organizations such as the Schwab foundation, the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship and Catalyst2030, promote similar visions for change. Like SSE organizations, some identify serious problems in our economic system, such as poverty, inequalities, and exclusion. SSE organizations are also active in economic activities that in many cases target and support communities that are excluded from the global market economy, live in poverty, etc. However, the SSE perspective also includes working on the root causes of poverty and exclusion and inequalities, and operates collectively within the community itself. This paper will show that there are sharp differences between the social entrepreneurship and SSE movements as to understanding the underlying causes of poverty, inequalities, and exclusion.

## EXPLORING THE MEANING OF SOCIAL ECONOMY PROMOTED BY THE SCHWAB FOUNDATION AND WEF

Catalyst 2030 was accepted as a UNTFSSSE observer in mid-2020. The letter of application did not mention social entrepreneurship even once. In the application, the expression used was social enterprise, which is a different notion. For example, in many countries, they include cooperatives. In other words, why did they use the term social enterprise and not social entrepreneurship in the application? And there was no mention in the application of WEF or the Schwab Foundation. This only became apparent at a later date.

This Wikipedia (January 2024) description helps us to understand the complexity of describing



what a social enterprise is.

*“A social enterprises can be structured as a business, a partnership for profit or , and may take the form (depending on in which country the entity exists and the legal forms available) of a , mutual organisation, a (a form of business classification for income tax purposes in the United States), [5] a social business, a benefit corporation, a community interest company, a company limited by guarantee or a charity organisation. They can also take more conventional structures. Social enterprises are dynamic, requiring adaptation to ensure they meet the needs of communities and individuals in an ever-changing world. Their shared common thread is that they all operate to achieve a balanced financial, social and environmental set of objectives”.*

As mentioned below, this diversity of understandings as to what constitutes a social enterprise explains why social enterprises are part of SSE only insofar as they meet all the criteria of the universal definition of SSE adopted in 2022 and 2023.

In July 2020, the WEF and the Schwab Foundation, in collaboration with Deloitte, released the report ***Unlocking the Social Economy Towards an inclusive and resilient society.***

One particularly interesting paragraph in the report reads:

*“Over decades, social enterprises, cooperatives and innovative, entrepreneurial non-profits have prioritized social and environmental value, and made a difference where it matters: on the ground, among the millions of communities and natural ecosystems facing damage and loss. These actors embrace explicit social objectives and governance models, and work with groups who face barriers because of gender, race, ability and economic class. Jointly referred to as the social economy, they deliver inclusive and sustainable economic development”.*

This is quite different from the definition used by Social Economy Europe:

*“The social economy is made up of a diversity of enterprises and organisations such as cooperatives, mutuals, associations, foundations and social enterprises among other forms that can be specific to each country.*

*They are united around the values of: primacy of people and the social objective over capital, democratic governance, solidarity and the reinvestment of most profits to carry out sustainable development objectives”.*

Even if the report of the WEF and the Schwab Foundation mentions SSE once, specifically when referring to the UNTFSSSE, the engagement is to support the social economy. Certainly not SSE since they would have said so.

Furthermore, the expression “economic class” is a weird notion, since this is not a class such as in the Marxist analysis. The rest of the WEF and the Schwab Foundation description has nothing to do with what social economy is. The social economy is 150 years old, and well defined in the sense that **ownership is social**, in the sense of cooperatives. In some other contexts, it refers to an expression sometimes used in some Anglo-Saxon countries in the sense that it is part of the “Third Sector”, which is an umbrella term that covers a range of different organisations with different structures and purposes, belonging neither to the public sector (i.e. the State) nor to the private sector (for-profit private enterprise). For a description and the history of social economy, solidarity economy and social and solidarity economy, the [2014 paper by the author](#) of this paper provides more detailed explanation than the synthesis contained in section 1.

“Social economy” might also be an alternative to the expression “social entrepreneurship” since

some of these enterprises do employ people with disabilities, who might not otherwise have jobs. This is good work, but it is quite different from mainstream social economy such as the social economy in SSE, that is changing the economic paradigm in the broadest sense, and in all spheres of economic activity. **To be very clear: SSE will never be relegated to an economy for repairing or alleviating the worst effects of the current global system.** Some SSE entities are also involved in working with disadvantaged or excluded people, refugees, etc. However, at the same time they also work and promote more permanent solutions such as better social protection floors, stronger local economies, etc. While this is not the focus of this paper, it should be emphasized that the mainstream understanding of social economy used here is close in its content to the term “solidarity economy”, which is the preferred expression in Latin America and other places, such as the United States through the US Solidarity Economy Network (USSEN), or Asia, through the Asia Solidarity Economy Council (ASEC), both members of RIPESS. This history of convergence between these two traditions through the creation of RIPESS is covered in Box 1 above.

In 2021, the Schwab Foundation applied for observer status in the UNTFSSSE. Since members and observers were much more aware than in 2020 of the intentions of the social entrepreneurship movement, during a meeting between the UNTFSSSE and the Schwab foundation, an agreement was reached on the fact that the Foundation would not become an observer, but that there could be collaboration. SSE Observer organizations insisted on the fact that they did not correspond to the SSE definition that the UNTFSSSE had adopted in past position papers.

The social entrepreneurship movement, when endorsing the proposal for the promoting the adoption of a UN Resolution, pushed the idea that social entrepreneurship was part of SSE. This was very evident at the 13 December 2022 side event in New York co-organized by France and the UNTFSSSE. There were 4-5 interventions claiming that **social entrepreneurs constitute the “core of SSE”**.

In September 2023, Catalyst 2030 publicly released a letter during a side event held at the UN from the Corporate Leadership Council of the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship titled **“Encouraging Private Sector Engagement with the Social Economy”**. The letter is signed by Jean-Philippe Courtois, Executive Vice President of Microsoft, Alexandra van der Ploeg, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility, SAP and Åsa Skogström Feldt, from IKEA, Founding Member, Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship.

In the letter, they outline ways in which the private sector has collaborated with those they describe as social economy actors, including through financial support. After recognizing the importance of the ILC and UN Resolutions (described in the Conclusions below), they say: **“In this letter, we express our support for the implementation of the UN Resolution and call for appropriate representation of the private sector in the planning process”**.

The letter then continues:

*“The Social Economy has benefited from collaborations with the private sector for several decades. Social enterprises and cooperatives are now integrated into global supply chains. A significant number of organizations have emerged from or expanded through corporate accelerator programs and many have received financial backing from companies and corporate foundations. Social economy actors have joined forces with businesses to implement innovative interventions aimed at addressing social issues”*.

This paragraph makes it is very clear that there is a misuse of the concept of the social economy. This statement is misleading. All the social economy actors involved in the UNTFSSSE and in the larger SSE movement know that this is in large part not true. We can even say that in many instances the SSE organizations have grown in spite of opposition from the corporate sector. For example, in 2023 at the parliamentary commission held in Quebec province (Canada) before

the adoption of the Social Economy Act, out of nearly 100 briefs presented, only one opposed the law, the Business Council (*Conseil du patronat*). Similarly, during the 110<sup>th</sup> International Labour Conference in June 2022, the Employers group of this tripartite organisation introduced amendments that would have diluted the core vision and values of SSE. NB. The author of this paper attended all the sessions of the debates over the 10-day conference online. Thanks to the support of the Workers' Group, and most States, the resolution that was adopted was considered quite satisfactory to the SSE organizations involved. The resolution also benefits from the endorsement of the Employers group, representing the private sector, which strengthens its universal political value.

As in the analysis of the 2020 paper released by Catalyst2030 and Schwab Foundation, what is really implied here is the concept of social entrepreneurs, and not the social economy.

A revealing statement was made by Catalyst2030 in the [news item](#) on the side event in New York. "*Rana Dajani from the Catalyst 2030 Governing Council, emphasised that Catalyst 2030 is creating an ecosystem of multiple stakeholders at country level with proximate leaders at the forefront to alleviate poverty and promote prosperity*".

As mentioned earlier in this section of this paper, corporations and private sector foundations have indeed supported social entrepreneurs' businesses in recent decades. Pretending that this is social economy looks like an attempt to change the fundamental nature of what social economy and SSE really are. **The purpose of SSE is not to alleviate poverty, but to eradicate poverty!**

This is why people in the SSE movement often affirm the importance of **Article 25 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A)**. Article 25.1 "*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.*"



MADANI KOUmare, PRESIDENT OF RENAPESS MALI AND THE AFRICAN NETWORK FOR SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY RAESS, MADE THE CASE FOR A PARADIGM SHIFT AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY ECONOMY DURING THE UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS SUMMIT 2015 IN NY.

## SECTION 3 – OTHER INITIATIVES PROMOTED BY THE CORPORATE SECTOR

Recent decades have seen many initiatives promoted by different people in the corporate sector.

### CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

The modern vision of CSR was introduced in the 1970s, as a new revised version of corporate philanthropy that goes back to the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We will not go into detail in this document. But we can say that there is no evidence that this approach, which is voluntary, makes a significant difference. Corporations do contribute to responding to needs in local communities where they operate to alleviate problems such as poverty, support food banks, finance community infrastructure needs such as sports facilities, etc. In research published by the [Harvard Business Review](#), in most cases this improves the company's social standing and, in some cases, even helps increase revenue. The author also analyses the impact on the communities. The positive impacts do not seem conclusive, and indeed they may even prove negative.

CSR *per se* has a very limited impact and interest for SSE in general. In some cases, SSE organizations can negotiate an agreement with a corporation (see example in Box 2). This is on a case-by-case basis and is very rare in the overall SSE landscape. In all situations, this must not in any way create a dependency of SSE organizations towards the corporation.

In general, we have no evidence that CSR has any positive impact on the fundamental problems our world is facing. We could even affirm that it has a negative impact, as it creates the illusion that corporations are good corporate citizens and obscures the fact that they tend to create low-paid jobs, do all they can to prevent unionization, and frequently destroy local SMEs in communities.

Almost all the global corporations have a CSR programme. However, the fundamental question is how they operate as businesses. Let us examine a very important and impactful example. The GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon and Microsoft) corporations capture most advertising in the world. In Canada where I live, they are endangering the very existence of newspapers, from the national to the local level. In Quebec province all newspapers except one, were on the point of going bankrupt. Through a strong mobilisation of unions, social movements, and governments, this led to the creation of SSE organizations becoming owners of the daily newspapers. *La Presse* in Montreal was transferred to a non-profit entity. Six other dailies in other cities in the province were bought by six workers' cooperatives. The six cooperatives then created a second tier cooperative for more extensive collaboration. Three to four years later, these SSE organizations are resisting well, even if times are somewhat difficult, since Facebook is refusing to negotiate compensation for media in Canada as stipulated in a new law of the Canadian parliament. This is important not only for the survival of the newspapers themselves, but also for real journalism, which is essential for debunking fake news, and for many other reasons.

Any CSR from those corporations is like a drop in the ocean compared with the damage created by the corporate capture practiced by many mainstream media.

## BOX 2: AN EXAMPLE OF CSR IN AFRICA

In March 2013, the author had an opportunity to accompany a mission organised by [CECI](#), a Canadian international volunteer agency. The purpose was to evaluate projects underway in the Republic of Guinea (capital Conakry) in West Africa.

One of the projects, our mission, had the mandate to evaluate a PPP project initiated by Rio Tinto, one of the main aluminum producers in the world. Rio Tinto buys much of its primary product, bauxite, from Guinea.

They approached CECI, active for decades in Guinea, and offered a grant from their CSR funds to help the local populations nears the mining sites.

CECI refused those terms. They were very aware of extractivism and the very detrimental side effects of mining industries.

Instead, they proposed that Rio Tinto provide the funds to the State. If the government accepted the idea of managing the funds, CECI would be willing to be the operator for the project. The government accepted, and this also allowed the scope of the project to be increased with additional funding from AFD (the French development agency).

The objectives of the project were to reinforce the capacity of local authorities in rural areas to deliver projects. The funding allowed them to build facilities for the local population through consultations. One of the selected projects that was visited was a maternity clinic in the town of Sangarédi. An engineer was hired by CECI for all the projects (some were in other towns) to prepare tenders for its construction. This was quite a surprise since this had never been done previously! And there was no cost overrun to the budget. Many people told us that this was very rare in their country!

The brief mention of the project allows us to understand that in some cases CSR can improve the lives of people in communities, when like this example, the role of the State is strengthened at the same time, in consultation with the local population. The downside is clear. This totally depends on the will of corporations to provide funds for projects in a community or a country. Since it is dependent on the will of a corporation to renew funding or not, this is not sustainable development.

## INCLUSIVE BUSINESS

Ellen Mangnus, in a [paper](#) published in July 2023, provides a description of this approach:

*“In a period of decreasing aid budgets and increasing private sector engagement in the Global South, Inclusive Business-referring to a business model that integrates marginalized people in the company’s value chain as suppliers, distributors, retailers, or customers to the mutual benefit of both the company and the community has become a preferred development strategy. However so far, the impacts of inclusive business models on the livelihoods of these ‘marginalized people’ have remained elusive”.* The author proceeded to two case studies, one in Kenya and one in Ghana. The executive summary provides the following analysis.

*“The findings indicate that diverse groups in the communities are impacted differently by inclusive business models. Both companies catalyse trajectories that in the long term might have*

*negative repercussions on the livelihoods of smallholders. These long-term, or unintended, impacts are obfuscated in frameworks used to assess inclusive business models. Inclusive business models can only be a partial answer in overcoming poverty and food insecurity”.*

The author further explains the following:

*“Wider Community Effects:*

*Working only with the better-off farmers the inclusive business model in theory could have reproduced patterns of differentiation already under way. Nevertheless, as even farmers part of the inclusive business model did not gain in terms of income or food security, an aggravation of wealth inequality should not be feared. However, a negative impact on the community as a whole, but possibly even more so on the poorer farmers can be expected in the long term”.* As the research further explains, small stakeholders are not in a situation to negotiate favourable conditions in becoming suppliers to the corporations. This is why that instead of contract farming, the food sovereignty organisations promote another approach. According to the Nyéléni Declaration of 2007:

*“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation. It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal - fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations.”*



THE NYELENI FORUM ON AGROECOKOGY, 2015

## SOCIAL BUSINESS

Mohamed Yunus invented the notion of social business. The [website](#) provides key information. “What is a social business according to Yunus?”

*'Social Business' is a term coined by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Professor Muhammad Yunus. According to his definition, a social business is **a business with a “social vision at its core.”** The primary focus of a social business is to address a social need and solve human problems”.*

Furthermore, the fundamental vision is very explicit: **“We harness the power of business to end poverty and the climate crisis.”**

Another quote from the website is revealing *“We leverage our expertise in social business to help corporations transform into a force for good.”*

In his 2008 book, *Building Social Business: The New Kind of Capitalism That Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs*, he explains well (pages 35-36) the origins of cooperatives with Robert Owen. *“The cooperative movement began as a movement as a response to the exploitation of workers by rapacious company owners.”* He then adds *“depending on the goals and interests of the people that band together to create and share ownership that a cooperatives business, such a business can also serve the middle class and not only the needy.”* He then adds that they can fall into *“selfish hands”* and operate like an ordinary business. This is why he proposes the “social business” as the solution to fight poverty.

The mission of “social business” is quite similar to “social entrepreneurship”. This probably explains why Yunus Social Business is also involved in the WEF-led social entrepreneurship movement.

In a [Wikipedia article](#) (January 2024), the principles of social business are interesting.

*“Principles of social business*

*Seven principles of a successful social business were developed by Professor Muhammad Yunus and Hans Reitz, the co-founder of Grameen Creative Lab:*

- *Business objective will be to overcome poverty, or one or more problems (such as education, health, technology access, and environment) which threaten people and society; not profit maximization.*
- *Financial and economic sustainability*
- *Investors get back their investment amount only. No dividend is given beyond investment money*
- *When investment amount is paid back, company profit stays with the company for expansion and improvement*
- *Gender sensitive and environmentally conscious*
- *Workforce gets market wage with better working conditions*
- *“...Do it with joy”*

Interestingly, many principles are similar to SSE principles. Except one, which is major. The ownership is not explained. We must presume that, like all other private businesses and corporations, that these are shareholder owned. In contrast, SSE businesses have people who govern. In some cases, there are millions of members. There is a sense of ownership by the population, which is not the case of a social business owned and governed by a few people.

Yunus does not mention either what would prevent social businesses to come into «selfish hands».

The SSE motto would be quite different. We would rather say **We harness the collective power of PEOPLE business to end poverty and climate crises.**

## IMPACT INVESTING

In the last 15-20 years, the field of impact investing has grown considerably. GIIN, the [Global Impact Investing Network](#) is the leader.

Their vision is very clear.

*“Impact investments are investments made with the intention to generate positive, measurable social and environmental impact alongside a financial return. Impact investments can be made in both emerging and developed markets and target a range of returns from below market to market rate, depending on investors' strategic goals.*

*The growing impact investment market provides capital to address the world's most pressing challenges in sectors such as sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, conservation, microfinance, and affordable and accessible basic services including housing, healthcare, and education”.*

It is quite astounding to see that they are pushing for investment in basic services such as healthcare and education. This is an obvious attempt to privatise and introduce corporate capture of services that should have a free or at least an affordable public option such as education, which can in some cases be serviced by an SSE entity, but subcontracted by the State, and not operated by the private sector.

SSE organisations and most global civil society organisations, including workers' unions, especially in the Global South, strongly oppose this neoliberal paradigm.

It is also worth noting that the UNRISD *Guidelines for Local Governments on Policies for Social and Solidarity Economy* caution against impact investing in the following terms:

*“One concern about impact investing for SSE is that there are no standardized or widely accepted methodologies or tools to measure social impact (a key requirement in all forms of impact investing). This is not only due to the lack of an unanimous agreement regarding the importance of such an evaluation, but also due to the difficulty in determining the criteria and indicators to be used, and finding the right balance between the interests of the investors, the financed organizations and the end users or beneficiaries. Moreover, reporting requirements might be too onerous for resource constrained SSEOs. Another concern is that the impact assessment may be more geared to the interests of the investors who often take a short-term perspective, instead of being a tool for improving the performance of the entire SSE ecosystem over the longer term.*

*For example, in Quebec, impact investing leveraging private investment to fund not just social service providers but also financial returns and payments to investors on achievement of agreed social and financial outcomes became rather unpopular. Impact investing targeting particular projects or initiatives rather than SSEOs themselves has been seen as directly conflicting with the widely agreed values of the social economy and social finance ecosystem based on solidarity*



*between members, democratic self-management and a broader goal of democratizing the economy and access to capital. To address this problem, the prevailing approach of the [Fiducie \[Trust Fund\] of the Chantier de l'économie sociale](#), is to invest directly in SSEOs, placing primary value on the aspect of collective ownership of non-profit organizations and cooperatives while acting as an intermediary between SSEOs and conventional financial institutions.”*

In some Northern countries, a variant called Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) has been developed. They follow the same rationale. Rather than promoting a strong public sector to provide for the essential needs of all people, they attempt to privatize anything and everything possible. The fact that this phenomenon first appeared in the early 1980s when Thatcher and Reagan pushed the neoliberal agenda to its upmost, is no surprise. The aforementioned *UNRISD Guidelines* also warn against SIBs in the following terms:

*“[T]his approach has been criticized for many reasons, including: no evidence of improved services or innovation of new services; more time-consuming red tape between the service provider and the investor; the timeframe on which success can be judged is controversial; and accountability on quality may shift to the investors rather than the service users.”*

Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) also became a trend not only in developed countries, but also in developing countries. The promise that this would solve problems was a largely empty one, or worse: a tendency to privatize the benefits and profits and socialize the risks and costs. This approach contrasts significantly with partnerships between government and SSE entities to provide support services to develop territorial SSE ecosystems through improved capacity-building, access to finance and public/private markets and the overall co-construction of supportive SSE public policies.

## OTHER INITIATIVES

The last 30-40 years have seen countless initiatives or innovations in the private sector. Some talk of a “fourth sector” that combines market-based approaches of the private sector with the social and environmental aims of the public and non-profit sectors to address pressing problems. Many labelling initiatives such as **B-Corp**, **Global Reporting Initiative**, have been put in place. However, there is no strong evidence that they have an impact on the structural problems facing our economic system and society. We could say the same for a vast portion of **privately managed microcredit**. Mohammed Yunus won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2006 for the **Grameen Bank** mission “**Microcredit as a Means of Fighting Poverty**”. Seventeen years later, this has clearly not lived up to its promise ([Bateman, Servet](#)), especially that of lifting women out of poverty. With sometimes usurious interest rates, this has even led to instances of “micro-debt crises”. There are examples of solidarity-based microfinance (loans & savings) that are managed by people in their communities themselves through mutuals or a cooperatives. They employ people in the communities, and this empowers communities to collectively improve their lives. Even then, microfinance must be seen as part of the toolbox to support all other entities such as a fishing or farming cooperative. Finance-led development is a trap. Finance must be seen as a tool, a very important tool, for all development, including for SSE economic activities. However, if finance dictates the what and the how, the risks are enormous.

## SECTION 4 – A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

**The root causes of the problems are not explained** by the social entrepreneurship movement. Even if some of the social entrepreneurship organisations mention that problems are caused by the current global economic system, the proposed solution is more social entrepreneurship! This is quite astonishing since this implies that problems such as poverty and exclusion are the result of a lack of social entrepreneurship!

None of them make any allusion to the huge inequality gap in the world where 1% of the world's population captured 38% of the world's wealth growth while the bottom 50% captured only 2% of the wealth growth in 2022. (Source: [World Inequality Report 2022](#)). Oxfam International has intervened many times at WEF events warning the leaders of the corporate sector that this is unacceptable and endangers the whole world. On the eve of the 2024 WEF event, Oxfam published its annual report on inequality, which very clearly identifies some of the root causes of skyrocketing inequalities with policy responses that are quite similar to the world vision of the SSE movement (see Box 3). For those that do not understand what the accumulation of capital is, we recommend they read *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* by Thomas Piketty who now leads the World Inequality Lab.

None of them recognizes that the systemic causes are the result of the current economic system which, as its name says, is led by capital, i.e., the shareholders of capital. Cynthia Freeland, the present Canadian Vice Prime Minister, had an interesting title for a book published in 2012 *Plutocrats: The Rise of the New Global Super Rich and the Fall of Everyone Else*. Oddly, she is now on the WEF Board!

This leaves the impression that the discourse as to how social entrepreneurship will solve problems is clearly an attempt to side-line any fundamental understanding of how our global, corporate-led economy is the root cause of multiple social, economic and ecological crises. Otherwise, we would discuss about fundamental paradigm changes to prevent this system from creating astronomical inequalities, exclusion and poverty and of course climate change. In other words, we are in a pure ideological discourse, since the solutions proposed are not in any way related to the fundamental causes.

There is an interesting quote to remind us of how ideology works.

*“When I feed the poor, they call me a saint, but when I ask why the poor are hungry, they call me a communist.”*

— Dom Helder Camara Archbishop of Recife in Brazil (early 1970')

### BOX 3: ROOT CAUSES OF INEQUALITY

While finishing this paper, OXFAM International released its annual report on inequality in the world, just before the opening of the 2024 World Economic Forum on 15 January 2024. It very clearly identifies some of the major root causes of skyrocketing inequalities.

Excerpt from the statement: *“Wealth of five richest men doubles since 2020 as five billion people made poorer in “decade of division”, says Oxfam. “Fortunes of five richest men have shot up by 114 percent since 2020”.*

*Oxfam predicts the world could have its first-ever trillionaire in just a decade while it would take more than two centuries to end poverty. A billionaire is running or the principal shareholder of 7 out of 10 of the world’s biggest corporations. 148 top corporations made \$1.8 trillion in profits, 52 percent up on 3-year average, and dished out huge payouts to rich shareholders while hundreds of millions faced cuts in real-term pay. Oxfam urges a new era of public action, including public services, corporate regulation, breaking up monopolies and enacting permanent wealth and excess profit taxes.”*

*The report then states “Runaway corporate and monopoly power is an inequality-generating machine: through squeezing workers, dodging tax, privatizing the state, and spurring climate breakdown, corporations are funneling endless wealth to their ultra-rich owners. But they’re also funneling power, undermining our democracies and our rights. No corporation or individual should have this much power over our economies and our lives —to be clear, nobody should have a billion dollars”. The recommendations of the report are quite similar to the world vision of the SSE movement. “Oxfam is calling on governments to rapidly and radically reduce the gap between the super-rich and the rest of society by:*

*\*\*Revitalizing the state. A dynamic and effective state is the best bulwark against extreme corporate power. Governments should ensure universal provision of healthcare and education, and explore publicly-delivered goods and public options in sectors from energy to transportation.*

*\*\*Reining in corporate power, including by breaking up monopolies and democratizing patent rules. This also means legislating for living wages, capping CEO pay, and new taxes on the super-rich and corporations, including permanent wealth and excess profit taxes. Oxfam estimates that a wealth tax on the world’s millionaires and billionaires could generate \$1.8 trillion a year.*

*\*\*Reinventing business. Competitive and profitable businesses don’t have to be shackled by shareholder greed. Democratically-owned businesses better equalize the proceeds of business”.*

## IS SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP THE SOLUTION?

This is the impression one could get from examining the publications of these organisations. Some of the documents do mention that social entrepreneurs are effective in providing support to

and inclusion of marginalized people. This is indubitably true. However, just as with charity that was considered important some decades ago, this does not solve the fundamental issues at hand. For example, access to education for all, good public health services, social protection for all, the right to food and housing *cannot* be solved in any significant measure by social entrepreneurship. Unless systemic changes are made to our current global economy, the problems will continue to get worse... Even the UN Secretary-General stated recently at COP 27, “our problems are linked to the pursuit of wealth and power”. As an African colleague mentioned, “if entrepreneurship were the solution, Africa would be rich, since Africans are very entrepreneurial, just to survive!”

## RELATIONS WITH THE CORPORATE SECTOR

One core element of social entrepreneurship clearly stands out, namely the relationship with private capital, understood here as namely financing by the corporate sector. Social entrepreneurs and their organisations not only welcome corporate capital; they are often entities created by corporate capital such as the Skoll Foundation, or they rely heavily on grants and donations from corporations or corporate-controlled foundations, or even CSR.

Why does the corporate sector support social entrepreneurship? This has not been very clearly explained. Is this a modern type of philanthropy whereby the rich and wealthy provide relief to the disadvantaged and the poor? This hypothesis would have the advantage of avoiding any debate on a much more progressive taxation system that would imply that the State can provide essential social services such as healthcare and education. And does this improve the image of the corporate sector? This is commonly known as “social washing”.

## THE INDIVIDUAL, THE INDIVIDUAL, ALWAYS THE INDIVIDUAL! AND NOW A NEW CATEGORY!

All the proponents of social entrepreneurship share one common trait, *the individual entrepreneur*. For example, Ashoka recognizes individuals called “fellows”. They have thousands of fellows on their website, in 95 countries. One of the main activities of all the organisations is providing awards to entrepreneurs. This is consistent with the dominant ideology that promotes *private/individual* entrepreneurship as a solution to creating your own job, and even getting rich! This is what is taught in business schools all over the world. As quoted above (page 14) the meaning of what a social entrepreneur is very clear: “*The social entrepreneurs are business people who use their business to create social value. These do-gooders are not funnelled into the public sector, but in fact make up an increasing portion of the private sector. In addition to earning a profit, and equally if not more importantly, their businesses respond to social issues or social needs they see in the world around them*”.

In contrast, SSE promotes an alternative approach to organising economic activity to fulfil needs and improve livelihoods. It is the idea of **collective enterprises**, an overarching notion that covers different approaches such as cooperatives, non-profit businesses, producer’s associations, etc. For SSE, ownership is therefore social, the assets belong to the members, and in most countries, the assets cannot be “given back” to the members. This is called “asset lock”. Most legislation on cooperatives and non-profits shares this characteristic. Another basic principle is the democratic governance of SSE organizations. Communities, using a solidarity approach, get together and decide how to organize to meet their needs. In contrast to a Darwinian view of the world, the historical premise of SSE is that if humanity has developed as a species, it is because of cooperation and solidarity and not because of individualism and competition! For examples of collective enterprises from around the world, see Box 4.

#### BOX 4: THE SSE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CORE APPROACH: COLLECTIVE ENTERPRISES

We have had cooperatives enterprise development, and enterprising non-profits for many decades. Some cooperatives, depending on legislation, can also register as a non-profit cooperative (with no income generated from sales of services or products). In the last quarter century, a new category to cover both cooperatives and non-profit enterprises has emerged and is called collective enterprises. Different authors such as [David J. Connell \(1999\)](#) and [Emmanuel Labithianakis \(2013\)](#) have written on this subject. In his document, the latter author provides the following quote from Shapero & Sokol (1982): “*Collective entrepreneurship combines business risk and capital investment with the social values of collective action. It is an event that exists when collective action aims for the economic and social betterment of a locality by means of some transformation of social norms values and networks for the production of goods or transformation of social norms, values, and networks for the production of goods or services by an enterprise*”.

In recent years, the expression “collective enterprises” has gained a higher profile. For example, in the Quebec province in Canada, the Ministry of the Economy used to include a department known as “Cooperatives and social economy”. It is now called the “Collective enterprise” department. On another occasion, a Minister from Cameroun used the same expression.

The “collective” in the expression signifies that a group of people get together to organize their own economic activity to respond to their lives. They can be small, or even quite big. Here are a few examples on which the author has personal knowledge.

A-[Seikatsu Club Consumer Cooperative Union \(Japan\)](#) This federation of 35 consumer cooperatives with a total membership of 410 000 members (95% are women), practice direct purchasing of food and other basic goods for the household. Sales are over a 1 billion dollars per year.

B-In Canada, the Indigenous Inuit People (from the far North) carry out an economic activity in their 60 communities; it is the cooperative store for all the goods imported from the South (meaning southern Canada for them) and they export. The cooperative store is managed by the community members. The sense of community is still very strong, despite the individualism promoted by the dominant dogma in the “Western” world.

C-Cooperation Jackson. The population of the city of Jackson, the capital of Mississippi state, is mainly Afro-American, while the rest of the state is predominantly white. The population of Jackson is poor, and public infrastructure has been neglected by the state. Racism is highly prevalent. To overcome this situation, [Cooperation Jackson](#) was formed in 2014. The mission is very clear: “*building a solidarity economy in Jackson, Mississippi, anchored by a network of cooperatives and worker-owned, democratically self-managed enterprises.*”

D-In Senegal, the Union régionale des coopératives de construction et d’habitat de Thiès (URCCHT) -Regional union of construction and habitat cooperatives of Thiess- has built 2000 homes in the last decade or so. 65% of its members are women. The statutes stipulate gender equality in the governing body.

There are thousands of such stories all over the world. One of the key reasons for success is the capacity to mobilise people to participate in a collective effort. The solidarity that binds the people together in communities helps them to prevail, even in difficult times. In countries where there are statistics, they show that a collective start-up such as a cooperative has a better survival rate than a private business. In Quebec province the survival rate after 10 years was more than twice that of private businesses, about 44,5% compared with 19,5% as per figures for 2022. (Ref. [Quebec Council of Coops and Mutuals \(CQCM\)](#), 2022.) Even if the definition of SSE in the UN Resolutions does not directly use this expression, it is implicit and linked to the core knowledge of SSE.

In the last two years, the Global Alliance and Catalyst 2030 have adapted their approach and have created a new category of awards to recognize group/collective innovations. At the last Catalyst 2030 awards of November 8 2023, in addition to individual entrepreneurs, the following also received awards:

- *The Canadian Federal Government - Global Government Winner*
- *The Basque Government, Spain - Regional Government Winner*
- *UN World Tourism Organisation, Global - Bilateral and Multilateral Winner*
- *UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy - Bilateral and Multilateral Winner*

The goal of adding this new category of awards is not very clear from an SSE point of view. We can imagine that a possible purpose might be for these organisations to foster a favourable opinion of social entrepreneurship. They may also signal an increased importance given to a supportive policy environment. Whatever the reasons, the fundamental vision and mission are the same, promoting social entrepreneurship.

## THE WEF/SCHWAB SOCIAL ECONOMY VISION VS SSE

In the WEF/Schwab 2020 paper *Unlocking the Social Economy Towards an inclusive and resilient society* and in the letter from the Corporate Leadership Council of the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship published in September 2023, entitled *Encouraging the Private Sector Engagement with the Social Economy*, the emphasis is only on “social” economy, while omitting the “solidarity” part of SSE.

The omission of SSE is certainly intentional. In the introduction of the letter by the Corporate Leadership Council, they mention the adoption of the UN Resolution on SSE. Since they promote the idea that the private sector should engage with the social economy, this would seem to imply that they do not support all parts of SSE. The omission of SOLIDARITY is telling. Where do they draw the line? Does it imply that they do not endorse all parts of the UN Resolution? For the SSE movement, solidarity is key to *Leaving no one behind*, the main motto of Agenda 2030. As mentioned in previous sections, there might be a more plausible explanation. The impression is that the expression “social economy” is meant and is used as a synonym for “social entrepreneurship”.



# LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

All the organizations mentioned, i.e., Ashoka, Skoll, Yunus Social Business, Catalyst, Schwab and the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship, work in English at the global level. At most, they have sections in other languages at country level or automatic translation. As mentioned in the section 2, the social entrepreneurship movement originated in the USA and in the UK. The first two organizations, Ashoka and Skoll, are both headquartered in the USA.

In contrast, most of the global SSE organizations (such as the International Cooperative Association (ICA), RIPESS or GSEF) work in three languages (FR-EN-SP).

This might partially explain the misconception about what social economy is, that it means social ownership and not just social purpose.

By coming together under the WEF leadership, this could be an attempt to strengthen the social entrepreneurship *model* to other parts of the world.



*THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY IS NOT CONFINED TO SPECIFIC SPHERES OR SECTORS OF THE ECONOMY. IT IS PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE ECONOMIC SPECTRUM, FROM PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION TO MARKETING AND CONSUMPTION, AS WELL AS IN AREAS SUCH AS HOMECARE SERVICES, HEALTHCARE, INFORMATION, EDUCATION, RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE, AND IN THE PROCESS OF REINVENTING CURRENCIES, ALL OVER THE WORLD. (SOURCE: [SOCIOECO.ORG](http://SOCIOECO.ORG))*

# CONCLUSION

There is a growing awareness within the SSE movement about the true nature of social entrepreneurship. The foundation of the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship under the leadership of the WEF and the Schwab Foundation is less than three years old. But the different social entrepreneurship organizations have been around for decades.

The SSE movement has promoted a different approach since its first steps that were taken about 25-30 years ago. What we now include as SSE entities already existed. This is well explained in the 2014 paper. SSE came into being as a federating concept due to a variety of different factors. The neoliberal policies of the Regan/Thatcher era, the fall of the Soviet Union, increasing inequalities between and within countries, struggles all over the world against injustice such as apartheid, protests against the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in [Seattle in 1999](#), created a situation where many intellectuals, and social movements coalesced for the creation of a movement which identified itself as SSE. It also draws on the earlier cooperative movement from the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and other traditions such as much earlier Indigenous Peoples' worldviews based on reciprocity and respect for nature. Over the years, SSE has grown as a movement on all continents.

A group of UN Agencies recognized the potential of SSE in 2013, which led to the creation of the UNTFSSSE, with ILO as a precursor well before this date.

The SSE organisations and the UNTFSSSE endorsed the 2015-2030 Agenda, even if SSE was not explicitly mentioned. Since 2015, achieving the SDGs has been a priority for the entire international community, including the global SSE movement. However, we were not surprised that the reports of the yearly High Level Political Forums (HLPF), quite soon after 2015, started raising alarms that the world was not on track to reach the goals. We were not really surprised, since all attempts to include a people-centred and human rights-based approach, including through SSE, in negotiations on Agenda 2030 failed. We then stated that “business as usual”, led by the global corporate sector would fail to achieve the SDGs. The reports even mentioned that for some goals, the world was going backwards, even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

This led the UNTFSSSE and SSE organisations, to promote SSE as a very important strategy for turning the tables around to make significant steps to move in the right direction towards achieving Agenda 2030.

Since a growing number of countries had also adopted policies and legislations on SSE since 2010, the situation allowed the promotion and the adoption of a UN Resolution on SSE in 2023. The adoption by the International Labour Conference (ILC) of the ILO on June 2022 of the [Resolution concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy](#) was also a great boon towards the UN Resolution since all UN member states at the ILC adopted the Conclusions of the General Discussion on the subject by consensus. In June 2022 the OECD Member States also adopted a [Recommendation](#) promoting SSE and social innovation. Many of the OECD countries also actively endorsed the UN Resolution adopted in 2023.

The process of adoption of UN resolution [A/RES/77/281](#) “Promoting the social and solidarity economy for sustainable development” has been well documented. For the purposes of the current document, we wish to point out that the definition of SSE included in the Resolution was transcribed word-for-word from the ILC definition of 2022. Since there had been extensive negotiations in 2022, and it had been adopted by Member States (and the Employers and Workers groups) there was a consensus to use this definition for the UN resolution on the basis of prior agreed UN language:



*“Recognizing the resolution of the International Labour Organization concerning decent work and the social and solidarity economy, adopted in June 2022, in which it recognizes that the social and solidarity economy encompasses enterprises, organizations and other entities that are engaged in economic, social and environmental activities to serve the collective and/or general interest, which are based on the principles of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid, democratic and/or participatory governance, autonomy and independence and the primacy of people and social purpose over capital in the distribution and use of surpluses and/or profits, as well as assets, that social and solidarity economy entities aspire to long-term viability and sustainability and to the transition from the informal to the formal economy and operate in all sectors of the economy, that they put into practice a set of values which are intrinsic to their functioning and consistent with care for people and planet, equality and fairness, interdependence, self-governance, transparency and accountability and the attainment of decent work and livelihoods and that, according to national circumstances, the social and solidarity economy includes cooperatives, associations, mutual societies, foundations, social enterprises, self-help groups and other entities operating in accordance with the values and principles of the social and solidarity economy.”*

The different aspects of the definition help to identify who and what SSE truly is. Social entrepreneurship is not mentioned in the definition of SSE in Resolution A/RES/77/281, even if it is referred to in the fifth preambular paragraph, which reproduces agreed language from previous UN Resolutions that mention social entrepreneurship, including the latest one, A/RES/77/160 *Entrepreneurship for sustainable development* of December 2022. Even if the social entrepreneurship movement sometimes uses the expression social enterprises, this does not *prima facie* qualify them as SSE entities. Social enterprises are only part of SSE insofar as they meet all the criteria in the definition. In other words, some social enterprises are part of SSE, and some are not.

Even if the different organisations involved in the Global Alliance for Social Entrepreneurship, and the Alliance itself are not SSE, can they support SSE or Social Economy, as the Corporate Leadership Council claims?

This is not clear. Of course, many social entrepreneurs who are involved in alleviating poverty support job creation for people with disabilities, support women’s entrepreneurship, and many other activities that often “do good” in communities. People who are excluded do need immediate help. Many SSE organisations also do this. However, unless organising longer term solutions to prevent people from becoming poor, or remaining poor, requires a very different approach.

Many people who are involved in social entrepreneurship might not have heard of SSE since this is not taught in universities, with some exceptions. With increased knowledge, people in social entrepreneurship who are concerned about long term solutions, could embrace the SSE approach.

Private capital, under certain circumstances, can also support SSE. For example, in the province of Quebec in Canada, the aforementioned *Fiducie* (trust fund) of the *Chantier de l’économie sociale* was created to provide patient capital to SSE organisations (called social economy in Quebec), including investment funds for community housing. The funds are managed by the *Chantier de l’économie sociale* and partners. The investment funds are provided by governments and private capital from workers’ pension funds and a foundation.

If some corporations, or even a group of corporations are willing to engage in support of SSE related measures, principles and measures can be laid out to prevent corporate capture. Here is one example from Québec province that is quite well known. In 1996, a Summit of social partners, the State, the Business sector, the Unions, and for the first-time community sector organizations, reached a deal to reduce unemployment by job creation, in particular in the social economy such as day care, forestry, etc. One of the financial tools was the creation of a fund by the corporations

and unions that agreed that 1\$ per week would be deducted from workers' pay, matched with 1\$ from the business. Over the three-year span of the project, the 275 million Canadian dollars was raised. To enforce the decision of the social partners, the Quebec National Assembly adopted in 1997 the [Act to establish a fund to combat poverty through reintegration into the labour market](#). The project was successful. A significant number of new jobs were created, especially for people unemployed or on social welfare. Having served its purpose, the Act was repealed in 2002. The point is that in the absence of such safeguards, SSE economic organizations are always at risk of losing their fundamental missions if those that provide the capital dictate the terms of the agreements.

## A ROADMAP FOR DIALOGUE

We are committed to both **social** and **solidarity** economy.

Our solidarity implies that no one should be left behind. It will be an extremely high-stakes challenge to find common ground with the corporate private sector movement and the SSE movement around the notion of “solidarity”, which is neither about “charity” nor even just about do-good “philanthropy”. We can find agreement in upholding fundamental *individual* human rights, but it remains to be seen whether we can agree that these human rights need to be balanced with *collective* human rights. In other words, do we agree on the balance that must be found between the right to *individual property* and the right to *collective ownership* (whether at the level of the enterprise or wider public goods, including the “Commons” and by which we do not by in any way necessarily imply State ownership)?

Within this prism we can distinguish two very different and contrasting economic (and socio-political) phenomena:

1. The overwhelming majority of enterprises or organizations with an economic activity fall within the category of micro, small, medium (or even meso-level) enterprises/organizations that generate the far greatest amount of employment on this planet, as ILO statistics will testify (and which are themselves an underestimate, given the vast numbers that operate in the mostly unrecorded informal or “popular” economy). Some are more or less in alignment with the underlying principles of the ILO Decent Work Agenda and wider sustainable development objectives. When so, they can qualify as “sustainable enterprises” as codified by the [Conclusions](#) of the 2007 International Labour Conference (ILC) on this subject, which served as a precursor to the seminal ILC General Discussion on decent work and the social and solidarity economy. Among many of these “sustainable enterprises” existing around the world are family farms and other cooperative forms of economic activity that practice the underlying values of SSE without necessarily being fully aware that they are doing so. Since 1997, the international SSE movement, that among others led to the creation of RIPESS and other SSE umbrella organisations, has been working to federate this growing cluster of the global economic system.

2. In sharp contrast, another cluster of the global economy could be described as a subset of the private sector (commonly termed as the “corporate sector”), but that wields immensely disproportionate political power since they fund large armies of lobbyists, own mega media enterprises, fund political parties (sometimes to the point of almost “owning” them), etc., despite their very limited record of decent work creation in comparison to the previous category, as ILO figures would again testify. Despite its low proportion of decent work creation, this sector affects many aspects of the overall body politic far too disproportionately. At the heart of the problem lies the governance that is based on a “shareholder” formula. And this determines how power is

wielded. Yes, this formula could appear as a form of “collective ownership”, but it stands far outside the realm of the SSE movement’s vision of democracy, since this formula is not based on one-person/worker-one vote but what could be summarily described as “one-dollar-one vote”.

Do we agree with the SSE movement’s central tenet that democracy is not limited to one-citizen-one vote within the realm of parliamentary representation, but needs to extend to the broader spheres of peoples’ lives, including equal rights to vote and contribute ideas to the running of both individual enterprises and the broader body politic whereby voting powers are NOT in any way related to the weight of capital held? Furthermore, SSE often speaks of participatory democracy, including at the local level such as participatory budgeting.

This paper is not a critique of small social entrepreneurs that indeed undertake many initiatives that help alleviate micro-causes of inequality, poverty and exclusion. In that sense, their activities are similar to some of those practised by the SSE movement, insofar as these activities are democratically governed. The question is whether they would be willing to dig deeper into the root causes and embrace more macro-systemic analyses and recommendations, such as those provided by Oxfam International in Box 3? Would the corporate patrons of the social entrepreneurship movement, such as the Schwab Foundation and the WEF endorse these analyses and recommendations to rein in fast-growing global corporate power and democratize the enterprise?

We acknowledge that SSE alone cannot change the world. Providing a better future for all humanity implies a holistic approach to tackle all the issues, step by step, from the local to the global, such as the power-shifting measures proposed by Oxfam. We suggest that all social movements, including social entrepreneurs, endorse this much more macro-systemic approach to the underlying challenges of our time.

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All these different points could be elements of a constructive dialogue to gain a better understanding between the social entrepreneurship movement and representatives of the SSE movement both within the UNTFSSSE and beyond.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



- Active since 2004 in the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy (RIPESS). Various tasks and functions were performed during these years.
- Participant in RIPESS global meetings since 2005 and in many regional meetings in Asia.
- Participant in World Social Forums in 2005, 2009, 2013, 2015 and 2016.
- Member of the Board of Directors since 2012 of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNET) and RIPESS representative.
- Since 2014, a RIPESS representative in the United Nations Inter-Agency Taskforce Working on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE). Has participated in in all meetings and symposiums since then.
- Between 2003 and 2013, co-editor of a monthly International Newsletter on Sustainable Local Development.
- Founding President of the Quebec City Community Economic Development Corporation (CDEC) in 1993-94. Individual member since then.
- Political science teacher and trade union activist from 1968 to 1997.

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