

Understanding Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship and the Social Economy in Rural Cambodia

Isaac Lyne, Charnith Ngin and Emmanuel Santoyo-Rio

Abstract

Purpose – Critically assess Western views on the social economy against everyday realities in a low-income country. To challenge ethnocentric epistemologies in the discourse of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship that is prevalent in international development.

Design/methodology/approach – Qualitative data is used to explore views of members of social enterprises in Northern Cambodia. Three enterprises with different characteristics were selected. Semi-structured interviews and a group discussion took place in each case, exploring motivation, values, empowerment, participation, equity, innovation and risk appetite.

Findings – The study finds that the important roles social enterprises play in rural community development are sometimes at odds with the reasoning of Western development agencies. The social economy in Cambodia is undergoing change with the advancement of capitalist market forces. This suits formal businesses but could exacerbate the exclusion of other community actors.

Research limitations/implications – Three case studies are in close proximity in Northern Cambodia and the situated dynamics may not transfer well to other contexts. Some limitations are offset by the selection of different types of social enterprises.

Practical implications – The study gives insights of value to the designers of programs or projects to support social enterprise working within international development agencies and non-government organisations. For academics it offers critical insight into assumptions about social enterprise that emanate from Western management literature.

Originality/value – This paper meets the need for close up inter-disciplinary work on social enterprise development in under-represented contexts.

Keywords – Community development, social economy, international development, social change, innovation.

Introduction

Cambodia was notoriously gripped by conflict for three decades lasting from the late 1960s until the mid-to-late 1990s. Entrepreneurship in the aftermath of this period was rudimentary and located largely in the black-market. Post-conflict reconstruction efforts in the 1990s initiated palliative humanitarian interventions along with structural adjustment to encourage foreign direct investment. However by the start of 2000s most of the entrepreneurial activities among the poor were typified by routine, speculative arbitrage (Dana 2002, 201-202). This has gradually changed as younger Cambodians have starting to experiment with small ventures that have longer term entrepreneurial orientation (Dana 2014). Alongside longer term oriented entrepreneurship there has also been a growth in social entrepreneurship in recent years – which is a process that leads (among other things) to the initiation of social enterprises (Haugh 2005).

Social enterprises are businesses with explicit social goals (or a primary objective of generating ‘social value’). They can be delineated from charities that depend more on donations and grants and also from corporate social responsibility that create social value as an externality (Alter 2007; Peattie & Morley 2008). They are commonly framed by not-for-profit principles to denote their explicit *social purpose* (Defourny & Nyssens 2010; Haugh 2005). However, some academics disagree that non-profit should be a starting point for analysis because the democratic distribution of profit, particularly in cooperative organisations, is a pedagogical practice that itself yields social impact (Ridley-Duff & Southcombe 2012).

Transversal analysis of social enterprise that employs social origins theory and institutional analysis to explain how social enterprises achieve strategic goals shows why alternative conceptions of social enterprise manifest in different regions of the world (Kerlin 2009). It has long been clear that entrepreneurship in general is ‘culture-bound’ and that universal frameworks are not useful for analysis (Dana & Dana 2005, 81). By adopting the position that social entrepreneurship and enterprise is no different we intend to put different conceptions of social enterprise to the test in a hither-to under-researched setting – namely rural communities in a low income country. Specifically, it is our concern with the tendency of grand narratives to undermine the broadest appreciation of social enterprises (Dey &

Steyaert 2010; Seanor et al. 2013) that led us into this research project. We formulate our principal research question as follows:

- How do views expressed in a academic literature about social enterprises' motivations, their role in community development and the way they target unmet needs compare to rural realities in Northern Cambodia?

This paper zooms in on three case studies, all in close geographical proximity. Firstly, we focus on a family planning centre operated under franchise from Marie Stopes International. We understand this as a variant of social enterprises named elsewhere as “enterprising non-profits” (Dees et al. 2001). Secondly we look at Leukkompos Satrey Agricultural Development Cooperative which derives revenues from trade and is commensurate with literature that proposes social enterprise as building blocks for community development (Haugh 2007). Thirdly, analysis of two village-level Resin Producer Associations allows us to interpret reasoning for social entrepreneurship in a rural village context where customary economic practices are increasingly impacted by market forces.

Through these case studies, this paper raises questions about governance, motivation, values, empowerment, participation and social capital, equity, innovation and risk appetite in relation to social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. The paper starts by situating social enterprise as part of the social economy by applying Ash Amin's (2009) contextualised framework to Cambodia in general. Assumptions in the social enterprise literature are then elaborated further and considered next to issues in Cambodia before we proceed to our methods and empirical data. Our findings underline how alternative conceptions of individual and collective entrepreneurship are pertinent in different contexts and also the implications of the changing nature of the social economy in a rural context.

Situating Social Enterprise

Social enterprises are generally portrayed as part of the ‘social economy’ and Amin (2009) shows that the *raison d'être* of a ‘social economy’ is contingent on the relative strength of three drivers which are: welfare states; market forces and the social economy itself, the latter manifest largely by the tradition of cooperatives and associations alongside non-profit enterprises (see Figure 1).

Amin claims that where welfare, market mechanisms and the social economy are all weak, the social economy merges with the informal sector and there is a high reliance on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). This applies to Cambodia where welfare provision is minimal and markets for the poor are unreliable (Menon & Hal 2013) and where civic trust remains constrained after decades of conflict and trauma including people's experiences under the notorious Khmer Rouge (Zucker 2011). As a legacy of post-conflict development interventions, in 2013 Cambodia had the second highest density of NGOs per capita worldwide (Domashneva 2013). However, as the amount of aid accessible to NGOs has declined since the mid-2000s many of them have turned to social enterprise as part of their strategies for financial survival (Khieng 2014)..

	Strong Social Economy	Weak Social Economy
Strong market mechanisms with strong welfare state	Social economy is a parallel sector (to the public and private sector) with a distinctive ethos.	Emphasis on market orientation and reducing the role of government service provision.
Strong market mechanisms with weak welfare state	Remedy for certain inequalities by promoting new markets or 'socially inclusive markets.'	Cheap substitute for more expensive services.
Weak market mechanisms with weak welfare state	'Post-capitalist possibility' where the social economy can provide viable economic alternatives.	Social economy blends with informal activity and dependency on NGOs. Overall impact on poverty is weak.

Figure 1: Situated practice of social economies (adapted from Amin 2009, 13-17)

There is no discernible Cambodian government support or legal framework for social enterprise (although policies do promote agricultural cooperatives and microfinance). While some social enterprises operate as formal businesses, the majority of NGOs do not register their enterprises with the Ministry of Commerce or General Department of Taxation. This puts many social enterprises within the informal economy (even though sophisticated business models are evolving) (Lyne et al. 2015) further testifying to Amin's thesis that the social economy tends to merge with the informal one when markets, public welfare and the social economy itself are relatively under-developed.

Assumptions about social enterprise and their relevance in Cambodia

A range of concepts, including social capital, competition, solidarity, governance and social entrepreneurship are used to explain the modus operandi of social enterprise from different points of view (Defourny & Nyssens 2010; Kerlin 2009). All these concepts can be critically examined in the Cambodian context. It is for instance written that social enterprises harness and enhance ‘social capital’ – generically, substantiated norms of trust between people and groups that helps to mobilise resources – by strengthening community interaction and reciprocity (Haugh 2005; Kay 2006). However, there are also questions about whether ‘bridging social capital’ – ‘weak ties’ across networks within and across communities – are really what counts, or whether ties with authority figures and influential individuals (‘linking social capital’) matter more for a social enterprises success (Toner et al. 2008). These observations are pertinent in Cambodia. While some research focuses on forms of social capital that have assisted the post-conflict recovery in villages (Krishnamurthy 1999) linking social capital is pertinent to the way patron-client relationships (or ‘lop-sided friendships’) have historically determined Cambodians’ strategies for protection and ongoing access to resources (Chandler 2008, 126-127).

In management literature social enterprises have been interpreted as a mechanism for competitiveness and more efficiently meeting social needs that is driven *a priori* by business principles (Alter 2007; Thompson 2008). Market feedback is deemed a means of accountability that ensures the productive use of resources (Dees 2001, 1-4) and it is also suggested that in low income countries the primary role of social entrepreneurship is developing new markets and scaling up solutions to poverty (Dees 2008; Power et al. 2012). This has been adopted into international development discourse as ‘inclusive business’ at the bottom of the economic pyramid’(Castresana 2013). In Cambodia some well-established social enterprises fit this model and have also been structured to leverage ‘impact investment’. However, most social enterprises are not structured in this way and they continue to rely upon a mixture of earned revenue, donations and grants (Khieng 2014). Market orientation is therefore a mixed picture. Moreover, the most successful transitions to self-funded business among NGOs in Cambodia, have happened in the microfinance sector that attracted foreign investment since the mid-2000s (Bateman 2014). Some view the microfinance institution (MFI) as a “quintessential social enterprise” that extends vital credit to the poor and view MFI pioneers as “some of the world's most formidable social

entrepreneurs” (Alter 2007, 6). But others are concerned that microfinance indebtedness impacts on neighbourly reciprocity and wellbeing (Dey & Steyaert 2010, 94-95). Internationally, there is also evidence of ‘mission drift’ among MFIs that withdraw financial services over time from the truly poor in order to reduce their transaction costs and maintain profitability (Toner et al. 2008, 9).

In contrast to placing the primary emphasis on efficiency, academics from the European Social Enterprise Research Network (EMES) (without denying that efficiency and markets matter) tend to put other criteria first. Drawing on cooperative traditions, EMES scholars idealise social enterprise as a means of democratic participation in economic life. The ultimately prized model seems to be ‘*multi-stakeholder management*’ that gives a voice to non-members of the enterprise in the delivery of a service or product on which they depend (Defourny & Nyssens 2010, 47).

Differential emphases on social enterprises efficiency and participatory nature also give rise to variable governance theories. Academics making nuanced use of institutional theory show how social enterprises governance varies in accordance with their strategies for legitimacy, which is in turn influenced by on one hand by societal norms and on the other by institutions from which support can be leveraged (Agrawal & Hockerts 2013; Mason et al. 2007). In comparison, research on Third Sector governance in East Asia shows that while ‘corporate governance’ by a board of directors has gained currency it remains unpopular in authoritarian countries like Vietnam and China (Lyons & Nivison-Smith 2008). This is pertinent in Cambodia where there is nominal democracy but all public service apparatus is enlisted to support the ruling Cambodian People’s Party via patronage relations (Turner 2013).

Social enterprise governance also informs debate about the room for initiative that should be afforded to the social entrepreneurs at work within a social enterprise. US management literature historically positions heroic social entrepreneurs or ‘change makers’ at the centre of social enterprises initiation and subsequent successes (Dees 2001; Drayton 2002). At the turn of the millennium they were being articulated as opportunistic, resourceful, bold, indefatigable leaders who are, in a Schumpeterian fashion, iteratively inclined towards ‘creative destruction’ in their pursuit of innovative/revolutionary ways to address social problems that they care about (Dees et al. 2001, 2-3). Social entrepreneurship (a process enacted by social entrepreneurs) has since been accordingly refined into a multidimensional

construct based on management concepts exclusively, embodying risk appetite, innovativeness and the recognition and appraisal of opportunities in financial and social terms (Weerawardena & Sullivan Mort 2006). Other academics call for research to adopt these principles and strengthens the evidence base using multivariate analysis instead of case studies (Short et al. 2009).

In contrast to the heroic individual narrative, EMES literature documents how the innovations enacted by social enterprises and also their chances of succeeding depend not so much on heroic individuals or leaders but much more on collective processes and people involved in wider circles of entrepreneurship than the enterprise itself (Defourny & Nyssens 2013; Spear 2006). A more strident critique of the heroic narrative also exposes its performativity. Succinctly put, the heroic narrative is not just empirically reflected by research but also brought into being through language and research choices (Dey & Steyaert 2010). For instance, religious overtones revitalise liberal capitalism by inviting ‘hope’ while these same overtones are obscured by a technical emphasis on management that positions social entrepreneurship as an ideology-free approach to development problems (91-92). This begs the question whether social entrepreneurship’s overtones are communicable across cultures. In Cambodia ‘hope’ might mean quite particular things. This in turn invites consideration of social enterprise and entrepreneurship from inter-disciplinary perspectives. Particularly promising in our view is infusing geographical research. From this analysis, social enterprise is for instance a way to foster rural community resilience by combining different monetary and non-monetary assets in new ways (Gibson et al. 2010) and also by maintaining the management of natural resources that are threatened by outside interests at local, regional and global scales (Berkes & Davidson-Hunt 2007).

Research problem

The literature reviewed has raised widely discussed issues in western-world contexts that are less well discussed in non-western low income country contexts like Cambodia. Thus the technical focus and assumptions about community empowerment and competitiveness and also counter-posed emphases on solidarity and participation all need much more exploration. The most pertinent current literature on social enterprise and entrepreneurship proposes it as a more sustainable and legitimate way to address ‘development’ than aid and grant dependent

NGO's (Chand 2009; Fowler 2000; Khieng 2014). But wider exploration is also needed to properly think about its contribution to society.

Methodology

Three case studies are composed from data collection on organisations that broadly fit social enterprise, as defined in the literature. Following Peattie and Morley (2008) these case studies represent organisations that generate revenues by trading and have certain explicit social goals. While our ability to claim that *all* three cases represent formal *enterprises* (a requirement if we speak of social *enterprise* at all) is untenable, certain factors need to be considered.

Firstly, Cambodia is populated by an abnormally high density of local and international NGOs. This is relevant to the emergence of 'enterprising non-profit organisations' - social enterprises that rely on mixed resources and strive for sustainability via commercial strategies (Alter 2007; Dees et al. 2001). Accordingly, we studied Marie Stopes International-Cambodia (MSI-C), zooming in on a franchised family planning centre that operates as a formal business and generates most of its revenues via service provision. In this respect, the selection of MSI-C was quite straight forward.

Secondly, in rural Cambodian localities membership associations are often the most coherent organisations that engage in trade. Under Cambodian Law the only legal vehicle for these is an Agricultural Cooperative – via one Government Decree (1998) and further Sub-Decrees (2001, 2013). Whether co-operatives are viewed as social enterprises depends somewhat on culturally delineated discourse (Ridley-Duff & Southcombe 2012; Spear 2010). However, for our analysis of Rovieng Leukkompos Satrey Agricultural Development Cooperative (LS-ADC) we are simply zooming in on a formally registered organization that derives its principal revenues from trade, which has primarily social goals related to rural community development and which also reinvests some surplus into the growth and outreach of the organisation. In summary, the structure of the organisation as a Cooperative is born out of contextual necessity.

Finally, the wider reality of the informal economy, which is the dominant means of livelihood for ninety per cent of Cambodians (Mendizabal et al. 2012) needs consideration pertaining to our analysis of two resin producer associations (RPAs). In this instance,

vulnerable villagers are organizing economic activities to serve social interests, even if they have not founded formal enterprises yet. Moreover, the RPA members were targeted beneficiaries of a United Nations international development intervention called the Creative Industries Support Programme (CISP). [1] Implementing partners were hired (among other things) to help instil formality into resin associations (Cambodia Daily 2011). CISP documents speak of ‘cultural entrepreneurship’ but on close inspection much is oriented to social enterprise. For instance, objectives include mobilising ‘social capital’ and community participation through economic activities (MDG-F 2008, 8-14) and promoting ‘niche products’ to instil sustainable livelihoods in communities that are negatively impacted by the market economy (29-30). We recognise that identifying social *enterprise* in this instance is contentious but the issue for discussion is to what extent themes in social enterprise and social entrepreneurship literature are pertinent to the RPAs’ modes of economic engagement.

Our studies took place in close geographical proximity in Northern Cambodia. Two took place in Romoney Commune, Rovieng District, Preah Vihear Province – namely the RPAs and LS-ADC. The third study (MSI-C family planning) was in Kompong Thom Province, bordering Preah Vihear and situated within 30 kilometres of the other studies. Fieldwork took place between April and May 2011. In three preceding months there were preparatory meetings, interviews and correspondence with associated development agencies. In each instance of fieldwork, six semi-structured interviews took place (90 minutes was allowed for each) with organisation members as follows:

- MSI-C – Country Director of MSI-C based in Phnom Penh; two members of the Kompong Thom clinical management team; three clinical nurses
- LS-ADC – The Chair of Board of Directors; three members of LS-ADC management committee; two association members
- RPAs – Two associations (thus 12 people) were interviewed in this instance – in each case the nominated RPA Leader and five association members. [2]

Semi-structured interview schedules allowed exploration of points of particular interest to respondents. Schedules consisted of twenty four questions designed to elicit latent content related to the following concepts that are associated with social enterprise/entrepreneurship in academic literature: inclusion; participation and community involvement; equity; the purpose

of producing surpluses; innovation; risk appetite and economic ethics. An additional group discussion was held to see if matters of importance in a group setting differed to those in a single person interview. [3]

We recognise concerns with interviews and data collection with respect to entrepreneurship. This is not least because entrepreneurship is fostered differently in specific environments (Peterson 1988). On that basis, observational methods can give a better reflection of how entrepreneurship is enacted in particular contexts than short interviews which also risk the iteration of responses that conform to social norms (Dana & Dana 2005, 82). We have reason to be concerned with this given that our aim is to contrast predominantly Western theory about social enterprise and social entrepreneurship with a different cultural and socio-economic context. While recognising that observational, ethnographic work would be desirable for a more in depth research project, we have mitigated problems to some degree by holding interviews that were not very short. Rather interviews were open-ended, with room for elaboration on points of interest as they emerged. Meanwhile, group discussions were also designed to test responses under a different set of circumstances.

Interviews/discussions took place in Khmer language, the main language spoken among the Cambodian population. All interviews and group discussions were digitally recorded and stored. Interview notes were typed up. In two of the studies where fieldwork was conducted by non-Cambodian researchers, translators were used. For the purpose of analysis, critical moments were revisited in recordings and accurate transcriptions were obtained with the help of native Khmer speakers. Critical insights were circulated among researchers and finally organised into three themes:

1. Internal/external and micro/macro level ‘drivers’ for the emergence and development of social enterprise.
2. Community empowerment, economic equity and participation.
3. Entrepreneurial process including innovation; opportunity recognition and risk tolerance. Forces that constrain the process dynamics were also identified.

Prior to interviews the organizations under study were contacted by phone and introduced to the purpose of the study. No respondents are identified by name. However, complete anonymity of some respondents is not possible given that organisations and some specific

positions of respondents in them are identified. This was explained to informants at the point of interview, when they were read a research information sheet prior to giving their recorded consent. The information sheet explained our reasons for conducting the research and for what purposes our data would be used. Different information sheets were used for semi-structured interviews and group discussions.

Study one: Marie Stopes International – Cambodia reproductive health services

Marie Stopes International (MSI) is an International NGO focused on sexual and reproductive health. MSI was founded in 1976 by Drs. Tim and Jean Black, who had seen the devastating effects of unplanned pregnancies on families in Africa and Asia. MSI grew through commercial franchising and is estimated to have prevented 4.5 million unintended pregnancies worldwide. In 2011 Marie Stopes International–Cambodia (MSI–C – a self-defined social enterprise) operated family planning clinics in seven Cambodian provinces that provide advice, contraception and surgical procedures including vasectomies and termination. The Kompong Thom provincial clinic had operated since 2008. It had 8 staff and received on average more than 600 patients/clients per month.

Drivers for emergence of the enterprise and participation in its activities

MSI–C originally operated as an NGO, providing free services and relying solely on donor funding. Since adopting social enterprise as a strategy for financial sustainability in response to the changing nature of international aid, MSI–C has worked towards a full cost recovery model while applying subsidised service rates for the poor. The Country Director in Phnom Penh revealed a strong market mentality when he claimed that incentives to respond to people's needs was stronger in a business than a purely donor funded programme. He also felt financial independence would give MSI–C organisational autonomy. At the clinic level in Kompong Thom senior staff believed service provision was more important than the service income but they also understood that without this income the clinic could not survive. Critically, it would be simplistic to view their financial considerations only in terms of a sustainable social mission, as they also said one of their main reasons for working at the clinic was a better salary than they previously received in the public sector. When lower level staffs were interviewed financial sustainability became less important. Instead priorities were fulfilling patients'/clients' needs and reaching targets.

Community empowerment, equity and participatory governance

Community engagement in the way that services are offered was perceived as essential to the success of the business model. For instance, staff conducted village visits to firstly identify and then offer specific services for free or at subsidised rates while also circulating information about clinic-based services. Commitment to equitable provision for the poor remained strong even among senior staffs that were more focused on financial responsibilities. However, interestingly all interviewed staff thought that a hierarchical structure was the best way to run the organisation. They claimed that this was what people felt comfortable with because lines of control and responsibility were clear. What might be concluded is that the community-based work was dialogical because it responded to locally identified needs and social change was premised on greater female control over reproductive rights. However, this work may not be geared towards democratic participation in community affairs given staffs' personal values related to hierarchy. This is replicated in most Cambodian public institutions including hospitals, schools and government offices where patron-client relationships operate from the highest to the lowest levels (Peou 2010; Turner 2013).

Innovation, opportunity recognition and risk tolerance

MSI is recognised for its innovative use of social marketing to get contraceptive products into poor communities. MSI-C had been successful in transposing innovations through franchising into provincial localities. According to the clinic staff, providing innovative services and products is important for clients. Staff at different levels said that clients value the new equipment, tests, and services that have been introduced into the locality. Through the head office in Phnom Penh, the clinic also implemented innovative voucher schemes to connect supply and demand for services and to increase the numbers of acceptors of modern family planning. Staff claimed that clients ask for more new services, demonstrating that despite conservatism in Cambodian society MSI-C had been able to get family planning innovations embedded into people's everyday lives.

While clinical staff thought taking risks is the only way to grow as a business, this seemed more like ideas learned from training about the need to become an enterprise with an entrepreneurial attitude than an embodied disposition. This was exhibited by their reluctance to invest money and resources into new services that clients may not be able to pay for,

irrespective of demand. This is significant because most clinic staff were former employees of the public sector (public clinics and hospitals) or other NGOs. They have come from a working environment where the idea of “selling” health services is alien and where “clients” are really seen as “beneficiaries.” This cultural context, constrains risks with market opportunities at the clinic level. In contrast risk appetite was higher at the MSI-C national headquarters, a case in point being its initiation of the voucher payment scheme.

Study two: Leukkompos Satrey Agricultural Development Cooperative (LS-ADC)

Founded in 2005, LS-ADC registered as a Women’s Association Federation (WAF) with the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) in 2010. LS-ADC has an office in Rovieng Town, within Romoney Commune, Rovieng District with 14 full time staff (in 2011). LS-ADC provided micro-lending services linked to national community finance institutions. A portion of financial return was set aside for local social development and infrastructure projects. Services were not just accessed by members but also by local private companies and NGOs in the district. Since broadening from micro-credit LS-ADC provided agricultural inputs and training and veterinary products and services. In 2011 membership stood at just under 700 members from more than 300 households.

Drivers for emergence of and participation in LS-ADC activities

LS-ADC emerged out of five Women’s Empowerment Associations (WEAs) that were instigated by the Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA) in 2002, as part of an integrated rural development programme. ADRA locally recruited and trained WEA leaders/facilitators to use participatory teaching methods. Notably REFLECT – Regenerated Freirean Literacy through empowering community techniques – which is informed by political pedagogy and ‘gender in development’ approaches, was taught with the aim of expanding community literacy services. Leaders/facilitators were also trained with problem tree analysis to help women develop plans for improving livelihoods based on their identification of the underlying causes of poverty (ADRA 2011, 7-14). Each WEA started with a 5,000 USD loan, so that they in turn could give small loans to income generation activities.

In 2005 the WEA’s amalgamated into LS-ADC which operated independently of ADRA from 2010. Committee members expressed commitment to “community development” and

“mutual support” and a personal motivation for “gaining experience” as reasons for joining the association. There was a strong sense among both committee members and interviewed association members that benefits (mainly savings/loans, animal treatment, sale of animal feed and medicine) remain within the villages and that surpluses are locally invested into community development (such as road maintenance/repairing). Some compared this favourably with microfinance institutions (MFIs) that send profits to investors elsewhere. However, optimism that these commitments can ensure staff retention is tempered by routine realities. Despite the importance of community improvement, committee members expressed that “improving income” was their prime reason for joining. Six (out of twenty) of them had left in the space of just over a year, in every instance due to “low incentives” (the meagre monthly payment). The Chair of Board of Directors had also moved to another organisation.

Committee members viewed LS–ADC’s on-going development as a derivative of members benefits garnered from comparatively-low interest loans, relatively-low service charges for animal treatment and agricultural training, cheaper animal feed and animal medicines and also form other community development activities conducted by the cooperative. They believed these businesses profit both members and non-members (although non-members were not permitted to get a loan from LS–ADC and were charged higher fees than members for the association’s services). In summary, while association membership was constantly increasing, staff retention was proving problematic. In response, some committee members expressed the desire to transform the association into a MFI in order to raise investment capital. This could be juxtaposed to the expressed commitment to retain surpluses within the community and suggests tension in their ideals.

Community empowerment, equity and participatory governance

The solid foundations that LS–ADC had been built upon had enabled the accumulation of capital assets. The association was able to buy land, build a headquarters and repay all its loans to ADRA. This was an enriching experience for the committee members. The aim of strengthening solidarity and tackling underlying causes of poverty and social exclusion was central to ADRA’s initial work to support of foundation of WEAs. This aim was in turn prevalent in narratives of committee members who spoke of different forms of knowledge sharing in the community, alluding to the enhancement of social capital (or mutual help). Committee members also expressed that many members had stopped or reduced their

borrowing from other institutions at higher interest although no hard data was given to support the extent of this. The association did need however to network more widely and operate more inclusively in order to optimise members' legitimate expectations. This was demonstrated by LS-ADC's inability (thus far) to meet the diverse needs of members with new business ideas and also by the need to leverage more external resources.

Association members who were interviewed held dear trust for committee members and viewed them as devoted, hard-working and caring for the community. Committee members decided on daily activities whereas association members partook in monthly meetings and attended the annual congress where they decided dividends from their shares and deliberated annual activity plans. There was summarily strong and organised governance and accountability, some of which was grounded in prior experiences of using REFLECT for literacy advancement. Despite all this, decision processes still fell in the private member mind-set of a mutual organisation. Non-members could not take loans, benefit from cheaper agricultural training or animal raising services, or have any say in the association's plans. The expanding membership of LS-ADC could be attributed to trust in the association as well its appropriate services. This could be considered as the kind of 'bridging social capital' that theoretically strengthens in communities as social enterprises gain in stature. However, such a statement is also tenuous because participation was limited to members. In reality it seems therefore that the association committee and the surrounding community of interest was united more by what people have *partially* in common than by completely common interest. This point of view finds common cause with 'community economies' literature which adopts the ethical principle that communities simply have their *being* in common. This allows individuals to forge meaningful, *negotiable* alliances – or in other words it is only in the spaces between people that dialogue is possible at all (Miller 2013). This position also provides impetus for critique of rigid reciprocity and the homogenisation of interests that social capital implies within development discourse (see Gibson-Graham 2006, 58).

Regarding sustainability, LS-ADC in summary thrived into an independent sustainable organisation with physical assets that made tangible contributions to local people's livelihoods and community infrastructure. However, despite being self-funded LS-ADC was financially insecure. The committee at the heart of LS-ADC remained precarious due to insufficient remuneration, reflected by the high turnover of staff. The tension between committee members' belief in their community-based model and the expressed desire to

become an MFI underlined the material impact of precarity on the committee's economic narrative.

Innovation, opportunity recognition and risk tolerance

Indigenous innovation does not fully explain the emergence of LS-ADC, for which ADRA also take large credit. But indigenous innovation was important in LS-ADC's subsequent development and expansion from saving/loans. Committee members sought new training in animal treatment from the Provincial Department of Agriculture (the training was funded by ADRA) and they gradually identified and added animal treatment services to their skill sets. They also expressed the desire to implement rice storage and pig-rearing as new businesses. The association also diversified economic activities in a way that signified the acceptance of business risks, along with strategies for risk mitigation. Investments into animal medicine retail for instance heralded expansion into unknown business, while the strategy was developed on the back of local market research. Going forward, committee members also proposed to produce dish-washing liquid for sale as some members knew how to manufacture it and thought this might be profitable.

In summary, potential and actualised innovativeness was exhibited in the direction of LS-ADC. This resulted from a collective process involving committee members and association members who contributed at monthly meetings and the annual congress. This suggests the type of collective social innovation championed by EMES scholars is more applicable than the narrative of 'heroic individuals.' Notwithstanding opportunities which committee members would have liked to pursue, they needed more capital to realise these ideas. In addition to savings and loans, they had begun to explore possible joint ventures with local businesses, again showing creativity. However, the desire among some committee members to transform LS-ADC into a MFI in order to address capital deficits might be viewed as innovative from some perspectives, but from other perspectives it might be viewed as submission to a market logic that narrows the economic narrative.

Study Three: Rovieng Resin Producer Associations

Oleoresin is a non-timber forest product (NTFP) tapped from dipterocarp trees by 'resin producers.' It has both a domestic and international market for boat caulking and boat sealant and an international market in paint/varnish and perfumery/cosmetics industries (Andaya-

Milani 2011). Oleoresin was a focus of the United Nations supported Creative Industries Support Programme (CISP) in Preah Vihear Province because it is a traditional product of the Kuy indigenous minority people. Indigenous minorities in Cambodia are disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and their access to natural resources has drastically decreased (ILO 2010, 13-19). The CISP intervention in Preah Vihear recruited a consulting firm to train villagers on resin marketing and also engaged a local NGO as an implementing partner to train RPA associations on governance and provide business support. Two Resin Producer Associations (hereafter RPA-1 and RPA-2) were encountered in separate villages in Romoney Commune, Rovieng District.

Drivers for emergence of the associations and participation in their activities

RPA-1 members autonomously organised their association out of concern for protecting their livelihood but received technical support from CISP interventions later. RPA-2 in contrast formed purely in response to CISP. In both RPAs members' primary motivations were to secure and/or improve their income. But between the two associations there were different outlooks on the best way to achieve this. RPA-1 members mostly prioritised forest protection. They recognised villagers' participation in the destruction of their own livelihoods when – largely due to their diminished access to natural resources – they took waged work with illegal logging operations. It was felt the RPA should promote better behaviour and ensure good relations with officials so that members are not banned from the forest. Moreover, other non-cash imperatives were mentioned. Forestry provided materials and food that constituted part of their subsistence or which could be bartered. It provided traditional medicines and was also a site for and source of materials for spiritual ceremonies. To this end, with encouragement from a local NGO, RPA-1 became part of a 'Community Forestry organisation' which provides limited user/subsistence rights on 'state land' under the 2002 Law on Forestry.

In RPA-2 the leader and a younger member spoke about conservation, but most members joined solely because they thought that they could somehow sell more resin. There was less agreement about the need to change behaviour. Two dissatisfied members said that cutting trees was justified if they could not make more money because of the association. There were also complaints about the consultant training on quality control that could mean they are

unable to sell all of their collected resin. It seemed the CISP intervention was fraught with contradictions in the eyes of these RPA members and their understanding of it was unclear.

Community empowerment, participatory governance and equity

Private responses did not suggest that RPA membership promoted a strong a strong sense of empowerment. Some members spoke of the importance of acquiring knowledge but also said that “powerful people” always had the most important information and were more capable of acting. Pooling profits for community infrastructure improvement including wells and latrines was deemed desirable by some RPA-1 members but there was greater emphasis on NGO support as the main means of getting better village infrastructure. No RPA-2 members (apart for the association leader) felt in private that reinvesting surplus into village infrastructure was desirable. However, the group discussion presented different data where pooling profit and leveraging credit for village improvements and new business (promoting community resilience and economic diversification) were readily approved. Despite the tendency of RPA members to replicate association leaders’ comments, differences between the public and private transcripts were remarkable. This suggested that surpluses might be invested into community infrastructure if RPA leaders argued for it. However, this position was undermined when the group again arrived at a final, collective reiteration that seeking NGO assistance was strategy better idea.

In both associations the leader was chosen by vote but villagers were divided on the need for participatory decisions. RPA-1 members felt leaders should not act alone and attended meetings regularly. However, more than half felt they should only be called on once the leader had decided what particular decisions needed to be taken. RPA-2 had low meeting attendance. Members strongly felt the RPA leader should take care of most things and liaise with NGOs and officials on their behalves. There was no desire in either RPA for equity in resin production or any sense of responsibility towards disadvantaged members. Some respondents said that those who work hardest should get more money regardless other members ability. This was despite the fact that RPA members included amputees and that Preah Vihear Province is one of five provinces that collectively account for more than 60 per cent of national post-conflict landmine contamination. [4] It was commonly said that someone who is badly disadvantaged must go to an NGO and that the association should bear no responsibility.

Innovation, opportunity recognition and risk tolerance

Innovation of resin selling and marketing was overwhelmingly constrained by the practice of selling to the middleman (in both instances the Village Chief) who then sells onward to outside wholesalers. The system was justified on the basis that resin producers did not trust each other enough to bargain collectively while the Village Chief was a trusted business-person. In the group discussion members elaborated that the Village Chiefs may buy resin in larger volume, allowing them to store produce and benefit from price fluctuations. However, Village Chiefs would only buy raw (unfiltered) resin because value added processing on the part of producers would eat into their profit. In summary there was tension between the key CISP objective of linking local cultural products to domestic and international markets by familiarising indigenous communities with market networks (MDG-F 2008, 8-9, 14-16) and villagers realities, given their acceptance of the Village Chief as gatekeeper. This shows that generic market-oriented objectives are not always well-attuned to localised survival strategies, including patron-client relationships that have long been reflected in anthropological studies in Southeast Asia (Scott 1972). Furthermore, 'social innovation' had limited traction. Some members expressed that the association could improve community organising (implicit social innovation) but elaboration was lacking. The idea of generating social change by cooperating on forest conservation depended on various externally driven incentives created for instance by CISP, Government policy or illegal timber operations. Moreover, sustained cooperation between the two RPAs was unlikely given how RPA-2 members felt justified in cutting trees if the resin association did not yield them sufficient income.

There was little evidence that RPA membership improved risk appetite. Risk aversion was evident across all ages but was highest amongst older respondents. Risks were expressed as 'bad' (or immoral) on the basis that they threaten family welfare. There was no recognition (even potentially) of 'strategic risks' that improve business fortunes. Where risk taking happened it was out of immediate necessity. A common risk was selling resin on a daily basis when prices might be higher at another time. Another routine risk was entering the forest when ordered not to do so by authorities. Producers' need of money had intensified for at least two reasons: firstly, the ascendancy of the cash economy and decline of traditional exchange; secondly and partially related to the former point, due to their growing (sometimes violent) exclusion from Prey Lang Forest (spanning four provinces including Preah Vihear).

This was happening on account of economic land concessions from the Government to agribusinesses and mining companies that are often also owned by or operating in partnership with Cambodian politicians or their families.

Findings

We examined three different types of enterprise in close geographical proximity. The main insights are summarised as follows:

- The Marie Stopes International-Cambodia (MSI-C) family planning clinic harnessed the market to extend the outreach of services. However, the applicability of market-orientation and cost recovery as a means of sustainability elaborated in literature (Alter 2007; Dees 2001; Thompson 2008) is not unanimously persuasive. Lower level clinical staff saw tension between equity and cost recovery.
- MSI-C's innovations were notably led by the Country Director who also exhibited risk appetite and belief in market-orientation as the best way to ensure accountability to service users. This conforms to the view that heroic individuals or 'change makers' are the main driver of social entrepreneurship (Dees 2001; Drayton 2002) and also to management literature that delineates the multi-dimensional construction of social entrepreneurship (Weerawardena & Sullivan Mort 2006).
- MSI-C employs community engagement in family planning services in order to extend market penetration, typifying the "double-bottom line" where financial success is intermeshed with social value (Dees et al. 2001, 275). However, this engagement was mainly for marketing purposes delivering appropriate products, but not geared to promoting democracy in the manner idealised in the EMES literature (Defourny & Nyssens 2013). Employees preference for hierarchy in their organisation, typifying the institutionalised patronage in Cambodia (Peou 2010) and Third Sector tendencies in other authoritarian Asian countries (Lyons & Nivison-Smith 2008) also bring the commitment to economic democracy into question.

- Leukkompos Satre Agricultural Development Cooperative (LS-ADC) amassed physical assets and repaid loans but it was much less secure than the MSI-C clinic that continued to benefit from international donations. This highlights the difficulties of extending outreach by purely by trading to low income clients/members. Committee members' inclination to become an MFI despite their preference for their existing model that reinvests surplus locally, potentially points to types of mission drift noted elsewhere (Toner et al. 2008).
- LS-ADC continually took risks and implemented innovative services to meet social needs. Innovations rose from the collective thinking of the management committee and wider members' and also had input from wider circles of entrepreneurship assisted by ADRA and provincial officials in the Department of Agriculture. In this instance, collective forms of innovation underlined by EMES scholars (Defourny & Nyssens 2013; Spear 2006) are more pertinent than the actions of entrepreneurial individuals.
- LS-ADC management were committed and practised to democratic governance which gave the membership a say in work plans and strategic objectives. There was also a pedagogical practice of deliberating dividends, reflecting a socialisation perspective on social enterprise (Ridley-Duff & Southcombe 2012). Reflecting institutional theory in relation to legitimacy (Agrawal & Hockerts 2013; Mason et al. 2007) it can be speculated that democratic governance was maintained because of ADRA's preliminary training and ongoing support. However, democracy did not extend to multi-stakeholder governance idealised by EMES (Defourny & Nyssens 2010). Instead, decision rights and also loans were rigidly restricted to the membership alone.
- Some Resin Producer Association members in RPA-1 were interested in using revenues to develop village infrastructure. But none felt this to be realistic presently. All revenues were deemed necessary for immediate survival, bringing the non-profit framing of social enterprise (Defourny & Nyssens 2010; Haugh 2005) into question. The main alternative framing ('socialisation') that proposes democratic profit distribution as a pedagogical practice (Ridley-Duff & Southcombe 2012) was not pertinent either. Most members felt profit to be theirs alone and that the less capable should seek NGO assistance. This context questions whether the flow or use of profits should be the primary analytical entry point.

- RPA-1 meetings had strong attendance and members valued democratic decision making. It was organised autonomously in the first instance and members concerns were not entirely financial. Forest conservation, accessing spiritual sites and accessing NTFPs for medicinal use, barter, and materials for ceremonies were important. In this case geographical research that explores social enterprise as a means of economic diversity, community resilience and natural resource management (Berkes & Davidson-Hunt 2007; Gibson et al. 2010) is pertinent. In RPA-2 participation was weak, members felt the Leader should make decisions and some were unconcerned with forest conservation. In contrast to RPA-1, RPA-2 was mobilised as part of a resin marketing intervention initiated by an international development programme. While not rendering irrelevant the view that social enterprises develop/scale up ‘inclusive markets’ (Dees 2008; Power et al. 2012) this outcome brings into question whether this should always be the *primary* objective of development interventions.
- RPA members in both villages rejected cutting out the middleman who was their Village Chief. They also accepted him precluding them from added value processing (filtering) of raw resin. In social entrepreneurship literature, resistance to threatening innovation is addressed in the same way as in business generally. Thus ‘competitive threats’, especially those implying radical change, are resisted by parties invested in the status quo (Dees et al. 2001, 170-171). To claim that social enterprises must overcome such resistance is contentious in this instance, given the way that patron-client relationships influence arrangements. Moreover, high risk aversion (particularly among older RPA members) compounds reliance on patron-client relationships as a safety-net in accordance with long observed survival strategies among Southeast Asian peasantry (Scott 1972).

This research paper is driven by views expressed in literature on social enterprise and social entrepreneurship related to dynamics, motives, roles in community development (including social capital) and addressing unmet needs. The basis for our research question is to what extent different points of view compare to rural realities in Northern Cambodia.

The three types of enterprise studied respond to different local needs. However, the initial catalyst in almost every instance was external actors’ technical assistance, capacity building and sometimes loans. The only exception was RPA-1, but even this association gained more coherence through external support. The sustainability of these enterprises varied. In financial

terms, sustainability was respectively determined by resources such as those accessible to MSI-C. However, when sustainability is viewed in other ways such as strength of participation and resilient communities, LS-ADC have shown that the input of material resources is not so clearly decisive. It was the probably the preliminary training and almost certainly the ongoing mentorship from ADRA that was decisive. ADRA is a development organization of the Protestant Christian Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is explicitly committed to radical pedagogy and participatory community development as a means for female empowerment. In contrast to LS-ADC, the MSI-C model of community engagement simply a means of extending the market penetration of a service and it arises from the embeddedness of a market-oriented approach across MSIs operations internationally. Both cases (LS-ADC and MSI-C) show how the path dependent nature of social enterprises motives, governance and means of addressing needs is enlightened by nuanced use of institutional theory (Agrawal & Hockerts 2013; Mason et al. 2007).

While social capital is contested conceptually, the 'linking' nature of it typifying interpersonal relations at the family planning clinic stands in contrast to the 'bridging' variant upon which social enterprise is generally premised (Haugh 2005; Kay 2006). Again underlining the importance of institutional theory, this reflects the influence of the public healthcare system from whence clinical staff came. It also reflects resin producers' reasoning vis-à-vis relations with their Village Chief. What is also notable with RPA-1 is that bridging social capital was mobilised to initiate an association motivated by a mixture of financial and non-financial objectives. Also notable is that embedded reciprocity and trust (social capital) was not so readily exhibited by RPA-2 members. Summarily, development interventions to promote social enterprise are problematic when they try to harness social capital found in one village to initiate something with different reasoning in another village, even one in close proximity.

Moving the social economy

Amin (2009) shows that the social economy is situated in practice, depending largely on the relative strength of market mechanisms, state welfare coverage and the social economy itself. We find that two of the social enterprises studied (MSI-C family planning and LS-ADC) have engaged with and shaped of these three dynamics in different ways. This has led to two different shifts in the social economy that might be anticipated, from the state of informality,

low impact and charitable dependency. On one hand MSI-C embodies a shift towards the scalable development of inclusive welfare service markets and on the other LS-ADC embodies the possibility for non-capitalist economic diversity (see figure 2). RPA's have not impacted much on any shift, but this is not to say that they are not important to their members' wellbeing.

	Strong Social Economy	Weak Social Economy
Strong market mechanisms with strong welfare state	A parallel sector (to the public and private sector) with a distinctive ethos	Emphasis on market orientation and reducing the role of government service provision
Strong market mechanisms with weak welfare state	Remedy for certain inequalities by promoting new markets or 'socially inclusive markets'. MSI-C	Cheap substitute for more expensive services
Weak market mechanisms with weak welfare state	'Post-capitalist possibility' providing viable economic alternatives LS-ADC	Blends with informal activity and dependency on NGOs. Weak overall impact on poverty. RPAs

Figure 2: Movements in the situated practice of social economies

MSI-Cambodia does little to strengthen the scope of public welfare overall but it does engineer a situation where specific welfare needs can be addressed by market-oriented business. Without being critical of MSI-C's work, without which family planning services would be non-existent, we find cause for concern that an instrumental market-oriented approach towards extending welfare could contribute to the erosion of more diverse of economic arrangements. This includes traditional forms of reciprocity that have historically enabled villagers to complete tasks related to their livelihood (Krishnamurthy 1999). More widely, the instillation of market logic into village life might induce people to more readily and justifiably exploit each other for financial gain. This is commensurate with the observation that MFIs' operations in Cambodia, far from reducing dependency on usurious informal money lenders, has become synthesised with informal lending as villagers try to

juggle their repayments (Ovesen & Trankell 2014). The end result can be deeper institutional embeddedness and acceptance of exploitative economic practices.

LS-ADC came out of ADRA's use of methods such as REFLECT for collective community empowerment, establishing a trajectory commensurate with the cooperative tradition. This has instigated a possible shift towards post-capitalist economic practices via a stronger social economy that retains its benefits locally. The choice of cooperative model was partially induced by the desire for private member-benefit and in great measure by legal vehicles that Cambodian Government policy currently makes available. This underlines a how social norms and institutional structures have influenced the inception and subsequent development of this association. ADRA's involvement does not mean that LSD-AC typifies a model of community development that has been instigated by outsiders. Rather the emergence of LS-ADC can be seen in our view as a meaningful partnership process.

The developments of the RPAs do not (yet) signify a movement in the social economy. This can be considerably attributed to the nature of the support given to them. The intervention emanating from CISP was not wholly commensurate with villagers' economic strategies. It seemed villagers were attending training as much for stipend payments as they were for training that they expected to be useful. The local NGO's work might also have simply strengthened villagers' strategy of dependency on external assistance. RPA members also exhibited low economic solidarity with disabled villagers. At least two issues must be considered here, again in accordance with social origins theory: firstly that the resin producers struggle to cope with the advancement of capitalist enclosures that diminish their resources; secondly they have within their living memory the Khmer Rouge regime that violently enforced collective labour and which pervaded in Preah Vihear Province into the mid-1990s, more than 15 years after the regime was ousted from many other provinces. All of this puts economic solidarity into a specific context.

Conclusion

This study has contributed to debates about the social economy by examining different types of rural social enterprise in a low-income country. We have added to theorising of the social economy by showing how its trajectory is being shaped by the different social origins of social enterprise. Each case illustrates how "*existing social structures and institutions shape and dictate the options available for the development of social enterprise*" (Kerlin 2009,

195). Movements in the social economy might more accurately be conceptualised as “fragmentations” into different *raison d'être* (or paradigms) in the same geographical locality. It remains open to question what paradigm will become dominant, however concurring with Nicholls (2010) we suspect (and are concerned) that the most “well-resourced paradigm” embodied here by MSI-C will garner the strongest institutional legitimacy.

Despite our concerns, we do not see reason for strong pessimism. MSI-C's market-oriented approach is indeed premised on the financial sustainability foremost. But MSI-C's desire for independence is also detectable. This suggests resource dependency is not the only thing driving social enterprise in the non-profit sector, organisational autonomy is also important and this in itself can keep possibility open ended (see Dey & Steyaert 2012). Moreover, sitting alongside a market-oriented model that is imported from abroad, we have also seen in LS-ADC a model for community-based social enterprise that emerges through a meaningful process of community partnering. In this case markets for products and services have emerged organically, connecting villagers to economic opportunities while retaining surpluses for community undertakings. There is a strong resonance with geographical research that proposes social enterprise development as part of strengthening rural community resilience (Gibson et al. 2010).

On the basis of the data gathered we see grounds for rethinking social enterprise development as part of ‘business at the bottom of the economic pyramid.’ This is a *modus operandi* of international development institutions that, as Castresana (2013) notes, “*does not make it possible to advance in a revision of the premises of development that would include the normative dimension in the debate*” (261). Berkes and Davidson-Hunt (2007) propose that social enterprise that maintains community management of natural resources in the face of threats from outside interests are important for upholding the commons. If this holds, then it stands to reason that sovereignty in the self-determination of livelihoods and diverse social economies should be a focus for development programmes that strive to promote the enterprising use of local resources. Taking such a view to heart, we might also envisage greater opportunities for grassroots social enterprise at the village level (in the form of resin producer associations and so on) to shape viable new directions/paradigms for social economies in the long term.

Notes

1. The Creative Industries Support Program (CISP) in Cambodia ran from 2008 – 2012, funded with \$3.3 million USD from the Spanish Government. It involved four UN agencies with participation from four Ministries of the Royal Government of Cambodia.
2. The main benefit gained from a comparison of two RPAs as opposed to a study of just one is that each emerged in different circumstances and there are different insights to be drawn.
3. The RPA group discussion brought together three members of each one which included the nominated Leader of RPA-1, two other members of RPA-1 and three members of RPA-2.
4. View www.the-monitor.org/index.php/publications/display?url=lm/2003/cambodia.html

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Corresponding author

Isaac Lyne can be contacted at: I.lyne@westernsydney.edu.au

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