

IIDE Proceedings 2011- Re-Integrating Technology And Economy In Human Life And Society ~ Volume I ~ Contents & Preface



International Institute for
Development and Ethics

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Preface

Since 2009 a group of authors from South Africa and the Netherlands have been cooperating in a project on issues of (small) entrepreneurship and development. What follows is a selection of nine research papers that have been presented and discussed in local seminars organized by the International Institute for Development and Ethics(IIDE) at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, and/or at the 16th and 17th Annual Working Conferences of the IIDE. The first six papers, mainly authored by (South) African scholars contain an interesting variety of empirical studies, while the following three papers from Dutch researchers have a theoretical focus and a reflective character. This categorization of the papers in empirical studies and theoretical reflections is useful to introduce each of them briefly:

Empirical studies

Lindile L. Ndabeni, a Research Fellow at the Institute for Economic Research on Innovation (IERI) and an academic at Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), discusses in the first paper the potential of low- and medium-tech SME economy to stimulate endogenous growth through innovation. He argues that innovation policy is central to the success of the LMT economy as this will increase the innovation capacities of LMT enterprises. After introducing the national system of innovation as the conceptual framework of the chapter and a general description of low- and medium-tech SMEs, the paper focuses on forest-products as low-tech SMEs.

Sibonginkosi Mazibuko, a graduate student at the University of the Free State, provides a critical analysis of the economic opportunities and barriers found around the conservation area of the Royal Natal National Park in the northern Drakensberg. He argues that the park and the tourism industry present avenues for viable opportunities for the poor to engage in entrepreneurial practices at levels commensurate with their capital assets in order to reduce poverty and unemployment. The parks are a factor largely because they represent economic anchors in many tourism areas, as is the case with the Royal Natal National Park and the larger tourism industry.

Daan F. Toerien, a consultant in local economic development (LED) and research associate of the Centre for Environmental Management of the University of the Free State, South Africa, seeks a satisfying explanation to the question ‘why is it that unemployment remains so high in post-apartheid South Africa?’ He

demonstrates that ignorance and/or disregard of the importance of strategic positioning and the nature of the technology applied could result in a systemic inability to overcome the unemployment problems. A broad solution is offered for consideration in South Africa and elsewhere.

Lucius Botes, of the University of the Free State, looks at the intended and unintended consequences of the way small business development support (SBDS) is occurring in the Free State, one of South Africa's nine provinces. For that purpose he uses the sustainable livelihoods approach as an analytic tool. He argues that current frameworks focus too narrowly on the financial, physical and human capital of entrepreneurial livelihoods, neglecting the natural and social capitals. This may cause the establishment of businesses which are non-responsive (or at least not responsive enough) to the social and environmental challenges of our time.

Lochner Marais, Motshedisi Lephasha, Molefi Lenka, and Johan van Zyl, all affiliated with the University of the Free State, consider in their article five attempts towards business development during the post-apartheid era. Although these five cases are largely an arbitrary choice, what they have in common is that they probably belong to the currently most prominent business support programmes. The article examines the changes in these five specific business support programmes and attempts to determine what the crucial ethical questions in this respect are.

Aad van Tilburg, of Wageningen University in the Netherlands, and *Emma Kambewa*, of World Fish Center in Malawi, analyse how an improved interaction between value chain partners, notably at the extreme ends of international value chains, will benefit from a common understanding of ethical chain values. Their paper demonstrates that there are good reasons to assume that a common understanding and interpretation of chain values by actors in the value chain are essential for the welfare of all chain participants and notably the small-scale primary producers at the bottom of the pyramid.

Theoretical reflections

Gerben Nooteboom and Mario Rutte of the University of Amsterdam examine three leading figures at the turn of the millennium who proclaimed the end of poverty through the application of business principles: Hernando de Soto, Muhammad Yunus, and Jeffrey Sachs. They aim to unravel the implicit ideologies

that underlie the optimistic, economistic and rather simplistic solutions that are claimed. For their purpose they use the concept of magic bullet that proclaim single solutions to complex problems.

Henk Jochemsen of Wageningen University in the Netherlands, in a reflection on the debate about the need for increased food production, aims to think through his critical stance in that debate. An extensive review of the literature about this debate is beyond the scope of his paper. The author focuses on the elaboration of a normative view on agricultural practice on the basis of arguments used in that debate and draws of philosophical insights that he has developed elsewhere. In order to indicate his position in the mentioned debate, Jochemsen investigates the implications of the developed normative model for different approaches in agrarian production.

Sytse Strijbos in conversation with *Darek Haftor* provides a broad outline of the research agenda of the IIDE that is focused on the role of 'technology' and 'economy' as the two major drivers of today's global world. Regarding the virtually autonomous development of 'technology' and 'economy' the main problem is how to reintegrate both into human life and society. After drawing a picture of the research of the past up to the present, the paper aims to think through a programmatic approach for the future. The latter is positioned against the backdrop of three contemporary streams of thought that all seek a way out of the problems of our age, especially the persistent problem of poverty.

As noted above, this volume has been produced in a North-South cooperation aiming to study issues of entrepreneurship and development. Given the broad exploratory nature of the project we are very proud of this preliminary result.

The editors

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