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Solidarity Economy, Social Enterprise, and Innovation Discourses: Understanding Hybrid Forms in Postcolonial Colombia

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Abstract: Dominant conceptions of solidarity economy, social enterprise, and innovation (SSEI) remain poorly positioned for understanding the diverse models emerging across the global South. The purpose of this paper is to examine the power relations between the global North and South in the production and dissemination of SSEI knowledge, highlighting the importance of recognizing alternative discourses in the global South. This contextual analysis is developed through consideration of the construction of the hybrid SSEI model in Colombia, drawing upon postcolonial theory and using Nicholls' framework on the legitimacy of SSEI discourses. This paper offers the first application of postcolonial theory to the analysis of SSEI in the global South. This research has demonstrated that the construction of the SSEI sector in Colombia is a reflection of the dynamic interplay of the hybrids, as it incorporates the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses within the traditional community discourse, which indeed is a combination of domestic (indigenous collective practices) and colonizer influences (e.g., cooperatives, associations). This paper also identifies the current tensions that have emerged from such hybridity within the country.

Keywords: solidarity economy; social enterprise and innovation; Colombia; hybridization; legitimacy; postcolonial theory, global North and South

1. Introduction

Solidarity economy, social enterprise, and innovation (SSEI) initiatives have gained greater visibility and recognition in recent years (Defourny and Nyssens 2010). Although these types of initiatives are understood differently by different people, they have generally been defined as initiatives that earned profits, but are motivated to address complex societal and environmental challenges (Pol and Ville 2009; Doherty et al. 2014; McKelvey and Zaring 2017; Alegre and Berbegal-Mirabent 2015; Austin et al. 2006). The authors have used a broad term 'SSEI' to encapsulate the different practices identified within the sector in Colombia, including the hero (social innovation), business-like (social enterprise), and community discourses (solidarity economy) (Nicholls 2012).

Interest in the SSEI sector has generated a number of international studies that seek to identify the factors that shape the construction of the sector across different global regions (Kerlin 2010; Gática 2015). Yet, one notable omission in the existing literature is the scant attention paid to the indigenous world and the collective traditions that have been historically practiced by 'native' indigenous people in the global South, such as for instance 'Minga' in Latin America (Giovannini 2014) and 'Ubuntu' in

Africa (Littlewood and Holt 2015). Therefore, there has been little progress in terms of constructing understanding of the alternative discourses in the global South and their potential for diverse development trajectories, which are rooted within their different traditions and contexts (Calvo and Morales 2017). Furthermore, there has been little examination of the power relations between the global North and South in the production and dissemination of knowledge related to SSEI (Idris and Hati 2013; Calvo and Morales 2015; Martin and Jiménez 2017). The North–South Divide (or Rich–Poor Divide) is the socio-economic and political division that exists between the wealthy developed countries, which are known collectively as "the North", and the poorer developing countries (least developed countries), or "the South".

Over the last few years, Latin America has implemented reforms to support a set of policies and fund the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation initiatives (see e.g., studies by Dvouletý 2017; Chen et al. 2018). Yet, little is known about this type of support within SSEI initiatives. In this article, we take a first step in addressing this gap by exploring alternative SSEI discourses in Latin America, drawing upon insights of postcolonial theory (PCT) and exploring this through Nicholls's (2010, 2012) framework on the legitimacy of SSEI discourses.

Our focus here is Colombia, which is characterized by a number of distinct SSEI traditions and contexts combining existing indigenous collective solidarity practices and new economic activities and organizations that have emerged since the end of the 19th century. There are some studies that suggest that there are around 10,500 solidarity economy practices (cooperatives, associations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with trading activities) in Colombia. However, there is no current data about the number of SSEI initiatives in Colombia, as the existing studies do not incorporate social enterprise and innovation organizational activities (Davila et al. 2018). We have selected Colombia to understand the complexity in the construction and interpretation of the SSEI field in the global South for the following reasons. First, Colombia has traditionally been a country that has looked to the global North for its model of socio-economic development (Fukuda-Parr 2016). Second, Colombia has attracted global interest among development activists and practitioners due to the high number of murders of community leaders, drug trade, internal armed conflict, and extended civil war. Thus, this makes Colombia unique and different from the rest of the Latin American countries and presents an opportunity to analyze the socio-economic progress and the development of SSEI initiatives in the country.

To achieve this, three related research questions are addressed. Firstly, how has the SSEI sector evolved historically in Colombia? Secondly, to what extent has the sector in Colombia been influenced by global North discourses? Thirdly, what are the tensions and contradictions that are apparent in contemporary practice in Colombia, and what are the implications of these for policy, practice, and future development paths? This paper contributes to our knowledge on the legitimacy of dominant SSEI discourses and the power relations between the global North and South in the production and dissemination of knowledge and alternative SSEI discourses in the global South, particularly in the Latin American context. The paper is structured as follows. We first explain the theoretical framework used for the study. Then, we reflect on the research methodology and introduce the case study country. We move on to present the main research findings and discussion, and conclude by opening trails for future research in this field.

2. Theoretical Framework: Using Postcolonial Theory to Understand SSEI Discourses in the Global South

PCT has become influential as a framework for understanding the power relations between the global North and South, as it incorporates insights from 'culturalist' and 'institutionalist' perspectives (Calvo and Morales 2015). Whilst the culturalist perspective assumes that differences are located in the values and beliefs of individuals, the institutionalist perspective emphasizes the influence of institutionalized beliefs and processes that share the same environment (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). PCT and, more specifically, Bhabha (1994) notions of mimicry and hybridity, analyze the

relationship between the center (colonizer) and periphery (colonized) by building on the concept of hegemony, or domination by consent (Mishra and Hodge 1991). Bhabha (1994) introduced the concept of mimicry as an analytical tool to expand on the (ambivalent) effects of domination, legitimacy, and hegemony. As Bhabha suggested, "mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of postcolonial power and knowledge" (1994). Bhabha (1994) claimed that the colonial subject is encouraged to mimic the colonizer by adopting the coloniser's cultural habits, assumptions, institutions, and values (Ashcroft et al. 2007; Huddart 2006). Whilst mimicry denotes the ways in which the colonizer tries to make the colonized into his own image, the outcome remains a mere reflection of the original. This opens up space for hybridity to emerge (Calvo and Morales 2015). As such, hybridity captures the integration (or mingling) of cultural signs and practices from the colonizer and the colonized cultures. However, this hybridity is not without problems, and can create tensions. We want to explore this in our study by looking at how SSEI global North discourses have influenced the construction of the model in the global South using Nicholl's framework on the legitimacy of SSEI discourses and exploring this through a postcolonial angle, taking into account the variables suggested by Bhabha in 1994: values and assumptions, cultural habits, and institutions.

In recent years, a number of scholars have turned their attention to how to understand the meanings and interpretations of SSEI (Mason 2013). While some policy makers and practitioners have presented SSEI as one element of the neoliberal grand narrative, whereby "doing good" (the social element) and "doing well" (the economic element) are combined under the notion of the double-bottom line, others have associated SSEI with a communitarian rhetoric that attempts to plot a ground beyond neoliberalism (Stevens et al. 2015; Teasdale 2011). Moreover, there has been growing interest in recent years among scholars to understand the meanings and interpretations of the term. In a chapter entitled 'the Legitimacy of Social Enterprise' wrote by Nicholls in 2012, three main SSEI discourses were identified: hero entrepreneur, business-like, and community discourses.

As illustrated in Table 1, the first is characterized by an individual focus; it is based on entrepreneur success stories, emphasizing the role of 'social entrepreneurs' and referring to them as heroes. Social entrepreneurs are often presented here as social innovators or change makers, playing the role of change agents in their sectors (such as health, education, and employment) (see, for example, Bornstein 2007). This discourse leads to a primary focus on success stories (Lounsbury and Strang 2009) and connects with existing narratives around commercial entrepreneurs and their achievements, such as for instance those from Silicon Valley. As Huybrechts and Nicholls (2012) suggested, widely influential foundations and fellowship organizations from the global North (institutions as suggested by Bhabha) such as the Skoll Foundation (founded in 1999), and the Schwab Foundation (founded in 1998) and UnLtd (founded in 2002), have promulgated the hero entrepreneur discourse.

The second discourse concerns the use of commercial logics and strategies to achieve social and/or environmental aims by building social partnerships between the public social and business sectors. The business-like discourse applies business models and thinking to achieve both financial returns and social impact (Nicholls 2012). This discourse has attracted the attention of policy makers in several countries such as the United Kingdom (UK), where the government has used it through its use of public policy, defining Social Enterprises (SEs) as businesses trading for social/environmental purposes (Teasdale 2011). Moreover, as seen in Table 1, several influential organizations have promulgated this, including among others the Grameen Bank Foundation (founded in 1997), the Impact Hub (founded in 2005), and the British Council Social Enterprise Programme (launched in 2009) (Yunus et al. 2010; Huybrechts and Nicholls 2012).

Table 1. Social economy, enterprise, and innovation (SSEI) discourses. CIRIEC: Social Economy and Cooperatives Research Network, EMES: Enterprise Research Network, PCT: postcolonial theory.

	PCT Variables		
SSEI Discourses	**Values & Assumptions**	**Cultural Habits**	**Institutions (Influential Building Actors)**
Hero Entrepreneur	• Individuals 'heroes' • Destiny of society lies on the responsibility of an individual	• Role of social entrepreneurs • Highlight Success stories	• Ashoka • Skoll Foundation • Schwab Foundation • UnLtd
Business-like	• Destiny of society lies on the relationship between private, third and public sector • Combining social and financial return	• Business models to achieve social/environmental aims • The use of commercial logics and strategies	• UK Government • Impact Hub • Grameen Bank Foundation • British Council Social Enterprise program
Community	• Based on social justice and communitarianism values, equality, and inclusion • democratic values	• Building a community voice • Close to conventional structures of third sector organizations • Collective enterprises (e.g., cooperatives and community-based organizations)	• CIRIEC Network EMES Network • Cooperative Alliance Organisation • Alternative and Solidarity Economy Network

The community discourse focuses on building a community voice, and it is based on social justice and communitarianism (Barnes 1999). This discourse sees SSEI initiatives as those that are close to the conventional structures of the third sector with altruist and equality values, in opposition to the other discourses that prioritize individuals and commercial strategies (Sarah Alvord and Letts 2004; Lounsbury and Strang 2009). This discourse focuses on collective enterprises such as cooperatives and group-based initiatives that are established for the attainment of social and economic objectives, emphasizing solidarity, democratic values, and ensuring inclusion and equality principles (Kerlin 2010). There are also influential organizations and research networks that have supported the community discourse, including among others the International Co-operative Alliance Organisation (founded in 1985), the Social Economy and Cooperatives Research Network (CIRIEC), the European Social Enterprise Research Network (EMES) (founded in 1996), and the Alternative and Solidarity Economy Network (REAS) (founded in 1997).

Although there is an agreement across the three SSEI discourses about the objectives and core values of these organizations, which are to benefit the community and create social value, they vary structurally, and each differs epistemologically in its approach. Whilst the hero entrepreneur and community discourses understand the production of goods and services as constituting the way in which the social mission is pursued, within the business-like discourse, SSEI initiatives are seen as those that can develop commercial activities that are only related to the social mission through the financial resources that they help to secure for them. With regards to governance, whilst the hero entrepreneur discourse sees SSEI as generally initiated or led by an individual, the community discourse emphasizes the collective views of the sector. However, the business-like discourse locates itself between these two positions and understands SSEI initiatives as a product of both individual and collective motivations. Moreover, the community discourse, in contrast with the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses, believes in the democratic style of governance, whereby organizations are created by a group of people and also governed by them (Calvo and Morales 2017).

As Nicholls (2012) suggested, while there is evidence of the presence of these three discourses co-existing together in the same space, there are some tensions between them. Moreover, and as some scholars have highlighted in recent years, we have observed how influential building actors or 'elites' prioritize the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses, marginalizing the community discourse (Lounsbury and Strang 2009; Nicholls 2010, 2012; Dart 2004). This omission has to some extent been addressed in some studies within the UK. For example, a study conducted by Teasdale in 2011 proposed that whilst the language of SSEI was initially developed as a way of promoting the community discourse (with cooperatives and mutual modes of enterprise), this language has changed latterly to include any organizational form that addresses a social/environmental problem, bringing the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses, mostly the latter, to the frontline of the policy agenda. Yet, more studies are required to investigate the presence of the different SSEI discourses in the global South and the power relations between the global North and South in the production and dissemination of knowledge. In the following section, we examine this phenomenon using Colombia as a case study country.

3. Materials and Methods

Colombia provides a particularly interesting setting in which to investigate the emergence of alternative SSEI models in the global South and the extent to which the global North influenced the sector in the country. In Colombia, extended civil wars since 1950s, internal armed conflict, drug trafficking, and rural displacement have had a negative impact on its socio-economic progress. However, opportunities have opened up since the Peace Talks started in 2012 between the Government, FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), and ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional).

First, this research is based on an extensive historical and political review on the construction of the SSEI sector in Colombia that includes books, journal articles, policy documents, and other grey materials. Second, 20 stakeholder interviews were conducted with government officials, academics, and staff from SSEI networks. The use of semi-structured interviews ensured basic consistency in the questions asked, but allowed for new and unanticipated issues to emerge and be pursued by the interviewer. These semi-structured interviews were conducted in Spanish throughout a period ranging from December 2013 to November 2014. The interviews lasted between 40–90 min, and were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Table 2 shows demographic characteristics of the sample. Interviews explored in detail the experience of stakeholders within the contemporary SSEI activity.

An email outlining the research objectives soliciting their participation in the research study was sent to the selected participants. The email was followed up with telephone calls to establish a suitable date for both the researcher and stakeholder informants involved. The author informed the co-researchers and participants about the project and explained in detail what was going to be done with the data collected. Then, a consent form was given to participants to read and sign accordingly. The anonymity and confidentiality of interview participants was ensured. Participants were at all times aware that they could stop the interview at any stage if they felt uncomfortable and/or did not want to record or be recorded.

An iterative analytical process was used to draw out the key themes, commonalities, and variations across stakeholders' responses. Detailed analysis proceeded through an initial phase of open coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998) concerning the development of SSEI and nature of the relationships between actors to develop a coding guide to facilitate cross-case thematic analysis. A second step integrated these codes by identifying themes via an iterative process of comparison and juxtaposition into a smaller number of higher order categories. Two emergent issues were identified within the analysis; (1) the historical evolution of a SSEI practice in Colombia, and (2) tensions and contradictions in Colombia's hybrid SSEI model. Within these emergent issues, key themes were identified as indicated in Table 3. The findings presented here are founded on the authors' interpretation of secondary sources and in-depth interviews.

Table 2. Data collection from semi-structured interviews.

	Role	Gender	Age	Interview (min)	Transcription Pages
1	Staff, Grameen Caldas	Female	34	40	3
2	Staff, Grameen Caldas	Male	50	60	5
3	Director, Impact Hub Bogota	Female	29	40	3
4	Staff, Impact Hub Bogota	Male	24	50	4
5	Staff, Impact Hub Bogota	Female	26	55	5
6	Quindío Coffee Cooperatives	Male	54	40	3
7	Quindío Coffee Cooperatives	Male	43	45	4
8	Quindío Coffee Cooperatives	Female	37	60	5
9	Escuela Nueva Foundation	Female	53	40	3
10	Escuela Nueva Foundation	Female	34	55	5
11	Director, Waste Pickers Association of Bogota	Female	46	40	3
12	Staff, Waste Pickers Association of Bogota	Male	53	45	4
13	Staff, MINTIC	Male	41	50	5
14	Staff, IPES	Female	46	40	3
15	Director, IPES	Male	55	45	4
16	Staff, Uniminuto University	Male	36	40	3
17	Vice-Chancellor, Uniminuto University	Male	57	90	7
18	Staff, Uniminuto University	Female	49	40	3
19	Staff, University of Andes	Female	38	60	5
20	Staff, Catholic University of Colombia	Male	43	55	5

Table 3. Key themes identified within the analysis.

Key Themes	Historical Evolution of SSEI Practice in Colombia	Tensions and Contradictions in Colombia's Hybrid SSEI Model
Mixing practices	- There is evidence of the hero, business-like, and community discourses co-existing in Colombia. "Despite the fact that different practices have co-existed together, there has not been much collaboration between them".	- There are tensions between the different practices (different ideologies). "There is resistance from traditional organizations to collaborate with the hero and business-like initiatives"
Financial and capacity support	- Evidence of historical support for SSEI practices. "The Colombia government has promoted the work done by SSEI actors".	- There has been recently a feeling of inequality between actors. "We can see that in recent years the government has supported social entrepreneurs and social businesses, ignoring cooperatives and indigenous solidarity organizations".
Power of discourses	- In the past, the most powerful discourse was the community discourse. Yet, the business-like and hero discourses are now more relevant in the Colombia scenario. "We can see the visibility of the SSEI sector since the 1930s".	- Lack of programs developed to enhance collaboration between discourses. "There are no current networking opportunities for different organizations from discourses to come and work together".

4. Findings

This section is divided in two parts. Firstly, we examine the historical evolution of SSEI in Colombia drawing upon PCT (mimicry and hybridity) and taking into account Nicholl's framework on the legitimacy of SSEI discourses. Secondly, we explore the current tensions and contradictions that exist between different discourses in Colombia, and the implications of these for policy, practice, and future development paths.

4.1. Historical Evolution of an SSEI Practice in Colombia

4.1.1. Mixing the Practice of Indigenous and European Traditions (10,500 BCE—1986)

The history of SSEI practices in Colombia can be tracked back to labor organizational forms of 'native' communities (e.g., Muisca, Quimbaya, Tairona, Calima, Tolima), which consist of collective solidarity action and mutual benefit community-based models that are often accompanied by celebrations and rituals (Calderón et al. 2008). During the colonization of Colombia, the European colonizers imposed their practices and legacies in social orders and forms of knowledge, for example, with the introduction of the 'encomienda' system, where the conquistadors, settlers, priests, and colonial officials were given large land grants (latifundium), and the 'natives' were required to work in exchange for protection. As a result of this, and since the European colonization took place, there was an imposition of new forms of production that prescribed value to certain societies, peoples, and traditions while disenfranchising others (Quijano 2007). Nonetheless, there is also evidence of collective practices that occurred during that period, which were primarily promoted by the Catholic Church, and include community banks (in Spanish, Cajas de Comunidad), public granaries (in Spanish, Pósitos), and the mount of piety (in Spanish, montepio). The mount of piety is an institutional pawnbroker run as a charity from the later Middle Ages until today that offered financial loans at a moderate interest to those in need.

Following the independence of Colombia in 1819, colonialism continued to wreak havoc on the minds of the ex-colonized after the end of direct colonialism. Mimic occurred as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of postcolonial power and knowledge in the region, where the colonized imitated the colonizer, adopting their traditions and values (see Bhabha 1994). The local elite (oligarchy), mostly mestizos, began to form a stable society based on ideas of modernity and industrialization, and a new exported-oriented economy was established (Larrain 2000). This is the time when a wide range of solidarity and collective forms were created, including craftsperson's societies (in Spanish, Sociedades de artesanos) and the Relief Society (in Spanish, Sociedad de la Caridad), amongst others (Calderón et al. 2008). Yet, and whilst SSEI initiatives in Colombia date back many centuries, most of the literature refers to the beginning of the 20th century, with the creation of the first cooperatives in the country bringing the European experience and cooperative values to the Latin American continent and inspired by the Rochdale Pioneers, which are aligned with the values of the community discourse.

As illustrated in Table 4, in 1931, the first cooperative law (number 134) was introduced. Although there is evidence of the formation of cooperatives at the beginning of the 20th century in Colombia, the cooperative sector increased significantly from 1960 onwards. An illustrative example of this is the establishment of cooperatives in the Santander region (Buchelli 2006). This was in part due to the support of the state and the Catholic Church, as they promoted the creation of cooperatives in rural areas to enhance socio-economic development (e.g., the Episcopal Conference in Medellin in 1968). Moreover, the cooperative legislation was modified in 1963 by the law (Number 1598) that incorporated mutuals and employee trusts. As a result of this, the number of cooperatives increased significantly in the 1980s. While there were only 523 cooperatives and 263,060 members in 1963, the number increased to 2120 and 948,265 members in 1983 (Organizacion de los Estados Americanos 1984). Therefore, within this period, we can see a combination of traditional collective practices by 'native' indigenous communities and colonizer influences with the incorporation of cooperative values and practices from European colonies (community discourse), creating a hybrid form (Bhabha 1994).

Table 4. Institutional framework for SSEI initiatives in Colombia.

	Year	Historical Context
Co-operatives/Solidarity Economy	1931	- The enactment of cooperative law (Number 134)
	1963	- Modification of cooperative law (Number 1598)
	1986	- The introduction of the concept of 'solidarity economy' (2636 Decree) establishment of the National Council of Solidarity Economy (CONES)
	1988	- With Law 79, the state recognizes cooperatives, mutuals, and employee trusts. - The establishment of the National Department of Cooperatives (DANCOOP)
	1991	Articles 58, 68, and 334 stress the importance of the solidarity economy
	1998	- The establishment of Law 454, the Superintendence of the Solidarity Economy.
	2001/2002	- The Resolution 1515 and Supersolidaria Law 795
Social Innovation	2010	- National Development Plan 2010–2014
	2011	- The establishment of Social Innovation Centre (CIS)
	2013	- The establishment of the Social Innovation National Node (NNIS)
	2014	- National Development Plan 2014–2018

4.1.2. The Consolidation of the 'Solidarity' Economy (1986–2010)

The concept of 'Solidarity Economy' was incorporated in the Colombian policy for the first time, and consequently adopted with the 2636 Decree on 4 August 1986. This gave birth to the National Council for the Solidarity Economy (CONES), which is a body that is responsible for formulating and coordinating policies, plans, and programs in relation to the solidarity economy. Since then, the 'solidarity economy' has been recognized as a relevant sector in the national economic environment. In 1988, with Law 79, solidarity economic forms were categorised into four groups: cooperatives, mutuals, associations, and employee trusts. In 1991, with articles 58, 68, and 334, the Colombian government stressed the importance of the solidarity economy.

Until the mid-1990s, the cooperative sector was very strong in several economic sectors, including construction, transport, agriculture, commerce, and services. Examples of some of these organizations are Colanta (founded in 1964), Coolechera (founded in 1933), and Saludcoop (founded in 1994), amongst others (Álvaro 2007). Moreover, new forms of cooperation and solidarity economic forms emerged, including community-based organizations, associations such as community committees (in Spanish, Justas de acción communal), and foundations. These initiatives were promoted by social movements; the Catholic Church linked them with liberation theology and local and international non-profit organizations (Álvaro 2007).

However, and particularly since 1997, the country experienced an economic and financial crisis that significantly affected the solidarity economy sector. According to a study by Álvaro (2007), the number of organizations reduced between 1997–1998 from 4108 to 3479, respectively. As a result, and in 1998, the Colombian government, under the Presidency of Ernesto Samper Pizano, introduced Law 454, describing the "solidarity economy" as a socio-economic, cultural, and environmental system formed by a set of organized social forces, identified by associative solidarity, democratic, and humanistic self-managed practices, and considered it crucial for the national economy (Villar 2001). The government transformed the National Department of Cooperatives (DANCOOP) (founded in 1988) to the National Administrative Department of the Solidarity Economy (DANSOCIAL) to guide and develop policies for the promotion and strengthening of solidarity organizations (DANSOCIAL 2003). A wide range of bodies were also established to support the development of the sector, which included, amongst others, the Superintendence of the Solidarity Economy to oversee the legal nature and activity of these organizations, and the National Fund for the Solidarity Economy (FONES) to provide financial

resources for them. These entities have since been responsible for planning solidarity economy-related policies, as well as implementing programs and projects (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2010).

The number of solidarity organizations has continued to increase since 2000, as data suggest that in that year, there were 5623 organisations, whereas there were 11,094 in 2006 (Álvaro 2007). The latter regulations concerning the solidarity economy took place in 2001 and 2002 with the 1515 Resolution and Supersolidaria Law 795. Moreover, there are universities that have traditionally supported the solidarity economy such as Javeriana University, Cooperativa Colombia, and San Gil University, among others, as well as local fellowship and network organizations that have supported the sector of the country such as the Latin America Confederation of Workers Co-operatives (COLACOT), which was founded in 1864, and had been crucial in the promotion of cooperatives in the country.

4.1.3. Social Enterprise and Innovation to Address Poverty (2010–Present)

Since 2010, the Colombian government has promoted greater integration of the sector by implementing strategic programs for public sector participation and creating new scenarios of social enterprise and innovation through partnerships between the state and for-profit and non-profit organizations (Castillo 2011). President Juan Manuel Santos ran for office with the campaign slogan "Prosperity for all", and when elected president, he established the Department for Social Prosperity (DPS) to coordinate and enact all public policies, compensate victims of conflict, and reduce poverty under the framework of the National Development Plan 2010–2014 and 2014–2018. This plan recognizes the SSEI sector and promotes SI as a mechanism for identifying and developing solutions to poverty and inequality (Villa and Melo 2015; Frias et al. 2013).

The Social Innovation Centre (in Spanish, Centro de Innovación Social or CIS) within the "National Agency for Overcoming Extreme Poverty" (in Spanish, Agencia Nacional para la Pobreza Extrema, ANSPE) was founded in 2011 to support social enterprise and innovation initiatives for extreme poverty eradication, aiming to help 1,500,000 families out of extreme poverty by 2020 (Pulford et al. 2014). One of the projects created was Hilando, which was a 2.0 website to support and connect social innovators across the country, emphasizing the role of the individuals and business projects (Domanski et al. 2016). In 2013, the Social Innovation National Node (in Spanish, Nodo Nacional de Innovación Social or NNIS) was also created as a platform for collective action, to enable citizens and communities to construct and implement policies, programs, and projects (Domanski et al. 2016; ANSPE 2013; CEPAL 2009). The April 2013 World Economic Forum report "Breaking the Binary: Policy Guide to Scaling Social Innovation" listed as a leading global example of public sector policy (Pulford et al. 2014).

Several universities have started to incorporate the terms "social enterprise" and "social innovation" within their curriculum and programs, bringing those terms that originated in the global North (primarily in the United States and some European countries such as the United Kingdom). An example of this is the University of Andes, which has referred to the SSEI sector as the one that incorporates corporate social responsibility practices and social firms that employed disadvantaged communities (in Spanish, negocios inclusivos) and have conducted work with companies such as Alpina. Moreover, the Uniminuto University, which has an international reputation in supporting grassroots social innovations at a national level, established a Scientific Park of Social Innovation in 2012. This park has since received several international awards such as the World Bank Project of the Year in 2012, the G20 Award in 2012, and the Financial Times Award in 2016. It is also important to highlight that in recent years, domestic (e.g., Buena Nota, Ruta N, and La Arenera) and international practitioners' networks, training, support providers, and funding organizations (e.g., Give to Colombia, Ventures, Ashoka Colombia, Grameen Caldas, Skoll Foundation, Schwab Foundation, the Young Foundation, and Impact Hub Bogota/Medellin) have been established in the country to give voice to individuals (social entrepreneurs) and social businesses that are addressing social/environmental problems in the country. Therefore, and as it is presented in Table 5, there is clear evidence of the presence of the three discourses (the community, hero entrepreneur, and business-like models) co-existing together at

present. Examples of organizations that are rooted within the different discourses and institutions that are promoting them in Colombia are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Solidarity economy, social enterprise, and innovation discourses in Colombia. COLACOT: Latin America Confederation of Workers Co-operatives.

Discourse Cluster	Examples of SSEI Initiatives	Influential Building Actors (Institutions)
Hero Entrepreneur (Social Innovation)	• Vicky Colbert (founder of Escuela Nueva) • Josefina Clinger (founder of Mano Cambiada Corporation) • Camilo Arjona (founder of Alas para la Gente Foundation)	• Ashoka • Skoll Foundation • The Young Foundation • Schwab Foundation • The Colombian Government
Business-like (Social Enterprise)	• Ruralive Colombia • Alpina • La Arenera	• Grameen Foundation • Some universities (e.g., Andes and ICESI University) • The Colombian Government • Impact Hub Bogota
Community (Solidarity Economy)	• Coffee-Cooperative of Quindío • The Waste Pickers Association in Bogota • Hiruria Handicrafts Associations in Guajira	• COLACOT • DANSOCIAL • Some universities (e.g., Catholic and Cooperative University)

We claim that, as Figure 1 depicts, Colombia represents a hotchpotch that combines indigenous traditional and colonial approaches where historical processes (the pre-Columbian, colonial, and postcolonial periods) as well as socio-economic and political contexts have clearly influenced the development of the SSEI sector. The expansion of meanings attached to the SSEI sector in Colombia is a reflection of the dynamic interplay of the hybrids, as it incorporates the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses within the traditional community discourse, which indeed is a combination of domestic (indigenous practices) and colonizer influences (e.g., cooperatives and association). This clearly explains how the integration (or mingling) of different practices from the colonizer (global North) and the colonized cultures (global South) have created a unique 'hybrid' SSEI model in the country (Bhabha 1994).

Still, a series of tensions and contradictions that shape the hybrid SSEI sector in Colombia are apparent from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted. The results that suggest the contradictions and tensions evident in contemporary SSEI practice, and the implications of these for policy, practice, and future development paths, are presented here.
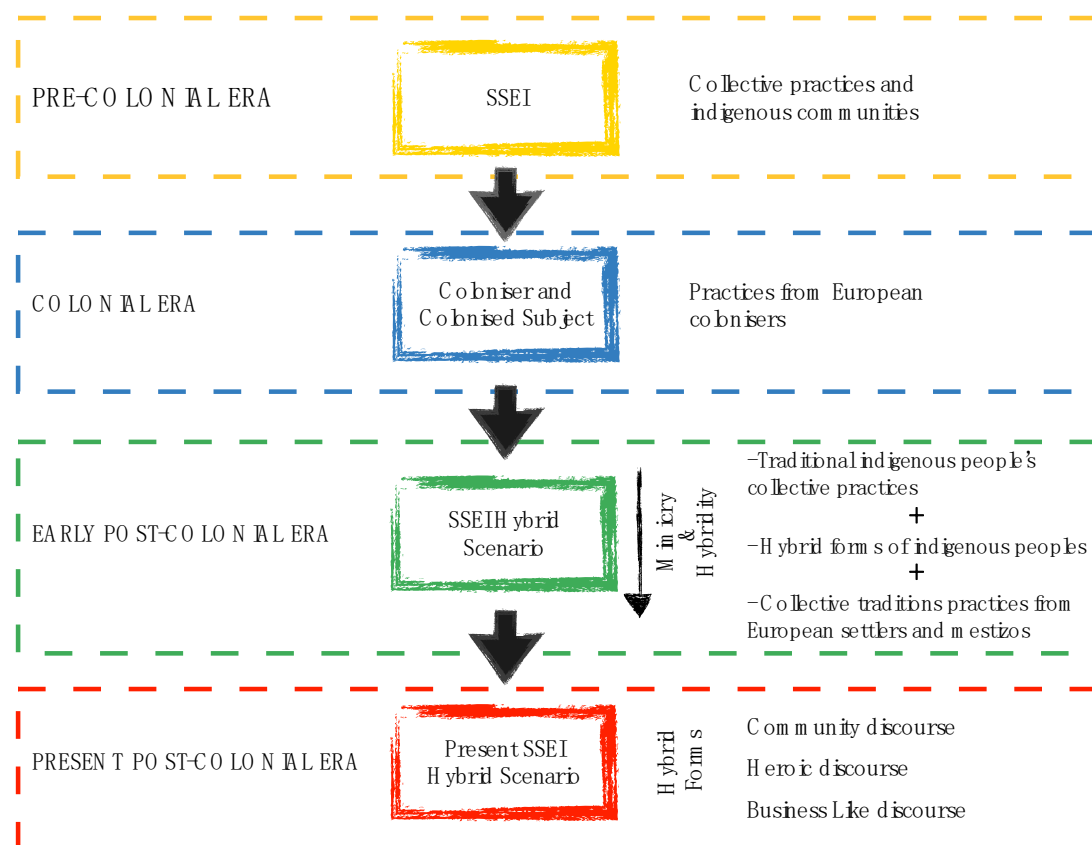
Figure 1. The historical evolution of SSEI discourses in Colombia drawing upon a postcolonial lens.

4.2. Tensions and Contradictions in Colombia's Hybrid SSEI Model

When asked about the current situation of the SSEI sector in Colombia, most interviewees acknowledged the important moment that the sector was experiencing and the diversity of actors that were working on it: "there is a momentum in the country that cannot be ignored"; "there are so many things currently happening in the country regarding social innovation that [are] difficult to explain"; or "Everyone is involved now: the state, private companies, and grassroots organisations, are all interested". Interestingly, some interviewees associated the recent arrival of international supporting organizations with the development of the SSEI sector in the country. As one of the academics interviewed claimed:

"We can see that in recent years [that] a considerable number of initiatives have been established with the support of international bodies. For example, Grameen Caldas has been given financial and capacity support for a wide range of social enterprise and innovation initiatives there, and this is encouraging people to take risks and start their projects".

One outcome has been that SSEI initiatives and social entrepreneurs have become more visible. As one SSEI actor observed:

"Most social entrepreneurs are much better known outside the country; for example, Vicky Colbert, the founder of Escuela Nueva, or Josefina Clinger in Choco have received awards outside (the country), but people don't know about their work in Colombia; well, this is changing now, because there are now institutions and organizations promoting them".

Furthermore, the state's role in supporting and promoting the SSEI sector was widely recognized across actors and stakeholders. As one of the social entrepreneurs commented: "The government has currently developed several social innovation programs to support the sector; we are very pleased

with this". A significant part of this process has been related to the partnerships created between the Colombian government and international organizations. An example of the support of the current Colombian government to international organizations can be seen, as highlighted by one of the interviewees that works for a network organization, with the partnership developed between the Grameen Bank Foundation and the Centre for Social Innovation for the establishment of initiatives in Pueblo Viejo, in the Magdalena department. Other local and regional governmental initiatives have also been taken in the country to support the SSEI sector. As an example brought by one of the policy makers interviewed, in Medellin, the local government, particularly since Miguel Fajardo took power in 2004, has been keen on the transformation of the city promoting SSEI-related activities creating strong partnerships with national and international network organizations (e.g., Buena Nota and Grameen Foundation) to promote the sector.

4.2.1. Asymmetrical Power of Discourses

Yet despite these attempts to promote and support the development of SSEI initiatives, a number of tensions rooted in the asymmetrical power relations between state and SSEI stakeholders, and between different SSEI actors, have been apparent. First, tensions have emerged over some SSEI discourses (hero entrepreneur and business-like) having been privileged by the state over others. This situation was described by one of the academics interviewed:

> "The Colombian government has somewhat promoted the work done by social entrepreneurs and social businesses, which are at the same time supported by international organizations, so we are seeing how the government is given priority to such organizations mainly because they receive international support. However, numerous organizations have been ignored, such as cooperatives and indigenous associations that have a strong tradition in the country."

Second, state support for certain SSEI discourses has created difficulties, particularly for informal economic actors. As a leader of a grassroots SSEI association stated: "We don't see the support from the state; we are surviving on the ground because we are passionate and believe in it, we have been working for so many years, but we would love to have more support from the state, to be part of the decision-making process, we are also part of the sector". With these findings, we have observed how the state—with the support of international organizations—is prioritizing the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses, marginalizing the community discourse (Lounsbury and Strang 2009; Nicholls 2010, 2012; Dart 2004). Therefore, and as we have seen with the findings above, in Colombia, there is been a tendency to mimic discourses primarily from global North countries, expanding the effects of domination, legitimacy, and hegemony (Bhabha 1994). This has lately created tensions and power dynamics between the 'traditional' community discourse and the recent arrival of 'new' ones that are more powerful in global North countries, as it was exposed by a study conducted by Teasdale in 2011 in the United Kingdom.

4.2.2. Collaboration between SSEI Discourses

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders belonging to different SSEI discourses. Several interviewees indicated that one of the biggest problems within the sector was the lack of collaboration and the fragmentation of the SSEI arena. As one of the academics that participated on a SSEI conference in Bogota in November 2015 suggested:

> "There is a dissonance in Colombia between the traditional solidarity sector with its roots in the 1980s and the recent initiatives that promote social innovation and corporate socially responsible practices. They [discourses] are not collaborating with each other; they are separate and have different agendas, when there are events and conferences".

In the same line, one of the interviewees that worked for the public sector explained:

"There is a resistance from traditional organizations to collaborate with other people who are aligned with the new discourses; well, they claim that [they] have a capitalist discourse and don't really give importance to the issues of associativity and reciprocity."

Commenting on this, several respondents highlighted how some of the reasons for this to happen were linked to the ideological resistance from some people to work with certain individuals, which was clearly associated with their identity, objectives, and ways of understanding the concept of SSEI.

Interestingly, the interviewees (independently of the different discourses that they were supporting) accepted the benefits of collaborating with other stakeholders to ensure the development of the SSEI in the country. In fact, one of the social entrepreneurs interviewed suggested this by saying:

"If we don't change this, and make sure we start working together as one sector, we are taking a huge risk of not growing according to scale."

These findings give some indication of the recognition among participants about the importance to collaborate with the different SSEI discourses for the development of the sector. Furthermore, they raise an important issue, the lack of policy programs designed to create cohesion between the different discourses. As one of the SSEI actors commented:

"We need policy programs developed to help us work together as well as the willingness from people to work together, independently of your ideas and visions, from academics, practitioners, and policy makers".

A possible solution raised by several interviewees would be for the state to develop specific programs and activities to support such collaborations, such as for example the creation of annual events to facilitate network opportunities with stakeholders from the different SSEI discourses. As one of the policy makers pointed out:

"There is a need to mix people from different backgrounds, people who are working in multinational companies, indigenous associations, academics from different backgrounds working within the sector, and policy makers from different angles and visions; we have never seen this happening in the country, [but] if we want the sector to scale to the next level, we need to do this".

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This paper had made both theoretical and practical contributions to advance the debate on the construction of the SSEI sector in a global South context, and the legitimacy of dominant SSEI discourses and the power relations between global North and South in the production and dissemination of knowledge (Nicholls 2010, 2012; Lounsbury and Strang 2009; Teasdale 2011; Calvo and Morales 2015, 2017). This paper has also contributed to the limited research on the construction and development of the SSEI sector in Latin America, and particularly Colombia, drawing on insights from Nicholls's (2012) framework on the SSEI legitimacy and using postcolonialism as a theoretical framework (Bhabha 1994).

Detailed examination of the historical and political process through which SSEI practice in Colombia has been constructed generates an understanding of the hybrid and contested natured of the activities and meanings of SSEI. This paper has clearly demonstrated that the construction of the SSEI sector in Colombia is a reflection of the dynamic interplay of the hybrids, as it incorporates the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses within the traditional community discourse, which indeed is a combination of domestic (indigenous collective practices) and colonizer influences (e.g., cooperatives, associations). As Bhabha (1994) suggested, mimicry denotes the ways in which the colonizer tries to make the colonized into his own image: the outcome remains a mere reflection of the original, leaving room for hybridity to emerge.

What is unique about the Colombian hybrid SSEI model is that it possesses a rich and diverse sector where different discourses operate together supported by a political infrastructure. However,

this hybridity is not without problems and can create tensions. This paper has also identified the current tensions that have emerged from different discourses and epistemologies within the country. Firstly, the paper has demonstrated that despite SSEI initiatives having been historically rooted within the community discourse, combining both the collective practices of 'native' indigenous communities and the influence of European cooperative values and traditions (solidarity economy), the hero entrepreneur and business-like discourses are currently dominating the paradigmatic development of the SSEI field in the country, and are indeed heavily promoted within a wider framework of neoliberal programs. These findings are aligned with previous studies conducted in global North countries (e.g., Teasdale 2011).

Secondly, the paper has demonstrated that there is a lack of cooperation and collaboration between stakeholders belonging to different discourses, and therefore, the fragmentation of the SSEI arena is occurring in the country. We believe that the SSEI sector in Colombia requires strengthening mechanisms for greater interconnection between different SSEI discourses. This needs to be addressed by the Colombian government with the implementation of clear strategic policies to enhance cohesion and dialogue within the sector. Reconciling and valuing the plurality of visions and approaches within the SSEI sector comprises a crucial policy agenda if the model is to retain credibility in the country.

What is occurring in Colombia is particularly interesting, as it demonstrates important differences from other Latin American neighboring countries, where traditions of SSEI practice come together in quite different ways to provide a different set of politics and associated possibilities. For example, in the case of Ecuador and Bolivia, the governments have incorporated the Buen Vivir policy within their constitutions of 2008 and 2009 respectively, and are reviving the collective discourse by supporting the solidarity economy and enhancing indigenous traditions, including cooperatives and associations, restricting the participation of the heroic entrepreneur and business-like discourses, and diminishing the support of international supporting organizations and the creation of initiatives rooted within such discourses (Calvo and Morales 2017).

This study has provided critical insights for understanding the development of SSEI initiatives in Colombia, highlighting the importance of recognizing alternative SSEI discourses in the global South. The limitation of the study is that the sample is too small (20 interviews) to generalize about the SSEI in Colombia. However, the authors believe that they have provided sufficient material to answer the research questions. Building on the current work, it would be appropriate to conduct a quantitative study to map the diverse SSEI initiatives in the country and have a greater understanding of the nature of the sector as well as explore the tensions and contradictions that exist within Colombia's hybrid SSEI model. Moreover, a comparative study between the SSEI sector in Colombia and other Latin America countries would be beneficial to learn lessons about 'alternative' global South SSEI models and the potential learning transfer from South to North, as most of the existing literature is from global North countries.

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