

Institution: University of Essex		
Unit of Assessment: 17		
Title of case study: Shaping the strategic priority and policy of youth-led enterprises and social economy for the United Nations and South Africa.		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: November 2013 - May 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Diane Holt	Professor in Management	November 2013 – May 2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2018-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Research by Professor Holt on ‘for-purpose’ enterprises and informal economy businesses, especially those led by young people based in the developing world, shaped the United Nations (UN) strategy in relation to the promotion of youth-led enterprises - including social enterprises - as part of their response to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.</p> <p>Essex research directly influenced the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) strategic priorities around “Enhancing national capacities for unleashing full potentials of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in achieving SDGs in developing countries”. Holt’s research on the informal economy has informed policy decisions in South Africa where a new policy on the ‘social economy’ is being developed with the International Labour Organisation (ILO).</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>This research draws upon an on-going dataset from various countries across sub-Saharan Africa and extended fieldwork in Brazil amongst ‘for-purpose’ enterprises (often commonly called social enterprises or hybrid firms), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as well as government departments, focused on inclusive growth development priorities and their associated beneficiary communities and stakeholders. The Trickle Out Africa database [www.trickleout.net] (originally developed as part of Holt’s successful ESRC-funded grant 2011-2013) continues to collect responses, and project researchers have continued to visit numerous enterprises across the various fieldwork locations, gathering subsequent interview data and insights, including the analysis of existing transcripts. Further funding [G1-4] enabled additional research to build on this and include work within informal economy communities, many of whom are youth/women, based in producer value chains in Kenya and Brazil.</p> <p>Research published in 2015 [R1] was the first, unique empirical comparative analysis of social enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa, and opened up a new debate on how social enterprises can differ between developed and developing countries based on contextual influences such as informality [R1] or aspects such as Black Economic Empowerment legislation. This was then further developed [R2] in discussions of hybrid firms as a more inclusive term for the various non-profit and for-profit business models emerging to address the SDGs [R3] and deficiencies experienced by those living in poverty. Work then emerged that considered how such enterprises intersect with the informal economy [R4] and the importance of this market space in the developed world [R3] facilitated by a series of external and internal grants and fieldwork in Kenya, South Africa and the Brazilian Amazon [G1-4].</p> <p>Building on foundational work R1-R5, and described in the position paper [R6], <i>Exploring Youth Social Entrepreneurship</i> [R7] was then commissioned by the UN. The formal publication of this report was delayed by the UN before being finally published in 2020. This report recognizes the</p>		

explicit influence of context as critical in developing effective initiatives and policies aimed at creating an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurs that goes beyond the wealthier and more educated young people in these societies where traditionally most entrepreneurship programmes have focused.

The research recognised the vital role young people play in achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development given population dynamics in the developing world and the barriers that young people experience where they are often looking towards the informal economy as a source of income. This underpinning research and fieldwork supported by additional funding [G1-4] coalesced into the policy responses developed by Holt for the UN [R6, R7] that will form the basis of ongoing UN policy and practitioner initiatives.

3. References to the research [available from HEI on request]

[R1] Rivera-Santos, M., Holt, D., Littlewood, D. and Kolk, A. (2015). Social Entrepreneurship in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Academy of Management Perspectives*. 29(1), pp. 72-91
<https://journals.aom.org/doi/10.5465/amp.2013.0128>

[R2] Holt, D and Littlewood, D (2015). Identifying, Mapping and Monitoring the Impact of Hybrid Firms. *California Management Review* 57(3), pp. 107-125
<https://doi.org/10.1525%2Fcmr.2015.57.3.107>

[R3] Littlewood, D.C. and Holt, D. (2018) How Social Enterprises Can Contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – A Conceptual Framework. In Apostolopoulos, N., Al-Dajani, H., Holt, D., Jones, P. and Newbery, R., (eds.) *Entrepreneurship and the Sustainable Development Goals Vol.8*. Emerald. ISBN 9781787563766

[R4] Littlewood, D.C. and Holt, D (2014). The Informal Economy as a Route to Market in Sub-Saharan Africa – Observations Amongst Kenyan Informal Economy Entrepreneurs. In S. Nwanko, S., and Ibeh, K. (Eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Business in Africa*, Routledge, pp. 198-217. ISBN 9780415635455

[R5] Littlewood, D. and Holt, D. (2018). Social Entrepreneurship in South Africa: Exploring the Influence of Environment. *Business and Society (Special Issue: Business, Society and Environment in Africa)*, vol. 57, No. 3 (March), pp. 525-561.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0007650315613293>

[R6] Holt, D. (2018) Youth and Social Entrepreneurship. Position paper. Prepared for the United Nations Expert Group meeting “Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda” by Professor Diane Holt, University of Essex. Used as an input into the development of [S4] World Youth Report 2020 (available from HEI on request).

[R7] Holt, D. (2020) [Exploring Youth Entrepreneurship](#) Report prepared for the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Related funding

[G1] Holt, D. South African PhD Partnering Network for Inclusive Growth through Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship. ESRC-NRF Newton Fund PhD Partnering Programme November 2015- November 2018. £152,256.

[G2] Holt, D. Researcher Links workshop – South Africa, British Council. September 2014. £47,200

[G3] Holt, D. Advanced Fellowship – Brazil, Newton Fund. September 2016 - August 2019. £104,030

[G4] Holt, D. Water storage and conservation agriculture for climate change resilience, exploring innovations, livelihoods and barriers amongst Kenyan women farmers. GCRF. October 2018 – June 2019. £11,880.99

4. Details of the impact

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for people, planet, prosperity,

peace and partnership seeking to eradicate extreme poverty in all its forms and dimensions. All 193 UN's General Assembly countries are working in collaborative partnership to realise the human rights of all (United Nations). There is growing recognition that hybrid organizations can play a critical role in the achievement of the UN SDGs. Coupled with this there is a global challenge to bring youth into the work force either through encouraging their involvement in entrepreneurship and/or creating new jobs for them. Holt's research **shaped the UN's social entrepreneurship agenda**, building youth entrepreneurship in the UN's strategic priorities and **shaped policy debate** around enabling social entrepreneurship in **South Africa**.

Shaping the social entrepreneurship agenda of the UN

Professor Holt's research on hybrid enterprises, with associated work on the informal economy [R1-R7], specifically contributed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Prosperity Goal. Holt was approached directly by the Director of the UN's Division for Inclusive Social Development (UN DESA), as one of eight invited international experts (the only academic to be included), to contribute to an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on 'Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda' [S1;S2;S3]. The group examined ways in which youth social entrepreneurship can be leveraged to become an integrated development solution towards the 2030 Agenda. Holt's research [R4;R6] and the position paper she prepared for the EGM [R6] along with its recommendations directly shaped the UN's 2020 World Youth Report (2020 WYR); a UN DESA flagship publication exploring young people's participation in economic, political and community life [S4]. The UN's 2020 WYR provides robust and varied perspectives into youth engagement (with a specific focus on social enterprise), as well as policy guidance for Governments and local decision-makers in the UN's 193 member states. The 2020 WYR encourages youth social entrepreneurship as an integrated development solution toward the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals and offers policy guidance to build enabling, responsive and sustainable national ecosystems for young social entrepreneurs [S5].

Building youth entrepreneurship in the UN's strategic priorities

The UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) commissioned Holt to develop recommendations for the UN on broader aspects of youth entrepreneurship and ways to facilitate this across the world, especially in countries where poverty and informality dominate. UN DESA directly approached Holt due to her research and expertise around 'for-purpose' enterprises and informal economy businesses [R1-R4, R5] and her distinct contributions [R6] to the UN 2020 WYR report [S4], which explored the macro-socio-economic status of the countries and recommended directly applicable support programmes to optimise the UN youth programmes in an inclusive and demand driven approach [S6]. She was commissioned to analyse youth enterprise and employment in MSMEs in Cambodia, the Philippines, Gambia, Laos and Fiji and to highlight best-practice policy and practitioner initiatives globally [S7].

Holt's culminating report '*Exploring Youth Entrepreneurship*' [R7] made a number of recommendations for UN youth entrepreneurship activities which was published by the UN in 2020 as advice to the government agencies, policy-makers, universities and other development agencies in UN member states interested in facilitating youth inclusion through entrepreneurship. The recommendations, which are mirrored in the UN's 2020 WYR [S4], focused on how youth-focused interventions including, counseling, mentoring and sharing of marketing and financing information, could be leveraged and adapted to strengthen youth entrepreneurship ecosystems.

Recommendations from '*Exploring Youth Entrepreneurship*' [R7], included a segmented model of entrepreneurship enablers, barriers and potential initiatives that reflect informality, gender and other intersectionalities experienced by young people, are aimed at shaping national level policy in countries experiencing extreme poverty and dominated by an informal economy. The report makes recommendations for decision makers in the UN's member states introducing initiatives aimed to include the most marginalized rather than only focusing on supporting youth enterprises in programmes such as incubators (where these new businesses often requiring specific knowledge, capital or other resources such as access to networks or markets are beyond the reach of most young people). This report [R7] also synthesizes information for five of the UN priority countries (Cambodia, the Philippines, Gambia, Laos and Fiji) focusing attention on these to encourage more investment and engagement with youth entrepreneurship.

Shaping policy debate to enable the social economy in South Africa

An ILO project with the South African Economic Development Department has been developing a Social Economy Policy for South Africa. A Green Paper outlining the government's vision on developing social and community enterprises, co-operatives, and non-profit organisations, creating an eco-system that encourages the earning of income whilst focusing on economic and social goals is currently undergoing public consultation. In 2018 the ILO, specifically supported by their Pretoria office commissioned research papers to inform the policy development. Professor Holt's research on the informal economy [R4] was a key resource and was drawn upon in '*Challenges and Opportunities for Social Economy in South Africa*' [S8].

The ILO (South Africa) confirms that: '*Professor Holt's work has been an important motivator for initiating the policy process for the social economy here in South Africa, in particular her 2015 study with Prof Littlewood [R4], that explored the institutional environment for social entrepreneurship. Here there is a direct call for government to engage in a policy process to enable the social economy*' [S9]. In February 2019 a National Social Economy draft Green Paper was published by the Economic Development Department [S10] setting out the government's proposals to create a formal policy on social economy in South Africa by the end of 2021 [S11].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1] Official invitation from the Director of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to attend the United Nations Experts Group Meeting on 'Youth Social Entrepreneurship'.

[S2] UN (2018) 'Programme on Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda: Concept note'.

[S3] Email (11.10.18) invitation from the UN Programme on Youth to attend the 'United Nations Experts Group Meeting on 'Youth Social Entrepreneurship'.

[S4] United Nations (2020), Department of Economic and Social Affairs: [World Youth Report Youth Social Entrepreneurship and the 2030 Agenda](#). Cited 7 times (pages 29,58,59,65,123,125).

[S5] UN World Youth Report 2020 [Executive summary](#).

[S6] Email from UN DESA/DSDA requesting that Holt undertake consultancy work for [R7].

[S7] Email from UN DESA detailing Holt's distinct contribution.

[S8] Challenges and Opportunities for Social Economy in South Africa report, 2018. ILO and Republic of South Africa Economic Development Department. (page 38)

[S9] Testimonial from International Labour Organisation, UN.

[S10] [National Social Economy Draft Green Paper](#), Economic Development Department, Republic of South Africa.

[S11] Screenshot of [Economic Development Department](#) detailing governments proposals.