
Book review: Chiriloaie V., Marcuta L., *The neo-social economy*, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing 2016, ISBN 978-3-330-33154-9

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Abstract: *This paper is a review of the book entitled “The neo-social economy”, edited in 2016 by LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing. The team of authors (Chiriloaie Violeta and Marcuta Liviu) approached social economy, an emergent field in Romania, offering to the readers an in-depth analysis of the term of social economy, considering 19th century economists’ vision and also 20th century realities, including social enterprises recent development.*

Keywords: social economy, social enterprise.

JEL Codes: Y3.

1. Introduction

Social economy has become an important topic in recent academic debates, conferences, research studies, as well as a European priority nowadays, a time when Europe's economic and social patterns need to be rethought and reinvented, and social enterprises must become the engines of change, social innovation, inclusive and sustainable economic growth. As stated in the most recent report elaborated by CIRIEC-International, the European social economy is very important in both human and economic terms and it is a reality which should be considered by society and by policy makers, providing over 13.6 million paid jobs in Europe, the equivalent of about 6.3% of the working population of the EU-28, the employment of a workforce of over 19.1 million, including paid and non-paid, more than 82.8 million volunteers, equivalent to 5.5 million full time workers, over 232 million members of cooperatives, mutuals and similar entities and over 2.8 million entities and enterprises. (Mónzon J.L. & Chaves R., 2017)

In this general context of the concerns for social economy, we welcome the publication of the book “*The neo-social economy*” written by Chiriloaie Violeta and Marcuta Liviu, which enriches the Romanian literature in the field of social economy, with an in-depth analysis of the term of social economy.

2. Review of chapters

The book has the main theme of “Defining the term of social economy”, and is divided into four chapters. The authors look for a standard operational definition of social economy, beginning with the 19th century economists’ vision, continuing with some experiments of social economy, with the story of the cooperative movement in 18th - 19th centuries Europe, and having a final chapter about the challenges of the 20th century - neo-social economy and the social enterprise. This scientific ‘search’ for the definition of the term ‘social economy’ carries the readers in a very interesting and brave approach of the authors, giving them the opportunity to understand economic phenomena related to social economy, different currents of economic

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thinking, social and economic evolutions across the time in Europe, old models of social economy organizations which can be met also in present, all these leading to the understanding of the social and economic rationale of social economy and social enterprises.

In the first chapter 1.1 entitled “The 19th century economists’ vision” the authors search the origins of social economy, going back in time to the 19th century when the economist Charles Dunoyer published a “Treatise on social economy” that advocated a moral approach to economics (1830), Frédéric Le Play founded International Society of Practical Studies of Social Economy (1856), John Stuart Mill advocated for the association of workers and joint ownership of capital by workers, and Leon Walras published his famous work “Study in social economy, theory of distribution of social wealth” (1896).

The second chapter 1.2 “Experiments of social economy” is about Robert Owen’s legacy, Charles Fourier’s vision on the ideal society and the Romanian Ion Ionescu de la Brad’s legacy who all his life tried to improve Romanian peasants’ life.

The third chapter 1.3 “Cooperative movement in Europe” represents an interesting incursion in the world of cooperatives, one of the oldest and successful models of social economy in Europe. It begins with the famous initiative of “the honest pioneers” of Rochdale (1844), continuing with the story of the honest and social trade from Lyon, and other examples of cooperatives in Europe such as: Hermann Schulze’s cooperative model, credit cooperatives of F.W. Raiffeisen, the Greek Common Company of Ampelakia, and the Romanian “Infratirea” Society of Savings from Braila.

After the captivating scientific journey from the first three chapters, in the last chapter 1.4 “Definitions of Social Economy in 20th century” the authors brings us in present, explaining and analyzing concepts such as the third sector, community economy, family economy, social and solidarity economy, social enterprise, considering also well-know approaches in the field: CIRIEC studies and EMES approach on social economy and social enterprise.

3. Conclusion

The book ends with an interesting conclusion about social economy and moral behavior, considering that having high moral standards in all the economic manifestations is a key to a sustainable social economy, and opening the way for future debates and researches on the topic.

4. References

[1] Chiriloaie V., Marcuta L., *The neo-social economy*, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing, 2016.

[2] Monzón, J.L. & Chaves, R. (directors), *Recent evolutions of the Social Economy in the European Union*, report elaborated by CIRIEC-International - Centre international de recherché et d’information sur l’économie publique, sociale et cooperative for European Economic and Social Committee, 2017.