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### Reconfiguring the social and solidarity economy in a Danish/ Nordic welfare context

**Lars Hulgård**  
**Linda Lundgaard Andersen**

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### **Welfare societies in transition**

### **Polanyi revisited through the lens of welfare state, social democracy and solidarity economy**

### **FIRST DRAFT**

### **Reconfiguring the social and solidarity economy in a Danish/Nordic welfare context**

*Lars Hulgård and Linda Lundgaard Andersen*

Department of People and Technology, Roskilde University, Denmark  
[hulg@ruc.dk](mailto:hulg@ruc.dk) & [lla@ruc.dk](mailto:lla@ruc.dk)

### **Thematic stream:**

Universalism revisited: Relational welfare and the reciprocal-institutional welfare state

## **Introduction**

When looking at definitions and understandings of the social and solidarity economy, one issue stands out as particularly significant. The issue of how it links to organizational (micro and meso level dimensions) and societal specificities. Whereas social enterprise also in the EMES ideal typical version (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001) is only indirectly linked to a Polanyian framework (Gardin, 2006), the notion of solidarity economy can hardly be understood at an elaborate level without reference to the Polanyian framework of plurality. Accordingly, in this paper we will first highlight the difference between adopting a social economy and a solidarity economy approach to social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. Within the framework of a social economy perspective, social enterprise is first defined through a set of organizational criteria leaving the relation to the

broader and deeper issues of economy and democracy open. As a contrast to this, solidarity economy links the organizational dimension of a particular social enterprise to the broader political and economic framework of the particular society (Laville, 2010: 230 ff.).

Secondly, we will present and discuss two specific social enterprises that both reflect the diversity of social enterprise and social entrepreneurial initiatives in a Danish welfare context and provide important insights for developing theories on solidarity economy. The two initiatives differ in shape, space/geography and organizational structure but are important examples of pluralism in a Danish welfare context (Andersen, 2015). Roskilde Festival and Skovgård Hotel share a number of features that place them as interesting agents of solidarity economy. They both display a differentiated activity portfolio of business; public and civil character and they display a differentiated profile of reciprocity, redistribution and democracy that place them as influential in local, regional and national/international contexts.

Finally, in the concluding section we discuss how an analysis based upon solidarity economy differ from one based solely upon a social economy perspective, and secondly some future perspectives for the continued evolution of the Danish/Scandinavian welfare model.

## **Sweden as a pioneer in an advanced understanding of social economy**

In 1998, the Swedish government became an international forerunner of contemporary social economy by launching a high-level cross-ministerial working group to start the process of defining a national strategy on social economy and social enterprise in the context of the Swedish welfare state. The work resulted in two reports and the appointment of a minister for social economy, initiatives that are significant to understand the possible role of social enterprise and social economy in the context of a Scandinavian type of welfare state. This work was done at an intellectually advanced level that addressed the issue of social economy from a perspective that is more open to inputs from civil society, government and market than what we see in most policy programs today at an international level.

Accordingly, such ‘early’ work on framing the social- and solidarity economy can assist in understanding the full potential of a social and solidarity economy and the plural framework of economy and in a universally oriented welfare state. Furthermore we argue that this potential can be better understood in the framework of solidarity economy than in the more restricted social economy/social enterprise perspective that tend to operate on an organizational level by highlighting the organizational dimensions of organizations in the social economy.

Already in 1997, the Swedish government at a meeting on November 27<sup>th</sup> decided to “map the conditions for social economy”. In the report following this decision, the government adopted an advanced understanding of the social economy that we today we see as being particularly relevant in the framework of solidarity economy. The three elements of democracy, solidarity and an open approach to organizational dimensions were emphasized by the Swedish committee, and these are even today among the most im-

portant in ambitions of realizing the full emancipatory potential of ‘social enterprise’. Accordingly, many scholars are observing the dimension of participatory democracy as the most fragile of the three dimensions in the EMES framework of social enterprise (Pestoff & Hulgård, 2015). In the report from the Swedish government, “associational democracy, primarily one member, one vote, is in Sweden an important method for governing enterprises in the social economy” (Ds 1998:48). The government committee furthermore expressed a distance to the use of the word solidarity, since in the Swedish language the word has “slipped towards encompass lesser mutual relations” and instead meaning “sympathy” that is closely related to charity (Ds 1998: 48). The committee ends a brief discussion of the notion solidarity by emphasizing that irrespective of the specific choice of concept it should reflect an egalitarian approach in the sense of “societal contexts with shared experiences as a basis” (Ds 1998:48), and thus distinguish itself from charity based forms of the solidarity concept. Furthermore the report emphasize that the social economy is a dynamic sector, “a kind of process that constantly develops itself” and thus it encompass a multitude of organizational types where many would not even be considered enterprises from a conventional perspective.

We argue that this early Swedish government interest in social economy represents a groundbreaking work to understand firstly how social- and solidarity economy may be seen as slightly different phenomena and secondly how solidarity economy could be relevant in a Scandinavian context. We shall elaborate on this in the following. Unfortunately, as we will touch upon throughout the paper, we will see that such approaches is replaced by more restricted and market-conventional approaches to social economy in the international policy discourse of social enterprise and social economy.

## **The relation and distinction between social and solidarity economy?**

Whereas social economy can be defined through a set of organizational criteria, solidarity economy is about relating the specific organizational type to the broader question of economy and democracy (Laville, 2010). Following this line of thinking social economy can be defined by a set of organizations, whereas looking at organizations from the perspective of solidarity economy is about moving from the specific enterprise/organization level to the societal level asking questions about how the enterprise is embedded and articulating forms of economy and democracy. When analysing from the perspective of solidarity economy critical questions to the dominating forms of economy and democracy cannot be avoided to the same degree as in the organizational (social economy) analysis of particular social enterprises. In the view of a solidarity economy framework, the boundary is not between for-profit and non-profit organizations, but between capitalist and social- and solidarity economy organizations, the latter “giving priority to a shared patrimony over returns to individual investments. In other words, in Europe, what is stressed at the organizational level is legal limits on private appropriation of benefits” (Laville, 2010).

However also in the critical tradition of social enterprise and social economy studies, the critique of ‘market fundamentalism’ is an important characteristic. Also the EMES Network and other critical positions to contemporary social economy adopts the

pluralist Polanyian framework. Following Nyssens (2006: 318) “social enterprises mix the economic principles of market, redistribution and reciprocity, and hybridize their three types of economic exchange so that they work together rather than in isolation from each other”. Whereas Nyssens operates with a Polanyian approach at the organizational level, Roy (2015) specifies that not even markets in general can be “set apart and elevated above socio-political forces” (Roy, 2015).

## **Solidarity economy in a Scandinavian context**

Not only the Swedish government approach to social economy in the mid late 1990s, but also the historic trajectory of the Scandinavian countries form a possibility for a more plural and advanced form of social economy than the one that nowadays is being full-fledged institutionalized in so-called eco-systems of social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. Both from the perspective of individual social entrepreneurs and innovators and among powerful stakeholders in governments and (private) foundations the perspective of social economy is to become better skilled and positioned on the conventional market. This is a sad limitation of experiences generated in the Scandinavian welfare model and to be found also in the historic trajectory of the social economy. A potential that was still fully recognized in the 1998 policy paper from Sweden.

Following Hulgård (2016) the typical Scandinavian welfare state facilitates a relationship between civil society and state that nourishes bridging and linking types of social capital that is more related to the notions of citizenship than to membership and volunteerism. The institutional-redistributive welfare state (Titmuss, 1987) in the Scandinavian countries was based upon institutions that encourage people to perceive themselves as being members of a broader national community rather than merely worrying about their own family, immediate neighbors, and their individual benefits. To understand the positive correlation between civil society and the Scandinavian welfare states, it is helpful to delve deeper into the institutional aspect rather than the redistributive aspect of the so-called “Institutional-Redistributive” model of welfare (Titmuss, 1987). This model of welfare is based upon a conception of social justice that does not merely see man as an individual or as belonging to specific local communities or associations but as a citizen with social rights (Titmuss, 1987: 264).

The historical legacy of an institutional welfare state model is to stimulate bridges of solidarity between groups and across otherwise segregated communities. Much macro-oriented theory has scrutinized the redistributive aspects of various welfare state regimes while neglecting to pay similar attention to the institutional capacity and specific institutional configurations. Such theories have partly failed to understand the *sociology* of the welfare state in terms of examining relations, relational goods (Donati, 2014), patterns of co-production and collaboration between public and private actors (Pestoff, 2009), between civil society-based institutions and public institutions in specific local welfare production (Hulgård & Andersen, 2012). However important the redistributive and de-commodifying capacity of a welfare state may be, this does not say much about specific institutional configurations of actors and institutions involved in the co-production and inter-relational character of welfare.

The Scandinavian countries form a unique background and a laboratory for a new reconciliation between an empowered solidarity economy (Polanyian framework) and a continuation of the universal orientation of the welfare state (Titmuss framework). Thus it seems urgent to ask if the road towards a continued downsizing and privatization of the welfare state also in the Scandinavian countries (especially Sweden and Denmark) can be challenged by systematic investments in solidarity economy. This could be in the form of programs for co-production and mixed types of welfare provision, where civil society is equally recognized for its political dimension in matters of decision-making (Fraser, 1992), and for its capacity for service provision delivered by volunteers and social entrepreneurs.

### **Reconfiguring the social and solidarity economy**

Therefore, we may note a growing interest that seems to be rooted in policy, economy, citizenship, democracy, sustainability, recognition, livelihood, empowerment, global visions – and probably more – challenging and scrutinizing the concept of social economy both embraced and juxtaposed by solidarity economy. Utting clarifies, that “accepting the reality of the capitalist system and its core institutions or ‘rules of the game’, social economy is primarily about expanding the economic space where people-centred organisations and enterprises can operate. It is fundamentally a contemporary variant of ‘embedded liberalism’ (Ruggie 1982 via Utting, 2015), i.e. it is about re-embedding enterprise activities in progressive societal norms and creating or strengthening institutions that can mitigate or counteract perverse effects of ‘business as usual’. Solidarity economy, for its part, pushes the envelope of social and systemic transformation. It emphasises issues of redistributive justice, so-called ‘deep’ sustainability, alternatives to capitalism and the debt-based monetary system, as well as participatory democracy and emancipatory politics driven by active citizenship and social movements activism” (Utting, 2015, p. 2).

In tracing the sharing and difference of social and solidarity economy many researchers revolve seeking to identify the horizon, the embeddedness, the critique and the origins. Laville points to, how “the tradition of social economy and the resurgence of associative democracy in the late twentieth century have generated a new theoretical perspective: the SSE. It critiques the non-profit approach, which tends to dominate international development discourse regarding the role and nature of civil society, and it creates an original framework of analysis by mixing social economy and solidarity economy viewpoints. The core elements of each approach, which are now coming together both conceptually and strategically” (Laville, 2015, p. 47). Social and solidarity economy has a long history, develops, and changes positions throughout history and different parts of the world display different take on SSE. This is interesting from a Nordic perspective. As we have pointed out, the refined distinctions, differentiation of social, and solidarity economy is unfamiliar in the Nordic countries – apart from our initial Swedish opening. This it even more interesting since a number of initiatives that very well could be labelled solidarity economy has co-created the Danish and Swedish welfare history.

Mendell situates comprehensive community initiatives as part of the solidarity economy and label these as community-based approaches to social, economic and environmental problems. They share specific features: multi-stakeholder processes of participatory governance, involving organizations, sectors of activity, citizens and government,

drawing on local experience, expertise and knowledge and bringing new resources to strategic decision making at the local level. They require institutional innovation. This approach challenges prevailing theories of wealth creation that consider resource allocation as the job of the market and social provision as the obligation of a thin state. It demonstrates the transformative capacity of collaboration and partnership among citizens (Marguerite Mendell, 2010). As such, this points to how substantial community-based approaches provide the potential for transformative capacity. And further clarifies that “all SSE enterprises, whatever their organizational form, require multiple tools – labor market (training), capital (financial instruments), research (partnerships with researchers), commercialization strategies (access to markets) and enabling public policy. Moreover, because the SSE is rooted locally, it requires both situated and macro policy measures. Too often, focus on the SSE is reduced to enterprises, organizations or sectors, missing its broader developmental capacity and potential (Marguriete Mendell & Alain, 2015, p. 166).

Gibson-Graham’s work on rethinking the economy with thick description and weak theory seems well in place if we need to deepen our critical understanding of social and solidarity economy (Gibson-Graham, 2014). In their work on reading the landscape for economic difference and theorizing diverse economies they situate thin versus thick descriptions. They advocate a move away from ‘strong theory’ with its “embracing reach” and “reduced, clarified field of meaning” towards ‘weak theory’ which, though “little more than description”, powerfully attends to nuance, diversity and overdetermined interaction. Weak theory does not elaborate and confirm what we already know, it observes, interprets and yields to emerging knowledge. To rethink the economy using thick description and weak theory is to carefully reconsider the ‘large issues’ that ‘small facts’ are made to speak to (Gibson-Graham, 2014). In contrast, a weak theory of diverse economies opens to these and a myriad of other motivating forces that are not only confined to so-called non-mainstream practices. A much wider range of social relations bear on economic practices including, to name just some, trust, care, sharing, reciprocity, cooperation, divestiture, future orientation, collective agreement, coercion, bondage, thrift, guilt, love, community pressure, equity, self-exploitation, solidarity, distributive justice, stewardship, spiritual connection, environmental and social justice. It is in the apprehension of these multiple determinations that ethnographic thick description comes into its own and leads the way towards rethinking the Economy (Gibson-Graham, 2014).

We now turn to presenting two specific social enterprises that both reflects the diversity of social enterprise and social entrepreneurial initiatives in a Danish welfare context and provide important insights for developing theories on solidarity economy. The two initiatives differ in shape, space/geography and organizational structure but are important examples of pluralism in a Danish welfare context (Andersen, 2015). Roskilde Festival and Skovgård Hotel share a number of features that place them as interesting agents of solidarity economy. They both display a differentiated activity portfolio of business; public and civil character and they display a differentiated profile of reciprocity, redistribution and democracy that place them as influential in local, regional and national/international contexts.

## Case one: Roskilde Festival, DK

Roskilde Festival is an association that has initiated and for decades provides one of the oldest and largest festivals in Europe. The festival has performed since 1971 and is run by 65 employees and approx. 31.000 volunteers, of whom Roskilde Festival organize 11.000 volunteers. Out of these are 300 volunteers organized the whole year around. Adding to these 220 NGO's and volunteer organizations recruit and organize 20.000 volunteers that are focused on delivering services during the festival and provide different features of social innovation since they often deploy their own original take on their products or services at the festival. The festival organization displays a network-based project organization where employees and volunteers participate and collaborates with extensive self-government on cross-sectional tasks all year round, organized under the Roskilde Festival Group (RF Group).

As a large organization with a large number of volunteers, Roskilde Festival is rather unique due to its size and its longevity. The festival is a nonprofit hybrid organization that does not receive financial support but financed by its own income and revenue, which is rarely seen in hybrid organizations (Andersen, 2015, p. 61). In the last 15 years, the RF group has worked with sources of income other than the festival. These include counseling, project management, course work, and safety work and equipment rental. The RF Group has initiated the development of a Roskilde Festival High school, where RF has served as the value base for the high school. The High School starts first team in 2019.

In numbers the 2017 festival generated all in all a surplus of Dkr 47 million, of which Dkr 16 million was used for donations. 200 NGOs, organisations and corporate trade and service activities provided services for Dkr 19 million serving festival guests. According to the festival yearbook, 2017 a theme of cultural equality and community was celebrated through festival hall debates and workshops on gender, ethnicity and religion aimed at festival guests. Several donations supported cultural equality and the surplus from Making The Change ticket went untouched to German Discover Footballs work for release through sports for women, and Association La Red in Switzerland got support to promote cultural life and volunteering between cultures. The festival supports more female musicians and artists and provide music-sponsorships for young girls.

The donation profile for 2017 comprised 148 project-initiatives that received funding ranging from 25.000 to 500.000 Dkr focusing on subjects like 'strengthening the voices of youth in terms like 'new generations in the public debate' and 'cultural life in focus'. A second theme focused on music possibilities and supported music as arenas of developing and enacted in the whole of Denmark and abroad and especially music as tool for and means of community. A third theme supported 'the good community' where people come together creating new communities for lonely or vulnerable young people seeking to become part of a community. A fourth theme 'Roskilde Moves' supports the local NGOs and associations in Roskilde municipality and local volunteerism. A fifth theme 'On the run' covers 'Young on Escape' and 'Prevent the Escape', focusing on the refugee situations and migration challenges that are being dealt with the world over. A sixth theme 'The earth calls' supports initiatives focusing on sustainability, environment and climate. A seventh theme 'Respecting the free space' focusing on cross-border behavior and how to behave with respect for each other and the community.

Music and other festivals offer greater potential for local economic development compared with for example “traditional” manufacturing sectors. However, sustainable music tourism broadly and festivals in particular are unlikely to rise directly out of the ashes of old industrial competences and resources. Rather, the emerging fame-holding music events are the effect of a continuous effort with a recirculation of acquired knowledge and relations in environments with distinct receptive and disseminating features (Hjalager, 2009, p. 247). What is particularly interesting is that the festival has increased its scope, particularly by diversifying into new services, entertainments and experiences provided on the festival area and leading to spin-offs outside the festival area. As a result, the festival is widely inter-linked with the social life and the economy of the area. This interdependence is of major importance to the festival itself as well as the development of other tourism-related activities (Hjalager, 2009, p. 270).

The audience comes from most of Europe, although with some emphasis on the Danish home-market, which accounts for around half of the visitors. Tickets can be bought on the Internet, but there are sales offices in other countries as well, a concession that indicates that the festival has become a genuine tourist attraction with a wide market. According to tourist board estimates, the festival accounts for a total turnover of around 30 million Euros per year. Thus, the festival represents between 20 and 25% of the total annual tourism turnover in the area. Most of the audience and the volunteer staff camp on the grounds. However, all other accommodation facilities in a large circle around Roskilde are also fully occupied. It is an event that engages a large proportion of the town’s 55,000 inhabitants in some way or other (Hjalager, 2009, p. 271)

## Case two: Skovsgård Model, DK

As part of an EU: Horizon 2020 SOLIDUS partnership a number of Danish case studies have been conducted and the following profile of Skovsgård Model has been developed by the Danish Solidus team. The case study focusing on empowerment, social justice and citizenship offer an analysis centering on themes of democracy, pluralism, transparency, recognition, social and political impact and scalability (Eschweiler, Hulgård, Nielsen, & Schneider, 2018).

The Skovsgård model consists of several independent social enterprises and a foundation cooperating in a network, all following the same principle, working mainly with people with mental disabilities in a rural municipality in Northern Jutland, not far from Aalborg. It started in 1983 as a social pedagogical collective with four residents with mental disabilities. Today the different initiatives employ more than 60 people with special needs, a number of social pedagogues and other professions like a chef, a merchant, and a carpenter, and are supported by local volunteers. They have initiated a collectively owned hotel, a grocery store, running a campsite and a café in an area, where most shops closed many years ago and only very few industries remained. Many of the “employees on special terms” live locally in houses owned by the oldest initiative, *Købmandsgården*. The goal of *Købmandsgården* is to provide maximum independence for the residents by giving them meaningful jobs integrated in local communities, thus strengthening their sense of self-esteem and developing their resources, rather than hiding them in care homes or closed workshops (Eschweiler et al., 2018, p. 14).

The Skovsgård model builds on the notion that if everybody contributes to society to the best of one's abilities there is an acceptance and by giving people with mental disabilities meaningful tasks they are recognised as people with resources and fellow citizens. The model builds on the PHIL-principle: Production (by the users), Handicap (to link the disabled users with the typical population), Integration (of the users into the local community), and Local (the project has to create life in the local community) (Eschweiler et al., 2018, p. 16). Today *Købmandsgården* employs 26 people on special terms and 15 regular full-time employees with different educational backgrounds. The foundation owns three houses in Skovsgård and the original *Købmandsgården*, offering accommodation to 19 disabled employees in independent housing communities. They were purchased with loans by local banks. The mortgage payments are covered by public funding received for housing and the rent residents pay from their pension. Other special terms employees are either living by themselves or with their families.

Following a 'learning by doing' approach, jobs consist of horticultural work for their own supply, craftsmen and green teams providing services for local citizens like storing and re-assembling garden furniture, clearing snow or cutting grass for the elderly, or decorating for public events. They cooperate with the local carpenter and the mink farm, do theatre and pottery workshops, work in the communal kitchen and work on a local camping site, a new social business *Købmandsgården* runs together with *Råd & Dåd*, another entity within the model.

*Skovsgård Hotel* is a social enterprise that runs as a limited liability company owned by citizens from Skovsgård area and the employees. It employs 15 people with disabilities along with four full time and two part time staff like a professional chef and finance person. The enterprise follows the same principle of active integration of people with disabilities in the local community and labour market, working peer-to-peer, benefitting from the hotel's activities (restaurant, live-concerts, IT-workshops) and attraction of tourists. It was the founder of *Købmandsgården* who gathered local support to re-open the hotel in 1992 as a social business.

However, a hotel kitchen needs supplies, which lead to the next entity within the model, *Råd & Dåd*. that started in 1994, first with a horticultural team of disabled and professional staff growing and delivering organic vegetables to the hotel, local restaurants and private households. Then they established craft team, a creative team, a second hand shop, and a grocery store, employing a total of 5 teams of 4-6 people besides the supervisor and the merchant. Today *Råd & Dåd* has around 50 employees, 13 of which on ordinary, mostly part-time contracts, and about 20 local volunteers. Every work team leader gets the same pay, and all the employees on special conditions get the same pay.

The grocery store is an important example of rural development through actions of solidarity. It illustrates how solidarity can be institutionalized in a hybrid complex manner: it is situated in a village that once had 38 small businesses, the last of which was about to close a few years ago. Citizens of the village came together with people from *Råd & Dåd* to run the store with a mix of volunteer staff members, a professional merchant as well as special needs employee. They received some funding from the Danish Social Capital fund. "Without that I don't think we would ever have gotten started up in Bonderup, we wouldn't have dared to do that" (ibid.). In addition to the grocery store a combined indoor/outdoor public meeting space has been added for celebrations, discus-

sions and public meetings. In 2010 *Købmandsgården* and *Råd & Dåd* took over a local campsite and a café at a nearby harbour, both running at market rates. In collaboration the three main entities offer a three-year training (STU) for young people between 16 and 25 who needs special education consisting of elements of teaching, training and practical activities, including internships in companies, following an initiative by the Ministry of Education to get youth into employment.

Most decision-making power for people with disabilities lies in the daily routines at *Købmandsgården*, where they can choose what area they want to work in on a 6 months basis. The Skovsgård model tries to exert as little hierarchy and centralised decision-making power as possible when working with mentally disabled people. However, employees have to subscribe to a certain philosophy and work ethics that might pose a challenge to regular employees. Skovsgård model is a democratic institution with its outlook on the common good, but not primarily concerned with working conditions. Staff is not organised in unions. They are trying to maintain a 37 hours week, but staff is expected to get the work done. The initial motivation of *Købmandsgården* was to modify the behaviour of people with mental disabilities by living together in a house, providing some meaningful work and integrate them in a local community. Soon they became known as contributors to society through work, but also socially, attending public dances, performing in theatre and sports events. Employees, who were working in specially designed programmes for the disabled before they became part of the Skovsgård model, report how much more meaningful their work feels, as they create a real service.

Beyond that there is the rural development aspect. As mentioned above, all the shops in *Skovsgård* and also in Bonderup, where *Råd & Dåd* runs the grocery store, had closed many years ago, making the Skovsgård model enterprises the only businesses available to local communities. Both are giving life back to the small towns, offer meeting spaces for the entire region, and cultivate social and cultural networks with their events and everyday proceedings. The model created some employment for local residents, bought and renovated houses and buildings that stood empty and were prone to decay, thus combining a for-profit and non-profit branch.

Some barriers remain for the Skovsgård model to develop further. Despite many ideas how to create more small and independent social businesses working with disabled people there is a sense that they have to strike a careful balance in local communities concerning the disabled-ordinary resident ratio. Another one is finding the right staff members who consider this a way of life.

## Summing up

In this paper we have sketched out the significant sharing and differences of social and solidarity economy in a Danish and Nordic context. We have further included to social and solidarity Danish case-studies both delivering a large number of different services and products for vulnerable and ordinary citizens, for local community and for national/international users. In our theoretical framing we have composed a number of features that we find imperative significant for an understanding of SSE. In conclusion we find that our two cases in many ways address several of the defining criteria. The two initia-

tives differ in shape, space/geography and organizational structure but are important examples of pluralism in a Danish welfare context. Roskilde Festival and Skovgård Hotel share a number of features that place them as interesting agents of solidarity economy. They both display a differentiated activity portfolio of business; public and civil character and they display a differentiated profile of reciprocity, redistribution and democracy that place them as influential in local, regional and national/international contexts.

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