

## **Patchwork Innovation: A Study of Social Bricolage and Social Value Creation in Indonesia's Social Enterprises**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The concept of social bricolage highlights creativity, flexibility, and boldness in utilizing available resources as the core of the social entrepreneurship process. In developing countries like Indonesia, publicly listed companies occupy a strategic position as social development actors through hybrid models that integrate profit-making with social impact. This article critically and reflectively analyzes the application of social bricolage theory (Di Domenico et al., 2010) in three Indonesian public companies—PT Telkom Indonesia, PT Pertamina (Persero), and PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk—using a case-based reflective essay approach. Five key dimensions—making do, improvisation, refusal to be constrained, stakeholder participation, and persuasion—are explored within the dynamic tension between commercial interests and social missions, as well as institutional challenges that shape the practice of social value creation. The findings suggest that implementing social bricolage in large-scale corporations is not only feasible but also represents an adaptive strategy in navigating the social complexities and regulatory pressures typical of emerging markets like Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Social Bricolage, Public Company, Social Value, Hybrid Organization, Improvisation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The development of social entrepreneurship worldwide has given rise to a new type of business entity that pursues more than just profit, but is also firmly committed to a social mission. This entity is known as a social enterprise. Unlike typical commercial companies, social enterprises strive to address social issues while maintaining financial sustainability, despite often operating within limited resources (Borzaga & Defourny, 2001). One interesting conceptual approach to understanding this phenomenon is the theory of social bricolage. This concept is rooted in Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of the bricoleur, a figure who creates by relying on what is available around him. In the realm of social entrepreneurship, Di Domenico et al. (2010) further developed this idea to describe how social actors or organisations develop innovative solutions without relying on established institutional pathways. This is where bricolage finds its relevance—as a creative approach to addressing limitations, not by giving up, but by assembling, improvising, and refusing to be constrained by shortcomings.

In the context of developing countries like Indonesia, social enterprises play a crucial role in addressing development challenges. Publicly traded companies (Public companies) have a significant opportunity to become strategic actors in social change. By adopting a hybrid business model—one that combines a profit orientation with a social mission—many of them are now highlighting how they are evolving: not only creating economic value but also having a positive impact on society. At the end of the 20th century, a shift occurred in the perspective of markets and their role in social development. Economic mechanisms, previously focused solely on growth

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and profit, began to shift to reach areas previously marginalized by the state and the private sector. This is where social enterprises emerge as a bridge between market logic and social needs. Interestingly, these entities are often more flexible and adaptive than traditional nonprofit organisations because they can manage resources more strategically and are oriented towards long-term impact.

In general, social enterprises combine commercial activities, such as selling products or services, with social objectives. The goal is to achieve financial sustainability without relying on government or donor funding. The sectors in which they work are pretty diverse, ranging from trade and public services to job training, arts and culture, affordable transportation, recycling, and even subsidized housing (Pearce, 2003). Behind this diversity, four key characteristics are generally inherent in social enterprises. First, they rely on a trading-based revenue strategy. This differs from conventional nonprofit organizations, which typically rely on donations for their funding. When new ideas about self-sustaining revenue emerged in the late 20th century, many organizations began to strategically utilize grant funding to enhance their business capacity. Profits from trading activities are then used to strengthen social services. Second, their primary orientation remains on achieving social and environmental goals. They focus not solely on profit but also on how the business can have a tangible impact on society. Third, social enterprises strive to provide products and services that meet the public's needs, accompanied by a governance structure that involves various stakeholders. When communities are actively involved, they become not only beneficiaries but also part of the change. Fourth, these entities are closely tied to communities that experience limited access to resources. In such situations, creativity becomes a key asset. Through unconventional methods, social enterprises can find new paths to create social impact while maintaining the sustainability of their organizations (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

The concept of bricolage is highly relevant in this context. Amidst uncertain and limited resources, social enterprises are required to continuously move and create. This is not always achieved with perfect tools, but with what is available around them. This is what is called making do—making something out of what is available. Then there is improvisation: adapting strategies and approaches to suit the context. There is also a refusal to be constrained—a reluctance to be limited by formal systems or bureaucratic rigidity. Moreover, no less important, stakeholder participation and the ability to persuade more parties to participate in their social mission (Di Domenico et al., 2010).

In this paper, the concept is analyzed in more depth in the context of public companies in Indonesia—companies that exist at the intersection of market demands and social mandates. The three companies studied—PT Telkom Indonesia, PT Pertamina (Persero), and PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk—were chosen because they hold dominant positions in the national economy and are actively involved in social initiatives. All three operate in a highly stressful landscape, influenced by regulators, shareholders, and broader societal expectations. This article aims to address the central question: How do large companies in Indonesia apply the principles of social bricolage in their business practices? Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the analysis focuses on the strategies of making do, improvisation, and stakeholder participation used to create social value. Initial findings indicate that bricolage strategies can be applied not only in small organizations or grassroots communities, but also in the complex structures of large companies. It

is precisely in this complexity that bricolage finds its momentum—becoming an adaptive strategy in responding to Indonesia's ever-changing social reality.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Bricolage and Resources**

Lévi-Strauss (1967) introduced the concept of bricolage intellectually to refer to the process of "making do with what is at hand." He employed the metaphor of bricolage to compare two perspectives: the mythical and the scientific, as different yet similar models of thought. Unlike scientists, bricoleurs acquire, compile, and store materials for future use. The latter's awareness of resource use is not fixed at the initial stage of resource acquisition, but instead allows for flexibility in subsequent resource deployment based on its purpose. The means not only shape the end but also shape the available resources. The nature of the resources and the resulting project is thus unbounded and only clarified through the bricolage process.

The terms "political bricolage" and "institutional bricolage" are used interchangeably to refer to the process of creating new institutions by applying elements from previous and existing institutions (Lanzara, 1998; Stark, 1996). In this way, the categories and frames of reference used correspond to a continuous process of social reproduction through the application of "bric-a-brac remains" (Douglas, 1986).

Bricolage can be used to implement any strategy required in a variety of circumstances, such as new organizational combinations, in response to unforeseen events (Ciborra, 1996), and disasters. In the entrepreneurship literature, bricolage has been used to analyze entrepreneurship in resource-constrained environments. Baker and Nelson (2005) investigated the process of "making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities." They proposed that entrepreneurial bricolage occurs when entrepreneurs in resource-constrained environments combine existing elements for a new purpose, thereby leveraging contributions that other firms have not utilized.

Baker et al. (2003) proposed the concept of improvisational bricolage when they stated that bricolage is "a construct often used to describe the set of resources required by improvisation." Miettinen and Virkkunen (2005) refer to bricoleurs as "tamers who improvise, imagine, play, and seek out new, unexpected cultural resources." However, the treatment of bricolage and improvisation about each other varies. Partly because improvisation has received more scholarly attention than bricolage in organization studies to date, some use the terms interchangeably or tend to characterize bricolage as a feature of organizational improvisation. The characteristics of improvisation, interpreted broadly across resources and strategies, are also a common theme in the social enterprise literature. The availability of unused and no longer needed capital assets is the starting point for community mobilization to create social enterprises.

The concept of social bricolage has begun to gain attention in social entrepreneurship literature due to its ability to explain how social organizations create value within limited resources. Di Domenico et al. (2010) define social bricolage as a process of social improvisation undertaken by social entrepreneurs to develop solutions from available resources, particularly outside formal market mechanisms or state policies. This theory emphasizes that innovation does

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not always arise from abundance, but rather from limited conditions that force actors to think creatively and unconventionally.

There are five main dimensions of social bricolage:

1. Making do – Using available resources without waiting for ideal resources.
2. Improvisation – Designing solutions spontaneously and flexibly based on the context on the ground.
3. Refusal to be constrained: Refusal to be constrained by formal structures or rules that hinder social innovation.
4. Stakeholder participation – Inviting stakeholders (society, communities, and even investors) to actively participate in value creation.
5. Persuasion: The ability to convince others that change can begin with a local approach based on limited resources.

Bricolage is not just a survival strategy, but also the foundation for creating social value. This value arises when an activity provides benefits that impact society, the environment, or broader social welfare. In an organizational context, this value can manifest as access to basic services, increased community capacity, or even enhanced social dignity within a particular community. In developing countries like Indonesia, the bricolage approach is increasingly relevant because many social entities, including companies, operate in conditions of uncertainty—economic, political, and regulatory. In this context, social bricolage can serve as a framework and adaptive strategy that enables companies to continue delivering social impact without waiting for ideal conditions or a perfect support system.

### **Social Value Creation**

A social enterprise is an organization that carries out business activities with the primary objective of creating social impact (Pearce, 2003). Unlike conventional non-profit organizations, social enterprises generate revenue from commercial activities, not solely from donations. The goal of creating social value is a defining characteristic of social enterprises; it is supported in their articles of association, policies, and procedures, and is also embodied in their business models and operating strategies. Remaining effective is essential to address the challenges of operating within resource-constrained communities with social and welfare issues, and consequently, high demand for their services. This was articulated by one informant who emphasized that, to create social value, there is an endemic need to generate dynamic resources as a necessary tactical response to the pressures of resource scarcity. This is achieved by adjusting existing arrangements as needs arise, improvising, and adapting, rather than adhering to predetermined plans or formulas.

### **Stakeholder Participation**

All informants referred to the active involvement of stakeholders in the creation, management, and governance of their social enterprises. In practice, every social enterprise utilizes stakeholder participation, essentially employing a social networking strategy to expand its governance structure and generate new contacts and relationships with other stakeholders or those possessing resources beneficial to the enterprise. An example of this strategy is described by a chief executive who is considering undertaking several large-scale building projects but lacks the

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necessary legal expertise. For example, the deputy chair of the board is a local attorney. He has an extensive practice and potentially valuable connections that could benefit the enterprise through assistance with social issues. Stakeholder participation is used to generate support for planned strategies and projects. Stakeholder participation is used to gain approval from a local landowner for a project to develop wind turbines on his land. Building close relationships with stakeholders often helps secure the social enterprise's legitimacy within the local community.

### **Persuasion**

Persuasion is related to the concept of negotiation introduced by Strauss (Strauss et al., 1963). Researchers have expanded this concept to include negotiation in the acquisition of resources by social enterprises. A negotiated perspective is influential in understanding processes where structures and rules are divided into a series of negotiated persuasive actions. Thus, informants reported that negotiation plays a crucial role in defining the goals of social enterprises and using persuasion as a means to articulate these to the broader community. For example, the stakeholder-based governance structure of social enterprises is crucial to their legitimacy and persuasion. This is evident in lobbying and advocacy. Interestingly, informants' effectiveness in these areas is enhanced by the increased autonomy resulting from their reduced reliance on grants and donations. Furthermore, many social enterprises were initially founded by individuals who were members of the communities in which they were established and which they served. For example, the very nature of the companies' origins emphasizes the power of persuasion through lobbying and efforts to reach consensus that would benefit the community.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Approach and Data Collection**

The research conducted was qualitative, based on case studies. Table 1 provides a brief explanation of the eight social enterprises from which researchers collected data from informants.

**Tabel 1 Social Enterprise Characteristics**

<b>Case</b>	<b>Principal Activities</b>
1	An independent social enterprise based in South Wales. Generating income through enterprise, it uses its revenues to provide community services and facilities.
2	A social enterprise providing community training, education sign posting and employment intervention programs in Northern Ireland.
3	A social enterprise and registered charity. Delivers services, and facilitates existing providers, to meet community development needs in the East of England. Key activities: youth work, rural economic development, skills training, supporting migrant communities.

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4	A social enterprise in the North East of England responsible for administering projects that meet the specific needs of the community such as childcare, a community wardens scheme, community transport services, and assistance with job placements.
5	A social enterprise and registered limited company with charitable objectives located in South East England. Provides projects and services in order to secure and oversee the use of resources in the regeneration of the local area and district.
6	A social enterprise located in a large town to the North of London. Acquires disused computers from companies. Carries out the appropriate refurbishment and modifies them to be sold on at reduced cost to charities and people on low incomes. Also exports computers to developing countries. Employs many low-income and long-term unemployed.
7	Social, community-led enterprise serving a particular housing estate in a large town to the North of London. Delivers government funded programs (e.g. New Deal for Communities) to improve employment and businesses in the area.
8	A social enterprise in the North of England delivering regeneration programs to disadvantaged wards of the local district. Provides services which include a focus on developing the local infrastructure and housing provision.

This table is used to identify the main characteristics of social enterprises (location, activities, social goals) as a basis for comparison with case studies in Indonesia. The analysis is conducted by:

1. Classifying main activities (training, community services, regional regeneration, etc.).
2. Mapping social objectives (unemployment alleviation, infrastructure development, community empowerment).
3. Comparison with the characteristics of social enterprises in the local context (Indonesia).

This study is structured as a case study-based academic essay, rather than empirical field research. Instead, it relies on a critical analysis of literature, sustainability reports, and official company documents such as Annual Reports and ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) reports from three public companies: PT Telkom Indonesia, PT Pertamina (Persero), and PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk. These three companies were selected because they have a strong track record in social initiatives and community development, as well as being representative of three strategic sectors: telecommunications, energy, and banking. This writing design is also informed by Di Domenico et al.'s (2010) theoretical framework of social bricolage, specifically its five key dimensions: making do, improvisation, refusal to be constrained, stakeholder participation, and persuasion.

## **Data Sources**

The primary data sources in this paper consist of:

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1. Public documents such as annual reports and corporate sustainability reports (2020–2024)
2. Relevant journal articles and academic books (especially Di Domenico et al., Pearce, Peredo & Chrisman)
3. Official company press releases and documented CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives
4. Secondary analysis of independent research reports, including ESG and corporate governance indices

## **Analysis Techniques**

The analysis was conducted using interpretive and thematic techniques, where secondary data was read in depth and coded into five categories according to the dimensions of social bricolage. Each case study was analyzed to identify actual patterns, strategies, and practices of the company in creating social value through improvisational approaches and resource adaptation.

The analysis was conducted at two levels:

1. Micro level – how social policies or programs are designed and implemented (units, projects, teams).
2. Macro level – how these strategies contribute to the company's positioning as a hybrid entity that is both socially responsive and economically competitive.

## **Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Case Study: PT Telkom Indonesia (Persero) Tbk**

PT Telkom Indonesia, Digital Innovation Amidst Bureaucracy. As a state-owned telecommunications company, Telkom plays a significant role in building digital infrastructure. However, the social value generated does not stem solely from infrastructure, but from Telkom's ability to adapt its network, human resources, and technology functions to meet social agendas. Programs like "Digital Village" were not born from a grand, top-down strategy, but from on-the-ground adaptation to community needs. When network infrastructure was not being optimally utilized, Telkom repurposed it as a digital training center and distribution channel for local MSMEs. This is a concrete example of making do and improvisation, where excess capacity is utilized as a social resource.

Stakeholder involvement is strong. Telkom established a multi-stakeholder forum involving village officials, youth organizations, and vocational universities. More than just symbolic involvement, this participation created a robust and responsive implementation structure. However, behind this success, the process was fraught with internal and external negotiations. Employees must be persuaded to move beyond the corporate framework into social work, and local governments need to be assured that this is not a covert political project. The persuasion dimension is key, demonstrating that social bricolage is not just about resources, but also about shifting perceptions. Telkom Indonesia, through its CSR programs such as the "Digital Talent Scholarship" and "Kampung Digital," empowers village communities through digital technology training.

- **Making do:** Telkom optimizes existing networks and infrastructure to expand internet access in underdeveloped areas. Previously underutilized base transceiver stations (BTS) are redirected to support schools and village training centers.

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- **Improvisation:** Training modules are tailored to local needs. In agricultural areas, training focuses on utilizing e-commerce to sell agricultural products.
- **Stakeholder Participation:** This program collaborates with village communities, vocational colleges, and the Ministry of Rural Development. This collaboration has a dual effect, increasing digital literacy and fostering microeconomic growth.
- **Persuasion:** Telkom approaches local governments to incorporate this program into the Regional Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMD), strengthening its legitimacy and political support.

## **4.2 Case Study: PT Pertamina (Persero)**

PT Pertamina: Renewable Energy from Unused Infrastructure. Pertamina has faced public criticism over the environmental impact of its upstream oil and gas activities. However, in recent years, it has initiated the Independent Village Energy project, utilizing unproductive assets to generate alternative energy sources such as biogas and solar panels. The key to this program's success lies in its refusal to be constrained. Rather than waiting for a sluggish national renewable energy policy, Pertamina collaborated with NGOs, village-owned enterprises (BUMDes), and universities to develop a hybrid scheme. Old, uneconomical wells were used as the basis for processing livestock waste into energy.

This practice was not without obstacles. Internal company interests, state procurement procedures, and community skepticism presented challenges. However, the program team was able to redesign the incentive structure and build cross-sector alliances. This was not mere improvisation, but structured social engineering. The resulting social value extends not only to energy access but also to the formation of community-owned energy cooperatives. Social value creation occurs not because of generous CSR, but because of empowering organizational design.

Pertamina operates the "Pertamina Sobat Bumi" and "Pertamina Eco Village" programs to promote environmentally friendly, energy-based MSMEs.

- **Refusal to be constrained:** When state funding for infrastructure is limited, Pertamina initiated the development of community-based alternative energy infrastructure. Village cooperatives manage solar panels and biogas.
- **Improvisation:** Given limited technical resources, Pertamina trains residents to become solar panel technicians and managers of renewable energy systems.
- **Stakeholder Participation:** Collaboration is established with the Energy and Mineral Resources Agency, Village-Owned Enterprises (BUMDes), and local NGOs for ongoing supervision and training.
- **Social Value Creation:** This program has successfully reduced village electricity costs, increased energy access, and simultaneously created jobs.

## **4.3 Case Study: PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (Persero) Tbk**

PT Bank Rakyat Indonesia (BRI): Fintech and MSMEs as Social Infrastructure. BRI's mission is to be a pro-people microbank, but in the digital era, challenges have shifted. When MSMEs struggled to access digital financial services, BRI did not build new technology from scratch. Instead, it utilized its network of BRILink agents spread across villages as a means of expanding its fintech offerings. \*Within the "making-do" framework, this strategy exemplifies the adaptation of technology without incurring costly investments.



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Existing applications were optimized, infrastructure was modified, and training was provided directly by a community of local mentors. Improvisation emerged in how they aligned field needs with OJK regulations.

Stakeholder participation became very explicit in the BRIncubator program, where MSMEs, academics, and digital industry players collaborated to design the incubation process. This process was iterative, with evaluations based on community needs. BRI's most outstanding achievement was not the number of MSMEs upgraded, but the formation of a sustainable digital village ecosystem. Their social bricolage approach was neither idealistic nor impractical, but rather pragmatic and contextual.

- **Making it happen:** Instead of opening new branch offices, BRI is optimizing BRILink agents as financial service points and education centers.
- **Stakeholder Participation:** BRI is building an ecosystem by involving MSMEs, village governments, universities, and digital platform providers.
- **Improvisation:** The BRIncubator program uses a decentralized incubation approach with local mentors and needs-based learning.
- **Persuasion:** BRI has successfully convinced local governments to participate in funding MSME training and certification as a form of multi-stakeholder collaboration.
- **Social Value Creation:** The impact is not only on expanding financial access, but also on transforming village economies to become more resilient and independent.

## Conclusion

Adaptive Strategy, Structure, and Challenges: The three case studies demonstrate that social bricolage is not simply a response to scarcity, but an organizational strategy to remain adaptive and relevant. In the context of public companies, this process operates under the pressure of market legitimacy, public demand, and internal constraints. The dimensions of persuasion and stakeholder participation are more prominent in large social enterprises. This suggests that at a large scale, social value creation requires political bargaining power and strategic perception management. Furthermore, bricolage in a corporate context requires internal actors who serve as bridges between market logic and social logic. These are social intrapreneurs who not only think innovatively but also navigate corporate bureaucracy effectively.

The concept of social bricolage offers a valuable perspective on how social enterprises navigate constraints to create social value. Case studies of public companies in Indonesia demonstrate that elements such as improvisation, stakeholder participation, and persuasion are crucial in the context of limited resources and institutional bureaucracy. The three public companies studied successfully combined business interests with social value creation. The implementation of social bricolage enabled them not only to survive but also to become catalysts for social change through their scale and influence. These findings support the validity of Di Domenico et al.'s (2010) framework and contribute to the theory and practice of social entrepreneurship in developing countries.

The application of social bricolage theory to public companies in Indonesia offers new insights, suggesting that even large organizations can adopt a social logic through creative and participatory strategies. In a dynamic socio-political context, the three companies analyzed demonstrate that social value is created not only from substantial resources, but also from the

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ability to improvise, persuade, and design cross-sector collaborations. Thus, social bricolage is worthy of being viewed not only as a theory of micro-social entrepreneurship but also as a strategic framework for reforming large companies toward inclusive and sustainable hybrid organizations.

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