

(Introductory paper)

Mapping Social Enterprise Models Some evidence from the “ICSEM” Project

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Apart from the fact that research on social enterprise is rather recent, at least two major reasons can account for the lack of a broad and precise view of most social enterprise (SE) models as they are emerging across the world. First, the concepts of “social enterprise” and “social entrepreneurship” can have different meanings in different contexts or for different schools of thought (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010). Secondly, much of the existing literature has relied so far on case studies, especially to highlight achievements of outstanding social entrepreneurs presented as heroes (Bornstein, 2004, among many other authors) or to serve as an empirical basis for various types of organizational or institutional analysis.

Until the early 2010s, only few countries had witnessed attempts to delineate, describe and analyse the whole (or a great deal of the) social enterprise landscape at the national level. These efforts had mainly taken place in countries that had experienced specific and strong public or private strategies promoting social enterprise and social entrepreneurship. The best example is provided by the United Kingdom, which combines strong third sector traditions (mutual and cooperative organizations and charities) with brand new developments in the last fifteen years in terms of SE promotion by public authorities and various other bodies. In such context, Spear *et al.* (2009) identified four types of social enterprise in the United Kingdom, according to their origins and development paths: *mutuals*, formed to meet the needs of a particular group of members through trading activities; *trading charities*, which develop commercial activities to fulfil their primary mission or as a secondary activity to raise funds; *public sector spin-offs*, which have taken over the operation of services previously provided by the state; and *new social enterprises*, set up as new businesses by social entrepreneurs. In the same institutional context, Gordon (2015) considered a wider spectrum of historical origins and purposes at the organizational level; on this basis, he identified six main SE “traditions and purposes”, each of them being characterized by a “basis”, central values, primary beneficiaries, potential legal or organizational form(s) and primary income sources.

In the US, Ashoka, various foundations and numerous consulting firms have been providing various types of support to innovative social entrepreneurs and to non-profits pursuing earned-income strategies (Boschee, 1995). Relying mainly on the US social enterprise landscape, Young and Lecy (2014) proposed the metaphor of a “social enterprise zoo”, in which different types of animals seek different things, behave differently and may (or may not) interact with one another in both competitive and complementary ways¹

¹ The authors identify “six major species of social enterprises in their zoo” (each containing substantial internal variation—subspecies—as well): *for-profit business corporations* developing programmes of

When it comes to international comparative works, most of them were based on conceptualizations and/or policy frameworks shaped by specific national or regional contexts, not on comparative empirical studies. For instance, Kerlin (2006) and Defourny and Nyssens (2010) mainly focused on comparisons of conceptual approaches of social enterprise in Europe and the United States. International comparative research including empirical evidence remained even more at an embryonic stage. Several authors—Borzaga and Defourny (2001) and Nyssens (2006) at the European level (with 15 EU member states); Borzaga *et al.* (2008) for Central and Eastern Europe; Defourny and Kim (2011) for Eastern Asia; and Kerlin (2009) at a broader international level—made first attempts in this direction, but their analytical grids did not rely on systematic data collection at the enterprise level.² Moreover, some of them (such as Kerlin 2013) adopted a broad macro-level perspective to identify key features of macro-institutional frameworks in various countries and to show how socioeconomic and regulatory institutions at the national level tend to shape specific types of social enterprise. However, while SEs are influenced by institutional factors at the macro level, their objectives and organizational features are also shaped by a variety of institutions and norms—such as historical traditions, values, existing legal frameworks and discourses—within every single national context. Adopting such a meso-level perspective paves the way for identifying different models of social enterprise in a same country.

In other words, the obvious limits of all the above-mentioned pioneering works called for more in-depth efforts to analyse and understand the diversity of social enterprise models emerging across the world.

THE LAUNCH OF THE ICSEM PROJECT

In such context, we devoted a whole year to preparing a worldwide comparative research project, under the auspices of the EMES International Research Network and within an “Interuniversity Attraction Pole on Social Enterprise” funded by the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO) The “International Comparative Social Enterprise Models” (ICSEM) Project was presented and launched at the end of the 4th EMES International Research Conference on Social Enterprise, held in Liege (Belgium) in early July 2013. From the outset, some 100 participating researchers from 25 countries decided to get involved and committed themselves to carrying out the proposed work over at least four years. Over the following twelve months, some 80 additional researchers joined the Project; its time framework was consequently adapted to allow late comers to catch up. Today, the ICSEM community of active research partners is formed of 230 researchers from some 55 countries from all regions of the world.³

corporate social responsibility; *social businesses*; *social cooperatives*; *commercial non-profit organizations*; *public-private partnerships* and *hybrids*.

² Nyssens (2006) appears as an exception in this regard, but this EMES research project only focused on work integration social enterprises (WISEs).

³ One of the most striking features of the ICSEM Project is that all research partners have to find their own resources to carry out the Project in their respective countries. Only accommodation costs for attending ICSEM meetings at the local, regional and global levels are covered. However, with a view to

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In short, the main objective of the ICSEM Project was to document the diversity of social enterprise models as a way 1) to overcome most problems related to the quest for a unifying and encompassing conceptualisation of social enterprise; 2) to show that it is feasible to theoretically and empirically build an international typology of social enterprise models; and, consequently, 3) to pave the way for a better understanding of social enterprise dynamics and eco-systems.

The ICSEM Project's first phase (2013-2015): Country-based contributions

All researchers involved in the project were first asked to provide a "country contribution" about the social enterprise landscape in their respective countries. The proposed work plan went much further than a simple country overview, and included three major parts to deal with three major issues.

Part A: "Understanding concepts and context" aimed to address questions such as: Is the notion of social enterprise explicitly used in your country? If so, in which circles: academic spheres, policy makers, civil society organizations...? What is (are) the major existing or emerging conception(s) of social enterprise in your country? Is it (are they) rooted in any specific social, political or cultural background? Which other terms or concepts tend to be used in your country (instead of or beside that of social enterprise—for example social entrepreneurship, non-profit organization, social economy, voluntary organization, NGOs, etc.)? Do public authorities tend to be interested in the notion of social enterprise? If so, which kind of conception tends to be adopted in their discourse or policies?

Part B: "Mapping social enterprise models" aimed to identify and characterize various sets of social enterprises as well as their fields of activity, social mission, target groups, public or private supports, operational and governance models, stakeholders, etc. In such a perspective, researchers were encouraged to collect and analyse all available literature and documentation, to establish a first classification of the main groups/categories of social enterprises, either on the basis of existing classification(s) or through personal intuitive attempts, and to select the main indicators or variables reflecting the major features that differentiate the various categories of social enterprise.

The purpose of *Part C: "Analysing institutional trajectories of the main SE models"* was to identify and describe the main "institutions" (at large) shaping the profile of social enterprises: legal frameworks used by social enterprises, public policies and programmes, major financial supports, or other tools such as norms or accreditation, federations of which social enterprises are members, private charters to which they subscribe, etc.

Two distinctive features of this approach should be underlined. First, no *a priori* conceptualization of social enterprise was imposed or even suggested for these national

minimising travel costs, several regional and global meetings have been organised immediately before or after EMES and ISTR Conferences.

contributions. Instead, the emphasis was put on the embeddedness of the SE phenomenon in local contexts. Moreover, most works were carried out by research teams, not just individuals, and this fostered discussion at the national level, thereby reducing the risk of domination of purely personal perceptions. Given these features, this first phase of the ICSEM Project can be seen as a bottom-up approach, involving both a significant body of descriptive informational content and analytical perspectives.

Practically all the country contributions produced during this first phase were presented and discussed during ICSEM Meetings organised at the local level (so-called "ICSEM Local Talks" have been organised so far in some 10 countries), at the regional level (ICSEM Regional Symposiums have taken place in Chile, Belgium, South Korea, Albania, Brazil and France) and at the global level (ICSEM General Meetings have been organised in Finland, Sweden and Belgium). Revised versions of these country contributions have been published in the series of ICSEM Working Papers.⁴

Most ICSEM country contributions will soon be published in three books, devoted respectively to social enterprise in Asia, Europe and Latin America, together with chapters focusing on transversal issues and comparative analysis across countries. Country contributions from other parts of the world are presented in this SEJ Special Issue, which covers Australia, Israel, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Africa, South Korea and the United Arab Emirates.⁵ Far from just providing raw materials, these country-based contributions are now serving as a strong basis for the two other phases of the Project.

The ICSEM Project's second phase (2016-2017): Theory building and data collection

The second phase of the Project was based upon two quite complementary strategies. As coordinators of the Project, we sought to build an original analytical framework theorising how key "principles of interest" and "institutional trajectories" generate four main SE models, which tend to emerge in many SE landscapes: the entrepreneurial non-profit model, the social cooperative model, the social business model and the public social enterprise model (Defourny and Nyssens, 2017). At this stage, however, our typology was based on a deductive approach, not on systematic empirical evidence.

In order to address the lack of reliable datasets at the enterprise level to undertake international comparative works, a second strategy aimed to collect in-depth information on social enterprises deemed emblematic of the different social enterprise models/categories identified in the country contributions. In such a perspective, we designed a common questionnaire to be used by all researchers. This questionnaire was submitted to all research partners and discussed and revised in an interactive process. It was then tested in several countries, before finally reaching a level of quality acknowledged by all involved partners.

⁴ All papers are available for download on the Project's website: www.iap-socent.be/icsem-project

⁵ South Korea—a country where the interest in social enterprise is already quite significant—had two distinct research teams. The other paper from this country should be published in the book on social enterprise in Asia.

Social enterprise managers were actually interviewed on such common basis from 2016 through the first months of 2017. Although the number of interviews differed across countries, detailed data were collected in a rather homogenous way for 721 social enterprises from 43 countries. As such, this database of course represents a key achievement of the ICSEM Project.

The ICSEM Project's third phase (2018-2019): Comparative analysis and statistical works

The last phase of the ICSEM Project will aim to exploit the unique dataset that was built through the work of the previous phases. More precisely, statistical works will be carried out about the main SE dimensions that were covered by the common questionnaire: the social mission and the economic activity of SEs; their financial structure in general and, more precisely, the ways in which they combine various types of resources; their governance structure; and the rules regarding the allocation of profits/surplus.

The value and key role of the country contributions in the whole ICSEM scientific process should be stressed again here: not only did they allow the identification of the main relevant SE groupings, which served in turn to select emblematic SEs whose managers were interviewed with the ICSEM questionnaire; they also represent the most relevant source of information to refine the interpretation of SE models as they will be identified and compared at the regional and world levels.

It is also why, still relying on country contributions, we want to confront here the international typology of social enterprise models we have recently proposed (Defourny and Nyssens, 2017) with country-level information presented in this special issue about SEs in quite different parts of the world. More precisely, with a view to embracing the diversity of SE models, we had drawn a triangle combining the three main "principles of interest" (namely the mutual, general and capital interests) and the major "resource mixes" to identify institutional trajectories generating four major SE models. Hereafter, we will briefly recall the logic behind these four major SE models and illustrate them with examples coming from the different countries covered in this special issue: Australia (Barraket *et al.*, 2017), Israel (Gidron *et al.*, 2017), New Zealand (Grant, 2017), Rwanda (Rwamigabo, 2017), South Africa (Claeyé, 2017), South Korea (Hwang *et al.*, 2017) and the United Arab Emirates (Johnsen, 2017).

PRINCIPLES OF INTEREST AND RESOURCE MIXES

Following Gui (1991), we argue that three major "principles of interest" can be identified in the overall economy: the general interest (GI), the mutual interest (MI) and the capital interest (CI). When speaking about "the economy", the first type of organization that generally comes to mind is the "for-profit firm", driven by capital interest. Capital interest organizations are controlled by investors who are mainly interested in the overall return of their capital ownership. Maximising profits to be distributed and increasing the value of the shares are the main goals of these investors. However, it is well-known that for-profit enterprises sometimes

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face market failures, which call for an intervention of the state, driven by the general interest. Some associations driven by a social mission are also close to the general interest logic, although their general interest or the community/target group they serve is usually not as wide as the one served by the state. There is also a third principle, often neglected when describing socio-economic realities: the mutual interest. The mutual interest refers to the production of services or goods provided to members under their own control, when the members are not acting as investors (the members' main goal focuses on such provision, not on the return on investment). In other words, mutual benefit organizations include all traditional types of cooperative enterprise, as well as voluntary associations driven by the interest of their members (such as sport clubs, professional associations, etc.).

In addition to these three principles of interest, the types of resources that are mobilized also contribute to defining organisations' "economic models". More precisely, organisations' "resource mix" may correspond to various combinations of three main types of resources: market income, public grants and philanthropic resources.

In order to represent the major models of social enterprise, we drew, as mentioned above, a triangle (see figure 1) based on these two dimensions: the interest principles and the types of resource mix. In this triangle, the vertices represent the three principles of interest, with some possible intermediary positions when different principles of interest are combined. The distinction among enterprises on the basis of their resource mix is represented by the two dotted lines that cross the triangle. We established a distinction between situations in which non-market funding (public funding and/or philanthropy, including volunteering) dominates, those in which market income is prevalent, and those in which a more balanced resource mix can be observed.

Figure 1 first shows six traditional enterprise models (in black): mutual interest associations (**MI-Assoc.**), which are driven by the interest of their members; cooperatives (**Coops**), which are also mutual interest organizations, owned and democratically controlled by their members; general interest associations (**GI-Assoc.**), which include all philanthropic and charitable organizations; the **state**, including all public agencies; and finally for-profit organizations (**FPOs**), which are capital interest organizations. Although capitalist as well, many small and medium-sized enterprises (**SMEs**) may balance the search for profits and non-financial goals in different ways than traditional for-profit enterprises.

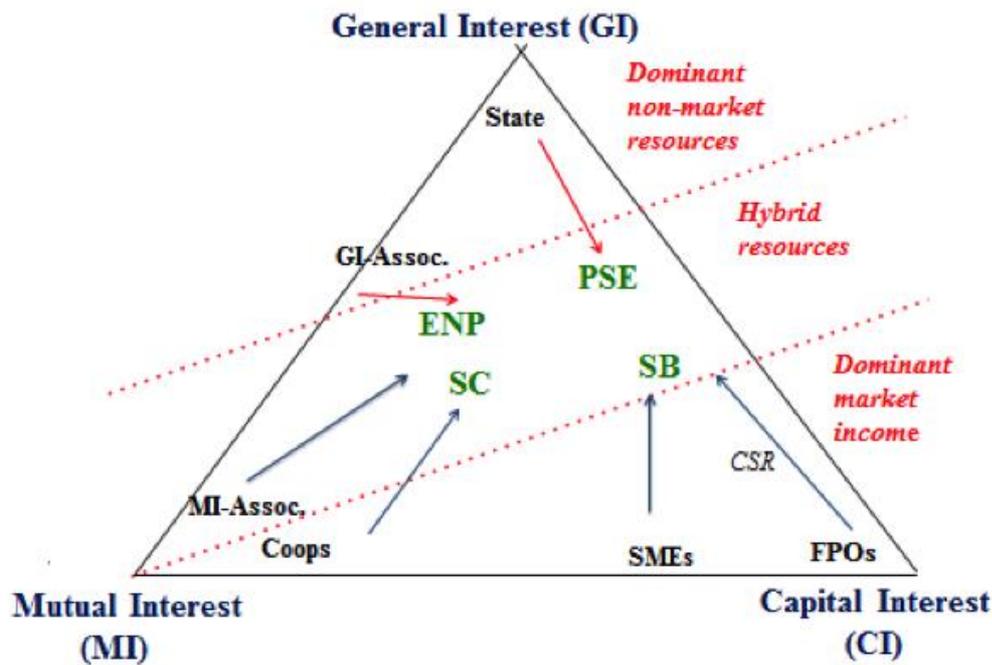
IDENTIFYING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODELS

As shown in figure 1, social enterprises (in green) emerge from these six traditional models through two distinct institutional trajectories: (1) an "upward" move, on the part of mutual or capital interest organizations, towards a greater orientation to the general interest (blue arrows); (2) a "downward" move, on the part of general interest organizations, towards more market-oriented activities in order to complement their existing resources (red arrows). These institutional trajectories give birth to four major social enterprise models.

At first sight, when looking at figure 1, the four SE models seem to arise from new dynamics at work in pre-existing organizations. Thus, it may seem that social enterprises cannot be

created from scratch. Such an interpretation is clearly misleading as a new (social) enterprise can emerge everywhere in the triangle; its location will depend on its general interest orientation, and on the way in which the organization balances social and economic objectives and financial resources.

Figure 1: Institutional trajectories generating SE models



Source: Defourny and Nyssens (2017)

(1) The upward move towards a stronger general-interest orientation gives birth to the social cooperative model and the social business model.

The social cooperative (SC) model differs from traditional mutual interest organisations (Coops and MI-Assoc.) in that it combines the pursuit of its members' interests (mutual interest) with the pursuit of the interests of the whole community or of a specific group targeted by the social mission (general interest). This model, as traditional cooperatives, also aims to implement forms of democratic governance, and it often corresponds to multi-stakeholder organizations.⁶

⁶ In a multi-stakeholder organization, a plurality of stakeholders (it can be users, workers, volunteers, providers, investors, etc.) are part of the governing bodies (mainly the General Assembly and the Board of Directors).

This model can be observed in most countries covered by this special issue. In Israel, cooperatives (among which the Kibbutz and the Moshav) have long been a central actor in building the rural infrastructure. A new generation of cooperatives puts a stronger emphasis on benefiting the broad society, not only their members. Their founders see these social enterprises of the social-cooperative type as “a catalyst for change to correct economic inequality while also addressing social goals”. In South Africa and Rwanda too, the cooperative model has been considered, these last years, as a possible driver of economic growth and social development. Cooperatives carry out activities in all sectors of economic and social life.⁷

In South Korea, most social enterprises dealt with in the paper are (social) cooperatives operating according to democratic principles and implementing stakeholder participation mechanisms. Various social missions shape these organisations, such as work integration, social services provision, regional regeneration, or what the authors call the “alter-economy”. In Australia, SEs belonging to the SC model are echoing the strong Australian working class tradition of mutual association and are driven by different types of social mission, such as work integration, meeting unmet consumer needs of excluded groups or promoting ethical consumption through ethical production and supply.

All these countries thus witness the development of cooperatives in many fields of action that are typical of SE. Can they all be qualified as social enterprises? The answer is clearly positive whenever a move is observed towards a behaviour giving significant importance to the general interest, beyond members’ interests.

In New Zealand, although a lot of co-operatives are among the country’s leading consumer/supplier brands, they are mostly considered as business/corporate organisations driven mainly by a profit motive. In the United Arab Emirates, no social cooperative has been identified, although cooperatives are well established in the economic landscape. This suggests that this collective form of ownership has not yet been explored as a possible vehicle for SE development in these two countries.

Finally, let us note that a similar move from the mutual interest to a stronger general-interest orientation can be observed among mutual interest non-profits (MI-Assoc.). As suggested in figure 1 and depending on local regulations and available legal forms, such a move can lead to the adoption of a social cooperative model or an entrepreneurial non-profit (ENP) model (described hereafter).

The social business (SB) model is rooted in a business model driven by shareholders’ (capital) interest, but social businesses mix this logic with a “social entrepreneurial” drive aimed at the creation of a “blended value”, in an effort to balance and better integrate economic and social purposes. In this model, a central issue is deeply related to social

⁷ In many developing countries, drawing a border between mutual interest and general interest organisations may be particularly difficult: a mutual interest “traditional” cooperative formed by small farmers as a tool to fight poverty often has direct impacts on the well-being of local communities.

businesses' actual practices: do the social and/or environmental dimensions actually dominate the profit motive or are they mere instruments to better serve capital interests?

The majority of SBs outlined across the different papers are small-size enterprises whose founders/owners are motivated by a balanced combination of economic and social goals. This model is the most widespread in the UAE social enterprise ecosystem. These SBs, mixing commercial and social objectives, operate in various industries: economic development, environmental conservation, children and youth, and education. In Rwanda, individual social entrepreneurs have launched SBs aiming at solving social issues in sectors such as health or education. Israeli SBs, typically established by one or two entrepreneurs, focus on employment and inclusion of marginalized populations as well as on environmental issues. In New Zealand, the paper identifies the emergence of young social entrepreneurs who combine their motivation for social change and their technological capabilities to develop start-ups. Some Australian social enterprises driven by mission- and/or business-related innovation strive to provide new and improved responses to unmet social, environmental, cultural and economic needs.

Rwanda and the UAE also underline the development of large SBs. This trend corresponds to the emergence of social enterprises incubated by private companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments. In Rwanda, after the 1994 genocide, public authorities raised the awareness of private companies about the need to take part in the reconstruction of the country. Some companies decide to provide punctual financial and material assistance to needy people (construction of social houses; financial assistance to orphans, widows and youth; payment of school fees for underprivileged children...). In the UAE, some companies are "re-thinking their CSR concept, shifting from handouts-based projects to sustainable programs, in line with the company's activities and know-how, and incorporating a capacity-building approach". However, should any social value-generating activity be considered as an expression of social entrepreneurship, especially when this activity remains marginal in terms of means allocated to it? From our point of view, CSR strategies may certainly lead to the setting up of social businesses, but the concept of social business would lose much of its relevance if it were to become diluted in a huge spectrum of socially-related initiatives.

(2) The second type of trajectories generating social enterprises can be observed in figure 1 among public and non-profit organisations experiencing **a downward move towards marketization**.

The entrepreneurial non-profit (ENP) model gathers all non-profit organizations, most often general interest associations (GI-Assoc.), that are developing any type of earned-income activities in support of their social mission.⁸ This model clearly corresponds to a widespread conception of social enterprise to which we refer as the "commercial non-profit

⁸ The arrow coming from GI-Assoc. is only slightly downward-oriented in order to suggest that a greater share of market income does not necessarily mean a weaker commitment to the general interest.

approach” within the broader “earned income” school of thought (Defourny and Nyssens, 2010).⁹

In Rwanda, NGOs with trading activities, among which microfinance, are ranked first among SE models, while the earned-income SE conception seems prevalent in South Africa. In the UAE, some international NGOs launched social enterprises that provide both paid training to the middle class and free training to poor people. The core workforce is highly skilled and well-paid, and extended support is provided by a large number of volunteers. In Australia and New Zealand, trading NPOs represent a growing phenomenon, like in most industrialized countries, where public funding is increasingly under pressure due to policies and public discourses converging toward a reduction of public budget deficits. In Australia, some social enterprises are owned and operated by charities. The goods and services produced by these ventures may be aligned or unaligned with their intended community benefit. Other NPOs are launching community organizations (bakeries, community gardens, WISEs...) to answer unmet needs within new or emerging ethno-cultural groups. In New Zealand, one of the most common areas of SE development is that of not-for-profit organizations developing trading arms with the intention of developing independent revenue streams. In Israel, many NPOs, faced with the dismantling of the welfare state and the pressure to become more business-like, are integrating income-generating activities within their core social activities: the commercial activity financially sustains itself while creating a social impact and, if possible, also supporting other social activities within the organization.

The second model resulting from the movement towards marketization is the **public-sector social enterprise (PSE) model**, which embraces “public-sector spin-offs”.

Public-sector SEs represent a new phenomenon in Israel. These SEs are owned by public organizations but they work as independent organisations providing public services using business methods. This model may also be observed in the UAE. In some cases, these SEs are organized as separate entities, legally registered as commercial establishments, with the state as their sole owner. Alternatively, they are internally structured within the parent public organization. They generally focus on social welfare and capacity building (WISEs). In South Korea, “certified social enterprises”, promoted by public policies dating back to 2007, may be considered as a SE model fully shaped by the state and fully dependent on public regulation and public subsidies.

As suggested above, our typology of SE models is based on some key dimensions we named “fundamentals”, but we do not pretend that it covers all possible SE cases. Especially, we are aware of the many types of hybridity that can be observed on the field. For example, partnerships between for-profits and non-profits and those also involving local public authorities are quite common. However, partnerships can sometimes be related to one of our four models, when a dominant partner can be identified or when the legal status chosen by the initiative drives partners towards one of the models. In other cases, there may be provisional arrangements aiming to better address social challenges in the short run. This is

⁹ The earned-income school of thought also includes the “mission-driven business approach”, which focuses on all types of organizations other than non-profits.

the case in Rwanda, where some SEs rely on a collaboration between the public sector and private entities. In order to cope with the various challenges and social issues it is facing, the Rwandan government designed social programs using traditional devices (“home-grown solutions”) in an innovative way. Some activities that are part of these “home-grown solutions” display some characteristics of social enterprises.

CONCLUSION

When looking at the various tentative SE typologies proposed in the seven ICSEM “country contributions” forming this special issue, the first impression may be that these national SE landscapes display strong divergences that add to a widespread feeling of confusion regarding conceptualizations and classifications of social enterprises. Such divergences are further strengthened by the extreme diversity of contextual features that can be observed among these countries. From a geographical point of view, the issue gathers contributions from Australasia, Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Asia. From a political perspective, we also obviously cover a very broad spectrum, from the United Arab Emirates and Rwanda to mature Western-style democracies. As to cultural and religious influences, the scope is even larger, with Islam (UAE), Judaism (Israel) and Confucianism (South Korea), Maori traditions and values (New Zealand) and traditional community practices (Rwanda), without speaking of the historical role of Christian missionaries and NGOs in several of these countries.

In view of such apparent confusing heterogeneity, we want to stress once again that it results from a threefold choice made from the outset by the ICSEM Project, and which also constitutes its novelty: first, to avoid any *a priori* definition of social enterprise; secondly, to consider that the “social” component of SE may only be apprehended through its embeddedness in society; and thirdly, to adopt—as a result of the first two choices—a bottom-up approach, based on local researchers’ perceptions and findings.

In spite of such options that paved the way for various types of divergences, a deeper look at the precise content of the proposed categorizations throughout this special issue drove us to find significant support, in most countries (if not all), for each of the four SE models we had theorized on the basis of “principles of interest” and “resource mixes” (figure 1). Indeed, new generations of cooperatives developing their social or societal impacts, non-profit organizations looking for more market income and social businesses seeking to create a real blended value are almost found everywhere. As to social enterprises launched by public authorities, they represent a model which was fully unexpected until recently but unquestionably represents an increasingly important phenomenon in various countries.

Such evidence, collected and displayed in a descriptive stance for seven countries, of course remains limited and calls for broader and stronger empirical tests. This is precisely what we plan to develop in a next step of the ICSEM Project, on the basis of the international database that has been built for more than 700 social enterprises from more than 40 countries.

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