



International Comparative Social Enterprise Models

Mapping and Testing Social Enterprise Models Across the World:
Evidence from the “International Comparative Social Enterprise
Models (ICSEM) Project”

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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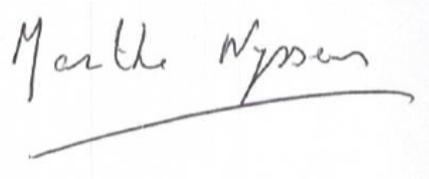
As intermediary products, ICSEM Working Papers provide a vehicle for a first dissemination of the Project's results to stimulate scholarly discussion and inform policy debates. A list of these papers is provided at the end of this document.

First and foremost, the production of these Working Papers relies on the efforts and commitment of Local ICSEM Research Partners. They are also enriched through discussion in the framework of Local ICSEM Talks in various countries, Regional ICSEM Symposiums and Global Meetings held alongside EMES International Conferences on Social Enterprise. We are grateful to all those who contribute in a way or another to these various events and achievements of the Project.

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Table of contents

Abstract	4
Introduction	5
1. Theorising the diversity of social enterprise models	6
1.1. Three “principles of interest” as a cornerstone.....	7
1.2. Market reliance and the resource mix as central issues.....	7
1.3. Institutional logics generating SE models.....	8
2. Data and method	10
2.1. The unique ICSEM survey and database.....	10
2.2. A hierarchical cluster analysis to identify major SE categories.....	11
3. Findings	12
3.1. Two clusters indicating the existence of a social-cooperative SE model.....	12
3.2. One cluster indicating the existence of a social-business model.....	17
3.3. Four clusters converging toward an entrepreneurial non-profit SE model.....	19
Conclusion and avenues for further research	21
References	23
Appendix 1. Hierarchical clustering	25
ICSEM Working Papers Series	26

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ABSTRACT

The comparative analysis of social enterprise (SE) models lacks strongly integrated theoretical foundations and empirical surveys that would allow for statistically testing typologies of SE models at the international level. This paper aims to address the lack of a scientifically robust typology of SE models by providing an analysis rooted in some of the strongest theoretical and analytical frameworks focusing on the third sector's identity, allowing for a wide diversity of SE models within the third sector and beyond its frontiers. Our typology is tested through the statistical exploitation (multiple factorial analysis followed by hierarchical cluster analysis) of a large international dataset, resulting from a survey carried out in the same way in more than 40 countries under the coordination of the authors. The existence of three of our four SE models—the social-business model, the social-cooperative model and the entrepreneurial non-profit model—is strongly supported by the empirical analysis in almost all the surveyed countries.

Keywords: social enterprise, third sector, hierarchical cluster analysis, international comparison

INTRODUCTION

The last two or three decades witnessed a high number of conceptual attempts to define social enterprise (SE). In this “SE literature”, it is rather easy today to identify the criteria or distinctive features that were most debated in such conceptual discussions: the primacy of social aims (Nicholls 2006); the search for market income in non-profit organisations, as developed by Skloot (1983) as early as in the 1980s, and then more widely in “mission-driven businesses” (Austin 2006); the specific profile of individual social entrepreneurs as described by Dees (1998); the place of innovation, analysed through various lenses, from the Schumpeterian works of Young (1983) through those of Mulgan (2007) on social innovation; and the issue of governance as a tool to achieve a sustainable balance between economic and social objectives, as highlighted by the EMES International Research Network (Defourny and Borzaga 2001).

Apart from a few attempts before the early 2010s, such as the one by Alter (2007), only few studies had hitherto endeavoured to delimit, describe and analyse the whole landscape (or a great part) of the SE field. 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—such as the United Kingdom, which combines strong third-sector traditions with brand new developments in the last fifteen years in terms of SE. In this context, Spear *et al.* (2009) had identified four types of SE, according to the initiatives’ origins and development paths. Much more recently, relying mainly on the US SE landscape, Young *et al.* (2016) had proposed the metaphor of a “social enterprise zoo”, in which different types of animals sought different things, behaved differently and may (or may not) interact with one another in both competitive and complementary ways... just like social enterprises, which differ significantly from each other in the ways in which they combine social and market goals.

When it comes to international comparative works, most of them were based on conceptualisations and/or policy frameworks shaped by specific national or regional contexts. For instance, Kerlin (2006) and Defourny and Nyssens (2010) had mainly focused on comparisons of conceptual approaches of social enterprise in Europe and the United States. At a broad macro level, Kerlin (2013, 2017) had adopted an institutional perspective inspired by the “social origins” theory developed by Salamon *et al.* (2000), identifying key features of macro-institutional frameworks in various countries to suggest how any set of socioeconomic and regulatory institutions at country level tends to shape a specific major SE model per country. At a broader international level, Borzaga and Defourny (2001) for the countries that then made up the EU, Borzaga *et al.* (2008) for Central and Eastern Europe, Defourny and Kim (2011) for Eastern Asia had made first attempts at international comparative analyses, but these analytical grids did not rely on systematic data collection at enterprise level.¹

The comparative analysis of SE types or models still lacks strongly integrated theoretical foundations and, even more, empirical surveys that would allow for statistically testing typologies of SE models; this is all the more true at the international level, as empirical relevance should be sought beyond national borders.

¹ Nyssens (2006) is an exception in this regard, as the work she coordinated relied on a common survey covering work-integration social enterprises in 11 EU countries.

This paper aims precisely at addressing the lack of a scientifically robust typology of social enterprise models by providing an analysis that would combine two key strengths: (1) it would be rooted in sound theoretical grounds, allowing for a wide diversity of SE models within each country and across countries; and (2) it would be supported by strong empirical evidence, provided by the statistical exploitation of a large international dataset, resulting in turn from a survey carried out in the same way in many countries.

In such a twofold ambitious perspective, we first propose a theoretical framework to identify a few major SE models, relying on two building blocks: on the one hand, “principles of interest” as key driving forces at work in various parts of the economy and as matrices from which social enterprise dynamics can emerge; on the other hand, “resource mixes” as a key dimension of social enterprise, acknowledged by many authors, among which Dees (1996), who classifies social enterprise types along a spectrum between two extremes corresponding respectively to a “purely philanthropic” pole and a “purely commercial” one.

We then describe the key dimensions to be captured and the methodological choices that were at the heart of a unique survey carried out in 2015 and 2016 on 721 social enterprises in some 40 countries across the world, in the framework of the so-called “International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) Project”, and we present statistical work that was carried out on the basis of this dataset—in particular a hierarchical cluster analysis.

Thirdly, we discuss the empirical results obtained which, as will be shown, provide strong support to our international typology of SE models.

Finally, we provide some concluding remarks.

1. THEORISING THE DIVERSITY OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE MODELS

Considering that social enterprises are often seen as belonging to the “third sector” or are somehow related to the latter (Defourny 2014), we chose to build our analysis upon some of the strongest theoretical frameworks focusing on this sector’s very identity, such as those proposed by Gui (1991) and Hansmann (1996). Leaving aside “capital-interest-driven” or capitalist enterprises, which distribute their profits to their investors, who also control these for-profit firms, Gui (1991) defines the third sector as composed by “mutual-benefit organisations” and “public-benefit organisations”. “Mutual-benefit organisations” are those in which the stakeholders who have the ultimate decision-making power (the “dominant category”) are also forming the “beneficiary category”, i.e. the category of stakeholders to whom the residual income² is explicitly or implicitly³ distributed. Indeed, such convergence of control and benefit ensures that members’ mutual interest is the objective pursued by the organisation. As for “public-benefit organisations”, they correspond to those in which the beneficiary category is different from the dominant category: they are voluntary organisations oriented to serving other people

² The residual income is the income that is not assigned by contract to other stakeholders than those who ultimately control the organisation (Hansmann 1996).

³ For example, through the improvement of the service delivered. In an NPO, the beneficiary category is formed by the group of stakeholders targeted by the social mission.

(beneficiaries) than the stakeholders who control the organisation.⁴ As stated by Santos *et al.* (2015), beneficiaries are those who are at the heart of the organisation's mission—more precisely, in the case of social enterprises, the social mission.

1.1. Three “principles of interest” as a cornerstone

These distinctions lead us to consider three distinct major drivers or “principles of interest” that can be found in the overall economy: the capital interest (CI), the mutual interest (MI) and the general interest (GI). We propose to represent them as the vertices of a triangle in which mixes of principles can also be represented along the sides (see figure 1).

Before trying to locate the various social enterprise types on our graph, let us note that all associations (voluntary organisations) seeking the interest of their members (such as sport clubs) are located in the “mutual-interest” angle, as are all traditional cooperatives. By contrast, associations (voluntary organisations, charities...) seeking a public benefit such as it is defined by Gui are located much closer to the general-interest angle, although not in the vertex itself, as their general interest (the community they serve) is usually not as wide (general) as the one served by the state. On the right-hand side of the triangle, shareholder companies sometimes develop CSR strategies through which they tend to express a concern for some issues of general interest, though without calling their main profit motive into question. This may be represented as a limited move upward along this side of the triangle.

The lower side of the figure represents a continuum between the cooperative treatment of profits and the capitalist stance on profits. In a cooperative, the search for profit is instrumental to the productive activity and profits are therefore only distributed as dividends with a cap and/or put into collective reserves with an asset lock; by contrast, profit distribution and increasing the value of their shares are the main goals of shareholding companies. In the case of large listed companies, investors may even consider production activities as instrumental to their quest for the highest short-term returns. Although capitalist as well, many small and medium-sized enterprises, especially family businesses, may balance in a different way the search for profits and non-financial goals (Zellweger *et al.* 2013).

1.2. Market reliance and the resource mix as central issues

A good deal of the literature and discourses on social enterprise underline a significant move towards market activities as a distinctive feature of social enterprise. When it comes to identifying operating social enterprises, many observers look at the proportion of market income and might require that at least 50% of resources come from market sales, like in various surveys carried out in the United Kingdom.

We have shown elsewhere that such a stance is often far from the field reality in many countries, and that it is not shared by various schools of thought. However, we fully acknowledge the fact that the degree of market reliance is a major issue in the debate and we certainly do not want to avoid it (Defourny and Nyssens 2010).

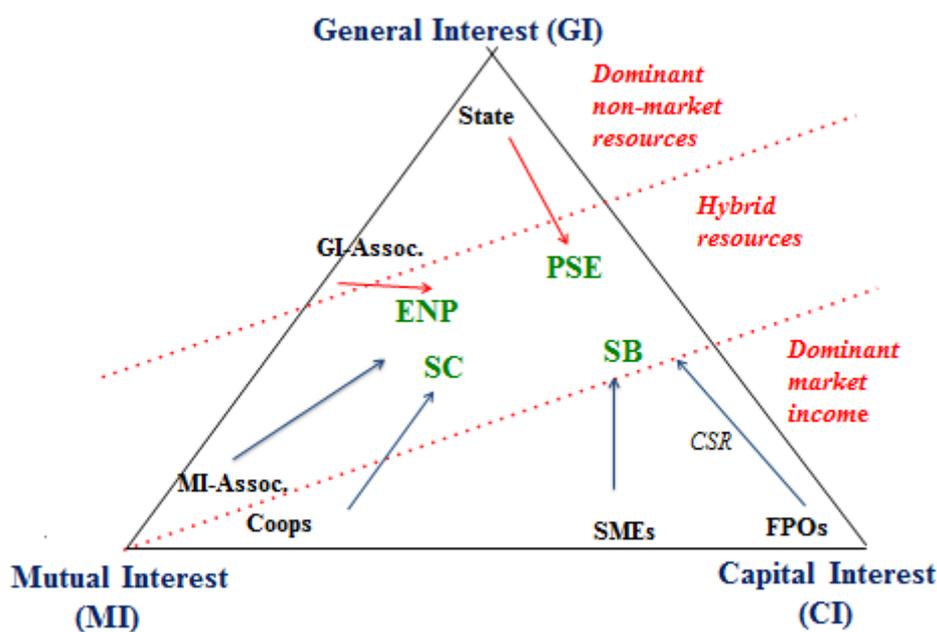
⁴ In such a perspective, all public (state) organisations and institutions are also typically public-benefit entities, but they form the public sector, not the third sector.

Therefore, we have drawn two dotted lines across our triangle to take into account the various combinations of resource types (market income, public grants, philanthropic resources), establishing a distinction between situations in which market income dominates, those in which non-market resources (public funding, voluntary resources) dominate, and those in which a resource mix (hybrid resources) is preferred with a view to better balancing the social mission and the financial sustainability (see figure 1). It should be noted that the lower dotted line also divides the “mutual interest” angle: cooperatives are enterprises operating mainly on the market and they appear below the line, as do all enterprises earning all or the bulk of their income from the market; on the contrary, mutual-interest associations, like leisure voluntary organisations, generally rely on a mix of market resources (member fees, sales at a bar or cafeteria) and other resources, such as volunteering and public contributions in the form of sport infrastructures and other indoor or outdoor facilities.

1.3. Institutional logics generating SE models

On the basis of the various elements presented above, we represented how various “institutional logics” in the whole economy may generate social enterprise models (Defourny and Nyssens 2017).

Figure 1. Institutional logics and resulting SE models



Source: Defourny and Nyssens (2017)

As shown in figure 1, social enterprises models (in green) emerge from six traditional models through two distinct institutional logics:

(1) The first type of logic generating social enterprises can be observed among non-profit or public organisations experiencing a *downward move towards marketisation* (red arrows):

- The **entrepreneurial non-profit (ENP) model** gathers all non-profit organisations, most often general-interest associations (GI-Assoc.), that are developing any type of earned-income activities in support of their social mission (Fitzgerald and Sheperd 2018).⁵
- The **public-sector social enterprise (PSE) model** results from a movement towards the marketisation of public services which embraces “public-sector spin-offs”. These SEs are usually launched by local public bodies, sometimes in partnership with third-sector organisations, to provide services which are outsourced (such as care services) or new services (such as those offered by WISEs).

(2) The second type of logic corresponds to an upward move of conventional cooperatives and mutual-interest associations *towards a stronger general-interest orientation*, and such a move may also be observed through some advanced CSR initiatives launched by the traditional business world (blue arrows):

- The **social cooperative (SC) model** differs from traditional mutual-interest organisations—i.e. cooperatives (Coops) and mutual-interest associations (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).
- 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.

At first sight, when looking at figure 1, the four SE models seem to arise from new dynamics at work in pre-existing organisations. Thus, it may seem that social enterprises cannot be created from scratch. Such an interpretation would be 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 it balances social and economic objectives and financial resources.

As suggested above, our typology of SE models is based on some key dimensions, which 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 in the field. For example, partnerships between for-profits and non-profits (Austin 2000) and those also involving local public authorities in a community-development perspective (Defourny and Kim 2011; Chan *et al.* 2011) 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 chosen legal form drives partners towards one of the models.

⁵ 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. This model clearly corresponds to a widespread conception of social enterprise to which we refer as the “commercial non-profit approach” (Defourny and Nyssens 2010).

2. DATA AND METHOD

2.1. The unique ICSEM survey and database⁶

So far, we have briefly described an approach that was mainly deductive, as it aimed to provide some theoretical foundations to establish a tentative typology of SE models. This attempt actually took place within a broad international research project that was launched in 2013 and was named the “International Comparative Social Enterprise Models (ICSEM) Project”. The main objective of the ICSEM Project was to document the diversity of SE 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 SE models; and consequently, (3) to pave the way for a better understanding of SE dynamics and eco-systems.⁷

Some 230 researchers from some 55 countries participated at least in some phases of the ICSEM Project.

In a first phase (2013-2015), all the researchers involved in the project were asked to provide a “country contribution” about the SE landscape in their respective countries. Among other things, researchers were asked to identify and characterise the various SE types they could observe, as well as their fields of activity, their social mission, their target groups, the public or private support they received, their operational and governance models, their stakeholders, etc.⁸ Two major distinctive features of this approach should be underlined here. First, no *a priori* definition of SE was imposed for these national contributions.⁹ Instead, the emphasis was put on the embeddedness of the SE phenomenon in local contexts. Secondly, most research was carried out by teams rather than by individual researchers, and this fostered discussion at the local or national level, thereby reducing the risks of biases induced by purely personal perceptions.

In a second phase (2016-2017), in order to address the lack of reliable datasets at enterprise level to undertake international comparative analyses, in-depth information was collected about social enterprises on the basis of a common questionnaire. More precisely, ICSEM research partners interviewed the managers of three to five social enterprises that were deemed emblematic of each SE type identified in the project’s first phase.

The questionnaire resulted from several rounds of discussion within the “ICSEM research community”; the goal was to design a questionnaire that would be meaningful and relevant in all world regions.¹⁰ Thanks to these efforts, detailed data were collected in a rather homogenous

⁶ We acknowledge the assistance provided by Elisabetta Severi in cleaning the ICSEM database.

⁷ See <https://www.iap-socent.be/icsem-project>.

⁸ A detailed “work plan” was provided to guide the production of these “country contributions”, which underwent a two-stage revision process and were then published in the ICSEM Working Papers Series and made available on-line; see <https://www.iap-socent.be/icsem-working-papers>.

⁹ We just delineated the field of analysis as “made of organisations that combine an entrepreneurial dynamic to provide services or goods with the primacy of their social aims”.

¹⁰ The first version of the questionnaire was submitted to all research partners, discussed, tested and revised in an interactive process before finally reaching a level of quality acknowledged by all involved partners. It was then translated in local languages.

way for 721 social enterprises from 43 countries. Needless to say, such a sample is by no way representative of the SE population across the world. Not only is the distribution across continents particularly uneven, with a quasi-absence of Africa; more fundamentally, the whole SE population is simply unknown, as there is no universal definition of social enterprise. In a few countries where SE is defined, for instance through a law promoting social enterprise, the definition does not generally enable an uncontested mapping and statistical analysis, because such a legal approach is often deemed too large or too narrow.

Table 1. Number of countries and social enterprises covered by the ICSEM survey

	Number of countries	Number of SEs
Europe	19	328
Asia	11	131
Latin America	7	162
USA-Canada- Australia-NZ	4	45
Africa	2	55
Total	43	721

These limitations do not prevent us from arguing that our overall research strategy, which combines a theoretical typology and a quite demanding bottom-up empirical approach, constitutes a major step toward capturing the diversity of SE models. The next step indeed is to exploit the dataset built through the ICSEM survey in order to see if it provides any empirical support to the above typology of SE models.

2.2. A hierarchical cluster analysis to identify major SE categories

For the purpose of carrying out a cluster analysis, we extracted quantitative and qualitative (nominal and ordinal) variables from the questionnaire. The ultimate goal was to describe each of the 721 SEs along five major dimensions: (1) general identity (legal form, origin, accreditations); (2) social mission (mission's nature, relation with the SE's main economic activity, prices of the goods and services provided, type of innovation); (3) workforce composition (workers and volunteers); (4) financial structure in general and, more precisely, ways in which the SE combines various types of resources; and (5) governance structure and rules regarding the allocation of profits/surplus. As multiple choices and combinations of several choices were possible for many questions, we defined 141 variables.

Before undertaking a hierarchical cluster analysis (HCA), we had to solve two main issues. First, our database included both quantitative and qualitative variables, while HCA cannot be performed on qualitative variables. Secondly, we wanted each of the five pre-determined dimensions to have the same weight, which was not the case since some dimensions were composed by a higher number of variables than others.

In order to overcome these problems, we therefore performed a multiple factorial analysis (MFA) on the 141 defined variables. The goal of MFA is to synthesise the initial information, to the largest possible extent, through a minimum number of factors. We chose to use MFA because it made it possible to simultaneously take into account qualitative and quantitative variables,

structured in pre-determined groups (our five dimensions). The number of selected factors is the number of factors needed to explain at least 50% of the total variance. Factors are therefore sequentially selected, according to the part of variance they explain. As far as we are concerned, we selected six factors. Using MFA thus solved our two problems: first, it gave the same importance to each of the five pre-determined dimensions; secondly, it enabled us to describe each of the 721 SEs through quantitative indicators only (the SE coordinates on each factor).

As a last step, through a hierarchical cluster analysis based on Ward's aggregation method, we classified SEs into different groups, on the basis of a hierarchical tree diagram (dendrogram) that started with each SE being considered as a separate cluster. This means that there were, in this first step, as many clusters as there were SEs; the HCA then aggregated the clusters sequentially, thereby reducing, at each step, the number of clusters, until only one cluster was left.¹¹ Finally, the optimal number of clusters (n) was defined; this optimal number of clusters corresponds to the number of clusters for which the sum of intra-cluster variances does not decrease significantly when n+1 clusters are considered. Based on that criterion, we first identified five clusters. Adding a supplementary cluster did not lead to a significant decrease in intra-cluster variances, but considering two extra clusters together led to a further significant decrease, which allowed us to obtain more coherent clusters. We thus finally decided to keep seven clusters (see appendix 1).

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Two clusters indicating the existence of a social-cooperative SE model

In two clusters among the seven (clusters 2 and 3, which gather 128 and 43 organisations respectively; see table 2), a large proportion of organisations (80% and 74% respectively) have adopted the legal form of cooperative. This is a strong feature, which invites us to look carefully at these two clusters as potentially signalling the existence of a "cooperative-type" SE model. The presence of other legal forms than the cooperative in both clusters is not surprising, as cooperative principles can also be implemented by social enterprises that are not formally registered as cooperatives. For example, in developing countries, many productive activities with primary social aims operate at the local level in a cooperative way, although they do not formally register as cooperatives and remain in the informal sector. According to our survey, 10% of the organisations in cluster 3 are informal and therefore do not declare any legal form. In cluster 2, 10% of all organisations have adopted dedicated SE legal forms, some of which are rather close to—although technically different from—the conventional cooperative status (this is for instance the case for the "general-interest cooperative society" created in France in 2001). Depending on existing national legislations, some other organisations have a "social-enterprise" label; such a label, although it may be combined with various conventional legal forms, may be strongly inspired by cooperative ideals: the "social-purpose company" label in Belgium (1995) and the "social enterprise" label in South Korea (2007) provide good examples of SE labels that are particularly accessible to cooperatives.

¹¹ The basic algorithm is very simple. First, using Ward's method and applying squared Euclidean Distance, distances are calculated between all initial clusters. Secondly, the two most similar clusters are merged and distances are recalculated. The criterion for merging is that it should produce the smallest possible increase in the sum of intra-cluster variance. Thirdly, the second step is repeated until all units are grouped in one cluster.

Table 2. Main features of SE clusters

Social enterprise models	Social-business (SB) model	Social-cooperative (SC) model		Entrepreneurial non-profit (ENP) model			
Cluster No. & dominant type in the cluster	Cluster 1 Small and medium-sized SB	Cluster 2 Cooperative SE	Cluster 3 Cooperative microfinance SE	Cluster 4 Non-profit-parent-launched WISE	Cluster 5 Non-profit WISE	Cluster 6 Local development ENP	Cluster 7 Health and social services ENP
Number of observations	138	128	43	72	34	55	251
Legal form	In most cases sole proprietorship/ Ltd companies	In most cases cooperatives		Wide variety of legal forms	In most cases NPOs, some Ltd companies	In most cases NPOs, some Ltd companies, cooperatives, informal organisations	In most cases NPOs and foundations
Goods and services provided	Various	Various	Mainly financial services	Various	Various	Various	In most cases education, health and social services
Social mission	Various social missions	Various social missions linked to community development	Mainly access to financial services	Work integration	Work integration	Local development, ecology, access to education, capacity building	Equality and empowerment, access to health services, employment generation
Mission-centric, mission-related or mission-unrelated economic activity	Mission-centric (52%) or mission-related (44%)	Mission-centric (66%) or mission-related (26%)	Mission-centric (65%) or mission-related (23%)	Mission-centric (42%) or mission-related (43%)	Mission-related (79%)	Mission-centric (62%)	Mainly mission-centric (69%)
Economic model	Dominant market income			Market: 48% Subsidies: 33% Donations: 19%		Market: 34% Subsidies: 29% Donations: 25%	Market: 38% Subsidies: 23% Donations: 13%
	87%	76%		72%			

Prices applied for the main economic activity and % of SEs applying them	Market price (61%)	Market price (63%)	Market price (42%) or below-market price (40%)	Market price (76%)	Market price (68%)	Free of charge (46%) Market price (31%) Below-market price (37%)	Free of charge (67%) Market price (33%) Below-market price (24%)
Governance model	Independent or capitalist	Democratic		Mainly democratic Some independent	Democratic	Mainly democratic Some independent	Democratic
Origin	One person	In most cases workers, citizens or TSOs	In most cases a group of citizens or TSOs	In most cases TSOs or a parent organisation	In most cases a group of citizens, TSOs or one person	In most cases a group of citizens or one person	In most cases a group of citizens, TSOs or one person
Multiple stakeholders' boards	24%	49%	37%	60%	NA	58%	72%
Ultimate decision-making power	One person or a board (managers, workers or investors)	GA/board (mainly workers and representatives of a wide diversity of other stakeholders)	GA/board (mainly users and investors)	GA/board (managers and experts and representatives of a wide diversity of other stakeholders) or, in some cases, one person	GA/board composed by workers (always), experts, volunteers, donors and citizens	GA/board (wide diversity of stakeholders) or, in some cases, one person	GA/board (wide diversity of stakeholders)
Rules limiting profit distribution	No (66%)	Yes (75%)		Yes (61%)	Total non-distribution constraint (80%)	Yes (61%)	Yes (70%)
If the SE terminates its activity, net assets are going to...	Undetermined (39%)	Members (40%)	Members (44%)	Another SE or NPO (32%) or the parent organisation (31%)	Another SE or NPO (44%)	Another SE or NPO (40%)	Another SE or NPO (38%)
Paid employees*	8	15	20	34	34	9	111
Volunteers *	0	0	8	7,5	3	6	15

*Median per social enterprise

According to our theoretical typology, the social cooperative model may be analysed as resulting from a move of mutual-interest organisations towards a behaviour giving more importance to the general interest. Such evolution can be observed at two distinct levels. First, existing conventional cooperatives and mutual-interest associations can decide to combine their mutual-interest orientation with some new activities or practices, oriented toward the interest of the whole community or of a target group of non-member beneficiaries. Secondly, such move can also be observed at a meso level: in some contexts, at least part of the conventional cooperative movement (and even of the associative world),¹² supported by structured social movements, can become aware of new social challenges and decide to support and to lobby for a new type of cooperative, i.e. the social cooperative, which appears to be best adapted to these new challenges. Such lobbying can lead to the development of a supportive eco-system: creation of a new legal form, promotion of access to public contracts, and so on. In that regard, the development of so-called “social cooperatives” in Italy may be seen as a success story: in the late 1980s, pioneering cooperative-like initiatives were launched by groups of citizens or workers without any specific legal form; they paved the way for the subsequent development of the broader set of more formal and better acknowledged social cooperatives. However, in many countries, public recognition has not been reached yet and “cooperative-type” SEs still operate under various, more traditional, legal forms. In other words, the logic(s) leading to the emergence of social enterprises belonging to the social-cooperative model may result from various forces at different levels.

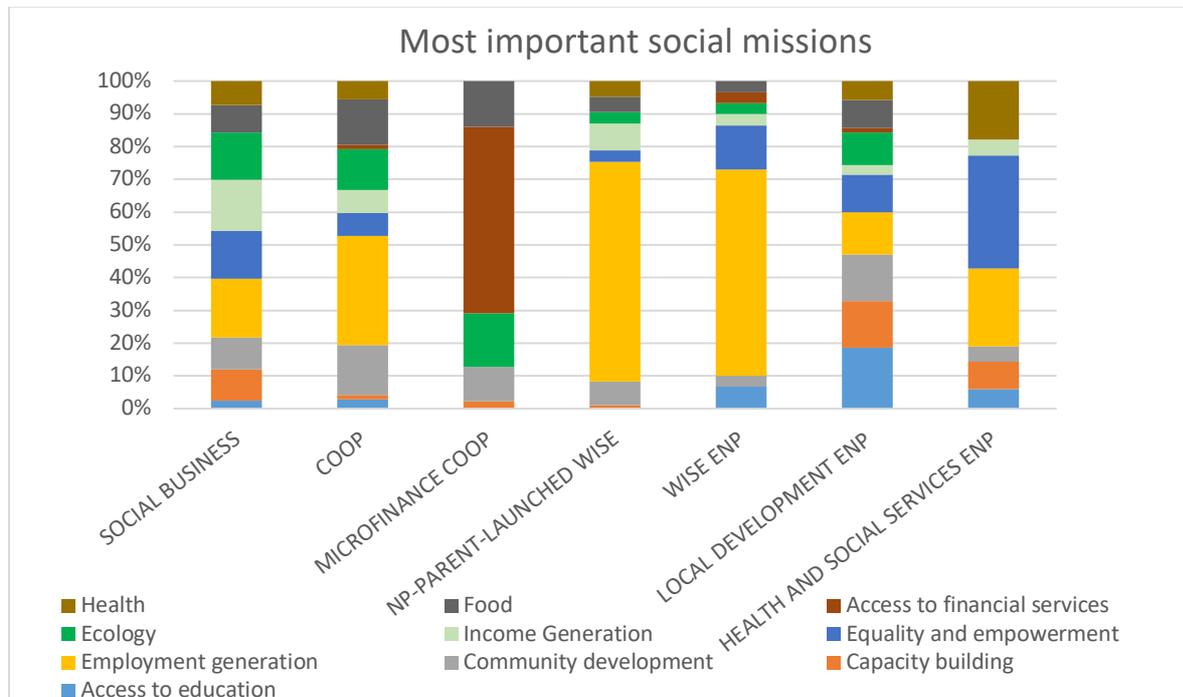
There is clear evidence of the cooperative nature of clusters 2 and 3, but we still have to document more strongly their specific “social” identity. The key question is thus the following: to what extent is it possible to distinguish organisations belonging to these two clusters from conventional cooperatives, in a way that might justify their positioning closer to the “social cooperative” model in the above triangle?

First, let us look at the types of social mission and economic activities which might lead to qualifying organisations in these two clusters as “social enterprises” rather than as traditional cooperatives. The social mission and economic activities are clearly interwoven in the organisations making up these two clusters: in both of them, two thirds of all organisations perform economic activities that are “mission-centric”, and one fourth develop activities that can be qualified as “mission-related”, according to Alter’s influential classification (2007). Although organisations in the first cooperative cluster (cluster 2) produce a wide diversity of goods and services (a diversity that can also be observed in the whole landscape of cooperatives), practically all these productive activities are meant to serve social objectives: they aim at creating jobs for the unemployed, at generating income for poor people, at pursuing community development, at addressing ecological issues, etc. (see table 3). Interestingly, the second cooperative cluster (cluster 3) does not display the same heterogeneity (and this is one of the main differences between the two clusters): some 60% of organisations in cluster 3 provide financial and insurance services—this is why we labelled this cluster “Cooperative microfinance SEs”. Access to financial services has always been a main concern for poor populations and a central issue for an important component of the cooperative movement, be it through “credit

¹² This is clear for the arrow coming from MI-Assoc., but the arrow coming from GI-Assoc. goes quite near to the “social-cooperative model”, not just to the ENP model.

unions” in US history and in developing countries with a British colonial heritage or through “credit and saving cooperatives” (*coopératives d’épargne et de crédit*, or coopec) in countries with a French colonial heritage. A good deal of these cooperative initiatives were launched well before the “microfinance movement” arrived at the forefront of the public agenda and they are now fully part of it.

Figure 2. Social enterprises’ social missions



Secondly, a stronger emphasis on general interest among these organisations than in traditional cooperatives could lead to governance structures involving other stakeholders than members looking for their mutual interest. Half of the organisations belonging to the first cooperative cluster indeed display governance structures that involve a wide diversity of stakeholders (among which, in many cases, workers) in the board and the general assembly. Not surprisingly, users and investors are the stakeholders most often represented in the cluster dominated by financial cooperatives. In the same spirit, the allocation of profits as dividends on member shares might be more limited in social cooperatives than in traditional cooperatives, or it might even be prohibited. Three quarters of organisations in the two cooperative-type clusters have rules, imposed by their legal form or bylaws, limiting the distribution of profits (as is also traditionally the case in most cooperatives, which impose a cap on the distribution of share-related profit) and providing for rebates to the members according to their transactions (and not according to their number of shares). But particularly worth underlining is the fact that some specific features, which are only rather rarely found in conventional cooperatives (such as a total non-distribution constraint or a strict equal distribution among members), can be observed in 50% of the cooperatives of our sample.

Finally, social cooperatives would presumably be in a better position to get more non-market resources in support of their social mission than traditional cooperatives, which rely on earned

income, generated by the sale of their production on the market. If market income is clearly dominant in the two cooperative clusters (more than 75% of resources on average), the part of the remaining income appears more important than in most traditional cooperatives. It comes from a mix of membership fees, public subventions and volunteering resources, and while membership fees may often be seen as a signal of mutual interest, the other two categories are quite typical of a private or public willingness to support a social mission.

The above analysis leads us to conclude that our identification of social cooperative as a major SE model is supported by strong empirical evidence. In the next section, and with a view to pursuing our goal of documenting the diversity of SE models, we will analyse some of the above features to highlight convergences and divergences between a “social cooperative” model and a “social business” model.

3.2. One cluster indicating the existence of a social-business model

Another cluster (cluster 1; see table 2) may be identified as gathering organisations that combine a very strong business orientation and a social mission, thereby indicating the existence of a “social business” model. Before further documenting the distinctive features of this cluster, let us note a few similarities with the two cooperative-like clusters previously described. First, data show a similar diversity of economic activities, and more or less the same diversity of social missions, in this social-business cluster and in cluster 2 (i.e. the first of the two “cooperative-type” clusters). We also learn that organisations of both the social-business cluster and the two cooperative-type clusters mostly sell their goods and services at market prices. Finally, organisations in these three clusters operate with paid workers and they do not rely—or only to a very limited extent—on volunteers.

Beyond these common characteristics, several other features tend to draw the picture of two quite diverging SE profiles. While “cooperative-type” SEs are set up by a group of citizens, workers or other third-sector organisations, “social-business-type” SEs are most often (in 53% of cases) initiated by only one person. Moreover, social businesses often adopt the legal form of limited company (50%) or sole proprietorship (26%), and they draw the bulk of their resources (87%) from the market, while cooperative-type SEs, although also relying predominantly on market resources, also mobilise, to a greater extent than social businesses, other sources of funding (which represent one fourth of their resources). As far as their activities and mission are concerned, social businesses’ economic activity is more often “mission-related” (45%) than that of cooperative-type SEs, which means that they deliver, more often than organisations in the cooperative-type clusters, goods or services to a wider population than the group targeted by the social mission.

As for the ultimate decision-making power, in organisations belonging to cluster 1, it most often belongs to the owner (in 47% of organisations) or, alternatively, to a board composed of managers, investors and/or some workers. In SEs governed by such a board, the governance can be described as “capital-interest-oriented”, or even “capitalist” in some cases, while it might be more appropriate to speak about “independent” ownership and management when these are in the hands of a single person. This of course contrasts with the “cooperative-type” clusters,

whose organisations display democratic governance structures, with a board and a GA involving a wider diversity of stakeholders.

Finally, regarding rules and provisions related to profit distribution, it is striking to note that there is no rule limiting profit distribution in 66% of organisations in the “social-business” cluster (which sharply contrasts with the situation in the cooperative-type clusters, where 75% of organisations have rules regulating profit distribution). These businesses can adopt a legal forms or seek an accreditation requiring that social goals be predominant in the mission, but generally, such legal forms or accreditations (e.g. the “low-profit limited-liability company” [L3C], the “flexible-purpose corporation” [FPC] or the private accreditation of “benefit corporation” [B Corp]) do not impose any asset lock nor impose any cap on the rates of return on investment (Cooney 2012). This is not to say, however, that all or most of the profits are usually distributed to owners: a quite common practice (shared by 70% of organisations in the “social-business” cluster) is to reinvest at least part of the profits in the social enterprise.

To better capture the actual profile of social enterprises in the “social-business” cluster, we still need some more information, especially about their actual size. At first sight, a good deal of the social-business literature emphasises, promotes and celebrates initiatives launched by or in partnership with multinational corporations, thereby suggesting rather large-size initiatives. The annual World Social Business Summit, organised by Yunus Centres around the world, is emblematic of this “school of thought”, which stresses four key principles: shareholders in social businesses should not expect any financial return on investment (which is easy for big corporations in the framework of a CSR strategy); all profits should therefore be reinvested for the social mission; goods and services should be sold at low prices to reach a high number of poor people; and the absence of public subsidies should guarantee full independence from the state.

It is precisely that kind of profile we had in mind when we started to conceptualise the social-business model in the triangle presented in figure 1. But data collected through the ICSEM survey and our statistical results actually suggest a wider diversity than expected, within the “social-business” cluster, in terms of size of the initiatives. Indeed, an important feature of this cluster is that the median size of the paid workforce is actually eight workers. Although surprising, this feature is consistent with the already observed key role of an individual entrepreneur as the initiative’s founder, main owner and dominant decision-maker.

Clearly, this cluster is made of small- and medium-sized enterprises identified by ICSEM local researchers in their respective countries as “social businesses” operating on the market while pursuing a social mission at the same time. As this combination of economic and social goals is implemented within less regulated frameworks than those defined by the governance rules and structures in “cooperative- type” SEs, the balance between these goals and its evolution over time raise the question of the social mission’s sustainability. For instance, only 10% of organisations in this cluster impose a reinvestment of all profits, and almost 40% have no predetermined rule about the distribution of net assets in case the activity is terminated. In such contexts, it seems critical to observe enterprises’ actual practices more in depth: To what extent do social and/or environmental dimensions actually dominate the profit motive? Are they not mere instruments to better serve the financial interests of the owner(s)? More generally, under

which conditions can a social-value-generating economic activity be considered as an expression of social entrepreneurship?

In any case, we can, at this stage, state that this cluster provides support to the idea, already represented in our triangle, that the social business-model is also deeply rooted in SMEs' willingness to generate blended value.

3.3. Four clusters converging toward an entrepreneurial non-profit SE model

Among the four remaining clusters, two of them (clusters 4 and 5) gather organisations that are mainly driven by a mission of employment generation and may therefore be considered as work-integration social enterprises (WISE), whereas the two other clusters (clusters 6 and 7) cover a wider spectrum of social missions.

We will first analyse the features of these two latter clusters. The dominant legal forms in these clusters are those of non-profit organisation and foundation. Other legal forms (cooperative and commercial company) as well as some informal organisations are also observed, but they are far fewer in number.

Organisations in clusters 6 and 7 have been launched, in most cases, by a group of citizens, sometimes in partnership with another third-sector organisation. Either the board or the GA holds the ultimate decision-making power, and this body is composed of a wide diversity of stakeholders. In some—much less frequent—cases (around 10% of organisations), a single person is the SE's initiator and independently manages his/her organisation. In almost 40% of SEs belonging to these two clusters, in case the activity is terminated, net assets go to another organisation with a similar social mission. These features are typical of NPOs (understood in a broad sense, including public-benefit foundations) in most countries. However, we need to analyse more deeply these two clusters before speaking of an underlying SE model.

Services provided by organisations in clusters 6 and 7 are mainly "mission-centric". The largest "non-profit-type" cluster (cluster 7) gathers organisations providing mainly education, health and social services, which are at the core of their social mission. Another major distinctive feature of organisations in this cluster is the fact that they are the largest organisations of the entire sample—the median size of their workforce reaches 111 workers. As for cluster 6, it gathers much smaller organisations (50% have less than 9 workers) providing a very wide spectrum of services to foster local development, ecology, access to education, capacity building... These organisations rely to a significant extent on volunteering: they have almost as many volunteers as employees.

The "non-profit-type" organisations belonging to these two clusters display a much wider diversity of resources than what is found in the two cooperative-type and the social-business clusters, with less than 40% of income coming from the market. Clusters 6 and 7 gather those SEs in our sample that rely most on philanthropy, including volunteering. Only one third of these organisations sell some of their services at market price. Indeed, providing at least some services free of charge or at a price not covering most production costs is a widespread practice among

these organisations. In cases where such practice is implemented, the organisation may also receive public subsidies or grants, when its production is considered to contribute significantly to the public good and cannot be financed by private, market and non-market resources.

Such resource mix could be seen as somehow surprising since a usual—although superficial—approach to social enterprise sees it as “a market solution to a social problem”. Moreover, when it comes to identifying operating social enterprises at the field level, as we have mentioned above, for some observers, the proportion of earned income (i.e. the requirement that at least 50% of resources come from market sales) constitutes the main indicator. For many other scholars, however, among which those belonging to the EMES school of thought (Defourny and Nyssens 2010), the entrepreneurial dimension of social enterprise lies, at least partly, in the fact that the initiative bears a significant level of economic risk—but not necessarily a market risk. This means that the SE’s financial viability often constitutes a continuous challenge, and that it depends on the efforts of the members to secure adequate resources to support the enterprise’s social mission. In this broader perspective, the resource mix which can best support the social mission is likely to have a hybrid character, as it may combine trading activities with public subsidies and voluntary resources (donations, volunteering...). Based on an extensive review of literature, Maier *et al.* (2016) identify several dynamics which can characterise “NPOs becoming business-like”. Not only can NPOs adopt business-like goals (such as commercialisation or/and conversion from an NPO to an FPO legal form); they can also adopt business-like core and support processes (entrepreneurial orientation, professionalisation, business-like philanthropy...) or develop business-like rhetoric.

For all these reasons, it is not surprising that many NPOs have been identified as social enterprises by local researchers, even if they have less than 50% of earned income. Clusters 6 and 7 may therefore be seen as indicating the existence of a broad “entrepreneurial non-profit” SE model.

As briefly observed above, the remaining two clusters, which have not been described so far (clusters 4 and 5), gather mainly work-integration social enterprises (WISEs). These initiatives sell a wide variety of goods or services, mainly at market price, and rely more heavily on earned income than the two clusters we have just described (earned income represents 72% of resources for enterprises in cluster 4, and 48% of resources for those in cluster 5, while it represents less than 40% of resources for organisations in clusters 6 and 7). These enterprises’ productive activities can be considered as being less often “mission-centric” and more often “mission-related” than those of enterprises in the two clusters previously analysed: indeed, in clusters 4 and 5, the economic activity is a means to create jobs, whatever the types of products that are commercialised, for a population which is quite different and much wider than the group targeted by the social mission. The mission of WISEs is to integrate the disabled and other disadvantaged groups, including the long-term unemployed, back into the labour market and society through a productive activity. In the last two decades, WISEs have become increasingly recognised in many countries, and they now constitute a major focus of policies promoting social enterprise (Nyssens 2006; Cooney *et al.* 2016).

Most WISEs in cluster 5 adopt the NPO legal form, and most have been launched by citizens. They share, broadly, the same type of democratic governance features than the two “entrepreneurial non-profit” clusters analysed before (clusters 6 and 7).

In the other cluster bringing together WISEs (cluster 4), legal forms are much more diverse (NPOs, foundations, limited companies or even informal organisations), but more than 80% of organisations in this cluster have been launched by a parent third-sector organisation or by citizens. If the SE terminates its activity, the net assets are transferred to another SE or NPO with a similar social mission (32%) or to the parent organisation (31%). The distribution of profit is fully prohibited (29%), or profit is distributed to the non-profit parent organisation (31%). It is why we labelled cluster 4 “non-profit-parent-launched WISEs”.

Although the last four clusters (clusters 4 to 7) clearly suggest the existence of two major sub-groups of SEs, i.e. one strongly focusing on work integration (clusters 4 and 5) and another displaying a diversity of other social missions (clusters 6 and 7), all these clusters share enough features to suggest the existence of a deeply rooted “entrepreneurial non-profit SE model”, covering a spectrum of non-profit social enterprises.

CONCLUSION AND AVENUES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The objective of this paper was to test the “international typology of SE models” that we had put forward (see figure 1), basing our analysis on the results of a wide international survey covering 721 social enterprises from 43 countries.

The first and main finding is that three of our four models are strongly supported by the empirical analysis: the existence of a social-business model, a social-cooperative model and an entrepreneurial non-profit model is fully confirmed, as these models clearly emerge from the examination of seven clusters resulting from a hierarchical cluster analysis. Moreover, these three models are found in 39 countries out of 43. So, while SEs are influenced by institutional factors at a macro level (which may contribute to shaping some of their organisational features), these results show that social enterprises do stem from all parts of the economy and can be related to different organisational backgrounds—namely, the non-profit, cooperative and traditional business sectors—that exist in almost all countries.

Secondly, in contrast to the view conveyed by some influential voices highlighting SE as a market solution to a social problem, half of all the surveyed SEs display quite hybrid financial structures, with market resources representing less than 50% of their funding mix. Not surprisingly, those SEs (clusters 5, 6 and 7) generally operate under a non-profit legal form, which enables them to mobilise more public subsidies and more philanthropic resources, including volunteering.

Thirdly, our typology also includes a public or semi-public SE model, whose existence does not appear to be statistically confirmed by the identification of a distinct cluster. However, in clusters gathering work-integration social enterprises (clusters 4 and 5), respectively 11% and 12% of the SEs involve a governmental agency among their founding members. A possible interpretation is that, although they do actively support social enterprises, most public authorities prefer to act as partners—rather than as main entrepreneur—in the creation and management of WISEs.

Another explanation for the absence of a distinct cluster confirming the existence of a public-sector SE model may be linked to the personal perception of the social enterprise phenomenon by local researchers: many of them probably considered *a priori* SEs as private entities by nature, and therefore disregarded public-sector initiatives as potential social enterprises.

We are fully aware of the limitations of the present work. Of course, the lack of a common definition of social enterprise among researchers from so many and so different contexts induced a high degree of heterogeneity in the ways SEs were identified and categorised across countries, as well as in the selection (and the number) of SEs to be covered by the survey. In the absence of a widely accepted and common definition of social enterprise, we do argue, however, that our strategy enables us to take into account and give legitimacy to locally embedded approaches, thus resulting in an analysis encompassing a huge diversity of SE. Our data underline the need to go beyond a conception that would view social enterprises simply as “intermediate organisations”, whose hybridity is shaped by institutional contexts, if we are to better grasp the diversity of SE landscapes. The identification of major SE models helps to delineate the field on common grounds in an international perspective.

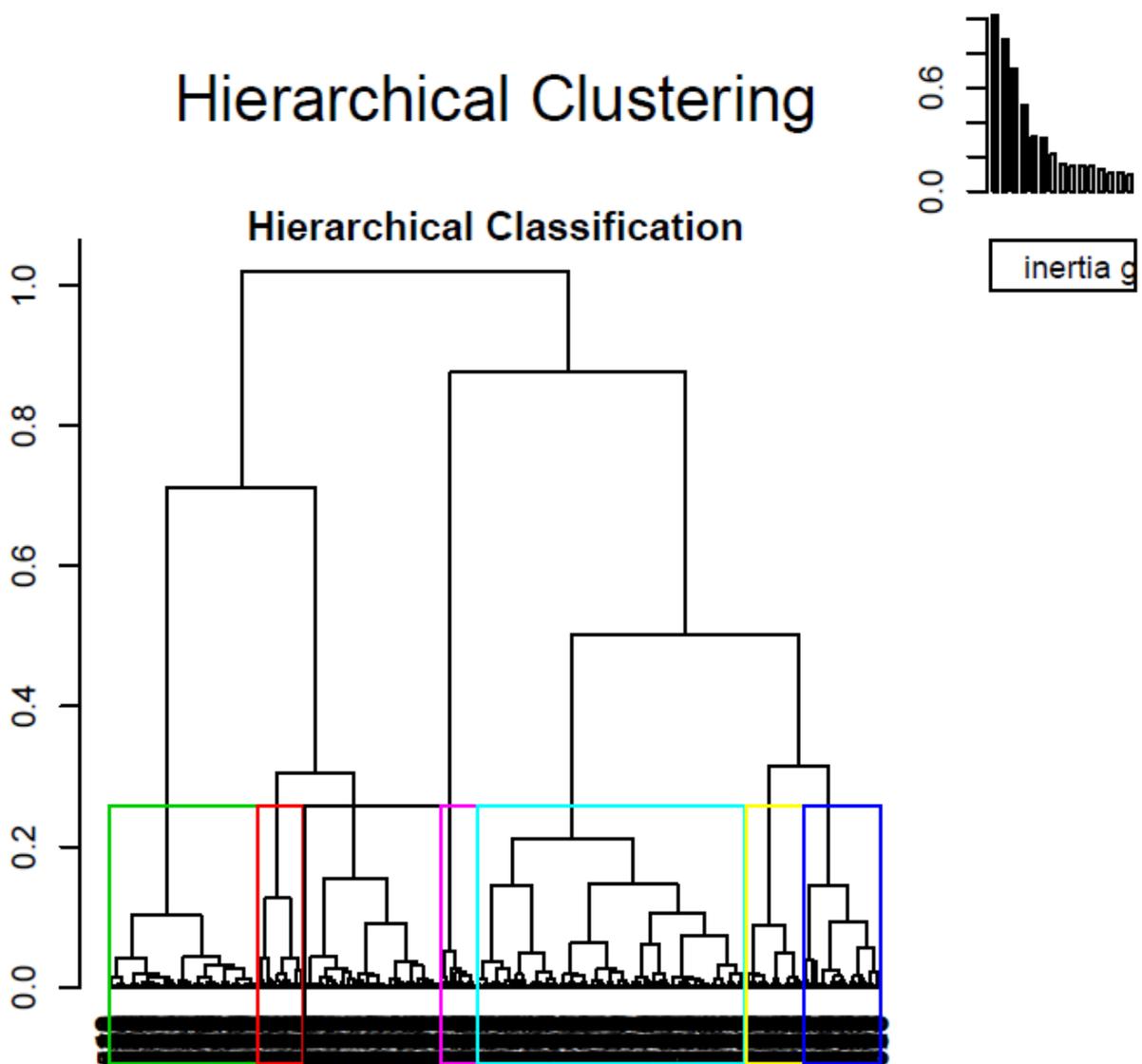
On the basis of the same database or by somehow extending it, it will be possible to explore the diversity of SE models within each world region as well as across regions. It should also be feasible to explore more deeply the governance structure of the various SE models, a dimension that is often ignored or neglected in the literature, despite its importance. Indeed, most SE approaches share the view that social enterprises combine an entrepreneurial dynamic to provide services or goods with the primacy of a social mission. Just as the governance structure of any enterprise can be seen as a set of organisational devices that ensure the pursuit of the organisation’s mission, governance mechanisms in social enterprises appear as devices protecting them from mission drift and as key instruments enabling them to keep a sustainable balance between economic and social goals.

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