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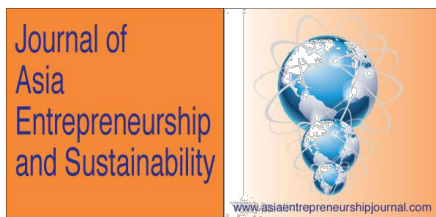
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Social Entrepreneurship as a Cluster Concept: Is a Cricket Farming Start-Up a social enterprise?

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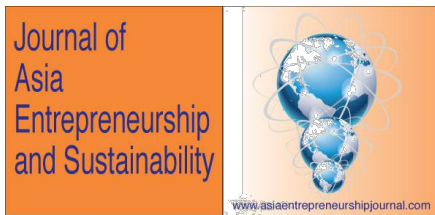
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Abstract

Purpose - The purpose of this study is to add to discussion on conceptualising social entrepreneurship. This paper contributes to the cluster concept of social entrepreneurship proposed by Choi and Majumdar (2014) by drawing on an empirical case study, a Finnish start-up specialized in cricket farming technology and food made from crickets. The case company's mission is to create economic,



environmental value and social value, thus fulfilling the broad definition of social enterprise. However, according to the Finnish law it does not meet the criteria for a social enterprise.

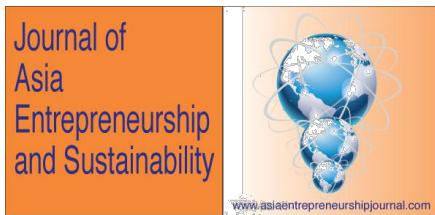
Method - With a case study, this paper elaborates the theoretical framework by examining the applicability of the cluster concept of social entrepreneurship in empirical settings.

Results - This study contributes to social entrepreneurship theory advancement by illustrating how the local economic, social and legal context is to be taken into consideration in parallel with the cluster concept classification.

Conclusions - This study highlights the importance of contextual understanding in advancing the conceptualization of social entrepreneurship.

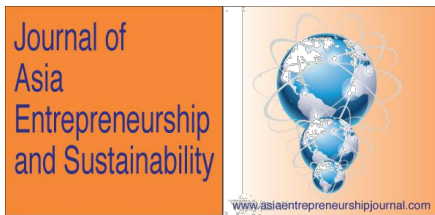
1 Introduction

The phenomenon of social entrepreneurship emerged in response to the need of socially oriented innovative business solutions in the rapidly changing economic, environmental, social and political environment (Bornstein, 2004). The need of social entrepreneurship bore seed in the emergence of volatility and uncertainty in socio-economic and politico conditions across the world, leading to depleting



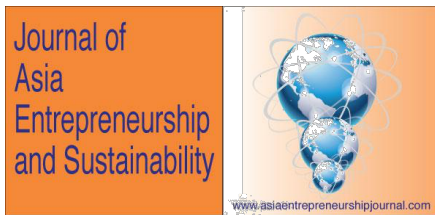
funds for the third sector and the inflating necessity of a paradigmatic change in businesses to make them socially oriented (Bornstein, 2004; Bacq & Janssen, 2011; Phillips et al., 2015). Research on social entrepreneurship is growing steadily and there is myriad of concepts and approaches related to phenomenon (Choi & Majumdar, 2014).

By definition, social enterprises are different from the conventional profit-maximising businesses in how closely the goals and solutions/products/services are aligned to social and environmental impact by marrying managerial efficiency, social innovation, and action for social change (Nicholls & Opal, 2004; Jay, 2013; Sengupta & Sahay, 2017). The umbrella of social entrepreneurship has multiple constructs that come together in different contexts in different combinations to explain the concept of social entrepreneurship (Sengupta et al., 2018): Social value creation, economic value creation, market orientation, double bottom line, triple bottom line, social entrepreneur, social innovation, hybridity, business modelling, scalability, leadership, local embeddedness, and leadership. The criteria that differentiates these enterprises from usual for-profit businesses, is in the priority given to value creation rather than value capture (Santos, 2012); which means that for an enterprise to be a social enterprise, it would be a requisite to align the purposes and solutions towards creation of social or environmental value, through



social innovation, on-ground social-change creation, and management efficiency (Jay, 2013). Since there is no exact definition on what kind of enterprise can be called a social enterprise across the world, irrespective of context (Peredo & McLean, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009), there is always a discussion on what is to be considered as social entrepreneurship and what not.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to social entrepreneurship theory advancement and add to discussion on conceptualizing social entrepreneurship. With an empirical case study, we examine the cluster concept of social entrepreneurship created by Choi and Majumdar (2014), and discuss its applicability in an empirical setting. The cluster concept of social entrepreneurship was developed to address the fundamental problem of social entrepreneurship being a contested concept. The approach of identifying and clustering the key sub-concepts constituting social entrepreneurship was aimed at reducing contestation within the phenomenon and including concepts without which the phenomenon falls apart. This study draws attention to the local contexts and highlights the importance of using the cluster concept in parallel to attention to the local economic, social and legal context.



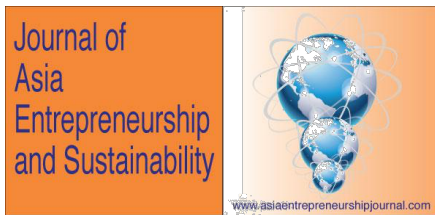
The case company, EntoCube, is a new generation enterprise that addresses sustainable food system in the global climate crisis. The company develops insect farming technology in a climate-controlled environment and produces insect-based food. The company was found to be an interesting case due to be an innovative clean tech enterprise (a pioneer in futuristic insect-based food innovation)ⁱ, a forerunner in the circular economy eco-systemⁱⁱ, seeking to have a note-worthy social and ecological impactⁱⁱⁱ globally. What also makes the company an interesting case company for this research is that as per the Finnish law, EntoCube is not a social enterprise. It is an enterprise that has a business model creating a sustainable solution to the global food problem and supporting farmers associated with the enterprise.

The paper is structured as follows. In the following chapter, we will, first, present the cluster concept understanding introduced by Choi and Majdumar (2014), and then, then review literature on contextual understanding of social entrepreneurship. After briefly presenting the method of the study, we introduce the case company. In the results chapter, we present the case company by using the sub-concepts of the cluster concept of social entrepreneurship. In the discussion, we evaluate the applicability of the cluster concept. We conclude by notions on advancing the

conceptualization of social entrepreneurship and the importance of doing case studies to account for the context in theory development.

2 Theoretical background

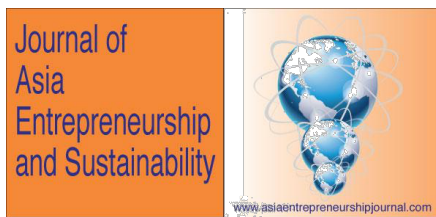
Considering the contested characteristic of the meaning of social entrepreneurship due to contextual diversity, Choi and Majumdar (2014) synthesised past research on social entrepreneurship to explore the contested nature and constructed ‘social entrepreneurship’ as a concept formed by the cluster of five sub-concepts. First sub-concept is ‘social value creation’ that highlights the social mission of the company and the practices with which it provides solutions that address long neglected social issues. Second sub-concept draws attention to the ‘social entrepreneur’ and the entrepreneurial qualities behind the inception of the idea and making a difference in the future of the enterprise, the solution brought to the market, and the social impact of the solution. Third, ‘social enterprise organisation’ refers to the business model and the legal form of the enterprise. Fourth sub-concept is ‘market orientation’, which draws attention to the efficiency in the use of resources, use of market opportunities, effectiveness of operations, and financial sustainability of the operations. The fifth sub-concept is ‘social Innovation’. This refers to innovation and an idea of change. It is integral that the social enterprise



engages in either radical or incremental innovation and seeks to create a change that has a positive impact on social issues.

While many researchers had been addressing the disparities in the field, this contribution of Choi and Majumdar (2014) stands out from earlier research because it synthesises earlier research to provide a definitional foundation which goes ahead of hybridity to propose that it is hardly possible to have a universal definition of social entrepreneurship, and that it will be more helpful to come out of the contestation in the field by perceiving the phenomenon as a conglomerate sub-concepts that may exist at different degrees in a social enterprise context. Theoretical development towards the path of convergence of the sub-concepts would help mitigate the contestation in the field and advance research and practice in this phenomenon. The framework is a universalistic conceptual model that directs, and it draws little attention to the specific operational context of a social enterprise.

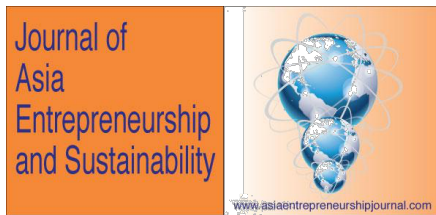
Two decades of research on the social entrepreneurship phenomenon has established the fact that though it broadly signifies the confluence of the sensitivities of the third sector and the dynamics of market principles, what it means depends largely on the context, thereby making it a phenomenon in a context (Sengupta et



al. 2018). The phenomenon is not easily generalised because when it comes to making social change and development for creating social value and social innovation as priority, backed by a market oriented approach, the meaning of social entrepreneurship might change as social issues are not the same in all contexts and the approaches for dealing with those issues are socially, legally, and politically determined (Sengupta & Sahay, 2017; Sengupta et al. 2018); for instance, ‘poverty’ in an emerging economy would be much more elementary and sometimes more menacing than what it would be in a more developed economy (Dietz & Porter, 2012; Sutter et al., 2019). Also, in emerging economies, the social and environmental issues in need of being addressed are very elementary, such as livelihood generation, right to better education, poverty eradication, to name a few (Defourny & Kim, 2011; Dietz & Porter, 2012). Issues to be addressed in developed economies by social enterprises may be different. As per the European understanding of social entrepreneurship, commonly known as EMES (Emergence of Social Enterprise in Europe), ‘social enterprises are not-for-profit private organizations providing goods or services directly related to their explicit aim to benefit the community. They rely on collective dynamics involving various types of stakeholders in their governing bodies, they place a high value on their autonomy and they bear economic risks linked to their activity’ (Defourny and Nyssens, 2008).

In Finland, the legal and policy framework and institutional environment talks about work-integration social enterprises (Defourny & Nyssens, 2010). According to the Act of Social Enterprises in Finland, enacted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, enterprises with at least 30% of the employees being disabled or previously unemployed, are to be identified as social enterprises (Finlex, 2018). At the same time, there is also a Social Enterprise Mark given by the Association for Finnish Work to enterprises whose primary objective is to provide social good, and most of the profits are used for that purpose; not necessarily employing disabled or long-term unemployed people. From the presence of two different institutional structures for identification of social enterprises, it is evident that there is a lack of coherence and unity in Finland on what social entrepreneurship is.

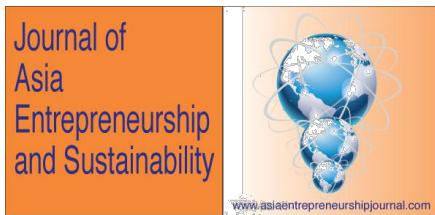
Considering the fact that context has a significant role to play in shaping the meaning of entrepreneurship (Gaddefors & Anderson, 2017), the need for contextualisation of the meaning of social entrepreneurship demands that current researchers go beyond the definitional debates and legal boundaries to explore how to make meaning of a social enterprise within the context it operates and how the



social entrepreneurs' approaches and activities reflect the constructs that come together to form social entrepreneurship.

3 Methodology

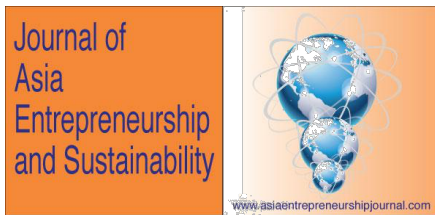
The case study approach was selected to present a story of an enterprise in its context (Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016; Piekkari & Welch, 2017) and to discuss applicability of the cluster concept of social entrepreneurship in an empirical setting. This is a descriptive case study that aims at elaborating a theoretical concept (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014). Thus, the research question is not designed for testing an existing theory for probabilistic generalizability, but to make meaning of a nascent concept in a specific context (Patton, 1990; Gummesson, 2006; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016). The benefit of this approach is that it allows for investigating the general theory and the context simultaneously (Ketokivi & Choi, 2014). The research data comprise an in-depth interview of the CEO of the company, and secondary data in the form of text from company reports and online publicly available information about the company. The interview was recorded and transcribed, and content analysis was used as a method for analysing the data (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2016).



4 Case Entocube

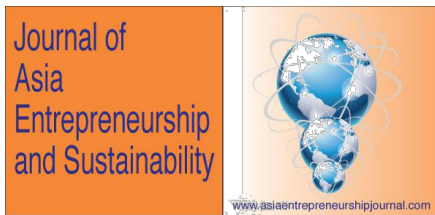
In this chapter, we examine the case company with the cluster concept by Choi and Majumdar (2014). The first sub-concept is social value creation. It draws attention to the ways by which a social enterprise practices a social mission and provides solutions that address long neglected social issues. EntoCube specializes in insect farming solutions and insect food products. It develops a compact technology solution for cricket farming, farms crickets, and sells farmed/processed crickets as edible products under the brand Samu. The products include roasted crickets, cricket granola, and cricket nut mix. With its solution, EntoCube is one of its kind of a clean tech enterprise that introduced food innovation for addressing the growing concern of food scarcity. The food products are produced with a futuristic vision of offering the world a sustainable, viable, high quality, and healthy diet. Insects for food have been an established part of local cuisine in certain cultures for a long time, and while EntoCube may not be a ground breaking from that perspective, it is a first company in the world to provide cricket farming solutions. It has designed a farming solution inside old shipping containers where a climate-controlled farming can be done. Entrepreneurs can use the container for farming cricket and then converting them into edible products in any environmental context in the world.

The second sub-concept is social entrepreneur. It directs attention to the entrepreneurial qualities of the individuals who form the inception of the idea and seeks to make a difference in the future of the enterprise, who create the solution, and the social impact of the solution. In Entocube, the social and ecological contribution envisioned by not just the founder, but the whole team who are interested in providing an alternative, sustainable, and manageable protein source to replace and complement sources of protein with severe impact on climate such as cows. The solution created by the company has a potential to replace meat consumption in the long run. The food products are rich in nutrients and contain all the essential amino acids with a good balance of fats. Also, farming of crickets is environmentally sustainable, convenient, and uses far less resources compared to farming of animals. Twenty kilos of feed and 1500 litres of water is needed for one kilo of cow protein, whereas 1.7 kilos of feed and 1 litre of water is needed for one kilo of cricket protein. Clearly, that gives it the economic and environmental edge, making it a potential alternative to meat, and thereby, addressing food scarcity and the need of innovatively restoring the farming occupation. The organisation is made up of passionate people:



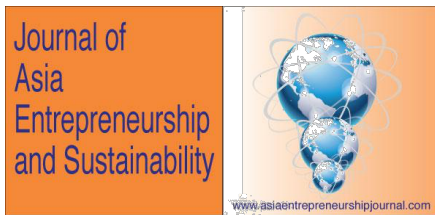
“All members are ideologically involved (...) we have a weird idea and bad salaries (...) one of the team members has been involved with UN projects in Peru and Laos”. (The CEO, 2018)

All members of the organization share the environmentally and socially sound ideology that drives the future food production. They have low salaries and even though they do have structured business logic; they see passion and motivation as the key driving forces for every team member. The company has many interns from universities, and they offer thesis opportunities for the students. The CEO has strong elements of social entrepreneur. This is clear when he discusses the responsibility of the future of own and other children. They want to have an impact in this world, with a business approach that has elements of social value creation and social innovation at the heart of the solution provided to the regional as well as global community. The company’s solution offering for sustainable food production is one possible way to reduce emissions, to move away from meat consumption, and eventually have a radical effect on the climate change. In this whole equation, the role of the entrepreneur has been very important in imagining and developing the business:



“To leave the Earth in a better condition than it was when we got it”. (The CEO, 2018)

The third sub-concept is social enterprise organisation. It directs attention to the business model and the ways by which it enables the combination of social and market oriented approaches, the effectiveness and efficiency of the operations and the financial sustainability of the operations. In EntoCube, the central values, “doing good” and “fairness”, are reflected in the company’s business model. For example, the company is committed to buying all the crickets the farmers are able to produce. This shows that the company appreciates its cricket suppliers and takes responsibility of the farmers and their success. Initially, the idea was to go to developing countries for business and production, and more specifically, to go to countries where consumption of insects has become an established part of local cuisine. That, however, would have meant high cost of running the business, and it would have brought in other practical difficulties associated with technology transfer. So, instead the company decided to aim for a business solution that was relatively less capital intensive, scalable at micro-level, and needed less resources, so as to enable farmers to easily manage and operate the process. With a focus on Western countries as the market, they believed they had a higher prospect of better returns, and that it would be easier to get new products and innovations to markets



due to higher acceptability. Also, they considered that getting a quick feedback about the technology and products was important and that getting feedback from markets closer to home would be easier.

The fourth sub-concept, market orientation, draws attention to the ways by which the company explores market opportunities and assesses the economic feasibility of the solution. Also, the legal form of the enterprise is evaluated with this sub-concept. The board as well as the employees perceived the business as a continuous value creation activity that could give opportunities to bring a social and cultural change in this world. The CEO refers to the importance of creating value that can be measured with both financial outcomes and the societal impact.

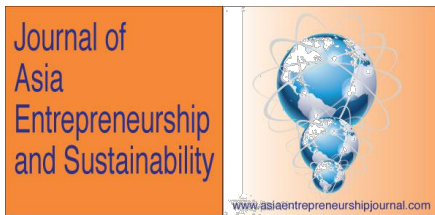
“Usually it’s seen that you need to choose: either doing business or doing good. The way I see it is that the basis of all business is that it creates value. The payment that we get is the compensation about what the company does”. (The CEO, 2018)

For the company, value creation and viable business logic are the ground rules for making a change in the world. In that sense, the company’s market orientation is clearly visible as a driving force in business development. Market orientation practices can be seen in the pricing strategy and customer orientation in business

development, both of which also support their social value creation efforts. In addition, the company is engaged in constructing an efficient and effective ecosystem around the cricket farmers, which in turn offers support and easy access to cricket farming to new farmers. Also, the company has been “actively involved with the public administrators in writing (insect business and insects as a food source) the rules”. The CEO highlights the importance of business logic:

“you always need a business logic so that you can make progress and to make that business scalable” and “the price for kilo of crickets will be at the same level as other competitive daily protein sources”. (The CEO, 2018)

The business goals can be perceived from the perspective of ‘saving the world’ with a sustainable organic solution and as an innovation in the culinary perspective. The mission of the company is “to make sustainable insect food mainstream” while the vision is “to leave the Earth in a better condition than it was when we got it”. The enterprise has a high social, environmental, and economic potential as a for-runner in sustainable protein production. With the climate-controlled farming solutions the company can fight hunger by providing an accessible and affordable way for insect production and by offering an environmentally friendly source of protein to the growing population.



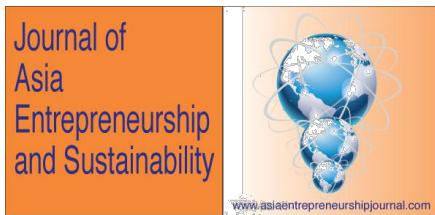
Under the Finnish law, Entocube does not meet the criteria for a social enterprise. Also, it is a privately owned company with a strong intent of becoming both profitable and sustainable business. As a for-profit-company it is different from commercial activities of not-for-profit companies. From the social innovation perspective, which is the fifth sub-concept, Entocube is an innovative start-up company that seeks to reform the existing patterns of food production and consumption (see Dees & Anderson, 2006). The company is engaged in social and environmental problem solving with non-conventional approaches, and thus, is oriented towards social value creation and social innovation.

The cricket-farming solution offers sustainable food production and easy consumption, something that would have a positive impact on climate change. The company offers business opportunities for farmers, especially in Finland, where there are many empty old farms with suitable buildings that can be utilised in cricket farming. Alternatively, farming can also be done in shipment containers that allows for climate control, and thus, allows for farming in any natural environmental condition be it very cold or very hot. There is clear focus on innovative technology and ensuring that the social and economic impact of the business operations is optimal. The company aims at creating new solutions for

farming crickets, and for that, it needed to develop new technology, the climate of regulated and automation driven farming modules. Continuous innovation is a key strategic area as the aim is to develop cricket-farming to the point where the production is automated with a scope of volume and quick scale-up. Once the technology has been developed to the point where the costs are competitive, it will be easier for more people to join in cricket farming as micro-entrepreneurs (cricket farmers). In the Finnish context, technology innovation is an important aspect of social innovation, because advanced innovation can attract governmental funding and create an impact to the society through employment, environment and society.

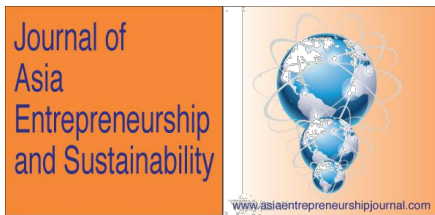
5 Discussion

Using the five sub-concepts in the Choi and Majumdar (2014) cluster concept framework we can summarize that the case company EntoCube as an innovative solution for sustainable food production exudes elements of social entrepreneurship. First, the challenge of working towards sustainability by adopting dual-logics of creating social value while having a sound profitable business logic qualifies the company as a social enterprise. The company's mission to introduce crickets to the public as nutritious food alternative to lead the way for creating a sustainable food ecosystem with built-in circular economy practices aims at creating social value globally.



Second, the company has strong elements in social value creation in the ideological premises that guide entrepreneurial thinking and activities. Third, all members of the company put a strong emphasis on caring for environment, climate and people in challenging environmental and social conditions in the future. Fourth, market orientation is a strong aspect in their business as they are pro-market and for-profit, yet their social innovation is targeted to be effective on a social scale and create social value with the scalable technology. On a smaller scale, the company offers new business opportunities for farmers and anybody that has interest in cricket farming, and therefore, the company creates social value in both developed and developing countries. On a larger scale, their activities and the new technology offer an alternative means for reducing emissions and thus have an impact on climate change. Fifth, the company aims at making a positive social, economic, and environmental change with the help of food innovation.

The sub-concepts are the defining properties of the social entrepreneurship concept. Illustrating cluster concept through this descriptive case study directs attention, first, to the inclusiveness of the cluster concept. The cluster concept argues that if an enterprise exhibits these properties, which may be at varying degrees and combinations in practice (Gallie, 1956; Gaut 2000; Choi & Majumdar, 2014), it would be sufficient to consider it as a social enterprise because of its



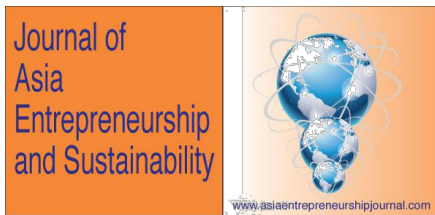
combination of necessary qualities (Choi & Majumdar, 2014). As proposed by the cluster concept, we see here that social value creation, often put as a forefront condition for social entrepreneurship, is not a stand-alone quality, and that it is weaved to other qualities, such as being market oriented, being socially innovative, and having the sensitivities and compassion that is expected from a social entrepreneur and a social enterprise organisation. This opens up avenues for empirically using the cluster concept framework as a representative of the diversity of the social entrepreneurship concept. This also creates scope for using it as a facilitating conceptual tool rather than a constraining one for exploring intrinsic cases that can help researchers delve deeper into what qualities make social entrepreneurship a universal phenomenon and what qualities make it a contextual phenomenon. This has an important policy implication as it can be a facilitator for encouraging policy thinking that can see through how the meaning and implications of a social enterprise goes beyond legal boundaries.

However, this study also shows that the inclusiveness of the cluster concept has its drawbacks as many start-up companies include social value creation in their mission and emphasize doing good for the environment due to the global attention to climate change. Also, entrepreneurs in start up's are typically mission oriented and passionate about their business. In the case firm, responsible organization is

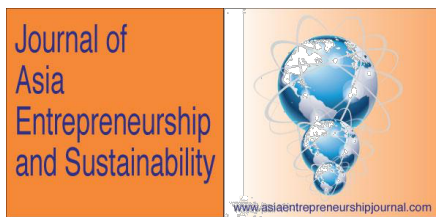
emphasized, yet that alone does not qualify it as a social enterprise. Finally, the company is an innovation start up with a strong focus on clean tech. It's business model does not include elements that would qualify it as social enterprise according to the Finnish law. The cluster concept of social entrepreneurship can be criticized for being too inclusive and abstract to be used as a guideline for identifying what is a social enterprise and what is not.

6 Conclusion

EntoCube is an enterprise with elements that fit in the cluster of social entrepreneurship sub-concepts: social value creation, social entrepreneur, social enterprise organization, market orientation, and social innovation. With this illustrative case, we show how an innovative clean tech start up can be considered as a social enterprise when evaluated with the cluster concept framework. We also show, how the inclusiveness of the cluster concept makes it difficult to draw a line between what is and what is not a social enterprise, particularly in the start up scene. This study shows that it is fruitful to use the cluster concept in parallel to local legal definition of social enterprise. While the cluster concepts draws attention to the multiplicity and richness of the concept at a universal level, the local law brings in the contextual understanding of what accounts as a social enterprise and what does not.

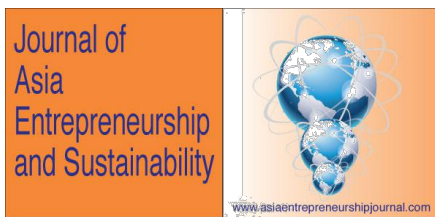


Interestingly, while past research had spoken about the lack of legal identities as a limitation in the social entrepreneurship practice and research in certain emerging economies (Sengupta & Sahay, 2018; Sengupta et al. 2018), this research shows how the existence of a legal identity brings in the contextual understanding about social entrepreneurship. An important future research avenue would be to consolidate conceptual development of the phenomenon with policy drafting and implementation practices. If this emerges as a necessity in a developed country context which is already known to have been an egalitarian society where social welfare had been an integral part of business establishments, it can be assumed that such might be a necessity in emerging and least developed economies as well. More case studies in different contexts using the cluster concept would advance the conceptual development of social entrepreneurship by reflecting on how new-age enterprises in different eco-systems enact social entrepreneurship traits, even though the legal and regulatory norms in certain countries have boundaries of its own.

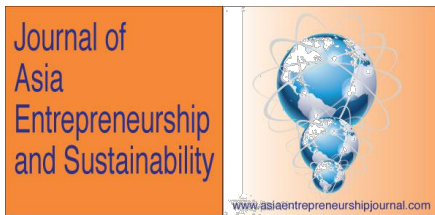


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ⁱ Source: <https://www.myhelsinki.fi/en/business-and-invest/invest/clean-tech-entocube-is-saving-the-world-by-growing-insects-for-food> (accessed on 9th January, 2019)

ⁱⁱ Source: <https://www.sitra.fi/en/cases/new-protein-sources-lead-way-circular-economy/> (accessed on 9th January, 2019)

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: <http://impactiglu.org/entocube-finnish-startup-fights-hunger-by-producing-insects/> (accessed on 9th January, 2019)