

Regional Social Enterprise Ecosystems in India

A Conceptual Framework



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1 Introduction

Social enterprises, defined here as small, for-profit companies with an explicit commitment to social impact through their products and/or employment and sourcing strategies, have the potential to tackle some of India's most pressing challenges. They offer new and innovative ways of providing goods, services and livelihoods opportunities for the poor. In order to flourish, however, these businesses require access to finance and other support. Social enterprises are often riskier than traditional businesses, for example, without, necessarily, the promise of extraordinary returns that might justify a purely financial investment. They might be creating new markets or have to develop new supply channels and other enabling infrastructure. Monitor¹ lays out the range of challenges that the combination of "social" and "entrepreneurial" aims creates.

The context for social business varies across India, and can be particularly challenging in areas with perhaps the greatest need for development-focused innovation. Social enterprises located in and around major metros in India can increasingly rely on a range of support from impact investors, incubators, network platforms, angels, consultants, market access facilitators, and others, as noted in recent reports on the impact investing landscape² as well as the social enterprise landscape³ and market enablers⁴. They exist within a well developed social enterprise ecosystem.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that this social enterprise ecosystem, while impressive, is not reaching beyond these cities. As a response, institutions like the World Bank and the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) have specifically set up funding programmes to finance social enterprises active in other regions. Likewise, sector platforms including Sankalp and Unconvention's Unconvention-Local are undertaking smaller, local events to create awareness and encourage networking in smaller cities.⁵

The interest is important, but we need more information in order to make an impact. We do not know much about social enterprise activity or support outside of the main metros – or the strengths and weaknesses of regional social enterprise ecosystems. This paper draws on recent literature to discuss what we mean when we talk about regional social enterprise ecosystems and their components. We develop a framework with a set of indicators to characterise a regional social enterprise ecosystem. The framework will be applied to develop a series of reports for nine regions across India based on cities where Unconvention-Local hosts one-day events. This is part of a larger long-term effort to understand how Villgro and others interested in strengthening the ecosystems for market-driven innovation in smaller-city and rural India can best do so.

The first part of this paper reviews existing literature to outline a social enterprise ecosystem. We then go on to look at the regional social enterprise ecosystems in India, detailing the components that make up the ecosystem including stakeholders, policy and networks. Next we develop indicators characterising the regional social enterprise ecosystem based on recent work on doing business and innovation system indicators. We briefly discuss the challenge of gathering social enterprise data at the regional level before going on to outline, in detail, the sets of indicators we use for this study, including support, skills and research, communication and collaboration, entrepreneurship, local economy characteristics, and government policy and enablers. We end by discussing the need to connect the dots in the system.

1 Koh et al. 2012

2 Saltuk and Bouri, 2011; Koh, et al. 2012.

3 Allen, et al. 2012.

4 GIZ, 2012.

5 They work alongside existing networks such as the Jagriti Yatra that connects social entrepreneurs from across India through its Yatra and online alumni network platform.

2 Social Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Social entrepreneurship and innovation⁶ are intricately intertwined since successful social enterprises are continuously innovating when starting, growing and scaling their enterprise. They are 'opportunity entrepreneurs'⁷ in that they spot, and choose to fill, an unexplored business or market opportunity with both social and commercial returns. Given the nascent stage of the social enterprise sector and the difficulty in balancing social needs with commercial requirements, many of the challenges entrepreneurs face are innovation challenges. These include the creation of a new product or service, demand for a new product or service, reaching the market, or accessing inputs. Even internal systems such as project and business management and human resources often require innovation to balance social and business objectives in complex market settings.

The literature on innovation suggests that innovation emerges from a system of actors whose interactions, behaviour and patterns of learning are conditioned by institutions.⁸ In other words, innovation does not exist in isolation, but comes about when different kinds of stakeholders – entrepreneurs, academics, civil society, state actors, funders and incubators, to name a few, come together share knowledge, learn from each other and interact. The knowledge sharing and learning and interaction depends on habits and practices – the way things are done.

Innovation systems thinking draws on a number of different schools of thought. It includes the notion that innovation emerges from the destruction of what came before – creative destruction in the words of Schumpeter.⁹ It also emphasises innovation as a process that continuously changes and adapts, based on evolutionary economics. Lastly it recognises the complexity of systems, that is highlighted in systems theory.

Depending on the objective, we can study innovation systems from various macro perspectives, including at the national level¹⁰ (a whole country), within a region, across a sector or for a particular technology or product.¹¹

Studying regional innovation systems is becoming increasingly popular. There are two chief reasons for this: first, innovation and entrepreneurship policies are often implemented at a regional level, second, innovative industries are often based in clusters, or in groups located a short distance from one another, therefore local, rather than national.¹² Studies on clusters and geography of innovation also "emphasise that knowledge generation is dependent on unique and exclusive regional framework conditions."¹³ In other words, regions likely retain certain characteristics and conditions that are distinct from other parts of the country and these variations affect the local as well as broader innovation system.

This is especially true when we look at innovation that relies on a great deal of tacit (or unwritten) knowledge (as opposed to more formalised, written down knowledge)¹⁴ which is likely to be the case for innovating social entrepreneurs.

6 We define innovation as the continuous process of upgrading, using new knowledge or a new combination of existing knowledge. It is new locally rather than new to the world.

7 This is distinct from necessity entrepreneurs who enter into entrepreneurship because of external shocks such as unemployment (Reynolds, 2004 in Lingelbach and de la Vina, 2005)

8 Freeman, 1987; Lundvall, 1992; Edquist, 1997.

9 Schumpeter, 1934.

10 Freeman, 1987; Lundvall, 1992; Nelson, 1993; OECD, 1997.

11 Cooke, 2001; Malerba, 2004; and Carlsson et al. 2002, respectively.

12 Hollander, 2013

13 Boschma, 2005 in Martin, 2012:2.

14 Nelson and Winter, 1982.

Using a systems perspective broadens the analysis to a complex system where agents and their interactions are influenced by institutions, which in turn affect the innovation process. Roles of actors and their relationships often evolve over time.¹⁵ Therefore, the system needs to be flexible enough to evolve with the changing requirements of new networks and partnerships. Within these networks, partnerships grow out of shared values and trust built up over a period of time. Because of the importance of personal networks, individuals rather than organisations often play a vital role. The most effective partnerships are those made up of stakeholders with different knowledge and capabilities so that each can provide something new to others.

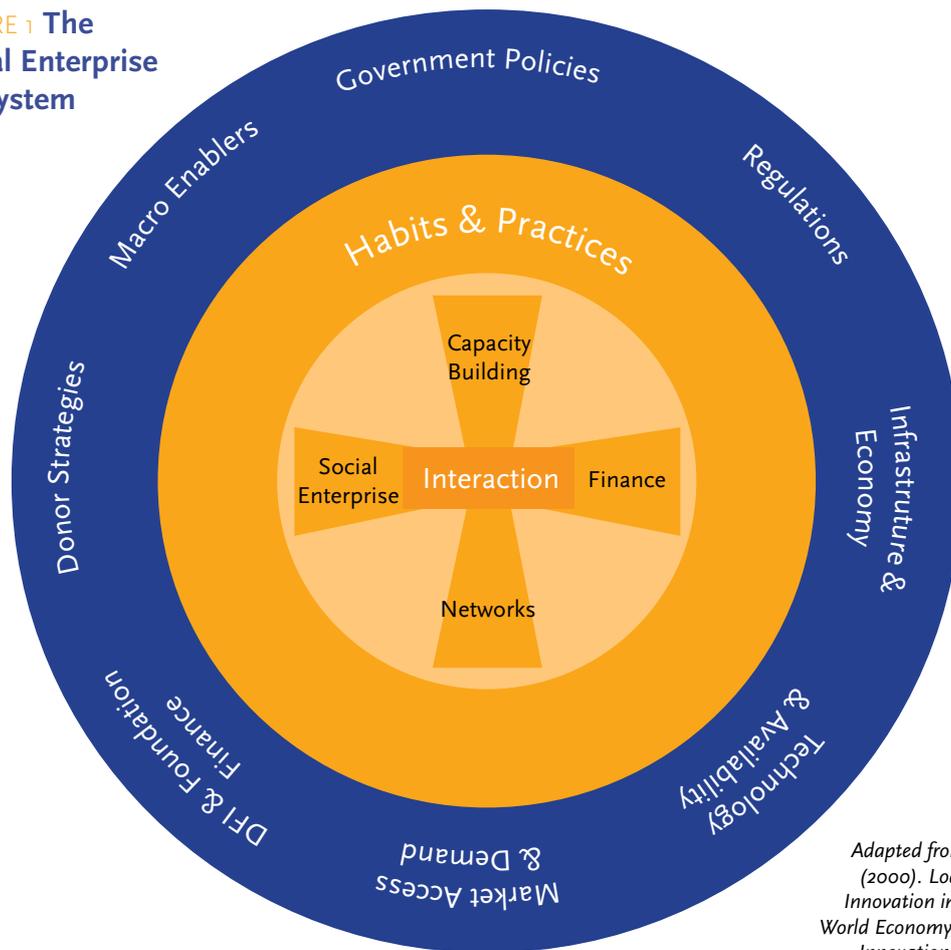
Given the central role of accessing and adopting new knowledge and information, critical reflection and learning are important so that actors can adjust to new challenges or improve the way they are dealing with existing ones as new knowledge and information become available.

To sum up, the innovation systems literature suggests that innovation is not a linear process and does not happen in isolation, but rather, in a system where different components are interlinked and interact in various ways. A system is made up of actors (organisations and individuals), whose actions are governed by soft (habits and practices) and hard (regulations and policies) institutions. Creating links (through networks) between actors is vital so that knowledge and information flow through the system. If the system is enabling, the unobstructed flow of knowledge and information provides the basis for innovation and new knowledge creation in the system. Learning and feedback loops are important ways of improving existing knowledge. The innovation system is complex and evolutionary – changing shape and structure over time as different actors group and regroup in different ways, in response to external and internal factors that influence their behaviour.

An enabling innovation system, then, comprises a **range of different entrepreneurs (at different stages and in different sectors)** and a **range of support organisations offering varied but complementary financial and non-financial support**, enabling social enterprises to grow, collaborate and innovate. **Networks and platforms allow actors to connect** easily. **Government policies at a local, state and national level** encourage, incentivise and support social entrepreneurs, and innovation within the social enterprise sector. Additionally, governing behaviour is the culture and context of the place where the ecosystem is located – **the habits and practices and unwritten rules, that may make it easier or harder (in general, or for specific groups of the population)**, to be entrepreneurs and gain access to resources and support. If the ecosystem is open and flexible, it is likely to be more inclusive of different kinds of entrepreneurs by keeping barriers to entry low. Enabling policies encourage learning from and between different actors in the ecosystem, as well as knowledge sharing.

¹⁵ Clark et al., 2003; Hall et al., 2004.

FIGURE 1 The Social Enterprise Ecosystem



Adapted from Mytelka, L. (2000). Local Systems of Innovation in a Globalized World Economy, Industry and Innovation, Vol. 7, No. 1.

When an ecosystem is not enabling, there may be serious gaps in the support offered to entrepreneurs, hindering their growth and progress. There may be barriers to accessing support (such as centralised or city focused policies), and entrepreneurs may work in isolation from each other and therefore be less likely to share knowledge and learn from one another.

The next section describes the contours of the social enterprise ecosystem in India, using this framework.

3 India's Social Enterprise Ecosystem

We define India's "social enterprise ecosystem" as the collection of entrepreneurs as well as support organisations that use financial and non-financial methods to support entrepreneurs including social entrepreneurs. There are also a number of organisations funding and improving the infrastructure of the ecosystem – access to finance at a sector level, access along value chain or to markets, for example. Government policy is another important actor as stated policy priorities and existing programmes can be important enablers.

A limited number of studies in recent years have considered the social enterprise and impact investing ecosystem from various perspectives. Intelcap mapped the landscape of social enterprises in India, noting the main sectors, types of support, legal status and challenges facing enterprises along their progress from ideation to growth and scale (including access to finance and to human resources). GIZ surveyed the support system for social enterprises in India, in particular mapping the incubator and impact investment landscape. IIT-M focussed on the tension and convergence between the social and commercial goals of impact investing in the 2013 India Venture Capital and Private Equity Report. Lastly, Monitor has provided an analysis of the innovation process from ideation (or blueprint) to scale of social enterprises across Africa and Asia, and the challenges that social entrepreneurs face at each stage.¹⁶

Outside of India, UK's Overseas Development Institute (ODI) has written a report broadly surveying social impact support across emerging economies through a pilot study. The ANDE network surveyed the social enterprise ecosystem in East Africa, with a special focus on incubation support, and has more recently produced a toolkit for enterprise ecosystem analysis.¹⁷

The Center for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CSIE) of the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) in Chennai keeps an online record of stakeholders in the social enterprise ecosystem in India.¹⁸ For the purpose of this study, and based on existing reports and materials, the stakeholders that make up the social enterprise ecosystem in India can broadly be covered in the following categories: social enterprises, support organisations, knowledge providers, and networks, enablers and policy makers. Below we consider each of these in more detail, followed by a discussion on the importance of the local context.

3.1 Social Entrepreneurs

Social entrepreneurs are distinct from conventional entrepreneurs in that they combine commercial goals with social aims. In India, as in other emerging economies, that social aim is generally a product or service targeting poor and/or marginalised communities. These underserved markets and consumers are often hard to reach, and social entrepreneurs frequently face having to create both value chains and market access, even new markets – considerable challenges. At the same time, they measure success in terms of social impact. An enabling ecosystem therefore needs to cater to both the commercial and social parts of a social enterprise – creating a business climate in which entrepreneurs can start and grow, but also provide support for the specific social ('doing good') aspects.

Furthermore, social entrepreneurs are diverse. They work in a range of sectors (e.g. energy, health, education, agriculture), offer different kinds of products and/or services and range in size from a one-man-band to organisations with a large number of staff and established organisational structures and processes.

Business models vary across the spectrum from non-profit to for-profit companies. While the latter would fund operations through private sector income, the former may rely on grants as part of

¹⁶ Allen et al. 2012; GTZ, 2012; Rajan, 2013. and Koh et al. 2012.

¹⁷ Whitley et al, 2013, ANDE, 2012 and 2013.

¹⁸ See <http://csie.iitm.ac.in/SEandSupport.html>

its income. Yet others operate hybrid models, internally cross-subsidising certain non-profit activities with income from profit-making areas. In the same vein, some social enterprises place social impact at the very core of the business, while others rely on indirect social impact, focusing, instead, primarily on the commercial success of the venture as a means to sustain long-term impact.

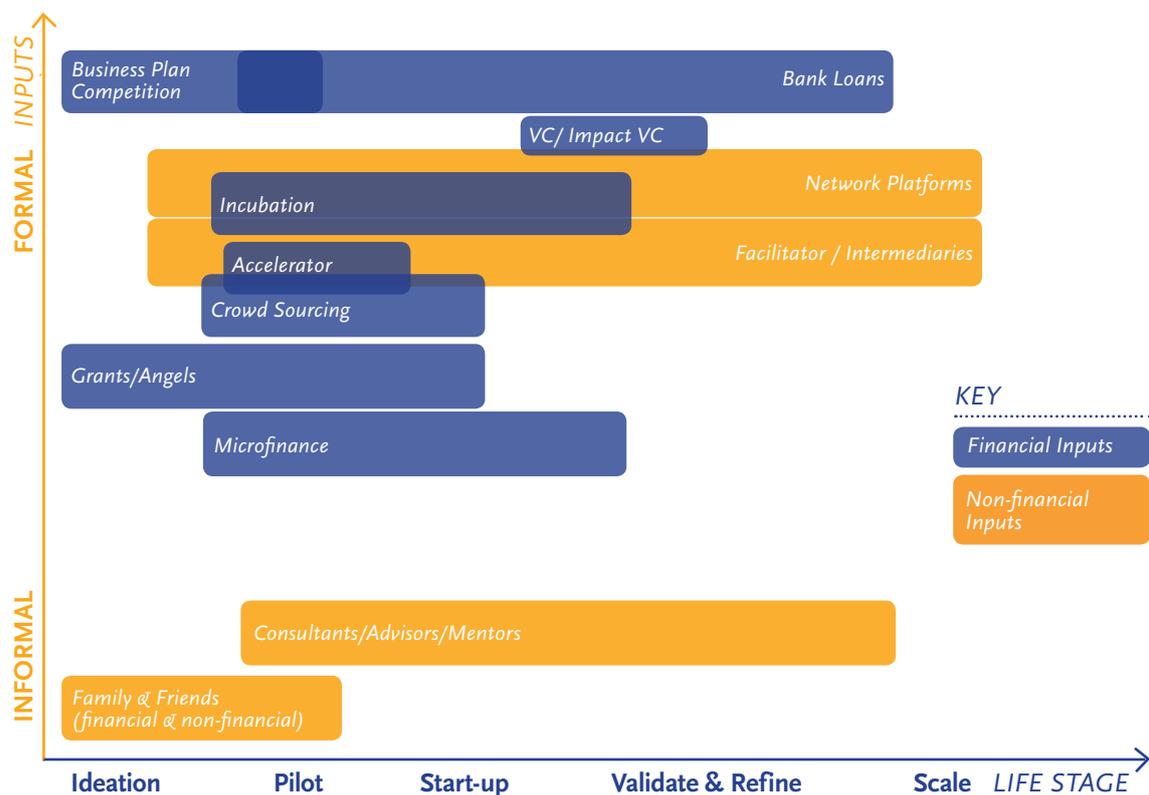
Lastly, a social enterprise, like any other enterprise or NGO, requires different support at different stages of its business life- from the ideas stage to prototyping and piloting, starting out, and scaling.

Taken together, this means that the social enterprise ecosystem not only needs to contend with the challenges of supporting both social and commercial goals. The ecosystem also needs to adapt and provide support for a range of different kinds of social enterprises, operating across distinct sectors, and at different stages of the enterprise business cycle.

3.2 Support Organisations

Different social entrepreneurs require different kinds of support. For instance, depending on the core activity of the enterprise, the sector, the stage of development and the existing internal capacities. The range of support organisations that make up the social enterprise ecosystem provide both financial and non-financial support.

FIGURE 2 Financial and Non-financial Support by Life Stage



Business plan competitions are common entry points for social enterprises looking for funding. At the ideation and pilot stages, incubators and accelerator programmes offer hands-on support to create, improve or test a viable business model. While incubator support is mostly non-financial advice, training and know-how, some also provide small grants or the possibility to access loans. Social enterprises generally use their own savings when starting out, or borrow from family and friends. However, when they reach a point where they need more funding in order to accelerate investment, many turn to impact investors, or angels.

Social enterprises may rely on alternative financial support such as microfinance or money-lenders at the early stage, as well as bank loans. However bank loans are relatively hard to come by, especially for new social enterprises without assets.

The support organisations that make up the social enterprise ecosystem can be broadly divided into two groups: those that directly work with social enterprises, and those that work to strengthen the ecosystem, therefore indirectly supporting social enterprises while playing an important role.

The different kinds of support tools they use are summarised below.

TABLE 1 Types of Support¹⁹

Tool	Explanation	Organisation
Financial		
Grant	Provided with no requirement to reimburse the donor.	Donors, Governments, Philanthropy, Incubators, Business Plan Competitions
Debt	Money or goods borrowed at stated interest rate for a fixed term on a secured or non-secured basis.	Banks, Microfinance, Incubators (also facilitated by VC)
Equity	Purchasing shares of stock in anticipation of income from dividends and capital gains, alongside voting and residual rights (share of profits or assets if the company fails).	VC, Angel, Incubator
Guarantees & Insurance	Guarantees to take on debt should the borrower default (in the form of grant or debt), lender or third-party insurance on debt.	Facilitated by VC, Incubators
Non-financial		
Business Support	Assistance with finance, management, systems and processes, routes to market, R&D, governance, legal issues, strategic advice and business planning, business model development and technical development.	VC, Incubator, Facilitator/Consultant, Business Plan Competitions
Payment of Third Party Services	For professional services to be delivered through a third-party contract.	Incubator
Network Access	Providing connections to investors, potential collaborators, customers or others offering support.	Network Platforms, Facilitators, Incubators
Human Capital (Fellow/Mentor)	Fellowship or internship schemes offering short-term solutions to staff shortage, or senior management with an advisory role pro bono or at a cheap rate.	Incubators, Fellowships, Facilitators
CSR/Work in Kind	Large corporates providing management or operations support (e.g. creating HR policy) in kind as part of CSR activities.	Corporates

Note: draws on reports by ODI (Whitley, 2013) and GIZ (2012).

19 Not including funding from founding team or friends and family.

3.3 Knowledge Providers

Organisations and institutions that provide knowledge and capacity building are primarily from academia and consulting.

Universities across India, such as IIT-M, The Indian Institute of Management- Ahmedabad (IIM-A), the Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI) and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), teach courses on entrepreneurship, incubate student social enterprises, hold business plan competitions and undertake social enterprise research. Some universities have social enterprise societies and the national student social enterprise conference and network was started by students at XLRI.

While social enterprise research in India is still at a nascent stage, and most of the university-based social enterprise activities are operating separately from the core of the social enterprise ecosystem, academia has potential to be a hub for social enterprise activities, especially outside of the metros. Furthermore, since academia in India has not yet undertaken a great deal of research or capacity building in social enterprise, there is ample space for other knowledge providers in the ecosystem to do so, as evident from the emergence of a range of consultancies offering research (for instance, Monitor and Dalberg) and capacity building (such as Technoserve).

3.4 Networks, Enablers and Policy

One additional set of organisations work to strengthen the ecosystem and shape the way stakeholders interact, rather than directly supporting social entrepreneurs. These include network platforms and forums, macro enablers including international foundations and development agencies supporting infrastructure and programmes, and the government.

3.4.1 Network Platforms and Market Access

Network platforms such as the Sankalp Forum and the Unconvention Local series offline, and the Artha Platform online, seek to connect disparate parts of the ecosystem. Other ecosystem enablers provide access to markets (such as Idobro) or actively link philanthropy funding to the social enterprise ecosystem (Dasra), for example.

3.4.2 Macro Enablers

At the macro level, international development agencies (such as GIZ, DfID and USAID), development finance organisations such as the World Bank, and private foundations are investing to improve the infrastructure of the ecosystem, finance large scale support programmes in under-served markets (e.g. World Bank's Development Market Place) or invest in research to inform policy and practice, and capacity building.

3.4.3 Government Policy and Programmes

The Government of India plays a crucial role in shaping policies and regulations affecting the ecosystem. There are national policies for social innovation such as the Inclusive Innovation Fund run by the National Innovation Council.

The National Innovation Council has in turn set up State Innovation Councils. In Bihar, for instance, the Bihar Government is sponsoring the Bihar Innovation Forum together with the World Bank, and it is being organised and run by the Bihar State Innovation Council in cooperation with the Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (JEEViKA).

There are also Sectoral Innovation Councils. These are not necessarily explicitly focused on social innovation, but do intend to support innovators focused on issues deemed to be important for India's development.

3.5 Local Context and Dynamics

The local economy and culture affects the social enterprise ecosystem and the way it develops. For instance, a local culture of entrepreneurship is likely to be more conducive to social entrepreneurship than a culture that favours a 'job for life' in government or for a large corporate firm. However, where commercial entrepreneurship is accepted, there may still be a cultural bias against social entrepreneurship because, for example, it is associated with civil society and a lack of income.

In the same vein, the existence of a few social enterprises may encourage the establishment of additional social enterprises, leading to a cluster, which can reap benefits of scale and scope if there is an open environment of collaboration and communication. A cluster may also result in healthy competition, driving innovation.

The level of literacy and the skill level in the local labour market both affect the formation of social enterprises as well as their ability to find qualified local staff. Specific customer needs or demands may shape the products or services on offer in a certain region, as may be the case with the natural resources available locally.

Easy access to markets, including business towns and road networks has an impact on the ability of social enterprises to scale up, as does the availability of electricity and internet access, for instance. Likewise, the willingness and inclination of customers to test new products or services affects the enterprises' ability to establish themselves in a new markets. Related to this is also perceived local demand and need. A classic example in the context of India is toilets: provided across India at low cost and perceived by outsiders (whether government, NGOs or individuals) to be vital, we still find thousands of abandoned toilets across the country because those receiving support in installing or building toilets do not necessarily see them or their maintenance as a priority.

Having set out our understanding of the social enterprise ecosystem in India, the next section will consider indicators and parameters that can be used to characterise regional social enterprise ecosystems and thus identify gaps to be met.

4 Characterising the Ecosystem: Indicators

We have mapped out the social enterprise ecosystem actors and components. To improve our understanding of the quality of a social enterprise ecosystem, and to be able to compare different ecosystems, we need a set of indicators to look for in each regional ecosystem. These may include the kind, range, quality and quantity of actors that exist and the policies and contexts that shape the way they interact and ‘do’ things. It is important to look at the extent to which the ecosystem is able to support social entrepreneurship and innovation. Does it enable knowledge and information sharing? Is collaboration encouraged? Is it an open or closed ecosystem- e.g. is it easy to gain entry?

This research project does not attempt to aggregate ecosystem indicators into a normative single benchmark or “index” of potential for social-enterprise-driven innovation. As discussed above, the success of the innovation system in generating applicable solutions to local development challenges involves various interactions between components. These interactions complement aggregation – the impact of a particular aspect of the local ecosystem is contingent upon the state of other actors. We also believe that the dashboard, disaggregated approach is most appropriate to achieve the goal of documenting the range of gaps that may be present in social enterprise ecosystems outside of India’s major metros so that donors, policymakers, investors, and other stakeholders can focus their efforts to contribute to the social enterprise ecosystem. The dashboard approach allows us to present relevant information to a range of potential supporters who may be able to offer different scales and types of support ranging from financial to mentoring to sharing of distribution channels and other contributions

4.1 Examples of Indicators for Doing Business and Innovating

There is no existing literature on indicators to characterise social enterprise ecosystems. We therefore study two related areas: ‘Doing Business’ indicators aimed at describing the context for small and/or new businesses and Innovation Indicators that characterise the flow and production of new knowledge and combinations of knowledge.

4.1.1 Doing Business Indicators

The World Bank’s Doing Business indicators are well known indicators for small and medium enterprises and start-ups. Doing Business indicators compare the ease of starting, and running, an enterprise across different countries. While some indicators, such as taxation, is directly related to the regulatory environment, others, such as electricity supply are less direct, but nevertheless have a great impact on the ability to execute business.

Methodologically, ‘Doing Business’ relies on two sets of data: one is carefully studying the rules and regulations of the country governing areas related to starting and running a business to determine the kind and the quantity of regulations required for undertaking a business related task. The second set of data measures the efficiency with which one can achieve the policy and regulatory aims.²⁰

BOX 1 Doing Business Indicators

The Doing Business indicators cover areas such as “measures of regulations for starting a business, dealing with construction permits, getting electricity, registering property, accessing credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency” (World Bank, 2013).

20 World Bank, 2013.

4.1.2 Innovation System Indicators

A separate set of indicators attempt to measure innovation, the propensity to innovate, and the way countries enable innovation.

Researchers at INSEAD have developed a Global Innovation Index. The set of indicators measure innovation capacity across different countries. Innovation capacity here refers to a country's 'innovation efficiency' e.g. the efficiency and effectiveness of a country's innovation system for "accessing, anchoring, diffusing creating and exploiting innovation."²¹ The Innovation Efficacy Index indicators measure the extent to which "different components and networks within an innovation system work together to achieve both individual and collective goals."²² In other words, it measures indicators of an innovation system in relation to their importance in the local context. Using five system functions: innovation access, anchor, diffusion creation and exploitation, the researchers compile a list of input and output indicators for innovation capacity (see Box 2).

While these input and output indicators go much beyond what we would like to see for a social enterprise ecosystem analysis, they provide a good starting point for picking those that are most relevant to this study, and thinking of alternatives to other areas or functions of the social enterprise ecosystem not covered here.

Separately, NESTA has discussed the broader conditions for an enabling innovation system in the UK, and developed a framework for thinking about sectoral innovation capability across nine sectors in the UK.²³ NESTA compiled 35 indicators grouped by seven conditions for a favourable innovation system, including Public Research, Openness (innovation diffusion and absorption), Entrepreneurship, Demand, Competition, Access to Finance, and Skills (see Box 3 below).

BOX 2 Input and Output Indicators for Innovation Capacity

The Access input indicators include: internet users, total broadband per 100 people, extent of business internet use, prevalence of trade barriers and infrastructure. The Access output indicators are: value chain presence, breadth of international markets, and presence of advanced service providers. The Anchoring innovation indicators are: days for starting a business, dealing with license, political stability, regulatory quality, protecting investors, foreign ownership, while the Anchoring output indicators include: prevalence of FDI, presence of clusters, royalties paid and inward skilled migration. Further, the Diffusion input indicators comprise: literacy rates, quality of education system, availability of scientists and engineers, extent of staff training, E-participation index, local availability of specialised research and training services, gross capital formation, while the Diffusion output indicators include: firm level technology adoption, technology awareness, manufacturer and ICT goods imports, and production process sophistication. Creation input indicators are: company expenditure on R&D, IPR, quality of scientific research institutions and enrollment in doctoral programmes, and researchers in R&D, while the output indicators include: scientific publishing, patents filed, trademarks, business formation, tertiary graduates. Lastly, the Exploitation indicators include: venture capital availability, quality of management schools, local equity market access, government procurement, entrepreneurship and gross private capital flows, while the Exploitation output indicators comprise: goods exports, service exports, creative goods and services, GDP per capita, industry and service value added.

Source: Mahroum (2012).

21 Mahroum, 2012: 2.

22 Ibid, 2012:7.

23 2009a and 2009b, respectively.

4.2 Data Sources for Indicators

A number of sources provide national level data on enterprises (number of new businesses) and their ability to do business (time taken to start a business), on research output (patents and paper publications), on local context (GDP) and so forth. The data derives from existing statistics as well as ease of doing business surveys and innovation surveys.

In the EU, the European Innovation Scoreboard, now the Innovation Union Scoreboard, collects indicators for innovation across Europe. The scoreboard predominantly uses national level figures, and is based on existing statistical data sets together with the Community Innovation Survey- a large-scale survey of innovating firms across the EU. The Regional Innovation Scoreboard emerged more recently and is based on the country level scoreboard

but uses a smaller set of indicators and a smaller number of countries as there is much less data on regions. In fact, “the key challenge to any regional benchmarking study is the availability of data.”²⁴ The regional data then comes partially from the innovation survey and partially from Europe’s Eurostats – the statistics agency.

NESTA discusses the ability to measure innovation conditions at a country level in the UK, using a range of existing statistical sources, including Eurostat, OECD Main Science and Technology database, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, European Enterprise Survey, Erawatch, Eurostat’s science, technology and innovation database, Scopus database, Higher Education Business and Community Surveys, as well as surveys by Eurobarometer. The point to make here is that much of the data that is used already exists and it is a matter of deciding which proxy data to use for each indicator. For instance, for research and innovation output, proxies such as R&D, business expenditure on R&D, Government budget R&D can be used together with output indicators such as academic publications, patents or spin-offs.

It is clear that there are few existing data sources for regional social enterprise ecosystem indicators. We therefore need to complement the few existing sources with our own mapping and data gathering process. In this section we discuss the relevance of each indicator to the components that make up the ecosystem. We also consider the kind of data we will collect for each indicator and through what means we will collect the data.

Given the lack of existing quantitative data for regional social enterprise ecosystems, as well as the very context-specific and heterogeneous nature of regional ecosystems’ challenges and characteristics, much of the data we collect is qualitative in nature. For instance, only providing the number of government schemes or number of banks supporting social entrepreneurs is unlikely to give us an idea of the usefulness or ease of access of those schemes.

BOX 3 Indicators for a Favourable Innovation System

The Public Research indicators include: quality, accessibility and relevance of public research, measured by citations, publications, commercial exploitation, patents and level of collaboration with non-academic actors. Openness comprises: openness to foreign ideas, social capital, broadband penetration, speed and price, and business satisfaction with ICT infrastructure. Entrepreneurship includes attitudes towards risk of business failure and early stage entrepreneurial activity. Competition indicators comprise intensity of local and foreign competition. Demand include consumer confidence index, demand as an innovation source, firm-level technology absorption, inclination to buy innovation and uncertainty of demand as an obstacle to innovation. Skills comprise expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, the share of population with tertiary education, percentage of high-skilled workforce, researchers in industry, adaptability of workforce, employees’ ICT skills, availability and usage of training for innovators, and participation in life-long learning.

Source: NESTA, 2009 a, b.

24 Hollander, 2013

A further point to note is that some indicators are not specifically focused on social enterprises, but take a broader view, including conventional start-ups and/or NGOs. This is because we want to understand the potential for creating a social enterprise ecosystem where one does not exist. Such indicators include vibrant start-up and civil society environments, as well as the availability of higher education institutions involved in entrepreneurship.

Lastly, each of the indicators and conditions exist within a system and are therefore interlinked and influence one another. For instance, education and skills underpin to some extent the propensity to be entrepreneurial, and government schemes are mentioned under the enabling government condition, but also belong in the support category.

4.3 Indicators Characterising Regional Social Enterprise Ecosystems²⁵

So what does this mean for regional social enterprise ecosystems? Based on the analysis of the components of social enterprise ecosystems in section three and the overview of indicators and conditions above, we provide a set of indicators for each of the components below. Here, the 'region' is broadly defined as city-centric with the city together with a radius of 2-3h travel, including nearby and obvious business hubs. Based on this broad definition, we will define each 'region' on a case-by-case basis.

As a starting point for the regional ecosystem, we find the functional model of innovation depicting necessary conditions or elements from NESTA useful. It highlights seven conditions, including public research, skills, access to finance, openness, competition, demand and entrepreneurialism.

Drawing on NESTA's work we depict the ecosystem based on functional areas.

FIGURE 3 Conditions of Social Enterprise Ecosystem



Adapted from NESTA, 2009a.

²⁵ This section draws heavily on NESTA (2009a) and its depiction of conditions for UK innovation

First, the creation, adoption or adaptation of knowledge (innovation); second, the entrepreneurial ability that turns an opportunity into a product or service; third, the (natural) selection of social enterprises through market mechanisms such as competition and demand but also the impact of local characteristics; and fourth, the mobilisation of resources to turn an entrepreneurial opportunity and new knowledge into reality through skilling, capacity building and support of entrepreneurs, both financial and non-financial.

We adapt these conditions for the components we find to be important, grouped as support (financial and non-financial), research and skills, communication and collaboration, entrepreneurship, and the local economy. We also draw on the Doing Business indicators to add the government's role as a dimension – whether policies, programmes, and implementation are enabling or not.

We describe each of these elements of the ecosystem below, and highlight relevant indicators. Using these, we can analyse the strengths, weaknesses and gaps in regional social enterprise systems and in turn hone in on possible future interventions in a systematic manner. We end with discussing the system as a whole and the need to connect the dots within it.

4.3.1 Support

Support, especially financial, is cited by social entrepreneurs as the major barrier to progress for Indian social enterprises.²⁶ At the early stage of the enterprise it is particularly hard to access finance given the high risk and uncertainty coupled with a lack of tangible assets that enterprises face. Once savings or funding from friends and family run out, it can be incredibly difficult to continue operating and grow a social enterprise. This is where the broader social impact support organisations such as seed and venture capital investors, angels, incubators and business plan competitions play a vital role in injecting funds. However, social entrepreneurs generally require a great deal of non-financial support too – capacity building, management advice, improved business plans and networking, for example, and many of the support organisations provide a mixture of financial and non-financial support. Non-financial support is a way of reducing the risk (of default) of the financial support. We also include local organisations that may offer support to social enterprises, such as microfinance, civil society organisations and CSR programmes here. To sum up, access to financial and non-financial support is a key driver for social entrepreneurship.

A vibrant social enterprise ecosystem usually includes a number of organisations offering various types of financial and non-financial support for entrepreneurs as they start and grow their enterprises. The first task then is to find out what kind of support organisations exist regionally and how they support social enterprises.

The first set of indicators therefore asks whether there are financiers (investors and angels), incubators and accelerators and banks that lend to social enterprises. We also ask about their focus and current activity. We find out whether there is non-financial support to complement funding, such as putting together a business plan or advice on strategy. This may include both organisations and individual mentors playing an important role regionally. One way to enter the social enterprise ecosystem and gaining the attention of support organisations is to participate in a business plan competition, so the next indicator looks at the number of such competitions available and who they target (such as students or working professionals, or perhaps existing entrepreneurs; are those schemes specifically regional in focus or perhaps while located locally, includes competitors from across the country, therefore not necessarily focusing on the regional ecosystem).

Lastly, we want to know if there are other types finance flowing into the social enterprise ecosystem through philanthropy and CSR activity. Here we list current CSR programmes and note the potential of CSR funding by listing the presence of any top 100 companies and their expected CSR spend. This is particularly interesting in regions where there is little in the way of existing social

26 Allen et al. 2012

enterprise ecosystem, but where other kinds of related organisations may suggest that a vibrant ecosystem could emerge with the help of organisations and initiatives that are currently operating in related areas.

TABLE 2 Support Indicators

Indicator	Description	Feasible Metric	Data Collection Process
Investors and Angels	Existence of financial support organisations (investors, angels)	List investors and angels investing in 1) social enterprises 2) conventional enterprises locally. # of deals done in 1 & 2.	Mapping: desktop research, preliminary interviews
Incubators/ Accelerators	Existence of incubators/ accelerators	List of incubators/accelerators; work focus, # local incubatees.	Mapping: desktop research, preliminary interviews
Banks: ease of access to loans	Existence of banks lending to social enterprises; conventional enterprises	List of banks lending to SEs; # SE and micro entrepreneur lending schemes by banks. MSME lending by district.	Mapping: desktop research, preliminary interviews
Support Services and Mentors	Other kinds of support – non-financial (strategy, management, pro bono, reasonable service providers) from the private sector and civil society. Existence of persons working/acting as local mentors.	List of organisations/individuals offering support; type of support	Mapping: desktop research, preliminary interviews
Business Plan Competitions	Existence of business plan competitions	# and type of competitions in last 2 years, organisers; target audience. Number of applicants and change in that number over time. Applicants across sectors.	Mapping: desktop research, preliminary interviews
CSR and Philanthropy	Existence of CSR initiatives involved in supporting social enterprises	List of companies with significant CSR presence. List of major companies that would potentially have great presence. Note public commitment to support SE.	Mapping: desktop research, preliminary interviews.

4.3.2 Skills and Research

The availability of skilled human capital has been highlighted by Indian social enterprises as a critical factor, and a major challenge (Allen et al., 2012). We can divide skills and local capacity into three types:²⁷ *Specialised knowledge* for creating new knowledge and innovating social enterprise products, services and business models in a challenging environment; *Vocational skills* that can be applied in a social enterprise – people with the right skills to work in an entrepreneurial environment straddling both for profit and social objectives; *Education level* and literacy rate in general are important for three reasons: the ability to find potential employees with the capacity to train on the job, the awareness of potential consumers of what is available as well as the ability to seek out what they need, and the general level of education and literacy within the ecosystem impacts how knowledge and new information flows and is taken up, or absorbed, within the ecosystem.

Further, local capacity for research can provide regional social innovators and entrepreneurs with a regional source of external knowledge, and specialised capacity they may not have within the enterprise. Here, knowledge can be both new-to-the-world ‘technologies’ as well as research improving our understanding of the local environment – mapping exercises of customers, government programmes or local characteristics, for instance. For both skills and research, local higher education institutions play a vital role, and can be important knowledge hubs for the regional ecosystem.

The higher education institutions provide two sets of inputs: capacity building, or skilling, through teaching and mentoring, and new knowledge, through research. We therefore want to know the number of local higher education institutions that undertake programmes or courses in social enterprise. We also want to know the number of institutions that host other types of social enterprise activities such as business plan competitions, mentoring, capacity building workshops or seminars for local social enterprises.

The local capacity and quality of workforce is important so we also look at the number of schools that exist locally with programmes in engineering, biology, agriculture, health and other core sectors important to social enterprise activity.

TABLE 3 Skills and Research Indicators

Indicator	Description	Metric	Data Collection Process
Higher Education Institutions with SE course	Existence of HE with courses in social enterprise and related fields.	List of business schools, engineering colleges and other HE institutions in area with SE courses/programmes.	Desktop research: number of institutions and no of SE courses, research. Interviews: nature of course/research.
Higher Education Institutions with SE-related activity	Existence of HE institutions mentoring (incubation) social enterprises or having social enterprise student associations	List of business schools, engineering colleges and other HE institutions with demonstrated attention to SE research, support, mentoring and business plan competitions	Desktop research: mentoring, incubation, student programmes. Interviews: quality and focus of programmes in supporting local capacity, who work with.
Higher Education Institutions producing skills relevant for social enterprises	Programs in engineering, biology, agricultural college, IRMA, rural energy – core sectors, agri-business, health.	Number of schools and their nature. Estimated number of students.	Desktop research

27 NESTA, 2009a

4.3.3 Communication and Collaboration

Innovation does not happen in isolation, since one person or firm is unlikely to have all the knowledge required. It follows that an open environment where individuals or enterprises collaborate, communicate and share knowledge, is critical. Here, both people's propensity to be open to sharing ideas and collaborate, as well as the infrastructure, such as ICT, that enables such openness is important. Local or regional networks and organisations operating as formal or informal 'hubs' reinforce communication and collaboration.

In terms of indicators, we want to find out if there are any existing network platforms locally – either regional or national platforms, or other informal local hubs. Beyond these formal and informal networks, it is important to find out to what extent social enterprises, support organisations and higher education interact. Is the ecosystem open and do people communicate and collaborate within and across sectors and areas? Are social entrepreneurs collaborating? Do they share information about markets or new opportunities? Is there collaboration ongoing? The latter questions are qualitative in nature. We also ask if there are co-working spaces in the region. Lastly, we ask if media is playing a role in creating awareness about, and highlighting, the sector.

TABLE 4 Communication and Collaboration Indicators

Indicator	Description	Metric	Data Collection Process
Network Platforms	Active networking platforms (e.g. TIE) and/or organisations acting as local hubs.	List of platforms present; type of activity and audience	Mapping: desktop research, preliminary interviews to assess activity
SE Collaboration	Existence of local enterprises collaborating	Is there evidence of SE collaboration – what are the patterns, areas of collaboration.	Interviews
Collaboration in sector	Openness and Collaboration between SEs and support organisations, NGOs	Is there evidence of collaboration between NGOs, SEs, support orgs? What kind? Formal, informal?	Interviews
Open Communication	Open communication channels – to SEs and support organisation speak regularly and exchange information	Is there evidence of regular exchanges of information? Forum for knowledge exchange?	Interviews
Co-working space	Are there co-working spaces that can foster collaboration, communication, knowledge sharing?	List of co-working spaces; description of what they do/offer and clients.	
Media Attention	Does the local media drive or highlight social enterprise through articles written or specific projects/campaigns/awards?	Number of local articles on SE in past 2 years	Desktop research

4.3.4 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is risky and uncertain by nature. Therefore attitude towards risk and risk taking influences people's decision to innovate and setting out as an entrepreneur. At a broader societal level, there are varying culturally driven attitudes to entrepreneurship and start-ups which have a clear impact on the ability of people to choose social entrepreneurship over what is perceived as a more stable or higher status employment. Since social entrepreneurship links to both conventional entrepreneurship and civil society activities, we expand the idea of a vibrant ecosystem to include conventional entrepreneurs and start-ups, and civil society.

We ask whether it is culturally acceptable to be an entrepreneur and whether it is a common occupation. In other words, are there tacit barriers to become a social entrepreneur, and are there existing role models within the community or region? Are there a large number of entrepreneurs and start-ups in the region (social or otherwise)? If there are already a significant number of MSMEs, does that translate into a vibrant environment in which to start and run a social enterprise? This may include a vibrant social enterprise environment, but if that is not the case, we can look for the potential of building such an environment through the existence of a vibrant civil society or conventional start-up environment. We also look for local social enterprise 'heroes' – people who have set up social enterprise ventures, lead by example and can inspire others.

TABLE 5 Entrepreneurship Indicators

Indicator	Description	Metric	Collection Process
Entrepreneurial Culture	Is it culturally acceptable to be an entrepreneur?	Qualitative: yes/no/depends	Interviews
Vibrant Start-up / Civil Society Environment	Do people perceive there to be a vibrant social enterprise, conventional start-up or civil society environment?	Qualitative: descriptive	Interviews
Social Enterprise Heroes	Are there local SE that are successful, lead by example and (can) inspire others?	Examples	Desktop research; interviews
Existence of Start-ups	Existence of conventional start-ups	Number of start-ups; type of startups. Examples of start-ups	Desktop research

4.3.5 Local Economy: Demand, Competition and Access

The ability of social enterprises to survive and thrive depend to a great extent on the market conditions and local economy in which the enterprise operates.

Is the local infrastructure, whether roads, transport systems, electricity or internet access conducive to enterprises and small firms? We also look at the profile of the local economy, and whether there are particular local characteristics that can act as barriers, such as the political situation. Lastly we consider local industry and any particular clusters that may have an impact on the social enterprise ecosystem, as well as barriers, such as cartels hindering new market entrants.

TABLE 6 Local Economy Indicators

Indicator	Description	Metric	Collection Process
Infrastructure	Infrastructure: roads, electricity, internet	Electrification: hours/day, internet access. Infrastructure – road network.	Desktop research
Economic Profile (substituting demand)	Economic profile of the region – income, activity	Income, activity	Desktop research
Political Stability and obstacles to particular enterprises	Is the political situation impacting on regional SE activity and if so, how/why	Is the political situation acting as a barrier to SE	Desktop research + interviews
Local Industry (collaborators)	Is there a thriving local industry and what does it focus on?	Yes/no – existence of industry cluster example/ description	Desktop research + interviews
Local barriers (e.g. cartels)	Are there local barriers to SE setting up or progressing, such as cartels preventing market access?	Yes/no – existence of barriers–explanation/ description	Desktop research + interviews

4.3.6 Role of Government (and other Enablers)

Government (including apex institutions such as NABARD and SIDBI), even where it plays a relatively small direct role, does affect the functioning of the regional social enterprise ecosystem through policies, programmes and attitude towards social enterprises, and MSMEs and civil society more broadly. Are there schemes that are supportive of social enterprises and are they easy to use? Does the government actively encourage social entrepreneurship through specific schemes? Does it (through certain individuals, for example) have a good understanding of what social entrepreneurship is and the kind of support it requires? Does it provide an enabling environment for social enterprises and support organisations?

The first indicator lists national and state level programmes and schemes: are there regional social enterprise schemes running? Or national schemes with a specific state mandate for implementation? We want to know the number and nature of such schemes as well as whether there is any indication of their quality. The second indicator considers whether there is any evidence of social entrepreneurship being a policy priority locally and/or at the state level – is enabling social enterprises a stated priority of the regional (state) government.

Beyond specific social enterprise policies and programmes, we list relevant civil society and conventional start-up schemes in number and use.

We also consider the ease of use of government programmes and schemes qualitatively through interviews with local stakeholders and especially entrepreneurs.

Since there are a number of other institutions that work towards enabling the social enterprise ecosystem, we also consider Indian industry bodies (such as CII) with activities related to social enterprise, and international development finance institutions here- do they run particular programmes regionally – whether infusing finance or building capacity at a system level.

TABLE 7 Government and Enabler Indicators

Indicator	Description	Metric	Collection Process
SE Government Policies and Schemes	Are there government programmes and schemes to support SE (national, state and local) active locally?	List types of programmes, activity	Desktop research follow up with interviews (practice)
SE Policy Priority	Is social enterprise a stated priority by regional government actors?	Yes/no + example	Desktop research follow up with interviews (practice)
Non-SE Schemes Relevant to SEs	Non-SE government schemes that can be used by social entrepreneurs locally? (e.g. livelihoods, MFI, handicraft, MSME). How are they used?	List type and activity of schemes. Examples of schemes	Desktop research (limited), interviews
Ease of Accessing Government Schemes	The ease of access and use of government programmes supporting SEs?	Qualitative – how long does it take; challenges	Interviews
Industry Bodies (e.g. CII)	Are there industry bodies locally and do they undertake SE related activities?	List industry bodies and type of activities	Desktop research; interviews
Macro Enablers	Existence of programmes by international development finance institutions- enablers such as GIZ, DfID, WB?	List relevant programmes and their activities.	Desktop research; interview follow-up. To target macro-enablers in one trip to Delhi & get data for different regions then.

4.3.7 The Ecosystem: Connecting the Dots

While we have considered the components of the social enterprise ecosystem one at a time, they are of course interlinked and intertwined. Therefore, even when there are many individual pieces of the social enterprise ecosystem puzzle in place, small but significant gaps or a lack of linkages between those pieces, may result in little social enterprise activity taking place. Individual efforts are working in isolation.

For instance, if there is availability of impact investing finance, but few effective early stage incubators or capacity builders, it is likely that impact investors would find a lack of social enterprises ready to invest in. By the same token, ideation and prototype stage grant funding can be very helpful to refine and test the idea and venture, but without early stage finance available, the ideas and prototypes may never turn into a viable business. In India, we are currently seeing financing gaps, and a disconnect between entrepreneurs that cannot access finance and investors that fail to find deals to invest in. This may be partially the result of a failure to unearth and grow budding social ventures, but it might also be due to a lack of efficient networks that connects disparate stakeholders: the ecosystem components work in isolation.

As a second example, knowledge creation is at the core of innovation and innovating social enterprises. We expect entrepreneurs to be continuously innovating and evolve their venture to meet new challenges and opportunities. However, in social enterprises where the focus is on the scale of social and commercial impact, we may find that this focus on scale comes at a cost of innovation. The social enterprise may have scaled swiftly, but the lack of innovation may mean that the organisation and what it offers becomes obsolete faster.

A third example would be a disconnect between the stakeholders enabling social enterprises on the ground, but struggling due to unhelpful regulations. A current example is the difficulty to move between for profit and not-for profit and to work in partnerships across different legal forms. There are also legal constraints on investing in social impact, for instance in relation to bringing capital into the country. Therefore, even in a place like Mumbai or Bangalore with a relatively healthy social enterprise ecosystem on the ground, social enterprises and investors may still struggle to make the most out of opportunities because of the legal and policy environments.

This framework and the original study of regional social enterprise ecosystems will not focus on the interconnectedness of different parts of the system, but it is something that we plan to add, through network analysis, when we repeat the study next year. Over time, therefore, this framework also opens up questions for further research project on the Indian context, as we know more about regional social enterprise activity and gaps.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, this paper has considered how to conceptualise and characterise regional social enterprise ecosystems in India. We have done this in order to improve our understanding of the regional variation in enabling environments and characteristics, including local strengths, weaknesses and gaps. We expect this to improve our ability to hone in on what critical future interventions might be. As a next step, we will produce a set of nine reports on regional social enterprise ecosystems across India, based on this framework.

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Okapi began operations in July 2012 as an action research collective and consultancy focused on institutional design for sustainable development. Associates combine academic excellence with operational experience in policy, social enterprise, innovation and other areas. Okapi is currently being incubated by IIT-Madras and has offices in Mumbai and Chennai. www.okapia.co

