1. Introduction

South Korea is certainly one of the countries in the world where the social enterprise phenomenon has been the most developed, with well elaborated public policies and an increasing interest from all parts of society. In the last two decades, various social enterprise models have successively appeared in the country; they have been conceptualised in different ways, with several concepts related to the concept of social enterprise itself, such as self-sufficiency, social jobs, social cooperative and, more recently, social economy.

By “social enterprise phenomenon”, we refer to a phenomenon related to a series of interpretations regarding objectives, functions, and impacts of certain types of existing or new organisational models, and to their institutionalisation process, creating their own space in institutional, social and cognitive environments. The social enterprise phenomenon is often simplified into the study of new forms of organisations or individual entrepreneurs combining economic activities and social aims. But behind these concrete realities, there are often complex interactions between—and co-existence of—expressions which, although they are the same or close to each other, are given different interpretations, inspired by different approaches; this results in conflicts between different interests, concept producers, and philosophical approaches within a same concept or between different concepts.

Our analysis tries to grasp this complexity of the social enterprise phenomenon in South Korea, arguing that the meanings of economic activities and social aims are always controversial and interpenetrating. In order to describe the complexity, we suggested a conceptual framework which distinguishes more dominant models of social enterprise at certain periods (meta-models) from more specific models (single models). Whereas the previous work focused on historical context and development of meta-models, in this paper, we try to illustrate how meta-models and singles models are related to each other. After briefly reminding whole framework (second section) and each meta-model (third section), we will explain single models and their interaction with meta-models (forth section).

2. A proposal of conceptual framework for understanding the social enterprise phenomenon in South Korea

From the historical description we did in previous works (Bidet and Eum, 2015; Eum and Bidet, 2014), we could assume that the social enterprise phenomenon cannot be understood only through the emergence and recognition of specific types of new or existing organisational models, but also reflects the process of reinterpretation of certain values and logics in a society, stimulated by the inspiring concepts of social enterprise. Forms of enterprise that can be assimilated to social enterprise have existed for a long time in South Korea. However it can be argued that one recent and distinctive feature is the emergence of the social enterprise concept in itself as a powerful concept whose role is to break existing conceptual scenes and to configure a kind of new sector. Therefore, while the different social enterprise models can be examined as independent models which have their own institutional and social spaces, it is also essential to understand how they can be regarded as the expression of a social enterprise sector in a large sense.

As far as research methods are concerned, we relied mainly upon document analysis and completed it with interviews. In order to avoid falling into the trap of adopting a viewpoint reflecting specific positions or specific approaches, which would hinder having a broader perspective on the phenomenon, we began by constituting a series of literature materials composed of different kinds of documents, including newspaper articles. Supposing that the general concept of social enterprise perceived by the public is formed through this information, exposed to the public in direct or indirect ways, our historical description of the social enterprise phenomenon relied upon the identification of
different kinds of actants and numerous interactions between these actants. The notion of “actant” is here borrowed from French sociologists Bruno Latour and Michel Callon (Callon and Latour 1981). Callon and Latour insist that actants can be human actors but also non-human actors. Both types of actors can be active in reference to a given phenomenon and have the same importance to understand this phenomenon. Because they may exert an influence on human actants, some non-human actants can be active actors. Consequently, our analysis relies upon the identification of different sorts of actants, whether human (individual or collective) or non-human (public policy, law, concept, theory, best practice, foreign experience…). For this reason, our analysis is not only based on the study of human actors moved by consciousness and assumed purposes, but on the analysis of a series of successive contingencies where different kinds of human and non-human actants emerge, decline, and re-emerge through various relationships among them. Concretely this approach led us to take into account and combine in our analysis different inputs with different status: individual interviews, participating observations, media materials, theoretical arguments, political views, legal texts and processes, quantitative data, etc.

Although our analysis is inspired by several of the main concepts introduced by Callon and Latour, it does not attempt and does not aim to strictly follow the rules they apply in their works. But we acknowledge that the idea of meta-model was strongly inspired by the concept of “obligatory passage point” that Callon and Latour mobilise in what they call the “actor-network theory” or the “sociology of translation”. In their works, the obligatory passage point refers to a strategic point through which actants in a given situation must pass (Callon 1986a, p. 27). Considered as a problematisation which describes associations of actants, the obligatory passage point defines their identities and the issues at stake in the focal situation (Callon 1986b, pp. 184-5). In their works, Callon and Latour stress the concept of “translation” to express the capacity to link and combine elements which belong to different spheres and need therefore a “translation” to be mobilised in another sphere. They argue that most innovations are the result of this capacity, which implies to solve the controversy resulting from the diversity in order to reach a consensus. This main view has inspired what is called in France the “pragmatic sociology”, to which the so-called “convention school” (introduced at the same period by Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot) also belongs.

In the very dynamic context of Korea, the social enterprise concept consensually refers to a new sector or a range of new organisational forms that are positively considered as socially useful, and furthermore actively encouraged by different kinds of social forces, including public authorities. Before a sufficiently large consensus can emerge, the process of defining this concept in legal terms generates as well several conflicts, involving different actors with controversial interests and logics. The social enterprise concept is therefore continuously shaped and transformed by controversies where each participant tries to get a more favourable content for himself/herself in justifying his/her position. Following Boltanski and Thevenot, we consider that the resolution of these recurrent controversies and conflicts surrounding a concept can usually be seen in the emergence of a strong and consensual form of convention (Thévenot 1984; Boltanski and Thévenot 1991). In our study, we argue more precisely that the enactment of a new legislation and/or the designing of new public policies with related public funding and schemes represent such a form of strong consensus. We do not deny the existence of a plurality of opinions but assume that the enactment of a law or the introduction of a public scheme reflects the emergence of a consensus above this plurality. This is particularly meaningful in South Korea, where public authorities are still considered as having a right or an authority to define social realities and where these definitions are accepted very quickly at the different levels of social systems.

We picked up the terminology of “meta-model” to express the result of this consensus, i.e. the contents that are retained in a specific legislation or a public policy introduced after long or short discussions among stakeholders. In such a perspective, a meta-model reflects a structuring power that exerts an influence, generating or contributing to design other experiences and models. The historical perspective shows a constant dynamic where each meta-model has an influence on local interpretations featured in single/simple models and guides daily practices before it loses a part of its consensual power and credibility and finally generates the emergence of another potential meta-model, co-existing with the previous one and partially modifying it. We assume that this idea of a “meta-model”, by articulating individual models and the ideal concept of social enterprise during a certain period, based on a relatively strong institutional consensus, helps to understand the complex structuring of the social enterprise phenomenon in South Korea, although we are aware that it is certainly not the only relevant framework to explain this phenomenon.
We built up a conceptual framework relying upon two different levels: a superior level, where different meta-models have emerged, developed and encountered each other, and an inferior level, where meta-models mobilise single social enterprise models. While the meta-concepts have produced different interpretations of the social enterprise phenomenon on the general level, single social enterprise models constructed from specific public schemes or through bottom-up initiatives have their own concrete objectives, functions and development paths. While these social enterprise models have been formulated according mainly to specific public schemes or certain bottom-up initiatives that are not always explicitly related to the concept of social enterprise, they can also be considered as composing elements of each meta-model and are often re-formulated in accordance with these meta-models.

3. Meta-models of social enterprise

The models considered as meta-models in our work are single models in themselves. However, they are not isolated but have been related to other single models in various ways. Therefore, they have a certain level of generality allowing them influencing other single models. In this part, we explain each meta-model in focusing on their role as a meta-model rather than the details of each meta-model which are explained in our previous work (Bidet and Eum, 2015).

3.1. The “self-sufficiency” meta-model

The self-sufficiency programme introduced in 1996 in South Korea as a public policy can be considered as a pioneer step of the social enterprise phenomenon and is still an important social integration system, with well-organised infrastructures both in public and private sectors, such as large amount of public budget, human resources, specific knowledge and internal/external networks.

The self-sufficiency programme aims to promote, through different sub-programmes, the work integration of the beneficiaries of the NBLS and the poor who cannot benefit from the NBLS because their income is just above the income criteria of the NBLS. It should be noted that the self-sufficiency programme is more related to anti-poverty policy rather than to unemployment policy or enterprise policy. This is the reason why it is closely articulated with the NBLS and relies mainly upon the Ministry of Health and Welfare.

As the first institutionalised model, the self-sufficiency model has strongly influenced different single social enterprise models, particularly during the first years of the social enterprise phenomenon in Korea. Above all, it can be said that the term “self-sufficiency” itself served as a quasi-equivalent of “social enterprise” or “social economy” before these concepts were introduced in the country. Researchers and field actors who contributed to building the self-sufficiency model found indeed their inspiration in best practices observed in European social economy organisations, particularly those beginning to be called “social enterprise” in the works of the EMES network. Later on, the term “social enterprise” was first introduced by researchers and activists related to the self-sufficiency model, with the aim of reforming this model; as to the first experiences publicly presented as social enterprises, they were mostly self-sufficiency enterprises. The concepts of “self-sufficiency”, “social enterprise” and “social economy” are thus quite closely interconnected in the Korean context. On the other hand, new public policies dealing with the work integration for specific disadvantaged groups were introduced in the early 2000s adopting the self-sufficiency model and even its title. Thus, pointing to a narrower use of “self-sufficiency” as an equivalent of work integration social enterprise (WISE), with the setting up of

---

1 The NBLS represents the first real minimum income scheme to be introduced in Korea as well as the first comprehensive work integration policy in accordance with the workfare ideology that appeared in the 2000s to challenge the development of welfare benefits without counterpart from the recipients. The first livelihood protection program had been enacted in South Korea in 1961 but it had remained very limited in coverage, concerning only families with no able-bodied adults and provided very limited benefits to the few eligible recipients. Like many other national basic income schemes, the NLBS is a residual allowance: anyone with a monthly income under the poverty line can get the difference so that their income reaches this threshold. The NBLS expresses the idea that any citizen in need should get a decent support from government as a social right and therefore represents a turning point in South Korean welfare policies, which hitherto remained driven by what Holliday and Kwon (2007) called a “productivist welfare capitalism”.

It can thus be argued that the self-sufficiency model influenced individual social enterprise models in several ways.

First, the self-sufficiency model served to introduce several conceptual points, which are still being stressed in many different social enterprise models. In Korean, literally and originally, “self-sufficiency” stresses the ability of poor or disadvantaged people to manage an autonomous life through economic activities in the marketplace. However, tensions and controversies arose as this concept was often reduced to narrower interpretations, which were constrained by common sense and then disseminated in different other social enterprise models. For instance, it was argued that self-sufficiency enterprises composed exclusively of poor people could be viable.

The concept of economic activities in the marketplace was also problematic. Unlike many work integration social enterprise models in Europe focusing on improving employability of unemployed persons, the self-sufficiency model argues that the self-sufficiency enterprises should provide stable jobs to the disadvantaged with some direct and intensive support during the preparatory and initial stages only.

Second, not only the contents but also the whole system developed with the self-sufficiency model influenced different individual social enterprise models. As intermediary supporting organisations, such as Local Self-sufficiency Centres (LSSCs), Regional Self-sufficiency Centres (RSSCs) and the Central Self-sufficiency Foundation have formed a coherent support system involving public authorities at the local, regional, and national levels. This system in turn generated a comprehensive public financing model for social enterprises, providing substantial financial support in the preparatory period to cover the whole range of costs, including labour costs. After their creation, self-sufficiency enterprises are eligible to additional financial support for the initial period. Alongside the development of the self-sufficiency meta-model, various financial instruments have been developed both in the public and private sectors. Most of these financial instruments now play an important role in financing the whole range of social enterprise models.

In addition, in order to create a favourable environment for the self-sufficiency programme, actors in this field have tried to build up local networks with civil society partners and public authorities. In many municipalities, the decrees for the promotion of the self-sufficiency programme have been introduced, based on the joint efforts by local initiatives and on the recommendation of the central government. This whole environment surrounding the self-sufficiency programme eventually became a kind of archetype of a coherent support system for other social enterprise models.

Third, people who have been experienced and trained in the self-sufficiency programme became an important source for developing other types of social enterprises. Particularly, the staff who left the LSSCs to join self-sufficiency enterprises played an important role as social entrepreneurs who led to the SEPA meta-model, described in section 4. While they tried to overcome some limits of the self-sufficiency model, they also played a role as promoters and “providers” of the basic model of self-sufficiency into different kinds of social enterprise models, including the SEPA model.

In this sense, it can be argued that the self-sufficiency model was the dominant model of social enterprise during the first decade of the social enterprise phenomenon in South Korea, and played an important role as a pioneer model which contributed to introduce a few basic ideas into different models of social enterprises.

3.2. The SEPA meta-model

With the 2006 Social Enterprise Promotion Act (SEPA), South Korea became the first Asian country to enact a specific legal framework supporting and labelling social enterprise. The 2006 SEPA, which is controlled by the Ministry of Labour, defines a social enterprise as “a certified organisation which is engaged in business activities of producing and selling goods and services while pursuing a social purpose of enhancing the quality of local residents’ life by means of providing social services and creating jobs for the disadvantaged (Ministry of Labour, 2006)”. Based on this definition, the SEPA model proposes its own requirements and procedures for certification, and its own supportive eco-
system for promoting social enterprise through the certification. In this sense, we can say that the SEPA model has its own specific model, even though it was initially designed as a secondary labelling for various existing single social enterprise models. As a secondary label that allows important public support to social enterprises, the SEPA model plays a role of meta-model in (re)formulating various single social enterprise models wanting to get the label.

Since its enactment in 2006, the SEPA model has been slightly modified through minor amendments of the original law. One of the most important amendments was the addition, in 2011, of a “local community contribution type” to the existing categories of social purposes. This amendment was the result of an increasing interest for social enterprise as an actor of local development and aimed to integrate the “community business” scheme into the SEPA model. In this way, the SEPA model developed to reinforce its position as a meta-model.

One of the major outputs of the SEPA was to create a room for social enterprise in the Korean legal system and to construct a very complete model of social enterprise through synthesising previous experiences in Korea and current working experiences in foreign countries. Because of the very generous public support for certified social enterprises, the SEPA succeeded in raising the level of public interest from all parts of society, and the requirements for getting the SEPA certification became a prototype of social enterprise in South Korea. This led existing single social enterprise models to adapt themselves to the SEPA model, and to consider the SEPA requirements as the standard new single social enterprise models. Since the enactment of the SEPA, many existing single social enterprise models have been considering the SEPA certification as an additional title, which allows not only additional public support but also generates a positive image of their economic activities, officially recognised as socially useful. As a result, several existing social enterprise models that were not covered by the self-sufficiency meta-model began joining the social enterprise phenomenon. Medical cooperatives, professional activities for the disabled and self-help activities launched by specific disadvantaged groups such as North Korean refugees or victims of sexual traffic are exemplary cases. Therefore, the self-sufficiency model itself tried to adapt to the SEPA model and partly lost its role of meta-model; consequently, it became a single social enterprise model and a potential “source” of certified social enterprises. The following table, which provides an overview of the distribution of certified social enterprises according to their origins, shows that these models, which existed before the implementation of the SEPA model, represent a significant share of certified social enterprises.

[Table 1] Origins of certified social enterprises (2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of certified social enterprises</th>
<th>Social jobs programme</th>
<th>Self-sufficiency enterprises</th>
<th>Workshops for the disabled</th>
<th>Medical consumer cooperatives</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>474 (65%)</td>
<td>87 (12%)</td>
<td>78 (11%)</td>
<td>13 (2%)</td>
<td>71 (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the SEPA model is not only a synthesis of previous models; it also plays a role as an archetype for newly emerging models. Following the SEPA model, which is under the competence of the Ministry of Labour, several other ministries have introduced their own programmes aiming to create employment in their fields. Besides the self-sufficiency programme, which is managed by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Security and Public Administration launched the “community business scheme” in 2010 and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs began developing “community enterprises in rural area” in 2010. In addition, several local and regional governments introduced their own preliminary certification schemes in order to prepare enterprises to apply to the SEPA certification. All these new schemes have been conceived according to the SEPA model, and, in theory, all organisations developed in these schemes are targeting having a certification as social enterprise. In this sense, the SEPA model can be viewed as an ultimate goal of all single models. Several follow-up support programmes aiming to create social enterprises based on more innovative ideas have also formed new single social enterprise models such as social venture and social innovation-oriented social enterprises. Even though these models do not have institutional bases, they have been developed around follow-up support programmes designed in the SEPA meta-model. We can also classify the “company partnership type social enterprise model” as a model developed within the SEPA meta-model.
3.3. The “Social economy” meta-model

Compared to the two previous meta-models, the social economy meta-model is at an earlier stage of development; consequently, it is still difficult to analyse it in a coherent way. This difficulty is reflected in the complicated ongoing debates on the “Framework Act on Social Economy”. Therefore, we will focus here on its trajectory of institutionalisation and role as a meta-model.

Since 2010, the social economy is becoming an increasingly dominant concept, challenging the previous meta-model, based on the SEPA. Despite small differences among the promoters of the concept, the social economy approach commonly tends to include self-sufficiency enterprises, SEPA social enterprises, community business organisations, community enterprises in rural areas, consumer cooperatives, and cooperatives registered under both specific laws for traditional cooperatives and the 2012 Framework Act on Cooperatives. It is still questionable whether various types of association will find a room inside this social economy concept. If such an evolution were to occur, the self-sufficiency meta-model and the SEPA meta-model may become only single social enterprise models under the broader social economy concept.

The rise of the social economy as a new meta-model, challenging the SEPA meta-model, reflects on the one hand some difficulties and critics encountered by the SEPA meta-model, and on the other hand the emergence and influence of new single models that are not covered by the SEPA model.

The critics addressed to the SEPA model stress the growing tendency of the government to keep the control on the social enterprise concept and the questionable sustainability of certified social enterprises which depend too much on public subsidies. These difficulties were considered as failures of a scheme driven by government support and control. The strong dependency on public support and the increasing opportunism that resulted hereof also damaged the public image of social enterprises. In this situation, the social economy concept began getting a rising attention from various sides. For supporters of the SEPA model, the social economy was understood as a favourable eco-system from which social enterprises could mobilise various resources. For those emphasising the role of civil society, the social economy was understood as a solid base for civil society actors disputing the government-driven social enterprise model. On both sides, the social economy concept emerged as a broader concept than the concept of social enterprise.

On the other hand, it progressively appeared that several ministries in charge of different public schemes related to social enterprises did not accept the SEPA model as their meta-model. Particularly, in emphasising the collective interest of local people rather than the general interest, the “community business” scheme launched by the Ministry of Security and Public Administration and the “community enterprises in rural areas” scheme introduced by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs underlined their territorial aspect. Moreover, thanks to the 2012 Framework Act on Cooperative, the cooperative model gained more legitimacy, as a model that is more sustainable, although it receives little public support. The multiplication of different social enterprise models promoted by different ministries introduced a problematic complexity and a higher inefficiency at the local and regional levels, where all these public policies have to be implemented by local and regional governments.

The social economy concept was therefore quickly picked up as an alternative way for local development by some young reformist mayors who wanted to distance themselves from the conservative central government. Particularly, the mayor of Seoul, who was an activist in civic movements, gave priority to the social economy concept as a central tool for developing civil society. Through the enactment of a series of local and regional decrees on the social economy, the creation of a department of social economy in some local and regional governments, and the creation of political networks of mayors and of members of the National Assembly for the social economy, the concept of social economy is gaining ground as an official concept used to refer to a large range of social enterprise models concerned by different public policies.

4. Single social enterprise models

While a meta-model reflects a consensual but constantly re-discussed interpretation of the social enterprise phenomenon on a general level, the single social enterprise models do not have this general dimension, but are the results of specific public schemes or original bottom-up initiatives which
have their own concrete objectives, functions and development paths. Most of them can be related to one or more meta-models and they actually are often re-formulated in accordance with these meta-models although some of them may not be explicitly related to the concept of social enterprise. For most of them, these single models could be identified through specific existing public schemes. But some of them are not sufficiently institutionalised yet or even reluctant to be clearly related to one of the public schemes. Therefore, we should make our own identification of these uninstitutionalised models based on public discussions.

It also should be noted that although they can be identified as a social enterprise model, some initiatives are actually embedded in more complicated forms of organisations or of networks. For instance, with long history in local community, some social enterprises are deeply rooted in local social movement networks. In these networks, sometimes, it may be difficult to distinguish between supportive organisations and social enterprises supported by them. We can easily find spin-off social enterprises created by these networks as an answer to new needs in local community or to new opportunities provided by new public policies. In these cases, it would be more important to understand networks rather than individual social enterprises.

Altogether, we categorized these single models into three groups according to a set of common characters shared by the models.

The first category, the so-called “public policy driven models”, includes the models driven by public policies explicitly related to the social enterprise concept. Besides the self-sufficiency model and the SEPA model which are presented in the section 3, we can identify three social enterprise models initiated by public policies since the phenomenon of social enterprise developed in South Korea: initiatives of employment for the elderly by the Ministry of Health and Welfare, community business promoted by the Ministry of Security and Public Administration and local/regional authorities and community enterprise in rural area promoted by the Ministry of Agriculture. Each model was mainly designed by public policies aiming at dealing with unmet needs of the society such as increasing aging population, lack of local development opportunities as well as increasing unemployment rate.

The second category, the so-called “reinterpreted existing organisation models”, is composed of the models which already existed before emergence of the social enterprise concept and have been gradually reinterpreted at the new light of the social enterprise concept: social enterprise for the disabled, medical cooperative and self-sufficiency initiatives for various kinds of disadvantaged people. Some of them such as social enterprises for the disabled are also strongly related to certain public schemes which were not directly motivated by the social enterprise phenomenon. It is interesting to note that these models have their own relatively consolidated communities composed of concerning initiatives and support schemes. They are not only passively influenced by the meta-models but also strategically enter in relation with different meta-models according to their economic or symbolic interests.

The third category gathers emerging models which do not have specific institutional forms but the public perceive them as a kind of social enterprise models: social ventures for the youth, social enterprise managed/supported by private company and newly emerging model related to social innovation, ethical/ecological entrepreneurial initiatives outside existing schemes. Some of them are related to other public schemes or specific private initiatives. Some others seem to be on the way of institutionalisation. It is interesting that the weakly institutionalised characters of these models allow more innovative approaches of the social enterprise concept. Therefore, although they are not so many in quantitative terms, their meaning is not small in the social enterprise phenomenon.

Of course, this list of single models cannot pretend to be exhaustive. For instance, we failed to identify all kinds of disadvantaged groups. Although there are many SEPA social enterprises for the integration of immigrant women, we did not identify them as a model because it was difficult to find common features except their target group. On the other hand, we did not include initiatives for supporting social enterprises such as various kinds of social financing organisations and foundations. While these initiatives are gradually being recognized as social enterprise themselves, for the time being, it needs more discussion about how to distinguish between civil society driven initiatives and organisations in quasi-public schemes.
To understand the dynamics between meta-models and single models, we examine here three single models from each category.

4.1. Example of public policy driven models - Community business (Ma-eul Ki-up)

Community business is a social enterprise model based on the participation of local people for promoting local development. Community business is related to the public scheme managed by the Ministry of Security and Public Administration and local/regional authorities. According to this scheme, the title of “community business” can be granted to various kinds of moral persons such as private enterprises, non-profit corporations, cooperatives and agricultural corporations which are created by local people to carry out economic activities in mobilising mainly local resources with the aim to promote local development and to provide jobs and income to local people. After being certified as a community business, these initiatives can get public subsidies for two years and various kinds of non-material supports. By the end of 2013, there were 1,119 community business organisations certified by the Ministry, which provide 10,117 jobs (Ministry of Security and Public Administration, 2014).

Community business model is the convergence of two different origins. One of them relies on the various community building activities which had been organised by local grass-root organisations since the mid-1990s. Inspired by Japanese experiences of community building activities, these activities aim at reactivating local community by encouraging people to participate in social, economic, and cultural activities. In the community building projects, when local people identify their unmet needs, they try to mobilise local resources and create specific organisations or enterprises aiming at addressing these needs in a stable way. The lack of resources remains often an obstacle to create stable and efficient organisational tools. When the public work programme initiated by the Ministry of Security and Public administration at the time of economic crisis in 2008 had to be transformed into different format, this problematic was taken into consideration. In 2010, while maintaining an important part of budget for a renewed public work programme still managed by local authorities, a small part of the budget of previous public work programmes was redistributed to finance economic activity projects organised by local people for responding to their needs in the community. Through this process, the public scheme for supporting community business was institutionalised.

Although it is clear that the idea of the community business and its scheme was strongly influenced by the SEPA meta-model, difference between the concept of the SEPA social enterprise and community business has been emphasized from the outset generating a tension between these two approaches.

On the one hand, the SEPA meta-model attempted to include community business under its conceptual sphere. For that reason, the SEPA was partly amended in 2010 in putting local development as a new category of social aims.

On the other hand, some actors related of the community business stressed their distance with the SEPA. One of their main arguments is that community business is based on collective interest of a specific territory whereas the SEPA is based on the general interest of society. However, from interviews with actors, more informal arguments are also identified, such as competition between different ministries for having more competence and bad reputation of the SEPA which creates a growing dependency on public subsidies and consequently a weak sustainability.

Together with the cooperative model introduced by the 2012 Framework Act on Cooperatives, community business is an important driving force for developing the social economy meta-model. An activist of community business in Seoul symbolically explains the relationship between these concepts by saying that “social economy is a sphere where I can solve problems which are answered neither by the State nor by the market. However, since I cannot solve the problems alone, I have to work with neighbours who have same needs. If these needs are based on local community, it would be community business. If these needs rely upon more public demands, it would be social enterprise (Seoul metropolitan city, 2014)”.

Officially, the community business model is compatible with other models such as the SEPA social enterprise, community enterprise in rural area. And the legal cooperative form is strongly recommended as an appropriate legal form for community business. However, we can also observe that around the public support scheme, the community business model is setting its own human resources and network distinct from other models. In this sense, it seems that the community business
is contributing to promotion of social economy meta-model as a bigger common space where community business can maintain its own sphere independently from the SEPA meta-model.

4.2. Example of reinterpreted existing organisation models - Medical cooperatives

Medical coops are cooperatives providing medical and social services to local people. In South Korea, they can choose between two different legal statuses: consumer coops and social coops. In the case of consumer coops, medical coops are owned and managed by users, and in the case of social coops, they have to have multi-stakeholder membership. Medical coops are often presented as a typical example of the social enterprise model based upon the cooperative form. They play a marginal but very innovative role in the Korean health system by promoting a different conception of healthcare delivery based upon an involvement of users and a dialogue between patients and doctors, by emphasizing the importance of prevention and the control of medical spending, and by addressing the medical needs of disadvantaged groups which are usually ignored because of their insolvability.

Medical coops have developed since mid-1990s with strong involvement of social movement organisations and activists. They were firstly institutionalised as a kind of consumer cooperatives according to the 1998 Law on Consumer cooperative. However, after the drastic increase of fake medical coops, medical coops affiliated to the Korea Medical Cooperative Federation tried to distinguish themselves from the fake cooperatives. In this sense, affiliation to the national federation has played as an important symbolic sign to identify genuine cooperatives. It is well known that one of the aims of the social cooperative chapter of the 2012 Cooperative Framework Act was to offer an appropriate legal status to these genuine cooperatives. Medical coops with a legal status of social cooperatives have to meet stricter conditions regarding their creation, non-profit distribution and multi-stakeholder governance. Following the 2012 Framework Act on cooperatives, all members of the Korea Medical Cooperative Federation already changed their status to social cooperative or are still in the process of transition. The federation itself changed its title as Korea Health Welfare Social Cooperative Federation.

It was through the social jobs creation programme that medical coops joined the social enterprise phenomenon in the early 2000s. The social jobs creation programme allowed medical coops to extend their activity to the provision of care services to disadvantaged people in local community. Due to their successful experience in the social jobs creation programme, medical coops are explicitly mentioned in the SEPA as one of the legal forms that a certified social enterprise can use.

As an important example of the SEPA meta-model, it should be noted that medical coops have played as a bridge between social enterprise and consumer coops which were then external to the social enterprise phenomenon. During the emergence of the social economy meta-model, medical coops with their social cooperative status were presented as a very well articulated model between mutual interest represented by the traditional model of cooperatives and general interest represented by the newly developed concept of social enterprise.

4.3. Example of newly constructed models without specific institutional forms - Newly emerging model related to social innovation, ethical/ecological concept outside existing schemes

After the diffusion of the social enterprise concept, some activities or initiatives which are not initially claimed by actors themselves as social enterprise have been reported on media or social networks as examples of social enterprise. They are launched by various groups or individual persons mainly in order to realise their social, ethical or ecological values. However, it is difficult to define these initiatives with institutional or coherent categories. Therefore we only remind here a few identifiable cases.

Some initiatives are, reluctant to enter into existing schemes for political and ideological reasons and trying to use economic activities for supporting their objectives and values. An exemplary case is “People’s Houses” which is strongly related to left-wing political movement and developed activities such as café, library, culture activities and permanent education programmes.

In some other cases, initiatives have been launched by individuals and often do not aim collective or democratic governance. These initiatives start and grow their business independently from existing public schemes or big companies’ financial supports. They can be detected and related to the social
enterprise phenomenon through private social entrepreneur support programmes such as Ashoka Fellowship, Beautiful Fellowship or other social investment programmes. These social entrepreneur support programmes of private organisations usually seek social enterprise initiatives with innovative, ethical or ecological characters, which can hardly meet the criteria of certified social enterprise. For example, Beautiful Fellowship supports “social innovation entrepreneurs” who aim at solving social problems in the field of environment, human rights, education, culture, and community with innovative social ideas. Ashoka Fellowship supports social entrepreneurs who have five characteristics of new idea to change the society, creativity, entrepreneurship, social impact of business idea, and ethics.

The initiatives which could be identified with this model have appeared in relation with the SEPA meta-model. The introduction of the SEPA and the following diffusion of the social enterprise concept brought a framework which allows people to consider these initiatives as a kind of social enterprise although they often are not certified by the SEPA. Indeed, these initiatives are gaining their place in the social enterprise phenomenon in criticizing existing schemes, particularly the SEPA meta-model considered as too much dependent on public subsidies and losing innovative aspects because of bureaucratic control from the government or big companies.

Although they are not systematically present and cannot be considered as important driven forces in the current formation of the social economy meta-model, it is expected that they can play as an antidote against the current tendency to narrowly understand the social economy model as an integration of diverse public policies and public schemes from a bureaucratic point of view instead of strengthening civil society.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, assuming that the social enterprise phenomenon cannot be completely understood in South Korea through the single reference to the 2006 SEPA, which only reflects the perspective of the Ministry of Labour, we tried to make understandable the complexity and dynamics of this phenomenon in South Korea. For this purpose, we considered the social enterprise model not as a fixed entity or organisational form with precise and stable boundaries, but as an “entrance point” for understanding a ground phenomenon expressed in this model.

In such a perspective, we argued that what we call a “meta-model” allows to identify relevant landmarks in the development of social enterprise and is an appropriate conceptual tool for understanding and describing a complex and dynamic phenomenon which is embedded in civil society, public policies, and entrepreneurial spirit. And also, by introducing the concept of single models and their interactions with meta-models, we tried to describe more complicated dynamics of social enterprise phenomenon.

Although our conceptual tools are influenced by sociology of translation, we focused more on the description of interaction between meta-models and single models rather than on the strength of relations. In this way, beyond simple description of florescence of social enterprises, our work could serve as basic work for allowing critical analysis in identifying some controversial points in social enterprise phenomenon in South Korea. For instance, the Korean experience especially reveals interesting combinations and tensions between bottom-up initiatives from civil society and a top-down approach from public authorities, which have their own motives and values to promote this concept. Our analysis suggests that the social enterprise phenomenon in South Korea should not be understood only by its expressed contents, but also be related to the motives and values which served to shape it, given that the content is only a temporally valid outcome of a dynamic that is still in process.
[References]


