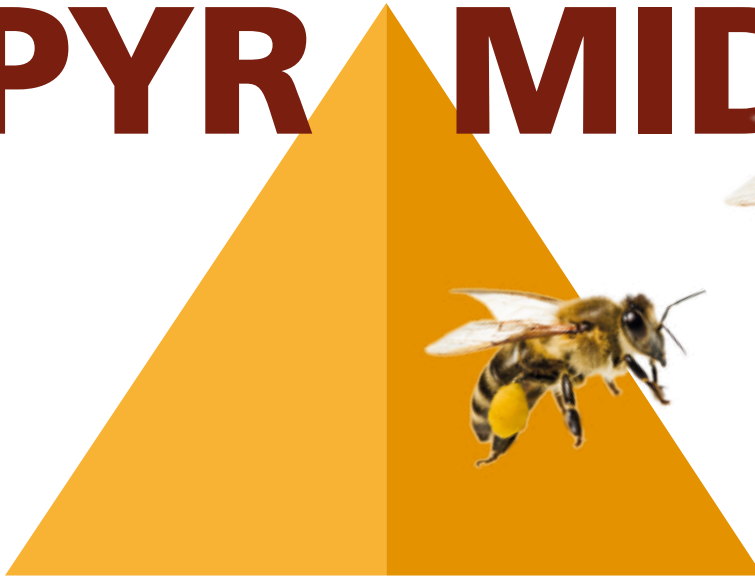


At the base of the PYRAMID



One team is working with Honey Care Africa (HCA), an innovative social enterprise that promotes commercial bee-keeping as a sustainable source of secondary income for low-income rural households in East Africa. The team was tasked with designing framework for HCA to monitor and evaluate its social impact. This has enabled HCA to provide informed feedback to their partners/donors and has been critical in securing further support and funding.

These student projects are one part of the Lab's applied projects, which directly feed back into the Lab's research agenda. We aim to further integrate researchers from partner universities such as Cape Town University and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, as well as from universities in Asia and Africa.

Can poverty be reduced through successful business model innovation? **Christian Busch**, associate director of LSE's Innovation Co-Creation Lab, describes the Lab's work and calls for LSE alumni to get involved.

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." While the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is widely accepted, reality is different. Four billion people around the globe live on under US\$4 per day, at the "economic base of the pyramid" (BoP). The potential to involve these people in global social, economic and political processes as consumers, producers and participants seems vast, yet will require innovative means.

Sustainable, inclusive business model innovation at the BoP, in combination with in-depth knowledge of how the new organisations (social enterprises, companies, NGOs, state organisations and so on) really impact the lives of people on the ground, can be an effective way to address problems associated with poverty and to promote basic human rights. This is the belief of Professor Harry Barkema, who founded LSE's Innovation Co-Creation Lab (ICCLab) in the Department of Management in 2007, and of the entire team. It works with leading academics, social entrepreneurs, NGOs and companies in Africa, Asia and South America to co-create evidence-based knowledge to empower organisations and individuals working at the BoP.

Mapping the genome

The precise mechanisms of how organisations successfully build and innovate their models are poorly understood. The Lab is therefore focused on understanding and "mapping the genome" of the entire ecosystem of how

and why new organisational types – or partnerships of organisations – interact with people living at the BoP under specific economic, social and political constraints, to reduce poverty.

This requires insights from multiple disciplines, so the ICCLab brings together researchers from management, anthropology, sociology, psychology and other disciplines. For instance, Juli Huang, associate director of the Lab is not only central to the "mapping the genome" project, together with Harry, but also brings in important insights from anthropology. She is about to leave for a two-year ethnographic study in Assam (India) – the first of its kind – of how social enterprises enable informal labourers to possess their own means of production. Another comparative study of Kenyan social entrepreneurs examines their effective uses of networks to scale; and several studies look at how multinationals have scaled their solutions in Indian and South African BoP contexts. In order to extend research findings to people who might benefit most, this research is not only published in academic journals, but also disseminated via social media channels and through workshops on the ground, as well as through master's-level teaching.

Monitoring and evaluation

MSc student teams are currently working in India, Kenya and other countries, with organisations such as IBM, Riders for Health and Husk Power Systems.

Working on the ground in BoP countries

We have done many workshops and seminars with social enterprises, multinationals, and NGOs around the world. The key challenges facing social entrepreneurs are identified and analysed, enabling them to develop solutions to address them.

Workshops are due to take place in Cape Town, Nairobi and several Indian cities this year, in collaboration with partners like Ashoka, Sandbox Network and The Hub.

Vili Lehdonvirta, the Lab's director of operations, is currently implementing an "interactive digital knowledge map", which will enable the Lab to create a bridge between academic contribution and practical impact, and make the research accessible to those for whom it matters most.

We would be delighted to enter a dialogue with LSE alumni, via our newly launched presence on Facebook (LSE Innovation Co-Creation Lab) and Twitter (@ICCLab) or through our website www.icclab.com. Please join us on this journey through the constantly evolving body of knowledge, whether as advisers, donors, partners, collaborators or critical observers. ■



Christian Busch is associate director at the LSE Innovation Co-Creation Lab (ICCLab). He co-founded Sandbox (www.sandbox-network.com), and his research and teaching focus on the scaling-dynamics of (social) enterprises. His latest TEDx-talk on "Creating Impact Organisations" is on: <http://bit.ly/dUDAik>, Twitter: @ChrisSandbox