

# Hybrid entrepreneurship in just transitions: Dealing with dilemmas facing ‘the other’

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to investigate the role of hybrid entrepreneurship in developing justice and diversity responses to sustainability transitions that are complicated by contexts of ambiguous socio-technological shifts and manifested in material and ethical dilemmas for ‘the other’, i. e., those deemed different. Based on analysis of two original case studies featuring the other—the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation indigenous community in Canada and the Karachi Down Syndrome Program in Pakistan—we identify the conditions for engaging minority communities in strong collaborative and participatory cross-stakeholder processes to deal with dilemmas posed by sustainability transitions. We centre on issues of social inclusion and social equity. We illuminate how hybrid entrepreneurship practices enable, structure and manage collective learning within and outside hybrid ventures to facilitate equitable transitions. Finally, we propose how to co-create actions that amplify marginalized voices to influence institutions.

## 1. Introduction

Sustainability transitions have been receiving increasing attention by policymakers and academics. These transitions can be complex and do not necessarily follow a linear and sequential trajectory. They can represent not only transformative progressive opportunities for economies and societies, but also significant risks related to reinforcing existing inequality, exclusion and marginalization for ‘the other’, i. e., those deemed different by society (Wulf, 2016). There are multiple calls to better understand and mitigate these risks, for instance, as part of the just transition agenda (Swilling, 2020). Yet, the current sustainability transitions literature falls short in addressing the complexities of socio-technical and socio-ecological transformations. First, this literature predominantly emphasizes technological and policy changes, often overlooking entrepreneurial activities that drive innovation at the grassroots community level (Galgóczi 2022; Heffron, 2021; Kuckertz et al., 2020; Wang and Lo, 2021). Second, traditional sustainability transitions frameworks tend to focus on mainstream understandings of entrepreneurial ventures, neglecting the potential of hybrid models which balance and integrate social, cultural, economic, and environmental value creation activities to address complex community needs and values (Colbourne, 2017).

Much of the research bridging entrepreneurship and sustainability transitions remains anchored in models grounded in

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technocratic approaches (Affolderbach and Krueger, 2017). These are centred on economic efficiency, advanced technologies, competition, consumerism and individualization, and are often associated with restructuring, displacement of capital and impacts, networked forms of governance and redefined workplaces (Feola, 2020; Guarneros-Meza and Geddes, 2010; Mouton and Burns, 2021; Slone et al., 2023; Torres et al., 2023). The alternative forms of value (e.g., related to socio-cultural, physical and emotional health, well-being, dignity, political action and place attachment) and the respective value creation processes that can be deliberately activated through alternative forms of enterprise to create space for sustainability transitions that depart from neoliberal models remain largely under the radar (Feola, 2020; Feola and Jaworska, 2019; Feola et al., 2021).

The sustainability transition context is ‘constructed from entrepreneurs’ reaction to their environment’ (Muñoz et al., 2024, p. 610) and the institutionalization of their values, beliefs and practices to create new products, services and business models that align economic goals with social objectives (cf. Battilana et al., 2012; Hall et al., 2010; Kuckertz et al., 2020; Planko and Cramer, 2021; Tracey et al., 2011; Vallaster et al., 2021; Vasquez-Delsolar and Merino, 2021). In this regard, hybrid ventures can play an enabling and transformational role in sustainability transitions through acting as market, space and place shapers, framing alternative solutions and pathways that influence sustainability transitions and challenge mainstream market economics (cf. Affolderbach and Krueger, 2017; Manjon et al., 2022; Shahzad et al., 2022; Syväri and Turun, 2022). Hybrid entrepreneurship can be seen as a response to both material and immaterial dilemmas that may arise from sustainability paradigm shifts (e.g., related to an unequal distribution of material gains and losses; or disruption of a cultural identity). By balancing the interests of the under-represented ‘other’ with the modern imperatives of sustainability transitions, hybrid entrepreneurship can create alternative forms of value to enable and sustain just transitions.

Hence, the aim of this paper is to explore the concept of hybrid entrepreneurship in sustainability transitions with emphasis on alternative value-creation, addressing the dilemmas facing the under-represented ‘other’. Our focus is the underexplored interplay between entrepreneurs and their hybrid ventures, which is constructed by their responses to the immediate environment, and which acts to enable new forms of organizing to facilitate just transitions (Kuckertz et al., 2020; Manjon et al., 2022; Muñoz et al., 2024). To achieve this aim, we adopt a case study approach and analyse two purposefully selected cases featuring ‘the other’—the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation Indigenous community in Canada and the community associated with the Karachi Down Syndrome Program in Pakistan. The first case illuminates challenges and dilemmas facing Indigenous communities when facilitating socio-economic health and well-being of the underrepresented population. The second case brings to the fore the context of contradictions as well as the opportunities arising from socio-technological transitions towards improved quality of healthcare, and their implications for those who are physically and mentally different. On one hand, technological progress makes it possible to identify whether a newborn will be affected by Down Syndrome, putting parents in an ethically, culturally and spiritually conflicting situation about the future of their unborn child and the wellbeing of the family. On the other hand, technological progress can potentially create possibilities for better healthcare and an enhanced quality of life for the affected children, alleviating tensions between the socio-economic wellbeing and moral compass of the family. Based on a theoretical framework drawn from the hybrid entrepreneurship literature, each case study provides insights into the community conditions, the nature of the hybrid enterprise, the degree of embeddedness and the practical approach taken to defining and enabling alternative value creation in response to a particular community’s socioeconomic needs and objectives. The contrasting nature of the two cases has helped us to identify the essentials of the hybrid venture creation model that make it transformative in terms of enabling collective learning, co-creating actions to amplify voices of “the other” and impacting institutions to acknowledge the interests of ‘the other’ in sustainability transitions.

We contribute by identifying hybrid entrepreneurship as a critical strategy for addressing issues and challenges facing marginalized and equity-seeking groups during transitions to provide a practical model for how transitions can be managed to balance social and economic goals, thus offering a more nuanced understanding of alternative value creation in transition processes. Our findings provide grounded insights into how hybrid entrepreneurship can address specific community challenges, while our methodological approach and analytical framework enable us to enrich the sustainability transitions literature by providing detailed, context-specific examples of how transitions can be managed inclusively and equitably (Galgóczi 2022; Heffron, 2021; Wang and Lo, 2021). In particular, we contribute to the sustainability transitions literature that calls for a closer engagement with critiques of the dominant neoliberal capitalist model (Feola, 2020; Feola and Jaworska, 2019; Feola et al., 2021). As such, we enhance the capacity of sustainability transitions research by advancing knowledge on the hybrid entrepreneurship processes that enable the construction of spaces of alterity to facilitate just transitions. We demonstrate the clear potential of hybrid entrepreneurship to transcend Western and non-Western contexts, not as an inferior and uniform model for sustainability transitions, but rather as a flexible and inclusive framework that embraces the diversity and situatedness of decision-making logics and visions of living well, emerging in the context of strong social interdependencies embedded in community-based socio-cultural and spiritual beliefs and practices.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section two provides an overview of the theoretical foundations of the study. These are shaped by a discourse on just transitions and hybrid ventures as an alternative form of enterprise that seeks to achieve just outcomes for the under-represented communities. We wrap up this section by presenting an analytical model of hybrid venture creation and its underlying interrelationships. Section 3 explains our methodological approach and details the data collection and analysis techniques used. Sections 4 and 5 present the context and findings from the two case studies. These are structured around the core elements of our underlying analytical model such as community identity, community embeddedness and value creation. Section 6 concludes with a discussion of key takeaways.

## 2. Theoretical foundations

### 2.1. Just transitions

The term ‘just transitions’ was originally formulated in the United States by labour and environmental justice organizations in context of climate change impacts (Henry et al., 2020; Meadowcroft, 2009; Newell, 2005; Newell and Mulvaney, 2013; Rosemberg, 2010; Stevis, 2020; Stevis and Boswell, 2008; Stevis and Felli, 2015). While the eco-technical aspects of just transitions have been relatively well-studied, socio-technological and economic dimensions related to transitions in communities are under-researched and need to be further explored to facilitate a more equitable and just transition (cf. Brown and Stubbings, 2017; Gałgóczi, 2022; Heffron, 2021; Wang and Lo, 2021).

There is a growing consensus that sustainability transitions can offer opportunities for progress, but also pose risks related to inequality, exclusion and deprivation (Swilling, 2020). Marginalized and disadvantaged communities, referred to as “the other” or “being different,” may face uncertainties and challenges in adapting to socio-technological changes and obtaining decent living conditions and quality of life. Communities are facing just transition challenges related to power imbalances working to displace and reconstitute the commons into free marketplaces and spaces that colonize and threaten languages, traditions, identities and world-views. These tensions and interactions create an evolving set of norms, expectations and aspirations about how socioeconomic resources are used and/or shared (Naidu et al., 2018; Peck and Tickell, 1992; Peck et al., 2009; UNDP, 2016). Marginalized communities, ‘the other’, often require skills and capacity strengthening when engaging with such power imbalances and tensions. These focus on issues, challenges and aspirations related to community-based transitions constituted by people with diverse characteristics, linked by formal and informal social ties, sharing common perspectives and engaged in collaborative action (Macqueen et al., 2001).

Hence, a just transition has to be viewed as a construct inseparable from the notion of community. The notion of community itself has evolved due to technological transitions. Community places and spaces are being (re)constructed in response to emerging and disruptive technological developments. While early conceptualisations of community were equating it to place and place-confined social relations, technological developments (e.g. advances in transportation, communication and information technologies) have effectively led to ‘displacing’ place from the social relations that underpin community (Bradshaw, 2008). This has created the phenomenon of non-place communities, where people are increasingly linked by shared identity, interests, norms and values without being tied to particular locations (Bhattacharyya, 2004; Bradshaw, 2008). Many of the examples of these types of communities are linked to underrepresented groups (e.g., ‘disabled entrepreneurs and professionals’, ‘gay professionals’, etc.) and facilitated by digital technologies. Yet, these same technologies and infrastructures reproduce and amplify inequality. For instance, digital technologies and platforms can exacerbate the vulnerability of gig economy workers, restrict social mobility, and challenge the resilience of marginalized communities to move beyond poverty (UN Habitat, 2016).

The proliferation of non-place communities, however, is not expected to negate the role of place. Place, space and related social action can amplify the public good, protect the community and make it thrive (Bradshaw, 2008) as illustrated by creative cities and regions that become vibrant and attractive community hubs of innovation, knowledge production, and cultural activities. These are constituted by complex ties arising from the interrelation of diverse peoples, cultures, ideas, and practices (Florida, 2012). Equally, taking away place and space from a community can have devastating effects on the survival and socio-economic health and wellbeing of the community as illustrated by the experiences of Indigenous people internationally (MacInnes et al., 2017; Sockabasin, 2023). Indigenous people are recognized as descendants of those who inhabited a geographical region at a time before people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived and became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means (World Bank, 2023). Notions of place and space are closely linked to the traditional territories of Indigenous communities which, in turn, are critical to informing the particular languages, cultures and worldviews that constitute Indigenous communities.

Facilitating just transitions for the ‘other’ involves significant social, political, and economic transformations that challenge mainstream neoliberal logics of dealing with socio-economic and socio-technical restructuring of community spaces and the diverse people, cultures, ideas, and practices within them (cf. Biswas et al., 2022; Gibson-Graham and Dombroski, 2020; Peck et al., 2009; Peck and Tickell, 1992; Swilling, 2020). One cannot underestimate the challenge involved in ensuring that just transitions address the

**Table 1**  
Continuum of social venture diversity.

	For profit enterprise Commercial	For profit CSR Hybrid	Socially responsible enterprise	Social enterprise	Non-profit and income generating	Non-profit enterprise Philanthropic
Value creation objectives	economic	social, cultural, spiritual, environmental as well as economic				social, cultural, spiritual, environmental and/or economic
Motives	self-interest	mixed—self-interest, community-interest, stakeholders and/or shareholders				social change
Methods	market-driven	mission/values and market-driven				mission/values-driven
Income distribution	stakeholders and owners	reinvested in mission/values-related activities or operational expenses and/or retained for business growth and development (for profit may distribute a portion to community)				reinvested in social programs or operational costs
Accountability	shareholders	accountable to rightsholders, shareholders, communities and ecosystem stakeholders				community and other stakeholders

(Adapted from Alter, 2003; Colbourne, 2017; Khieng and Dahles, 2015).

complex and interrelated issues of social justice, inequality, and exclusion to facilitate the sustained socioeconomic health and well-being of underrepresented communities over time (Biswas et al., 2022; Swilling, 2020). Advanced technologies effectively ‘colonize’ places and spaces to promote and reinforce neoliberal interests through restructuring, (re)defining civic engagement, work and the workplace while mediating access to information, ideas and social action in real time (Good, 2020; Mouton and Burns, 2021), further reproducing and amplifying power relations and inequality facilitated by socio-technological transitions.

## 2.2. Hybrid ventures

Hybrid ventures emerge as an alternative form of enterprise that seek to address complex social issues and achieve just outcomes (cf. Battilana et al., 2022, 2017; Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2020; Lortie et al., 2022). Indigenous hybrid ventures, for instance, emerged to challenge the legacies of colonization and to address consequent socio-economic issues as diverse as poverty, healthcare, economic development, infrastructure development, education, housing, culture and language revitalization. These ventures pursue economic decolonization or economic reconciliation through asserting Indigenous rights, sovereignty and self-determination to facilitate sustainable economic development through facilitating Indigenous-centric social, cultural, economic and environmental value creation activities (Gladu, 2016; Sengupta et al., 2015).

Hybrid ventures can take many organisational forms (see Table 1). The continuum of social venture diversity not only reflects the variety of venture forms but also captures the transformation of entrepreneurship from purely profit-driven to value-driven paradigms. At the left side (of Table 1) are traditional for-profit ventures primarily concerned with profit maximization and shareholder returns, utilizing strategies to capitalize on market opportunities for growth (Alberti and Varon Garrido 2017; Bygrave and Zacharakis, 2011; Dollinger, 2008). In a shift towards integrating ethics with earnings, ventures with corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives emerge as hybrids, espousing financial performance while simultaneously addressing social and environmental issues, thereby broadening their scope of accountability from shareholders to include a wider array of stakeholders, and rights holders (Bouslah, Hmaïtane et al., 2023; Bygrave and Zacharakis, 2011; Dollinger, 2008; Koh et al., 2023). Socially responsible hybrid ventures pursue market opportunities that align with their social change agenda and focus on balancing commercial success with their social impact objectives characterized by a blend of market and mission-driven objectives (Bygrave and Zacharakis, 2011; Alter, 2003; Khieng and Dahles, 2015). Social entrepreneurs orchestrate this by mobilizing resources to address social needs, adopting market-based strategies to promote social innovation and transformation within their communities (Henriques et al., 2020; Colbourne, 2017; Dees, 1998). These ventures embody a commitment to social value, engaging in activities that yield both economic and social dividends, thereby contributing to community socio-economic health and well-being.

For hybrid ventures, there is a stronger emphasis on social impact, with profit generation serving to support community-oriented programs, epitomizing entrepreneurial venture creation aimed at facilitating community and/or societal socioeconomic benefits (Bornstein and Davis, 2010; Buratti et al., 2022; Bygrave and Zacharakis, 2011; Dees, 1998; Ricket et al., 2023). Finally, non-profit ventures are distinguished by a singular focus on some form of philanthropy that advances societal, cultural, environmental or other causes important to the entrepreneur (Laursen and Lough 2022; Steyaert and Hjorth, 2006; Stryjan, 2006).

Entrepreneurs are guided towards hybrid venture creation by a community’s identity, associated values, traditions and culture, and socioeconomic needs and objectives (Colbourne, 2017). Through engaging in community-based value creation activities, hybrid entrepreneurs seek to balance their personal experience, ambitions and value creation orientation with a community’s socioeconomic needs and priorities for social, cultural, spiritual and environmental value creation (Battilana et al., 2012; Colbourne, 2017; Murphy and Coombes, 2009). The non-mainstream status of traditionally marginalized communities carries several liabilities that prevents them from realizing their entrepreneurial potential and results in several practical issues and challenges. Consequently, many hybrid ventures adopt a value creation strategy that is responsive to their community’s socioeconomic needs and objectives to address issues related to just transitions as varied as poverty, healthcare, economic development, technology, environmental stewardship, education, and housing among others (Anderson et al., 2008; Dana and Anderson, 2011; Hindle, 2010; Murphy and Coombes, 2009). Hybrid ventures that decentre economic value creation face distinct challenges in managing risks associated with the highly interwoven dynamics of social, cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic value creation within the same venture (Ebrahim et al., 2014; Wilson and Post, 2011). Hybrid ventures, known as *differentiated* hybrids, address this risk through separating social, cultural and environmental value creation from economic value creation activities and invest a proportion of their profits into community socioeconomic health and wellbeing activities. *Integrated* hybrids, in contrast, combine, balance and blend (integrate) all value creation and socioeconomic health and wellbeing activities as being central to the venture’s mission and actions addressing community socioeconomic health and wellbeing needs and objectives (Ebrahim et al., 2014).

Hybrid entrepreneurial value creation, therefore, occurs in the context of strong social interrelationships and interdependencies that are embedded in community-based cultural and spiritual understandings, beliefs and practices and the particular geographical ecosystem within which a community is located. *Community embeddedness* is the nature, depth and extent of an individual entrepreneur or venture’s connection to community that enables them to understand local rules, practices and customs, access community resources and create and contribute value back to the community (Jack and Anderson, 2002; Seelos et al., 2011). The nature of an individual entrepreneur’s or a community-based venture’s embeddedness frames the hybrid venture’s opportunity recognition and value creation activities according to community needs, expectations and socioeconomic orientations (Colbourne, 2017); facilitates and/or constrains entrepreneurial venture creation and management activities (Johnstone and Lionais, 2004; McKeever et al., 2015; Seelos et al., 2011); and affects how and which social, cultural, political and/or economic resources might be extracted to contribute value back to the community (Jack and Anderson, 2002; McKeever et al., 2015).

The degree of embeddedness within a community influences a venture’s credibility, access to local knowledge and resources and

affects its ability to have a nuanced understanding of and practical insights into the formal and informal rules, customs, traditions, policies and procedures associated with a particular community to facilitate just transitions (Colbourne, 2017; Jack and Anderson, 2002; Kenney and Goe, 2004; Peredo et al., 2004; Peredo and McLean, 2010). Community value creation strategies are often informed by a community's overarching socioeconomic needs and objectives. The range of value creation strategies available to an entrepreneur may not easily be aligned to community needs or objectives or may conflict with its particular value creation beliefs and values thereby creating risk for the hybrid venture (Colbourne, 2017; Ebrahim et al., 2014). For example, with reference to individual versus community-based Indigenous entrepreneurship, collectivist-oriented cultures emphasize individual socio-economic interdependence within the community. Individuals act interdependently with others and value is placed on activities that benefit the community and sustain harmonious relations. Individual needs, wants and desires are subordinated to the collective needs of the community (Henry, 2007; Tassell et al., 2010; Thornton et al., 2011). Western individualist-oriented cultures are characterized by individual identities focused on satisfying personal needs, desires and wants. Individuals act in competition with others and value is placed on personal achievement and, in many cases, on the accumulation of wealth viewed as being superordinate to community needs (Henry, 2007; Tassell et al., 2010; Thornton et al., 2011). While non-community based hybrid ventures face inherent tensions in balancing and blending value creation activities in response to the external pressures of rights holders, shareholders and other interested parties (Murphy and Coombes, 2009; Russo et al., 2015), community embedded hybrid ventures are more dependent on community acceptance and support based on the venture's degree of alignment with the community's culture, values, traditions, socioeconomic needs and objectives (Colbourne, 2017).

To summarize, a hybrid venture creation model (Fig. 1) can be presented as a set of dynamic and nuanced interrelationships between the community's shared identity, associated objectives, the nature and degree of community embeddedness and comprehensive value creation encapsulating socio-economic, physical and mental health and well-being of the community.

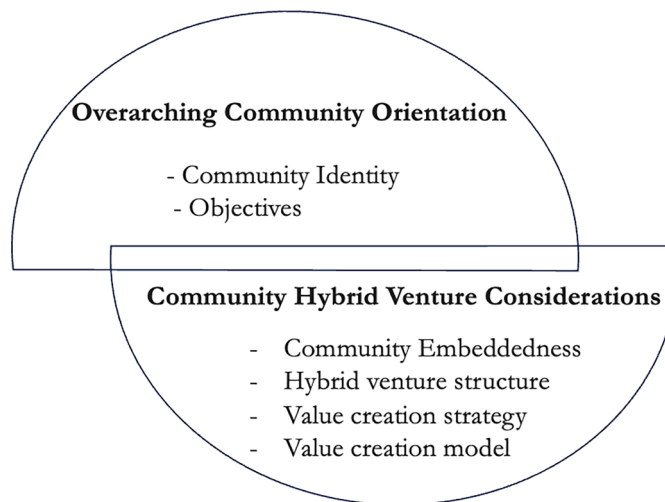
### 3. Methodology

To explore hybrid entrepreneurship as a form of alternative value-creation for the under-represented 'other', an interpretivist case study approach was chosen. This is highly appropriate as it allows for understanding ambiguous and complex issues (such as 'the otherness') in their natural contexts. Our case studies are purposefully selected to be distinct to illuminate different and contrasting angles of just transitions for 'the other'. Our data gathering methods are aligned with our qualitative research paradigm (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The first case is concerned with Indigenous entrepreneurship within the Nisichawayasihk community in Canada, focussing on the partnership between this community and Manitoba Hydro to develop the Wuskwatim Hydroelectric Generating Station project. Both primary and secondary data were collected for this case study. The primary data were sourced during January-June 2023 from 11 structured interviews and 10 sets of semi-structured conversations with diverse stakeholders, 3 blocks of participant observations, and several community participatory activities. Among primary data collection events were the 2023 Liberal Party Convention, where unstructured interviews with government officials and interactions with the executive director of the community development corporation took place, and a site visit to Northern Manitoba in May-June 2023. During the site visit, various locations were toured, including local businesses, housing sites, the Wuskwatim hydroelectric station, and a meeting with the community's Chief and Council took place. The duration of interviews and conversations varied from 20 min to 2 h. Secondary data, such as project reports and public information about the Wuskwatim project, offered essential contextual insights (See Table 2 for further detail on data sources).

The second case focuses on the Karachi Down Syndrome Programme (KDSP). This is a not-profit income generating enterprise founded and supported by the families affected by Down Syndrome. It provides wellbeing support for communities affected by Down Syndrome (DS) in Karachi, addressing opportunities and tensions embedded in societal transitions towards sustainable healthcare and better quality of life, and their implications for those who are "different" mentally and physically. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources during January 2021–February 2023. Primary sources included two sets of in-depth semi-structured interviews with the founders of the Karachi Down Syndrome Programme (KDSP), its Chief Executive Officer and Chief Operating Officer, as well as semi-structured conversations with KDSP teachers, therapists and two families supported by KDSP. Two site visits took place and one block of participant observation was carried out at the annual DS fair/gala organized by KDSP. The duration of the interviews varied from 45 min to 2.5 h, while informal conversations lasted between 20 min and an hour. Secondary sources such as KDSP's web and printed materials, Sindh Disability Act 2018 and supporting legislative orders as well as policy reports on disability issues in Pakistan (including those by British Council and Network of Organizations Working For People With Disabilities) provided further important contextual insights (See Table 3 for further detail on data sources).

Data in both case studies were analysed qualitatively, identifying themes related to community identity, objectives, and value creation. For each theme the data were of sufficient depth to enable us to deploy a theory elaboration process (Fisher and Aguinis, 2017). This confirmed that the theoretical saturation point was achieved. At this point, our intuitive model of hybrid entrepreneurship (Fig. 1), as informed by the existing literature, was interrogated by empirical observations from the two contrasting cases to develop new theoretical insights. Each case study's validity was ensured via the research team cross-checking with the respondents and conducting analysis of multiple data sources.





**Fig. 1.** Hybrid venture creation conceptual model.

**Table 2**

Data collection—the Wuskwatim project.

Data collection method	#	Description
Structured interviews	11	Conducted 11 structured interviews with key stakeholders in the Nisichawayasihk community and associated parties involved in the Wuskwatim project.
Semi-structured conversations	10	Engaged in 10 sets of semi-structured conversations with diverse stakeholders, allowing for flexibility and depth in exploring various perspectives and experiences.
Unstructured conversations		Engaged in informal unstructured conversations with government officials and community representatives during the 2023 Liberal Party Convention, enabling open-ended discussions.
Participant observation	3	Completed 3 blocks of participant observations, providing first-hand insight into community interactions and project-related activities within the Nisichawayasihk community.
Site visits	1	Performed site visits to Northern Manitoba in May-June 2023, touring local businesses, housing sites, the Wuskwatim hydroelectric station, and meeting with community leaders.
Community participatory activities		During the site visit, engaged in community activities to better understand the local context, community dynamics, and the impact of the project.
Secondary data analysis		Reviewed project reports and public information about the Wuskwatim project to provide essential contextual insights and complement primary data findings.

**Table 3**

Data collection—Karachi down syndrome programme.

Data collection method	#	Description
Structured interviews	5	Conducted 5 structured interviews with key stakeholders at KDSP.
Semi-structured conversations	10	Engaged in 10 sets of semi-structured conversations with diverse stakeholders (such as relatives of people with DS, doctors, staff at KDSP, therapists, trainers) allowing for flexibility and depth in exploring various perspectives and experiences.
Unstructured conversations		Engaged in informal, unstructured conversations with attendees at the annual KDSP awareness and fundraising campaign. This ticketed event is open to the public, and brings together KDSP beneficiaries, sponsors from supporting private and public organizations, and other key stakeholders.
Participant observation	3	Completed 3 blocks of participant observations, providing first-hand insight into community interactions and project-related activities within the KDSP community (for e.g., as silent observer in a training of staff, discussion between therapists and management etc.).
Site visits	1	Performed site visit to KDSP in 2022, engaged with key leaders and observed beneficiaries availing KDSP services. It allowed a nuanced understanding of the impact of the project especially in the context of vocational training, speech and physical therapies.
Community participatory activities		Participated in the annual KDSP gala over two years (2021 and 2022) where sponsors, KDSP management, KDSP beneficiaries, and general public come together to raise awareness and funds for the project.
Secondary data analysis		Reviewed project reports and public information about the KDSP project and existing institutional support for persons with DS to develop a historical and contextual sense of the KDSP project.

## 4. Case study one: the Wuskwatim project

### 4.1. The context

The Nisichawayasi Nehethowuk (Nisichawayasi) are descendants of people who lived at the confluence of the Burntwood, Footprint, and Rat rivers. They speak Nehetho, the language of the four winds. The Nisichawayasi have lived on their sacred lands (N'tuskenan) since ancient times, exercising sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> They follow the Great Law of the Creator and their own customary laws, guiding the behaviour of individuals, families, clans, and the Nation (Moody, 2019). Their culture is guided by stories about Wesahkechahk, a kind spirit, hero, and teacher. The lake where their reserve lands are located, Footprint Lake, is named after Wesahkechahk's footprints (NCN, 2023). Today, there are approximately 3500 community members living on reserve and 2700 living elsewhere who are members of NCN.

Indigenous Economic Development Corporations (IEDCs) are used by Indigenous communities to drive socioeconomic health and wellbeing and facilitate self-determination, self-governance and sovereignty through acting as a bridge between cultural values, socio-political strategies, and the broader market-driven economy (Cornell and Kalt, 2010; Coates, 2016). Key Features of IEDCs are as follows: (i) community-centric, prioritizing the community's socioeconomic health and well-being; (ii) can be involved in a wide range of sectors such as natural resource extraction, agriculture, tourism, real estate, retail, etc.; (iii) play a role in preserving and promoting the culture, values, and traditions of the Indigenous community; (iv) while economic value creation is essential for the sustainability of IEDCs, their primary goal is to achieve broader socioeconomic health, wellbeing and cultural objectives; and (v) IEDCs typically have a governance structure that reflects the interests and values of the community and may feature greater involvement of community members, youth elders and/or Chief and Council in decision-making processes.

In 1992, the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN) established the Nelson House Development Corporation (NHDC) to invest in economic ventures and generate revenue for the Nation (NCN, 2023x). NHDC generates around \$150 M in revenue annually, with up to \$40 M in profit (D. Kobliski, Personal Communication, May 2023). Surpluses are used to build new houses on the reserve due to severe overcrowding issues and the impact on youth (D. Kobliski, Personal Communication, May 2023). Their approach to entrepreneurship prioritizes cultural continuity, communal welfare, and environmental stewardship.

In the late 1960s, the Churchill River Diversion (CRD) Project, initiated to increase electricity generation capacity, faced opposition from NCN due to the environmental and cultural damage.

*'Water came up, up, up, up—it never stopped...Nobody expected it to be that bad'*

(Jerry Primrose, NCN community member; NCN, 2005).

*'Traditionally, you didn't live too far from the shoreline. That's where all the fur bearing animals, the birds, the rodents—that's where the life of most animals, nature, insects—that's where it happens. From the water level up to at least 50 or 100 feet up, which they call the Riparian Zone, that's the same thing with our tradition, our culture. We're part of that Riparian zone, and that was taken away' (Ron Spence, NCN Community Member; NCN, 2005).*

Yet, the project proceeded without any consultation with NCN. The Northern Flood Agreement (NFA) was signed in 1977, followed by a more autonomous agreement by NCN in 1996, which granted them control over the Nelson House Resource Management Area (NHRMA) and compensation for the damages. Soon after the NFA signing, Manitoba Hydro unveiled plans for a 350 MW generating station at Taskinigup Falls near Nelson House, within the NHRMA. When the federal government issued a construction permit, NCN threatened a \$1.6B lawsuit for violation of NFA Article 8 and lack of consultation. Consequently, the permit was rescinded, and Manitoba Hydro was instructed to secure an agreement with NCN before proceeding. Using the stipulations of the NFA, the updated 1996 version, the subsequently written NCN procurement policy, and NCN's inherent rights as specified in Treaty 5 and Section 35 of the Constitution, NCN's leadership was able to opt-out of a dynamic reflective of the "old way" of destruction and exploitation and opt-in to a true partnership model shaped by the Nation to align with the values and objectives of the community and generate substantial value in accordance with the Nisichawayasi understanding of the meaning of economic development.

NCN insisted on owning a stake in the generating station and rejected initial offers of 5 % revenue sharing and 10 % asset ownership from Manitoba Hydro. Ultimately, NCN secured 33 % ownership through loan-funded investments, marking a unique partnership between a First Nation and a utility company. This led to the formation of The Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership, and NCN is projected to earn about \$54 million annually post-loan repayment. NCN's negotiation resulted in their substantial control and participation in the project.

### 4.2. Community identity

The Nisichawayasi-Manitoba Hydro partnership and the development of the Wuskwatim Hydroelectric Generating Station is an example of the transformative potential of Indigenous entrepreneurship and hybrid value creation and the ability of community-based ventures to generate sustainable socioeconomic benefits that align with the values and aspirations of the community to facilitate socioeconomic health and well-being. The Nisichawayasi Cree Nation (NCN) successfully asserted their rights and sovereignty, shaping

<sup>1</sup> More detail on the notion of sovereignty is available here: <https://www.theindigenousfoundation.org/articles/indigenous-sovereignty>; <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/aboriginal-self-government>;

the project according to their cultural and spiritual aspirations, experiences, and objectives. By asserting sovereignty and indigenizing economic opportunities according to the community's values, beliefs and worldviews, NCN facilitated community self-determination and greater self-sufficiency. The generation of own-source revenues enabled them to be responsive in pursuing the community's socio-economic objectives free from restrictive government funding conditions and interference that overwhelm many communities' Chief and Council with onerous Federal government-mandated reporting requirements.

*'Conditions diminish the ability of the First Nation to meet local needs and accessing funding consumes substantial amounts of time writing proposals, completing compliance reports, arguing over expense eligibility, and waiting through slow turn-around processes' (Anonymous, IEDC, 2023).*

As described above, community identity is vital for setting the structure, organization and objectives of community ventures, as it influences the venture strategies deployed, and metrics of success. In the case of the Nisichawayasi community, Indigenous identity (indigeneity) was central to the formation and execution of the Wuskwatim project. The community held several meetings to discuss the project, allowing every member to voice their opinions and concerns. Community engagement and consultation ensured that the community's socio-economic objectives were addressed, and community identity was preserved and promoted throughout the project. The community is characterized by a strong adherence to their values, beliefs and worldview, notably their connection to their traditional territory—the land and water. This underpinned their decision to participate in the Wuskwatim project, as NHDC and the Nisichawayasi community viewed the project as a mechanism for asserting sovereignty and as an opportunity to protect and sustain their natural resources. This commitment was manifested in their insistence on including environmental protection clauses in their agreement with Manitoba Hydro.

*'With Wuskwatim, there was an engagement of the local First Nation community in the process of monitoring—environmental and socio-economic and also from the perspective of traditional knowledge, (Anonymous, consultant, 2023).*

The Nisichawayasi community's involvement in the Wuskwatim project can be seen as a strategic act of self-determination through asserting sovereignty over their traditional territory. While the Wuskwatim project faced various challenges, including negotiation hurdles with Manitoba and differing opinions within the community, the community decided to opt into the project on their own terms to ensure that their values, beliefs and world views were respected and that the project's outcomes facilitated their socioeconomic health and well-being.

#### 4.3. Community embeddedness

The Wuskwatim project was originally presented to NCN as a low-embedded, differentiated hybrid venture in which a small amount of generated surplus could be directed toward community spending by the NCN Band Council. After a years-long process of community engagement and indigenization, NCN transformed the Wuskwatim project into a highly embedded integrated hybrid venture, gaining sufficient community support to pass a referendum without interference, and generating significant socioeconomic returns across the spectrum of NCN's community values. The project created significant employment income for community members and own-source revenue that supports NCN's objectives of self-sufficiency and self-government.

It is notable that the project followed a lifecycle of three distinct phases that is characteristic of some Indigenous entrepreneurial

**Table 4**  
Value creation in the Wuskwatim project.

Project	Description
Economic	Electricity generation revenue, \$54 million annually for the next Seven Generations Building supplies income Road and infrastructure income Worker camp contract income Worker camp supplies income Aski' Otutoskeo income ATEC training centre construction income Other indirect economic benefits
Social	ATEC training centre opportunities Employment within and beyond the Wuskwatim project Pride from asserting sovereignty, self-government, Indigenous Knowledge, and success in self-sufficiency, negotiation, governance, management, environmental stewardship, and work ethic and quality Strengthening of Indigenous identity, Indigenous Knowledge, and elder-community connection Continued benefits resulting from own-source revenues including those from building new houses
Cultural	Strengthening of governing institutions as a result of working through community consultations, Wuskwatim referendum, and continued community engagement Strengthening of Indigenous knowledge through practice Creation of a pathway for elder knowledge to flow to the next generation via Aski' Otutoskeo Creation of the Wuskwatim story now told within the community, providing many teachings and pillars of identity
Environmental	Prevention of flooding Prevention of disturbance to waterways from access road Other practice of Indigenous Knowledge



ventures. In the first phase, sovereignty was asserted to challenge economic venture creation activities by the Manitoba government that featured differentiated ventures that were characterized by low community embeddedness and, therefore, low socioeconomic value to the community. In the second phase, the Nation took control of the opportunity to facilitate the creation of an integrated and highly embedded venture that addressed the socioeconomic needs of the community and considered the community's values, beliefs, spirituality and traditional practices for opting into regional economic development opportunities. As an integrated entrepreneurial venture, it created socioeconomic value that facilitated socioeconomic community health and well-being and asserted sovereignty, self-governance and self-determination. Finally, in the third phase, the community's entrepreneurial venture transformed into a differentiated, low embedded venture based on the changing nature of the project going from construction and high levels of community employment towards a working dam that requires minimal maintenance and management in which the value generated by the venture is increasingly focused on economic value creation. In the case of Wuskwatim, few employees are required on site, little about its operation changes day by day, and the generating station is out of sight and out of mind of the community. Once this community based entrepreneurial venture reverted to being a low embedded, differentiated venture, 75 % of the revenues go to the community to finance institution and nation building activities while 25 % of the revenues are retained by the community's economic development corporation to be reinvested into other entrepreneurial venture creation opportunities that facilitate community socioeconomic health and well-being.

#### 4.4. Value creation

Indigenous entrepreneurship and hybrid value creation moves beyond prioritizing financial return as the sole purpose of economic activity. The Quadruple Bottom Line approach can be used to further understand the Nisichawayasi community's approach to value creation through exploring the interaction of social, cultural, spiritual, and environmental value creation with economic value creation (Table 4). The pursuit of these additional socioeconomic values varies based on the level of embeddedness of a venture within the community. As a result, community-based entrepreneurship and hybrid venture strategies may be expressed across a diverse portfolio of ventures, each with its own value creation strategy and degree of community embeddedness (Colbourne, 2017). The Quadruple Bottom Line framework, grounded in Indigenous perspectives, provides a lens for understanding the community's value creation strategies as reflected in the Wuskwatim project across the following dimensions: community, spirituality, sustainability and entrepreneurship.

The Nisichawayasi community's overarching socio-economic needs and objectives are centered around sovereignty, self-determination and self-government. They seek to create economic, social, cultural, and environmental value that aligns with their culture, values, beliefs, worldviews, and socioeconomic needs. These objectives informed the community's value creation strategies and guided their engagement with the Wuskwatim project. From the perspective of the community dimension, the Nisichawayasi community and NHDC asserted their values, beliefs and worldviews (indigeneity) to emphasize the importance of their traditional territory and cultural practices for informing which value creation strategies and how these will be engaged through community-based entrepreneurial and hybrid venture creation practices. In the case of the Wuskwatim project, the community's ownership and control of the project demonstrates their commitment to asserting sovereignty to facilitate self-governance. NCN's 33 % ownership in the Wuskwatim station, achieved through the Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership, exemplifies active participation in regional economic development activities on their own terms. Integrating the dimension of spirituality asserts and inserts Indigenous ways of knowing and being actively into the community's hybrid venture creation activities. NCN's engagement with the community's Indigenous knowledge, beliefs, values, and traditions is exemplified by the company Aski' Otutoskeo. Aski' Otutoskeo conducts environmental impact studies according to the Nisichawayasi community's customs and practices, incorporating Woodland Cree Indigenous knowledge which ensures that the project aligns with the community's spiritual and cultural values. Economic sustainability, resilience, and environmental sustainability are crucial aspects of value creation addressed by the dimension of sustainability. The Nisichawayasi community's and NHDC's focus on generating own-source revenues through the Wuskwatim project contributes to their economic sustainability. The annual revenue of approximately \$54 million for the next Seven Generations supports the community's needs and objectives for facilitating socioeconomic health and well-being. Additionally, opting for a low-head dam and reducing flooding to 0.5 square kilometers, demonstrated the community's commitment to environmental sustainability. Finally, the dimension of entrepreneurship accounts for social, economic, and environmental factors related to the community's socioeconomic needs and objectives. NHDC's partnership with Manitoba Hydro and their active participation in all aspects of the Wuskwatim project exemplify this dimension. They negotiated for 33 % ownership of the asset, ensuring a meaningful stake in the project's success. They also engaged in construction activities, such as the access road and the worker camp, which provided employment opportunities and control over the project's execution.

The partnership between Nisichawayasi and Manitoba Hydro showcased an important approach to Indigenous entrepreneurship and hybrid venture creation, with a broad view of value creation extending beyond mere economic gains. The Wuskwatim project served as a testament to the power of indigeneity in influencing economic development strategies that also address social, cultural, and environmental value creation. The Nisichawayasi community effectively maintained and asserted their Indigenous identity in the project's execution. This formed a strong basis for decision-making, reflecting the community's indigeneity, and ensuring the project's outcomes promoted community-based socioeconomic health and well-being. The project displayed a high degree of connection and understanding of the Nisichawayasi community's values, beliefs and worldviews, exemplifying the importance that embeddedness has in the creation and sustainability of Indigenous community-based entrepreneurship and hybrid venture creation.

## 5. Case study two: Karachi down syndrome program (KDSP)

### 5.1. The context

Down's Syndrome is a genetic condition causing developmental delays and changes related to physical features and intellectual disabilities (CDC, 2003). It can also lead to medical difficulties such as heart and gastrointestinal issues. Scientific advances in predicting Down-Syndrome (DS) in newborns are aimed at improving the lives and well-being of affected families. Yet, they may also be associated with a complex interplay of ethical and religious and/or spiritual dilemmas for families and communities who have to consider their core values and beliefs in order to deal with the issue. For instance, some studies show how religious discourse intertwines with cultural understandings to shape perceptions about conditions such as DS (Bryant et al., 2011). The birth of a child with a certain health condition can be perceived as "God's will" and viewed positively as 'being chosen'. Yet, it can also be viewed in some communities as divine punishment for the parents. Such complex and dichotomous interpretations are known to exist across different religions such as Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam (Selway and Ashman, 1998). There is evidence of stigma surrounding conditions such as DS which leads to reduced social interaction, self-imposed isolation, and seclusion (Daudji et al., 2011) on the part of the affected families. Studies argue that most of these problems are not due to negative attitudes or empathy but because of lack of knowledge, social support and resources (Ingstad, 2007).

KDSP is a non-profit income generating hybrid enterprise that came into existence in 2005 to battle limited support and resources available for those with DS in Pakistan. It was formed with the mission to advocate the value, acceptance and inclusion of people with DS and provide them with the opportunity to lead independent and fulfilling lives. KDSP positions itself as a community tied together by solidarity and shared commitment to address the needs of people with DS. It strives for empowerment, inclusion and the right for individuals with DS to be equal members of society. The venture's income is generated via a combination of pay for services and fundraising activities.

### 5.2. Community identity

Six families with members affected by Down Syndrome, collectively started the Karachi Down's Syndrome Program (KDSP), a not-for-profit, Shariah compliant Section 42 organization, reporting to and regulated by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), in 2005. This particular legal form of KDSP provided the right fit for the purpose. The six founding families were economically affluent and could afford healthcare available in the developed Western world. Yet, recognizing the social entrepreneurial opportunity and driven by the desire to build an inclusive social support and healthcare system for their community and in their home country, they deployed personal resources to build KDSP. They identified a clear need for an organization such as KDSP to support families with similar circumstances not only locally but also regionally. They also understood the risks involved, given the overall misconceptions about DS, and uncertain payoffs from a social and healthcare enterprise. They also realized that their own family's psychological wellbeing depended on being close to their Pakistani roots. One of the founding members decided to take up the on-ground management of KDSP assuming the responsibility of KDSP's CEO, in its initial years of inception, to 'stay and fight' instead of relocating with their daughter, who had DS, to the US. In the words of this founding member, the fight entailed setting up and running KDSP.

*'As far as Down's Syndrome is concerned, nobody was doing anything about it in Pakistan. We said we have to and there's no option for us. The choice was to get up and leave but then we would be like other expat Pakistanis who leave. The other was to stay and fight because we had a strong identity in Pakistan, and we chose that option. I always had an inclination toward social service. And this is what's proving to be just the perfect recipe, you know, an intrinsic motivation. ...my wife had a background in social service...we were blessed by God with resources and supportive families.... everything just fit'. (Anonymous, founding member).*

Emulating characteristics of hybrid ventures, seeking to address a complex and multi-layered issue with multiple stakeholders, the KDSP has built a community through prioritizing and blending social, spiritual, cultural, economic value creation activities. According to the founders, KDSP works like 'Noah's Ark,' bringing affected families and members out of the storm and bonding them with those who care about DS and are committed to make a difference.

*'KDSP is a very unique organization not only in Pakistan but worldwide. We offer a one-stop solution for those who need to deal with Down's Syndrome which is rare for any organization. It provides the kind of services that you would find in a developed country. Our services are comprehensive, so anybody who has anything to do with Down's Syndrome just needs to connect with us. Families with DS that come to us, we give them a metaphorical hug and we tell them it's going to be okay. Here (in Pakistan) we are told that people with Down's Syndrome are very dependent, but we found out after interacting with doctors in the US that there are many success stories globally. We have musicians who have Down's Syndrome, actors who have Down's Syndrome, business owners and even chefs (Anonymous, founding member).*

KDSP is embedded in Pakistani culture, grounded in collectivist values and traditions, intertwined with Islamic religious prescriptions that shape expectations, behaviours and objectives. As such, KDSP reflects the collectivistic orientation of the founding members, underpinned by the religious (Muslim) values and local culture. Yet, the non-mainstream and marginalized status of people with DS makes it challenging to realize their potential (e.g., many community members have to live in seclusion due to non-acceptance and stigmas associated with being the 'other'). The founders seek to reduce the extent of such challenges by blending their personal experiences and value creation orientation with the community's socio-economic and socio-cultural priorities and needs and

envisioning an alternative social-justice centred model for those cognitively and physically diverse:

*‘There are four ways to look at the issue. The first is the so-called ‘medical model’ which classifies someone as disabled based on a medical assessment; based on appearance and characteristics. The second is the ‘charity model’ which is traditional and seeks to financially help those with disabilities. The third is the so-called ‘judgment model’ in which we see all kinds of judgments being passed such as saying that someone is disabled because of a curse or something that he or his family did. The final way to look at the issue is through the ‘social model’ which looks at how people with a disability navigate barriers that they face because of the society they live in, such as problems related to inequality, accessibility, systems, or because they stem from policy, or its lack thereof’ (Anonymous Senior Manager).*

### 5.3. Community embeddedness

Because the founders have relatives with DS, they feel they have extra credibility within the community. This helps them to get access to resources and develop a nuanced understanding of the needs of the DS community and how these can be reconciled with the formal and informal rules, customs, traditions, policies and procedures within the wider community. Such community embeddedness of the founders and managers allows KDSP to leverage cultural and religious practices and customs, to extract value and to contribute value back to the broader community, socially, economically and culturally.

Having set out the initial objective of creating awareness, KDSP moved to developing family support groups and then progressed towards early childhood intervention knowing that the first 100 days of their lives are very important for children born with DS. This is underpinned by two core promises: (i) there will be no compromise on the quality of services offered and (ii) no one will be refused service if they are unable to pay. To deliver on its first promise, KDSP’s staff recruitment and pay model adopts a market approach. KDSP tries to offer competitive employment packages to recruit and retain high quality employees. Volunteering is considered as a short-term solution only. Another investment priority is continuous staff development. For instance, KDSP provides a specialized training in ‘compassionate treatment’ of people with DS and has a related programme of KDSP champions. Having developed its international network, KDSP actively uses it for the purposes of upskilling its staff. From the operational and governance points of view, KDSP ensures the quality of its services via applying the principles of transparency and accountability. To illustrate, a team of about five therapists report to a head of department who is an internationally qualified physical therapist. The head of department is further guided by an international physician in the USA. The physical therapy sessions are recorded with prior consent of children and guardians and then viewed and audited by the senior therapist to ensure the quality of delivery to the clients. Reviews and analysis of training, coaching and resource needs are integral part of day-to-day operations.

*‘We are working for the marginalized community. We want to provide high quality services, and naturally the costs are going to be high, but we charge the families almost nothing. We get donations, sponsorships, grants, etc. We don’t let the fact that someone cannot pay come in the way of providing them with services. We never turned away anyone who said that they were short of paying the bill’ (Anonymous, founding member).*

To deliver on the second promise, KDSP mobilizes its financial aid and Zakat<sup>2</sup> funds. These are used to enable families to benefit from their service as well as to cover their travel expenses. No eligible family is denied service at KDSP. This is achieved through maintaining a flexible pricing mechanism, taking into account personal financial circumstances of the affected families. Approximately, 94 % of the KDSP families are benefiting from subsidized services. Zakat and other financial donations, grants and sponsorships are the main source of price waivers. A small fraction of these funds is also used to support raising awareness and marketing activities. However, the founders are reluctant to spend too much on marketing, prioritising the immediate needs of the families. For instance, empowering and equipping families with the skills and knowledge to support their children is one of the high priority tasks, especially when the families wait for their therapy course to be available to them. While the scale of operations has nearly doubled in recent years, increasing from 350 to 400 weekly surgeries to approximately 600, the scope of support has widened as well to cover children up to the age of 7, as compared to up to the age of 3 previously. This has left KDSP with a waiting list of up to 200 families for each type of therapy (such as speech, occupational and physical therapy). To address the issue, KDSP connects families on the waiting list to other service providers so that they can get home plans and practice these with their children while being supported over phone by the KDSP staff.

### 5.4. Value creation

At the heart of the value creation strategy of KDSP are the community’s overarching socioeconomic needs. As a community embedded differentiated hybrid venture, it is very much dependent on the broader community’s acceptance and support. The challenge for KDSP is to manage the risks inherent in ensuring a sustained and ongoing link between its economic value creation activities and the social needs and outcomes that they are seeking to address. To mitigate these risks, KDSP makes sure that value creation activities are clearly articulated and aligned with the community’s socioeconomic needs and objectives (Table 5). KDSP follows a value creation model called *KASHTI*. (*Kashti* in Urdu is the equivalent of a boat in English). Each letter in the *KASHTI* acronym refers to an

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the Five Pillars of Islam. It represents a payment made annually under Islamic law on certain kinds of property and used for charitable and religious purposes.

**Table 5**  
Value creation at the Karachi down syndrome program.

Activities	Description	Value created (KASHTI)
Advanced training of families with children with Down syndrome. Social interaction between families with children with Down syndrome and other members of community.	There are approximately 1100 registered families benefiting from KDSP's services.	Family support (Khandani Sahara). Spaces for interactions are created for families with DS to grow networks, empathy and inclusivity.
Annual fundraising, carnivals, concerts, social media campaigns, out of home billboards.	Share knowledge through mass media; ensuring everyone in the society becomes responsible.	Awareness (Agaahi). Information and knowledge are shared with the citizens through different campaigns to create awareness; acceptance and responsibility; young volunteers are invited to manage these campaigns which also increases engagement.
Raising funds through Zakat, calls for philanthropic contributions from international donors and corporations in Pakistan.	Enable families to help individuals with Down syndrome live independent lives.	Affordable Healthcare (Sehat); Philanthropists and religiously inclined individuals are invited to contribute in kind; efforts made to make a difference in the lives of the DS community that are sustainable.
Vocational trainings	Train people with Down syndrome in a vocation.	Enrichment and skills development (Hunar). A regular feature of KDSP is its vocational training, which keeps individuals with Down syndrome not only intellectually stimulated but also helps them adopt skills that can benefit them in the long run
Partnering with 16 mainstream schools.	Inclusion of people affected by Down syndrome in mainstream schools.	Education and training (Taleem). KDPS not only provides basic education but also partners with mainstream schools that invite applications from individuals with Down syndrome, offering them learning spaces with other children. This improves lives, fosters acceptance, and creates a culture of inclusion and equal opportunity.
Early childhood intervention	Physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy form a part of early childhood intervention.	Early intervention (Ibtidai bunyad). A comprehensive program of physical therapy, exercise, and activities to improve gross motor and fine motor skills, language, social development, and self-help skills.
Customised occupational therapy sessions.	Use everyday activities to enhance the quality of life by supporting mental and physical health development.	Occupational therapy sessions to master skills for independence through self-care, such as feeding and dressing, fine and gross motor skills, school performance, and play and leisure activities.
Physical and speech therapy sessions, delivered by local experts in collaboration with international supervisors.	Therapies designed to enable individuals with Down syndrome to lead independent lives, focusing especially on the first 100 days of a child's life.	Physical therapy develops lung function and gross motor skills by using the large muscles that help the child with neck holding, independent sitting, walking, and running. Speech therapy aids in day-to-day communication, enhances social interaction skills, and helps break the communication barriers that exist when a child has speech and language development delays.
Administration independent of founding members.	Organization managed by a CEO and overseen by an independent/autonomous board.	Transparency and trust; to ensure that the Program runs independently of the founders and the cause remains bigger than the persons behind it.
Lobbying with the government.	Get Down syndrome individuals recognized as Pakistani citizens; get land for a purpose-built infrastructure.	Institutional inclusion; creating value by lobbying and pushing for inclusive laws (for example labour laws; workplace laws).

Urdu term that represents KDSP's strategic aims. 'K' stands for '*Khandani Sahara*' which means 'family support' indicating that KDSP services extend to the families of individuals with DS. This is also a clear reference to collectivist Pakistani culture. 'A' is for 'Agaahi' which means 'awareness'. This is to emphasize the role of sharing information and knowledge about DS through different channels in transitioning towards a society that embeds empathy and inclusivity for individuals with DS. 'S' is for '*Sehat*' which literally translates into 'health' and KDSP's service of 'healthcare at affordable cost'. 'H' stands for '*Hunar*' which means 'skills' and is referring to KDSP's programmes to develop skills and competencies of individuals with DS and train them in a vocation. 'T' is for '*Taleem*' which means 'education'. This is to stress the importance of ensuring and enabling a seamless integration of children with DS into mainstream schools. Finally, 'I' stands for '*Ibtidai bunyad*' which means 'early childhood intervention' and is offered by KDSP through tailor made occupational, physical and speech therapies to help people with DS to lead independent lives.

To achieve its sustainability, KDSP's value creation model appeals to both religious and community values. Nearly 90 % of KDSP operations are funded by Zakat (Muslim almsgiving) and other donations, grants and sponsorships including those by affluent Pakistani and international philanthropists, socially responsible organisations, and religious charities, with the remainder coming from KDSP's specific interventions. The latter are expected to accelerate and consolidate through establishing a KDSP endowment. The overwhelming majority (up to 98 %) of KDSP's benefactors are regular donors, as the founders' integrity, vision and embeddedness have become important pillars underpinning the sustainability of the value creation model at KDSP. This is also purposefully leveraged, using the rich social capital of founding members, to shift the focus from individual donations to institutional collaborations. Engaging with the government has gained KDSP further resources and authenticity that enable it to define and address the needs and challenges of the DS community. Through its active dialogue with the government, KDSP has been able to convince legislators to

recognize this population and their rights (e.g., via issuing them with a National Identity Card). This techno-legal solution represents a first step in getting full information about the scale of DS in Pakistan that is being addressed by KDSP and other stakeholders, directly or indirectly, working for the same community. It also helps to enhance the social acceptability of DS people and bring them into the orbit of social life. Having positively influenced the attitude of the government towards the DS community in terms of awareness, recognition and inclusion, KDSP has initiated consultations to get land for a purpose-built regional centre of excellence, which would be the first of its kind in Pakistan. The KDSP founders are considering scaling up their operations to set up a second center of excellence in the federal capital, which could give them an opportunity to serve families from other parts of the country (as its central location promises ease of accessibility), while having less restrictions (due to the federal jurisdiction) and having more national and international visibility to advocate the DS cause. Having observed this progress, it is difficult to imagine that only a few years ago KDSP operated in a small space with one speech therapy room, one physical and occupational therapy room, and three other small multi-purpose rooms.

Finally, one more important factor underpinning the KDSP value creation model is its governance and accountability mechanisms. KDSP's strategic direction is guided by its Board of Directors. The Board is an elected body, regulated by Companies Act of Pakistan. The outgoing Board elects the incoming Board, on a one member one vote basis, from the interested applicants of the general public, for a period of three years. The Board and its Audit Committee oversees KDSP's budget and monetary flows. The Board through its Resource Committee proactively guides the fundraising efforts of KDSP, by facilitating campaigns, assisting with grant applications, identifying potential candidates for corporate sponsorships, and promoting opportunity for donations and Zakat. Importantly, the CEO of KDSP maintains independence from the founders, by focussing on ensuring an effective management of the enterprise and its 100 employees.

## 6. Concluding discussion

In this study, we sought to examine the potential of hybrid entrepreneurship in just transitions. In doing so, we have elaborated on how entrepreneurs and their hybrid ventures, through their responses to their immediate environment, can effectively create spaces of alterity that challenge mainstream visions for sustainability transitions and offer alternative forms of organizing to facilitate equitable outcomes for marginalized communities (Feola, 2020; Feola et al., 2021; Gálóczi 2022; Heffron, 2021; Wang and Lo, 2021). Our focus of attention is on two distinct case studies that empirically illuminate pathways and forms of value creation by 'the other' and/or for 'the other'. In each case study we observe how the imperatives of socio-technological progress can be associated with the risks of being left behind for those considered different (such as Indigenous populations or individuals with Down Syndrome and their families, respectively). Yet, each case demonstrates that an alternative hybrid entrepreneurship approach, with a broad view of value creation extending beyond mere economic outcomes, significantly mitigates risks across different contexts, each featuring unique characteristics that shape differing sustainability transitions. The contrasting nature of the two cases enables us to demonstrate the viability of the hybrid venture creation model (featuring community identity and community embeddedness) that makes it possible to organize collective learning, co-create actions and influence institutions to amplify the voices and interests of 'the other'. Furthermore, in each case we observe how the hybrid venture leverages place and non-place-based strategies, rooted in their identity, to empower the marginalized for inclusive and just transitions. We now proceed to elaborate in more detail how our findings related to our key constructs such as marginalization/vulnerability, community embeddedness/community identity, and place illuminate and advance the field of transitions.

### 6.1. Overlooked vulnerability and marginalization as a focus of hybrid ventures

Through addressing the vulnerabilities of communities that have been subject to colonization, oppression and marginalization and often unseen in mainstream sustainability transitions, hybrid entrepreneurship, we show, plays a critical role in facilitating economic and socio-cultural health and wellbeing. As such, our findings pave the way for expanding the theoretical basis for studying hybrid ventures as an alternative form of enterprise that challenges mainstream neoliberal logics of dealing with vulnerable and marginalized communities (Battilana et al., 2022; Besharov and Mitzinneck, 2020; Lortie et al., 2022), and creates alternative trajectories and configurations for enabling just transitions (Feola, 2020). While in both contexts studied we can see an engagement with market-centred frameworks and narratives, our hybrid enterprise cases are far from being an extension of neoliberalism (Nicholls and Teasdale, 2016). In both cases there is strong evidence of challenging and 'unmaking' neoliberal approaches by focussing on the beneficiaries and their alternative value systems (Feola et al., 2021; Sharma, 2016). The Wuskwatim project represents a powerful challenge to the forces of colonization, enabling the community to assert sovereignty over their territories and reclaim control over resources to ensure that socioeconomic activities align with their cultural and spiritual values. KDSP's hybrid model addresses the vulnerabilities and marginalization experienced by individuals and families living with DS by challenging and reshaping the perceptions and treatment of individuals with DS. It mobilizes care, promotes inclusion, and drives advocacy for those who encounter stigma, social isolation, and inadequate support services.

### 6.2. Just transitions through inherent venture embeddedness in community identity

The interlock between community identity and an individual entrepreneur and/or venture is central to the success of hybrid ventures in just transitions. The community's identity and worldview inform and frame socioeconomic activities of ventures through foregrounding certain values over others (i.e. social, cultural, environmental over economic). In advancing the theorization of 'just



transition-centred' entrepreneurship, both case studies emphasize the strategic importance of community embeddedness in embracing the diversity of value priorities and non-economic decision-making logics, that are often undervalued by sustainability frameworks (Feola, 2020; Feola and Jaworska, 2019). The capability to navigate the intricacies of community embeddedness by a venture/individual entrepreneur appears to be essential in mitigating issues and challenges in alleviating dilemmas facing the underrepresented communities and facilitating just transitions on communities' own terms. Embeddedness emerges as a central consideration and mechanism for a hybrid venture, defining the nature, depth, and complexity of the interrelationships between a community's shared identity and the venture's value creation scope and strategies.

In the case of the Nelson House Development Corporation and the Wuskwatim Hydroelectric Project, they guided the venture's formation, management and its strategies for value creation. Understanding community identity and the degree of embeddedness were at the heart of recognizing, respecting and integrating Indigeneity in community-based hybrid venture creation. It was essential for uncovering the necessity for venture partners (i.e., government, non-Indigenous corporations) to understand and navigate the nuances of community embeddedness to realize successful, community- and culturally-aligned joint ventures. As evidenced by our case of Indigenous ventures, community embeddedness enables implementing a fundamental, comprehensive and long-term change across socio-political, socio-cultural, economic and ecological domains to recognize the diversity of Indigenous peoples and the right to self-identification; sovereignty over their traditional territories, and reinforce Indigenous traditional cultural, economic, social or political practices, values and institutions. In the case of KDSP, the high degree of community embeddedness, due to the founders being closely related to individuals with Down syndrome, is a significant factor in its credibility. This credibility facilitates access to resources and helps develop a deep understanding of the DS community's needs. The founders' personal connections with DS enhance trust within the community, enabling KDSP to design its services in culturally sensitive ways. The founders' grounding in collectivist values and Islamic identities of Pakistani culture enables them to challenge the status of individuals with DS as non-mainstream and marginalized. Having adopted a community-embedded approach, KDSP's founders are empowered to drive an inclusive environment that is aligned with the community's broader needs and priorities. This is noticeable in the way KDSP builds its KASHTI value creation model that integrates family support, awareness, health, skills, education, and early intervention, reinforcing the underlying community values and reaffirming an alternative value system oriented towards care and social cohesion.

One particular contributing finding emerging from this discourse on the community identity/community embeddedness is related to spiritual and cultural legacies. These are shown to play a critical role in calling for and implementing fundamental changes to address the needs of 'the other'. In both cases, hybrid enterprises emerge as an effective mechanism by which the 'other' manage to establish, maintain, assert and activate their spiritual and cultural identity on their own terms. This creates a strong basis for decision-making, reflecting the underlying community needs and ensuring that the outcomes of the enterprise promote the community's socio-economic, physical, and emotional health and well-being.

### 6.3. Attachment to place and common interest

Discussions about just transitions often revolve around place and people-place relationships (Raymond et al., 2023). Similarly, rootedness, belonging, connections, and attachment to place are fundamental in shaping hybrid entrepreneurship. For instance, we show that Indigenous venture creation occurs in the context of strong social interrelationships and interdependencies that are embedded in cultural and spiritual understandings, beliefs and practices and the particular geographical and environmental ecosystem within which a community is situated. For the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, their cultural practices, spirituality and language are deeply rooted in the place of their traditional territories. The development of the Wuskwatim Hydroelectric Generating Station is not merely an economic project; it is acting on sovereignty and self-determination, and on the local community's values of environmental stewardship. This emphasizes the critical positioning of place-based hybrid ventures in harnessing local spatial contexts to facilitate just transitions that respect and uplift community identity. By contrast, although physically based in Karachi, KDSP operates within a 'non-place' context, transcending geographic boundaries to connect families affected by Down syndrome across Pakistan and beyond. Non-place based communities are known to generate so called 'nodes' or 'clusters' that are geographically confined, and serve as a source of new opportunities and ideas (e.g. Silicon Valley in the context of an otherwise dispersed community of digital technology professionals) (Bradshaw, 2008). Similarly, Karachi becomes such a node for dispersed communities affected by DS, leveraging and blending both digital and physical connectivity to create supportive networks.

In both cases, we observe hybrid entrepreneurs that perform the function of expanding resources, capacities and competencies available to their communities by linking with and influencing stakeholders at different geographical scales. Additionally, in the case of KDSP's non-place-based community, creating geography-free solidarity around a common interest or challenge (such as ensuring a quality of life for 'the other,' i.e., those affected by Down syndrome) becomes the essential mechanism for building, maintaining, and growing the community. We find that the opportunity to pool resources and expertise across different regional, national and international jurisdictions was critical for the non-place based community of KDSP. It provided flexibility when solving problems and overcoming rigidities of local structures (Rosenbloom, 2012). The actualisation of this opportunity, in turn, is possible due to the inherent ability of a hybrid venture to compartmentalize the complex challenge underpinning the identity of the community and recognize the diversity of interests and motivations of participating community members (e.g., see Table 5). This is a contributing finding in the context of the just transition literature, typically struggling to identify practical workable models of how such transitions can be implemented (Wang and Lo, 2021; Weller, 2019). KDSP exemplifies how a hybrid venture is capable of adopting a more fluid meaning of place that transcends traditional geographical limitations in order to increase the flexibility and adaptability of the venture, as well as to position it as a key resource advocating for marginalized communities. However, this also creates a serious challenge when an increase in demand for KDSP services largely comes from socio-economically disadvantaged groups unable to cover the cost of



treatment. This is an important finding, revealing the conflicting nature of network effects generated by non-place-based communities centered on the needs of 'the vulnerable other,' where an increase in value generated by the network is associated with an increase in the risks of not delivering the required support.

To conclude, by providing space for the spectrum of alternative value systems and associated value creation processes, the hybrid entrepreneurship model emerges in our analysis as inherently inclusive, forward-looking and contextually organic to both Western and non-Western interpretations of living-well in just transitions. These properties, one can argue, make this model indispensable for facilitating justice and equity in sustainability transitions, particularly focusing on marginalized communities or 'the other'. The underpinning conceptual framework (Fig. 1) proposed and interrogated by us in this study enables the examination of how hybrid ventures foster culturally appropriate value creation activities that facilitate socioeconomic health and wellbeing in marginalized and equity-seeking communities. The framework benefits researchers and practitioners in the field of sustainability transitions, offering a way to systematically assess and implement transition strategies that consider social equity, inform broader policy agendas and guide transition processes towards more inclusive and just outcomes. Just transition is a multi-perspective concept, yet it is well-known for its gaps including the shortage of empirical studies rooted in practice, and those expanding to developing countries (Wang and Lo, 2021). As such, this study contributes to helping close these gaps. It does so by emphasizing the importance of engaging marginalized and equity-seeking communities through collaborative and participatory processes. Furthermore, the hybrid venture perspective has a potential to encourage debate on the relationship between different concepts of just transition, which remains largely underdeveloped as well (Feola, 2020; Wang and Lo, 2021). As implied by our study, one promising direction for further theorizing could be the nexus between just transition as a socio-technical transition and recognition justice for 'the other' (interlinked with distribution and procedural justice) (Saareen and Haarstad, 2018; Cipler and Harrison, 2020). We therefore encourage and foresee further analyses of hybrid entrepreneurship in different sustainability transition contexts to both enrich the empirical evidence and scope of theorizing.

### CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Rick Colbourne:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Lalarukh Ejaz:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Vadim Grinevich:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Saima Husain:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Data curation, Conceptualization. **D'Arcy O'Farrell:** Writing – original draft, Visualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

### Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### Data availability

The authors do not have permission to share data.

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