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C- Community Cleaning Services: 
combining market–and donor-based approaches 
to urban sanitation and youth engagement

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Abstract. This paper sets out to analyse the three phases in the growth of the Community Cleaning Services initiative, sponsored by SC Johnson in the slums of Nairobi. After the launch of the BoP Protocol™, followed by the development of a micro-franchise system, CCS has become an independent non-profit social enterprise. In each of these three phases, the paper describes the complex relationships that develop–for the enterprise and for its micro-franchistees–between aid and the market.

Keywords. Cleaning service, BoP, social enterprise, sanitation.

1 Introduction

Community Cleaning Services (CCS) is a Kenyan non-profit social enterprise¹ dedicated to improving urban sanitation while creating profitable entrepreneurial opportunities for youth² from low-income communities. CCS uses a microfranchise distribution platform to offer an integrated model of awareness creation, training, quality assurance, product supply and marketing support to sanitation service providers who are delivering toilet cleaning services across Nairobi's low-income neighbourhoods.

CCS’s current constitution–a mix of business and development tools applied to economic and social objectives–considered as a static snapshot, is an interesting case. This article tracks the evolution of CCS from corporate Base of the Pyramid (BoP) pilot project to independent social enterprise in order to explore the complex liminal zone between purely commercial and entirely philanthropic undertakings.

The CCS case, or story, has three phases. First was the BoP Protocol pilot, an exploratory and developmental stage. Second was a focusing and integration phase where CCS defined its market offering and S. C. Johnson & Son, Inc. (SC Johnson), a home cleaning and pesticide products manufacturer, took the development lead. In the third, and current phase, CCS emerges as an independent non-profit social enterprise. The challenges faced, considerations made and balance struck throughout this evolution yield myriad lessons. This article focuses on four particular themes underpinning the story of the CCS social enterprise: a) A Trans-National Corporation (TNC)’s interface with urban “hustle economies”; b) urban sanitation software versus hardware; c) scalability and the grassroots “success penalty”; and d) economic sustainability and monetizing social value.

The authors have been involved with CCS since June 2005, even before its inception, and continue today as senior advisors to the organization. Both were part of the original Cornell University BoP Protocol pilot team sponsored by SC Johnson. Subsequently, Justin co-founded and co-led CCS with Joseph Njenga as part of his BoP innovation role at SC Johnson. Tatiana continued to advise CCS management and studied CCS as part of her 2009-2010 doctoral research focused on urban poverty, youth entrepreneurship and the “hustle economy” of waste management. In essence, Justin has been an ‘observing participant’ and Tatiana a ‘participant observer’.

2 Phase 1: the BoP Protocol: exploration and development

In 2005, SC Johnson sponsored a Kenya-based test of the BoP Protocol™, a business development process created by Erik Simanis, Stuart Hart and diverse other collaborators to help large corporations engage with “Base of the [socio-economic] Pyramid” communities to co-create businesses of mutual value. The inspiration for this project came from the company’s deep commitment to sustainability and significant sponsorship of thought leadership towards sustainable enterprise. As the BoP Protocol took shape, SC Johnson lead the consortium by agreeing to sponsor an in-field pilot test of what had until then been a purely theoretical academic exercise. A team of six was assembled from outside the company

¹ Officially a “company limited by guarantee”
² In Kenya, “youth” are defined as people aged 18-35, and comprise a majority of slum residents.
to be led by Erik Simanis and sponsored by the corporate sustainability office. The aim was two-fold: 1) testing the Protocol and 2) co-creating a BoP business for SC Johnson.

The Protocol test was carried out in Kibera, East Africa’s most famous slum, through a partnership with Carolina for Kibera (CK), a community-based organization with deep relationships and involvement in Kibera. The Protocol process brought together entrepreneurial Kibera youth groups, SC Johnson representatives and development professionals from several NGOs, including CK, to co-create a new business concept. Very different organizational and cultural contexts were brought together, leveraging local entrepreneurial energy, social capital and knowledge in combination with the company’s products and expertise in business, home cleaning and pest control. The business concept that emerged was to create services based on SC Johnson products that would create new entrepreneurial and employment opportunities while enabling the provision of “cleaner, safer homes”.

In itself, a service concept was not new, but the confluence of potential economic, social and environmental benefits made it an innovative process, and represented major shifts for both SC Johnson to deliver and the community to “buy into”. Economically, it allowed for “micro-amortization” of business costs across clients reducing the price to the consumer and returns to the operator. Socially, a service concept created more opportunities for customization and value-addition within the community and closer to the consumer. Environmentally, a service model meant that packaging went from being a disposable component of Cost of Goods Sold to being a re-usable, durable fixed capital cost, nearly eliminating packing waste from the system.

Methodologically, the in-field phase also created the foundations on which to build this new business: trust, shared vocabulary, and mutual commitment to co-creating a new business that would generate value for the community (as suppliers and consumers) and for SC Johnson. Importantly, the “team” was now no longer just the “Protocol consultants” from Cornell but also committed young community members (later to be referred to as “entrepreneurs”) and one particularly committed SC Johnson Kenya representative, Joseph Njenga. Essentially, a partnership had been brokered (much credit is owed to CK here) and firmly established between SC Johnson and select young entrepreneurs.

Starting in 2006, SC Johnson and community partners began iterating business models and market offerings based on the service concept. Eventually, the company’s product categories defined the service areas to be explored: pest control and home cleaning. The first iterations focused primarily on in-home insecticide spraying (a “pay per spray” model) and selling these services door-to-door, trying to tap into the youth groups’ existing garbage collection clients.

After a year, it became clear that although the products were very effective (the image of thumb-sized cockroaches pouring out of a typical Kibera wall and dying in piles on the floor remains a poignant memory) something was wrong with the business model: the business was not making money for the youth groups or SC Johnson, and momentum was lagging. Analysis of the first phase yields several important lessons.

The community entrepreneurs with whom we were working could not afford “sweat equity” investment because their daily income was required for daily living expenses: immediate cash flow was critical. The business model had to generate cash and profit that went directly into the operators’ pockets. Monthly fees and complex payment structures would not deliver the rapid return or security required for those living in the hustle economy where today’s earnings bought tonight’s dinner (or paid last week’s rent). Furthermore, in the income-poor neighbourhoods where the work was being done, an extreme level of caution and apprehension was applied to any new “scheme” that meant a consumer would part with even a single Kenyan Shilling. The business model needed to leverage existing local payment and cash collection methodologies and allow for flexibility in this critical business function from one area to the next. Some teams collected monthly, others weekly, some collected upon completion of the job, and others might extend credit to a customer or group of customers because they were also garbage collection clients or had established trust by other means. Furthermore, there were important social norms concerning gender relations that clashed with a door-to-door ‘in-home’ service. Usually, the potential residential customers were women who were in or near the homes, while most entrepreneurs were male youth. It was culturally unfamiliar and potentially unacceptable to invite a young man into one’s domestic space to provide a service without the ‘man of the house’ being present. In most cases, men were also in control of the household budget, which complicated the payment process.

Two core insights emerged in this early phase that defined the direction of the initiative and served as the foundation for what would become CCS. First, focusing on shared/community resources would overcome the challenge of accessing clients’ personal living space and would further amortize the cost of a service across multiple consumers. Second, the business had to deliver immediate and tangible value because consumers needed to be able to see or smell the difference in order to justify the expense. These communities had for over a decade become accustomed to paying for garbage collection by local entrepreneurs. The challenge for CCS was to similarly become part of the local waste economy and accepted household expenses. Though the cost was that of a single soda, a sum within reach, it was new and represented a significant share of disposable income. Even miniscule expenditures on non-essential goods or services (essentially anything other than housing, education and food, usually prioritized in that order), were considered with sceptical rigor.

Another key insight concerned the business operations and local service providers. Working with pre-existing groups and proven entrepreneurs allowed the business to take root quickly and leverage existing social capital. However, most youth groups were too careful and sophisticated to risk their hard-won client-base by testing an unproven concept on them. In these early days, we may have over-used the term “social capital” in referring to the very real business asset of an existing client base. For the young entrepreneurs involved, the services being tested were interesting enough and with enough potential to invest time in, but not nearly established enough to risk the valuable relationships and trust they had
built with their clients. In the “hustle economy” of these youths’ lives, sophisticated calculations of risk and reward were made instantly. The goal became to work with groups and entrepreneurs who had established structure, some experience of success and a vision for their business and community, and who saw these new services as a secure addition to their income generating “portfolio” of activities.

Working with and through youth groups was a crucial step initially, given that they had built an entire informal waste economy in these neighbourhoods, and had experience navigating through these communities. Working with groups proved challenging, however, when it came to business management. Once local groups were identified as entry points, the objective became partnering with an individual “entrepreneur” within the group who took on the leadership and coordination of the business. Given the fluid reality of working between the formal and informal economies, having clarity on roles and responsibilities proved critical. Entrepreneurial youth groups in these neighbourhoods had various roots as football teams, gangs and street-theatre troupes, to name only a few, and starting a new business was a leadership and organizational challenge to which many would not rise. Those who did were often lead by an individual, not always the overall group leader (or the most vocal individual), but a single “coordinator” who was responsible, had a vision for the new business and demonstrated the leadership qualities to rally others behind that vision. The challenge was that individuals like these were rare and these same qualities often meant other opportunities would be presented to them, especially once they had been involved with and “trained” by a multinational corporation. SC Johnson, CJK and all of us involved with CCS were always promoting our partners and were proud when they left us for greener pastures, despite the operational challenge losing talent entailed. In retrospect, we should have better tracked this positive impact for improved understanding and communications, although it is unlikely we would have been able to monetize it. To reduce turnover, CCS began selecting entrepreneurs with skills and vision but who were also committed to impacting their community from within, a strategy that included an inherent limit to each entrepreneur’s growth, which we discuss later in this article.

3 Phase 2: CCS market offering defined and SC Johnson takes development lead

In early 2007 the second phase of CCS’ development began with two key events: SC Johnson took over project and business leadership from the Cornell research team and the critical decision was made to focus the business on a micro-franchise shared toilet cleaning offering. Critically, SC Johnson invested in the CCS team so that strategic decisions could be made quickly, locally and based on epistemic privilege. Joseph Njenga, who had formally worked with SC Johnson Kenya, was re-engaged to lead the small “CCS Central” management team. SC Johnson remained the sole sponsor and the objective remained to develop a sustainable BoP business, consciously increasing and maintaining the focus and pressure. The exploratory phase was over, and now a viable business had to be developed to justify SC Johnson’s continued investment.

CCS began to distance itself from some of the methods and tools it had used in the first phase, many based on participatory development as outlined in the BoP Protocol. The best example of this shift was a new “no workshops” rule. Half-day workshops had throughout Phase 1 been a primary tool for needs assessment and brainstorming. Popular amongst development practitioners including the NGOs CCS had worked with, this tool sent the wrong message in this second phase where collective reflection was no longer as important as testing on the ground. Holding workshops meant nobody was working so revenues were zero and a free lunch was included. CCS management re-invented how they interacted with the “franchisees” in favour of in-field, action-based activities. Integrated into the induction and quality control processes, this new in-field focus delivered multiple benefits. On-the-job training and quality-control meant revenue was always generated, potential clients could observe CCS’ professionalism and rigor and CCS processes reflected the core ethos of the hustle economy: there can be no free lunch.

CCS was originally housed at CJK’s offices, physically putting the business within an NGO. As phase 2 began, CCS management started looking for their own modest offices. CCS developed a selection and induction process that ensured only committed new entrepreneurs were engaged while simultaneously creating capacity, community awareness, client demand and incomes right from the start. CCS focused its efforts on entrepreneurs/coordinates who were well known in their communities and able to manoeuvre through local politics, critically giving CCS a trusted and permanent presence in the communities. Similarly, CCS was a local partner entity for SC Johnson, reducing risk and navigating challenging local “issues” independently.

There were serious concerns amongst the CCS management team, the authors included, that many of the young entrepreneurs involved would not appreciate the increased performance pressure and the hands-off approach (moving away from the NGO model). A few did leave in the transition, but those who remained were the more capable and committed entrepreneurs. Later, one would even admit in referring to this shift, “at the start you were so timid, this is business, it has to be tough.” We had probably underestimated our partners, not yet appreciating the ‘thick skin’ of youth operating within the hustle economy, and had focused too much on the “soft” aspect of social enterprise.

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1 Thieme, “The ‘Hustle’ amongst Youth Entrepreneurs in Mathare’s Informal Waste Economy” (Forthcoming)
3 The BoP Protocol™ version 2 is available at www.bop-protocol.org, but is now somewhat outdated and outpaced by its authors’ experiences.
4 Many savvy youths in Kibera, where NGOs probably outnumber toilets, refer the NGO workshops as “feeding programmes” (informal interview with CCS Quality Control Professional who lives outside Kibera, Feb 2011)
CCS was entirely focused now on developing the supply-chain, business processes and marketing strategies necessary for a shared-toilet cleaning business. SC Johnson R&D identified the optimal existing formulas of Toilet Duck™ and Mr. Muscle™ cleaners. CCS imported these to Kenya from SC Johnson’s Egypt facility in barrels, not cases of consumer packaging. Bulk importation was an important business adaptation for the CCS service model that “closed the loop” on packaging waste within the CCS business allowing re-use of all packaging, reducing CCS’ environmental impact; and cost reductions, improving CCS’ financial performance. CCS teams now operated daily, selling and delivering cleaning services to shared residential toilets (ie accessed by several families), schools, clinics, restaurants and bars. Because the toilets were shared, so was the cost of the service. The average residential client paid $0.18 per week, which was less than a commonly consumed bottle of soda. Furthermore, based on its success, local governments and NGOs started asking CCS to get involved with the management and cleaning of community and public (pay-per-use) toilets.

From 2007 to the end of 2009, CCS and SC Johnson experimented and learned what did and didn’t work. At one point CCS was working with over 20 independent entrepreneurs and over a hundred public toilets. CCS now had at least a presence in most of Nairobi’s low-income communities and we noticed an important aspect to urban sanitation: subsidized sanitation infrastructure—often referred to as “hardware”—was consistently in various states of dangerously putrid disrepair and misuse. In contrast, CCS had decided on a “software” approach, focusing on making the toilets already in the communities operational, safer, cleaner and perhaps even pleasant to use. SC Johnson’s expertise in cleaning and its commitment to the communities where CCS was working were critical because “sanitation software” is a challenging investment. It is not as tangibly technical, photogenic, or simple to ‘install’ and verify as other sanitation “hardware” solutions (interventions often more familiar in rural areas where the conditions are less complicated).

CCS, supported by SC Johnson, saw the need to leverage the hardware and assets already in place, by investing in “sanitation software” through business and cleaning training for independent CCS “micro-franchisees”. The problem was not as much the lack of facilities as it was the condition, maintenance and management of existing facilities (many of which had become abandoned or used as a dumping ground). Later, the focus would include educational marketing for the community, the toilet users, with the aim of raising expectations, creating awareness of the dangers and costs associated with open defecation and dirty toilets; and changing sanitation-related behaviours.

### Phase 3: CCS emerges as an independent non-profit social enterprise

In early 2010, CCS was in an interesting but challenging position. On the one hand, there was growing “buzz” across Nairobi and beyond about CCS both as a social enterprise addressing urban *usaful* (sanitation, cleanliness, hygiene) while creating income opportunities for under-employed youth and, more locally, as a valuable cleaning service. On the other hand, the business was not meeting financial objectives and could not be considered a viable business investment.

At the community level, the situation was best described by a CCS trainer, “CCS is becoming a movement. *Now the name speaks for itself*” (March 2010). CCS clients and non-clients alike often referred to the professionalism of CCS teams and the use of SC Johnson’s “first class” products. When probed further, the answers concerned the “sweet smell” of the product, the “whiteness of the bowl”, and the “professional” quality of the service. These visual and olfactive aspects, driven by personal and social pride, stood out above any health benefits. Not unlike higher income consumers, Nairobi’s poorest also valued having a toilet facility that they, their families and their guests could use without discomfort or shame. Furthermore, local leaders and youth alike recognized the value of CCS as an income generating opportunity and as a business that respected and valued its members. CCS was the only community-based business to provide and enforce the use of uniforms, protective gear and professional cleaning techniques.

Yet, CCS Central’s financial performance lagged behind break-even targets and could not justify further business investment. CCS micro-franchises were profitable with revenues from clients covering operating costs, including wages well above minimum wage, and delivering profit for re-investment or disbursement. On the one hand, the costs to CCS Central of franchisee training, follow-up and quality assurance were well above projections and were destroying profitability. On the other hand, these processes were also necessary for the business, a key driver of the “buzz” and positive social impact generated through the establishment of high quality standards. Furthermore, it was clear that additional marketing, in the form of sanitation and hygiene campaigns, was necessary to create demand for the CCS service and to shift expectations and change behaviours around sanitation.

CCS had become indigenous to the communities in which it operated by “franchising” to existing entrepreneurs and youth groups already operating in the informal urban economies of these communities. However, one aspect of the hustle economy capped the teams’ ability to grow beyond a certain point: territorial economic zoning. Integral to the informal waste economy in these low-income neighbourhoods was a respect for particular demarcations of economic activity. CCS teams were usually based on youth groups, quite often with historical links to gangs, and working on various forms of waste management. The specific territorial zoning within which the teams managed and serviced a set number of residential plots carried a perceived sense of boundaries. As many youth entrepreneurs often explained, “you do not go beyond your base”. The respect for other groups’ “base” was clear and dangerous to contest.

This issue was often seriously discussed in various CCS meetings amongst entrepreneurs. Paradoxically, the consensus was that if other CCS entrepreneurs went beyond their base, this was not a problem (unlike for garbage collection). “It’s healthy competition,” they said, and a way of marketing the service. Some explained that it was sometimes easier to market CCS outside one’s immediate residential area, as it
made the service seem more credible if it came from the outside. On the other hand, establishing trust between the CCS service providers and local residents took time. So while many teams felt comfortable being invited to complete a job or service a customer outside their base on a one-off basis, most teams worked within their zones of economic and social comfort. Additionally, youth groups whose social and economic organization included references to “hustling” preferred being self-employed, working within their own neighbourhood where they were known, and understood the inextricable link between economic pursuits and social service. Their social reputation influenced their entrepreneurial success, and vice versa. The meaning of work for youth and the resource of (solid and human) waste in these communities were heavily connected with the “base” where business operations took place. For CCS, the benefit of legitimacy and operational capacity in Nairobi’s informal communities and “hustle economy” carried the cost of being limited by this “grey” economic zoning, and having to adhere to these entrepreneurial groups’ conceptions of territory.

In addition to the territorial sensibilities of “the group”, there was also an important individual dimension to the perceived “limits to growth”. Within the hustle economy, there was a cost to doing “too well”. There was a real psychological limit to individual economic gain, regularly manifest as adamant discretion concerning income. Consciously hiding and subconsciously limiting one’s income was a protective mechanism against the risk of becoming a target for crime, being exploited by friends and family and social exclusion if, to avoid the above, one left the mtaa (‘hood’) to live elsewhere. This led to a perceived “success penalty” – where success meant having enough to meet your basic expenses including school fees and some disposable income to upgrade your living standards, but NOT needing to leave the hood for fear of no longer belonging or being safe. At a personal level, the success penalty restricted individual drive to raise income beyond “the necessary”. For CCS, this meant that costs were driven by the number of CCS teams, while growth per team was limited by aspects of the hustle economy and the individual success penalty. Therefore, CCS needed to fund the growth in the number of teams outside of its operational costs while creating infrastructure and partnerships that would allow it to effectively service a huge number of franchisees.

CCS also had a critical marketing challenge: residents had become used to deplorable sanitary standards because, as they often put it, ni kawaida (it is usual). Based on interviews and focus group discussions in Mathare (one of the oldest and largest slums in Nairobi), residents expressed shame and frustration concerning the sanitation conditions in their neighbourhoods, but these conditions had become normalized, as was dealing and living with them. The “capacity to aspire” to better, to imagine a different reality, was inhibited by the need to cope and “make do” with the consequences of unplanned urbanization, and the lack of bargaining power residents living in informal settlements tend to have due to their lack of official tenureship. This meant that when it came to marketing CCS, residents were very difficult to “sell” on a toilet cleaning service.

Despite some success, CCS was converting only a tiny fraction of the potential market into clients. Diseases like cholera, typhoid, and diarrhoea, which kill more than malaria or AIDS, were common in the dense urban settlements where CCS operated, especially amongst children, but local residents did not link dirty toilets and disease. Analysis of CCS sales and marketing efforts revealed that the key wasn’t about convincing people that CCS offered a great service, (several powerful tactics had been developed to do this), it was showing the health value and potential health care cost-savings of a clean toilet, beyond the olphatic and visual “nice to have”. CCS clients were consistently happy with the service, but repeat was limited because the full value was not perceived. How do you show a frugal client the value of disease prevention in the context and time-frame of a door-to-door sale? CCS marketing was in a classic trap where a health “need” did not transfer into market demand or consumer behaviour. The challenge was how to integrate a community-wide social health awareness campaign into a business already running “in the red”.

A significant shift in structure and strategy was required and CCS began mapping a hybrid structure to balance market-based business and donor-funded NGO. SC Johnson agreed to support CCS in making this transition. CCS became an independent non-profit Kenyan social enterprise, technically a “company limited by guarantee”, no longer an LLC, and began the third, and current, phase of its development.

By early 2010, CCS had developed a valuable niche set of capabilities but to these it needed to add improved youth entrepreneur follow-up and increased, public health-focused communications. These were areas of social impact and value-creation that had been cost centres for CCS but which could be monetized through social-sector partnerships and contracts with organizations looking to positively engage urban youth in their communities and needing urban “sanitation software”. For example, an NGO might be building a toilet but needing a sustainable maintenance strategy. Another might be looking to seed entrepreneurship or income opportunities in a given community. Yet another might be funded to improve sanitation and hygiene. Any of these NGOs could contract CCS to assess the market, identify, train and support a local CCS team who would in turn maintain the NGO’s toilet and offer cleaning services throughout the community. As has been CCS experience, this would create new sustainable income opportunities and improve hygiene in the community. CCS was in a uniquely attractive position as it offered an established, locally trusted and externally respected “entry-point” for outside institutional actors seeking to build on local sanitation efforts.

7Appadurai, “The Capacity to Aspire”


9According to triangulated interviews conducted with residents and local clinicians, the cost of treating a case of diarrhea was equivalent or higher to the average day’s wage of a slum resident, and a third of one household’s monthly rent.

10Erik Simanis has written extensively on these issues and proposed interesting “market creation” strategies to overcome them. See also Thieme 2010, pp. 13 for a description of the CCS “cost dilemma”.

www.factsreports.org
CCS and Plan International partnered in June 2010 to launch a pilot Urban Community-Led Total Sanitation (UCLTS) pilot in Mathare 10, one of CCS’ key operating areas. Plan had successfully implemented CLTS in rural areas of Kenya and was a leader in its application for significant community-led sanitation improvements. However, CLTS had not yet been successfully adapted and implemented in low-income urban settlements. CCS and Plan would work in partnership, funded by grants from Dutch and Australian development agencies, to adapt CLTS techniques and methods to the complexities and peculiarities of an urban “slum”. The work is ongoing but has already achieved improvements in local awareness (over 5,000 residents reached), coordination (70 active volunteers) and action to improve sanitation (5 toilets built, 6 sewers repaired). The frequency of open defecation and the use of “flying toilets” have decreased, in part due to increased community peer-pressure and the community-led efforts to campaign for alternatives to these coping strategies. Local and national government agents have taken notice and are engaging with CCS and the residents of Mathare 10. “Hanging toilets” that drop into open sewers, some near schools, have been closed and demolished. Toilets have been built. Landlords are being engaged and, in some cases, shamed into improving the sanitation options they offer residents. CCS teams have also seen a strong increase in business in the area, and many CCS members have been trained in CLTS methodologies. CCS’ partnership with Plan is deepening and expanding, showing the direction of CCS’ future evolution as a hybrid organization.

5 Conclusion

CCS started as a purely market-based innovation project with the goal of creating a new profitable BoP business. As it evolved, CCS moved towards a hybrid model, adding increased elements of donor funding to monetize the social value it was generating. The future-state for CCS is to be market-based regarding franchise supply while donor–or social-sector-funded for its support and sanitation awareness work. The organization was originally structured as a business, and we aim to retain its culture and DNA rooted in the private sector. These market-based roots help drive CCS’ high standards of effectiveness, quality and rigor and are the foundation for the caring but demanding relationships it has with its franchisees, none of whom come to CCS expecting donations or hand-outs. Additionally, CCS’ evolving hybrid structure must be nimble in accessing social-sector innovations and funding and efficient in providing social-sector deliverables (proposals, impact assessment, reports).

Implicit in this new “hybrid” path for CCS is a broadened notion of “sanitation marketing,” coupling a public health message with a campaign for youth entrepreneurship and income generation. At a time when both the issues of urban sanitation and youth under-employment have become crucial development challenges, CCS continues to offer the possibility of turning these two challenges into opportunities. Until now, it has happened at a small, locally meaningful scale. Situated within the extreme context of urban poverty and youth ‘hustle’ where the line between entrepreneurship and crime is often blurred, CCS has offered a kind of work that both fits within the youth hustle economy and provides a network of mentorship, training and support that goes beyond business. Moving forward, the key will be to strike the difficult but fascinating balance between expanding and meeting the expectations of the community residents, local entrepreneurs, and institutional actors involved. These expectations and the very idea of what constitutes positive impact are inevitably articulated in different ways, and may even sometimes diverge. It is the combination of continued critical reflection and action-based efforts that will shape CCS’ sustainability in every sense of the word. With the majority of humans now living in urban settings and the majority of population growth occurring within low-income communities, CCS has massive potential both as a hybrid social enterprise but, importantly, also as a model from which others can learn as they look to combine market– and donor-based approaches in operating in this emerging, challenging but critical arena.

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