

Market-Shaping to Foster Social Change in Ghana

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Actors can through their deliberate activities reconfigure and modify an existing market or form a completely new market. This process is called **market-shaping** e.g., (Kjellberg, Azimont, & Reid, 2015, p. 6-7; Nenonen, Storbacka, & Windahl, 2019, p. 618; Nenonen, Fehrer, & Brodie, 2021, p. 236).. However, market-shaping can also be **a vehicle to bring about positive social change**. An example would be the introduction of micro finance services to people in developing countries so that people can found their own business or extend it. This can not only foster **economic growth** but **similarly positive social change**, e.g., strengthening the inclusion of disadvantaged population groups and improving their living conditions.

Social entrepreneurship as a driver for positive social change

Markets are **not static** but **constantly “in the making”** (Kjellberg et al., 2012, p. 220). Following the logic of value co-creation (Woratschek, 2020; Vargo & Lusch, 2016), various market actors (e.g., for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, suppliers, customers, competitors, volunteers, media, government) can **co-create markets** through their **coordinated interaction and collaboration** (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2011, p. 255). **For example, co-creation could be done by** sharing knowledge or jointly founding a new organization.

Social entrepreneurship is the “process of identifying, evaluating and exploiting opportunities aiming at social value creation by means of commercial, market-based activities” (Bacq & Janssen, 2011, p. 376). Social entrepreneurs aim at **solving societal problems** and thus, **bring about social change** (e.g., Alvord, Brown, & Letts 2004, p. 260). This is illustrated by a study analysing the relationships between social entrepreneurs, the government, and international organisations in Ghana (Kullak, Fehrer, Baker, Woratschek, & Sam-Cobbah, 2022).

At first sight, emerging economies seem to be lagging with entrepreneurial activities as they are more concerned with issues such as widespread poverty, limited financial capital, high unemployment rates and limited community infrastructure compared to developed economies. However, a closer look reveals that these economies provide fertile ground for social entrepreneurial activities (Mirvis & Googins, 2018, p. 2). In Ghana, the number of social enterprises aiming to tackle social and environmental problems has grown substantially (British

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Council, 2016, p. 00; 12). Not infrequently, these social enterprises compensate for government and market failures (Sepulveda, 2015, p. 852).

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Kullak et al. (2022) analysed social entrepreneurship in two interview rounds from 2017 to 2020. As a result, **two phases** with a total of **five activity dimensions** (market shaping patterns) are identified. These **activity dimensions change the institutions** that ultimately lead to market-shaping. Here, institutions are defined as **structures of laws, rules, norms, and social conventions** governing actors' behaviours and expectations as well as regulating business operations and ethics (Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006).

In the first phase (initiation), an emerging market system for social change begins to develop. In the second phase, the market system becomes viable (consolidation).

A) Initiation phase

1. **Introducing new coordination mechanisms:** Social entrepreneurship in Ghana received little attention from both the government and the general public until 2014. In response, two international not-for-profit organisations initiated a social entrepreneurship programme and founded the Ghanaian Social Entrepreneurship Platform (SEP). The objectives of the SEP were to represent different socio-economic perspectives from across the country, connect social entrepreneurs, facilitate networking activities, transfer knowledge and become a vibrant centre for a thriving network of social entrepreneurs.

2. **Promoting social entrepreneurship policies:** Another reason for establishing the SEP was to mobilise many social actors for policy and regulatory change. As a rule, institutions can only be brought about by a critical mass of willingness to change.

3. **Bottom-up driven social entrepreneurship:** Social entrepreneurs often responded to problems they had observed first-hand (e.g. lack of waste management, high youth unemployment). They were not driven by government funding initiatives or the profit motive but by a social mission and a desire to take a leadership role. They passed on their entrepreneurial knowledge and experience to other (potential) entrepreneurs in their community or village and initiated peer-to-peer education. They also shared their knowledge with business partners and their wider communities.

B) Consolidation phase

4. **Networking of actors:** the creation and dissemination of knowledge about social entrepreneurship in the media continued. SEP set up a "Social Thursday" programme where

the "Social Entrepreneur of the Week" was presented on social media, and organised physical events called "Social Affairs". It offered monthly newsletters with information on funding opportunities and networking events and regularly took part in exhibitions and trade fairs. Actors were increasingly enabled and facilitated to practice social entrepreneurship.

5. Promoting collective social entrepreneurship: SEP, which was originally founded as an advocacy and information network, became the leading platform for social entrepreneurship. Ghanaian entrepreneurs began to compensate for the lack of government regulation, with the SEP providing the structure and governance mechanisms for social entrepreneurs and local incubators to work together across Ghana. Furthermore, social enterprises trained others. These developments, with the support of the SEP, led to systemic learning.

The SEP received significant membership growth and became firmly established as the central national platform for social entrepreneurship in Ghana to take over full responsibility.

To put it in a nutshell:

1. **Market shaping** means **reconfiguring** an existing market or **creating** a new market.
2. **Market shaping** (e.g., a market for social entrepreneurship) can be a **driver toward social change** through social entrepreneurs and the collaboration of many different actors.
3. **Social entrepreneurship is a market-based process** aiming at co-creating social change.
4. A **social entrepreneurship platform enables and facilitates** market-shaping to co-create social change.
5. An analysis in **Ghana** showed that **a market for social change** can be shaped by **five activity dimensions**.
6. In the **initiation** phase the activity dimensions are **introducing new coordination mechanisms, promoting social entrepreneurship policies, and bottom-up driven social entrepreneurship**.
7. In the **consolidation** phase the activity dimensions are **networking of actors and promoting collective social entrepreneurship**.

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