



ERICSSON

THE SOCIAL BUSINESS ERA

CREATING IMPACT AND INFLUENCING CHANGE

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Social businesses operate like traditional businesses, but are guided by their passion for creating long-lasting social impact

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Starting a social business is a statement against earlier structures of governance, creating something aspirational for the future



BACKGROUND

Mobile communications and internet connectivity have transformed the way we organize our lives, businesses and societies over the past two decades, providing instant access to a wealth of information, content and services from anywhere in the world

The technology provides us with an unprecedented capacity for individual empowerment, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Every year, information and communication technology (ICT) is further improved to deliver increasingly complete off-the-shelf capabilities. Anyone with an idea can start a company and acquire all the necessary tools and business infrastructure – including a complete online store, office environment, back-office support and more – at a fraction of the cost and complexity of just a few years ago, and with

fewer skills. This enables people to engage in new economic activities in a much more flexible setting, with a corresponding rise in overall levels of innovation.

As such, it is no coincidence that social businesses have recently emerged and developed in the Networked Society. We are more exposed to social issues, with new access to tools and opportunities to address them, and the boundaries between companies, customers and users are becoming increasingly blurred.



In a networked society, businesses operate in commercial markets and play their part in the whole social ecosystem

The ultra-capitalistic industrial society is now being questioned as a relevant model for a 'good' world. Traditional social institutions created to care for the welfare of citizens are failing people, and ongoing global financial instability means that government finances in many countries are under great pressure. Consequently, tax revenues have been used for bailing out banks to save 'the system' – often at the expense of pensions and social security.

While these social issues were previously considered a problem for governments and other institutions, technology has empowered citizens to find the solutions.

An outcome of this is the notion of social business, which sets out to make the world a better place. A generation of digital natives is now entering the arena, used to efficiency and instant results, who are turning away from conventional, profit-driven entrepreneurship; they are social entrepreneurs who intend to make a difference.



It is no coincidence that social businesses have recently emerged and developed in the Networked Society

DEFINING SOCIAL BUSINESS

Social business is a relatively new phenomenon, with no single definition of what a business needs to do to be “social”. For this report, the following broad definition is used: “A business whose primary intent is to create [positive] impact and that uses revenue streams to become financially sustainable in order to create more impact”. As shall be seen, however, there is much more to it than that

The process of defining social business has gone through several stages, including:

- > **No dividends allowed:** The concept of “social business” was introduced in 2008 by Muhammad Yunus, founder of the microfinance Grameen Bank. The term had not previously been conceptualized with the intent to create a disruptive movement. Yunus has defined social business as a “non-loss, non-dividend company, dedicated entirely to achieving a social goal”.¹ According to this definition, the company will generate income but not a profit for investors or stakeholders.
- > **Focus on intent and output:** The essence of Yunus’ definition still prevails in terms of the mission of a social business, but the definition has widened and become more accepting. Frankel and Bromberger define a social enterprise as “an organization formed by one or more people whose commercial activities are primarily driven by the desire to create positive social change”.² This does not exclude the possibility of giving dividends or making profit, provided the intention is social impact.
- > **A broad, pragmatic approach:** To simplify matters, a social business is generally defined as “a business whose primary intent is to create social impact and that uses revenue streams to become financially sustainable in order to further that impact”.

The social business is a new creature

Originally, for-profit and non-profit organizations were clearly defined, with separate legislations and different forms of taxation. Yet the traditional profit and shareholder value paradigm of 20th century capitalism is undergoing a kind of transformation, challenged by new business models.

Therefore, to better understand what is going on with entrepreneurship and business in the Networked Society today, a more nuanced categorization of for-profit organizations is required, with a distinction made between for-profit businesses, mission-driven businesses and social businesses.

As demonstrated in the table below, mission-driven business may have a social or impact agenda but is still geared at generating profits in the first place, while the social business usually works the other way around. Elon Musk’s automotive company, Tesla, is an interesting “borderline” example because it has an overarching ambition to rid the world of fossil fuels by establishing electric cars as the automotive norm. As such, Tesla wants to make a positive social impact, but also wants to be a highly profitable and highly valued business. A social business, on the other hand, has its eyes set on social impact and considers everything else secondary.



¹ Yunus, Muhammad, Building Social Business: The New Kind of Capitalism that Serves Humanity’s Most Pressing Needs (2010)

² Bromberger, Allen and Frankel, Carl, The Art of Social Enterprise: Business as if People Mattered (2013)

A NEW APPROACH

There's a reason why some entrepreneurs have chosen to start social businesses rather than non-profit organizations or for-profit companies to address social issues

“Social enterprise isn't only an individual passionate undertaking. It's also a social phenomenon that's surfacing during a specific moment in history. Increasingly, social entrepreneurs see themselves as members of a very contemporary social movement consisting of people who are actually doing something and not just complaining – a sort of union of change agents who are dedicated to transforming business and the world.”

Frankel & Bromberger

Social businesses' main criticisms of traditional approaches to solving social issues

- > Governments have failed to provide social security for their citizens
- > NGOs have good intentions but are too naïve
- > International organizations have large operations but lack grassroots
- > Traditional businesses do not hold the social mission at heart

Social business' approach to solving social issues

- > Working from within the community ensures lasting impact and empowerment
- > Entrepreneurship is a force of good when adopting the right tools and elements from for-profits
- > Financial sustainability enables continuous social impact

Working from within the community ensures lasting impact and empowerment

Community participation and local engagement is at the core of a social business; without it, good intentions do not have lasting and substantial impact. From a practical perspective, it ensures the continuity of the business, as the community feels responsibility, and can take ownership to run it on its own. From an impact perspective, empowering the local community through participatory processes gives it a voice, and provides members with possible employment opportunities and the ability to acquire new skill-sets.

It's not only about delivering a solution to the end of the value chain, but about creating an impact that goes beyond any linearity. This is why social businesses do not promote hand-outs as a long-term solution, but rather see that the community has an economic stake in projects so that they take ownership.

Whether it's walking the steep and heavy hills surrounding Medellín or the impenetrable intensity of the informal settlements in Nairobi, to grasp a problem it needs to be lived. For example, BRCK chose to establish its design team in Nairobi to develop mobile routers, as COO Philip Walton explains:

“If we set up shop in Edinburgh things would be coming out quicker, but then our engineers would have no idea of how bad the roads are, that the teacher has 40 kids in her classroom to keep up with... So the engineering needs to come from the inside, not the outside saying 'this is how you should do things in Africa.'”

Social impact and profit-making can work together

Social entrepreneurs have chosen to create a business over a charity or an NGO for a reason: Profit-making and social impact can work together to achieve social good. Social business embraces entrepreneurship and the free market as a transformative force; it lends itself to innovation, problem solving and sustainability, especially in contrast to the inefficiencies of NGOs and IOs. In offering a market solution for social change, social businesses abide by the neoliberal market rules to achieve social impact.

Medora Brown at Sanergy explains one reason why business is a good way to serve the population at the bottom of the pyramid:

“Most actors in the sanitation space, for example, on the provision side are usually NGOs. But if you build a toilet and leave it in the community – what happens when it fills up? But if I build the toilet and I say “you’re going to run it and you’re going to earn money doing so” you will be incentivized to run it. And if I collect the waste, and I can make money off end products, then I’m incentivized to collect the waste. So incentives along the chain keep it going, not only from a financial perspective but from a human capital perspective.”

Financial sustainability enables continuous social impact

Financial sustainability is not just about keeping the business going – it’s about keeping the mission and impact alive. The aim is to generate enough revenue to cover expenditure and use potential profits to, for example, re-invest in product development or expansion. While breaking even would likely be seen as a failure for most traditional businesses, it’s considered good enough for social businesses as they can sustain operations effectively.

In relation to organizations that depend on aid or grants, or businesses that need continuous investments to stay afloat, financial sustainability also allows for independent decision making. As social impact is at the very heart of a social business, any compromise for financial equity does pose a threat to keeping this core intact.

Remaining financially independent until reaching sustainability is in no way easy, but Plurrify’s founder Mathias Anthonsson explains why it may be good to survive the first years without any external financing:

“There’s an inherent driving force in really making it work and not having making money being the main motivation... Secondly, they [the social businesses] have been able to try things out and control the process themselves and found a shape that works... And once getting that funding, it means that they can generate a lot more out of it.”



THE SOCIAL BUSINESS MODEL

For social businesses, “success” is not measured by the end of year financial result, but the social impact that is created. Unlike a traditional business model that revolves around maximizing profit for shareholders, the intention of a social business is to secure revenue (to sustain the business) and maximize social impact (the very intent of the business). As such, the social business model not only encompasses elements of a traditional business model but also adds new value to the market and to society

Social business is a new creature

While conventional for-profit businesses have maximizing profit at the very core of their business models, social businesses see profits as a tool rather than an end in itself. Stable revenue is only a part of a much larger picture to achieve social impact.

There are three dimensions of a conventional, for-profit business model:



Social businesses don't define a value proposition in the first place, they define a social impact proposition, and this is their main reason for being

1. The value proposition



The role of the value proposition is to define what type of value the business is offering on the market, in terms of products and services.

2. The revenue model



The revenue model defines how the business is making revenue from its value proposition. The revenue model includes payment models and all other types of monetary streams that exist in order for revenue to be generated in the business.

3. The network relations

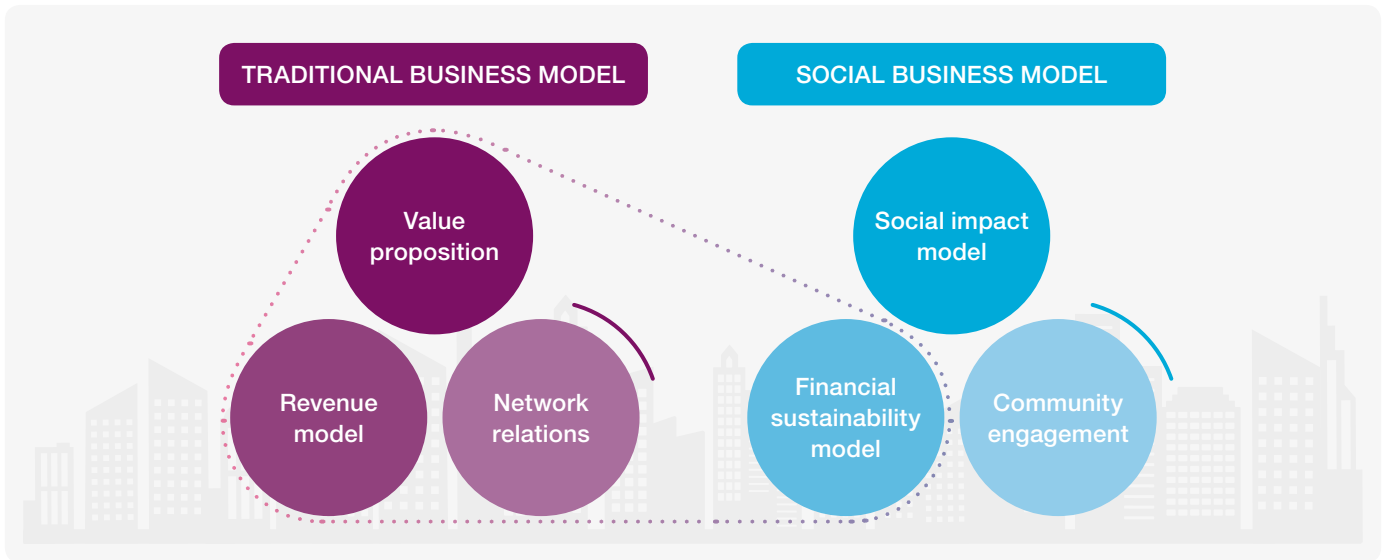


The network relations define the different market actors that a business has relationships with, and is more or less dependent on in order to operate. Network relations include a place of business in a value chain, and defines various customers, suppliers and other important parties.



What constitutes the whole conventional business model of for-profits is contained within only one dimension of the social business, namely the financial sustainability model, which has the role of ensuring finance.

Where conventional for-profit businesses understand their place in the world in terms of a value chain or a network of business relationships, the social business understands its place in the world in terms of the community that it's engaged in and trying to aid.



The traditional business model and the social business model

As seen, the sustainability model encompasses the business model of a traditional business. A social business model also adds the social components of the social impact proposition and community engagement. The model here suggests that the social business has a broader perspective of its role and place in society compared to the conventional for-profit business.



Social business has a broader perspective of its role and place in society compared to the conventional for-profit business



Social impact proposition

While a traditional value proposition seeks to define the value a business offers its markets and customers in terms of product and service experience, social businesses define value by the impact their solutions will have and what kind of meaning it creates.

The social impact proposition explains the intent and mission of the business. To exemplify, SiembraViva offers convenience and conscious consumption to urban dwellers, but the social proposition is to empower local farmers and increase ecological produce.

As with a value proposition, there are expectations on deliverance; that is, measuring the social impact to evaluate the “result”. Traditional for-profit businesses only look at the financial profits and returns, but a social business is also expected to somehow quantify social indicators. Despite several attempts to build models for such an impact assessment, there is still no common ground.

Financial sustainability model

The financial sustainability model is designed to generate enough revenue for the social mission, ensuring both continuation of social impact and scalability.

If the social business is not making any revenue, the social impact is compromised; however, it's not designed to generate revenue at any cost. It is meant to do so in a way that supports the model's two social pillars. An ability to scale may prove the sustainability model works, but does not make it as important as impacting someone's life. In contrast to a traditional business model, the profit is only a vehicle for change rather than the business' aim. Reaching financial sustainability is, however, key and constitutes a major challenge for social businesses.

There is not one financial sustainability model for social businesses, as it has to be adapted to the business and mission. A key difference is that while a revenue model constitutes a separate element in traditional business, the financial sustainability model must encompass all elements of a traditional business model (see the figure on the previous page).

This is an aspect of for-profit businesses that offers concrete tools to solve revenue flow. As social businesses act in the same arena as traditional for-profits, there is a need to "speak the same language", particularly if looking for investments.



Community engagement

The traditional business model is the idea that businesses are autonomous entities, building a network of relations to increase revenue: i.e. network relations. The social business model builds on the view that businesses are not autonomous, but connected to the larger community to which they contribute. In this community or ecosystem, all affect all: being connected is already a given, not a voluntary choice made when deemed convenient.

This is an imperative element to the social impact proposition and financial sustainability model. Community engagement roots the social business, ensuring the social impact proposition is relevant and that the financial sustainability model has an arena on which to act.

Philip Walton at BRCK describes the impact of community engagement in Nairobi:

“ Just that collaborative, community-oriented environment lends itself to wanting to be socially impactful. Because we see the needs of our peers and the needs of other businesses and the people we interact with. It just becomes a natural thing.”

A community is not just a way of organizing different players, it represents a philosophy and a way of thinking that diverts from the classic business approach and challenges and re-defines businesses' relations to society at large.

THE CLASH OF IDEALS

Social business involves making a mental move from profit first to social impact. It creates new ideals and values on how businesses should relate to society, and how a business should treat people and the community around them. This opens up a new way of thinking and “talking business”, signaling a need for social businesses to communicate their stories effectively

Differences in central concepts between conventional business and social business

| CONVENTIONAL BUSINESS | SOCIAL BUSINESS |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Owner | Founder |
| Employee | Contributor |
| Salary | Meaning |
| Customer | Partner |
| Product/service | Solution |
| Consumer | Empoweree |
| Financial result | Social impact |
| Financial profitability | Financial sustainability |
| Competition | Co-operation |
| Network | Community |



It is evident that traditional businesses and new social businesses speak different dialects; in its extension, this also encompasses two different worlds. While traditional business is rigid and hierarchical, social business depicts a more community-based organization built on co-creation.¹

TRADITIONAL BUSINESS



These are autonomous entities run by an owner who has employees that produce a product or service for a market with the aim of maximizing profits. In exchange for their work, employees receive salaries. The business evaluates monetary results looking to make financial profit. The business is in competition with other businesses to get customers and consumers to purchase their products and services. The business can choose to create a network in which it can use connections to further its potential for maximizing profits.

SOCIAL BUSINESS



These are contributors to society and are driven by a founder who, in collaboration with team members, attempts to find a solution for positive social impact on a community. Through their contributions, team members gain monetary compensation but foremost create meaning for themselves and others. The business aims to reach financial sustainability and finds success in the evaluation of its social impact. The business is in co-opetition with other contributors in the community to maximize social impact for empowerees.¹

¹ From consumers to empowerees: Rather than a consumer paying for a product or service, as with traditional business, the solution that the social business provides aims to empower people throughout the value chain through solving a social problem that they are facing

SOCIAL BUSINESSES IN MEDELLÍN AND NAIROBI

Social businesses operate like traditional businesses, but are guided by their passion for creating long-lasting social impact. This determines the choices they make every day and, to truly understand what this means, their stories need to be heard

In the following chapter, social businesses will be presented in two contexts: the first is Medellín, Colombia's second largest city, which has undergone an inspiring journey from a violent past to the center of innovation; the second is Nairobi, a city with great disparities but which is also known as the technology hub of East Africa. Both share a turbulent history, which magnifies existing social problems and creates a high demand for social solutions.

The backdrops for these social businesses are to some extent different. While Medellín started as a top-down initiative, where the local government engaged the

community to join its vision of an innovation hub, social businesses in Nairobi have grown from the grassroots up – with hardly any support from government bodies. As such, while government institutions in Medellín may be considered slow but positive partners, the institutions in Nairobi are deemed non-trustworthy and avoided if possible.

These differences aside, the challenges that the social businesses face are astonishingly similar. Particularly evident is the way in which ICT has played an important role as an accelerator and facilitator of ideas, best practices and concrete output.



MEDELLÍN

Medellín is trying to increase its role in the global economy. The once divided city has been united by intra-integration projects, increasing mobility and connectivity, and now wants to distance itself from its darker past and move forward.

Social businesses are helping the city to achieve this by providing solutions to social problems, building a foundation for coming generations, and offering an alternative future to the pervasive violence and criminality. In these efforts, technology and access to information have been enablers for change, while lack of connectivity has proven a substantial issue for further development, often limiting the impact that social businesses wish to have

The context for social businesses in Medellín

Haunted by its history, determined to move forward

A deliberate intra-integration process in motion

ICT development is still buffering



Medellín was once known for its entrepreneurial spirit, as well as its ability to overcome its challenging geography and connect to global value chains. For many years, the city has been at the center of Colombia's textile industry and coffee production, and home to many of the country's largest companies. Now that the lid of violence has been lifted, the entrepreneurial spirit has been able to breathe again, allowing Colombia to finally become the global player it deserves to be.

Supporting this notion is Ruta N: a business space established in 2009 that aims to create an innovation culture and support for technology-based businesses. Initiatives such as Ruta N and the ambition to become a node for innovation in Latin America by 2021 have not gone unnoticed by young talent in the city, like Andrés and his colleagues at Protesis Avanzadas:

“The city is building an innovation ecosystem. So today it's easier for disruptive thinking and projects to come alive. Everybody is helping each other in this network, in this ecosystem.”

Medellín has since been named Innovative City of the Year in 2013 by the Urban Land Institute, as well as playing host to the Global Entrepreneurship Congress 2016.

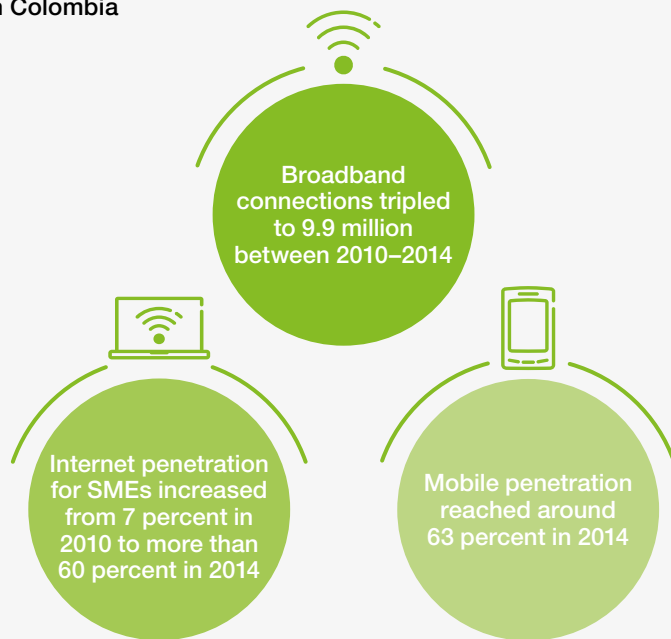
The social entrepreneurship scene in Medellín is on the rise, but still rather rudimentary in comparison to, for example, Nairobi. The social businesses in Medellín are, in this sense, local pioneers in promoting education (Pygmalion, Marina Orth Foundation, Rainbow Tree Inc.) and bringing down costs of existing technologies (Fundación Todos Podemos Ayudar, Protesis Avanzadas). A common denominator is also empowerment of traditionally socioeconomically weak groups, such as farmers (SiembraViva) or women (Arbusta).

It is clear that, as much as Medellín is in a battle against physical violence and its effects, it's a matter of winning the hearts and minds of the younger generations, and offering them an alternative future.

Starting a social business in Medellín is not only a route to self-employment – it's a statement: a choice to not focus on wealth at whatever cost, or take advantage of a weak governance, but choosing to focus on social impact and support an ecosystem that lives beyond short-term gains.



ICT in Colombia



Source: Ministry of Information Technology and Communications

The importance of ICT access becomes even more evident when speaking to the city's social entrepreneurs; not only as a platform for sharing or offering something, but for developing their initial idea further. Being able to find best practices, benchmarks and information on how the issues have been tackled elsewhere is essential. When asked how they found a solution to the issue they encountered, the answer is always: "I checked online".



The technology infrastructure proves to be a real barrier for reaching out and scaling up

ICT development is still buffering

Alongside mobility, access to technology has been recognized as a key driver for achieving Medellín's ambitions. During the mid-2000s, libraries and cultural centers providing free internet were established in the poorest areas of the city, and there are ongoing projects for free Wi-Fi in public spaces. On a national level, the initiative Vive Digital was launched in 2010, with a focus on creating a digital ecosystem to improve the business climate, increasing economic growth and reducing poverty, through bringing internet access and mobile connectivity to the poorest areas of the country.

Despite increased efforts, connectivity in Medellín is still weak and volatile. It is not unusual for online platforms to be interrupted by connectivity failures, hampering productivity. For many

social businesses operating in the city, the technology infrastructure proves to be a real barrier for reaching out and scaling up. One such example is the Marina Orth Foundation, which works with technology education in schools. Gina D'Amato, the Marina Orth Foundation's Executive Director says:

Keep in mind that this is the situation in Colombia's second largest city; the situation in the country's rural areas is far worse. The majority of Colombia's population is not connected, and many of the smart solutions presented can only reach as far as the grid allows.

“ One of the advantages of technology is coverage. We cannot have teachers everywhere, but with technology a quality education can be made accessible to more. But connectivity is a big issue. It's sad to say, but we basically had donations from large companies to increase internet access through installing towers, but they have become obsolete since there hasn't been proper maintenance.”

Arbusta

The key objective of Arbusta is to help young people enter the workforce and find a way to make a living. It acts as an intermediary between unemployable young people and digital companies that need services within basic data and content management.

By instilling more self-confidence in young people, and giving them life skills to build on, Arbusta intends to create a stepping stone for those who are unable to enter the job market. In other words, the tasks they perform can serve as a foundation for further employment.

Arbusta works with so called 'ninis', a large group of young people in Latin America who do not study and are not part of the job market (ni trabajo, ni estudio – neither working nor studying). It is estimated there are 22 million ninis in South America – and 75 percent are women. Some of them lack qualifications, whereas others are unable to work due to family commitments. Arbusta reaches out to them primarily through social media, and provides an introduction program before they commence work.

Employees can then choose the hours they work, making it possible to take care of chores or family members at home. Many of them work six hours a day and typical tasks include programming, managing comments for websites or social media profiles and subtitling. These are all tasks that can be

completed online, which provides the opportunity to work from home or at a community center if they are tied up with other engagements and unable to get to the Arbusta office.

The initiative was founded by three entrepreneurs who wanted to address the growing problem of workforce exclusion, and most clients are private businesses that need to outsource digital tasks. Business leader, Juan Esteban Uribe, who currently runs the daily operations in Medellín, has seen many of the friends that he grew up with go under. On a personal level he finds it gratifying to be able to offer an alternative to others from a similar background.

Arbusta has successfully incorporated the value proposition with the social impact proposition. Juan explains:

“ It’s a two-way tool – companies are receiving help on digital tasks and at the same time they are taking a social responsibility.”

Arbusta has also found a functioning financial sustainability model, and a large part of the profit is reinvested in the business. There are currently plans to expand the social business across parts of South America.



Protesis Avanzadas

Protesis Avanzadas is developing advanced, low-cost, robotic hands for upper limb amputees, aiming to make state-of-the-art technology accessible to the Colombian market; this is the foundation of its social impact proposition.

As an electronic engineering student at university, founder Jorge Alberto Robledo Ramirez met a man with an upper limb amputation. Jorge set out to find what solutions there were for the man, but concluded that the only options available in Colombia were limited to products that were either purely aesthetic (e.g. rubber hands) or had limited functionality (e.g. hooks). On the other hand, options in the US and Europe were far too expensive to be realistic for the Colombian healthcare system to provide. Frustrated with seeing that there were better but unaffordable options elsewhere, Jorge started his quest to develop a low-cost robotic hand and began iterative testing with local upper limb amputees.



Fast-forward four years and Jorge's basement project, funded by his own savings, became a company and a team. Protesis Avanzadas' main clients are healthcare centers, as law obliges them to provide the best solution available at a certain price. The team eventually wants to devote time to product development and manufacturing; however, the financial sustainability model has to work first. Jorge says:

“ We are not there yet. There are many things that can be improved. The initial revenue will be re-invested in development and focused on getting us there. To be able to move forward, the growth has to be organic, it has to come from the sales, because we need to prove to possible allies that we can do this.”

While the development of the robotic arm has been successful from a technological and economic perspective, some main challenges remain. One is production, as the robotic arms are manufactured with a 3D-printer and assembled manually, and investments are needed to scale-up production and develop an app that connects the end-user to the company. Another challenge is healthcare sector regulations. In all this, the team's intention is to “think big” and go international, but with a partner that shares its vision.

Protesis Avanzadas is an example of a social business that started with a social intent, and has since developed into a business to enable social impact

The team needs the sustainability model to be in place before going to market, but the case also shows how hard the balancing act can be to find investments and investors who share the same social mission.



Aulas Amigas

Aulas Amigas aims to improve tuition in Colombia by offering educational tools and training for teachers. It offers technological tools and digital resources to private and public institutions, as well as individual end-users.

The company was founded by Juan Manuel Lopera, who grew up in a rough part of Medellin and, like many of his peers, ended up hanging around with petty criminals. However, one teacher's creative teaching methods had a significant impact and made him realize the joy of learning. He also had a passion for technology and computers and was innovating in his spare time. This sparked the idea to use technology to improve the quality of education, which became the businesses' social impact proposition.

Aulas Amigas' financial sustainability model revolves around selling to the public sector and schools, but the demand for products and services sold directly to teachers has been surprisingly high. Individual teachers are willing to invest their own money in the program to improve the level of their education. The business has grown rapidly by about 100 percent each year since 2011, and now employs approximately 500 people.



Even though balancing the commercial goals with social change can be a challenge, staying true to the social cause remains a strong focus

Aulas Amigas' founder, Juan Manuel Lopera, explains the company's approach to social business:

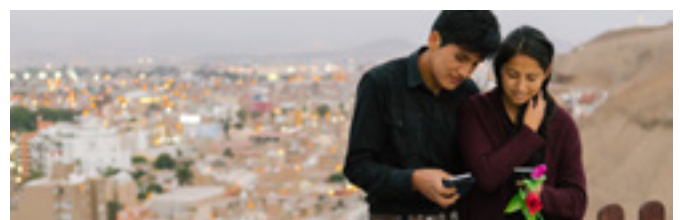
“What it means to be a social business is something we're really thinking about. For instance, we go directly to the teachers and train them, which is not for-profit. And that's what makes us different. We're teaching. We're glad to spend time and money on a cause that everyone benefits from in the end.”

Aulas Amigas is about to launch a new tuition product, while also considering a subscription model and trying to solve cash-flow issues accentuated by rapid growth. Five new branches were opened last year and the plan for 2016 is to expand even more.

A key challenge moving forward is to maintain Juan Manuel's story and vision for the company:

“When I was little I read cartoons with people that were immortal and it made me think about how limited our lives are. I don't know how to be immortal but the best way is to make an impact and leave a footprint, to leave and not be forgotten. That's the main motivation.”

Aulas Amigas is an example of an initiative that has evolved from a product that addresses a cause, to an established organization where the founders are a key part of the narrative of the business, rather than playing operational roles.



SiembraViva

SiembraViva connects small farmers selling organic produce with urban, conscious customers through an online platform. Cutting out the middleman in the value chain, SiembraViva's social impact proposition is to empower small farmers, while offering ecological produce to the Colombian market.

Small-scale farming in Colombia can be risky. Most farm for their own consumption, but lack knowledge on how to refine the produce, and are victims to intermediaries in the value chain that stop farmers from entering a competitive market on equal terms.

For Diego Benítez, the founder and CEO, it all started when he felt cheated trying to sell potatoes to a warehouse owner. Having arranged the price beforehand, the buyer later refused to pay the price and the farmer lost three months of work. The day after, the buyer was selling the same produce without reduction.

After having seen the same thing happen over and over, he left his job at one of the major banks in Colombia and started SiembraViva in



2011. Today, SiembraViva works very closely with its 12 farmers to deliver ecological food to approximately 500 customers a month, and is set to break even at the end of this year. The financial sustainability model is still taking shape and has been developed organically through trial and error.

Founder and CEO, Diego Benítez, says:



“ The financial model can only be sustainable if we have recurring clients, because the margin is very low... We realized that the story about local farmers and organic is strong enough to get the customer quickly – it’s not a tough decision for them... but then we realized that, the abandon rate was very high. And we realized we needed to personalize the items. We understood that convenience is very key.”

SiembraViva started developing a production system to ensure quality and quantity through hotbeds. This was combined with an incentivized system where farmers that provide correct reporting over a period of six months receive a tablet from which they report to SiembraViva. Handling the mobile technology usually requires help from the farmers' grandchildren.

remotely; SiembraViva has recruited an agronomist to develop technology solutions for this, so that farmers can be alerted to problems quickly and more of what is planted can be sold.

SiembraViva shows that having a business background and connections to expert knowledge, along with adopting an iterative process, is



To increase convenience and quality, SiembraViva built a better business model for the farmers

As internet connectivity is very patchy in the mountainous rural areas, information is often sent via text – although SiembraViva intends to provide real-time updates through an app it is developing.

Lack of connectivity is also holding them back from monitoring the harvest

invaluable in finding a functioning financial sustainability model. Through continuous contact with the farmers, SiembraViva has created strong community engagement and an ongoing story – from the personal experience of the founder, to the empowered farmers on the hilltops.

NAIROBI

Nairobi is a city of vast polarity. On the one hand, it has established itself as an East African technology hub, with an entrepreneurial spirit and an educated work force. It has become an attractive inlet for international businesses and investment banks seeking to establish themselves on the growing African market. On the other hand, Nairobi has many social issues to address. Far-reaching problems with ethnically divided politics, corruption and economic disparities have caused violent outbursts of frustration, as the basic needs of its citizens remain unaddressed



An uncontrolled rapid urbanization has furthered tensions, as informal settlements like Kibera, Soweto and Mathare become increasingly crowded. Estimates say around 60 percent of Nairobi's 2.7 million inhabitants today live in slums.¹ Nairobi's two poles pull the city in two directions: towards high-tech solutions and serving basic human needs.

With about 45 percent of Kenyans still living under the poverty line², the government, traditional businesses and NGOs are perceived to have failed in addressing the basic needs of the country's citizens. In this context, a grassroots movement of social entrepreneurs has emerged, who use and adapt technologies to local needs. This empowers Kenyans to develop solutions that meet the critical demand for basic services.

Social entrepreneurs often struggle with an unstable political environment and the frustration of a developed technological infrastructure that is running below capacity.

¹ APHRC 2014

² World Bank 2014

The context for social businesses in Nairobi:

A history of political instability, corruption and violence

A relatively mature scene for social businesses

An ICT environment with infrastructure but lacking uptake



A relatively mature scene for social businesses

In comparison to Medellín, the scene for social businesses in Nairobi has reached a certain level of maturity. There is an existing grassroots community of social entrepreneurs and technology startups addressing social issues around them. Meeting spaces, like the iHub, have played an integral role in creating a welcoming environment and supportive atmosphere for young entrepreneurs. Additionally, local role models for social innovation, such as Ushahidi, a crowdsourcing tool that originated from post-election violence in 2008, has shown that it's possible for Kenyans to develop global success stories.

Philip Walton, COO at BRCK, an initiative that aims to increase connectivity in areas with poor infrastructure through mobile routers, explains:

“ In an environment like Kenya, if you're doing business here and selling to customers here, it's almost natural that you start to look at where the needs are. And they are often at or near the bottom of the pyramid. So to me, it's not intentional – it's just natural. You can't live here and not want to make a lasting impact.”

Another reason for the growth of social businesses is that Nairobi has a history of social work. International organizations and NGOs have been present in Nairobi for decades, making it a center for non-profits in Africa. Right outside the city center, the United Nations alone has more than 15 offices and is accompanied by other institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The impression is, however, that there has been very little sustainable impact considering the millions of dollars invested.



As explained by Saruni Mara, co-founder of recycling initiative Taka Smart, the impact of IOs and NGOs has simply been too slow:

“ If we don't fix them, there's really no one else to do it. We can't keep waiting for the UN to offer support. We can't keep waiting for the WHO to do this and do that. So that's why you find most people have made the decision to actually come up with these startups to solve the problems around their communities. Because these things are affecting us directly.”



An ICT environment with infrastructure in place but lack of uptake

With the highest concentration of undersea fiber optics in East Africa, a bandwidth that doubled between 2014 and 2015 (to 1,624 GB), and an estimated 30 million internet users, Kenya has become one of the most connected countries on the African continent.³ Plans are to take this further with a fifth undersea fiber optic cable, and the government has recently announced it has plans to provide all constituencies with free Wi-Fi.

However, having such an infrastructure in place does not mean that it's being used. There are still huge disparities as data access is often expensive and is not a priority (in relation to buying basic goods such as water). In short, the technological infrastructure is in place, but the uptake is not. It's intriguing to think that with 0–14 year olds constituting around 42 percent of the population, nearly half of Kenya could consist

³ Communications Authority of Kenya (CAK)
⁴ CAK



Nearly half of Kenya could consist of digital natives in just a couple of years – if given the right prerequisites

of digital natives in just a couple of years – if given the right prerequisites.

The mobile sector, on the other hand, has already reached out and into the daily lives of Kenyans, partly supported by regulations introduced in 2010. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the price of mobile services. Being affordable and having clear benefits, mobile phones have become a priority in Kenyan households. In 2015, estimates showed a mobile penetration of 88 percent, and almost 38 million subscribers.⁴ Although the share of smartphones is clearly growing, the majority sold are still feature phones.

With a higher mobile penetration than fixed online accessibility, many ideas coming out of Nairobi and Kenya are more mobile than online. Revolutionary mobile money transfer service, M-Pesa, with approximately 20 million users in Kenya today, has been a spearhead for mobile solutions in Kenya, as it has broken down barriers and created an openness to adopt new technology solutions in general.

Overall, a belief in the possibilities of technology has led to many high-tech products and services being remodelled to the local context, such as mobile routers (BRCK), microfinancing (Branch), or vaccination services (M-Chanjo).

Social entrepreneurs in Nairobi also recognize that technology and digitalization of data have the potential to increase transparency – which is highly sought after in a country with a history of corruption. For example, Stella Ngugi created the online application Smart Ballot to add transparency to elections and the voting processes.

Maji Milele

Maji Milele distributes prepaid water meters to public water points and for domestic connections. It uses a digitalized revenue collection and online monitoring system to improve maintenance, quality and transparency. The social impact proposition is to provide clean water to all Kenyans at an affordable price.

The organization was founded on the insight that many clean water projects ran by NGOs were unsustainable, despite a considerable amount of investment. Marcel Schreurs, the founder of Maji Milele, figured that many existing problems could be solved through a digitalized pre-paid system – automating revenue collection, enabling a 24/7 service and minimizing water waste.

With financial support from Water for All, Maji Milele began its operations in 2014 and started out with offering full maintenance services with pre-paid hand pumps in rural areas. The financial sustainability model includes several revenue streams. Apart from offering a full-service model where it takes part of the revenue, the business also offers



Maji Milele is an example of a social business, with a clear social impact proposition, that is implementing a financially sustainable model

training on the products it sells, with an additional service contract for a yearly fee. The primary target group has been government bodies, with NGOs a secondary target. Marcel has won some important tenders during the last two years, and Maji Milele has been able to generate revenue from the beginning, although it is still waiting to break even.

One of Maji Milele's water points is located in a school in the informal settlement of Soweto, which also runs the water point. After installing the prepaid water meter on its premises, the school is generating income they can invest in school materials. As the system is automated, there is no need for staff because the water pump basically runs itself 24 hours a day, generating revenue for the school.

With plans to expand, Marcel, the Managing Director, explains the need to balance social and business goals:

“Ambition is big, and I have two of them. One is on a personal level of idealism and the other is from a business perspective. From the idealistic perspective, I see and expect a prepaid water system to be all over rural Africa within five to eight years... The advantages of prepaid are just too many to deny... It will go big and expand to other countries. On a company level, that will be way too much for us. My focus is to be the first player in Kenya, that we already are, and possibly one to two other countries in East Africa. And to get a big market share here.”



The foundation of Spatial Collective is community engagement and community perception

Spatial Collective

Spatial Collective uses geographic information systems (GIS) for community development. Through data collection and visualization, it supports communities in identifying available resources and applying this knowledge to the development of initiatives.

The organization was set up by two Canadians who started out as volunteers in social projects in Kibera while studying. The volunteers soon discovered a growing demand for mapping informal settlements, based on specific needs, to ensure sustainability and success. Spatial Collective was launched in 2012, and has gone through various iterations since then. The initial idea revolved around providing open and shared data; but, after realizing that there were several projects where the clients were unwilling to share data with others, the financial sustainability model was revised, and the company is now a consultancy that runs custom-made projects for individual organizations.

One of the key motivators to set up the organization as a business, rather than an NGO, was that if people paid for the maps and data sets they would be more likely to put them to use – meaning that the local community would benefit from the work.

Clients include several types of government bodies that need help improving the security of water sanitation in the informal settlements.



Strengthening local communities is the main driver behind Spatial Collective's work. A key issue that they deal with is land ownership and different types of borders in informal settlements. They use information collectors, who have been elected within their community, to provide the information via a GPS device.

Employing people from the informal settlements is a key ambition, but has had to be compromised in order to become financially sustainable. At one point, the company had grown very large and was unable to keep a large number of locals on the payroll. Co-founder and Managing Director, Jamie Lundine, says:

“ We almost ran out of business by trying to support people who otherwise wouldn't have a job. It was counter-productive; we were not making any money and had to scale down. But seeing people move on to a career gives me a sense of satisfaction. That is the type of difference that we can make.”

The social impact proposition of Spatial Collective is relatively broad and has evolved gradually. Finding the right balance for a long-term financial sustainability model has proven difficult. Striving towards increased community engagement has, at times, tested the business.



Sanergy

By installing high-quality, low-cost toilets, and educating local franchisers to run them and remove the waste, Sanergy's social impact proposition is to build healthy, prosperous communities by making hygienic sanitation accessible and affordable in urban areas.

Lacking hygienic sanitation (defined as the possibility to separate oneself from one's waste) is a particularly pressing situation in informal settlements; in Kenya alone, up to 8 million slum residents lack access to hygienic sanitation solutions. The options are often pit latrines or large public toilets in the periphery of the community (a distance that can be dangerous at night). Many also resort to "flying toilets", causing human waste to be scattered in the community, with a high risk of spreading disease.

The idea for Sanergy came about in 2009, when a group of students at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) were assigned to develop a business solution to a poverty challenge faced by more than a billion people.

A franchising model was chosen to incentivize community participation. Sanergy sells the toilets at cost to its franchisers and provides training. The company also has a plot model where property owners can offer a common toilet for their tenants within their compound, and a school model including training in proper hygiene that also has potential to increase attendance.

Sanergy's Communications Manager, Medora Brown, says:

Sanergy aims to achieve profitability in 2019, but expanding the enterprise has not been free from pain. From an ICT perspective, Sanergy has met issues with poor internet connectivity, as it has tried to come up with systems for loyalty cards, as well as radiofrequency identification (RFID) sensors, which would alert the waste team when there is a need to empty toilets. The team is piloting the RFID sensors in 25 toilets, trying to come up with a solution. Some apps are also in development to make sharing information easier.

“ The most telling statistic is that schools say that both enrollment and attendance increase by 20 percent after having installed a Fresh Life. Absence from school is an indicator of diarrheal disease in these areas, and for adolescent girls the inability to deal with their period in schools can be a barrier. A clean toilet with a door that closes makes a difference.”

Not taking any revenue from the usage as such, Sanergy's financial sustainability is foremost based on selling waste-derived end-products. Sanergy collects the waste on a regular basis and takes it to a processing plant where it's converted into usable end-products: organic fertilizer and insect-based animal feed, which is sold to Kenyan farmers.

Sanergy is an interesting case of a social business, as it has a well thought-through model to reach financial sustainability, and has built-in scalability. However, it also highlights the importance of community engagement to reach such revenue streams and expand social impact.

Since 2011, Sanergy has:

Installed over 800 active toilets in 8 informal settlements

Gained over 400 franchisees

Gained 250 team members

Created over 800 jobs



BRCK

BRCK creates rugged, self-powered mobile routers to increase connectivity in areas with poor coverage. Believing in the importance of equal and open access to technology and information, BRCK keeps developing devices that give people a platform and a voice, with a clear social impact proposition: “To get the next 800 million Africans connected”.

The people behind BRCK created startup successes iHub and Ushahidi, and the original idea stemmed from solving an internal problem for the programming team – namely unreliable connectivity that would stop the work flow and reduce productivity. Initially, the target group was people like themselves, or smaller SMEs and cafés experiencing unreliable connectivity.

BRCK’s COO, Philip Walton, explains:

“ We believe it’s a part of our mission to use technology as an equalizer.”



The design team is located in Nairobi to help understand the local context that the BRCK products need to function in



Studying the needs of teachers in remote areas, the team developed a ‘kio-kit’, with the BRCK as a mobile router that can be used to share content in the classroom. It has built-in 3G connectivity, and a USB port to download content to use offline. All the teachers need to do is plug in one cord and push one button – and 40 students can view the content on their tablets.

Today, BRCK has a team of about 35 people. The design team is located in Nairobi to help understand the local context and be part of the community that the BRCK products need to function in.

Philip says:

“ If you look at Western innovation, it tends to be what I call “scratching the flees” – can I adjust my thermostat from my smartphone, can my car send emails for me? Whereas in Africa, we’re dealing with life and death, we’re dealing with lion-sized problems.”

Although the social intent came after the actual product in the case of BRCK, it’s an interesting case as the business has moved to developing technology products that solve social issues. The social issues have come to them, and they’ve taken on the challenge.

Key insights from the two contexts

Whether in Medellín or Nairobi, social businesses share many common challenges and opportunities. These cases collectively offer important insights into factors that have been supportive in their development.

Starting a social business is a statement against earlier structures of governance or business culture, renouncing the ideals and values of the past and creating something aspirational for the future.

Access to the internet and digital tools have played a major role throughout the different phases of social business development, including collecting information, finding best practices, benchmarking and gaining support from the community to generate social impact.

Connectivity is an enabler for social impact, linking social businesses with the communities or issues they seek to empower or solve. Importantly, ICT infrastructure facilitates social impact when connected to all areas of society, rather than to a limited elite.

Spearhead projects are important in inspiring social innovation and promoting new digital solutions with the potential to improve social conditions (e.g. M-Pesa).

Ultimately, it is vital for social businesses to balance social and financial goals to remain successful.



Challenges

Naturally, no business endeavor is without its problems and challenges. The case studies from Medellín and Nairobi highlight that the challenges relate to social factors, as well as the business itself. Although some may be contextual (political conflicts, lack of regulation, etc.), other challenges have proven common across borders.

Eight major challenges for social businesses:



1. Balancing the social agenda and the business agenda



2. Finding a financial sustainability model that works



3. Recruiting the right human capital



4. Getting (the right kind of) investments



5. Measuring social impact



6. Gaining credibility in the eyes of others



7. Expanding nationally and internationally



8. Lacking connectivity

ROLES OF ICT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL BUSINESSES

Social entrepreneurs share an undeniable belief in technology as a power to do good. In the Networked Society, where information on social issues, best practices and know-how can be shared instantly with millions, impact can escalate rapidly

ICT plays a central role in the emergence and development of social businesses: it has enabled affordability, scalability, and a new way of connecting to the community. Additionally, its potential reinforces social entrepreneurs' belief in the transformative power of ICT for future generations.

Advances in technology have always been used by for-profits to increase revenue, but have not necessarily been applied by governments and other organizations for social impact. This incoherence in applying technology to solve social issues is a source of frustration for many social entrepreneurs. It also seems that the speed in which things can be done technologically is far faster

than comprehended or implemented by governments and organizations. This situation is summarized by Stella Ngugi at My Smart Kenya as: "People are using technology, but not for good as it should be". Social entrepreneurs, on the other hand, have not merely adopted digital technology – they were born into it.

The role that ICT has played on a broader level for the development of social business as a phenomenon should not be understated. ICT has made starting a social business affordable, it has made social impact scalable, and has enabled social entrepreneurs to build a larger and even global community.



Three main ways ICT has developed social businesses



1. Affordability

Starting any business can be financially challenging, but starting a social business whose primary intent is not to make profit can be even tougher. Initial investments are often scarce, as it's hard to convince investors that social impact rather than ROI is the end game. However, in the Networked Society, ICT solutions decrease the initial setup costs in an unprecedented way. This enables social entrepreneurs to begin their trial-and-error phase without major investments (or losses).

ICT has also granted free access to information and forums for knowledge-sharing and best-practices, aiding social entrepreneurs' understanding of the market without straining finances. Using digital tools, social entrepreneurs have found solutions and benchmarks, and redesigned their services. What would have demanded hours of desk research at libraries, meetings, classrooms, etc. in a pre-digital society, is today just a couple of searches and emails away.



3. Community

The community is no longer limited to a business' geographical scope. ICT connects the social business to those it seeks to empower in a direct and engaging way, and helps the business stay connected to the community all the time. Online channels have been incredibly important in broadcasting social business messages. Although the presence of a social business is very much on the ground within the community, the story of a social business is mostly told online. Through web pages, social media and online forums, social businesses can engage a larger community and reach global audiences all at once, and in an inexpensive way.

The cooperative environment offered by online channels has also created a community that social entrepreneurs can turn to for moral support and practical guidance. Seeing that others have experienced the same issues and obstacles, and may have found solutions, can offer comfort in what otherwise can feel like an impossible quest.



2. Scalability

Through technological advances, we can connect far and wide instantly. Technology has allowed skilled digital natives to create their own tools, as well as to reach the community members they're looking to empower. While initiatives before were limited to just one community, they can now reach beyond that community with far less effort.

Many social businesses have incorporated ICT technology and tools to increase productivity, including meters for optimizing the emptying of waste bins (Sanergy), sensors for nutrition in soils (SiembraViva), and circuit functionality in robotic arms (Protesis Avanzadas). In comparison, the existing systems demand heavy manual labor, and are slower and more expensive. Incorporating technology solutions in this way allows for higher accuracy; for example, the instant data collected from Protesis Avanzadas' robotic arm.

ICT has also allowed teams to keep in contact regardless of work location, making it easier to branch out and expand. For those with offices in several countries (and those who are looking to expand internationally, ICT is vital.

The potential for more

ICT's potential to further support social business in the future is substantial. For example, improved connectivity and better Internet of Things (IoT) solutions would allow for extensive product development (by enabling real-time data feeds and analysis), whereas today social businesses have to spend time coming up with solutions that attempt to bypass the need for online connection (BRCK, SiembraViva, Sanergy). A truly connected society would also help social businesses reach larger audiences, improving their business model and financial sustainability. Philip Walton, COO of BRCK, says:

“ One of our principles was that we want to see an equality of access to education technology, in the most remote village as well as in the city... if we can give them equal access to the tools, the information, the things a student in Nairobi would have access to, we can help to level out that playing field. We believe it's a part of our mission to use technology as an equalizer.”



For social entrepreneurs, ICT is something much more than practical hardware, software tools, and infrastructure. It sparks social change, with the potential to increase equal opportunities for people – levelling out the playing field for the digital generations to come. That is why social entrepreneurs are giving children mobile technology, spending hours teaching them how to code and build robots, and posting free tutorials online.



ICT creates more transparent and empowering environments so that new ideas and initiatives can grow

To have mobile access and the skills to participate in the online community enables a person to be part of the global economy. The access is, however, dependent on a functioning infrastructure being in place. Lack of connectivity obstructs an individual's ability to access the same information, knowledge and examples of solutions that those who are connected have. Moreover, as detailed in this report, technology must be affordable for everyone, and not just the fortunate elite.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of social business is the result of a multitude of converging factors, which will only increase as technological advances continue. The Networked Society, where new methods and ideas can be accessed instantly, is the ideal platform for social entrepreneurship. As social business gains momentum, it's intriguing to think about what consequences this may entail – because for every social business that is started, a traditional business is not

Social business as a movement is here to stay, and it's a movement that will grow. As it does, it's likely that social businesses will begin to challenge the mechanism of the traditional capitalistic market, and the approaches and strategies of traditional for-profit enterprises. They will change the way in which consumers and users understand and appreciate brands, forcing traditional for-profits to reinvent themselves (at least to some extent). Social businesses are also likely to impact non-profit organizations by creating a new space in the intersection between society and the market.

It starts with consumers – brand and consumption becomes political

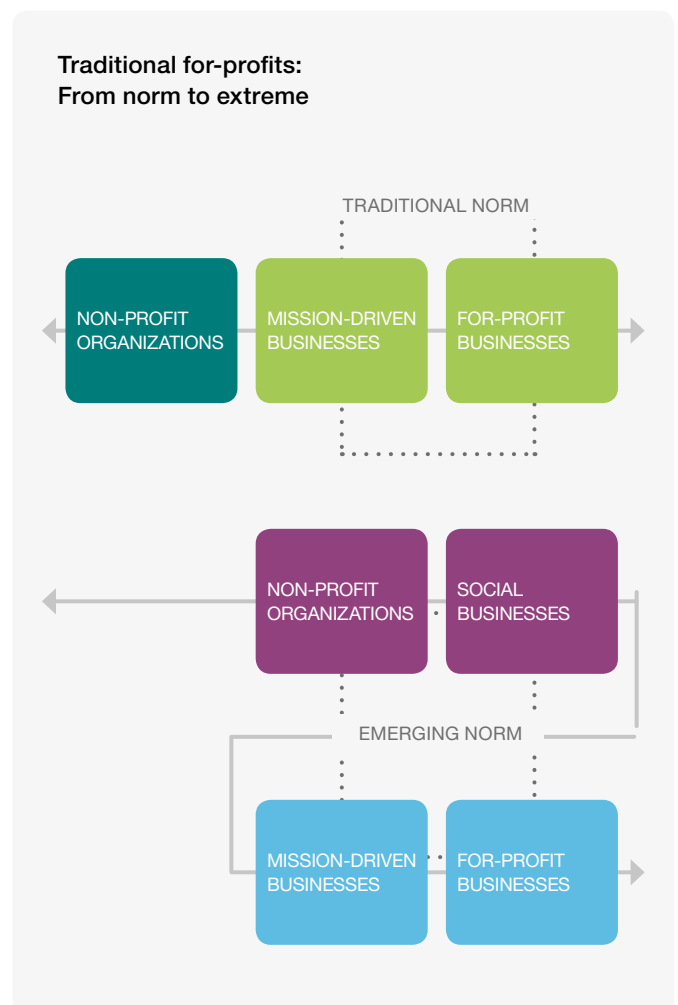
In an enlightened networked society, people are increasingly aware of the ethics behind brands and choose brands based on ethical values that resonate with them. However, the well-oiled, mass production machinery of consumer goods, where low price is the most important factor, will continue to be tempting for many people.

Going forward, the way people consume will directly correlate to their values and beliefs. This means that the brands of tomorrow will need to take a political or ideological stance, rather than trying to stay as neutral as possible to attract as many customers as possible.



Take a stand for something

When social businesses enter the market, they come with a very clear social agenda and clear beliefs. They stand for something, they become interesting and attractive actors in society, and will accordingly attract many groups of consumers. They provide meaning in an elevated way that traditional for-profits are unable to do, and they rid consumption choices of (at least some) anxiety. In doing so, they put a completely new pressure on traditional brands and for-profit businesses.



What's the mission?

The first step on this journey is that traditional for-profits become more mission-driven. Even though digitally-native enterprises like Google, Tesla, iZettle, Local Motors, Zazzle and Truecaller are driven by profit, they are also mission-driven as they want to target and solve real-life problems that they have identified in society. Their missions give these brands an elevated sense of meaning, which resonates with the consumer market.

However, the stronger the social business movement grows, the more it will pull the market towards genuine social missions. The market will expect social mission to be at the core of business models and the ambitions of businesses, rather than an added extra.

The stronger the social business movement grows, the more it will pull the market towards genuine social missions

Challenging traditional CSR

Today, the social agenda of traditional for-profits is usually allocated to the corporate social responsibility (CSR) department. Social businesses are challenging social responsibility, as they incorporate this into the core of their operating model and prioritize the social agenda over financial growth.

With social businesses as an emerging norm on the market, CSR will look more and more like a PR stunt and something that is not completely trustworthy or genuine.

It's reasonable to assume that social businesses are currently setting a



new standard for what CSR should be; namely, a social agenda that lies within the core business model rather than outside of it. This will force traditional for-profits to rethink how they work CSR into their whole business operation and organization.

Measuring social impact

If the social agenda is placed at the heart of a business, it means that traditional for-profit businesses will have to start measuring their social impact – just as social businesses are trying to do. Today, for-profit businesses are only evaluated in financial terms, but it's likely that society and the consumer market will demand a social evaluation model to help determine which brands to buy. If a social evaluation model of businesses is created,

traditional for-profits will be forced to move towards a social agenda by free market mechanisms, but also by legal restrictions.

Employing talent

The creative elite is driven by finding a sense of genuine meaning in what they do. In the Networked Society, status isn't found primarily in the category of economic capital, but in making the world a better place to live.

It's clear that mission-driven companies have an easier time employing the most talented people, making it increasingly difficult for traditional for-profits to attract talent. This also means that traditional for-profits must move towards having true social agendas from an employer perspective.

SOCIAL BUSINESS IN THE NETWORKED SOCIETY

Social business belongs to the Networked Society, but how can the movement change the culture, values, logic, and markets of this society?



1.

Social businesses will begin to challenge the mechanism of the traditional capitalistic market, as well as the approaches and strategies of traditional for-profit enterprises, creating a new space in the intersection between society and the market.



2.

For traditional businesses, it will become increasingly important to show how they contribute to a better world, such as their vision, mission and values, and this must be grounded in the very core of the business itself.



3.

To recruit talented people, businesses and organization must show their mission very clearly as people seek companies whose visions and purposes are grounded in genuine values.



4.

ICT is central to the development of social businesses. Access to different ICT platforms makes it possible to start a social business, as minimum investment is required for the tools needed. By being connected, the business also can access resources and build a network in their community.



Ericsson is the driving force behind the Networked Society – a world leader in communications technology and services. Our long-term relationships with every major telecom operator in the world allow people, business and society to fulfill their potential and create a more sustainable future.

Our services, software and infrastructure – especially in mobility, broadband and the cloud – are enabling the telecom industry and other sectors to do better business, increase efficiency, improve the user experience and capture new opportunities.

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Ericsson Networked Society Lab

The Ericsson Networked Society Lab is focused on delivering unique insights about the emerging opportunities in society enabled by information and communication technology (ICT). Since 2008, we have conducted research into vital aspects of the technology-driven transformation of industries, business, society and everyday life. Our lab community includes a dedicated core team, Ericsson experts, and partners such as university professors and independent thought leaders. By gathering a wide range of perspectives and experiences, the Networked Society Lab aims to provide a deeper understanding of the fundamental changes empowered by ICT.

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