

# Emerging Trends in Social Entrepreneurship and Social Economy

New global challenges such as climate change, inequality, poverty, and globalization are reshaping social entrepreneurship and social economy. Social entrepreneurs are increasingly embracing solution-driven innovations that enhance well-being despite serious global constraints and challenges, which the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address. These innovations encompass climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, including eco-friendly business models that promote renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, industrialization, and waste recycling techniques. Social entrepreneurs are also adopting digitization and artificial intelligence to improve efficiency, productivity, and global reach.

Additionally, there is growing interest in fields such as decarbonization, circular economy, short food chains, energy cooperatives, and other areas with significant social and environmental impact. Many social enterprises have integrated policy-driven objectives such as “green policy,” poverty reduction, and environmental sustainability into their business models, aligning with the SDGs. Emphasis is placed on how social enterprises and social economy contribute to the shift to low-carbon economy and innovations in waste recycling. Other emerging areas include short food chains, local food systems, and digitization.

This edition of the *Social Entrepreneurship Review* explores new and emerging trends in social entrepreneurship and social economy, covering various aspects such as sustainable development, social innovations, decarbonization, and the resilience of social enterprises in the face of crises. Other issues discussed include historical and theoretical perspectives of social entrepreneurship and the role of empathy in designing social innovation.

The issue begins with “Decarbonization Obstacles in the Context of the Photovoltaic Market Development in Poland From the Social (Prosumers’) Perspective,” which examines the challenges Polish prosumers face in adopting solar energy. The study highlights financial, technical, and legal barriers, emphasizing the need for targeted government subsidies. This article reflects a growing focus on grassroots decarbonization, underlining the importance of local collaboration in promoting renewable energy. The authors suggest further research to better support prosumers in the green energy transition.

Next, “The Role of Empathy in Designing Social Innovation for Blind and Visually Impaired People in Public Transportation in Poland” emphasizes the value of empathy in understanding

user needs and using design thinking to create effective solutions. Through a case study within the Silesian Innovation Space incubator, the research shows that empathy leads to innovations that significantly enhance value. The study calls for more research to deepen the application of empathy in social innovation design.

“Social Enterprises in Poland in the Face of Recent Crises” explores the resilience of Polish social enterprises during the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Despite facing challenges, a significant percentage of social enterprises provided crucial support to beneficiaries and refugees. The study highlights the need for increased support and policies to empower social enterprises during crises.

Continuing with sustainable development, “Multiscalar Institutional Work of System-Building Sustainable Entrepreneurs in Transitioning Coal Regions: A Case of an Energy Cluster” examines how sustainable entrepreneurs in coal regions can drive energy transitions through innovative practices. Focusing on the Polish energy cluster ZKlaster, the study identifies the key factors that influence the success of sustainable entrepreneurs in shaping transition pathways. It offers insights into the role of embedded agency in regional energy transitions.

Expanding the geographical scope, “Decarbonization Efforts in Africa: Successes, Opportunities, and Challenges for Promoting the Use of Renewable Energy by Social Economy” explores the intersection of decarbonization and social economy in Africa. The study highlights the strategies and challenges faced by African governments and social economy sectors in promoting renewable energy, calling for comprehensive policies and investments to overcome these barriers.

“Investigating the Phenomenon of Social Entrepreneurship” delves into the evolution of social entrepreneurship theory since the 1980s, highlighting the need for a standardized framework. The study emphasizes the importance of understanding social value creation and calls for policies that support both entrepreneurial processes and societal impact.

Finally, two varia documents are included. The first, “Measuring Social Economy in Public Statistics: Introduction to the Polish Experience,” discusses the evolution of social economy research in Poland. The author highlights the methodologies used to gather data on nonprofit organizations, cooperatives, and social enterprises, stressing the importance of reliable data for sustainable development and policy-making.

The second document, “Evaluating Evidence-Based Ecosystems-Based Adaptation for Food Security Assembly (EBAFOSA) and Nasarawa State University (NSUK) Initiatives: Decarbonization, Clean Cooking Energy Promotion, and Cassava Food Chain Entrepreneurship in Nigeria,” showcases successful initiatives in promoting clean cooking energy and entrepreneurship in Nigeria. It emphasizes the potential for scaling these efforts across Africa, with key recommendations for policy and finance.

As we face unprecedented global challenges, the evolving field of social entrepreneurship and social economy offers innovative pathways to address pressing issues such as climate change, inequality, and sustainable development. The articles in this edition of the *Social Entrepreneurship Review* underscore the critical role of social enterprises in driving decarbonization, fostering resilience in crises, and promoting social innovation. By exploring these emerging trends, we gain valuable insights into how social entrepreneurs can continue to lead the way toward a more equitable and sustainable future. It is essential that we support these efforts with robust policies, targeted investments, and a commitment to scaling solutions that benefit both society and the environment.

As you explore the articles in this edition, we encourage you to reflect on the pivotal role social enterprises play in addressing our world's most pressing challenges. We hope you find the insights as inspiring and thought-provoking as we do. Enjoy your read!

### About Authors

**Martyna Wronka-Pośpiech\***, Ph.D.  
Department of Entrepreneurship and Management  
Innovations  
Faculty of Economics  
University of Economics in Katowice  
ul. 1 Maja 50, 40-287 Katowice, Poland  
e-mail: martyna.wronka-pospiech@ue.katowice.pl  
ORCID: 0000-0001-9240-6670  
\* Corresponding author.

**Rifkatu Nghargbu\***, Ph.D.  
Department of Economics  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
Nasarawa State University Keffi  
Keffi-Akwanga road, Nasarawa State University Keffi,  
911019, Keffi, Nasarawa State, Nigeria  
e-mail: rifkatunghargbu@nsuk.edu.ng  
ORCID: 0000-0001-9155-3521.

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