

# T19P07 / Roles and Functions of Social Enterprises in Social Policy

**Topic :** T19 / SECTORIAL POLICY

**Chair :** Benoit Renevey (HES-SO//University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland)

**Second Chair :** Wei Li (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

ICPP 7 – CHIANG MAI, July 2025

PANEL PROPOSAL - Roles and Functions of Social Enterprises in Social Policy

Chairs:

Benoît Renevey, HES-SO//University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland, Fribourg

Emmanuel Fridez, HES-SO//University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland, Fribourg

Social enterprises (further : SE) have become key players in shaping social policy accross the globe, blending social missions with market-driven approaches. Their primary focus is on social impact rather than profit maximization. They utilize market-based strategies to achieve social objectives (Loosemore, 2015).

SEs are generally identified on the basis of nine characteristics (Draperi, 2010: 20-21):

- economic characteristics: like any enterprise, SEs have a continuous activity of producing goods and services; they have a high degree of autonomy; they assume a significant economic risk; they employ employees from the first labour market.

- and social characteristics: the civic nature of the SE's activity; broad stakeholder participation in decision-making; non-exclusive governance by shareholders; limited distribution of profits to owners; an explicit objective of service to the community.

Thus, the social enterprise represents a hybrid economic model that lies at the intersection of the traditional enterprise and the not-for-profit organisation. It aims to respond to social or environmental issues while guaranteeing its financial viability. This model has attracted growing interest, particularly for its role in implementing and supporting social policies.

Over the last few decades, humanity has faced many challenges and difficulties, even though overall well-being is tending to increase slightly. Thanks to the UN's 2030 development goals and the EU's intention to ban the sale of internal combustion engine vehicles in Europe by 2035, social and environmental concerns have gained in importance, and many public players - at least at international level - are implementing policies to improve the situation. But at the same time, the legitimacy of spending large sums of money on policies aimed at well-being and good living in developed countries has not necessarily evolved positively since it collapsed during the series of crises that followed the end of the Thirty Glorious (Ferragina, 2022). After a crisis of legitimacy, social policies have shifted towards an increase in the provision of non-monetary benefits (workfare) aimed at social reintegration, coupled with a reduction or stagnation in cash benefits (ibid.). In developing countries, the success of conditional cash transfer programs in Latin America has inspired similar initiatives in African nations, reflecting a broader shift towards social protection mechanisms. This rapid expansion of social protection programs has been characterised by Barrientos and Hulme (Kundo, 2019), who describe it as a transformative movement in social policy aimed at addressing the needs of the poor. However, most developing countries - and even nations such as the United States and European countries (knowing that universal social coverage is constitutionally guaranteed in these countries) - are unable to provide universal social protection coverage. Moreover, international interdependencies further complicate the evolution of welfare states in developing countries. Nullmeier et al (2022) argue that the development of social policies is increasingly influenced by transnational factors, moving beyond the traditional focus on the nation-state.

In this context, SE are led to offer services aimed at improving the well-being of individuals or populations in difficulty or lacking means of subsistence. In itself, their objective is similar to that of social policies, which are generally deployed on a large scale, whereas SE propose solutions aimed at local beneficiaries and medium-sized communities. As with social policy, the aim is to promote positive social change and have a positive impact on people's lives. Researching the roles and functions of SE in social policies is of significant

scientific relevance due to their potential to address complex social issues, foster innovation, and contribute to sustainable development. SE operate at the intersection of economic viability and social mission, making them unique agents of change within the broader socio-economic landscape. Their dual focus allows them to tackle pressing social problems while also generating economic value, which is crucial in the context of diminishing public sector resources and increasing social needs (Muñoz, 2010; Jackson et al., 2018).

One of the primary contributions of SE to social policy is their ability to implement innovative solutions to "wicked" problems – issues that are complex and resistant to straightforward solutions. Research indicates that social enterprises often employ radical or transformative innovations to address these challenges effectively (Ranabahu, 2020). For instance, SE can leverage cutting-edge technologies and novel business models to create social value, thereby enhancing their role in public service delivery (Phillips et al., 2017). This innovative capacity is essential for developing sustainable social policies that can adapt to changing societal needs and conditions (Wang et al., 2021).

Moreover, SE play a critical role in fostering social cohesion and addressing inequalities. They are often positioned to serve marginalized communities, providing services and opportunities that traditional businesses may overlook (Finlayson & Roy, 2019). By engaging with local communities and understanding their specific needs, SE can tailor their offerings to effectively contribute to social inclusion and empowerment (Muñoz et al., 2014). This localized approach not only enhances the effectiveness of social policies but also ensures that they are grounded in the realities of the communities they aim to serve (Domenico et al., 2010).

The interplay between SE and government regulations further underscores their relevance in social policy research. Studies have shown that government support and regulatory frameworks can significantly influence the development and sustainability of SE (Wang et al., 2021). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for policymakers aiming to create an enabling environment for social enterprises to thrive, thus maximizing their potential impact on social issues (Barraket & Yousefpour, 2013). Additionally, the multi-stakeholder nature of SE necessitates a nuanced understanding of legitimacy and accountability, as they must balance diverse stakeholder expectations while pursuing their social missions (Zhong & Zhou, 2020).

In conclusion, the scientific relevance of researching social enterprises in the context of social policies lies in their capacity to innovate, address social inequalities, and adapt to regulatory environments. Their unique positioning allows them to contribute significantly to the development of effective and sustainable social policies that can meet the challenges of contemporary society. Therefore, our panel aims to address the following question :

How do social enterprises interact with, influence and complement social policies, in a global context of economic and societal transformations ?

The aim of the panel is twofold. On the one hand, to identify the latest concrete realities and scientific productions on the links between social enterprises and social policies, in the particular context that the world has been experiencing since the last ten years. On the other hand, over and above the inventory that can be made of these realities in different contexts, the aim is to identify future research needs and opportunities on the roles and place occupied by social enterprises in the production of well-being, always in relation to the social policies implemented by states, more particularly considering the recent changes that have occurred in the world (regional wars, awareness of the dangers of climate change, need for development and sustainability, etc.).

With reference to the research question, we take into account the reality of three key moments in the existence of links between SE and social policies :

- Because they are rooted at the heart of small communities, SE may play a part in the construction (even per-construction) of social problems. Their activities make inappropriate situations visible and help to convince (or not) public authorities to take action by putting social policies in place ;
- In addition to this role of claiming and blaming, they also may participate in the making of social policies and in the transformation of social policies, or, on the contrary, implement their own social policies, in competition with or replacing public social policies ;
- And thirdly, SE may or may not participate actively in the implementation of social policies, whether public or private, in other words, whether or not in collaboration with the public authorities.

As stated in the call for papers, we welcome contributions addressing various aspects of the above issues. Contributions should come from research activities (all possible types), but we as well welcome purely theoretical studies, or reports of field experience.

Selected contributions may be presented online or on-site.

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## CALL FOR PAPERS

Social enterprises (further : SE) have become key players in shaping social policy accross the globe, blending social missions with market-driven approaches. Their primary focus is on social impact rather than profit maximization.

It is undeniable that, because they aim to bring about social change and improve people's living conditions, SE have various roles and functions within the framework of social policies. As Gleeson (2013) concludes, SE influence social policy and vice versa.

Because they are rooted at the heart of small communities, SE play a part in the construction of social problems. Their activities make inappropriate situations visible and help to convince (or not) public authorities to take action by putting social policies in place.

In addition to this role of claiming and blaming, they also participate in the making of social policies and in the transformation of social policies.

And thirdly, SE participate actively in the implementation of social policies, whether public or private, in other words, whether or not in collaboration with the public authorities.

In the light of these considerations, we propose a panel focusing on the following research question:

How do social enterprises interact with, influence and complement social policies, in a global context of

economic and societal transformations ?

This research question holds significant scientific relevance due to the evolving role of SE in addressing complex social, economic and environmental challenges. They are unique in that they blend entrepreneurial strategies with social missions, often addressing policy failures where traditional actors (government or private sector) fail short. The relationship between SE and social policies remain an underexplored domain in both entrepreneurship and public policy literature. This research question addresses a critical gap in the theoretical frameworks that define the roles of SE within welfare systems. Few studies explore how SE engage with social policy frameworks.

Proposals addressing the following issues and questions are welcome (but not exclusive) :

1) Social problem construction

- How do SE lead to the identification of social situations as problematic?
- How do SEs manage to convince (or not) the public authorities to commit to resolving a situation deemed to be problematic?

2) Policy making

- How do SE influence the development and/or transformation of social policies
- What role does social innovation implemented by SE play in the creation and/or transformation of social policies?
- Are SE leaders in the policy-making process or/and do they have to submit to the authority of the public authorities?
- Do public authorities encourage the development of public policies by SE and if so, how?

3) Social policies implementation

- Which roles play SE in the implementation of social policies ? In what situations are they perceived as partners of governments, and when do they enter into competition with them ?
- How do SE contribute to strengthening social protection systems ?
- What social innovations from the entrepreneurial sector can be integrated into large-scale social policies ?
- What impact do SE have on improving the living conditions of the beneficiaries of the social policies in which they are involved?

We welcome a wide range of contributions: case studies, literature reviews, theoretical and applied research, theoretical and methodological contributions.

Proposals should not exceed 500 words.

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## Session 1 Empowering marginalized communities through inclusive socioeconomic models

Wednesday, July 2nd 13:45 to 15:45 (D1)

### Discussants

Manli Zhang (University of Science and Technology Beijing)

Emmanuel Fridez (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland )

### (Virtual) Roles and Functions of Social Enterprises in Social Policy: The Colombian Context

Sara Calvo (Universidad Internacional de la Rioja)

Social enterprises have emerged as pivotal actors in addressing complex social challenges, blending entrepreneurial practices with a commitment to social impact. In Colombia, a country marked by socio-economic inequalities and a prolonged history of armed conflict, social enterprises play a critical role in shaping and implementing social policies. This paper explores the multifaceted roles and functions of social enterprises within Colombia's social policy landscape, focusing on their contributions to poverty alleviation, peacebuilding, and sustainable development. The author uses qualitative interviews to explore this phenomenon.

The study examines how social enterprises act as intermediaries between the state and marginalized communities, fostering social cohesion and providing innovative solutions to policy gaps. Social enterprises in Colombia have been particularly instrumental in post-conflict areas, addressing unemployment, inequality, and social exclusion (Calvo et al., 2022). However, challenges such as limited access to funding, regulatory hurdles, and insufficient policy frameworks hinder their full potential (Smith et al., 2018; Dacin et al., 2010).

Through case studies and existing frameworks, this paper highlights the transformative potential of social enterprises in Colombia's social policy arena. Drawing on the structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) and social enterprise ecosystems (Kerlin, 2006), it offers policy recommendations to enhance their impact. These include fostering multi-sectoral collaboration, improving regulatory environments, and increasing public and private sector investment. Such measures are vital for building a resilient and inclusive social enterprise ecosystem in Colombia.

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# Reframing Enterprise Development: Sino-Thai Digital Cooperation and Regional Innovation

Leilong Ma (Chiang Mai University School of Public Policy)

In recent years, the digital economy has emerged as a crucial driver of global economic growth and innovation. The collaboration between China and Thailand in the digital economy is viewed as a strategic partnership that capitalizes on the strengths of both parties. By establishing a collaborative digital economy, China and Thailand can address shared challenges such as data security, intellectual property protection, and market access through coordinated policies and regulatory frameworks. Furthermore, the potential impact of Sino-Thai digital cooperation extends beyond direct economic benefits, driving enterprise upgrading through business innovation, enhanced digital transformation, and improved total factor productivity (TFP).

However, existing studies have failed to capture attempts within the Southeast Asian context or the critical role of China, particularly regarding enterprise upgrading. To address this gap, this study focuses on the Sino-Thai case and employs qualitative research methods, specifically literature analysis, to examine the impact of Sino-Thai digital cooperation policies on enterprise upgrading. The study emphasizes the necessity of such cooperation and addresses the limitations of using TFP as the sole metric for enterprise upgrading, which may overlook the significance of digital transformation in the era of the digital economy. Based on this foundation, the study analyzes how Sino-Thai digital cooperation promotes digital transformation and uncovers its role in driving technological innovation and digital upgrading within enterprises.

This research aims to provide empirical evidence for the strategic advantages of cross-border digital collaboration, contributing to theoretical advancements in enterprise upgrading within global value chains and international policy cooperation. Conducted under the policy frameworks of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the China-ASEAN Information Harbor, and Thailand's 4.0 initiative, this study also seeks to offer policy recommendations for enhancing the digital economy under these initiatives.

**Keywords:** Sino-Thai digital economy cooperation, Corporate innovation, Enterprise digital transformation, Total factor productivity, Enterprise upgrading

## Research Question

In the context of the digital economy, how does Sino-Thai digital cooperation offer new perspectives for the study of enterprise upgrading? What are the research gaps in the existing enterprise upgrading measurement systems, and how can digital transformation help construct a more comprehensive measurement framework?

## Research Objective

Explore the research on enterprise upgrading from a qualitative perspective, focusing on the following aspects:

- (1) Conduct a bibliometric analysis of existing research on enterprise upgrading, develop a research framework, and summarize future research directions. This will lead to a justification for studying the impact of Sino-Thai digital cooperation policies on enterprise upgrading, highlighting its necessity and addressing current research gaps.
- (2) Delve into the methods for measuring enterprise upgrading. Although total factor productivity (TFP) is a commonly used metric for measuring enterprise upgrading, solely relying on this measure may overlook the importance of digital transformation in the digital economy era. Therefore, this section will explore how to construct a more comprehensive measurement system for enterprise upgrading in the context of the digital economy.

## Research gap

Sino-Thai digital cooperation has significant theoretical and practical implications. However, quantitative research in this area is scarce, and there is a lack of empirical studies in the academic community.

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## Session 2 Session 2 Regulating social entrepreneurship: a strategic tool for social policies

Wednesday, July 2nd 16:00 to 18:00 (D1)

### Discussants

Benoit Renevey (HES-SO//University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland)

Emmanuel Fridez (University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland )

### (Virtual) A “political agenda” for social enterprises in Switzerland

Anna Bracci (University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland)

Over the last decades, social enterprises have become a priority on political agendas, as global markets and the **crisis in the welfare states** started in the Seventies have highlighted the fragility of State-market synergism. Although the benefits of globalization and technology have been significant, great threats started to come into sight, like increasing inequalities, risks for democracies, the depletion of environmental resources and other commons. And, as the World Bank stated in 1997, “when comprehensive collapse of the state is a danger, [an active civil society] may reduce the risk”.

There is no unique **definition** of social enterprises in literature, but European tradition and research refer to entrepreneurial initiatives promoted by civil society to provide social protection. Social enterprises shape and support public policies by pursuing an explicit social aim of serving the most fragile people or territories through their entrepreneurial attributes, significant economic risk, non-distribution constraints on profits and inclusive governance. Typical sectors are social housing, educational or cultural services, health care, work integration of disadvantaged people, craft activities, social agriculture, circular economy, biodiversity protection, etc.

In **Switzerland**, institutional and academic interest in social enterprises has arrived later than other European countries. As a notably liberal country, a very traditional view of the enterprise is still the norm. Moreover, a strong State-market alley, together with a flexible labor force, protected the country for a while from the welfare crisis, which deepened in the Nineties when unemployment, dualization into the labor market and the number of invalidity pensioners started to rise. Similar to other countries, this context of austerity led to several revisions of the main social protection regimes and a reorientation towards welfare-to-work policies, which triggered the debate in the country and led to the emergence of first social enterprises. Therefore, the phenomenon is relatively new, and the recognition process is evolving and confronted with other concepts, which challenge de facto social enterprises to identify themselves as that and gain legitimacy from authorities.

However, social enterprises play a notable role in **promoting State effectiveness and equality** by providing services of general interest at lower costs for governments, crafting more flexible responses to emerging needs, offering free services to non-paying demand or at lower price levels to the disadvantage of users, and creating and preserving employment. This is why social enterprises should gain the recognition they deserve.

But how should policymakers support social enterprises? This contribution makes a few suggestions in this regard. A “**political agenda**” for social enterprises may range from developing new demand for services to facilitating access to resources, reducing legal obstacles (especially in work integration) and supporting entrepreneurial behaviors. We argue that public support should be shaped by preserving social enterprises’ entrepreneurial positioning and inclusive governance, which guard social enterprises from actively

supporting and innovating welfare. An alley between the State and social enterprises would remarkably contribute to transcending the current economic and social dilemmas, which private and public sectors are no longer able to fill alone.

## **From Policy to Practice: The Evolution of Social Enterprises under Thailand's Pracharath Initiative**

Chakorn Loetnithat (LKY School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore)

Supachai Sompol (Thailand Development Research Institute (TDR))

This paper explores the evolution and impact of social enterprises (SEs) in Thailand, focusing on the "*Pracharath Rak Samakkee Provincial SEs*" initiative launched under the "*Sarn Palang Pracharath*" framework by a former Prime Minister. Over the past decade, significant governmental efforts have established an ecosystem conducive to SE development, marked by the enactment of the Social Enterprise Promotion Act B.E. 2562 and the creation of supportive mechanisms such as committees, offices, and operational plans. Notably, Pracharath Rak Samakkee Provincial SEs comprise approximately one-third of all social enterprises in Thailand, reflecting their critical role in advancing local empowerment and sustainable development. These movements highlight the government's intent to leverage SEs as a bridge between business strategies and social policy, offering an alternative model for addressing societal needs without the rigidities of traditional state mechanisms.

This study examines the dual role of SEs in Thailand as both business entities and social change agents. It evaluates their contributions to marginalized populations through employment opportunities, community development, and environmental initiatives. Additionally, the paper analyzes the involvement of the big firm which plays a pivotal role in providing resources and business expertise, distinguishing the Thai SE model from its international counterparts.

The methodology includes a mixed-methods approach:

- 1. Policy Analysis:** Examining the legal and institutional frameworks supporting SEs.
- 2. Case Studies:** Assessing the operational plans and societal impacts of specific SE initiatives under the Pracharath Rak Samakkee model.
- 3. Stakeholder Analysis:** Investigating collaboration between government, private sector, local communities, and other related sectors.

Key findings indicate that while the initiative demonstrates significant potential to merge business efficiency with social objectives, questions remain about its sustainability. Political associations with the previous government and a shift to OTOP models (One Tambon One Product) or Soft Power concepts raise concerns about the long-term viability of SEs as a policy instrument.

This research aligns with the panel's exploration of SEs' roles in social policy by offering insights into the Thai experience as a case study of innovation and challenges. It contributes to understanding how SEs can complement public policy, foster local empowerment, and navigate political and institutional dynamics, providing valuable lessons for global applications.

## **(Virtual) Social enterprises' public Value co-creation for sustainable development -The mechanism of boundary practices in context of China**

Wei Li (Huazhong University of Science and Technology)

Social enterprises (SEs) contribute to the delivery of United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a financially sustainable and holistic manner. In this sense, SEs are public value co-creators. The mechanisms that link SEs' managerial approaches and outcome of public value co-creation have been under researched. Based on 15 case studies of SEs in China conducted during 2023, this study found that SEs adopt boundary practices to mobilize cross-sector resources, integrate cross-field knowledge, and facilitate cross-jurisdictional joint actions. The boundary practices include crossing the public-private sector boundary, crossing and maintaining commercial-nonprofit sectors, setting up intra-organizational mechanisms to employ multi-field expertise, establishing contacts with intermediaries, utilizing digital technology to connect people and transfer information, working around contacts and rules, and carrying out Party-building work. The public value outcome of SEs' boundary practices includes both process and substantive ones related to sustainable development. Different from what previous studies suggest, the study found that SEs do not have to rely on government funding to create social, economic, environmental and institutional dimensions of public values. The findings also suggest that effective government support for SEs' public value co-creation can be in the form of providing networks and platforms for SEs'

participation in community building and public policy development.

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## Session 3: Towards innovative social policies: the triggering role of social entrepreneurship

Thursday, July 3rd 08:00 to 10:00 (D1)

### Discussants

Manli Zhang (University of Science and Technology Beijing)

Benoit Renevey (HES-SO//University of Applied Sciences of Western Switzerland)

### (Virtual) Preventing School Gun Violence: Social Entrepreneurship and Policy-Driven Innovations

Monica Nandan (Kennesaw State University)

#### Issue:

School shootings devastate communities, and their causes are complex and multifaceted. Understanding how schools and the living environments of schoolchildren function as protective or risk factors for such tragedies is equally challenging. As Bushman et al. (2016) state, "It is unlikely that we ever will understand the depth of alienation or desires for social status motivating an individual shooter, nor will we be able to restore peace of mind to the families and communities that have experienced these tragedies" (p. 41). Research highlights that exposure to media violence significantly increases violent behaviors in both the short and long term (Huesman, 2007). Furthermore, loneliness and social isolation critically influence young adults' self-perception, while positive peer interactions reduce violent tendencies (Smith, Flay, Bell, & Weissberg, 2001).

Recent reports reveal an unexpected pattern: many youth engaging in school-based gun violence were high-achieving students excelling academically. These students did not draw attention from school officials as being "at-risk." However, there is a lack of research exploring the challenges high-achieving students face and the protective factors that could prevent such incidents. This gap underscores the urgent need for innovative, community-driven solutions to address school gun violence effectively.

#### Innovative Process in a Georgia County, USA:

In response to this critical issue, a philanthropist and five graduate students from interdisciplinary fields—including social work, conflict management, business, and public administration—collaborated to map services and resources available to school-aged children in a Georgia county. Using Human-Centered Design Thinking methodology, the team conducted interviews with over 200 high school students, focusing on high-achieving individuals to identify stressors and potential protective factors.

Through this participatory process, students proposed solutions to address their challenges. Graduate students then compared these suggestions to existing resources in the county, ultimately designing innovative prevention strategies. This work culminated in the creation of YouthCentric, a social entrepreneurship venture dedicated to implementing tailored strategies to mitigate stressors faced by high-achieving students and prevent school-based violence.

#### Impact and Policy Integration:

YouthCentric secured funding from three sources over its initial three years to implement its innovative strategies in three schools. This required modifying school policies and aligning practices to support implementation. The venture's success highlights the potential of integrating student-driven insights into social entrepreneurship initiatives to address systemic issues.

YouthCentric also engaged with federal and state policymakers to secure funding and support for its

initiatives. The project's outcomes influenced local and state policy discussions, demonstrating its potential for scalability and broader impact. Key insights into how YouthCentric navigated policy frameworks and aligned its strategies with funding mechanisms will be presented.

This presentation will detail the development and implementation of YouthCentric, its innovative approach to social entrepreneurship, and its impact on social policies at multiple levels. By leveraging community-driven strategies and interdisciplinary collaboration, YouthCentric illustrates a scalable model for preventing school gun violence through targeted, policy-aligned interventions.

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(Note: This manuscript is not the copy of record and may not exactly replicate the final version. The final version of record is available via the DOI link provided above. This research was partially funded by the National Science Foundation [NSF] grant "Workshop on Youth Violence" [BCS-1322155].)

Smith, P., Flay, B. R., Bell, C. C., & Weissberg, R. P. (2001). The protective influence of parents and peers in violence avoidance among African-American youth. *Maternal and Child Health Journal*, 5(4), 217–224. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1013036216644>

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### **How Do Social Entrepreneurs Influence the Transformation of Social Policies? Social Workers' Perspectives**

Hani Nouman (The University of Haifa, Israel)

Social entrepreneurship, which is grounded in the education policy and accreditation standards (EPAS) of the Council for Social Work Education and the professional ethics codes, requires social workers to implement and advance innovative, productive and transformative solutions to address social challenges. Social entrepreneurship is particularly vital when social service systems are underperforming or fail to address current issues. However, the role of social workers as social entrepreneurs (SE) in shaping and transforming social policies remains an unanswered question.

This lecture draws on two complementary studies I recently conducted: (1) A qualitative study involving interviews with 28 social workers who successfully implemented social initiatives within their social services ( $n = 28$ ). The interviews explored three key questions: What are the goals of the social enterprise? What action strategies were used to promote and implement the it? How did the initiative impact policy transformation? (2) A quantitative study with 185 participants ( $n=185$ ) that examined the success factors of social entrepreneurship and the motivations driving social workers to act as social entrepreneurs.

The findings highlight three key mechanisms through which social workers drive policy transformation through social entrepreneurship. First, social workers challenge the existing social order and status quo by tackling the root causes of social issues with innovative entrepreneurial initiatives. They do this by actively involving community members both the planning and implementation stages, ensuring that the solutions are rooted in local needs and experiences. Second, social workers foster strategic coalitions across various sectors, including third-sector organizations, businesses, and municipal agencies, to promote entrepreneurial thinking and drive innovative change. This multi-stakeholder approach helps legitimize and scales their initiatives. Third, social workers engage directly in policy advocacy by leveraging a range of resources: recruiting volunteers, utilizing material resources, using media and social networks for awareness, and actively participating in political arenas to influence policymakers to adopt and promote their social initiatives. The impact of these entrepreneurial efforts is assessed through both subjective indicators (such as client and partner satisfaction) and objective outcomes, particularly in terms of social policy changes that reduce inequalities and improve access to resources.

These new insights are expected to provide a foundation for enhancing training programs and shaping policies that encourage social workers to engage in social entrepreneurship, helping to address the complex and ongoing social challenges in the current era.

## **Shaping social policy for homelessness by social enterprises : a case from a swiss canton**

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Low-threshold social work policies in Switzerland are not unified at federal level, particularly as regards the fight against poverty. While the Swiss Federal Constitution guarantees every citizen the right to decent living conditions (housing, coverage of vital needs, etc.), the implementation of anti-poverty policies is entrusted to the cantons. As a result, each canton implements its own low-threshold policy in the fight against poverty. One of the foundations of low-threshold policies is the guarantee of housing for everyone, which is why the cantons are developing emergency accommodation policies and sustainable housing policies.

In Switzerland, homelessness has always tended to affect cantons with large cities, such as Zurich, Geneva, Lausanne or Bern. The so-called 'rural' cantons have long been less affected by this phenomenon. But the economic crisis of the 1990s and the changes that accompanied it led to a spectacular increase in homelessness, which the public authorities in these cantons were unprepared to deal with. In these cantons, in the absence of well-established policies, it was mainly non-profit organisations that took the initiative in setting up emergency shelters and temporary social support for homeless people.

Our presentation will illustrate the gradual development of a low-threshold policy to combat poverty in a rural canton, Fribourg. Over a period of some twenty years, a social enterprise called 'La Tuile' led the way in setting up an initially private policy, which eventually became institutionalised as a public policy, supported and steered by the State. The text looks at the development of the La Tuile association, founded in Fribourg in the 1990s to meet the needs of homeless people. This organisation has developed through an approach centred on social entrepreneurship, filling the gaps in public policy in this area.

In its early days, La Tuile provided emergency accommodation for the homeless. Over time, it has broadened its scope, offering a variety of solutions, including supported housing, home follow-up, reintegration workshops and a socio-cultural café.

However, this diversification has taken place in a context of low public support. This led La Tuile to self-finance its projects for years, through private funding, partnerships and fundraising initiatives. In this way, social entrepreneurship initiatives have served as a powerful tool for making up for the State's shortcomings by proposing innovative solutions. By dint of lobbying, La Tuile obtained a cantonal financial mandate in 2021, officially recognising its leading role in the fight against homelessness.

In this way, La Tuile has played a fundamental role in blaming a social situation, in implementing measures to support the homeless, and in shaping future official policies supported by the State from the 2020s onwards.