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**UDC 31, 33: 331, 334, 338**

**SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP VS FREE MARKET.  
TYPOLOGY (OF LACK) OF COOPERATION  
BETWEEN SOCIAL ECONOMY ENTITIES AND ENTERPRISES**

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**Abstract**

Social enterprises (i. e. entities of the social economy) are currently perceived as auxiliary tools of social policy aimed at solving social problems, using economic mechanisms. Their quantity, size, and importance for the economy determines their rather minor significance to the economic functions of the open market. Which, in turn, is recreated in relation to the conditions of the capitalist economy that grants small weight to non-economic motivations for running a business. As a result, the main players of the open market (entrepreneurs) need social justification for their economic decisions, which, in addition to a strategy leading to profit, should include social responsibility. Nowadays, the range of economic entities has exceeded social enterprises, which initiate changes in the rules of the free market. This is not only a trend, but also a need, the fulfillment of which is to increase the quantitative and qualitative involvement of citizens in the labor market.

This article aims to answer the following questions: what place should social enterprises take on the free market; what are the consequences; and whether it is possible to talk about the “ideal model” of building relationships on the open market between social and classic enterprises. It is also worth re-asking the question about who (especially from the perspective of current social needs) should determine the rules of the free market? This question is worth expanding in relation to which rules should regulate the freedom of the market.

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**Citation:** Waligóra A. 2019. “Social entrepreneurship vs free market. Typology (of lack) of cooperation between social economy entities and enterprises”. Tyumen State University Herald. Social, Economic, and Law Research, vol. 5, no 1, pp. 23-35.  
DOI: 10.21684/2411-7897-2019-5-1-23-35

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Conducting this research required both primary quantitative (analysis of existing statistical data) and secondary qualitative research methods (among others, literature research, participant observation, case studies). That resulted in the creation of “Typology (of lack) of relations between social economy entities and enterprises”. English and Polish-language literature in the field of economics and other social sciences was used to prepare the article. The results show that both social enterprises and enterprises in general have a small mutual awareness of their existence, and when they obtain it, they find optimal formulas of effective cooperation. In addition, dividing social responsibility between cooperating social enterprises and enterprises in general can be a target and optimal model of cooperation within the free market.

### **Keywords**

Economic sociology, social entrepreneurship, social enterprises, corporate social responsibility, free market.

**DOI: 10.21684/2411-7897-2019-5-1-23-35**

### **Introduction**

In the free market space (which dominates the economy today), it is assumed that economic profit is the most desirable category of profit. Undoubtedly, money that will put the economy in motion and stimulate social life (at least in the area of the labor market) is an indispensable motivation for citizens to engage in economy. However, it is not always a sufficient incentive. Apart from the possibility of being a part of the dominant market trend, it is possible to operate in the gray zone (the so-called economy of the second circulation) [3, p. 17] or to remain inactive professionally. In spite of numerous studies serving the ongoing viewing of the shadow economy and its essence [2, p. 9; 8, pp. 256-257], it is difficult to name uneconomic motivations leading to the choice of formal or real inactivity. However, it is easy to see their economic consequences leading to imbalances in the labor market, including profit, regulation of fiscal obligations, and building individual professional CVs of citizens.

Individual decisions related to whether and how to participate in the labor market, affect the situation of enterprises. Nowadays, the public discourse mentions the so-called employee’s market, i. e. the situation where the task of balancing the relation on the market is attributed not to the entrepreneurs creating the market, but to the employees who choose them. There is little discussion about the advantages of such a solution consisting in an increase in salary and improvement of working conditions, which are the most desirable phenomena, but their durability depends on the balance between the needs of entrepreneurs and the expectations of employees.

Looking at the two free market paradoxes described above, one can get the impression that employers and their (potential) employees create two separate realities of this market, although their separate long-term stable functioning is not

possible. It seems that the indirect, committed form of entrepreneurship emerging on the open market could help reducing the imbalance. It is social entrepreneurship that balances economic and non-economic profits of enterprises. Social entrepreneurship has a long tradition and is derived from the bottom-up need for cooperation aimed at improving economic existence by engaging in market activity. And although entities of the social economy (social enterprises) are well recognized in the history of management [9, pp. 13-15], they are not a popular tool for balancing the open market.

The involvement of social enterprises in the free market seems to be the highest recognized form of corporate social responsibility (CSR), but it is not the dominant form of this activity. Nowadays, in highly developed countries, meaningful CSR is a social expectation that enterprises should fulfill. In Europe, the inclusion of social enterprises in the open market is stimulated mainly through social policy. In the United States of America, the stimulation of social entrepreneurship is mainly the concern of entrepreneurs [7, pp. 120-122].

The result of the presented considerations is a rather simple conclusion leading to the author's thesis that building cooperation between enterprises operating on the open market and social enterprises serves to achieve the socio-economic balance of the capitalist economy based on strengthening the social capital of the labor market. Although this solution seems to be uncomplicated, it is not widely used in practice.

### **Key definitions**

In this study, the notion of a free market was used from the perspective of contemporary economy considerations. Over time, many authors dealt with the problems of the free market: Adam Smith ("The Wealth of Nations", 1776), Jan-Baptiste Say ("A Treatise on Political Economy", 1803), David Ricardo ("On the Principles of Political Economy and Taxation", 1817), John Stuart Mill ("Principles of Political Economy", 1848), John A. Hobson ("Evolution of Modern Capitalism", 1894), Leonard Hobhouse ("Liberalism", 1911), Ludwig von Mises ("Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth", 1920), Friedrich Hayek ("Individualism and Economic Order", 1948), Isaiah Berlin ("Two Concepts of Liberty", 1958) and Milton Friedman ("Capitalism and Freedom", 1962). Each of the authors emphasized another aspect of the market space, focusing on its potential or threats. It is worth noting that the ongoing management practice was inevitably accompanied by a theoretical reflection on what the free market should be. For the purpose of this study, the following operational definition of the free market was adopted:

"Free market [is] an unregulated system of economic exchange, in which taxes, quality controls, quotas, tariffs, and other forms of centralized economic interventions by government either do not exist or are minimal. As the free market represents a benchmark that does not actually exist, modern societies can only approach or approximate this ideal of efficient resource allocation and can be described along a spectrum ranging from low to high amounts of regulation" [1].

According to the logic of the study, the deliberations on the free market include the concept of corporate social responsibility as a holistic approach to the functions that the market is supposed to fulfill. Although it does not meet the classic conditions, the following definition of corporate social responsibility was adopted:

- “1. Corporate Social Responsibility is a process that is concerned with treating the stakeholders of a company or institution ethically or in a responsible manner. ‘Ethically or responsible’ means treating key stakeholders in a manner deemed acceptable according to international norms.
2. Social includes economic, financial and environmental responsibility. Stakeholders exist both within a firm or institution and outside.
3. The wider aim of social responsibility is to create higher and higher standards of sustainable living, while preserving the profitability of the corporation or the integrity of the institution, for peoples both within and outside these entities. The key is how profits are made, not the pursuit of profits at any cost.
4. CSR is a process to achieve sustainable development in societies. Both CSR and Sustainability address multi-stakeholders and their materiality.
5. Corporate means anybody private, public or NGO [our definition applies neatly outside the traditional private corporate sphere]” [5, pp. 299-300].

When preparing this article, the author included a key (from the perspective of the social economy) concept of a social entrepreneurship:

“Social entrepreneurship is defined as types of organized business practices, also going beyond the existing legal framework for social responsibility, positively evaluated in relation to social and symbolic values, meeting the requirement of economic rationality<sup>1</sup>. Social enterprises are therefore both old and new social economy entities, and other types of entities in an open market that balance their economic and social goals” [12, p. 7].

The concept of social capital in the perspective of Piotr Sztompka has been added to the above definitions: “social capital as a moral space based on trust, loyalty, mutuality, solidarity, respect and justice” [11, p. 12].

The above-mentioned concepts, although they do not exhaust the definitions important from the perspective of the research problem, seem to be crucial for further consideration in the discussion. The free market consumes an economic approach to the raised issues. Social capital refers to the characteristics of the free market described in sociology. Social entrepreneurship is a bridge between these two realities.

### **Methods and purpose of research**

Conducting this research required consulting both secondary quantitative (analysis of existing statistical data) and primary qualitative research methods (literature research, participant observation, case studies).

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<sup>1</sup> The presented definition of social entrepreneurship was created by the author and first mentioned in her dissertation.

In the field of secondary quantitative analysis, academic literature and statistical databases of social enterprises in Poland and around the world were used. Both industries and types of social enterprises operating within these industries were analyzed. Attention was paid to the relationship between production and service activities, as well as experience regarding cooperation with free market entities. The collected information constitutes a background to the conclusions formulated in this study, and above all the foundation for the creation of the “Typology (of lack) of relations between social economy entities and enterprises”.

In the field of qualitative research, scientific articles, research reports and other non-scientific studies describing the characteristics of social enterprises in the context of cooperation with the free market were used. In addition to written studies, audio-visual materials (such as promotional spots, TV and other online interviews with experts and reports describing cooperation between free market entities and social enterprises) were also used.

It should be noted that there are no common fully comparable databases on cooperation between social economy entities and enterprises, and therefore, combination of research methods seemed to be an optimal methodological solution.

## **Results**

Thanks to the analytical activities described above and due to the lack of model approaches in the subject literature, there was made an attempt to develop a systematic look at the relations that connect the open market with social enterprises. They were divided into six types describing the density of the above relations from the lack of relations to full cooperation between entities operating on the free market and social enterprises. From the perspective of ambition of formulated research objectives, the Table 1 highlights the lack of cooperation between the surveyed entities, which, as it seems, may be a potential barrier to the stability and balance of the free market. Findings, resulting from all categories of relationships, are presented in the Table 1.

The first type, “Unconscious coexistence”, describes a situation in which free market entities do not realize the existence of social enterprises on the market. On the other hand, social enterprises do not consider enterprises operating on the open market as potential cooperators. “Unconscious coexistence” refers most often to enterprises with little operating experience on the market. It is also more characteristic of economic activities unrelated to the social environment, and thus, it takes place where there is a low level of social capital.

The second type, “Conscious coexistence”, describes a situation in which both analyzed market sides realize the possibilities of cooperation, but they do not use this possibility. The reason may be the reluctance to build such a relationship on the market, lack of motivation or lack of mechanisms conducive to establishing cooperation. “Conscious coexistence”, or an attitude towards the implementation of particular economic interests is characteristic of market activities conducted in low social capital.

The third type, “Friendly Coexistence”, describes the situation in which open-market operators see opportunities in social enterprises to carry out ad hoc activities related to charity, corporate social responsibility, or conscious consumption. However,

their cooperation is mainly social, not economic. An example of “Friendly Coexistence” may be that open-market entities run student cooperatives aimed at developing entrepreneurial attitudes among students. The third type is best carried out in the conditions of developing social capital.

Table 1

**Typology (of lack) of relations between social economy entities and enterprises**

Таблица 1

**Типология (недостаточного) взаимодействия между субъектами социальной экономики и предприятиями**

Type of relation	Character of cooperation	Examples of the social economy entities
Unconscious coexistence	Entities operating on the open market are not aware of the existence of social economy entities and are not interested in acquiring this knowledge.	Small non-governmental organizations with local influence.
Conscious coexistence	Entities operating on the open market are aware of the existence of social economy entities, but they do not interact with them in the market.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Student co-operatives,</li> <li>— Social Integration Clubs,</li> <li>— Centers for social integration,</li> <li>— Food cooperatives,</li> <li>— Other entities of the social economy.</li> </ul>
Friendly coexistence	Entities operating on the open market are aware of the existence of social economy entities and the possibility of acting as patrons of their activities. They take into account the possibility of sharing surpluses.	
Incidental cooperation	Entities operating on the open market use products/services of social economy entities guided by the choice of a cooperator with the principles of an open market (selection of the most advantageous offer that meets the lowest price criterion).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Social cooperatives,</li> <li>— Credit unions (Spółdzielcze Kasy Oszczędnościowo-Kredytowe — SKOK).</li> </ul>
Systematic cooperation	Entities operating on the open market establish permanent cooperation with social economy entities in a joint effort to generate profit or generate new quality. This relationship may be of a partner (cooperation), subcontracting (commissioning) or service nature (services and financial products).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Vocational Development Centers,</li> <li>— Student cooperatives,</li> <li>— Employment co-operatives,</li> <li>— Food cooperatives,</li> <li>— Cooperative banks.</li> </ul>
Symbiosis	Entities operating on the open market establish or co-operate entities of the social economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Private limited non-profit companies,</li> <li>— Corporate foundations.</li> </ul>

Source: author's own elaboration.

Источник: авторские выводы.

The fourth type, “Incidental cooperation”, occurs when social enterprises make a single purchase of goods or services from social enterprises. This is usually the case in the public procurement procedure ordered by public institutions or procurement contracts in a different formula implemented by enterprises operating on the open market. In this type of relations, social enterprises participate in the market relation on the principle of free competition. This situation occurs when the free market enterprises do not apply the mechanism of social or analogous clauses or when social enterprises are characterized by high competitiveness of undertaken market activities. “Incidental cooperation” is associated with high social capital expressed by trust in market-related partners. It is also characteristic for socially and economically resourceful business entities.

The fifth type, “Systematic cooperation”, describes a situation in which enterprises from the free market consciously choose social enterprises for their partners. In this type of relations, social enterprises participate in the market relation on the basis of free competition or using social clauses. An example of such a relationship may be the transfer as part of the subcontracting part of enterprises’ activity from the free market to a social enterprise, such as professional activity facilities. Such an action may be used to develop corporate social responsibility or reduce the operating costs of an open market enterprise. “Systematic cooperation” works best in the conditions of developed social capital and developed awareness of corporate social responsibility.

The sixth type, “Symbiosis”, describes the market where economic entities are fully aware of the importance of social entrepreneurship for the development of social capital and social enterprises to stimulate various aspects of management. In “Symbiosis”, companies from the open market strive to develop existing and co-create new social enterprises. An example of building “Symbiosis” is the creation of an open market by enterprises, often in cooperation with public institutions or entities from the third sector — non-profit companies. The sixth type characterizes optimal conditions of management, which creates fully developed social capital and high awareness of the importance of corporate social responsibility for management.

The above description included both the subjects of the “old” and “new” social economy [6, p. 106], although in literature, they are rather divided, assuming that the motivations for the creation and existence of the “old” and “new” social enterprises is different. In the perspective of the deliberations, however, it is worth focusing on a different aspect of the functioning of social enterprises. These are the relationships with social enterprises currently on the open market. This perspective shows that both “old” and “new” social enterprises can successfully participate in this market, no matter what functions they were originally assigned. This perspective also shows that the initiators of the market relationship can be both entities operating on the open market and social enterprises. The role of all “intermediaries” in establishing market relations, such as entities from the third sector also has its significance, but this study does not directly concern this topic.

An important factor for open market entities to cooperate with social enterprises, is the possibility of implementing the corporate social responsibility strategy.

A company from the free market, a “seeker” of CSR is treated here as the initiator of the relationship. The benefits of this cooperation are two-way. On the one hand, the open market entity implements the partly non-economic operation of CSR; on the other hand, there is a niche on the market that is partly independent of the economic rationality that social enterprises can fill. It seems that the creation of such dependencies on the market is on the one hand the highest possible form of implementation of corporate social responsibility strategy. It is also an opportunity for social enterprises for the long-lasting marketization and economisation of activities undertaken on the market.

The main purpose of the article was to determine the answer to the question of what social enterprises occupy on the free market, what are the consequences and whether it is possible to talk about the “ideal model” of building relationships on the open market between social enterprises and free market entities. This goal has been achieved through the analysis and synthesis of available knowledge about social enterprises and enterprises from the free market as well as the relationships in which these entities enter. The conducted research allowed to determine the ideal model currently described in “Typology (of lack) of relations between social economy entities and enterprises” as “Symbiosis” of open market entities and social enterprises.

Answering who (especially from the perspective of current social needs) should determine the rules of the free market is more complicated. The results show that the factor affecting the activities of the free market should be the constantly increasing social pressure, which results in the implementation of rational, credible and valuable CSR strategies. This activity supports the existence of social enterprises or the existence of the possibility of creating them. The answer for the question about who should determine the rules of the free market is the following: society, along with all its institutions and opportunities that appear, inter alia, along with the development and dissemination of social entrepreneurship.

### **Discussion**

In the public debate on the development of social entrepreneurship, an argument is often raised that all enterprises operating on the market are social, because they all affect the socio-professional activity of people and, indirectly, they aim at their well-being. However, it is necessary to distinguish between social enterprises and enterprises as well as other open market entities, due to the proportions of economic and social goals they implement. It also seems important to draw attention to the aspect of unequal access to the labor market for people who do not find themselves in its neo-liberal formula. Enterprises of the open market pay less attention to the dependence between occupational inclusion of persons remaining under coercion (e. g., consequence of disability) or choice (e. g., consequences of outlook) outside the “first circulation” labor market, while social enterprises focus on these people. The above arguments are not and should not be the basis for settlements measuring the analyzed market initiatives (from the free market and social ones). Rather, they serve to see the complementarity of various entrepreneurial activities and accept that the economic or social motivation of their management may prevail. Assuming that



the balance of goals within individual entities is rather difficult and to achieve, it is also worth formulating a conclusion regarding the legitimacy of existence of both.

The free market and the labor market coexists with a number of phenomena that have not been the subject of this study and which undoubtedly affect this market. These include, among others, state policy, the scale of the real economy (not based on financial speculation) [4], economic patriotism that breaks in the scientific discourse [10, pp. 275-276], or the presence of both sexes on the labor market. All the above-mentioned phenomena constitute an important context of including social entrepreneurship in the contemporary economy. It seems, however, that in the face of the research problem presented here, these are some benchmarks that differentiate the dynamics of social entrepreneurship development, which deserve a broader detailed discussion in separate studies.

### **The importance of the results**

Social economy and social entrepreneurship function separately from the theory of economics. The social economy is identified with social policy or charity, playing an important role in the labor market and the activation of human resources, which experience difficulties with their existing job offers. In turn, corporate social responsibility is identified with the open market and, mainly, enterprises operating on it. The combination of the social economy and corporate social responsibility seems to correspond to the postulate of the economization of social enterprises and the humanization of business operations in the free market. In turn, the change in thinking about market relations being in transition from the dependence of smaller players on larger ones, to cooperation seems to correspond with the contemporary postulate of social capital densification in the social world, where the market belongs to.

The proposed change of viewpoint relieves the image of social enterprises treated so far rather as recipients of market surpluses (e. g., accumulated in EU funds) and puts them in the perspective of partners. Free entities receive, thanks to their existence, a chance for real CSR activities, based on their competence resources and real market needs. The relational approach to the open market frees both sides from the need to prove the legitimacy of the existence of social enterprises and the value of activities related to corporate social responsibility.

### **Conclusion**

At present, we are dealing with a situation where, on the one hand, the instability of the labor market destabilizes the economy as such. On the other hand, in the face of open market enterprises, there is an increasingly clear expectation for their ethical functioning based on social consensus. Social entrepreneurship is not a phenomenon that in the global economy would have its economic significance. It is not about the volume of economic turnover, but it creates conditions for it. Corporate social responsibility becomes an increasingly articulated social expectation that requires sophisticated, long-term activities for the benefit of, most often, the local community. Together with the increase in the awareness of the impact of the economy on the environment (both natural and social), which is often understood as a threat, it is worth considering

the benefits that result from the existence of free market enterprises who are becoming equal actors of social life with the development of CSR. It seems justified that these actors implement activities in the area of CSR, where they know each other best, and hence connected with stimulating, through cooperation with social enterprises, economy for management.

The pursuit of market symbiosis between enterprises and social economy entities seems to be a rational scenario for stabilizing at least local markets. More than the mentioned results of launching social economy entities, the concentration of social capital seems to improve not only the quality of the labor market, but the quality of life.

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УДК 31, 33: 331, 334, 338

**СОЦИАЛЬНОЕ ПРЕДПРИНИМАТЕЛЬСТВО  
ПРОТИВ СВОБОДНОГО РЫНКА.  
ТИПОЛОГИЯ (НЕДОСТАТОЧНОГО)  
ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ МЕЖДУ СУБЪЕКТАМИ  
СОЦИАЛЬНОЙ ЭКОНОМИКИ И ПРЕДПРИЯТИЯМИ**

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**Аннотация**

Социальные предприятия (субъекты социальной экономики) в настоящее время воспринимаются как вспомогательные инструменты социальной политики, направленные на решение социальных проблем с использованием экономических механизмов. Их количество, размер и важность для экономики определяют их довольно малую значимость для экономических функций открытого рынка. Открытый рынок, в свою очередь, воссоздается в связи с условиями капиталистической экономики, в которой неэкономическим мотивам ведения бизнеса придается небольшой вес. В свою очередь, основные игроки открытого рынка (предприниматели) нуждаются в социальном обосновании экономических решений, которое помимо прибыльной стратегии должно включать социальную ответственность. В настоящее время круг хозяйствующих субъектов превзошел социальные предприятия, которые иницируют изменения правил свободного рынка. Это скорее необходимость, реализация которой заключается в повышении количественной и качественной вовлеченности граждан на рынке труда.

Основная цель этой статьи — ответить на следующие вопросы: какое место должны занимать социальные предприятия на свободном рынке, каковы последствия и мож-

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**Цитирование:** Валигора А. Социальное предпринимательство против свободного рынка. Типология (недостаточного) взаимодействия между субъектами социальной экономики и предприятиями / А. Валигора // Вестник Тюменского государственного университета. Социально-экономические и правовые исследования. 2019. Том 5. № 1. С. 23-35.  
DOI: 10.21684/2411-7897-2019-5-1-23-35

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но ли говорить об «идеальной модели» построения отношений на открытом рынке между социальными предприятиями и предприятиями в целом. Также стоит еще раз задать вопрос о том, кто (особенно с точки зрения текущих социальных потребностей) должен определять правила свободного рынка. Этот вопрос особенно важен в связи с тем, какие правила должны регулировать свободу рынка.

Для проведения этого исследования автору потребовались как первичные количественные (анализ существующих статистических данных), так и вторичные качественные методы исследования (включая литературные исследования, наблюдение за участниками, тематические исследования). Это привело к созданию «Типологии (недостаточного) взаимодействия между субъектами социальной экономики и предприятиями». Для подготовки статьи автор ознакомилась с литературой на английском и польском языках в области экономики и других общественных наук.

Результаты показывают, что как социальные предприятия, так и предприятия в целом мало осведомлены о существовании друг друга. Но когда они в курсе этого, они находят оптимальные формулы эффективного сотрудничества. Кроме того, разделение социальной ответственности между сотрудничающими социальными предприятиями и предприятиями в целом может быть целевой оптимальной моделью сотрудничества на свободном рынке.

#### Ключевые слова

Экономическая социология, социальное предпринимательство, социальные предприятия, корпоративная социальная ответственность, свободный рынок.

DOI: 10.21684/2411-7897-2019-5-1-23-35

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