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## SOCIAL MARKETING OF A DIFFERENT PACE: BETWEEN LIBERAL AND PATERNALISTIC MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Abstract. This article examines social marketing as one of the approaches for managing social change. We place the concept of social marketing on the continuum between liberal and paternalistic approaches to social change management. Furthermore, we consider which forms of social change management in Slovenia are dominant, and in which position among them is social marketing. The presumption of the discussion is that social marketing has developed at different paces and with different acknowledgements around the world, according to the prevailing governmental philosophy: paternalism or liberalism. Societies based on liberal models of governance seem keener to accept and develop liberal approaches and social marketing among them. In societies with a tradition of paternalistic social change management, where we position Slovenia, social marketing is evolving slowly, with more caution, although incorporating the essential principles of social marketing developed in liberal market societies. We conclude the discussion with an assessment of the current stage of the life-cycle of social marketing in Slovenia, and the opportunities and obstacles to its further development. Keywords: social marketing, Slovenia, social change, behaviour change

### Introduction

A decade ago, Alan R. Andreasen (2002), one of the founders of social marketing, challenged us to think about social marketing as 'a product' (a discipline) and its position in relation to other approaches in influencing and managing social change. In less than 30 years, social marketing has developed from being solely a concept into being a recognized practice and profession. Although well framed, social marketing still stumbles in reaching its

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full capacity and its full recognition, more so in some countries than in others. Originating in the USA in the early 1970s (Kotler and Levy, 1969; Kotler and Zaltman, 1971), and intensively exported elsewhere over the last decade, social marketing is now considered to be in the growth phase of its product life-cycle, with a bright future if the various barriers can be overcome (Andreasen, 2002). While in certain areas, primarily Anglo-Saxon countries, social marketing has already entered maturity, it has hardly reached adolescence in other countries, according to Andreasen's classification (2003). A glimpse into the state of social marketing in Slovenia would suggest that it fits the latter case. This paper will attempt, firstly, to position social marketing in relation to other approaches to social change management on the continuum between paternalistic and liberal governmental philosophies. Furthermore, it will discuss the position of the social marketing life-cycle in Slovenia, and assess the opportunities and obstacles to its further development.

# First things first: the political legacy of managing social change in Slovenia

Slovenia is a young state, although its political history dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. In recent history, Slovenia has adopted and/or repudiated different political and economic organizations of society and forms of government: a monarchy, a socialistic republic, and a democratic republic. It started a process of democratization in the early 1990s, still being part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, and claimed independence in 1991. As a democratic republic it joined the European Union in 2004.<sup>1</sup> Political and economic transition also brought many challenges in the area of social change management. The new political and economic circumstances and a declining welfare state questioned the power relations between the government and the citizens and the distribution of rights and responsibilities between the state and the individual. In the previous system, the state was, as some like to say metaphorically, a nanny. It provided strong and complex public institutional support in all areas of life: education, health, housing, transport and so forth. The citizen could feel that she/he would be well cared for of as long as she/he complied with the recommendations and respected particular societal norms. The state was perceived to be responsible for the well-being of the collective, and of the individual as an integral part. People were responsible for respecting rather explicit norms and by doing so, they were guaranteed access to various public services, support and solidarity. Trusting and conforming to the well informed expert apparatus of the state, which knows best, was perceived as a voucher for achieving

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> More about the historical political context of Slovenia can be read in Prunk (2008).

the well-being of the individual and the prosperity of society as a whole.

Like the 'old' state, the 'new' state is equally guided by the need for healthy, well-behaved, creative and productive citizens. But for the late modern, individualized subject (Beck, 1992) and the political circumstances in which liberal principles proceed in the foreground, explicit normalization is not admissible, just like the accenting of societal interests ahead of the interests of individuals. Gradually, in accordance with technological development, demystification of science, with the processes of the de-traditionalization, secularization, and individualization of society, governmental (and expert) discourse excluded the explicit addressing of individuals of a collective spirit, common good and of the meaning of individual behaviour for the development and prosperity of the nation, such as had been characterized for decades after the Second World War (Kamin, 2004). Government at the declarative political level denounced the centralization of action and took on the economically 'more efficient' participative, dispersed action. It introduced the concept of free choice, and, by this, redirected more and more responsibilities for the well-being of the individual to the individual. The concept of common action for common good was dissolved; explicit norms were gradually transformed into friendly recommendations and implicit norms.

It would be naïve to think that the state became indifferent to citizens' compliance with recommendations; however, the need to address the citizens as individuals, who are free to choose, became apparent. Political documents addressing people's behaviour nowadays primarily occupy a freeing, non-normative, non-obligatory and non-moralizing discourse, often leaning on the concept of empowerment of the individual. In spite of such postulates, we recurrently observe the opposite at the level of interventions for managing social issues. The discourse of social change intervention is, to a great extent, still decidedly normative and moralizing, displaying the long legacy of the paternalistic relationship between the state and the citizen (Kamin, 2004).

Primarily, social changes were traditionally managed institutionally, on a structural and communitarian level in Slovenia, enforced by legislation and encouraged by education. The latter focused on providing information about certain facts, for example about sexually transmitted diseases, or teaching basic skills, for example how to clean teeth properly. A great deal of education about various issues was close to the concept of propaganda, by which we mean the act of dissemination of a particular doctrine (Jančič, 2000). Non-compliance with recommendations was essentially considered to be a consequence of poor knowledge, ignorance and/or disobedience. The solution seemed to be to feed people with more information and pose stricter laws. Is there something wrong with this picture? Are there other possible strategic tools on offer, which could best promote, accomplish and sustain desired social changes and respect the new political and economic order without risking stigmatization, criminalization of lifestyles, individualization of social problems, growth in social inequalities and so forth?

# Strategic tools for the management of social issues behaviour in democratic societies

Rothschild (1999: 36) emphasized that all societies attempt to manage the behaviour of their citizens at some level; the question is only how to do so appropriately. At the bottom line, the choice of approach depends to a large extent on the perceived relations between the state and the citizen: distribution of rights and responsibilities between them and the locus of power for deciding what is best for somebody. Rothschild (1999: 29) brings forward two oppositional philosophies of government related to the above issue. First is paternalism, which puts the knowledge of the state (with all its expert information apparatus) before the knowledge of the individual. 'Paternalism has been described as actions by society for the benefit of the individual without consent of, or contrary to the wishes of, the individual' (Brock in Rothschild, 1999: 29). The state knows best what is good for society and for the individual and manages social changes from this position by imposing knowledge and by enforcing recommended behaviours on members of society. The second philosophy is libertarianism, which celebrates free choice and puts high bets and expectations on the power and knowledge of the individual. The individual is trusted to know what is best for her/him: therefore behaviours should result in an individual's own decisions which should not be imposed on them by others, namely the state.

Regardless of the prevailing governmental philosophy, there is always a degree of unease in deciding how many rights and responsibilities the state should have, and how much freedom in rights and responsibilities the individual should have. The level of approved free choice for the individual usually depends on the perceived long-term cost for society. Rothschild (1999: 28, 29), referring to Buchanan, defines these costs as externalities that affect other individuals without their specific agreement; and which need to be paid for, directly or indirectly.

An example of a recent free choice dilemma in Slovenia, as in the majority of European union countries, is the adoption of the non-smoking law, which, in order to protect non-smokers from involuntary passive smoking and to reduce public health burdens related to smoking, denies smokers the free choice to smoke in indoor public places. The state has exercised its right to impose the law on smokers to reduce the externalities for the wider society. These kinds of compromise are visible on every level of the state-citizen relationship and in every field, for example in public health, education, security, road safety, the environment and so on.

Sometimes, the easiest and the fastest way to achieve social change seems to be a decision enforced on the citizens and organizations from a position of an unquestionable sovereign. But this approach is myopic and has many pitfalls.

Referring primarily to the public health field, Rothschild (1999) suggests that there are three primary classes of strategic tools for the management of social issues behaviour: education, marketing and legislation. He discusses the relevancy of particular tools according to the target's motivation, opportunities and abilities for cooperation in achieving social change. From this perspective, each of the 'tools' has its strengths and weaknesses. Legislation, for example, is the most appropriate intervention when people are very reluctant to act in accordance with the recommendation, yet the externalities are very high.

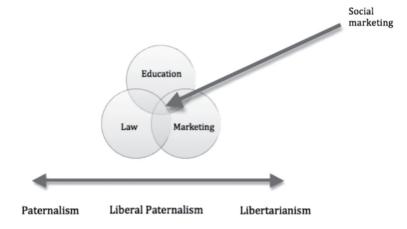
Different 'tools' are presented in Figure 1, positioned on a scale between paternalism and libertarianism, according to the underlying philosophies: coercion on the one hand and exchange on the other. Utilized for solving extremely complex issues, they should, in my opinion, ideally be complemented with respect to the scope of the problem, its macro and micro contexts, and its manifestations on the structural and individual levels. Legislation can be more effective if marketing and education are applied to assure such a social climate, which is in favour of certain issue regulations. Regulation, to be respected, needs social consent, support of the majority and the engagement of the lawmakers and law enforcers. Legal regulations need to be perceived as a common good. Without general consent, legislation is ignored, avoided and provoked whenever possible. The adoption of the non-smoking law in Slovenia, for example, would not have so much support and respect without the health education efforts, non-smoking advocacy, propaganda and so forth of the preceding years.

I share concern with Donovan (2001: 12) that separation of the above categories as distinct methods for achieving desired attitude and behaviour change is somehow artificial, and, like all categorization, arbitrary, and could lead the reader to think that they are mutually exclusive rather than overlapping. I believe that all three methods or principles are immanent in social marketing programmes; it is only a question of how much attention a particular method or tool gets in the overall programme.<sup>2</sup> This distribution should be decided with regard to the knowledge of the environmental and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For example, upstream social marketing programmes can be focused only on changing the behaviour of policymakers, the media etc. and therefore influence the law on or other forms of regulation of certain issues.

social circumstances of the issue in question, the 'characteristics of the 'target', and the resources at one's disposal.

### Figure 1: STRATEGIC TOOLS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL ISSUES BEHAVIOUR AND GOVERNMENTAL PHILOSOPHIES



Contrary to Rothschild (1999: 24), I do not share his optimism on the power of the individual, especially related to his belief that all issues of social concern are tied to freely chosen behaviour. Behaviours are, to a great extent, imbedded in the social structures to which individuals belong (Kamin and Tivadar, 2011). Practices that people undertake are thus less free than one would like to believe. As Bourdieu once said: not everything is possible for everybody.<sup>3</sup> On that account, I particularly support the side of social marketing which is (together with regulation and education) focused on strengthening the abilities of individuals and communities, and opportunities for them to act in accordance with recommendations and desired social behaviour.

With this statement, I come close to the philosophy called liberal paternalism and the 'nudging' concept, which comes out of behavioural economics (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). This philosophy basically supports the idea of choice environments or choice architecture, which does not abridge

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> 'Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied form, takes time to accumulate and which, as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form, contains a tendency to persist in its being, is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things so that everything is not equally possible or impossible. And the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determing the chances of success for practices.' (Bourdieu, 1986/1997: 46)

the individual's freedom, but guides people's decisions by designing positive alternatives which are more likely to be achievable than negative ones. Choice architecture is the context, which shapes and influences people's behaviour choices. Recommended choices should be made easily through managing the social structure: the social conditions in which people live and make their everyday decisions, no matter if rational, emotional or just habitual. This approach divides the responsibility for acting in accordance with desired social behaviour between the individual and the 'system', namely public services, NGO, private organizations, and the rest. Liberal paternalism is thus one of the governmental philosophies, positioned between the paternalistic and libertarian approaches (as shown in Figure 1). One example of nudging is managing vividly displayed products, for example sweets, cigarettes, alcohol, fruits, vitamins and so on, at the checkout in the supermarket, so influencing impulsive purchases.

The idea of (dis)placement is in 'raising transaction costs' (Thaler and Sunstein 2003) for undesired behaviours and reducing transaction costs for desired behaviours; thus making the proposal of undesired behaviour, such as eating deserts, smoking, buying alcohol, overspending and so on 'unattractive'. Nudging is also a sort of visibility management: making better choices more visible than poor choices, and consequently more desirable. Another example is that, whenever customers order an alcoholic drink in a bar, the bartender automatically brings a glass of water besides. Experience shows that customers drink more water and less alcohol in a night out, if they are automatically served with water when they order alcohol. It is obvious from this nudging example that active thinking and planning about choices is ascribed to the choice architects. Essentially, certain choices in such a context become 'free' more on a formal level than in actual situations. Should that at all concern us?

French (2011) warns that nudging is not a magic bullet for solving social problems and needs to be complemented with other approaches, which would better involve people and make exchanges more active. 'Active exchange is one where people engage in a rational assessment of the exchange, weighing up the pros and cons of the benefits and costs. This process has the added benefit of developing critical judgment capacity and in so doing can assist many other life choice situations'. Similar reasoning drives Nutbeam (2000) when he advocates critical (health) literacy. I sympathize with this reasoning and, at the same time, see much potential in combining it with choice architecture. If the choice architecture concept incorporates the active exchange concept and the concept of critical literacy, it suddenly looks rather similar to the basic marketing mix elements: place (distribution), and price (costs). As such, it focuses on making the things that are needed for active behavioural change available and affordable. I believe

that in the long run, social change could only be achieved and sustained by enabling people on the structural level and by equipping them with critical thinking. Without good structural support, too many social problems could only become individualized and far away from being solved.

By undertaking social marketing we should be strengthening the abilities to act, and through that motivate individuals to cooperate in actions for achieving social change. In my opinion, this includes advocacy and the deconstruction of industries' actions that promote destructive behaviours and unsustainable environments. These activities fit well into that which some define as the 'critical social marketing approach' (for example, Hastings, 2007; 2009). Within this approach, focus of behaviour change is directed downstream, but even more so upstream. Concerned individuals can thus be members and/or representatives of the 'general' public, the media, funds providers, legislators, policymakers, NGOs, potential partners, everyone who fits the network of interdependent individuals that are crucial in making the programme of social change successful.

### Social marketing

Roots of social marketing originate in the discipline of marketing, which Donovan (2011: 11) vividly characterized as 'a grab bag discipline' including concepts from various disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, communications, economics and so on. Social marketing includes all these and, in addition, concepts typical for the social fields it works on, such us environmental studies, public health, politics, education and so on. By undertaking social marketing we imply that we use the principles of marketing to promote social change. But as exposed in Figure 1, by undertaking social marketing we apply other principles besides marketing to solve complex social issues. This 'grab bag' foundation of social marketing makes many people uncertain as to their understanding of the precise nature of social marketing. French (2011) even says that because social marketing is transtheoretical the 'what-is-social-marketing' debate will never be concluded.<sup>4</sup> I do not perceive this as a huge problem, since the foundations and principles are clear, and there are not that many. I agree with those who see the very fundament of social marketing in orientation to the individual. In my opinion, the most important feature of social marketing, and the first step in the social marketing process, is to understand the manifestation of a particular social issue at the individual level. Seeing and feeling someone in their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> This debate has been driven many times for the sake of the debate only, which I ascribe to the marketization of academia, to the competition between professionals and practitioners for projects, and often does not add a particularly fresh insight into the development of the concept itself.

everyday life circumstance is of crucial importance for designing effective social marketing programmes. Everything else derives from here.

On the basis of a review of the prominent social marketing literature, Andreasen (2003) identified several difficulties with early definitions of social marketing that introduced much confusion to the field that lasted globally until the 1990s. In his opinion, the important breakthrough was the negotiated realization that the essence of social marketing was not in changing ideas but in changing behaviour. Nonetheless, changing ideas and attitudes might also be an important part of a social marketing programme: when we want people to change their attitudes towards, for example abortion, the death penalty, ethnic groups, and reduce hatred towards 'the other' and so on. Hence, education is an important integral part of social marketing, but cannot be confused with a synonym for social marketing.

Andreasen apprehends social marketing in a rather broad (inclusive) term; 'not as a theory or unique set of techniques but as a process for developing social change programs that is modelled on processes used in private sector marketing'. The uniqueness of social marketing lies in that it (1) holds behaviour change as its bottom line, (2) is essentially customer-driven, and (3) emphasizes creating attractive exchanges that encourage behaviour (Andreasen 2002: 7). Philosophical postulation of social marketing is a concept of exchange, which should, in Andreasen's opinion, be voluntary: giving up something of value to get something of value in return, at the very end leads to the improvement of personal welfare and that of the society to which individuals belong (Andreasen, 2003: 296).

The width of the exchange concept in marketing, and consequently in social marketing varies. I endorse the one conceptualized by Jančič (1999). He defines it within the theory of social exchange and on rather widely conceptualized social relations. If a programme does not consider and involve the immanent target as well as other social groups and does not develop exchange by considering both immediate and long-term social relations and effects, which are mutually considered to be positive, it should not deserve to be called marketing. Deriving from these foundations, we could say that the problem with marketing is often such that there is little or no marketing in particular 'so-called-marketing' actions. Social marketing has inherited this problem. 'Double marketing action' (Jančič, 1999: 52) is one of its manifestations and is recognizable as an action where management of an organization clouds planning and the implementation of the social marketing programmes of the organization. In other words, the organization is self-absorbed and more concerned with its own promotion and survival than with actions for achieving goals for which it was established in the first place. Another common problem is confusion of management philosophy, which focuses on action in accordance with the manager's interests, and

marketing concept philosophy, which focuses on building social relations with long-term reciprocity (Jančič, 1999).

There is a difference in the process of managing people or engaging with people in the exchange process to achieve social change. These two underlying philosophies often get confused. In my opinion, poorly designed 'social marketing' programmes, which are driven by management philosophy lead to relatively short-term transactions and symbolic behavioural changes; on the other hand, social marketing programmes, which are driven by the marketing concept and combined with other approaches, result in actions with long-term behavioural accommodations and sustainable social change. Smoking cessation, for example, will be successfully sustained only when individuals recognize the positive outcomes of their behaviour change on various levels: physical and social. Refusing smoking for external reasons will only result in a longing for the first chance to light a cigarette or finding a substitute to compensate for the lost pleasure.

#### Social marketing in Slovenia, quo vadis

Social marketing has a short record in Slovenia, as a concept and as a practice. It has only recently been introduced into academia and scarcely adopted for managing social issues behaviour. There still prevails a lack of understanding as to the meaning of social marketing and the capacity it has to influence social change. The first difficulty already appears on the terminological level. Up to the present time, many have used social marketing as a synonym for non-profit marketing, societal marketing, social advertising, public issue campaigning, cause-related marketing, and even social public relations. The concept originates in the English language; therefore its adaptation to Slovene brings additional difficulties, accompanied with various translations and interpretations. Even marketing itself has often been wrongly used as a synonym for selling and transactions; when, as such, applied to social issues it has primarily been negatively marked with manipulation. This problem has been thoroughly addressed in the last few years.

There are several signs, which indicate wider acknowledgement of the social marketing concept and practice in Slovenia:

- A full academic course on social marketing was developed at the University of Ljubljana, The Faculty of Social Sciences, in 2005.
- Several undergraduate and postgraduate theses related to social marketing concept and practice were defended in the last decade.
- Governmental bodies from different fields, but primarily from the public health field, have drawn attention to the need for efficient social behaviour change programmes, which would include social marketing principles.

- Sections devoted to social marketing have been included in health promotion literature (for example Kamin, 2006).
- There has been a considerable increase in invitations to public talks on social marketing at workshops, conferences and symposiums organized by governmental organizations, NGO, activist groups, and so on (for example Kamin, 2009; 2010; 2011).
- Social marketing training programmes have been developed and implemented for public health professionals.
- The benchmarking of social behaviour change programmes against social marketing criteria has been increased.
- An interdisciplinary alliance for managing alcohol related problems, according to social marketing principles was established in 2008 (Kamin et al., 2010).

According to a number of indices, some of which are listed above, we could say, the roots of social marketing discipline have been settled in Slovenia as well. There is a challenge to further develop the discipline, spread the knowledge about social marketing principles, monitor social marketing activities in practice, promote noteworthy examples and gradually introduce social marketing principles as being intrinsic to social behaviour change programmes.

There are several barriers to that, and I will list and comment on those that are, in my opinion, the most critical:

- Marketing, as a word, has a rather negative connotation in Slovenia; primarily it is linked with the most visible side of marketing activities: marketing communications (especially advertising and sales promotions), which people as a rule relate to manipulation and to a practice imbedded in the private sector. This misunderstanding has been frequently addressed in Slovenia (for example by Jančič (1990, 1999, 2004), one of the most prominent marketing concept advocates in Slovenia). It still needs to be popularized among the general public who are not marketing experts.
- Application of marketing terminology to the social marketing field is sometimes confusing. I agree with Peattie and Peattie (2003) that some terms should stay only within commercial marketing, where they originate. Among these are especially consumer, product, place, and price. Social marketing programmes address citizens, individuals, communities and so on. And the social marketing mix consists of people, behaviour, costs, and structural opportunities, to name just a few.
- Legal regulation, and institutionalized education for managing social change have paved the way for a paternalistic approach to managing social issues behaviour in Slovenia.
- Practitioners, who advocate the usage of social marketing principles,

are often deploying only social advertising skills. Juxtaposition of such practice with false naming is strengthening the equation of social marketing with social advertising, and as such distorts the understanding of the capacities that social marketing has.

- Tight competition between NGOs and other organizations for a share of the shrinking state budget, from which Slovenia finances the majority of social issue behaviour change programmes, is discouraging organizations from joint action and influences the double marketing action. Many NGOs and other organizations do not even see the need for cooperation (Zorko et al., 2010), despite the fact that acting on their own considerably impedes their chances of successful social issue behaviour change.
- Social issue behaviour change can easily lead to the individualization of social problems. It is commonly perceived that more liberal approaches lead to this problem more intensively than other less liberal approaches. Poorly designed 'social marketing' projects can indeed lead to individualization of social problems, but so can education and legislation. The latter can even criminalize undesired social behaviour. 'Disobedient' people are, in such cases, perceived not only as irresponsible and immoral, but also as criminals.
- Related to the last mentioned barrier, the most critical barrier to social marketing growth is, in my opinion, the lack of proper (formative) research as the foundation of every single social marketing programme. By undertaking social marketing we need to understand the scope of particular social issue behaviour problems. We need to understand their manifestations at the individual level and see how they are positioned structurally. As Andreasen (2002: 8) argues, one needs to ask in each and every situation: 'whether a program should emphasize structural change, individual change, or community mobilization'. In achieving all of these changes, social marketing can be a great help.

### Conclusion

Barriers to the growth of social marketing in Slovenia are similar to those listed by Andreasen (2002). One-third of those listed above are typical for the early stages of social marketing development. A barrier to social marketing growth, which is more typical for Slovenia, is related to its political legacy of managing social change. Approaches to social change traditionally originated in paternalistic governmental philosophy and were supported by strong confidence in institutionalized expert knowledge. A gap in power relations between the expert apparatus and the so-called lay people who need to be told what is good for them is still visible, although it is getting smaller, and particularly better disguised. Reluctance to adopt the more liberal approaches to social change is partly related to the fear of increased burdening of the individual with structural problems, and consequently individualization of social problems. This concern is, in my opinion, more vividly expressed in countries that used to be welfare states.

There is nothing wrong with stressing individual behavioural choices, if the individual really is able to choose, and if she/he is convinced of the personal relevance of the recommended choices. The underlying problem with whichever form of management of social behaviour change is, again, misunderstanding of the particular social (behaviour) issue, and its manifestation at the individual and structural levels. Even more critical is the willingness to address the core of the particular problem, not only its most visible surface. Orientation towards the organization (educator, expert) and conviction that everything that the experts fight for is unquestionably good, frequently obscure the familiarity with the individuals' opportunities and capabilities to follow recommended choices, and the individuals' convictions about the (ir)relevance of recommended choices due to personal, cultural, economic, and other obstacles. Many difficulties, which reduce the effectiveness of 'social issue behaviour change' programmes, derive from this. In relation to social marketing, Andreasen (1995, 41-48) addresses them as inaccurate starting points. Good social marketing practice needs people that understand the principles of social marketing, but even more so understand the nature of social issues, the social origins of the behaviour in question. Without this acknowledgement, social marketers cannot follow the true mission of influencing social change and solving problems, but can only contribute to cosmetic short-term behavioural accommodations.

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