

How will social marketers shape the world, our communities and our profession towards 2025? What avenues offer immense opportunities for success and accelerate real transformation yet are largely untapped? Looking to tomorrow, where are the openings for groundbreaking partnerships? How can we be pioneers, innovators, leading cutting-edge change makers? What skills and knowledge do we need for the 21st century yet to come? How do we open our field to new scholars? The answers to these questions and many more lie at the frontiers of social marketing theory and practice. Social marketing futures will include, yet are not limited to, *understanding the nature and scope of change* – regenerative social marketing, *ways of accelerating change* – mutuality-based social marketing and *being a change catalyst* – disruptive social marketing.

## Regenerative social marketing

As the world moves towards net zero for 2050+, Planet Earth as a key stakeholder will be a defining principle that sets social marketing apart from other change mechanisms, e.g. education and legislation. Patagonia leads the way with CEO Johnson explaining “there’s no business to be done on a dead planet” [1]. Without a healthy vibrant world brimming with biodiversity, social marketing will have no role. How will we respond to Earth to be a key stakeholder in social marketing plans, research, interventions and impact outcomes?

The principle of *Planet Earth as a key social marketing stakeholder*, comparable to funders, policy makers and clients, will herald us into *collective action*. It offers *transformative change* in “the patterns of daily life in human communities directly impacting the provisioning systems that form in a community to meet the needs and wants of individuals, groups, and entities for goods, services, experiences, ideas” (Layton and Domegan, 2021, p. 4). Social marketers will broaden their theories, beyond an intervention targeting an audience or a community, to understand provisioning and system concepts such as complex causation, non-linear feedbacks; self-organisation, multi-level networks and more that emerge over time. We will delineate top-down and bottom-up evolving processes characterised by constructs such as communities, networks, communication and cooperation. What, when and how does this hold true for social marketing? Why so? How will social marketers respond to the urgent need for collective action and transformative change?

As well as Planet Earth, *technology* is a defining force in any provisioning system in any civilisation, whether it is a public, commercial, collaborative or an informal system. Twenty-first century technologies such as quantum and edge computing, genomics, robotics, smart devices, datafication and AI will dominate our provisioning systems [2]. What good and what harm will technologies such as smart devices and AI bring to human behaviours? How will these technologies affect what humans value and do not value? What do these technologies mean to social marketing theory and practice? What skills will we need?

Beyond high technologies, low-tech contemporary solutions offer as much, indeed, Julia Watson argues more, for resilient change that collectively benefits Planet Earth and communities [3]. Award-winning Sponge cities are an example that combine high and low technology-based behaviour, social and systems change, to address climate change accelerated urban flooding [4]. How will we choose to work in harmony “with” nature? How do we learn from nature’s behaviours to design and create contemporary nature-based solutions that will improve our daily lives, and in many cases, save our communities? How will social marketing use *high and low technologies in a symbiotic and holistic way to accelerate*



### **Mutuality-based social marketing**

These *regenerative questions* bring us to a fundamental philosophical and theoretical shift yet to occur for social marketing. Our field, like commercial marketing, intrinsically defines itself on the central role of voluntary, individual and value-based exchanges. This is a myopia and limiting principle when we understand *individuals in context*, i.e. understand individuals live in *communities* in *provisioning systems* in developed and developing countries on Planet Earth. It demands social marketing's exchange paradigm moves from "me to We", from individual, self-interested to *mutuality-based value exchanges* (Doppelt, 2012). Mutuality-based social marketing accounts for the impact and effects of singular provisioning transactions on others, including Planet Earth. There are no externalities in mutuality-based social marketing. What successful models of symbiosis coexistence at community, city, regional, country and global level we learn from? What micro-macro or aggregate value and exchange frameworks are the beacons for tomorrow's social marketing? How do we understand, explain, model, teach and design collective exchanges, exploring the ripple effects over time of exchange actions and reactions? Mutuality-based social marketing signals that we urgently need collective explanatory exchange models and a *theory of global change* that delineates and delivers local, regional, country and global pathways to social value and social impact, societal good and planetary welfare. Mutuality-based social marketing will need meta-theories representing the needs and wants of individuals who sustainability live in communities, living in societies and living on Planet Earth. How do we manifest such complex, networked, nested, embedded and dynamic multi-stakeholder top-down/bottom-up voluntary exchanges? What values lend themselves to mutuality exchanges? What values block mutuality exchanges? What power, conflict and resolution skills are we lacking? What can we learn from other social sciences to create replicable, multi-scale, multi-regional change? What intersections of sociology, anthropology, ecology, innovation, engineering, medicine, public health, law and geography are fertile scientific endeavours for mutuality value-based exchanges for social marketers?

### **Disruptive social marketing**

Such mutuality questions and related concepts present a disruptive responsibility for social marketing. We are looking to futures that will, or will not, manifest change within existing provisioning systems. How do we champion *access* to behaviour, social and systems change when locked into harmful lifestyles? Disruptive social marketing stops and, if possible, reverses the *damage* being done to communities and the planet by the way we design, implement, manage and regulate our provisioning systems. Immediate practices to *access and accelerate* transitions to sustainable, resilient daily patterns of behaviours are essential for poverty, hunger and inequalities. What disruptive social marketing strategies will address cross-cultural, cross-generational and multiculturalism or neurodiversity? How do we interrupt ableism in markets and "colour-blindness" in societies? What's needed to impede the "SSB" norm, i.e. "same source bias" norm (Previte *et al.*, 2023)? How can social marketers be at the forefront of change exploration and practice disrupt current harmful behaviours of commercial firms, policy makers, regulators, media, criminals and more?

Disruptive social marketing, like regenerative and mutuality-based thinking, will be driven by collective data and research. The data collected by various agencies, commercial and social media firms for health, environmental or socio-economic purposes, and used by social marketers, is satisfactory in its current form of granularity for one target audience

intervention purposes, but what of multi-level interventions? multi-group interventions? What strategic stakeholder engagements and partnerships will offer potential to provide richer integrated, metadata and collective intelligence on the multiple links between environmental quality, health and socio-economic status for multiple communities to improve daily lives (Domegan *et al.*, 2021)?

### Conclusion

Social marketing faces incredibly challenging times to contemplate *the relationship of change, the ways of accelerating change and being a change catalyst*. Regenerative social marketing is about the nature and scope of change and pivoting principles of Planet Earth as a key stakeholder, collective action, transformative change, provisioning systems and high and low technologies. Mutuality-based social marketing concentrates on accelerating change premised on mutuality-based value exchanges as the defining principle with concepts such as trust, communication, collaboration, power and conflict as part of a theory of global change. Access to interrelated, holistic data, collective intelligence research, partnerships and stakeholder engagements to stop the harms being perpetrated by parts of our provisioning systems on other parts of our systems. Regenerative, mutuality and disruptive social marketing provide rich and fertile opportunities for scholars and practitioners to look to social marketing futures that make a real difference and be the difference.

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### Notes

1. See <https://changeoracle.com/2021/09/10/10-reasons-why-patagonia-is-worlds-most/>
2. See [www.bbc.com/future/article/20170713-what-will-the-challenges-of-2050-be](http://www.bbc.com/future/article/20170713-what-will-the-challenges-of-2050-be)
3. See [www.ted.com/talks/julia\\_watson\\_how\\_to\\_build\\_a\\_resilient\\_future\\_using\\_ancient\\_wisdom](http://www.ted.com/talks/julia_watson_how_to_build_a_resilient_future_using_ancient_wisdom)
4. See Sponge Cities at <https://turenscape.com/en/project/index/4.html>

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