



LUND UNIVERSITY  
School of Economics and Management

# **Social Entrepreneurial Motivation**

An Exploration of the Antecedents  
Based on The Life Story Method

by

Thi My Duyen Nguyen

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Supervisor: Caroline Wigren-Kristoferson  
Examiner: Diamanto Politis

# Abstract

Investigating motivation to create a social enterprise is a continuing concern within entrepreneurship which was expressed in previous studies. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to explore the antecedents of social entrepreneurial motivation and the trigger events that motivated the social entrepreneur to start a social enterprise. The life story method guided in the data collection and analysis process. Six semi-structured interviews were conducted with social entrepreneurs in Germany.

The study concludes that all participants were motivated by pull factors influenced by relationships, past social and work experiences. The trigger event to finally decide for a social enterprise creation happened either at the same time or after the motivation was developed. Other factors that influenced the decision were financial security, social support, self-confidence and passion.

The theoretical implications for future research are that social entrepreneurs can be motivated to solve a social issue at a trigger event but need to consider the existence of fundamental factors at the time they decide for social entrepreneurship. Therefore, a model was contributed for future investigations in social entrepreneurial motivation. Finally, this study contributes with empirical insights to the complexity of social entrepreneurial motivation to start up in entrepreneurship research.

**Keywords:** Social Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurial Motivation, Life Story Method, Opportunity Recognition

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1. Social Entrepreneurship.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2. Purpose.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.3. Research Limitations .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4. Outline of the Thesis .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Literature Review.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.1. Social Entrepreneurship.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1.1. Social Entrepreneurship Definition .....	4
2.1.2. Brief Historical Review .....	7
2.1.3. Social Entrepreneurship Research .....	8
<b>2.2. Social Entrepreneurial Motivation.....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.2.1. Motivation Theories .....	15
<b>2.3. Literature Review Summary .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3. Methodology .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.1. Research Approach.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>3.2. Research Design .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>3.3. Data Collection Method.....</b>	<b>19</b>
3.3.1. Preparation.....	21
3.3.2. Identification of Participants .....	21
3.3.3. Life Story Interviews .....	24
<b>3.4. Data Analysis.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>3.5. Ethical Considerations.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>3.6. Methodology Summary .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>4. Findings .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.1. Biographical Development .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4.2. Previous Experiences .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>4.3. Social Entrepreneurial Traits .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>4.4. Path to Social Entrepreneurship .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>5. Discussion.....</b>	<b>32</b>

<b>6. Conclusion</b> .....	<b>36</b>
<b>6.1. Implications</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>6.2. Future Research</b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>I</b>
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>A</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Interview Guide</b> .....	<b>A</b>

# List of Tables

Table 1 Social Entrepreneurship Definitions

Table 2 Overview of SE Interviewees

# List of Figures

Figure 1 Comparison between motivations for commercial entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship (Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015)

Figure 2 An emergent model of social entrepreneurship motivators (Omoredede, 2014)

Figure 3 From Motivation to Opportunity Recognition (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015)

Figure 4 Adjusted model

# 1. Introduction

This chapter comprises a brief review of past research in social entrepreneurship and emphasizes on the research gap of motivation in social enterprise creation. The purpose, research limitations and an outline of the thesis are provided in the following sections.

## 1.1. Social Entrepreneurship

There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of social entrepreneurship in having a significant impact on social change in the world's society (Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011; Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Kraus et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2015). Social entrepreneurship is similar to entrepreneurship where value is created out of limited resources to address a demand in the form of a new venture. Whereas entrepreneurship creates value for economic reasons, social entrepreneurship's highest priority is to create social wealth (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006). Therefore, this study has adopted the definition that social entrepreneurship is "a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs." (Mair & Martí, 2006, p. 37). Further discussions can be found in 2.1.1. Social Entrepreneurship Definition.

Social entrepreneurship research has focused on social value creation, social entrepreneur, SE organization, market orientation, and social innovation (Choi and Majumdar, 2014). Especially, the role of the social entrepreneur has been discussed regarding social mission, opportunity recognition, personality, identity and image (Shumate et al., 2014; Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Tigu et al., 2015). Both, conventional and social entrepreneurship, require personality traits, such as risk tolerance, innovativeness and creativity. Their main difference is their altruistic personality based on the traits of empathy and compassion. Considering that the personal traits of each social entrepreneur are distinctive, the ways to social entrepreneurship are as diverse (Yitshaki and Kropp, 2015).

There remains a gap in explaining the connection between the social entrepreneur's intention and behaviour, to choose the social entrepreneurial path and establish a social

enterprise. Therefore, scholars (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Kraus et al., 2014) have emphasized on the missing link, the importance of motivation. Little attention has been paid in motivation and its context to explain the social entrepreneur's decision to start up.

Following the developments in social entrepreneurship research, this is of academic importance: to understand how and why social enterprises are founded. Research can provide illuminating insights about social entrepreneurs' motivations in order to support them. By changing governmental policies, support systems, providing training and education, it increases the awareness and nurtures the potential in people to become social entrepreneurs. The goal is not only to increase economic wealth but prioritise to address social problems in an effective and efficient way through the academic insights.

This study does not focus on the success factors of social enterprise creation. Further, the social entrepreneurial behaviour is excluded because these actions depend on the motivation of the social entrepreneur. Research about social entrepreneurial motivation has received little attention, especially its antecedents (Alcantara & Kshetri, 2013). These new insights help to understand the why behind the motivations of the social entrepreneur, the strength of the deeply routed motivations.

## **1.2. Purpose**

Based on the aforementioned developments in social entrepreneurship, the study aims to address the following research question: "What was the trigger event that motivated a social entrepreneur to start a social enterprise?" With this research question, the author explores the foundation of the social entrepreneurial motivation answering what antecedents had an impact on the decision to create a social business. Therefore, the focus is to clarify questions, for example "What was the context of the trigger event?", "What were the major life changing moments?", and "How did the relationships and moments shape their values, beliefs and activities in starting up?" (see Appendix 1: Interview Guide)

To address these questions, the following method was chosen based on previous literature on social entrepreneurial motivation and life story interviews. The life story method includes six semi-structured interviews with six German social entrepreneurs, and serves in exploring the antecedents of social entrepreneurial motivation. The concept

of life story method is applied as a guide for creating the interview guide, selecting, contacting and interviewing social entrepreneurs. Interviews are transcribed, coded, analysed and discussed according to the categories identified.

### **1.3. Research Limitations**

This method is based on subjective perspectives and interpretations. However, as the interpretivist's perspective implies that the reality is formed in the mind of the individual. This method enables new insights that can only be discovered by understanding the world described in the words of the interviewees (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Comparing these interviews allows identifying common categories. Due to the small number of interviewees, the results are not generalizable and offer research areas for future research.

### **1.4. Outline of the Thesis**

This study is divided into the following sections: After outlining the thesis in this Chapter, Chapter 2 deals with the literature review of social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurial motivation and motivation theories. The methodology about the life story approach for data collection and analysis approach is discussed in Chapter 3. The four categories, such as biographical development, previous social and work experiences, social entrepreneurial traits and how individuals chose the social entrepreneurial path, are analysed in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, the thesis ends with conclusions about the antecedents of social entrepreneurial motivation, and provides an adjusted model, implications and future research areas for researchers and social entrepreneurs.

The following Chapter 2 provides an overview of the theoretical elements in order to comprehend the execution of the methodological process.

## **2. Literature Review**

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on social entrepreneurship. It begins by discussing the definitions, contextualising the thesis in the history and past research on social entrepreneurship leading to the role of the social entrepreneur. What follows is a discussion about the findings and conclusions of the phenomenon around social entrepreneurial motivation. Research gaps are highlighted before presenting the motivation theories. Finally, the main points of the literature review are summarised in 2.3. Literature Review Summary. This chapter builds the knowledge foundation of the thesis.

### **2.1. Social Entrepreneurship**

This section builds the general context of social entrepreneurship for this research. Therefore, the definition of social entrepreneurship, a brief review of the history and past research are presented. Past definitions and the definition for this study are discussed in the following section.

#### **2.1.1. Social Entrepreneurship Definition**

Several definitions of social entrepreneurship were formulated. However, no agreement on a specific definition has been found yet (Dees, 1998 cited in Zahra et al., 2009; Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006; Mair & Martí, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009).

In order to comprehend the conflict, most cited studies including the definition are listed in the table and discussed in the following.

Authors	Definitions
<b>Dees (1998)</b>	Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents in the social sector, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adopting a mission to create and sustain social value (not just private value),</li> <li>• Recognizing and relentlessly pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission,</li> <li>• Engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning,</li> <li>• Acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand, and</li> <li>• Exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.</li> </ul>
<b>Mair &amp; Martí (2006)</b>	social entrepreneurship is “a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs.” p. 37
<b>Peredo &amp; McLean (2006)</b>	social entrepreneurship is exercised where some person or persons (1) aim either exclusively or in some prominent way to create social value of some kind, and pursue that goal through some combination of (2) recognizing and exploiting opportunities to create this value, (3) employing innovation, (4) tolerating risk and (5) declining to accept limitations in available resources. p. 56
<b>Austin, Stevenson &amp; Wei-Skillern (2006)</b>	... social entrepreneurship as innovative, social value creating activity that can occur within or across the nonprofit, business, or government sectors. p. 2
<b>Zahra et al. (2009)</b>	... social entrepreneurship “encompasses the activities and processes undertaken to discover, define, and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organizations in an innovative manner”. p.519

**Table 1 Social Entrepreneurship Definitions**

Reviewing the most cited definitions of social entrepreneurship, there are four common aspects: social value and change, innovation, opportunity, and to some extent resources. Social change and social value are used interchangeably with social wealth

creation. For example, changing the approach of clean water supply in Africa from digging fountains to absorbing water from air by creating new devices is an innovative way to solve social issues. Opportunity contains social awareness to recognise and exploit opportunities with limited resources, such as skills, finances, material and social network. Hence, social entrepreneurship is similar to entrepreneurship. But instead of delivering value by filling a market gap, social entrepreneurship creates social value. Mair and Martí (2006) defined social entrepreneurship as a process whereas Peredo and McLean (2006) formulated that it was performed by an individual or a group of people adding the aspect of risk tolerance. Defining social entrepreneurship as a process may mean that there is no one point in time of social entrepreneurship but rather several stages that result in social entrepreneurship as a total. In comparison to a job at a company where the monthly income is secured, social entrepreneurs embrace more uncertainty in income. They tolerate the risk of failing to generate enough money in order to create social value. Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern (2006) considered the different organisational forms from non-profit to for-profit and hybrid while Zahra et al. (2009) were inspired in entrepreneurship by Hayek, Kirzner and Schumpeter. Therefore, they emphasised on the new venture creation or intrapreneurial aspect, and developed a concept of three social entrepreneur types (see 2.1.3. Social Entrepreneurship Research). Although, even the most cited definitions do not completely conform to several aspects, they do have a common basis. Selecting these definitions from various time periods demonstrate that researchers did agree on some points over time.

Therefore, this thesis study adopts the definition by Mair and Martí (2006, p. 37): social entrepreneurship is “a process involving the innovative use and combination of resources to pursue opportunities to catalyze social change and/or address social needs.” It also includes services and product offers as well as new venture creation (Mair & Martí, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009; Germak & Robinson, 2014). Based on social entrepreneurship, the definition for the social entrepreneur can be derived for this study: A social entrepreneur is a person or a group that uses and combines limited resources in an innovative way in order to seize an opportunity leading to increased social value.

In elaboration of the chosen social entrepreneur definition, social entrepreneurs are also known as “change agents for society” (Ashoka, 2016). They address problems that

could not be solved by another institution to create a social change. Further, it is agreed to including the different organisational forms from non-profit to for-profit and hybrid. This excludes the legal form as it does not determine social entrepreneurship (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006). Even though profits are generated, the main goal is not to increase shareholders' value but to reinvest in the growth of the enterprise in order to increase social wealth (Schwab, 2016). Although, some studies include companies with Corporate Social Responsibility in social entrepreneurship, this study excludes this aspect as they prioritise economic goals rather than social goals.

Besides the scholarly definitions of social entrepreneurship, the European Commission (2011) adds the definition of social enterprise: “Those for which the social or societal objective of the common good is the reason for the commercial activity, often in the form of a high level of social innovation, those where profits are mainly reinvested with a view to achieving this social objective, and where the method of organisation or ownership system reflects their mission, using democratic or participatory principles or focusing on social justice.” Thus, this definition also includes a democratic aspect of a social enterprise where parties have the right to participate autonomously. One criticism of much of the literature on the definitions of social entrepreneurship is that the definitions are either too vague or too specific (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006; Mair & Martí, 2006; Peredo & McLean, 2006; Zahra et al., 2009). Defining what the social entrepreneur is, guides this study in conducting the empirical research (see 3.3.2. Identification of Participants). The following sections create the context of this study regarding history and social entrepreneurship research.

### **2.1.2. Brief Historical Review**

The concept of social entrepreneurship has existed for many generations. It involved social actions in education, health care, areas of famine, and so forth. Whenever the government or private sector failed in solving a problem, social entrepreneurial actions developed out of these opportunities. Further in history, Bill Drayton is widely known as the founder of the organisation Ashoka, that supports social entrepreneurial leaders across the globe, but as well as the one who coined the term “social entrepreneurship” in the 1980s. Despite this, J. Gregory Dees contributed with the most cited definition (see Table

1 Social Entrepreneurship Definitions) and his research building the foundation of the social entrepreneurship field about a decade later. A classic example of social entrepreneurship represents Muhammad Yunus establishing Grameen Bank to empower impoverished women with microloans for their business in Bangladesh (Kickul & Lyons, 2012; Mair & Martí, 2006). Although, the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship was already practised before, the interest of researchers and practitioners increased within the last decades (Kraus et al, 2015; Ruskin, Seymour & Webster, 2016). These developments are discussed in the following section.

### **2.1.3. Social Entrepreneurship Research**

Recent studies (Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011; Choi & Majumdar, 2014; Kraus et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2015) reviewed hundreds of scholarly work on social entrepreneurship. They gathered past studies emerging into clusters, such as the definition, conceptualisation, culture, networks, institutions, impact, and performance success factors. In their thorough investigation into social entrepreneurship, Choi and Majumdar (2014) created the cluster concept framework. The five clusters consisted of the social value creation, social entrepreneur, SE organization, market orientation, and social innovation. Although, they stated that these clusters could help other scholars in the orientation of their work, the study would have been more relevant if the authors included macro elements to contextualise their framework.

Narrowing down from the general research field, the role of the social entrepreneur was highlighted by scholars (Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011; Kraus et al., 2014; Phillips et al., 2015). The role consisted of social mission, opportunity recognition, personality, identity and image. A social entrepreneur acts where a social need is. They help socially disadvantaged people such as children, women, disabled and poor people. Their fields of action can range from hunger to health and social injustice (Harbrecht, 2010). Social entrepreneurs are seen as innovators because they contribute to a social change with new approaches. Therefore, they are highly motivated to reach that social goal which makes them persistent in their actions. In comparison to the conventional entrepreneur, the social entrepreneur has not the aim to make profit but is rather led by a social mission (Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011; Choi & Majumdar, 2014).

Having clarified the main differentiating factor of social entrepreneurs, Zahra et al. (2015, p. 519) presented different types of social entrepreneurs. First, Social Bricoleurs solve local social issues whereas the second type Social Constructionists address social gaps that other institutions were not able to solve. Last, Social Engineers change existing problematic social systems by replacing them with a new and innovative solution. The consideration behind the typology is that social entrepreneurs differ in their process of opportunity recognition and execution. Consequently, the social entrepreneurs can have a similar social goal but would recognise and act on them on different ways.

Besides the aforementioned processes of social entrepreneurship, there are different ways that lead an individual on the social entrepreneurial path. This information can be found in the past of social entrepreneurs (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015). Some of them were influenced by the impressions during a year abroad or voluntary work (Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015). They could also have been influenced by experiences during childhood and early adulthood (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015). For example, parents or other role models were active in politics, church or social work, which could teach moral values and beliefs to serve others. Traumatic experiences are another way to social entrepreneurship. A severe accident causing loss of family members, abuse or a horrible mistake could anchor the motivation to prevent or ease such experiences for other people. It could be an act of rehabilitation (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015). Moreover, social entrepreneurs worked in various jobs such as doctor, nurse, social worker, teacher or business person (Bornstein & Davis, 2010). These experiences may have an impact on the social awareness to recognise opportunities. Thus, it was assumed that an individual became a social entrepreneur due to an impactful moment, which is known as a spark moment or moment of inspiration (Corner & Ho, 2010). This study, however, used the term trigger event where the individual encounters a social issue, an inner readiness and decides to act on it. Consequently, their actions could be in a non-profit, for-profit or hybrid organisation (Austin, Stevenson & Wei-Skillern, 2006).

Regarding the personality, traits of social entrepreneurs are similar to the conventional entrepreneur: risk-taking, innovative, passionate, and visionary (Shumate et al., 2014; Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Tigu et al., 2015). Estay, Durrieu and Akther (2013) added on the personal traits of entrepreneur with the factors of accomplishment, control,

autonomy and creativity. Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) describe social entrepreneurs as compassionate which may be due to their empathy. This empathy enables social entrepreneurs to recreate the experiences of others based on their own experiences. This personal trait helps the social entrepreneur to understand their community's needs on a deeper level. Shumate et al. (2014) refer back to the social commitment of the social entrepreneurs' family members. A good example are the parents that were active and engaged in conversations about social issues. These conversations developed the empathy as well. Braga, Proença and Ferreira (2015, p. 20) concluded that "...persistence, leadership and empathy..." are significant personal traits of a social entrepreneur. Finally, Miller et al. (2012) contribute to the discussion of compassion by concluding that it encourages individuals to choose the social entrepreneurial path.

There is a main difference, however, that social entrepreneurs tend to be altruistic (Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Ruskin, Seymour & Webster, 2016). Although, there are many studies about the personality traits, the interest in this area decreased when behavioural studies became more significant than personality traits (Gartner, 1988; Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). There remains a discussion about the effects and causes. Carsrud and Brännback (2011, p. 17) stated that "[an] entrepreneurial intention does not always lead directly to entrepreneurial behaviors." Thus, they identified motivation and the impact of the context to be crucial in comprehending the intentions that lead to entrepreneurial behaviours. Kraus et al. (2014) agreed on motivation in their citation analysis by pointing out the research gap in motivation of social enterprise creation for future research. Hence, their work incited this research formulating the initial research question: "What are the motivations of social entrepreneurs to create a social enterprise?" Consequently, the next section discusses the findings and conclusions based on this question from previous studies on social entrepreneurial motivation.

## **2.2. Social Entrepreneurial Motivation**

Due to the complexity within the term social entrepreneurial motivation, it is divided in motivation, entrepreneurial and social entrepreneurial motivation. After describing the meaning of each term, past studies are discussed. Finally, research gaps are presented to highlight the focus of the thesis to fill in entrepreneurship research.

First, motivation is “... the reason a person has for acting in a particular way, a motive” (OED Online, 2016) in psychology. Sociology describes motivation as a “general desire or willingness” (OED Online, 2016). This suggests that motivation is a factor that is important to explain the behaviour of individuals. Leading to social entrepreneurial motivation, most of the studies refer back to entrepreneurship research which applied theories from social science and psychology (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011). Entrepreneurial motivation has often been related to the creation of a new venture. These motivations included independence, profit-orientation, and autonomy (Estay, Durrieu & Akhter, 2013). Shane, Locke and Collins (2003, p. 274) developed a model dividing the entrepreneurial motivations into general and task-specific motivations. General motivations were the need for achievement, locus of control, vision, desire for independence, passion and drive. Task-specific motivations were goal setting and self-efficacy. Edelman et al. (2010) divided the motivations into start-up and growth motivations. They concluded that entrepreneurs are motivated to start up to be recognised for their achievement, impact as role models, realise their own ideas, have success financially or innovate. Only the last three motivations were considered as growth motivations. The findings of Carsrud and Brännback (2011) classified the motivations after internal and external motivations which overlap partly with the previous authors. They concluded that conventional entrepreneurs may be motivated by external motivators, such as money, power and prestige but also by internal motivators, such as achievement. Adding to these motivations, they acknowledged that not all types of entrepreneurs could be encouraged by profit maximisation. For example, the types social entrepreneurs and lifestyle entrepreneurs have stronger intrinsic motivations. Necessity entrepreneurs, on the other hand, want to avoid failure at all costs because it is about their survival if they do not earn enough money to feed themselves and their families. Braga, Proença and Ferreira (2015) provided a good overview by contrasting the motivation of the social entrepreneur with the conventional entrepreneur in the following table.

Motivation	Commercial Entrepreneurship	Social Entrepreneurship
<b>Innovate/create</b>	X	X
<b>Independency</b>	X	-
<b>Recognition</b>	X	-
<b>Role models</b>	X	X
<b>Financial success</b>	X	-
<b>Achievement</b>	X	-
<b>Passion</b>	X	X
<b>Work related factors (dissatisfaction)</b>	X	X
<b>Volunteering</b>	-	X
<b>Opportunity recognition</b>	X	X
<b>Altruism</b>	-	X

**Figure 1 Comparison between motivations for commercial entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship (Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015)**

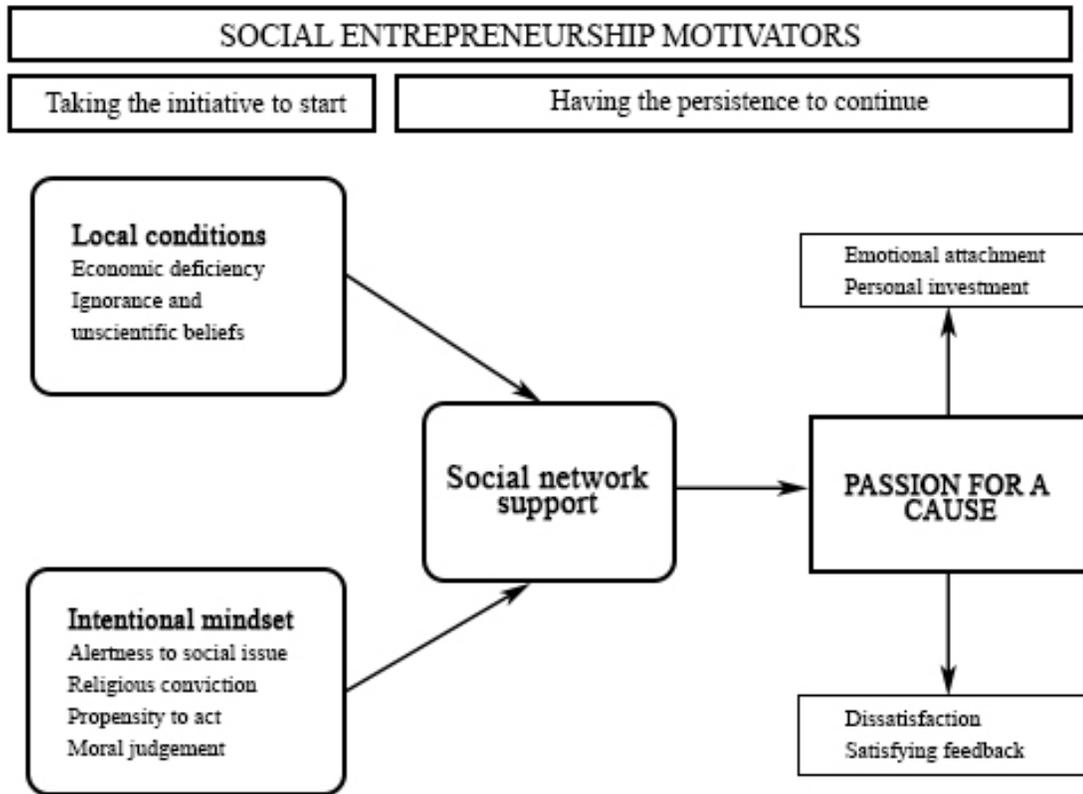
Like conventional entrepreneurs, social entrepreneurs have several motivations in common but distinguish in their motivation to volunteer and act according to altruistic motives. This supports past findings that social entrepreneurs are similar to conventional entrepreneurs but are mainly different in their primary goal. Whereas conventional entrepreneurs follow especially economic goals, social entrepreneurs operate towards social goals (Austin, Stevenson and Wei-Skillern, 2006). Consequently, researchers in social entrepreneurship focus on the main distinctive motivation to help others known as prosocial motivation (Miller et al., 2012; Renko, 2013). A derivative and more specific motivation is societal motivation to contribute to a change in society (Berglund & Wigren, 2012; Alcantara & Kshetri, 2013; Ruskin, Seymour & Webster, 2016). Miller et al. (2012) argued that compassion is an emotional antecedent of prosocial motivation. Ruskin, Seymour and Webster (2016) added to this research with further emotional antecedents, such as passion, frustration, sympathy, and empathy.

Next to the emotions, the influence of prosocial motivations on the performance of the new venture creation process was studied (Alcantara & Kshetri, 2013; Renko, 2013). The

findings of Alcantara and Kshetri (2013) and Renko (2013) were significantly different. Whereas one said that the motivation does have positive influence on sales increase, higher company size and more novelty, Renko (2013) found out the opposite effect. The reason is that they use different samples from different countries, namely Japan and USA. In addition, the definition or sample criteria influenced the procedure. An agreement for the definition of social entrepreneurship is needed to come to more aligned conclusions. Furthermore, Alcantara and Kshetri (2013) suggest future research in exploring the antecedents of motivation by examining the personal and environmental context.

Besides the prosocial motivation, researchers argued that studying mainly that one motivation is not sufficient in understanding the social entrepreneurial motivation. Therefore, studies identified the challenges, antecedents of motivation, and created several profiles of social entrepreneurial motivation (Germak & Robinson, 2014; Shumate et al., 2014; Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Tigu et al., 2015). First, researchers (Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015) found that social entrepreneurs face the same challenges in venture creation like conventional entrepreneurs. However, they have more difficulties in acquiring human resources, external financing and dealing with bureaucratic hurdles. This may be due to the different regulations of social and entrepreneurial legal forms, and may be a reason for social entrepreneurs to stop the venture creation process. Second, regarding the antecedents of motivation, Germak and Robinson (2014) listed the following factors: personal fulfillment, non-monetary focus, achievement, and closeness to social problem. Finally, Tigu et al. (2015) created a graph of social entrepreneurial motivations that includes intrinsic motivation, professional development and the following motivations. Shumate et al. (2014) agree with the motivations of being mission driven and financial independent, and Germak and Robinson (2014) with changing society. A study about the social entrepreneurship development in Indonesia revealed that religion was a key motivation (Idris & Hijrah-Hati, 2013). That means although social entrepreneurs set their businesses to solve a social business, they also have a healthy amount of self-oriented motivations. Omoredede (2014) contributed with a model with the contextual factors based on Nigerian social entrepreneurs. These factors comprised local conditions and an intentional mindset to start a business, and to persist social support and passion for a cause were integrated into

the model. For example, the social network support is important because the individuals “... received encouragement, support and derive strength from their spouses, children, parents and close friends.” (Omoredede, 2014, p. 258)



**Figure 2 An emergent model of social entrepreneurship motivators (Omoredede, 2014)**

Only Omoredede (2014) attempted to contextualise the motivations of social entrepreneurs. Therefore, more studies on different levels of less developed and developed countries should be a topic of future research. Although, researchers did agree on several motivations, more research is needed to validate the findings. There may be inconsistencies in the interpretation and classification of motivations probably due to differing selection processes of social entrepreneurs. These selections may be different in each country as there is no agreement on one universal definition of social entrepreneurship. Therefore, these results should be interpreted and dealt with caution. The findings of Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) demonstrated that the motivations of social entrepreneurs were rooted in their pull and push factors shown in the next section 2.2.1. Their conclusion was that past experiences increased the awareness of social problems,

which is linked to opportunity recognition. Another interesting finding was contributed by Shumate et al. (2014). Out of all the antecedents of societal motivation, previous work-experience increased the success of a new venture significantly.

As little attention has been paid to social entrepreneurial motivation in comparison to entrepreneurial motivation, this study focuses on filling the following gaps: 1. focus on social entrepreneurs in Germany (a more developed country than past studies in Nigeria and Indonesia; see 3. Methodology), and 2. more research about the antecedents of the motivation of the social entrepreneur.

### **2.2.1. Motivation Theories**

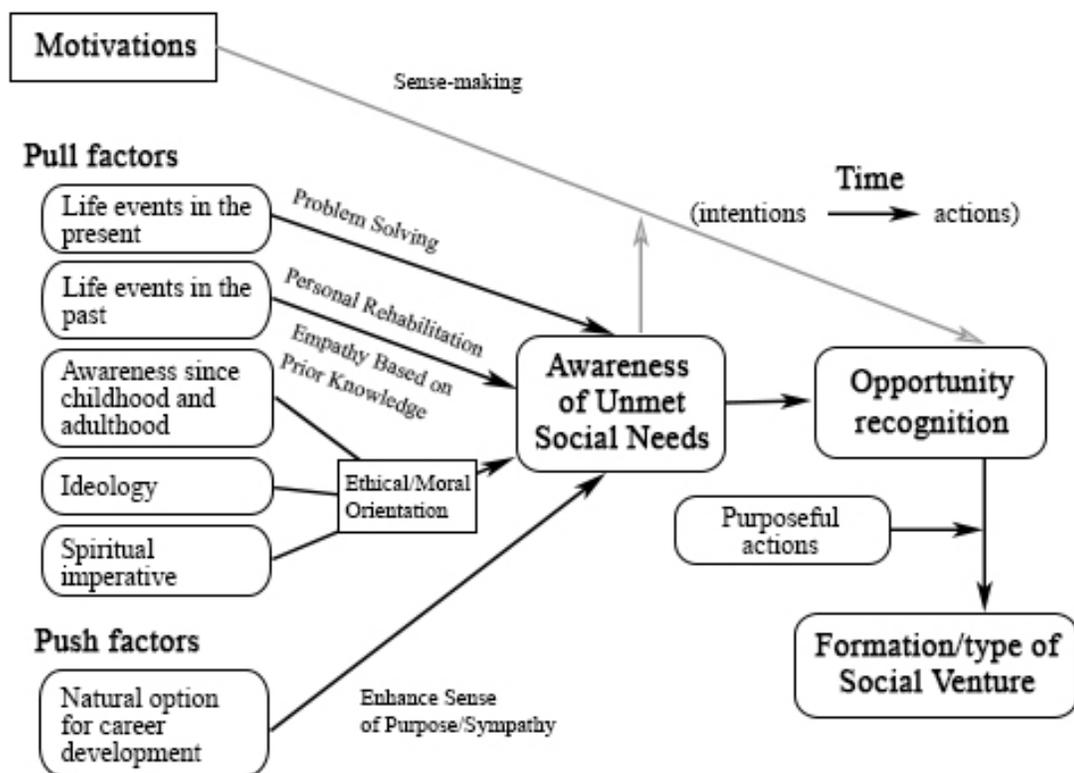
Different motivation theories were applied in previous studies to analyse those findings about entrepreneurial motivation. These theories may be divided into two main categories, such as content theories and process theories. Content theories ask what the motivation of an individual is, such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and push and pull theory. And process theories ask how an individual is motivated to behave in a certain way. For example, goal definition theory and expectancy theory are process theories. All these aforementioned theories were commonly applied in entrepreneurial motivation (Edelman et al. 2010; Carsrud & Brännback, 2011) as well as social entrepreneurial motivation (Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015).

Beginning with the content theories, Maslow's hierarchy of needs consists of five levels. These are physiological, safety, social, esteem and self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1977). In other words, there are needs that have to be satisfied in order to ensure the survival of the individual. Once, these basic needs are fulfilled the individual can grow through self-fulfilling actions. The push and pull theory presents another content theory. Pull factors are internally driven. For example, a person finds the true purpose in life by contributing to a change in the world as a teacher. Push factors are driven by external motivations, such as a frustration with the tasks or salary that push them out of the job into unemployment, and finally to social entrepreneurship (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015).

Continuing with the process theories, goal theory and expectancy theory often were applied. The goal theory explains that people are driven by their goals, and thus, act

towards them (Locke & Latham, 2002). And the expectancy theory explains that an individual considers several options to behave, and chooses the one that they expect to bring the highest outcome (Renko, 2013).

For this study, the model of Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) was chosen because they applied the push and pull theory through the life story method in social entrepreneurship as one of the few studies in this field. In comparison Braga, Proença and Ferreira (2015) also gathered the push and pull factors but focused more on the motivations rather than on the antecedents of the motivations which is the main purpose of this study. Therefore, only the pull and push factors of the following model (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015) are explained that lead from social awareness to opportunity recognition and finally to the new social venture creation shown in the graph.



**Figure 3 From Motivation to Opportunity Recognition (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015)**

Six themes emerged in the study of Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) that are divided into push and pull factors. First, present life events concern current personal problems that could not be solved by the existing system or that other people experienced as well.

Identifying a gap or people with similar problems encouraged the social entrepreneur to act. Second, experiences in the past mean that social entrepreneurs transformed problems from the past into social actions. Some actions were seen as a rehabilitation, such as suffering from abuse and wanting to prevent this from happening for other people. Third, other social actions were encouraged through an early awareness as child or young adult influenced by parents or social family activities of several generations. Fourth, ideology motivated the social entrepreneur to act in order to have a positive impact on the country or world, such as leaving a legacy for future generations. Fifth, the spiritual imperative involved a calling from either a religious belief or another spiritual influence (Idris & Hijrah-Hati, 2013). Finally, the push factors are summarised as career development that could have been caused by a natural development, frustrating job or a search for more meaningful activities.

### **2.3. Literature Review Summary**

The purpose of the literature review was to build a theoretical foundation guided by the research question: “What was the trigger event that motivated a social entrepreneur to start a social enterprise?” Studies about entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurial motivation were gathered. After discussing about the definitions of social entrepreneurship, the definition by Mair and Martí (2006) was chosen. Social entrepreneurs are mainly led by a social mission but experience different processes and triggers from past experiences, influences of close social network and career development. Their personal traits are similar to conventional entrepreneurs and only differ in their altruistic motivations. Past studies about social entrepreneurial motivations focused on the distinguishing factors from entrepreneurs, which is the prosocial motivation. Conclusions about the influence of prosocial motivation on the venture’s performance could not come to an agreement yet but suggested future research about the antecedents of motivations and its context. Omorede (2014) developed a model to explain the motivations to start up and persist based on a developing country and encouraged researchers to study more about different developed countries. To fill the gaps, this study discussed various motivation theories and chose to adapt Yitshaki and Kropp’s (2015) approach to contribute with more insights about the motivational antecedents.

## **3. Methodology**

The methodology section provides an overview of the data collection method and analysis in order to answer the research question about the initial moment motivating and leading to the creation of a new social enterprise.

### **3.1. Research Approach**

As the phenomenon of social entrepreneurial motivation is not fully understood yet, this study followed an inductive approach. It allowed to engage with the content fully and explore new themes (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A deductive approach would have prevented a full exploration due to the set theory in the beginning. Deductive approaches tend to be quantitative. The information is gathered through surveys or questionnaires (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In the case of measuring the significance of several factors, it could be useful in determining the strength of the relationship between motivational factors and new venture creation. However, as the phenomenon of social entrepreneurial motivations is not fully explored, a quantitative approach does not offer the possibility to contribute with new knowledge. It only examines the already identified motivations. The results would be insufficient as there may be more critical motivations and other factors that lead to a new venture.

Qualitative approaches are mainly conducted as interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It allows to capture the social reality of the individual in their own language and subjective perspective. These findings rely on the interpretation of the researcher, which have to be dealt with cautiously. Nonetheless, the findings can be validated with previous studies from recognised researchers. Whereas quantitative approaches do not allow spontaneity through standardised tests, qualitative approaches offer an open atmosphere to learn about new phenomena in detail. Moreover, the absence of the researcher and length of questionnaires could be confusing, and thus, affecting the research data negatively. Interviews offer the direct contact with the researcher where the interviewee can speak freely. Therefore, a qualitative approach was chosen to contribute to the small body of social entrepreneurial motivation research. A limitation of this approach is that the time restriction may result in not being able to cover all important aspects.

## **3.2. Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative research design to gather life stories of social entrepreneurs in Germany at a specific time. Its purpose was to explore the trigger events motivating them to start up. This implies that the aim was not to collect their stories to examine how their perception of the trigger event and motivations changed over time. The focus was to learn about their past events and experiences that they told in their own words at a point in time. Therefore, a longitudinal study was excluded, and the life story design was chosen. For the empirical data collection, semi-structured interviews were applied to learn more about the antecedents of social entrepreneurial motivation, which allowed comparability among the different individuals. In contrast to questionnaires that evaluate pre-determined variables, interviews allow more flexibility in formulating new questions to discover new themes while keeping a natural flow (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Previous literature on social entrepreneurial motivation to start up and life story dimensions were considered in the creation of the categories (Atkinson, 1998; Omorede, 2014; Shumate et al., 2014; Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Tigu et al., 2015; Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015). These categories provided a guide to empirically explore what the situation, motivations and impactful experiences were that prompted the social entrepreneur to take action in the form of a new social venture creation. Although, the categories stem from a deductive approach, the data collection process and the analysis were predominantly of inductive nature described in the following sections. This mix of both approaches agrees with Bryman and Bell (2011) that they can be applied at different points in time of the research process.

## **3.3. Data Collection Method**

Bertaux and Kohli (1984) defined the life story as a data collection method, which is a narrative approach. It is a story that is reconstructed and verbalised by an individual based on the personal memory. The process of the life story interview is divided into three stages: preparation, interview, data processing. Its application has been popular in psychology, sociology, esoterism and philosophy to learn about the individual's aspirations, roles in a community, values and ideology. The benefits of the life story method are the various insights about the individual. For example, the personal

perspectives about their life experiences and in relation to other people could be revealed in their stories. These stories contextualise the different stages in life, the decisions and emotions showing what meanings were attached to certain events and how they acted upon them (Atkinson, 1998). Although, the challenge lies in the complexity and subjectivity, Bertaux and Kohli (1984) stated: “Herein lies its fragility; herein lies its strength.” (p. 233). Despite the popularity of the life story in other disciplines, its application has been relatively small in entrepreneurship research. Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) combined the life story analysis with the push and pull factors on Israeli social entrepreneurs’ life stories to explore what motivates social entrepreneurs and what leads them to opportunity recognition.

It is important to understand the antecedents of why individuals decided to establish a social enterprise because motivations evolve over time. These motivations were influenced by the social entrepreneur’s past. Therefore, the life story approach was chosen to understand the past in relation to the present actions, and to contribute to the previous study. It aims to understand the context in which social entrepreneurs decided to dedicate their time and efforts to establish a social business in order to solve the social problem identified in these transitional events.

The life story method was conducted in the form of semi-structured interviews to find the answers to the research question. It is recommended to conduct unstructured interviews (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015) but semi-structured interviews allowed a better comparison among the interviewees but the freedom to discover new themes during the interview. Unstructured interviews involve the risk that the participant talks freely but endlessly, and might miss the main topic that the researcher wanted to approach originally. Although, the semi-structured are roughly structured as an interview guide, questions are not asked in a specific order to avoid interruption of the natural flow of the interview. These questions should serve as a redline that includes probing questions to learn more about the topic on a deeper level. Hence, it is important that the interviewer lets the participant talk until they finished, listen carefully and may ask more detailed questions in the end. Due to the small number of interviewees, this study may not be reliable like a questionnaire with over 100 participants. The purpose of this study,

however, is to explore social entrepreneurial motivation and fill the research gap of the antecedents of social entrepreneurial motivations.

### **3.3.1. Preparation**

Based on the literature review about social entrepreneurship history, social entrepreneurial characteristics and motivation, as well as life story method, themes were gathered to prepare the interview guide. The guideline was inspired by Atkinsons' (1998) life story interviews process. This interview guide included a checklist for the opening of the interview, main interview questions from biographical development, influential relationships, previous experiences, life transitions, and social start-up process (see Appendix 1: Interview Guide). Probing questions included why and how questions. First, the biographical development served to learn more about the persons biography in general by asking "Can you describe how your life developed, please?" Probing questions were roughly formulated, for example "Can you describe the situation in more detail, please? Why did you do that? How did you feel about it?" These questions led to a more contextual and reflective description revealing the motivations of the social entrepreneur. The second topic was about the influential relationships. In order to comprehend which people had an impact on their values, beliefs and attitudes, the question was formulated as "Who were the people that shaped and influenced your life?" Third, previous experiences should reflect on social issues in the past and work experiences that had an influence on the social awareness and start-up process. Fourth, life transitions had a special focus on life changing situations that changed the perspective or direction of the individual. Finally, questions about the social start-up process focused more on the situation triggering the motivation and what was helpful on the way to realize the idea to a social enterprise. This topic would also help in learning about the social entrepreneurs motivation and self-perception.

### **3.3.2. Identification of Participants**

Referring to the research question: "What was the trigger event that motivated a social entrepreneur to start a social enterprise?" This study focused on the past of the social entrepreneur before the start-up. Therefore, the main aim was to comprehend what the strongest reason or antecedent was that led the individual to the final decision for the

social entrepreneurial path. Therefore, the German context is interesting because it is a developed country with an established social welfare system. Even though, social entrepreneurship exists in practice, it is not implemented in the German governmental social policies yet (Engelke et al., 2016). German social enterprises are mostly active on a local or regional level. In comparison to the US, Germany has a less developed social entrepreneurship infrastructure (Scheuerle et al., 2013). This may be due to the different governmental systems that foster or hinder social entrepreneurial activities. Moreover, the number of English-written studies about social entrepreneurship in Germany is very little, and thus, offers more research opportunities for international access. Consequently, social entrepreneurs were identified based on the following criteria (see 2.1.1. Social Entrepreneurship Definition):

- Active social entrepreneur based in Germany, excluding the actual place of foundation and branch
- Social business already founded
- Main goal to create social value rather than increasing shareholders' value
- Non-profit or for-profit enterprise

With these criteria, social entrepreneurs were identified through google search “social entrepreneur in Deutschland”, Ashoka, Schwab fellow list and social entrepreneurs' recommendations. The company descriptions on the websites of the social businesses were used to identify the social goal and the products and services to solve the social problem with entrepreneurial approaches. To ensure that the social entrepreneurs were truly focused on creating social value, a detailed Google search of the company's field of work and activities was conducted. Furthermore, life stories of each person were collected to identify their purpose from their personal development.

15 social entrepreneurs were approached via E-Mail, phone and personal contact at social entrepreneur labs and meetups in Germany. Six interviews were conducted with German social entrepreneurs which are listed anonymously in the following table.

No.	Position	Sex	Age	Type	Area of Operations	Years of Operation
<b>I1</b>	Founder	F	50-54	<b>For-Profit</b> Agency offering services for seniors and immobile people to pursue a self-determined life	Germany	2
<b>I2</b>	Founder	M	35-39	<b>For-Profit</b> Creating customised tactile maps and services improving the life quality and autonomy of blind people	Germany	3
<b>I3</b>	Founder	M	55-59	<b>For-Profit</b> Employing autistic people as professional IT-consultants changing the perception on autism	Germany	5
<b>I4</b>	Founder	F	45-49	<b>Non-Profit</b> Social training for prisoners to become responsible and self-confident by training future guide dogs	Germany	6
<b>I5</b>	Founder	M	35-39	<b>For-Profit</b> Selling fair trade beverages as an innovative and social business	Germany, International	15
<b>I6</b>	Founder	M	60-64	<b>For-Profit</b> Exhibitions guided by disabled people leading to integration through changing perspectives e.g. exhibitions in the dark guided by blind people	Germany, International	28

**Table 2 Overview of SE Interviewees**

### **3.3.3. Life Story Interviews**

The interviews were conducted in German and English depending on the individuals' preferences. It took place at the office, café in Hamburg and by Skype phone call. All participants were introduced to the process of the interview, duration of 30 to 45 minutes, and their rights of confidentiality, anonymity and denial of answering questions. After the formal introduction, interviewees were asked for recording permission. Two recording devices were used in case one stopped, and notes were taken for later reference. In the end, each session took about 40 to 90 minutes although less time was requested. Once the interviews were finished, the recordings were transcribed, coded into themes for the analysis and translated from German into English.

## **3.4. Data Analysis**

For the analysis, the themes of the interview guide were adjusted and emerged to biographical development, previous experiences, social entrepreneurial traits and path to social entrepreneurship. Based on the four themes, the transcriptions were coded. After that, the list of codes was reduced to a few sub-themes with the help of previous literature. Finally, the themes were compared among the interviews transcribed and also categorised according to Yitshaki's and Kropp's (2015) push and pull model.

## **3.5. Ethical Considerations**

Throughout the research process, ethical issues were considered to ensure that the participants and their sensitive data were treated carefully. The ethical basics of Bryman and Bell (2011) guided the process. These considerations are presented in more detail in the following.

First, all the participants were contacted by E-Mail with a description of the research and the criteria why they were chosen. They were promised to receive more detailed information in the end of the interview to ensure that the answers were not influenced by the researchers main research question. Before the interview began, each social entrepreneur was briefed about the process of the interview and their data as well as their rights of confidentiality, anonymity and to refuse to answer a question. After their agreement about their data and to be recorded for transcription purposes, the interview

was officially started. This procedure is according to Bryman and Bell's (2011) consent regulation. Second, by the end of the interview, all the participants were informed about the research's purpose and content in more detail to prevent deception and ensure that the study would be about the topic as promised in the beginning. Third, the social entrepreneur's privacy was respected. The researcher communicated with the social entrepreneur about whether certain details could be processed or should be left out. Therefore, the interviewees were promised to have a final review whether the information was used truthfully before the study was published.

### **3.6. Methodology Summary**

For this study, the life story method was applied on six German social entrepreneurs to learn about their skills, knowledge, network, values, motivations and the context of their start-up decision. This method was conducted as semi-structured interview with an interview guide divided into five categories: biographical development, influential relationships, life transitions, previous experiences and social start-up process. Participants were identified within Germany based on the criteria and online information about them. After contacting the interviewees, conducting the interviews, the recordings were transcribed, coded and analysed according to the interview guide categories and Yitshaki and Kropp's (2015) push and pull factors. Finally, the execution of the ethical considerations were described to protect the participants' privacy and data.

## 4. Findings

The findings were divided into four categories: Biographical Development, Previous Experiences, Social Entrepreneurial Traits and Path to Social Entrepreneurship. These categories were derived from the interviews with the six social entrepreneurs. In the following sections, the findings are presented.

### 4.1. Biographical Development

The six social entrepreneurs were between the age of 35 and 64 years. All were born in different parts of Germany and family constellations that were mostly in the middle class. The social entrepreneurs told little about their childhood and emphasised more on the phase as teenager. I6 learned about his conflictful family history when he was a teenager that influenced him to try to comprehend the complexity during his life time. Since then, he became aware of the social issue of injustice.

Only one is working at the location where he was born. Although, the question was not asked specifically, two of the participants told that they had several jobs during school time. Five have a university degree and two of them even a PhD. Two of them did an apprenticeship in the social and health sector. The studies range from social work to business and IT. During their life time, some of them were involved in social work, nursing or honorary work, or went abroad for their studies. One encountered a social injustice in a later life stage. Altogether, the work experience range from six to over 20 years before starting up.

Regarding the question who had an impact on their life, most of them were influenced by their close family values. I4 said: *“And from my father, he impacted me in my values like modesty, happiness... [parents] gave me a strong idea what it means to have a sense of basic trust.”* Others could not point on specific people because they thought that everyone they met had an influence. Nonetheless, they gave some examples during their life time from musicians, spiritual role models teaching about the non violent actions. Besides the impact from family members and historical role models, some were influenced by managers and other leading personalities. I3 stated:

*“And that are always those who convinced with their personal attitude who actually meant what they said, who had a high demand of quality and had the ability to motivate others.”*

Next to the social influences, three of the social entrepreneurs were also socially and partly financially supported by their spouses. They received moral and emotional support. I3 was supported by their spouse because they shared the same belief.

*“My wife was the one. She was all in from the beginning. ... She gave me strength and showed that she believed in me. We discussed a lot and decided together. ... The common topic connected us and that’s the nice part about it.”*

## **4.2. Previous Experiences**

The previous experiences comprise influences by role experiences with social issues and work experiences. Throughout the life stories, the social entrepreneurs were confronted with social issues in their early adulthood or in later stages. I4 had contact with difficult children during her apprenticeship and later with drug addicts during the studies, which confirmed the passion for helping disadvantaged people. I1 dealt with different people through nursing and I2 provided attention at the Telephone Emergency Service increasing empathy. Others encountered disabilities in their own family or acquaintances. These experiences influenced their social awareness. Hence, three out of six social entrepreneurs obtained experiences in the social sector before starting up a social enterprise.

Regarding previous experiences before starting the social enterprise, five participants were grateful about their business experiences. The work experiences ranged from project management to business and IT skills. For example, I3 acquired business skills from his business management studies and work experience from IT person to project manager to CEO of several companies. These business skills helped to organize and operate the activities well. In contrast to the other five social entrepreneurs I6 did not have many experiences in business management: *“No, I don’t know anything about this business stuff. What helps me to develop my enterprises was this belief that I can give this contribution.”* Even though, acquired business skills were an advantage in starting up, I6 showed that he was able to establish his enterprise without previous business skills.

### 4.3. Social Entrepreneurial Traits

During the interview the participants described themselves. The personal traits that were dominant and mentioned several times were courage, risk tolerance, persistence, empathy, organisational and communication skills which are typical prerequisites not only for social and conventional entrepreneurs. I4 said: *“Courage..., risk-taking ... combined with a good portion of composure. I’m more interested in trying...”* I1 talked from another perspective about courage: *“Many say that I have a tremendous courage to found a business.”*

Next to the common entrepreneurial traits, I1 said: *“Because social is partly just mine and ... I am really a social person.”* In addition to the personal trait of being social, I6 summarised many personal traits and said:

*“Compassion helped me a lot. Empathy is not enough. I think you have to translate empathetic feelings and have to bring it into action. I need to be empathetic, to be compassionate, to be passionate and most importantly to be endurant and to be resilient. That means I never give up, never. And of course optimism, it will work in one way or another. ... and of course the curiosity. I have no problems to ask people. And I can connect people building a certain network or a support group. ... You have to love people.”*

Besides the personal traits of the social entrepreneurs, their attitudes were interesting to include because they demonstrate their risk tolerance and courage. The participants showed a positive attitude towards failures. I4 said: *“I think really negative experiences are so impactful, also in the personal development. ... One often needs a detour or maybe failure to realize what the right way is for me.”* I6 said specifically, *“I am not afraid to make failures and it can be corrected. And failures are wonderful learning opportunities. ... I think it’s really important to speak up and to raise your voice, especially when it comes to injustice.”*

Furthermore, the social entrepreneurs are self-determined like the statement of I3 proves: *“Then to stay undeterred and to say: ‘No, that is my topic. I want to do that. I don’t let anyone dissuade me from it.”* This finding and other statements underlined that the social entrepreneurs knew themselves and what they wanted in life which made them authentic.

A very interesting description involved a combination, such as ego-altruism by I6:

*“Ego-altruism. So you have to do something for your own ... but with reference to others. We don't do it just for our own egoism, selfishness but with certain reflection on other people. So I'm doing it for me but with the inclusion of the we, the other people.”*

Typical social entrepreneurial traits could be found in all participants that comprised altruism, compassion and empathy. Summarising the personal traits, it can be seen that many traits which are also typical for conventional entrepreneurs can be found in the statements of the interviewed social entrepreneurs. In addition, social entrepreneurs differ in their altruistic trait including empathy and compassion.

#### **4.4. Path to Social Entrepreneurship**

The first three social entrepreneurs described that their decisions to start up was triggered on at an event whereas the other three social entrepreneurs stated that their decision was more like a development of their previous activities.

The triggering experience was described by I3 when he visited a self-help group of his disabled child. He said: *“Something needs to be done because it made me angry that such well-educated people with high know-how are ignored by society. That's what I didn't like and that was the trigger.”* In the starting phase, I3 learned that it was better to choose a for-profit organisation and argued: *“If you talk to decision makers and say that you're non-profit ... It isn't on an equal footing anymore. ... I wanted to prove that [disabled people] do their jobs at least as good as [non-disabled people], and it would have been very difficult with a non-profit organisation.”*

I6 told about the time after his studies when his director asked him to train a colleague who became blind after a car accident.

*“He really changed my understanding about what it means to be blind or to be different. I was very shocked about my own behaviour. ... Actually, exclusion starts when you don't imagine that is a valuable life. So the first step, I already did with my mentor... misconception ... I could not cope with this condition being different and this was for me then the push.”*

I4 initiated the start-up after watching the movie premiere. She said: *“And that was the sparking idea to start with the topic.”* The movie content was similar to the start-up idea

combining the training of prisoners to responsible people and recruiting new guide dogs. This innovative idea would satisfy the high demand of well-trained guide dogs for blind people. Before the trigger event, she already developed an affinity to social disadvantaged people from her apprenticeship and university study. She was convinced that people should have a second chance in life. Therefore, she was on a search for something she could pursue with passion, and finally found the confirmation to start up after the movie premiere.

The other three social entrepreneurs experienced a coincidental meeting or new phase. I2 encountered blind people through the interviews for his dissertation and learned about their daily struggles as well as different perceptions. From then on, he developed empathy for this community and thought about possibilities to make their life easier. Thus, the idea to create his project to a more applicable work than merely a dissertation became reality when he met his complementary entrepreneurial business partner. He stated:

*“And he convinced me with his enthusiasm because he said, ‘Hey, wouldn’t it be cool ... if we make a product out of it. If we get it out to the world... to make the world a little bit better.’”*

I1 said the following about her decision to start up when the time was right.

*“I think there were more private reasons because my child graduated from highschool. ... Now, I can do what I want. ... It was clear that I could change myself locationwise and that there was a permission to do what I want now.”* In addition to her decision, she had no existential fears because she knew that she could find work in her old job in any case. Although, she decided to become self-employed at a later stage, she was already motivated in her past as nurse and consultant. She realised that she would not have a high impact to contribute to a better world when working in the corporate world due to the bureaucracy. That frustrated her in the health sector.

Although, some of the findings demonstrated spark moments there were other examples that developed over time such as I5’s case who said: *“It was in several phases.”* The first phase started when he realized that a beverage company changed the beverage recipe secretly, and then he demonstrated against it unsuccessfully. The second phase started when he learned that he could use the old recipe with some changes to

create his own beverage. But the problem was that he needed to make decisions above others although his main driver was that every human should be equivalent. *“... and that at point in time where I had no experiences, knowledge or network. So, the most stupid situation to decide above others. And therefore, I didn’t do it but invited everyone to decide ... until we found an agreement.”* After a few years, the business developed further to a point where he said: *“Ok, this could become a business.”* In addition, he explained that most social businesses do something good by sharing parts of their income which is too late in an economic system that focuses on growth and power without taking care of the environment. And therefore, he stated: *“And I would like to start earlier and build the business from the beginning that it avoids negative effects on the parties as much as possible.”* Hence, he established an innovative social enterprise with the focus on social justice from within empowering the parties to participate in the decision-making process actively. Regarding the decision to adopt fair trade, it developed from his experience with inequality of social classes at a young age. Therefore, he decided to give back by ensuring that the suppliers are compensated fairly.

## 5. Discussion

After presenting the findings in the previous chapter, the purpose of the discussion is to evaluate the empirical findings against past studies. By examining these two sections, attempts were made to answer the research question: “What was the trigger event that motivated a social entrepreneur to start a social enterprise?” Therefore, the chapter was divided into four parts: Biographical Development, Previous Experiences, Social Entrepreneurial Traits, and Path to Social Entrepreneurship. In the last section, the push and pull theory by Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) was applied to distinguish the start-up motivations and identify the trigger events (see 2.2.1. Motivation Theories.).

### **Biographical Development**

During a young age, social entrepreneurs developed an awareness of social injustice. That result about social awareness was also supported by Yitshaki and Kropp (2015). Every social entrepreneur had a high degree except for one and have started their social enterprise at a higher age. This could be related with Maslow’s theory about self-actualization (Maslow, 1977). It means that the individuals satisfied four of their needs of the hierarchy and could focus on the highest one, such as living a fulfilled life by working meaningfully as a social entrepreneur. Furthermore, it could also be related to their experiences and higher awareness of themselves that gave them the self-confidence to follow their calling and contribute to a world on a meaningful way. However, in this context the social entrepreneurs might start up at a higher age but this information should be treated with caution as the age might differ depending on the countries conditions.

Their experiences in another country and social work broadened their perspective on worldwide social issues. This finding is in line with the theory of Braga, Proença and Ferreira (2015) that such experiences have an impact on their social awareness. Moreover, encountering social issues in other ways and obtaining business skills during the career supports Shumate’s et al. (2014) theory of opportunity recognition and new venture creation. In addition, Bornstein and Davis (2010) finding about the various work experiences leading to social entrepreneurship were confirmed.

Social entrepreneurs were influenced by their community, such as spouses, close family and friends, in their values and as emotional support that confirms Omorede’s

(2014) model about why social entrepreneurs persist in the venture creation process. However, there is no finding about traumatic experiences as (Bornstein & Davis, 2010) found in their studies.

### **Previous Experiences**

The results of social experiences indicate that social awareness was developed earlier during childhood and adulthood. This supports previous research in opportunity recognition. It was found that previous experiences and knowledge have an increased effect on the awareness to recognise opportunities (Yitshaki & Kropp, 2015). In this case, it is recognizing the social issue and offering a solution to this demand. But why are some people able to recognise the social opportunities, and some are not? A possible explanation for this might be that they had similar experiences with the presented issue and knew how to act. For example, I1 worked as nurse and continued in the health sector. She was familiar with elderly people and their struggles. This experience led her to see the need in this area, and to act as social entrepreneur. Thus, these results show the importance of experiences and knowledge in recognising social needs (Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

This study has shown that most of the social entrepreneurs applied their previously acquired business skills during the start-up phase. This result concurs with other studies that show that previous work experiences have a positive influence on establishing a successful new venture (Shumate et al., 2014). This may be explained by the fact that the venture creation process is complex, and therefore, needs knowledge of several disciplines. An example of this is I3 who studied business management, worked as project manager and CEO of different company sizes. With these business skills and experiences, he had a broad overview of the activities in founding a social enterprise successfully.

### **Social Entrepreneurial Traits**

The findings are partly in line with those of previous studies about social entrepreneurial traits. The most obvious finding to emerge from the analysis is that all six social entrepreneurs showed altruistic personal traits. I2 described how his empathy advanced through his social work experiences. This agrees with the conclusion of several scholars that the main difference of social entrepreneurs from conventional entrepreneurs

is altruism (Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Ruskin, Seymour & Webster, 2016). Risk tolerance was mentioned and supported by statements about having courage and perceiving failure as valuable learning lessons. Moreover, the participants were very passionate about their idea and self-determined to realise it. Being passionate is another finding that agrees with several scholars (Shumate et al., 2014; Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015; Tigu et al., 2015). In addition to that, Omorede (2014) found that passion was partly the reason why individuals were persistent in the entrepreneurial process. This is also evident in the case of I4 who was passionate about solving the social issue, and persisted even though there was no other example in Germany. This idea was partly innovative as it already existed in the US but it was innovative in Germany.

One interesting finding is the term ego-altruism, which has not been used in previous studies. This rather contradictory result may be due to the different focus of initial studies in social entrepreneurship. These studies attempted to distinguish the social entrepreneur from the conventional entrepreneur emphasizing on the altruistic motive (Carsrud & Brännback, 2011; Braga, Proença & Ferreira, 2015). However, only one recent study concluded that social entrepreneurs are both self-oriented and other-oriented in starting a business (Ruskin, Seymour & Webster, 2016). Hence, the identified term ego-altruism is in accord with that study indicating that social entrepreneurs are also self-oriented. This finding is important in filling the research gap by supporting a more complete perspective on social entrepreneurs. Being open-minded, honest and authentic were found to be important personal traits of social entrepreneurs. However, surprisingly, this has not previously been described.

### **Path to Social Entrepreneurship**

As explained in section 2.2.1. , the push and pull model of Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) was applied to categorise the initial situations that led the individuals to start a social enterprise. The current study found that three pull factors could be described as trigger events and the other three as pull factor where the trigger event happened later.

First, I3 had a disabled child. When he went to a self-help group of disabled people as a parent for the first time, he could not believe that all of the participants were unemployed. He got angry about this situation because he saw the high potential in each person. This was the event that triggered I3's idea to take action. According to Yitshaki

and Kropp (2015), this case can be categorised as pull factor because there was a social issue that was not met at that present time. Second, I6 encountered a blind colleague who changed his opinion about perceiving a valuable life. This meeting had such an impact on I6 to take action that this situation can be classified as pull factor. Although, this case was not specifically listed in the push and pull model, it is a pull factor because it was an internal choice, and was not influenced by external factors that forced him. Third, I4 was on a search for a meaningful topic and found the trigger event during a movie premiere. This led her to the internal decision to solve the social issue. This kind of motivation is a pull factor.

Fourth, I1 began her social entrepreneurial career after her child graduated from high school. This was her trigger moment to start up because she completed her mother duties. Then she realised that the time was right to move to another phase. Before that, she found her motivation to help others and become self-employed during the time she worked in the health sector. Her motivation may be classified as pull factor due to the desire to address social issues of the health sector. Fifth, I2 realized in the second half of his dissertation when interviewing blind people that his research project could be a great facilitation of their daily life. Motivated by changing the world a little bit on this way, he took the final step when meeting his compatible business partner. In this case, the trigger event happened after the pull factor to simplify the life of blind people. Finally, I5 encountered a situation where both middle class and lower class thought they were lower than the other one. That stereotyping caused social issues in treating the other group in a disadvantaged way. This is the moment and his key motivation that every person is equal. But the moment that triggered the start-up happened years later. Hence, the motivation and the trigger event happened at different time periods.

Unanticipated findings were the emotional antecedents of motivations. Anger and curiosity were identified in starting up through the life story method. Miller et al. (2012) and Ruskin, Seymour and Webster (2016) found five emotional antecedents: compassion, passion, frustration, sympathy, and empathy. Therefore, the findings were unexpected and suggest that there are more emotions involved in the start-up motivation.

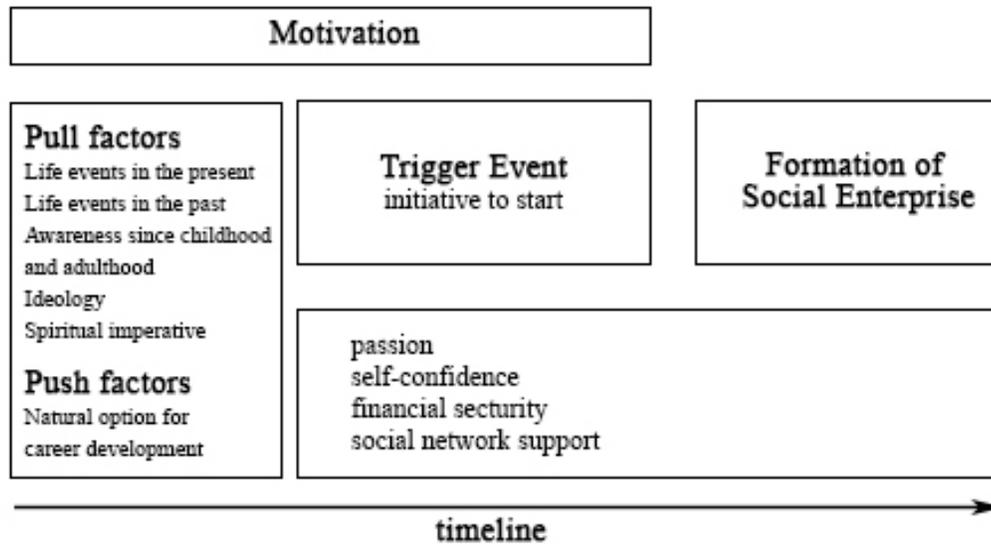
## 6. Conclusion

This study contributed to the understanding of social entrepreneurial motivation by filling the gap with the antecedents of motivations to start up. Therefore, the research question was: “What was the trigger event that motivated a social entrepreneur to start a social enterprise?” In order to answer this question, past studies about social entrepreneurship and motivation were gathered to choose an appropriate approach of data collection and analysis. Including the discussion of the empirical findings, the information is presented in the following.

The literature review demonstrated that challenges remain related to the diverse definitions of social entrepreneurship. Furthermore, it was indicated that social entrepreneurial motivation has received little attention in research although it was found crucial in explaining the intention to start up and behaviour to create a social venture. Therefore, future research was suggested in studying social entrepreneurial motivation in a more developed country and its antecedents that led the social entrepreneur to start up a social enterprise. To address these research gaps, information was gathered with the life story method as semi-structured interviews with six German social entrepreneurs to learn about their past and the context of the trigger event.

The empirical findings showed that the trigger event and motivation were not the only factors that motivated the social entrepreneur to start up. This was an unexpected finding. Regarding the decision to start the entrepreneurial path by establishing a social enterprise, it was found that all six social entrepreneurs were motivated by pull factors but the trigger event either occurred at the same time or after the motivation developed out of past experiences such as a new life phase to become self-employed. In conclusion, the motivation to start up was rather an accumulation of events, experiences and knowledge that increased the awareness of these individuals for social needs. The trigger event can be described as a final point in time that reached its peak to make the decision.

Thus, there were several factors that influenced that decision to take the initiative, such as financial security, social support network, passion and self-confidence. These factors were combined with the model of Omorede (2014) and Yitshaki and Kropp (2015) in the following graph. It serves as model for future research on social entrepreneurial motivation.



**Figure 4 Adjusted model**

## 6.1. Implications

The practical implications are that social entrepreneurial motivations are not the only driver for a start-up because there are several factors such as financial security, support, network and self-confidence crucial to make the decision to start up. In Germany, it is important to have a safe base and support before starting up whereas in other countries social ventures are founded to survive and finance the family to have enough food on the table like in Nigeria.

The theoretical implications are that all the social entrepreneurs were motivated by pull factors. However, the trigger event happened either at the same time or sometime later. Moreover, social entrepreneurs do not only have altruistic motives but are guided by a combination, such as ego-altruism. Investigations in motivation are not sufficient in explaining why some social entrepreneurs start a social enterprise and others not.

Concerning the methods, the life story method was useful in learning about the past of the social entrepreneur because it provided a structure, and thus, should be more applied in entrepreneurship research. Another method such as quantitative method could have been more useful in the case of the certainty that enough social entrepreneurs could be identified. A more suitable method would have been a mixed method where interviews are used to gather the main themes that could be asked in another study of quantitative nature to validate and examine the significance of certain social entrepreneurial motivations against entrepreneurial motivations.

## **6.2. Future Research**

More motivational and contextual factors should be considered because it is a combination of several factors that make the individual decide in that situation to become a social entrepreneur. These factors could lead to new insights about other motivations that were not consciously thought through by the individual. The challenges in future research lies in the definition of social entrepreneurship that has not found one definition. Therefore, it will be difficult to validate the data on a worldwide scale as the national context has diverse criteria that is individually adjusted to the country. Therefore, researchers should focus on agreeing on an overall definition that is clear because it is the basis of each future study.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Interview Guide

### Details

Name:

Position:

Company name:

Founding year:

Interview date and location:

Duration of interview:

### **Biographical Development**

1. Can you describe how your life developed, please?

#### Probing Questions

1.1. Can you describe the situation in more detail, please?

1.2. Why did you do that?

1.3. How did you feel about it?

1.4. What would be a good example for this?

### **Influential Relationships**

2. Who were the people that shaped and influenced your life?

#### Probing Questions

2.1. How would you describe this person?

2.2. Why do you look up to that person?

2.3. How did your family/friends/role models influence you?

2.4. What did you learn from them?

### **Previous Experiences**

3. Which of your skills helped you to start the social business?

Examples: Management, Finance, Marketing, HR, Investment

#### Probing Questions

3.1. Where and when did you acquire those skills?

3.2. Why did you choose:

Examples: travel, work experience, start-up experience, charity,  
community

3.3. Why do you think these skills are important?

3.4. How have you applied it during the start-up phase?

4. What other experiences did you make before starting your social business?

Probing Questions

4.1. What did you learn from that experience?

**Life Transitions**

5. What life challenges did you go through?

Probing Questions

5.1. How did you deal with the challenge?

5.2. How did it change your perspective or decision making?

5.3. Would you want to undo this change? If yes or no, why, how?

6. What were the best moments in your life?

Probing Questions

6.1. What did you feel in that moment?

6.2. How did it benefit the next steps in your life? Examples

6.3. What has changed since then?

**Social Entrepreneur**

7. How would you describe yourself?

Probing Questions

7.1. What's a social entrepreneur in your opinion, the characteristics in comparison to conventional entrepreneurs?

7.2. Do you see yourself as social entrepreneur?

**Social Start-up**

8. When and in which situation did you have the idea for the start-up to solve the social problem?

Probing Questions

8.1. What were your motivations to start?

8.2. Can you tell more about the context, please?

9. What happened from the time you had the idea to the start of the social business?

Probing Questions

9.1. What obstacles did you face? How did you overcome those?

9.2. What and why did you have the strength to continue during the start-up phase?

9.3. If you compare your motivation before founding the social business and nowadays: did it change over time?

9.4. What is your outlook and vision for your company in the future?