THE ‘EVERYDAY’ POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOCIAL ENTERPRISE
LESSONS FROM GRAMEEN SHAKTI IN BANGLADESH

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For Shaun
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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADAB</td>
<td>Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asia Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B/W TV</td>
<td>Black and White Television</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BCSIR</td>
<td>Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAC</td>
<td>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDM</td>
<td>Clean Development Mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFL</td>
<td>Compact Fluorescent Lamp/Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNG</td>
<td>Compressed Natural Gas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>Direct Current</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EIPE</td>
<td>‘Everyday’ International Political Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDI</td>
<td>Foreign Direct Investment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for International Cooperation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoB / Government</td>
<td>Government of Bangladesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTC</td>
<td>Grameen Technology Center/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH</td>
<td>Household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>Improved Cook Stove/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDCOL</td>
<td>Infrastructure Development Company Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFRD</td>
<td>Institute of Fuel Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Government Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOC</td>
<td>International Oil Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPE</td>
<td>International Political Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPP</td>
<td>Independent Power Plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KfW</td>
<td>Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (Reconstruction Credit Institute)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lakh</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LED</td>
<td>Light-Emitting Diode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGED</td>
<td>Local Government and Engineering Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNC</td>
<td>Multinational Company</td>
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<tr>
<td>MoU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>MW</td>
<td>Megawatt</td>
</tr>
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<td>n.d.</td>
<td>no date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Not Available / Not Applicable</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDBMP</td>
<td>National Domestic Biogas and Manure Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOAB</td>
<td>NGO Affairs Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBS</td>
<td>Palli Bidyut Samities (Electricity Cooperatives)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO</td>
<td>Partner Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PV</td>
<td>Photo-Voltaic (solar energy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REB</td>
<td>Rural Electrification Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REEEP</td>
<td>Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REREDP</td>
<td>Rural Electrification and Renewable Energy Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIPE</td>
<td>‘Regulatory’ International Political Economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSF</td>
<td>Rural Services Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAP</td>
<td>Structural Adjustment Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHS</td>
<td>Solar Home System/s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNV</td>
<td>SNV Netherlands Development Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tk</td>
<td>Taka. Bangladesh currency unit. 70 Taka ~ US$1 (1 January 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US / USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organisation</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Abstract

With increasing international concern for both the corporate social responsibility of businesses and the market-compatibility of charitable projects, a new field is sparking interest in government, business and academic circles. The burgeoning field of ‘social enterprise’ incorporates a variety of organisations which attempt to tap into the potential of business and nonprofit ventures, with their dual social and financial goals, or ‘double bottom-line’. The literature concerning social enterprise is still in the early stages of development, with much focus on the economic debates but considerably less attention to the political aspects that influence and drive the field. This is especially true for social enterprises in developing countries. In order to help fill this gap in the literature, the thesis uses an ‘everyday IPE’ (International Political Economy) lens to explore and assess ‘Grameen Shakti’, an energy-focused social enterprise from Bangladesh.

In-depth analysis of this case study reveals the ways that Grameen Shakti has been able to ‘resist’ the energy development history of Bangladesh, with its alternative focus on decentralised, renewable energy solutions for rural households. In terms of its sales-based dissemination of energy technologies like the solar home system, Grameen Shakti has made considerable strides forward. The social enterprise’s dual focus on both financial and social goals, however, has meant that it has not been as successful with its less financially-rewarding technologies and sales initiatives. Furthermore, the analysis shows that Grameen Shakti’s product-oriented approach is not sufficient for addressing embedded local socio-political energy issues, such as the gendered energy inequalities surrounding land use and fuelwood supply. In summary, while Grameen Shakti does step outside the conventional boundaries of energy development in Bangladesh, and has made significant progress in addressing rural energy needs, its focus on market-compatible energy solutions means that it is an incomplete solution to rural energy development.
In itself, this finding is not problematic, as a social enterprise like Grameen Shakti could still be considered a valuable piece in the development puzzle. It is when we consider the national and international political contexts, however, that the broader causes and consequences of Grameen Shakti’s choices become apparent. With an analysis of the political economy of development in Bangladesh, the thesis reveals how social enterprises like Grameen Shakti have been used by powerful national and international actors, such as the Government of Bangladesh and the World Bank, to direct the development sector as a whole towards more market-compatible, and less politically sensitive, development issues. Consequently, it may be argued that social enterprises in Bangladesh and other developing countries are helping to legitimise the marginalisation of the types of development solutions and organisations that may be better able to challenge structural political inequalities and mobilise for social change.

In this way, the social enterprise field is part of a broader, global contestation between neoliberal and counter-hegemonic agendas, with individual social enterprises (in both developing and western countries) contributing to this scenario with varying degrees of resistance, complicity and awareness. Currently though, with the social enterprise literature being dominated by the economics of social entrepreneurship, political issues such as this are not being sufficiently studied or debated. The thesis ends, then, with a call for more ‘everyday IPE’ analyses of social enterprises in a variety of contexts: to gain a more nuanced understanding of these significant political dimensions and to create a social enterprise discourse that better reflects the diversity in the field.
Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Michelle Hackett and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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