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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AREAS

PH.D. DISSERTATION THESES

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1. CHOISE OF RESEARCH TOPICS

1.1 Justification and actuality of the choice of topic

National and international literature pays increasing attention to the study of social sustainability and social innovation, the fundamental goal of which is to achieve social justice, fight poverty, eliminate exclusion and discrimination (Smuk 2020). Social innovation focuses on meeting the needs of communities, emphasizing the social benefits of innovative ideas that can be interpreted at local community level in problem solving. Social innovation, reinforcing each other with technical and technical innovations, can be able to respond to challenges appearing at the level of local communities and to find solutions to everyday problems. Social innovation can be of particular importance in areas with job and income shortages.

Therefore, in my dissertation I focused on the potential effects of social innovations on less favoured regions and on the sustainability of the organizations created by these innovations.

The relevant problems of the economy and society, such as unemployment, lagging regions and sustainability, require long-term solutions that require novel cooperation between the actors of society. The changing effects of social innovation are reflected in Figure 1. summarize.

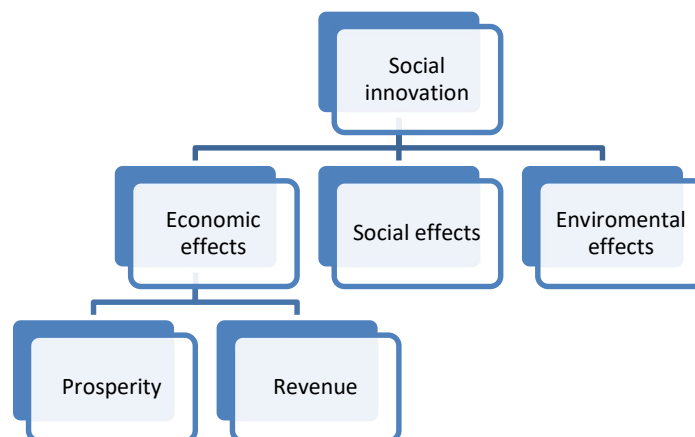


Figure 1. Effects of social innovation

Source: own editing

There are several nearly identical definitions of social innovation. In my dissertation, I assumed that social innovation "provides new or novel answers to the problems of a community, increases the well-being of the community" (Kocziszky et al. 2017). The main areas of the social innovation process (CRISES, 2012) can be:

- product- and/or technology-based social innovation process (e.g. employee involvement);
- consumer/user social innovation process (encouraging consumers, encouraging responsible consumption);
- entrepreneurship-based social innovation process (cooperation, social responsibility);
- area-based social innovation process (community development).

I felt it was my task to review and systematize solutions related to social innovation both in the domestic and international environment. This provided an opportunity to answer the question of what tools could be available to deliver sustainable social innovations.

Innovation is one of the drivers of economic growth. It has a positive impact on the competitiveness, growth and employment of companies, sectors and nations. Therefore, since the 1980s, economic policy in developed countries has focused on investment in innovation, with a particular focus on high value-added activities (OECD 2003), which has led to increased investment in knowledge-intensive industries and the creation of highly qualified, well-paid jobs.

The direction and speed of spatial spread of innovation are different. Lazonick and O'Sullivan (2000) and Mazzucato (2013), discussing the EC 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, argue why periods characterised by smart investment in innovation (e.g. the 1990s) resulted in territorial disparities increasing most rapidly. The authors introduce three key characteristics of innovation – its uncertain, collective and cumulative nature – in the study of the relationship between innovation and inequality.

Some empirical analyses show that in some cases investing in innovation and moving up the value chain is not sufficient to ensure sustainable growth. A higher rate of technological innovation does not necessarily translate into higher prosperity. This is confirmed by national (Dosi et al. 2006), regional (Fragkandreas 2013) and sectoral (Ejeremo et al. 2011) research and statistics.

Some authors point to the destructive effects of innovation (Buenstorf et al. 2013) and the "dark side" of innovation (Pyka and Hanush 2013) associated with job destruction and unequal distribution of wealth. Consequently, researchers increasingly believe that other types of innovation are needed in addition to new technologies, due to the diversity/complexity of problems that characterize society, demographic trends, inequality, structural unemployment, knowledge intensification and globalisation (Lazonick and O'Sullivan 2000, Mazzucato 2013, Pyka and Hanush 2013, Stiglitz 2013).

1.2 Individual motivation to research

In my previous teaching and research tasks, I mainly dealt with technical innovation, supporting and generating corporate innovation processes. In recent years, I have participated in the implementation of several projects that dealt with conceptual issues and possible good solutions of social innovation. In 2021, I successfully completed the Social Innovation Manager training. Currently I am a facilitator of the thematic forum entitled "The future of work, social aspects of the economy of the future" within the framework of the TINLab project and I carry out research on the topic as a member of one of the research groups.

My personal interest in this topic was also strengthened by the fact that I work in or come from a region lagging behind, therefore exploring and encouraging novel collaborations and solutions is close to my thinking. My work focuses on meeting the needs of the community sustainably, emphasizing the social benefits of innovative ideas that can be interpreted at local community level.

2. THE PROCESS OF RESEARCH

2.1 Research process and hypotheses

In my research, I analyzed the diversity of conceptual approaches to social innovation, the different focal points appearing during the development of the concept, and the relationships between different types. Accordingly, I dealt with social sustainability and innovation as key elements and determining factors of economic development. I examined the relationships between types of social innovation. The logical process of my research is described in the Figure 2. Logical steps of the research framework model 2. illustrates.

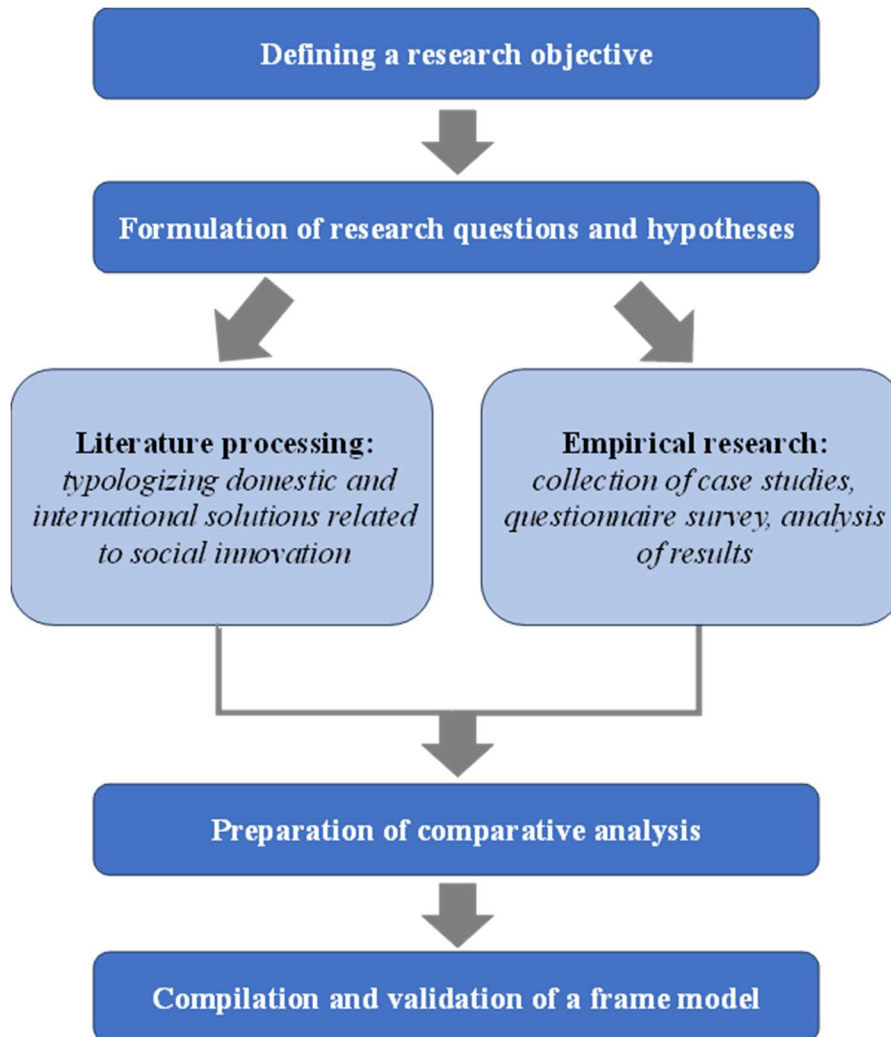


Figure 2. Logical steps of the research framework model

Source: own editing

After defining the research goal, I formulated *my research questions*:

- What is the relationship between social sustainability and social innovation, and what characteristics and factors can describe it?
- What is the role of social innovation activities in the corporate sector and how does this relate to the social responsibility of these organisations?

My hypotheses:

1. The role of social innovation is undervalued in the economic literature: social innovation is a relatively new concept, which has become the focus of research interest mainly due to social and economic constraints.
2. The economic importance of social innovation today is still small compared to its social importance. Top-down and bottom-up innovation have different effects.
3. Social innovation contributes to the sustainability of rural areas and settlements.
4. Social innovations that are essentially bottom-up initiatives have a longer lifespan.
5. Network embeddedness and network competences play a decisive role in the sustainability of enterprises applying the results of social innovations. A knowledge management model based on good practices supports cooperation for social well-being.

2.2 Research methodology

The purpose of my investigations and the methods used are defined in the Table 1. Hypotheses of the dissertation and methods 1. summarize.

Table 1. Hypotheses of the dissertation and methods

	Hypothesis/research question	Method
1.	Social innovation is a relatively new concept, which has become the focus of research interest mainly due to social and economic constraints.	literature research by PRISM method
2.	The economic significance of social innovation today is even smaller compared to its social significance, but the concept is widely known in domestic practice. Top-down and bottom-up innovation have different effects.	literature research and questionnaire survey
3.	In the case of rural, resource-deficient settlements and regions, social innovation is of particular importance.	analysis of practical examples, questionnaire survey
4.	Social innovations that are essentially bottom-up initiatives have a longer lifespan.	analysis of social innovations
5.	Network embeddedness and network competences play a decisive role in the sustainability of enterprises applying the results of social innovations.	Analysis of practical examples and questionnaire survey

Source: own editing

a) Review of the literature history

The literature was processed using PRISMA method. For a systematic review of the available sources, I used systematic literature screening. This method provides an opportunity for "critical evaluation of the comprehensive synthesis following detailed and thorough research work" (Kamarási-Mogyorósy, 2015). The process is illustrated by Figure 3. Logical process of literature review of the topic (*based on PRISMA recommendation*) 3.

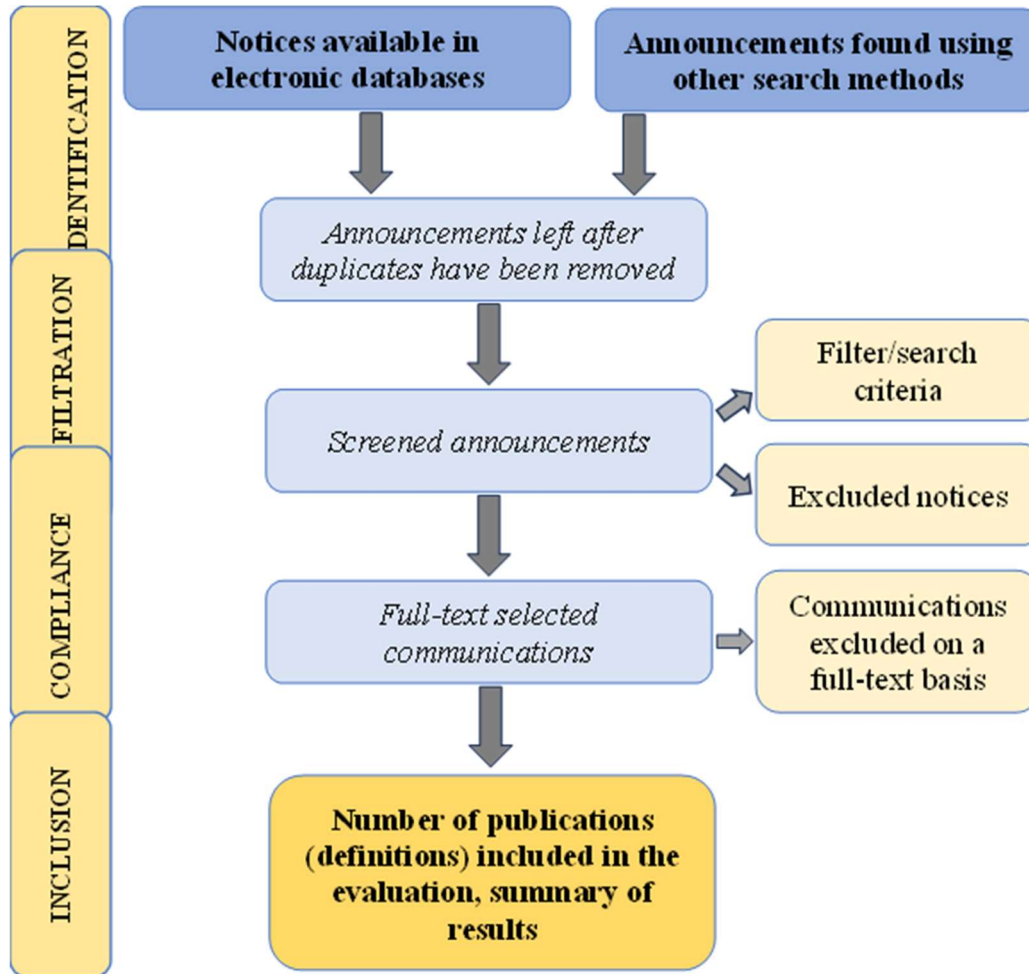


Figure 3. Logical process of literature review of the topic
(based on PRISMA recommendation)

Source: own editing based on Moher et al., 2009 and Kamarási-Mogyorósy, 2015

In addition to the literature, I considered it important to review and typologize domestic and international experiences related to social innovation.

b) Empirical study methodology

After structured screening, an empirical study was performed. The aim of my research among organizations implementing social innovation was to provide a sample picture of Hungarian organizations implementing social innovation. To this end, research has synthesized conceptual approaches to the relationship between social innovations and economic development; provided data on social innovation organisations, organisations that actually operate and exist only administratively and have ceased to exist; their economic performance, employment and economic potential, their territorial and sectoral distribution and the added social value they create.

A further aim was to examine the legal form, activity profile, fundraising and allocation practices of these organisations; identification of their activities, achievements, relationship systems, typical founding motives. The research also included exploring the difficulties, main risk factors and success factors of social innovations, as well as their areas of development.

After synthesizing theoretical approaches to social innovation, secondary and primary research was conducted:

- (1) *In the framework of systematic literature research and database analysis*, on the one hand, I examined the relationship between social innovation and economic development based on the literature, then I analyzed the characteristics of organizations implementing social innovation based on publicly available databases (Register of Civil Organizations, Central Statistical Office).
- (2) *In focus group interviews*, leaders and representatives of a total of 25 organizations expressed their opinions on the concept of social innovation, its social impact, the organization's fundraising and profit distribution practices, results, success factors and future development opportunities.
- (3) *During a questionnaire survey*, organizations and institutions implementing social innovation were interviewed in the areas of general data of the organization, revenues, expenses, determination of social added value and evaluation of operation. The sample included 25 organisations.

The six large units of the questionnaire sought answers to a total of 83 questions, most of them closed.

First, I was interested in the general characteristics of the organisations addressed. Especially for founding and operational purposes and motivations. In part, I assessed the employment characteristics of organisations through six questions.

The second set of questions sought to explore the background to available public management data (published accounts and profit and loss accounts).

Subsequently, I assessed with the help of 23 questions how organizations judge the impact of their operations on their environment and the social added value of their activities.

The 8 questions of the fourth set of questions related to the operational specificities of social innovation organisations.

The fifth chapter, which is the largest in terms of the number of questions (30 questions), sought to answer how social innovation organisations define the concept of social innovation, its goals, actors, challenges and significance. Of course, I was also curious about the effects of COVID-19.

My final questions related to the respondent, while maintaining anonymity.

The organizations contacted could answer my questions by filling out an online questionnaire via the Internet, which significantly facilitated the processing and analysis of data during the research.

- c) In the sample examined, I analyzed the specifics, relationships and effects of social sustainability, including social responsibility and social innovation. The questionnaire contains both closed and open-ended questions. Using the analysis of secondary information and the use of the results of empirical research, I carried out a comparative analysis for two counties. My goal is also to compile a repository of good practices in the scope of the study, which I intend to integrate into a novel knowledge transfer and management model. The basic objective of presenting the good practice is to identify those tools and methods that achieve the set goals more effectively than the earlier, already known methodologies, which demonstrably or already proven contribute to

raising the quality level of the given organization and serve as examples for other organizations to adopt (Szabó and Nagy 2014).

Criteria for assessing social responsibility and social innovation:

- sustainability
- innovativeness,
- success,
- upgradeability,
- adaptability,
- documentability,
- multiplicative effect.

Among the factors hindering the collection of good practices, I consider the objectives that cannot be adequately defined, documentability and lack of available information, and the undefined circle of stakeholders to be the most critical.

The planned result of my research is the compilation of a framework model that provides methodological assistance to the examined organizations to generate sustainable social innovations and thus contribute to the economic development of the examined regions. I also intend to validate the model to be developed.

The organizations contacted could answer my questions by filling out an online questionnaire via the Internet, which significantly facilitated the processing and analysis of data during the research.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Innovation is one of the drivers of economic growth. It has a positive effect on the competitiveness of companies, sectors and nations, and on the increase in emissions. Therefore, since the 1980s, economic policy in developed countries has focused on investment in innovation, with a particular focus on high value-added activities (OECD 2003), which has led to increased investment in knowledge-intensive industries and the creation of highly qualified, well-paid jobs.

From the point of view of my topic, it is worth highlighting that Lazonick and Mazzucato (2013), discussing the EC 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, point out that territorial disparities have continued to increase in periods marked by smart investment in innovation (e.g. the 1990s). The authors introduced three key characteristics of innovation – its uncertain, collective and cumulative nature – in the study of the relationship between innovation and inequality.

Some empirical analyses show that in some cases innovation and upgrading the value chain are not sufficient to ensure sustainable growth. This shows that higher rates of technological innovation are not necessarily linked to higher well-being. Evidence of this can be found at national (Dosi et al. 2006), regional (Fragkandreas 2013) and sectoral (Ejeremo et al. 2011) levels.

At the same time, the authors emphasize the potentially destructive effects of innovation (Buenstorf et al. 2013), the "dark side" of innovation (Pyka and Hanush 2013), which is associated with job destruction and unequal distribution of wealth. Consequently, researchers increasingly believe that other types of innovation are needed in addition to new technologies, due to the diversity/complexity of problems that characterize society, demographic trends, inequality, structural unemployment, knowledge intensification and

globalisation (Lazonick and O'Sullivan 2000, Mazzucato 2013, Pyka and Hanush 2013, Stiglitz 2013).

Social innovation is a new innovation paradigm (Howaldt et al. 2016). It means an innovation process involving a broad and dynamic network of actors and stakeholders, where traditional roles disappear or lose weight and new ones emerge: consumers no longer only provide information about their needs; but actively participate in the process of developing new products, services or models (Rosted et al. 2009). In this sense, social innovation can be understood as a process of collective creation (Crozier and Friedberg 1995, Howaldt et al. 2016).

Social innovation is seen by both researchers and policymakers as an important element of development capable of addressing problems and challenges (Howaldt et al. 2016, Moulaert et al 2013, Mulgan 2006, Pyka and Hanush 2013).

The socio-economic goal: to contribute to meeting human needs. Moulaert and MacCallum (2016, 21) define social innovation as "innovation in social relations based on the values of solidarity, reciprocity, and unification." These values include respect, empathy with different points of view and beliefs, openness to different languages and ways of communicating, tolerance and caring.

Social innovation affects "economic growth, productivity and market-rational behaviour". Therefore, social innovation can include a vision that allows its concept to prevail until recently in technology and entrepreneurship-driven innovation literature as "addressing the negative social consequences of growth-oriented innovation (inequality, exclusion, marginalisation)".

3.1 Publication of social innovation in literature

H1: Social innovation is a relatively new concept, which has become the focus of research interest mainly due to social and economic constraints. Its definition basically corresponds to Schumpeter's, except perhaps for the expectation of "creative destruction".

Research on this topic has been growing rapidly since 2009 (Figure 4. Number of publications (1966-2021) – cumulative values (*pcs*) 4). However, only a small percentage of these are published in economics-grade journals, and even fewer discuss the relationship between social innovation and economic development/growth (Figure 5.).

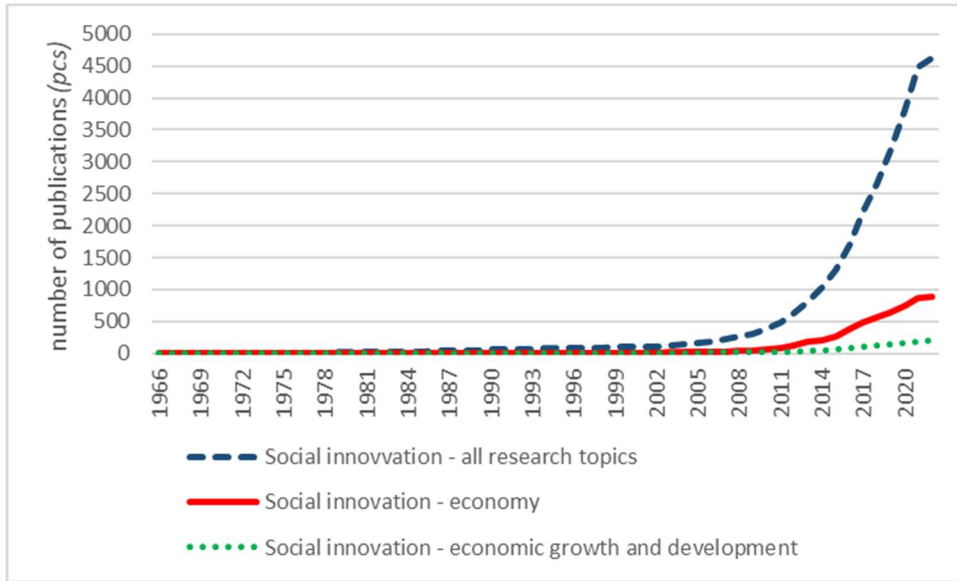


Figure 4. Number of publications (1966-2021) – cumulative values (pcs)
Source: own editing

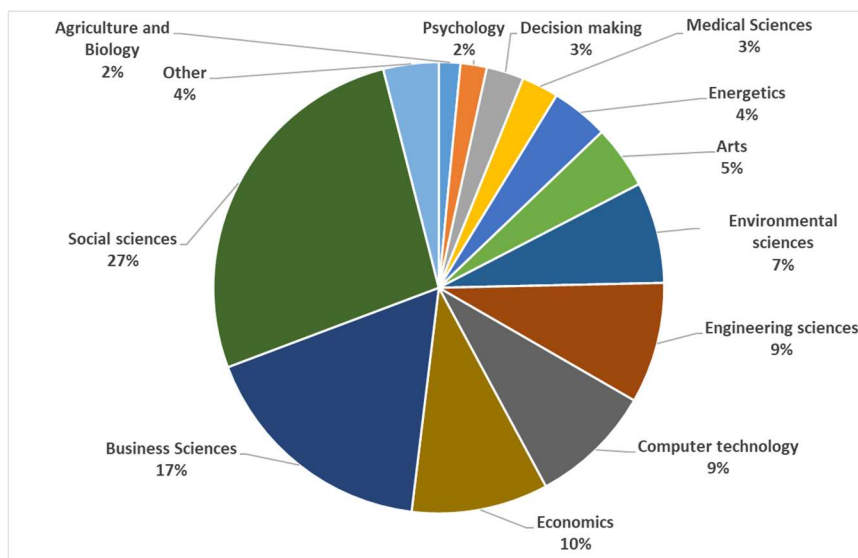


Figure 5. Breakdown of social innovation documents by topic (N=4632)
Source: own editing

The 169 authors studied are related to 160 organizations in 97 countries. Most of the publications have been published in the last 10 years. The main characteristics of the most cited sources are given in Table 2. summarize.

Table 2. The most cited sources on social innovation

REFERENCE	TOTAL NUMBER OF CITATIONS IN SCOPUS	NUMBER OF CITATIONS IN SCOPUS PER YEAR	ECONOMICS?
Moulaert, F., and Nussbaumer, J. (2005). The social region: beyond the territorial dynamics of the learning economy. <i>European Urban and Regional Studies</i> , 12(1), 45-64.	410	24	N
Winans, K., Kendall, A., and Deng, H. (2017). History and current applications of the circular economy concept. <i>Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews</i> , 68,825-833 .	339	68	N
Perrini, F., Vurro, C., and Costanzo, L. A. (2010). The process-based approach to social entrepreneurship: From identifying opportunities to scaling up social change in San Patrignano. <i>Enterprise and Regional Development</i> , 22(6), 515-534.	150	13	I
Ellström, P. E. (1998). Many meanings of professional competence and qualification. <i>Key qualifications in work and education</i> (3950). Springer, Dordrecht.	102	4	N
Manning, S., and Roessler, D. (2014). Developing cross-sectoral development partnerships: How do bridge agents shape project programmes and longer-term alliances? <i>Journal of Business Ethics</i> , 123(3), 527-547.	52	7	N
Quiggin, J. (2006). Blogs, wikis and creative innovation. <i>Journal of International Cultural Studies</i> , 9(4), 481-496.	36	2	N
Ziegler, R. (2010). Innovations in Action and Being: Innovations in Ability at the Intersection of Schumpeterian Political Economy and Human Development. <i>Journal of Social Entrepreneurship</i> , 1(2), 255-272.	38	3	I
Fink, M., Lang, R., and Harms, R. (2013). Local responses to global technological change – in contrast to restructuring practices in two rural communities in Austria. <i>Technology Forecasting and Social Change</i> , 80(2), 243-252.	35	4	N
Draskovic, M., Milica, D., Mladen, I., and Chigisheva, O. (2017). Prioritize institutional changes in social and economic development. <i>Journal of International Studies</i> , 10(2).	33	7	I

Source: own editing

Literature analysis showed that around 40% of studies are theoretical. Here, the authors propose new frameworks, models for the study of social innovation. Three of these studies present some cases to illustrate the application of the proposed solution (e.g. Heinze and Naegele 2012). Most studies are qualitative, descriptive, focus on a single case (e.g., Agostini et al. 2019) or compare multiple cases (e.g., Pradel-Miquel 2017). In these

studies, several data collection techniques are used, combining them, with an emphasis on in-depth interviews and examination of secondary data (reports, websites, databases, archives).

Studies cover a wide range of social innovations in different contexts, both in developed countries (e.g. Heinze and Naegel 2012, Soma et al. 2018) and developing countries (e.g. Kapoor 2019, Prasad and Manimala 2018). We can also find researchers of rural (e.g., Agostini et al. 2019, Antonaras and Kostopoulos 2017, Kapoor 2019) and urban contexts (e.g., Pradel-Miquel 2017).

In the sample I examined, only two studies mention that social change is the result of social innovation. Both studies focus on social entrepreneurship processes: Perrini et al. (2010: 529) highlight "social value creation and achieving lasting social change"; In the opinion of Ziegler (2010: 256), social entrepreneurs are "agents of social change."

This suggests the need to move beyond the "social innovation issues of economic development" approach and encourage researchers publishing in economic journals to examine more closely the relationship between technological and social innovation. Economists can thus contribute valuable results to the concept of social innovation and its effects.

T1: Social innovation plays an important role in promoting economic development and prosperity. My research proves that, despite this, the importance of social innovation is underrepresented in the economic literature. According to my analyses, this may be due (among other things) to the fact that the topic is less "spectacular". Nowadays, authors dealing with innovation focus their attention on new topics (e.g. artificial intelligence, electronic central bank money, etc.). At the same time, the results of recent years have been that the authors dealing with the topic have identified the fundamental social problems that social innovations can provide solutions to. At the same time, the concept has become widely known in Hungary, thanks to the fact that more and more examples of application possibilities and results are mentioned in the domestic literature.

3.2 Initiating social innovation

H2: The impact of social innovations on a given territorial unit is still modest. However, a distinction needs to be made between top-down and bottom-up innovation.

Disadvantaged rural areas (lack of jobs, capital, infrastructure, etc.) face specific, complex challenges that social innovation can help solve. These challenges differ in geography as well as social and economic conditions (Benedict, 2020; Kocziszky – Szendi, 2021).

Bottom-up innovations are important factors for improving social conditions (e.g. income, employment, inclusion/acceptance). Gupta (2014) identifies three different forms of bottom-up innovation. The first group includes initiatives of local people when they do not use the help of formal sectoral institutions. The second category includes all innovations designed to meet the needs of people living at the bottom of the economic pyramid. The third category includes innovations developed jointly by NGOs or NGOs, individuals and independent experts or companies working with local residents. They implement innovation that is "socially inclusive for local communities in terms of knowledge, processes, and outcomes" (Smith et al., 2013, p. 114).

The majority of respondents to my questionnaire survey believe that both bottom-up and top-down processes can be successful, while a fifth of respondents clearly preferred bottom-up social innovation (Figure 6.).

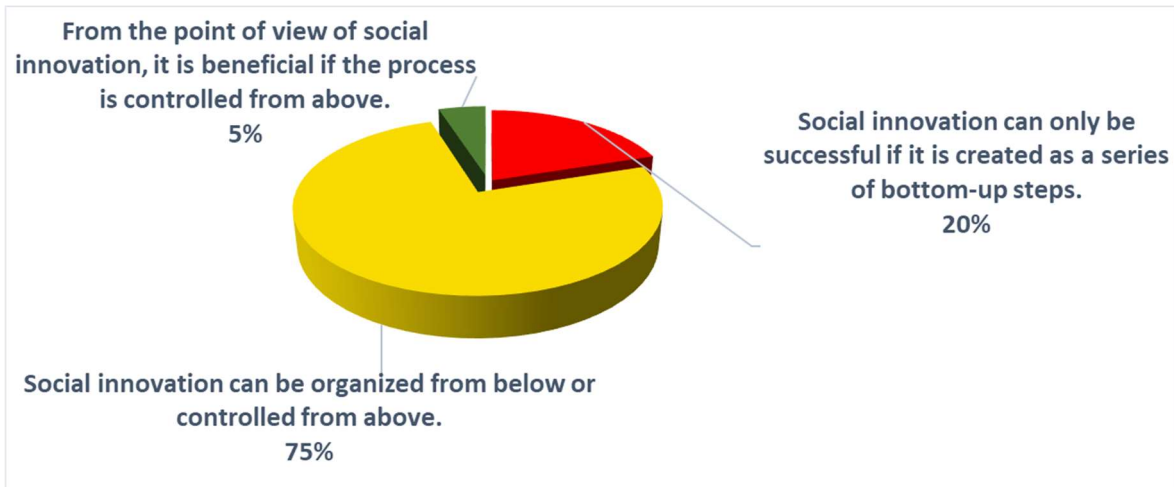


Figure 6. Social innovation initiatives considered effective

Source: own editing

Among the characteristics of respondents and their organisations, there was a significant difference in the distribution of opinions on the relationship between sustainability and social innovation according to the classification of the organisation and the type of settlement where it is located. Based on the results, they are somewhat polarized in the settlement hierarchy from the capital to the commune. Among non-Budapest organisations, the proportion of respondents who believe that only bottom-up social innovation can be successful is significantly higher, while respondents representing organisations operating in smaller towns or villages believe that top-down social innovation can be successful (Table 3. Considered advantageous 3.).

Table 3. Considered advantageous initiative the surveyed organization by headquarters

What way of organizing is beneficial for social innovation?	Town classification				Average
	Budapest	City with county rights	Other city	Municipality	
Social innovation can only succeed if it is created as a series of grassroots steps.	11%	24%	22%	23%	20%
Social innovation can be bottom-up or top-down.	86%	72%	72%	67%	75%
Social innovation benefits from being a top-down, controlled process.	4%	4%	6%	10%	5%
Altogether	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: own editing

According to the respondents, the role of the state in relation to direct financial support is the most important, least of all the strengthening of local independence, self-organization and autonomy. On the other hand, the role of municipalities is considered to be the most

important in the latter area and the role they attach to them in cooperation and facilitation of activities, while the least important area for them is support through indirect regulators. However, in terms of opinions as a whole, both actors are, on average, more or more important in different activities, i.e. respondents expect significant administrative involvement from both central government and local and county governments in all these aspects.

T2: The goal of social innovation is complex, holistic. My research shows that it is worth distinguishing between bottom-up and top-down processes. The former is more owned by those affected and considers that it has a greater impact on employment, supply and demand developments, the world of work (e.g. income, tax, health, psychological, etc.), the environment and the private sector (e.g. suppliers, temporary work, etc.). In contrast, they expect greater support from top-down innovation.

3.3 The importance of social innovation in resource-deficient settlements

H3: Settlements and regions lacking resources tend to be multiply disadvantaged, therefore social innovation is of particular importance in their case.

The territorial and legal status characteristics of the organisations implementing social innovation included in my study were as follows:

- (1) *Territorial distribution:* based on the location of the organisations, the distribution of regions is as follows: Dél-Alföld (32%), Dél-Dunántúl (4%), Észak-Alföld (4%), Észak-Magyarország (52%), Közép-Dunántúl (0%), Közép-Magyarország (8%), Nyugat-Dunántúl (0%) (Figure 18).
- (2) *Distribution by legal form:* 16% of the sampled organisations were associations, 28% were social cooperatives, 16% were non-profit ltd. 20% foundations, 16% were other non-profit organisations, and another 4% represented other categories. Based on this, the sample is well represented by associations, other non-profit organizations and non-profit ltd., social cooperatives are overrepresented by 12 percent.

Table 4. Main characteristics of the examined settlements

Name of town	Type of settlement	Number of inhabitants on 01/01/2021 (persons)	Unemployment rate 05/2022 (%)	Proportion of graduates 2019 (%)	Age 65 or over 2019 (%)
Abaújszántó	small town	2841	10,76	7,25	16,61
Abod	municipality	156	10,78	4,49	37,82
Békésszentandrás	municipality	3403	2,67	11,34	21,86
Békésszentandrás - Furugy	**	32	**	6,25	68,75
Boldva	municipality	2248	10,37	6,09	12,14
Budapest	capital	1723836	1,49	27,13	0,00
Edelény	small town	9209	8,37	10,01	18,40
Hernádszentandrás	municipality	445	16,73	2,47	15,06
Heves	small town	9999	10,25	10,06	18,70
Kecskemét	town*	109651	2,93	17,91	15,31
Mályi	municipality	4157	4,68	17,20	12,70
Miskolc	town*	150695	4,55	20,13	19,85
Nagykanizsa	midtown*	45428	4,41	14,37	18,38
Nagykőrös	midtown	23424	4,23	9,75	17,61

Öcsöd	municipality	3024	4,43	4,56	23,05
Szarvas	small town	15248	2,92	15,60	21,93
Szolnok	midtown*	69725	4,09	20,48	18,00
National average			3,69		

Source: own editing based on NSF and HCSO

* city with county rights

** homestead settlement without independent self-government

Reasons for founding the organizations under investigation

Among the reasons for founding organisations implementing social innovation, respondents most often mentioned the realisation of some kind of community goal (94%). In addition, the involvement of stakeholders (85%), solving social problems (83%), supporting the common good (81%) and promoting sustainable development (80%) were among the goals. 20% of social innovations involve several settlements or micro-regions, while nearly 18% have a national scope. Based on the scope of social innovation, the majority are at county or regional level, less than 10 percent have an international scope.

The majority of organisations (62%) have a single owner and it is a domestic legal or private entity, 17% have two owners and only 1% have more than two. 70% of organisations with two owners are owned by domestic individuals and local governments, 15% by domestic legal entities and domestic legal entities, and 10% by domestic legal entities and local governments. In organizations with more than two owners, domestic individuals, companies with domestic legal personality and the municipality are the owners.

Employment practice

A significant majority of female employees are present in the organizations surveyed (63%). In terms of age group, most employed people (60%) are aged 25-49, nearly a quarter are aged 50-64, 10% are aged 16-24, and only 3% are over 65.

Most work full-time (69%). The share of part-time employees is only 20%, although even this is above the national average. The vast majority of employees (65%) are employed. The frequency of all atypical forms of employment (agency contracts, public works, voluntary work, simplified employment, member employment relationships) is below 10%.

The majority of organisations (86%) employ people with full capacity. 46 % employ workers disadvantaged in the labour market (Figure 7.).

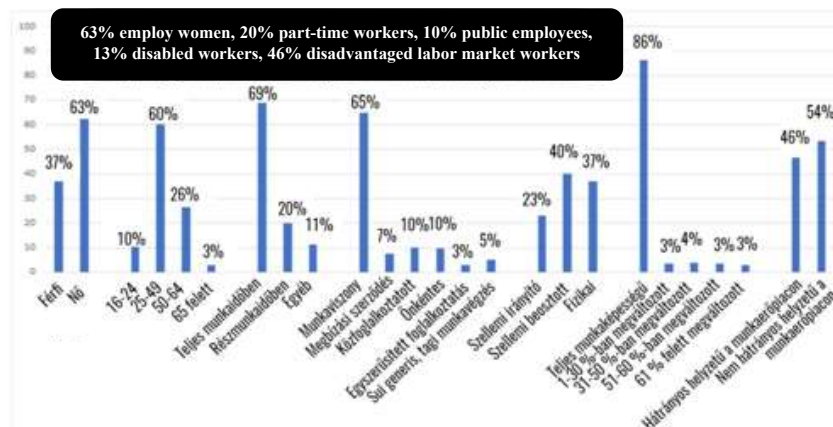


Figure 7. Employment practices of social innovation organisations

Source: own editing

Revenue development

In the case of the audited entities, income from core and public benefit activities was decisive (29% up to 58%). The exception to this is Dél-Alföld, where central state support was the decisive source of income in 2021, the income of basic and public benefit activities is only 18% was. The proportion of central state support in the Dél-Alföld 47%, while the lowest proportion was found in the Észak-Alföld (8%). Rate of grant 12% (Dél-Alföld) and 23% (Észak-Magyarország). The level of municipal support was lowest in Dél-Dunántúl (1%), while the highest is in Közép-Magyarország (11%). Business revenue was only 2% in Észak-Alföld and reached 5% in Dél-Alföld and the highest was in Közép-Magyarország (15%). The membership fee income is 0% and 12%, domestic private aid between 0 and 9% of the population. The regional composition of revenue is determined by Figure 8. shows. The combined income of basic and public benefit activities and business activities in the case of Dél-Alföld 21% and Észak-Magyarország 43%.

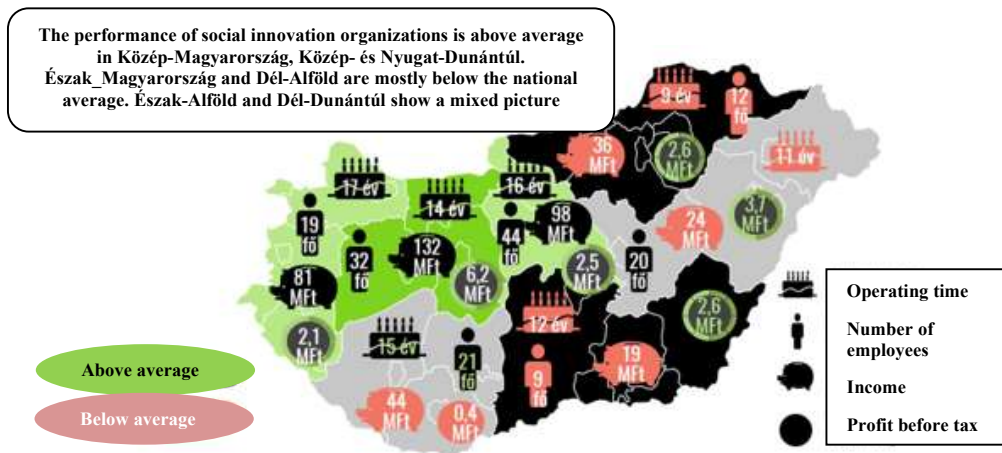


Figure 8. Revenue composition of social innovation organisations by region

Source: own editing

a) Action areas for social innovations

In the opinion of respondents, during surveys related to the social innovation project, understanding the phenomenon and identifying the underlying causes play an important role, while the least important role is played by the divergent research infrastructure and service mapping. The importance of each area varies according to the area to which the respondent's activity is linked. Those related to local development, governance and the public sector consider most topics less important, while those related to social well-being and human systems consider most topics to be more important than all respondents, regardless of their affiliation.

My research shows that the previous territorial effects of social innovation can be demonstrated, albeit to varying degrees, in the examined settlements (Figure 9.).

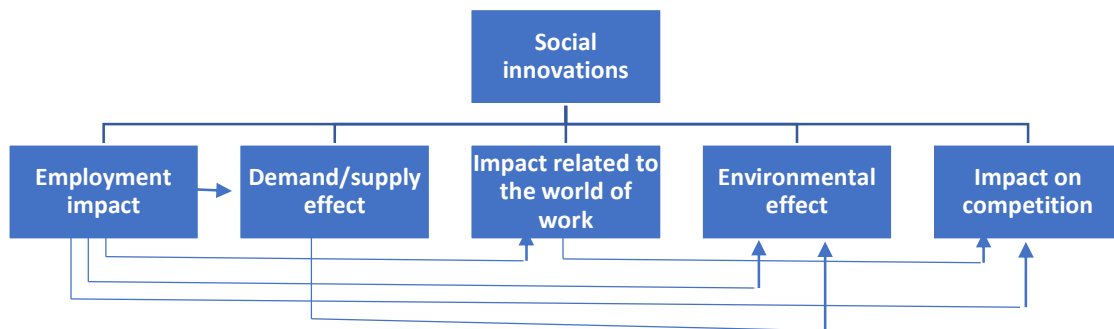


Figure 9. Potential territorial impacts of social innovation

Source: own editing

T3: My research shows that the target area of social innovation is complex. The organizations studied strive to stand on several legs. Their activities are primarily related to the improvement of employment, supply and demand relations, their impact on the world of work (e.g. income, tax, health, psychic, etc.), their environment and the private sector (e.g. suppliers, temporary work, etc.). Urban projects aimed at implementing social innovation are primarily aimed at exploring and analysing the state of fact. In contrast, for people living in rural areas, priority is given to the rapid implementation of projects. The structure of the revenue of organizations shows regional differences: those operating in settlements in Eastern Hungary have greater exposure to state resources.

3.4 Sustainability of audited entities

H4: Social innovations or organisations that are essentially bottom-up initiatives have a longer lifespan because local forces are more motivated and engaged.

Organizations classified in other categories (26 years) have the longest history, but associations (20 years) and foundations (16 years) are also above average. The youngest are social cooperatives (7 years) with a low employability (5 people). The largest employers are foundations (27 people), but this is also significant for non-profit organizations (25 people). Social cooperatives had the lowest average annual income and profit before tax in 2021 (HUF 10 million and HUF 0.4 million, respectively), and the highest in other categories (HUF 133 million and HUF 4.8 million, respectively).

Based on the above criteria, foundations have parameters above average in all respects, social cooperatives - below average. Non-profit LTDs and other categories are above average except for one aspect, while associations have been operating for a long time, but their performance is below average based on other criteria (Figure 10.).

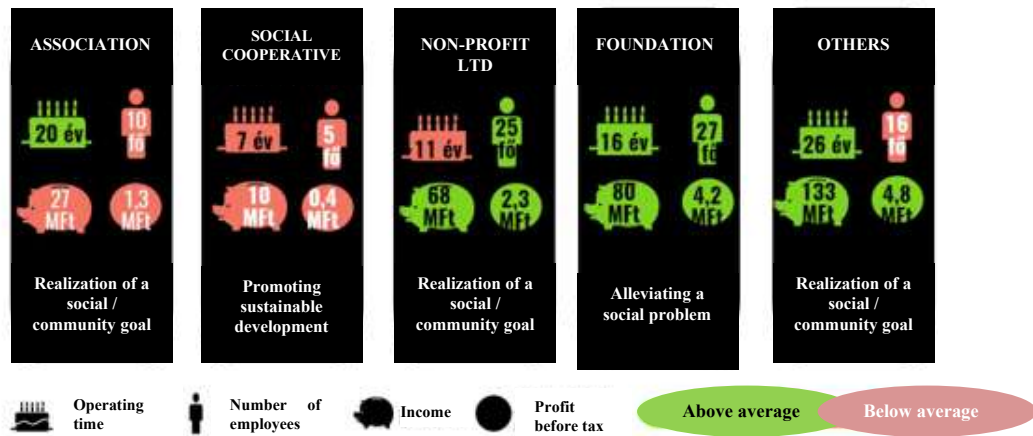


Figure 10. Organisational specificities of the social innovators under consideration

Source: own editing

According to the respondents, expertise is the most important success factor, which was considered important by 53% (Figure 11.). High-quality products/services (45%) rank second, followed by identification of existing social needs (42%), access to financial resources (35%), strategic thinking and long-term planning (33%). Operational experience (32%), good relationships (30%), personal sensitivity and commitment of management (29%) and knowledge of local conditions (28%) are important factors.

During the interviews, it became clear that sustainability requires an entrepreneurial mindset, as well as knowledge and skills of this kind. It is also essential to strike a balance between social and business objectives. Successful developments are supported by innovation. Despite this, less than a quarter (24%) of organisations surveyed said entrepreneurship knowledge and skills were important and just over a tenth (13%) said business income was important.

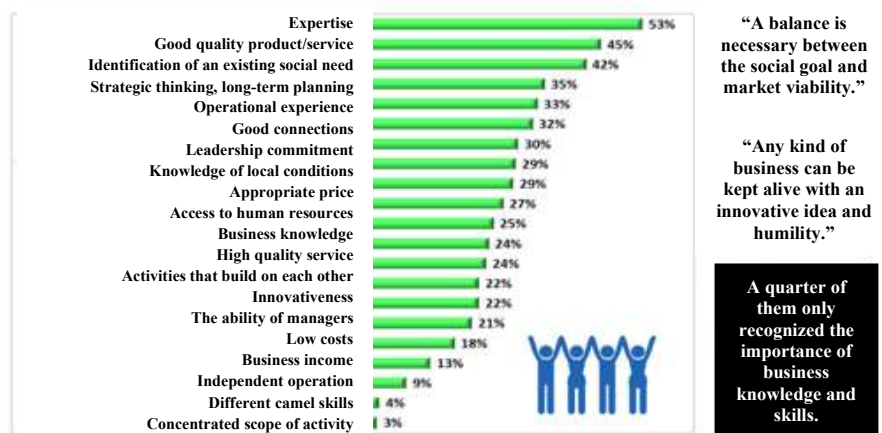


Figure 11. Success factors of organisations implementing social innovation

Source: own editing

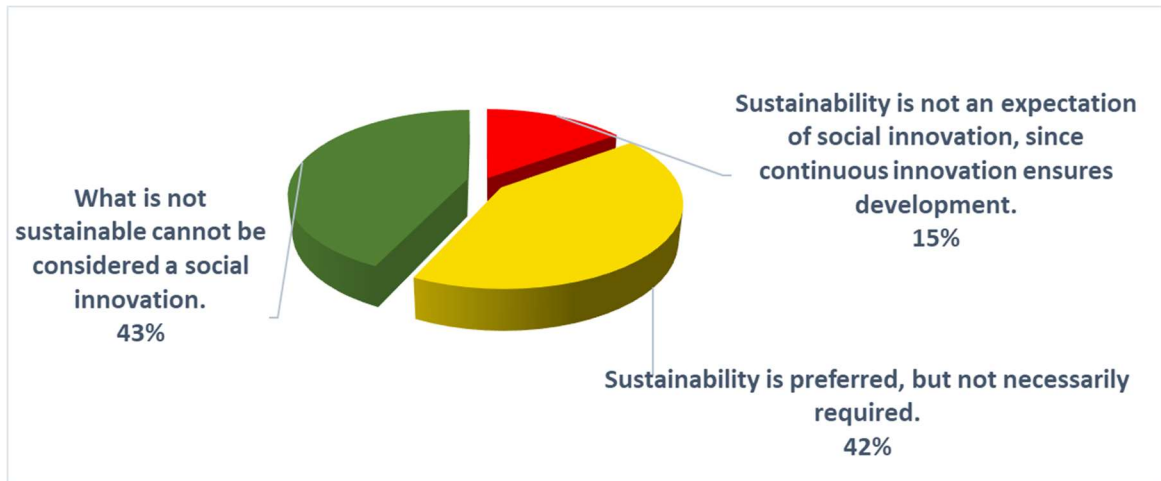


Figure 12. The relationship between social innovation and sustainability

Source: own editing

Respondents were not united on the relationship between sustainability and social innovation. While the relative majority of respondents consider sustainability essential for social innovation, the absolute majority of respondents believe that ensuring sustainability is not necessarily or not at all expected.

Conditions for successful social innovation and their availability

According to the respondents, all conditions are more or completely important for the successful implementation of the innovation process, but they no longer feel completely sure of their availability, on average they consider almost all the listed factors to be more achievable. The smallest differences between importance and accessibility were obtained in connection with the establishment and operation of the communication platform serving the project and the involvement of the relevant NGOs, as in addition to the importance of these conditions, their accessibility was also highly rated by the respondents. For the other factors, there are significant differences in perception of importance and availability: they typically consider these aspects important, but no longer see their availability as sufficiently assured (Figure 13. Conditions for successful social innovation and their availability 13.).

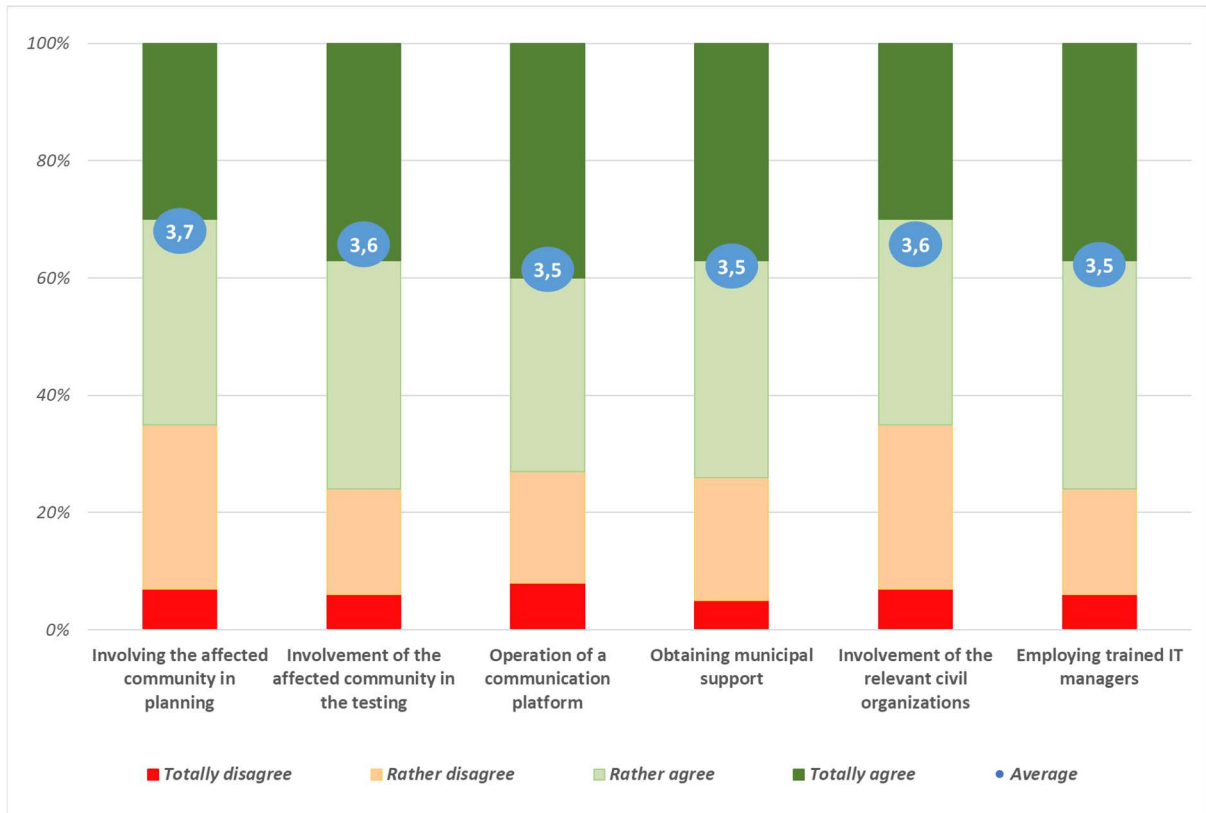


Figure 13. Conditions for successful social innovation and their availability

Source: own editing

The results of the survey confirmed the assumption of my hypothesis T4, so I could formulate my next thesis.

T4: My research shows that organisations implementing bottom-up social innovation initiatives have a longer lifespan. On the one hand, endogenous factors (expertise, precise identification of existing social needs, high-quality service) are necessarily the success factors of sustainable social innovations due to the low degree of influence on external conditions. On the other hand, owners of an innovative idea consider the implementation and maintenance of their ideas a matter of prestige.

3.5 The impact of network embeddedness of social innovation organisations on sustainability

H5: Network embeddedness and network competences play a decisive role in the sustainability of enterprises applying the results of social innovations. It is also relevant for sustainability: expertise, entrepreneurship, etc.

The modal majority of respondents know few social innovation projects other than their own, only 1-3, and a fifth do not know any (Figure 14.). The proportion of people gaining personal experience and experience of social innovation is also low.

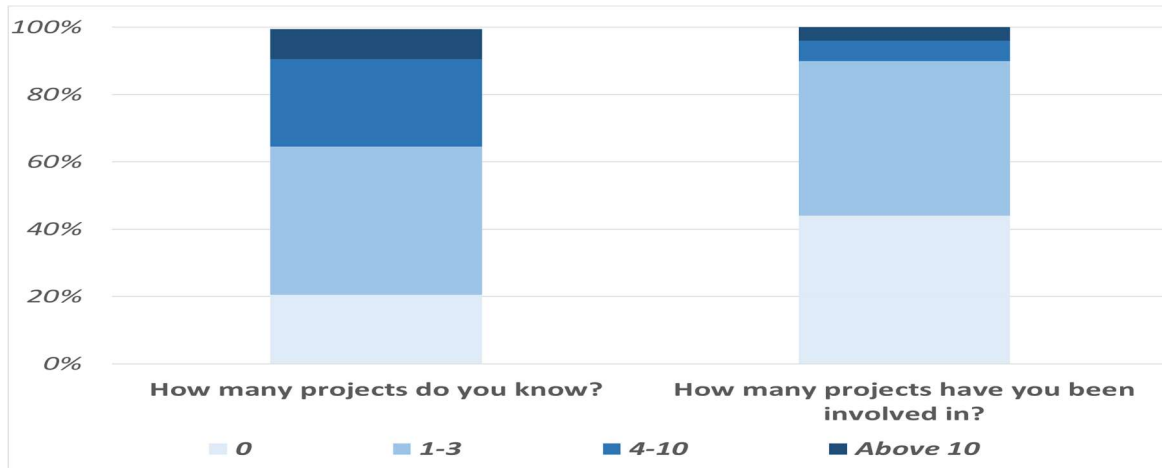


Figure 14. Knowledge of and participation in social innovation projects

Source: own editing

Almost half of respondents had not previously participated in a social innovation project and a further 41% He gained experience in only 1-3 projects of this kind. Only one-tenth of respondents participated in four or more projects. The involvement in the social innovation project was hardly related to the characteristics of the respondents or the organisations they represented. The only significant differences were between the respondent's education and the classification of the organisation surveyed (Table 5. Knowledge of social innovation projects and participation according to the level of education of the respondent 5.).

Table 5. Knowledge of social innovation projects and participation according to the level of education of the respondent

.db	How many projects do you know?			How many projects have you been involved in?		
	Respondent's qualifications			Respondent's qualifications		
	Up to secondary	Higher education (university, college)	Academic degree	Up to secondary	Higher education (university, college)	Academic degree
0	27%	19%	16%	62%	49%	36%
1-3	57%	47%	46%	38%	41%	44%
4-10	16%	23%	18%	0	6%	10%
Over 10	0%	10%	20%	0	3%	10%
Altogether	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: own editing

With high qualifications, there is a clear increase in the number of well-known projects or social innovation projects in which the respondent participated.

According to respondents, social innovation is mostly related to work, economy and future opportunities, as well as human systems (health, education, employment policy, social

care system), but equally important is attached to social well-being and the natural environment and climate.

The impact of social innovation actors on sustainability

According to the respondents, the most important actors of social innovation are educational and research institutions, followed by NGOs and public administrations (local and county governments and state government bodies) with very little difference. The least important players are companies (both SMEs and large companies). However, in their view, all these actors are, on average, more or more important for social innovation (Figure 15.).

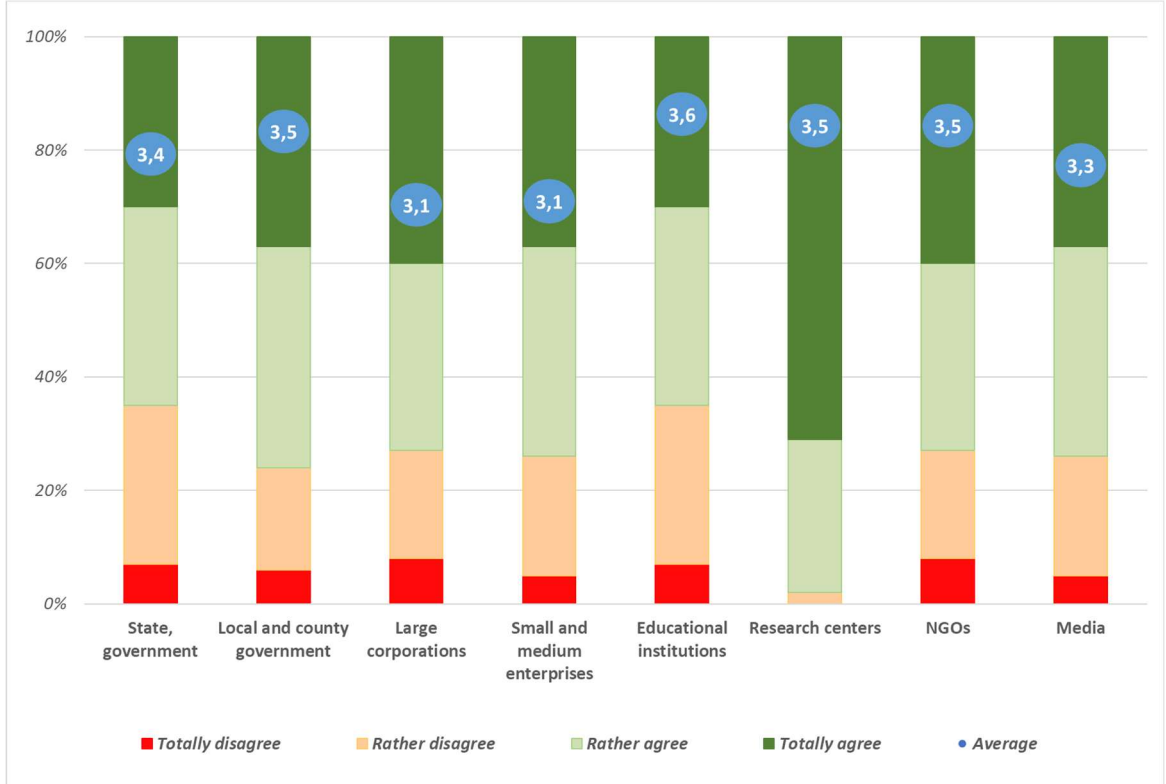


Figure 15. The importance of social innovation actors
Source: own editing

The assessment of the importance of each actor varies according to the area to which the interviewee's activity is linked. On average, those related to climate and natural environment consider NGOs more important, but at the same time they consider large corporations and the state and government less important than representatives of other fields.

The perceived importance of social innovation actors is related to how many social innovation projects respondents are familiar with. Those who do not know any consider the importance of NGOs and small and medium-sized enterprises to be particularly weaker by 0.24 and 0.19 points respectively compared to the average. Those who are familiar with social innovation projects tend to consider the majority of actors more important than those who do not. Especially in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises and large companies, it can be emphasized that those who know 4-10 TI projects consider these actors more important than average in social innovation, those who know more than 10 TI projects consider SMEs and NGOs more important than the average. Even if respondents

participate in more than 10 TI projects, NGOs are also considered more important by 0.22 points compared to the average opinion.

The impact of network connections on sustainability

According to respondents, the role of higher education institutions in launching education and training programmes and carrying out research activities is the most important, while the lowest is considered to be in financing social innovation projects and encouraging local self-organisation. Companies are not given a very important role in almost any of the activities examined, and interestingly, even in financing, the role attributed to companies is not significant (significantly below the expectation of state involvement in this regard) (Figure 16.).

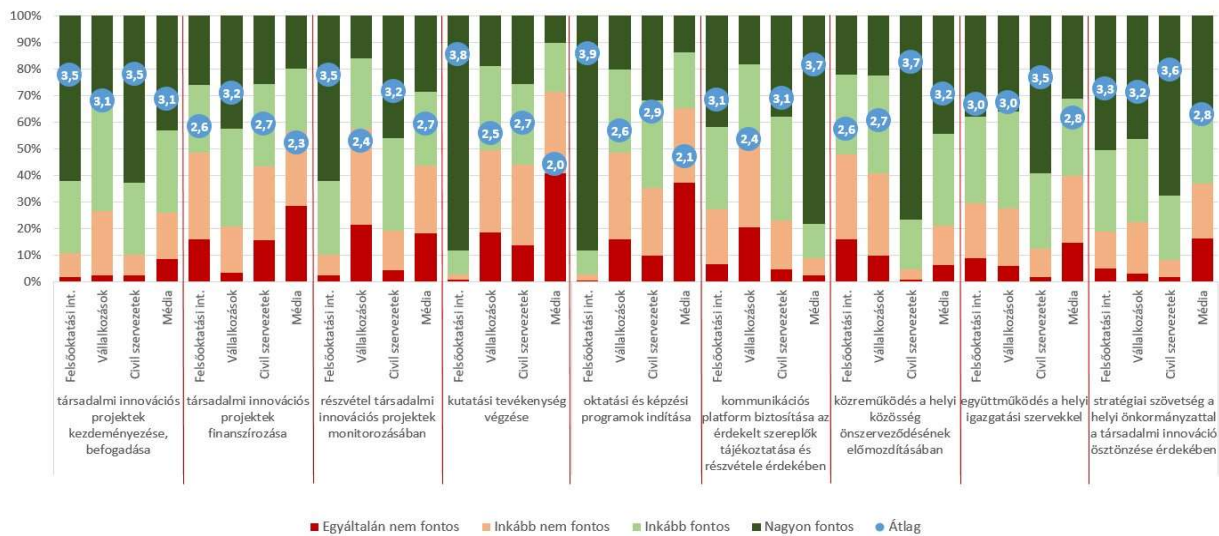


Figure 16. Evaluation of the role of higher education institutions, businesses, NGOs and media in social innovation

Source: own editing

The role of companies is seen as the most important in strategic cooperation with local governments and cooperation with local administrations, and they are considered to play the least role in monitoring social innovation projects. They link the most important role of civil society organisations to encouraging local self-organisation, and consider that they have the least role in financing social innovation projects and carrying out research activities. Respondents see the most important role of the media as providing a communication platform, least in carrying out research activities and launching education and training programmes (Figure 16.).

There are also differences in the average assessment per activity between the importance of the role of social actors. The biggest differences are observed in connection with research activities and the launch of educational and training programmes, however, in both areas the leading role belongs to higher education institutions, followed by NGOs with significant differences. Interestingly, companies are not attributed such a role by respondents. There are also differences in the monitoring of social innovation projects. Here, too, higher education institutions and civil society organisations play a greater role, while media and businesses play a smaller role. According to respondents, the most important role in providing a communication platform is the media, followed by higher education institutions and NGOs, and finally businesses in order of priority. Civil society

organisations play the main role in encouraging local communities to organise themselves, followed by the role of the media, businesses and higher education institutions, which has decreased significantly (Figure 16.).

The more social innovation projects respondents are aware of and the more such projects respondents have participated in, the higher their assessment of the role of each actor. Respondents involved in 10 or more projects typically rate the importance of each actor's role in almost all areas of activity examined higher than those who participated in fewer projects or are familiar with fewer TI projects. In particular, the role of CSOs in research and education and training programmes is rated significantly higher than other respondents. In contrast, the role of higher education institutions in initiating and monitoring TI projects and the role of enterprises in carrying out research and communication activities are considered less important than average.

Representatives of NGOs and representatives of public institutions also consider the role of actors in TI projects to be more important than the other two groups (representatives of enterprises and educational-research institutions). An exception is the evaluation of the role of civil society organisations in the case of public sector representatives: their role is significantly lowered than others, even by 5-7 percentage points in various fields of activity. In contrast, representatives of NGOs themselves significantly overvalue the role of their sector compared to representatives of other groups. Such an overvaluation of the role of the private sector is not typical of representatives of other groups, moreover, representatives of educational and research institutions undervalue the role of research and educational institutions in TI projects compared to others, but they also relatively undervalue the role of the media.

The sample of organisations surveyed is heterogeneous: they are of different size and profile in terms of size and activity. Some of them have already proven themselves (e.g. the tender organization of the municipality of Boldva has been active for 33 years), while others have been working for just over a year (Slachta Margit Nemzeti Szociálpolitikai Intézet). Based on the answers to the questionnaire, it can be stated that organizations in Eastern Hungary basically rely on tender resources. There are also others (e.g. Furugyi Szociális Szövetkezet és Szarvasi Iparosok Szociális Szövetkezet) that can be considered dormant organizations.

The Table 6. Main parameters characterising the organisations consulted 6. I summarised the different characteristics of the sampled organisations.

Table 6. Main parameters characterising the organisations consulted

	Organization name	Duration of operation (years)	Average net sales revenue of last 5 years of operation (million HUF)	Average grant income of last 5 years of operation (million HUF)	Average number of employees in last 5 years of operation (persons)	Average number of partners in last 5 years of operation (pcs)	Complexity of professional knowledge required for operation (from 0 to 10)
1.	Aba-Novák Agóra Kulturális Központ	14	76	19	47	8	5
2.	Abaújrakezdés Közhasznú Egyesület	15	2	142	8	16	8
3.	Baráthegyi Majorság	10	3	11	4	12	9

	Alapítvány						
4.	Boldva Községi Önkormányzat	33	520	32	120	30	7
5.	Borsod-Torna-Gömör Egyesület	14	0	40	5	9	7
6.	Eötvös József Református Oktatási Központ	10	793	200	105	28	7
7.	Fiatalok Fiatalokért Egyesület	18	4	6	2	11	8
8.	Furugyi Szociális Szövetkezet.	10	0	0	0	5	5
9.	Hírös Agóra Kulturális és Ifjúsági Központ Nonprofit Kft.	13	222	0	59	17	8
10.	Kacsacsőrű Művészeti Nonprofit Kft.	13	4	2	1	22	9
11.	Kelet-Magyarországi Munkaerőszolgáltató Szociális Szövetkezet	8	1199	40	9	48	6
12.	Közép-Borsodi Területfejlesztési Szolgáltató Nonprofit Kft.	7	59	14	14	61	8
13.	Nagykanizsa Központi Óvoda	18	188	8	34	25	7
14.	Nagykőrösi Arany János Kulturális Központ	14	36	2	21	34	5
15.	Öcsödi Primer Kereskedelmi és Szolgáltató Szociális Szövetkezet	8	8	20	2	9	7
16.	Önálló Másság Életminőség Fejlesztő Alapítvány	16	7	35	41	16	9
17.	Pro-Cserehát Egyesület	14	2	8	2	18	8
18.	Régió Fejlesztéséért Alapítvány	15	5	150	9	26	8
19.	Regionális Civil Központ Alapítvány	23	6	400	12	50	9
20.	Slachta Margit Nemzeti Szociálpolitikai Intézet	1	1063	85	481	148	7
21.	Szarvasi Esély Gazdasági és Szolgáltató Szociális Szövetkezet.	6	0	0	0	6	6
22.	Szarvasi Iparosok Szociális Szövetkezet	4	0	0	0	9	7
23.	Szent András Szociális Szövetkezet.	7	1	20	3	7	6
24.	Szimbiózis Alapítvány	23	58	45	216	35	9
25.	Szociálisügyi és Egészségipari Szociális Szövetkezet	6	0	0	1	6	9
	Minimum value:	1	0	0	0	5	5
	Maximum value:	33	1199	400	481	148	9

Source: own editing

For comparability of parameters, min-max normalization was performed. The normalized characteristics of the sampled entities are defined in Figure 17. displays.

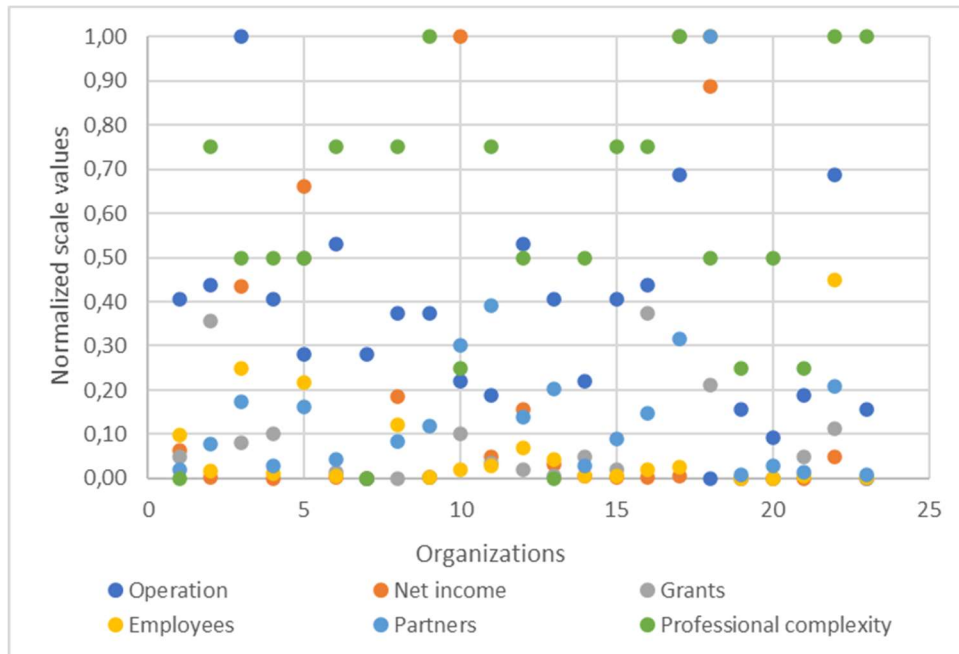


Figure 17. Features of sustainability of organizations implementing social innovation

Source: own editing

It can be concluded that values between 0 and 0.2 do not sustain the social innovation achieved, while values between 0.2 and 0.4 create sustainable social innovation. With values between 0.4 and 1, the social innovation of the given organization can be maintained in the long run.

Based on the research results, I formulate the following thesis:

T5: The success and sustainability of social innovations is fundamentally determined by the network embeddedness of the implementing organization and its members. The organizations examined consider strategic cooperation with local governments and administrative bodies to be the most important. In contrast to foreign trends and positive experiences, companies and international relations do not attach an important role.

4. FURTHER DIRECTIONS OF RESEARCH

My research clearly shows that:

1. Social innovations respond well to different community needs and promote community inclusion and engagement.
2. Some of the cases studied combine the logic of top-down and bottom-up construction. In rural areas, the bottom-up process is better suited to the specifics of the area, the identification of problems. The financing of projects implemented and run by local development associations demonstrates the combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches in delivering, scaling up and disseminating social innovation.

The relative completion of my research does not mean the end of my interest in this topic. I intend to use my experience and results gained during my work primarily in my educational activities. I intend to transform these into a curriculum in the upcoming social innovator training course when compiling the course titled Theory of Social Innovation. Case reports are an important part of this work, which I intend to expand into case studies. The 25 presented organizations/social innovations encompass all theoretical cases and are therefore a good basis for compiling a collection of case studies. I will be able to use these cases in my innovation courses currently taught in bachelor's and master's programmes to bring social innovation and social responsibility issues closer to life for students.

I believe that my practical experience gained during educational-research and the implementation of several catch-up projects could also be used in consultancy activities related to social innovation. In preparation for the realization of my plans, I also completed the social innovation manager training at the University of Miskolc in 2021. My theoretical knowledge and practical experience can help regulate the operation of organizations implementing social innovation; They allow me to formulate well-founded recommendations regarding the factors influencing their ability to apply and their lifespan.

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