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## **Social Responsibility of Organizations Directions of Changes**

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## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION UPON THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

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**Summary:** The paper presents the role and influence of social innovations upon the development of organizations and regions. Although social innovations contribute to economic growth and facilitate progress, they are the sphere where the source of innovation usually goes unnoticed. Social innovations constitute the field which ought to be credited with growth opportunities in numerous domains. Innovative changes pertaining to social matters have become the object of research and academic papers. The authors present a brief characteristic of social innovations, stages of their implementation and examples of social activities which significantly contributed to permanent changes in local societies.

**Keywords:** social innovations, development of organizations, region development.

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*The driving force behind innovation  
is the ability to perceive associations,  
find opportunities and make use of them.*

J. Tidd, J. Bessant, *Innovation Management*

### 1. Introduction

Organizations operating in the modern world and wanting to achieve long-term benefits are faced with ever-greater challenges. As emphasized by M. Żemigala: “The objective of a company’s existence is not only financial gain but also serving the community which demands particular things from it” [Żemigala 2007]. (...) Companies receive a certain mandate of trust from the society, thus must react swiftly to changing requirements and meet growing expectations. (...) “Society expects the company will act in the public interest: creating new jobs, respecting human dignity, providing high quality products and services and becoming involved in education

and research” [Ryan, Gasparski, Enderle, 2000]. It can be stated that society expects even more, i.e. it expects inspiration and cooperation as regards the introduction of significant changes.

The impact of social innovations, i.e. novel solutions applied in order to satisfy unfulfilled needs, can be observed in the immediate and distant surroundings. They can be noticed in public institutions, such as hospitals or nursery schools, non-profit organizations, businesses and even in daily life. Therefore, it can be said that the impact of social innovations can be seen everywhere around us. Social innovations can be treated like any new truth as understood by Schopenhauer: at first it is ridiculed, then violent counteractions are taken against it and at the end it is embraced as evident.

The paper aims at analyzing the phenomenon of social innovations, identification of their main features and levels of their implementation, as well as indication of the role they play in the development of regions and organizations.

The authors of the paper strive to find answers to the question of how to stimulate and implement social innovations so that they allow regions and organizations to undertake innovative actions and become more competitive. In order to find these answers case research was implemented and various examples provided: beginning with organizational behavior, environment protection, through ICT development and activities connected with culture. By presenting the selected cases, the authors aimed at indicating that actions connected with innovation carried out in the realm of social matters, both internally and externally, translate into lasting changes, which in turn influence the development of regions and organizations.

Social innovations are often understood as a result of the work of the brave and the uncommon, such as Robert Owen, the author of a unique welfare program, or Mahomet Yunus, the author of micro-credits concept [Mulgan et. al. 2005], sometimes occurring as a result of a greater movement or change, another time as a result of market dynamics and organizational incentives.

Economists estimate that approximately 50–80% of economic growth originates from innovation and new knowledge. Although there are no reliable indicators, innovation seems to play a decisive role in social life also by generating progress. Achievements in health care and development of novel technologies which foster the development of new solutions, e.g. electric car and development of the Internet, depend on social innovations in the same way as they depend on organizational and technological innovations. At present, it can be stated that social innovations are becoming more and more significant for economic growth [Mulgan et al. 2005]. This is partly due to the fact that some of the economic growth barriers such as climatic changes or aging of societies, may be overcome only by implementation of social innovations, which reinforce human relations and well-being instead of straining these. The key sectors of economic growth in 21st century are: health, education and social welfare, as these amount to approximately 20–30% of GDP in the majority of countries. Therefore, ignoring or disregarding these while implementing changes may bring about numerous negative consequences.

## 2. The profile of social innovations

The literature of the subject features several definitions of the term “social innovations.” However, all these have two elements in common. These are:

- objective which holds social change and general well-being in high regard,
- joint participation of several entities which revolves around cooperation of numerous partners.

Theoretical, Empirical and Policy Foundations for Building Social Innovation in Europe defines social innovations as new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes) which satisfy social needs and, at the same time, lead to novel or improved agency of the society and improved utilization of resources [Kroik, Skonieczny 2013].

Other authors indicate that social innovation is innovation in social relation as well as in meeting human need [MacCallum et al. (eds.), 2012].

On the other hand, M. Christiansen indicates that social innovations constitute a subset of disruptive innovations, i.e. those whose main objective is a permanent social change with a significantly greater effect and higher quality of activity [Christensen, Raynor 2003].

The simplest, but failing to render the essence of social innovations fully, definition of the term stipulates that innovation is an idea serving public good [Kaminska]. The public good can possess an internal and an external dimension. The external one can encompass among others:

- eradication of poverty and illnesses,
- development of civil society,
- growth of local businesses,
- struggle for compliance with human rights,
- promotion of health protection and sustainable growth,
- promotion of education,
- professional growth of various social groups.

Intraorganizational social innovations, on the other hand, may pertain to problems such as:

- improvement of work conditions and workplace safety,
- leadership,
- increase of co-determination,
- management of diversity,
- prevention of pathologies in organizational behavior,
- emphasis on ethics.

Social innovations are something more than mere entrepreneurship which takes into account social requirements. As a consequence, the innovation ought to be expressed in [Tidd, Bessant 2011]:

- objectives and motives, especially those which favor intentions and social tasks over individualism and accumulation of wealth;



- time perspective: especially the long-term one where lasting achievements will be visible;
- means to an end: those whose objective is the execution of change in cooperation with partners.

The internal dimension gains in significance, especially in the context of development of organizations. If they want to pursue innovative solutions in social domains, organizations must exhibit two features: improved empathy and the feeling of social justice [Mair, Robinson, Hockets 2006]. Empathy denotes simply the identification with feelings and needs of others, in this case those of employees. Obviously, the above are not the only conditions to be fulfilled. What is equally important is organizational spirit, strategies and methods of human resources management, creativity, embracing new ideas and competencies of management. However, without the two features, introduction of innovative solutions in the social domain of organizations will be hindered or even impossible. Certainly though, a long-term objective is the pursuit of a permanent change. Changes in the social domain of organizations demand coordination and cooperation of several departments and people. They also require an alteration in the way of thinking and acting, reshaping of strategies and business models, systems of communication and internal regulations.

Frequently the advocates of the old world order build barriers for them. Overcoming these barriers depends to some extent on the profitability of novel solutions.

G. Mulgan, S. Tucker, R. Ali, B. Sanders indicate 10 worldwide socially significant innovative changes. The following belong to the group [Mulgan et al. 2005]:

1. Open University and models pertaining to distance learning, which opened education worldwide and intend to promote it further.
2. Fair Trade: pioneered by the UK and USA. The idea is promoted globally.
3. Greenpeace and other environmental movements which operate actively and enable ordinary citizens to become directly involved in social changes.
4. Amnesty International: and struggle for human rights.
5. Oxfam (originally Oxford Committee for Famine Relief) and popularization of humanitarian aid.
6. Linux software and other open sources, e.g. Wikipedia, changing many areas.
7. Participatory budgeting originally implemented by Porto Alegre and currently followed by numerous cities in the world.

### **3. Social innovations – stages of development**

The implementation of social innovations encompasses a series of processes. These can run in six stages which do not necessarily follow one another in a sequence and feedback between these is not always present. However, these stages are extremely

useful when designing and introducing changes. The stages allow for a careful consideration of solutions and gaining support and assistance crucial in the process of their implementation [Mulgan, et al. 2005].

Stage 1. Inspiration: a stage at which the need for the introduction of change and novel solutions becomes apparent. A diagnosis of the issue and search for sources of inspiration occurs.

Stage 2. Ideas: search for particular solutions among available sources.

Stage 3. Prototypes: testing stage i.e. testing the feasibility of ideas.

Stage 4. Sustainance: ideas become daily practice. Introduced solutions are verified and improved. As regards businesses, this stage entails the provision of suitable conditions and people in order to ensure continuity.

Stage 5. Calibration and dissemination: infiltration to several interest groups.

Stage 6. System change: the ultimate objective of social innovations i.e. the introduction of a permanent change in thinking and behavior.

Entities introduce innovative changes for numerous reasons, the most important of which is the desire to develop an efficient and effective organization capable of competing with other entities, which in the end will translate into profit. However, it is noteworthy that even though social innovations do not generate direct profits, they are useful. E. Pol and S. Ville [Pol, Vill 2009] indicate that an inaccurate differentiation between social and economic innovations was included in an OECD report. According to the two authors, the differentiation is not appropriate because what characterizes social innovations is the fact that the idea which is the essence of innovation exerts qualitative and quantitative influence upon the life of a particular group of people.

#### **4. Barriers and difficulties in social innovations implementation**

The introduction of social innovations is met with resistance. Several main barriers hindering the implementation can be enumerated. The first group of barriers is connected directly with people and it encompasses features such as lack of flexibility, imagination and knowledge.

The second group encompasses the following elements:

- efficiency: people often resist even the most attractive reforms because they can lead to a swift reduction in efficiency. This is due to the fact that in any social arrangement, various elements have been optimized around one another over a long period of time and the system works correctly. Any change can distort the equilibrium.
- apprehension as regards human interest: in every organized social system, numerous individuals possess the feeling of stability. The change entails a risk of disrupting the *status quo* and loss of gained profits.
- productivity: sooner or later all systems become less optimized, they lose their effectiveness and a crisis can be felt on several levels. In businesses it can

translate into e.g. loss of profitability and on a national level it can take the form of a fiscal or legal crisis and for millions of citizens may cause stress brought about by fear or anxiety [Mulgan et al. 2005].

## 5. Examples of social innovations influencing organizations and regions

Several examples of social changes which influenced the success of enterprises are known. The first of these can be the idea of *carrotmob* also known as *BUYcott* (as opposed to the term boycott) applied by clients of companies which meet their requirements. The idea has become popular in recent years. The objective of *BUYcott* is the support of local service providers and assistance in introducing changes enabling providers to become recognized for their environment friendliness. A further example of the trend pertains to the citizens of Freiburg, Germany who wanted local businesses to reduce their contribution to climatic changes. A contest was organized asking local restaurants about the share of their day's takings they would be willing to appropriate for eco-investments. Among applicants, as many as three declared their willingness to apportion all of the takings for the particular cause. After the results had been published, a citywide campaign was launched encouraging citizens to visit the winner on a particular day. On the set date, the bar was visited by more than 300 customers who spent almost EUR 1600. The next step of the campaign involved energy audit of the bar's premises to identify the necessary investments and plan their implementation. Owing to the investment co-financed by the customers, the bar's owners will save approximately EUR 800 per year on electricity bills emitting 3.3 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> less and saving 9 thousand litres of drinking water.

Another example can be seen in Tesco, which implements the "Twister" program. In the framework of the program, Tesco's presidents and top management work on the floor for one day in a year. The objective of the program is to allow the management to test work conditions and analyze problems and difficulties occurring at particular workplaces.

### "The Zielawa Valley"

An example of social innovations influencing a region can be seen in a unique partnership project implemented in Lublin Voivodeship for joint development of the Zielawa Valley. In 2007, self-governments of five communes: Wisznice, Sosnówka, Jabłoń, Rossosz and Podedwórze (located by the Zielawa River) decided to become partners. The main objective of the partnership was to obtain EU grants for the development of the partner communes. The following projects were implemented in the framework of the partnership:

1. "Clean Energy in the Zielawa Valley": the project encompassed the installation of 925 solar installations used by 4000 home residents and 2200 citizens in public institutions.

2. Collective purchase of electric energy for the partner communes, including the city of Parczew, to make use of public procurement and lower the price owing to the group purchase.

3. “The development of 1.4 MW photovoltaic farm in the Zielawa Valley”: the objective of the project is the provision of energy security for the partnership region.

4. “The development of local roads in the tourist region of the Zielawa Valley”: as a result of the project, 20 road sections encompassing 18 km in total were created.

5. “A comprehensive system of nursery school education for northern Lublin region communes”: the project scheduled the development of new nursery school playgroups, assistance of a psychologist and speech therapist and a series of workshops aiming at the improvement of parents’ educational and upbringing skills. As a result of the project, 16 new playgroups were created, which provided care for 380 children.

## **6. Promotion of culture and tourism in the partnership region and the development of “The Zielawa Valley” brand.**

Five information points and an internet portal containing information on tourist attractions in the partnership region, events, cycle routes and investment opportunities were created in the framework of the project. Partner communes are renowned for growing herbs e.g. chamomile, pepper mint, dandelions, St. John’s wort. The results of herb-growing practice was the establishment of “The Land of Herbs” brand and promotion of the region as such. An example of the promotion is periodic organization of “The Festival of Herbs” event during which local herbalists present the properties of plants and exhibit their culinary skills.

### **“The Gateway to Lublin Region”**

The next activity carried out in Lublin Voivodeship involving social innovations is the widely understood computerization of the region. In the framework of the activity, individual projects are implemented, e.g. “The gateway to Lublin region computerization of administration” and “Lublin Virtual Library.” The first project encompasses the improvement of the quality of public administration services by means of IT tools (development of e-administration), development of the regional e-services platform and development of local structures of information society. In order to meet objectives of the project, modernization and expansion of the existing network infrastructure was decided upon. In addition, the purchase, installation and configuration of required devices (servers, computer hardware, peripheral devices, data processing centres) along with suitable software were scheduled. As a result of these activities, both administration and residents of the region gained benefits (see Table 1).

It is noteworthy that in order to ensure the development of information society of the region, 175 public access Internet hotspots were established. This fact significantly contributed to the increase in the number of residents using the Internet [[www.wrotalubelszczyzny.eu](http://www.wrotalubelszczyzny.eu)].

**Table 1.** Benefits of “The Gateway to Lublin Region” project

Main benefits of the project for:	
administration	residents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement of information flow between individual public institutions</li> <li>• Simplification of procedures</li> <li>• Joint databases (reduction of archived data)</li> <li>• Reduction in control costs</li> <li>• Increase in services provided online</li> <li>• Reduction in redundancy of tasks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier access to public services (collected in one place)</li> <li>• Shortening of time to handle official matters</li> <li>• Opportunity of handling and monitoring the progress of official matters, making payments from home</li> <li>• No requirement of notifying individual institutions in case of change in personal data</li> </ul>

Source: <http://www.wrotalubelszczyzny.eu> (11.01.2014).

### “Lublin Virtual Library”

Another example of social innovations introduced by means of IT was 2007–2013 “Lublin Virtual Library” project. The project was considered innovative on the national scale [[www.bu.kul.pl/art](http://www.bu.kul.pl/art)]. The project scheduled the cooperation of libraries and cultural institutions in order to enable digital access to their resources. The city of Lublin is the leader of the project. The following institutions are partners: Catholic University of Lublin, Maria Curie Skłodowska University in Lublin, Medical University of Lublin, H. Łopaciński Voivodeship Public Library, H. Łopaciński Lublin Public Library, Brama Grodzka Teatr NN Center, the city of Zamość, Zamość Library. “Lublin Virtual Library” is a platform containing resources of the partners for users to be able to browse through literature, study and information resources. A feature whose significance cannot be disregarded is the fact of creating digital copies of the most valuable works archived in libraries, museums and regional archives [[lbw.lublin.eu/informacje-o-projekcie/opis-projektu](http://lbw.lublin.eu/informacje-o-projekcie/opis-projektu)].

### “Lublin Asbestos” [[www.azbest.lubelskie.pl](http://www.azbest.lubelskie.pl)]

A further example of social innovations implemented with huge success is “The pilot project of asbestos waste management in Lublin Voivodeship.” The project was financed with grants from Swiss-Polish Cooperation Program. The main objective of the project was to improve the life and health conditions of residents and the condition of natural environment of Lublin Voivodeship by implementing the pilot system of asbestos waste management reinforced with monitoring the quantity of waste and its removal and utilization. The project mainly encompasses activities connected with the disassembly, transport and utilization of asbestos waste and information and promotion activities.

Detailed objectives are as follows:

- organization, implementation and successive improvement of asbestos waste management reinforced with the system for monitoring the quantity of waste and controlling its removal and utilization;

- obtaining full control over the flow of asbestos waste from the moment the waste is produced up to the time of its elimination;
- speeding up the process of asbestos waste removal from Lublin Voivodeship;
- eradicating storage of asbestos waste in illegal dump sites;
- involving self-governments of the region in promotion of activities informing about safe methods of asbestos waste elimination;
- raising awareness of residents of the region as regards asbestos' harmfulness;
- developing conditions for the region's growth on the basis of high opportunities sectors (tourism, agricultural products processing, eco-food, technological innovations in construction sector, energy efficiency and renewable energy, medical and telemedical equipment).

The project encompasses the whole Lublin Voivodeship. Care for the rich natural conditions of the voivodeship (22.7% of the area constitutes protected areas) determines the reduction of present threats to the environment. Undoubtedly, using asbestos-containing products and their illegal storage may count among threats not only to the natural environment but also to the health of Lublin region's residents. The voivodeship ranks second in Poland (right after Masovian Voivodeship) as regards the quantity of accumulated asbestos-containing products. When the quantity of asbestos *per capita* is concerned, Lublin Voivodeship ranks first in the country. The quantity of these products is estimated at over 2 million tonnes (in accordance with "2009–2032 National Programme for Asbestos Removal").

The inventory of asbestos-containing products carried out by natural and legal persons for 2009 indicated that approximately 800 thousand tonnes of such products were accumulated in the voivodeship. The discrepancy between estimates and the inventory stems from the fact that a considerable part of such products has not been indicated in the inventory and is utilized against regulations and then accumulated on the premises. Such operation is motivated by high costs of removal, transportation and utilization.

The majority of asbestos-containing products was inventoried on the premises of natural persons (approx. 98%), mostly in rural areas. In addition, the examination of the condition of these products indicated the necessity of their immediate utilization.

Due to the fact that the greatest concentration of asbestos-containing products is observed in rural areas, it is foreseen that inhabitants of these areas will potentially become the main beneficiaries of the assistance offered in the framework of the project.

The project is consistent with the ultimate objectives of Lublin Voivodeship Self-government which outline the region's development strategy. The objectives include the improvement of life and health of the residents, preservation of natural environment (limiting and ultimate elimination of asbestos-containing dust will translate into the improvement of health and environment's conditions) and boosting economic activity (increase of land and real estate value, increase of investments, pro-ecological development of rural areas, development of eco-tourism).

The implementation of the project will translate into the expansion of ecologically clean areas, development of tourist infrastructure, which will lead to the emergence of attractive tourist offer both for tourists from Poland and abroad, including those from Switzerland. The project is also well placed in the broader context of the voivodeship's promotion called "Lublin Ecopolis" which assumes the establishment of an open eco-region focused on the production of local eco-products, ecotourism and development of ecobusinesses. A perfect example of such a region is Switzerland, where high quality products are made in accordance with the highest standards, precision and with natural environment in mind.

## 6. Conclusion

Even though the above-mentioned examples encompass various activities, they clearly indicate the necessity of introducing social innovations in regions and organizations. In addition, innovations contribute to changes in the area they refer to. It can be said that they constitute a test field for evaluating novel solutions. In practice, they bring potential for a better adjustment to the needs of residents, employees or clients of different regions or organizations. As stated by A. Olejniczuk-Merta: "the content behind the term social innovations as well as its function and development reflect the complexity of socio-economic reality surrounding us, its dynamicity and the scope of changes. The content confirms their harmony with characteristics of a given society and economy the society functions in as well. The following characteristics ought to be considered in particular: mobility and activity of the society, its knowledge, level of globalization as regards culture, markets and consumption. (...)" and "(...) social innovations are becoming a requirement for all participants. The task is of particular, long-term importance for producers of goods, service providers and providers of other activities which influence the quality of life. The task is also realized in the conditions of significant competitiveness. Therefore, 'lack of social innovations leads to death.' For numerous social and business entities this may threaten their chances for survival" [Olejniczuk-Merta 2013].

Social innovations have taken a much more significant place in business strategies and regional policies. However, they are not particularly appreciated as a source of innovation, especially among SMEs. This may result from the fact that the majority of businesses focus their attention solely on economic gains disregarding at the same time criteria pertaining to e.g. ethics in business, environmental protection or activities influencing local communities, which all lead to the emergence of "new, innovative" solutions and contribute to the improvement of financial results, competitiveness and customer loyalty.



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## WPLYW INNOWACJI SPOŁECZNYCH NA ROZWÓJ REGIONU I ORGANIZACJI

**Streszczenie:** Artykuł prezentuje wpływ i rolę innowacji społecznych na rozwój organizacji i regionu. Innowacje społeczne są tym obszarem w którym nie dostrzega się źródła innowacyjności, chociaż to one w znacznym stopniu, przyczyniają się do wzrostu gospodarczego i napędzają postęp. To w nich należy upatrywać szanse na rozwój w wielu dziedzinach. Innowacyjne zmiany obejmujące otoczenie społeczne stanowią w ostatnim czasie temat badań i opracowań naukowych. Autorki artykułu przedstawiają krótką ich charakterystykę, etapy wprowadzania oraz przykłady działań o charakterze społecznym, które w istotny sposób przyczyniły się do trwałych zmian w środowiskach lokalnych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** innowacje społeczne, rozwój organizacji, rozwój regionu.