

**A Critical Analysis of UNDP-Supported ‘Social Innovation’
Projects in Governance: Case Studies of Uzbekistan,
Ukraine and Armenia**

**A Dissertation
Submitted to the University of Tsukuba
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Sciences**

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2019

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study has been accomplished through the MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) scholarship at the University of Tsukuba. It has been an attempt to conduct critical research into UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in governance in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank my supervisor Professor Timur Dadabaev from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science of the University of Tsukuba, for his advice and support for my dissertation, and for his wise direction regarding the Special Program for Central Asian Countries and the 1+3 MA and PhD Program in Advanced Japanese and Eurasian Studies. Also, I have great gratitude for Professor Nathan Gilbert Quimpo, who offered advice and leadership during the entire research and gave helpful and encouraging support in writing this thesis.

I am also indebted to staff members at UNDP, Kolba Lab (Armenia), SocialBoost (Ukraine), the TAPAS project (Ukraine), the ‘Eidos’ Center (Ukraine), colleagues from the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project (Uzbekistan), and ‘social innovation’ projects’ leaders from three countries. Also I owe a substantial debt to Professor Shioya and Professor Kawasaki for their timely support, constructive feedback, and cooperation. Finally, I wish to thank teaching and administrative staff at the International and Advanced Japanese Studies Office, and members of various institutions and scholars, all those who have directly and indirectly supported me during the research. Special thanks also goes to Mr. Bill St. John, Mr. James Brindley and Ms. Renee Kumor, whom I am honored to have as friends, for their comments and proof reading of this PhD. I also wish to thank my friends and course mates from the program for their contributions made during fruitful discussions at various meetings at the University of Tsukuba.

However, my greatest thanks goes to my father, my mother, my brother, my wife and my kids, without whose support, love and the conditions they have created, it would have been impossible to cope with this difficult and serious task. Finally, I thank my grandparents for their support and love. My grandfather, Radjabov Saifiddin, spent many years in education and research in Uzbekistan. He was accepted for a doctorate program but could not combine it with his intensive work at rural school, which was necessary to support his big family. I hope my grandfather and my grandmother Kamalova Muhabbat, both schoolteachers, would be proud of my accomplishment.

Tsukuba, September 2019

Bakhrom Radjabov

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society organization
CYI	Center of Youth Initiatives
ICT	Information-communication technologies
KO	Kelajak Ovozi (Center for Youth Initiatives)
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MVP	Minimal Viable Product
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIP	Center for Scientific and Technical Information and Innovation Promotion of Ukraine
NPO	Non-profit organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SGP	Small Grants Program
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TAPAS	Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration Services
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDP GCPSE	United Nations Development Programme Global Centre for Public Service Excellence
UNINI	Ukraine Norway Innovation Networking Initiative
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Abstract

This study aims at evaluation of UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects, and finding out their particular features, so as at discussion of the evolution of social innovation concept in the post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It focuses on ‘social innovation’ projects in governance that have been undertaken by three umbrella organizations, namely, the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project (Uzbekistan), SocialBoost (Ukraine) and Kolba Lab (Armenia) with development assistance from United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This research contributes to knowledge on *social innovation* through the yet missing critical analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects in governance for development in the post-Soviet republics. Critical analysis of the ‘social innovation’ projects is achieved by applying social practice and human development theories.

The research takes note that to achieve its development goals, the UNDP adjusted the concept of ‘social innovation’ to the local context in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, to achieve better political and economic opportunities, so as social services, and for improving capabilities of individuals. ‘Social innovation’ projects have been aimed for a greater inclusion, more participation and responsiveness through the extensive use of information and communication technology, open data, as well as locally-designed engineering works. Moreover, the UNDP put strong emphasis on the social impact of these post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects, particularly in terms of the identification of social challenges and the creation of new social relationships. Subsequently, ‘social innovation’ has evolved in post-Soviet settings, and created a new type – *developmental social innovation*.

Also, in the UNDP’s approach, ‘social innovation’ was seen as something that can be aspired and worked for (something *volitional*), so that the UNDP referred to newly started projects as ‘social innovations’. This characteristic, in post-Soviet countries, turned all the common features of social innovation volitional. In this regard, ‘social innovation’ projects mainly achieved four common features of social innovation, namely, human-centeredness, networking, localness and use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), but were still progressing towards two other features – scaling up and making a social impact.

The study shows that ‘social innovations’ in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia reached different levels of progress. In Uzbekistan ‘social innovation’ projects have not received government support, and occasionally cooperated with local organization. Therefore, they mostly affected individual needs, and occasionally fostered institutional changes. In Armenia and Ukraine better scaling possibilities were available, due to the better government support

and a more active civil society. Thus, ‘social innovation’ projects in these countries demonstrate signs of moving towards social change, but it is yet premature to assess their social impact. Finally, the study notes that in post-Soviet republics the concept of social innovation was interchanged with other terms that might diminish the social innovation concept.

Key words: Social Innovations, New Social Practices, Governance, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Armenia

Chapter 1. Introduction

Background

After two decades of engaging in development work in the newly independent post-Soviet republics, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) undertook a new approach starting in 2012. While operating in post-Soviet republics in three programmatic areas, namely economic governance, good (or democratic) governance as well as environment and energy efficiency, it introduced the concept *social innovation* in development projects in local governance in post-Soviet republics. The UNDP introduced the social innovation concept to design its development work in post-Soviet republics differently. Now, according to social innovation methodology, besides the conventional actors, namely the government, private business and civil society organizations (CSOs), a different approach to development work implied involvement of individuals and communities experiencing problems in designing and implementing solutions to these problems.

In fact, social innovation acquired different definitions generated by scholars and practitioners. For instance, (Alfonso, Carr, Wattam & Backhaus, 2015) defined social innovation as “new products, processes and methods that, in a creative and sustainable manner, offer a better solution to one or several social demands” (p. 7). Another very well-known and widely used definition of social innovation has been produced by Mulgan (2007), who described social innovation as “innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need, and are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social” (p. 8). Since, from the scholarly literature social innovation inherited numerous definitions, this study picks up and applies the most up-to-date, comprehensive description of the term provided by scholars using social practice theory (Howaldt et al., 2014; Domanski, 2017). Thus, the definition of *social innovation* is going to be formulated in accordance with social practice theory, as a combination of new social practices occurred as the result of imitation/repetition of invention, and that once diffused, became institutionalized and, over time, lead to social change (Howaldt et al., 2014).

Among the post-Soviet republics, the UNDP has supported ‘social innovation’ projects in governance in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. This dissertation critically analyzes UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in the post-Soviet republics mentioned earlier,

covering the national umbrella organizations/projects¹ as well as small-scale² projects in local governance under these umbrella organizations. The umbrella organizations/projects are: the UNDP/United Nation Volunteers (UNV) ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project (launched in 2012), SocialBoost organization in Ukraine (launched in 2012-2013) and Kolba Lab in Armenia (launched in 2013). The UNDP supported these umbrella organizations and the small-scale projects they articulated as ‘social innovations’, implying that they represented a novel approach in addressing social problems.

The UNDP in the three post-Soviet republics aimed for various targets through implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, according to the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project Final Evaluation Report (2014), ‘social innovation’ projects were aimed at “developing innovative solutions through establishing partnership between organizations, communities and society, and achieving synergy in activities directed towards solving social problems” (p. 23).

Local ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan were designed in a manner allowing individuals to identify and to come up with solutions of social problems themselves. To implement solutions that individuals offered through ‘social innovation’ projects, the UNDP assisted in developing these innovative solutions, and later, in partnering with other governmental, private and civic organizations to run, and eventually, institutionalize ‘social innovation’ projects.

In Ukraine, where the UNDP mostly partnered with SocialBoost to design and introduce ‘social innovation’ projects, it supported this organization, while as per SocialBoost webpage:

Organization [SocialBoost] connects startup community and civic tech expertise with the government to solve national challenges [...]. SocialBoost promotes open data and coordinates activities of more than 1,000 IT-enthusiasts, big IT-companies and government bodies in Ukraine through socially meaningful IT-projects, related to e-government, e-democracy, e-services and open government data. SocialBoost has developed dozens of public services, interactive maps, websites for niche communities,

¹ The UNDP supported three organizations/projects in three post-Soviet republics, and the local projects labeled by them as ‘social innovations’.

² The term implies the meaning ‘local’ in relevance to ‘social innovation’ projects. The UNDP supported ‘social innovation’ projects only on the local level.

as well as state projects such as data.gov.ua. SocialBoost builds the bridge between civic activists, government and IT-industry through technology.³

In Ukraine, SocialBoost supported socially significant projects initiated by individuals (e.g., civic activists) and organizations, as well as promoted partnerships between government and non-government actors (CSOs, private IT-companies, etc.) to come up with innovative projects in Ukraine.

In Armenia, Kolba Lab was the first social innovation lab supported by the UNDP. Its goal was to support social innovations in governance. Kolba Lab did so thorough ‘social innovation’ projects and in collaboration with public servants to inject social innovations in governance. According to Kolba Lab’s webpage:

Along with supporting citizen-led ‘social innovation’ projects, we [Kolba Lab team] also work with innovators and change-makers working in the public sector. Through various design and partnership formats we explore and test solutions from the ones who are actually running the governance machinery: the mid-level public servants. As a result, civil servants develop and run policy startups in the heart of the governance system, giving birth to a cohort of policy entrepreneurs.⁴

In Armenia, Kolba Lab supported ‘social innovation’ projects led by individuals from and outside the governments (local and national), and helped them to design, test and implement these projects through partnerships with various actors in Armenia.

Among the post-Soviet republics, besides Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia in two republics, namely, in Azerbaijan and Moldova ‘social innovations’ supported by the UNDP, have been developing as the innovative solutions of existing social problems (e.g. corruption lack of high-quality public services). For instance, in Moldova, the UNDP has launched a project to support Moldova Social Innovation Lab (UNDP, 2014) to enhance cooperation between government and people to resolve social problems. In Azerbaijan, the UNDP-supported State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations was aimed for making this government agency the leading entity for providing public services for citizens. Though ‘social innovation’ projects were supported by the UNDP in Moldova and Azerbaijan, they have not

³ SocialBoost, 2014.

⁴ Kolba Lab, 2013.

been focused on local projects in governance areas, and therefore, these initiatives have not been considered by the current study.

In contrast, in the cases of Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, the UNDP supported umbrella organizations/projects that maintained ‘social innovations’ in governance. Therefore, this study referred to these cases for the analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects. This was done intentionally to have the set of comparable ‘social innovation’ projects, implemented in the post-Soviet context. While being supported by the UNDP, UNDP/UNV project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab implemented small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects locally. The study has considered these local projects for the analysis, and contacted their leaders throughout the research process. By comparing ‘social innovation’ projects in the selected post-Soviet republics, valuable insights on evolution of the concept in these countries could be discovered. Also, particular features of social innovation, as well as how differently and/or commonly the projects fared as social innovations could be discovered.

Statement of the problem

The conceptual development and theorization as well as application of the social innovation concept remain one of the major theoretical and empirical challenges of social innovations for development in various sectors of economy and governance in post-Soviet context. In fact, as (Marques, Morgan & Richardson, 2018) suggested “the social innovation concept has been most effective as a concept in practice” (p. 506). This proved to be also true for the UNDP approach to ‘social innovation’ projects. As a research concept, nonetheless, it suffers from the over-theorization from the multiple criteria and dimensions attached to it, somewhat diluting the term. Subsequently, the concept is also loosely used in practice.

Although a huge amount of scholarly and policy-oriented literature on social innovations in developed and developing countries has been produced (Buehgger & Ornetzender, 2000; Gerometta, Haussermann & Longo, 2005; Hochgerner 2011; Evers, Ewert & Brandsen, 2012; Bhatt 2013; Barraket 2015; Howaldt et al., 2015; Ionescu 2015; Oosterlynck et al., 2015; Bassi 2016; Domanski 2017; Marques et al., 2018; Howaldt et al., 2018, etc.), scholarly research analyzing ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics has hardly been conducted. So far, scholarly research on social innovations in developed countries has been, for instance, focused on the issues of social innovations in relevance to sustainable development (e.g. Buehgger et al., 2000), healthcare (e.g. Barraket et al., 2015), improvement of the welfare system (Evers et al., 2012), as well as on theoretical and conceptual

application of the social innovation (Domasnki 2017, Marques et al., 2018, Howaldt et al., 2018). In developing countries, the most recent studies were, for example, focused on the social innovations in peace-building in Colombia (Moreno, 2017), or social innovations to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India (Santha, 2019). Hence, the scholarly analysis of social innovation is incomplete without full consideration of the peculiarities that the concept received from the post-Soviet context. Up to now this area has been left out from the mainstream research, and ‘social innovation’ projects supported for developmental purposes by the UNDP in post-Soviet republics have hardly received any scholarly consideration.

Therefore, the study intends to address the gaps pointed out above by critically analyzing ‘social innovation’ projects in the governance sectors in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, supported by the UNDP, the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab. Thus, to accurately approach the research purpose of the dissertation the following research questions have been formulated:

Research questions

1. How has the concept of ‘social innovation’ evolved in post-Soviet countries based on the experiences of the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia?
2. What have been the major features of these ‘social innovation’ projects?
3. How have the projects fared as social innovations?

While many studies have been conducted on the theory and practice of social innovations in different countries, hardly any scholarly research has thus far been done on the experience with ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet countries. Applying social practice and human development theories, this dissertation examines the evolution of the concept of social innovation as introduced by the UNDP in supporting certain development projects in local governments and communities in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia.

Argument

As post-Soviet republics have inherited from the Soviet era an omnipresent government with a strong domination over all sectors of society, it was necessary for the UNDP to cooperate with governments in order to deliver development assistance. To win over government

cooperation and support, the UNDP purposely framed the development projects in the three post-Soviet republics as ‘social innovation’ projects. The UNDP deemed the social innovation concept to be novel, appealing and not too political. ‘Good governance’ or ‘democratic governance’, as conceptualized and promoted by Western development agencies, was too sensitive an issue for post-Soviet governments. Thus, the UNDP chose to run ‘social innovation’ projects in governance, seemingly providing not much more than technical assistance to local communities and governments.

While largely meeting the usual criteria of social innovations on human-centeredness, networking, localness and inclusiveness, the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet countries bear specific characteristics. Firstly, scholars who have conducted studies on social innovations have done so on projects that succeeded or failed to become social innovations, and they have applied the term *social innovation* to projects deemed to have reached a superior level of achievement only after the fact, i.e., *post factum*. The UNDP views social innovation as something that can be aspired and worked for, and already refers to newly started projects as social innovations. Therefore, this dissertation argues that differently from the *post factum* application of the term in other countries, social innovation in the UNDP’s approach in post-Soviet republics is seen as something that can be volitional.

Secondly, distinctly from social innovations in developed countries, the ‘social innovation’ projects in the three post-Soviet republics have been of a particular type – developmental – due in large part to the UNDP’s role in pushing for them. They are developmental in the sense that they have been designed to help local communities and governments in a developmental (or transitional) context find solutions to existing social problems. They strive for the delivery of better economic opportunities and social services, and for improving capabilities, as Sen (1999) puts it, of individuals.

Thirdly, since, the UNDP experimented with ‘social innovations’ in its development work in post-Soviet republics, it has made certain gains and shortcomings. Thus, apart from being volitional and developmental, and differently from the other cases where social innovations were nurtured in non-governmental sector, ‘social innovations’ in the three post-Soviet states exhibit a crucial government role, with only those projects with at least a certain level of government support making significant gains. On the other hand, active civil society participation and the development of local leaders and ‘policy entrepreneurs’ have played a major role in the advances made by ‘social innovation’ projects, especially in Ukraine and Armenia. It is too early to assess whether the UNDP-supported projects in the three post-Soviet republics will fulfill two other standards of social innovation – scaling-up and social impact –

but some projects, particularly in Ukraine and Armenia, do show encouraging signs of eventually moving up to these levels. The same holds true for the aspiration of the projects to be truly developmental in actual result. Moreover, since the social innovation concept is being introduced into development studies and development work, it has been yet, insufficiently researched in the development context.

Finally, as used in the post-Soviet states, the term *social innovation* appears to be at risk of losing its meaning and potency. Apart from certain criteria of social innovation sometimes not well being paid attention to, in course of implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects, the term has been often interchanged or intermixed by local partners with such other terms as ‘social projects’, ‘civic engagements’, ‘civic technology’ and others, which tend to lead to the devaluation of the social innovation concept.

Selection of three case studies

The three post-Soviet republics have different ethnic, demographic, historical, political and economic backgrounds. This dissertation acknowledges these differences. However, the differences among the republics do not entail crucial implications on the ‘social innovation’ projects implemented by the umbrella organizations. Concurrently, the following similarities make the selected umbrella organizations/projects supported by the UNDP fully comparable: a) they were operating with support from the UNDP, in governance sector in post-Soviet republics; b) they have been confirmed by the UNDP, as organizations introducing small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, and have already lasted certain amount of time allowing their evaluation; c) they have been operating in the republics with similar Soviet governance history and traditions. Since ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and umbrella organizations were started not yet so long ago, the study did not expect them to be able to make a social change. However, the study considered ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics as having the potential of progressing towards this level over time.

In **Uzbekistan**, the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project led by the UNDP and by the UNV was the first and yet the only ‘social innovation’ supporting umbrella project. The UNDP applied two modalities for implementation of development projects: Direct Implementation Modality (DIM), and National Implementation Modality (NIM). The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project fell under the modality of Direct Implementation, meaning that it was implemented by the UNDP, without a national partner (ministry or local organization in Uzbekistan). Thus, the

project was directly implemented by the UNDP Good Governance Unit jointly with the UNV Program in Uzbekistan. Cooperation with national partner organizations was based on memorandums of understanding. The project managed 33 small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects implemented locally.

For example, the ‘social innovation’ project ‘Infobox’ was a mobile app containing the information about Bukhara City, available for tourists and local inhabitants. The primary goal of the project was for local residents to map the tourist destinations in Bukhara, and to provide information on how local authorities and agencies can be accessed by tourists and locals. The project was designed by a team of individuals from the local community in Bukhara city, and aimed to introduce a new possibility of interaction between citizens and government authorities, as well as design user-friendly services through crowdsourcing and mapping.

Among other small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and the UNDP/UNV projects in Uzbekistan were: information and communications technology (ICT) projects, engineering/infrastructure projects, education/trainings and workshops, filming and other art projects.

In **Ukraine** the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in local governments and communities, through national hackathon⁵ and municipal innovation labs. SocialBoost, the major supporting organization, co-managed 21 small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects together with the UNDP. Launched in 2012 by the group of volunteers, SocialBoost was later financed by various donors (including the UNDP) in Ukraine. It did a massive amount of socially significant projects involving ICT solutions in partnership with international donors, global corporations and partners. Besides SocialBoost, two civil society organizations (CSOs) – Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration Services project (TAPAS project) and Eidos – fostered cooperation between governments and citizens. Funded by Eurasia Foundation and other donors, TAPAS promotes more transparency and accountability in governance, as well as reforms in public administration. TAPAS closely cooperated with SocialBoost over the projects where open data was used. Through the competition called Open Data Challenge TAPAS and SocialBoost supported small-scale projects on open data visualization, and projects on anti-corruption and e-services. Eidos is a Ukraine-based CSO that provides analysis and assistance in reform of the public funds domain. It has partnered

⁵ A hackathon consists of events in which computer programmers, designers, project managers and domain experts gather to discuss and collaborate on ‘social innovation’ projects.

with the UNDP and other donors in designing projects aimed at fighting corruption, improving civic and political awareness, and promoting local democracy in Ukraine.

In the Ivano-Frankivsk, the ‘social innovation’ project ‘Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk’ was designed with the support of the UNDP as a mobile application allowing citizens to check the administrative procedures of service providers and to report corruption cases. Employing ICT, specifically its mobile application, allowed tackling the problem of low-quality public services and fighting corruption by involving citizens in monitoring public services.

Other small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and SocialBoost in Ukraine covered: anti-corruption projects, open data/data visualization, e-services providing projects, security (especially in the active war zones), and public administration (usually low-tech).

In **Armenia**, the UN established the Social Innovation Laboratory – Kolba Lab in 2013 to design and implement ‘social innovations’, using Big Data⁶ for development. Kolba Lab was financed by the European Union and supported 14 small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia. While the idea behind Kolba Lab was to embrace new technologies and methodologies in development work, it incubated social innovation start-ups and selected ideas through local government challenge – *mylocgov* to tackle problems in local governments and communities. Kolba Lab had two approaches to the generation of ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia: 1) Innovation challenges – Ideas competition for social innovation startups in local communities, and 2) Local government challenge for ‘social innovation’ projects in local governments.

For example, a ‘social innovation’ project supported by the UNDP, the ‘Consumers’ Rights Protection Chat bot’ or simply ‘Chat bot’, would allow users to report to the government entities, about violation of their consumers’ rights and to consult with legislation of consumers’ rights protection. Using the Chat bot would allow consumers to become better aware about their rights, make consumers more legally literate. All in all, this ICT service would assure stronger participation and inclusiveness of individuals experiencing violations of their rights, that otherwise have been neglected.

Other small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and Kolba Lab in Armenia were: anti-corruption projects, open data/data visualization projects, e-services providing projects, other low-tech projects.

⁶ Extremely large data sets that may be analyzed computationally to reveal patterns, trends, and associations, especially relating to human behavior and interactions.

Significance of the study

This study is significant for the several reasons. First, the application of ‘social innovation’ projects in development work is a novel approach of the UNDP to development assistance in developing countries. Among the developing countries (and/or countries in transition), the UNDP for the first time has experimented with ‘social innovation’ projects in the post-Soviet republics from 2012.⁷ But, these projects have not yet triggered critical analysis. In that sense, the current study is the primary attempt to research the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects. The different approach to delivery of development assistance by the UNDP by employing ‘social innovation’ projects, is *per se* barely explored area, which also makes the current research truly original. Since, social innovations are being introduced into development studies and development work, the current research could also contribute to this area of studies and highlight yet undiscovered aspects related to social innovations in developing countries (and/or countries in transition). While the literature on social innovations (Mulgan 2007; Sørensen 2012; Domanski, 2017; Howaldt et al., 2018, etc.) suggests that social innovation emerges in civil, private and public sectors, and may be led by civil society organizations, social enterprises, private and/or government entities, and even academic institutions, ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics constitute totally different, international donor (UNDP) supported social innovations. Though Domanski (2017) claimed that “liberation of social innovation from the silo of the third sector and opening it up to other areas of the society already happened” (p. 21), research of social innovations from the perspective of international development organization has not been yet conducted.

Second, it should be also mentioned that the UNDP was operating and delivering development aid in the context of post-Soviet republics transiting politically, economically and socially from the Soviet centralized governance and economic systems to market-based economies and democratic societies. Certainly, running development programs and projects in such circumstances required from the donor organization consideration of peculiarities of the transitional post-Soviet settings. Moreover, being an intergovernmental organization the UNDP had to undergo through governments’ approval of the approach it was going to take towards development aid delivery. Hence, the UNDP had to consider the above mentioned conditions and to adjust its development work methodology. Doing ‘social innovation’ projects

⁷ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project has been launched in Uzbekistan in 2012.

seemed to be mostly accepted by the UNDP and governments, new mechanism of development work. To use social innovation as its new development assistance methodology, the UNDP adjusted it to the post-Soviet context, adding to the social innovation developmental overtone. Moreover, by labeling its development projects as “social innovations” before even they become such, the UNDP entitled new, yet undiscovered characteristic of social innovation as something that one can work towards. Notable also is that the UNDP for the first time in the post-Soviet republics experimented with social innovations in development in general, and in governance in particular. This approach was also new for post-Soviet states, and different from the previous development projects led by the UNDP in these republics. Therefore, researching this topic can potentially contribute to the scholarship by generating original findings and valuable insights about social innovations that have not yet been discovered.

Finally, the current study, discusses evolution and particular features of ‘social innovation’ projects in the post-Soviet settings and evaluates how these projects fared as social innovations.

Methodology and methods of research

Prior to selected methods of the research, the study consulted with various methods of data gathering applied in other research projects that studied social innovations in the similar research context and with the similar research focus. For instance, in the study “Social Innovations on the Way to Sustainable Development” by Buchegger et al., 230 social innovation initiatives and projects in Austria, Germany and Switzerland were studied, among which 14 projects were researched in detail through interviews and analysis of written resources (Buchegger et al., 2000). This method proved to be an applicable step to substantiate the concepts (sustainable development and social innovation) on an empirical basis.

Among other possible options, research has also conferred with the method of conducting surveys to study social innovations. For instance, Evers et al. (2012) conducted a cross-country study of 79 cases in 20 cities in 10 European countries. However, this method has not been considered for the current research aimed at comprehensive in-depth evaluation of three case studies. It is believed that designing surveys is a suitable method for data gathering, when a bigger number of respondents corresponding with a higher number of cases are available for the analysis. This was not the case in the current study.

Another possibility applied to study social innovations was mapping them across the countries. For example, SI-Drive project members and authors of the *Atlas of Social Innovation*

with help of their colleagues based in the countries covered by the Atlas, have applied this method to map 1005 social innovations (Howaldt et al., 2018). This method has been also avoided in the current research due to practical absence of possibility and need to map social innovations. Moreover, the method of mapping neither corresponds with the research goal of the current study, nor deeply analyzes ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and relevant organizations in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. With this in mind, however, findings of the current study, could be used later to significantly supplement existing scholarly expertise on social innovations.

In the case of post-Soviet republics, where research on social innovations has not generated sufficient amount of high-quality data, usage of quantitative methods would be desirable for the possible further research projects encompassing bigger numbers of respondents. For the in-depth analysis, this study used in-depth interviews with individuals involved in the ‘social innovation’ projects. According to Oosterlynck et al. (2015), social innovation can only be understood contextually, and its newness is a characteristic not to the phenomenon itself, but of its relationship to a certain institutional context. Therefore, this study examined ‘social innovation’ projects that are new with regard to established practices in governance in the post-Soviet context. While studying ‘social innovation’ projects, research considered them as Oosterlynck et al. (2015) wrote “as socially innovative outside of normative framework aimed at social needs, in terms of means (process) effecting social relations referring to the new modes of governance and participation, forms of collective action, social learning, awareness raising, etc.” (p. 7).

The study applied the approach involving qualitative methods of data collection, namely (a) in-depth interviews and, (b) analysis of the documents related to ‘social innovation’ projects in three case studies. The methodology of the study focused on three umbrella projects/organizations in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, namely the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab and the ‘social innovation’ project implemented under these organizations.

The following methodological tactic was applied in the study:

Primarily, the scholarly literature discussing different features of social innovations from different theoretical perspectives has been reviewed. The literature on social innovations methodologically approaches the analysis of the features of social innovations in two ways. Based on the first approach, the scholars look for differences among the features of social

innovations and discuss what makes them particular in the certain social context. Certainly, any social innovation is contextual, as many scholars point out in their studies (e.g. Asadova, 2013; Oosterlynck et al., 2015, Moreno 2017; Domanski, 2017; Santha, 2019).

But, this approach is not helpful for neither understanding nor explaining the features common among all social innovations. Though it demonstrates contextual peculiarities of social innovations, it does not tell what features they are share, and subsequently, what makes all of them social innovations. Therefore, other scholars (e.g. Buchegger 2000, Mumford et al., 2003; Mulgan 2007; Evers et al., 2012; Marques et al., 2018; Howaldt et al., 2018) took the second approach to figure out the features that are common to all social innovations. This approach is helpful in conceptualizing social innovation. The current study, though acknowledged and pointed out existing differences, nevertheless applied the second approach and looked for the similar features of social innovations while conducting a literature review.

The dissertation also critically reviewed the literature covering social sciences theories that discussed social innovations. It identified the gains and the limitations of those theories to select the one that cover the features of social innovations, and the dissertation explains how social innovation is generated, in a comprehensive manner, and thus, more applicable for the cases in post-Soviet republics. Based on the critical theoretical review, social practice theory was selected. It was also found that the common features of social innovations generated from the scholarly literature were mostly coming from social practice theory. Some of them were also shared by the other scholarly literature and theories (e.g. ‘connected difference’ approach, actor-network theory). In total, six common features of social innovations have been identified. They will be discussed in the more details in the further chapters. In this dissertation, these common features served as the evaluation criteria for the ‘social innovation’ projects. The study applied the features of social innovations to reveal the contradictions between the ‘social innovation’ projects in the post-Soviet republics, and other social innovations. To analyze and explain these contradictions, the researcher first examined the documents related to the umbrella organizations and to the ‘social innovation’ projects, as well as approached interviewees in three post-Soviet republics.

To analyze the documents, the *interview technique* was applied. The researcher treated the documents like a respondent. The questions have been posed in relevance to the available texts, then to highlight the answers within the texts. The questions have been derived from the argument and the theoretical literature, as well as in accordance with the tasks and the goal of the study. Limitations of this method have been acknowledged. Official documents and other sources of information might provide incomplete or biased information; also the practical

implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects might not be fully corresponding with the outcomes planned or reported in the documents. Therefore, the questions about the background information, the purpose, and the goals of the organizations/projects publishing the documents have been asked, to identify the possible biases and agendas that the UNDP or umbrella organizations could have while implementing ‘social innovation’ projects.

In the case of data (documents) gathering in Uzbekistan, personal connections of the researcher, who has been employed by the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, have been used to contact the UNDP employees in charge of ‘social innovation’ projects, local leaders of the communities, and representatives of public organizations in Uzbekistan. Professional experience of the researcher has also allowed to access project documents of 33 ‘social innovation’ small-scale projects conducted in Uzbekistan locally. Moreover, professional contacts of the researcher in the UNDP, have been used to obtain up-to-date information about the UNDP-supported projects in Armenia. In Armenia and Ukraine, similar professional connections to the UNDP allowed reaching out to the UNDP former employees, who oversaw the implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects. Also, data about ‘social innovation’ projects available in English in Armenia (14 projects) and in Ukraine (21 projects) has been captured for research purposes.

Documents encompassing required information on ‘social innovation’ projects have been grouped based on the following categorization:

- (1) ‘social innovation’ projects’ documents;
- (2) memorandums of understanding between the UNDP supported organizations and local public organizations (if relevant and applicable) on cooperation to promote ‘social innovation’ projects;
- (3) ‘social innovation’ projects’ related information provided by the UNDP;
- (4) information about the ‘social innovation’ projects available online (e.g. websites, news articles, etc.).

To assure fair and equal assessment of all sources of information available for the research, this categorization has been equally applied for three cases. The data gained from the interviews was combined with the data consisting of project documents available for analysis. Analysis of the documents and official online sources has been conducted based on the chosen theoretical framework.

Documentary analysis was balanced with the data from the interviews. Interviews also helped to obtain the data not available in the documents, and to find and explain the contradictions revealed while analyzing ‘social innovation’ projects. Interviews have been

carried out in person and/or via skype/messengers during 2017 and 2018, with 23 respondents from Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, who supported and/or introduced ‘social innovation’ projects in governance.

Protocol for selecting the interviewees and quoting them in the dissertation.

While gathering the data in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, the following categories of respondents have been covered:

- (a) the UNDP staff members in charge of ‘social innovation’ projects;
- (b) individuals/team members of the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab in charge of ‘social innovation’ projects in governance;
- (c) local civil society leaders, members of interest groups, activists and advocates implemented ‘social innovation’ projects in local governments and communities.

Respondents from the UNDP the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ projects, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab have been chosen based on the following:

- a) engagement in ‘social innovation’ projects’ activities in governance in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan confirmed by official program and/or project documents;
- b) confirmed and documented cooperation with the UNDP in generation and delivery of ‘social innovation’ projects in governance sector;
- c) knowledge about the local ‘social innovation’ projects, and participation in the projects.

Local civil society leaders, members of local interest groups, activists and advocates have been chosen based on:

- a) leadership in ‘social innovation’ projects;
- b) implementation by them ‘social innovation’ projects in the local context.

To obtain primary data through interviews *networking strategy* has been applied to cover respondents, who introduced ‘social innovation’ projects. Topics of the interviews have been related to the background information and the argument derived from the theoretical literature. The questionnaire for the interview has been prepared in Russian and English. With the permission of respondents, interviews were recorded. Permission to directly quote respondents in the research has been obtained. Interviews have been chosen as the method of data gathering, suitable for the research tasks and the goal of the study, because:

- 1) Data limitations: The data on the UNDP supported ‘social innovation’ projects, has been gathered from the case studies of post-Soviet republics, that have not been studied before. These limitations have predetermined the choice of interviews to generate the primary, yet missing data. While conducting interviews in Armenia and Ukraine, limitations related to

usage of English or Russian languages occurred. Respondents without a good command of either English or Russian were not interviewed. Researcher has not possessed adequate knowledge of Armenian and Ukrainian languages to collect primary data from interviews, or secondary information from other sources.

Another limitation is that the study mainly evaluated umbrella organizations supported by the UNDP. It could not conduct in-depth evaluation of selected small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, where total number in the countries exceeded 60. Moreover, researcher could not access the data on small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects to conduct in-depth analysis, due to the fact that the UNDP did not always have this data available in all post-Soviet republics. The final limitation of the study is that it has not covered individuals affected by ‘social innovation’ projects. In fact, the study intended to critically assess ‘social innovation’ projects and not to evaluate their possible effects (implications) on the beneficiaries/users.

- 2) Conducting in-depth analysis: The study was aimed at conducting in-depth analysis and evaluation of the yet uncovered case studies of the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost, and Kolba Lab, to get the insights on ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. Therefore, in-depth interviews have been chosen as a method of research. By additionally focusing on data from the documents and electronic sources relevant to the small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, the study provided some breadth to the analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. This was required to assess systemic transformations that are possibly taking place due to small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects led by three organizations in three post-Soviet countries.
- 3) Critical assessment: The study focused on critical evaluation of the ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. To achieve this goal qualitative analysis demonstrating dynamics of the ‘social innovation’ projects has been conducted. First, the researcher generated the data on features of social innovations from the scholarly and theoretical literature on finished projects in developed, developing and post-communist countries. These features have served as evaluation criteria, and were applied in the case studies of post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects, to find out peculiarities of the post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects supported by UNDP. To do so, the data generated from the post-Soviet republics was related to the features of social innovations from developed and developing countries. Second, since ‘social innovations’ were supported by the UNDP in the post-Soviet developing countries (and/or countries in transition), developmental

criterion of social innovation generated from the scholarly and theoretical literature, as well as from the UNDP's reports and project documents, has been added for evaluation of 'social innovation' projects in post-Soviet republics. The developmental criterion has been generated after the critical analysis of development theories that scrutinized social innovations. After identifying the advantages and limitations of the relevant development theories, human development theory has been selected as the theoretical approach most comprehensively examining social innovations in relevance to development. This theory has been also selected due to the fact that it lies in the core of the UNDP development work (e.g. Human Development Index, Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals). Evaluating post-Soviet 'social innovation' projects against this criterion, along with six other social innovation criteria gleaned from the scholarly literature, helped to examine 'social innovation' projects against the set of criteria, and to discuss new type of social innovation, emerging in the post-Soviet context. The assessment criteria formulated by the theoretical framework have been equally applied to the projects/organizations in three case studies. This helped to identify how social innovation evolved in post-Soviet context, what the major features of 'social innovation' projects were, and how these projects fared as social innovations.

Ethics

Privacy and ethics in the research have been provided by applying explicit confidentiality, guaranteeing that information provided to the researcher is not going to be attributed back to the respondents. The names, relevant positions of individuals (respondents) in organizations or projects were used in analytical parts of the research after requesting permission from the persons. All questionnaires have had numerical and alphabetical orders. Numerical orders have been corresponded with the order in the list of respondents prepared by the researcher in advance.

All questionnaires have been stored by the researcher and have not been communicated to the third party. Moreover, any discussions of the obtained responses, outside of the current study, as well as any kind of unethical attitude towards the respondent have been fully excluded. Skype/messenger interviews have been recorded and stored by the researcher under the same conditions, guaranteeing confidentiality. The rules of the interviewing have been communicated to the respondents before the interview.

Thesis Outline

To successfully achieve research goals of this PhD dissertation, the following outline of the study is applied:

- *Chapter one* covers background information on ‘social innovation’ in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It presents research problem and research gaps, and formulates research questions as well as the argument. The chapter indicates the significance of the study within the existing scholarly work on social innovations. This chapter is also devoted to methodology and methods of the research. It includes detailed explanation of how the methodological matrix of the study was organized. In particular, it explains the use of theory and the literature for the data gathering and data analysis, as tools for critical analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects conducted by projects/organizations supported by the UNDP in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. This chapter also explains how the data was collected and how it was analyzed and utilized throughout the research.
- *Chapter two* explores the current literature on social innovations. It provides historical overview of the literature on social innovations from different case studies. It demonstrates how differently the concept was understood and applied throughout the historical timeframe. Also, it critically discusses social sciences theories devoted to social innovations, namely, the ‘connected difference’ approach, structuration and structural function theories, actor-network theory, social practice theory. Moreover, it specifically focuses on and discusses the scholarly literature on diverse features and types of social innovations, so as on the literature on development and social innovation. The chapter critically engages with theories, and selects social practice theory that will be applied to analyze and critically evaluate ‘social innovation’ projects in governance in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. Finally, it points out the gaps in the research and literature on social innovations and discusses how it is going to fulfill these gaps.
- *Chapter three* focuses on the use of theory in the dissertation. It introduces the reader to various definitions of social innovation coming from different fields. The chapter clarifies how social practice theory have been adjusted and applied for the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. Additionally, it discusses human development theory and the UNDP’s perspective on governance for development, and

developmental ‘social innovations’. Finally, the chapter discuss the theoretical framework of the dissertation encompassing features of social innovations from social practice theory, and developmental characteristic of it, inherited from human development theory.

- *Chapter four* starts from the discussion of the UNDP’s development work in developing countries to explain how development assistance was organized, and to provide the background information for the further discussion of how and why delivery of development assistance provided by the UNDP has changed in post-Soviet republics. To explain how exactly the UNDP’s development work has changed in light of shifting to social innovations, the chapter specifically examines volitional and developmental approach of the UNDP to ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia.
- *Chapters five, six and seven* critically analyze ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. The chapters discuss the projects supported by the UNDP and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab. They describe how ‘social innovation’ projects were generated in three post-Soviet republics. In the chapters, critical assessment of ‘social innovation’ projects against the common features of social innovation is conducted. The assessment helps to identify peculiarities of ‘social innovation’ projects in the post-Soviet context and examine how they have fared as social innovations. The chapters also explicitly discuss developmental feature of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan that contributed to the emergence of the new developmental type of social innovation. This type is aimed at improvement of capabilities of individuals, more political and economic freedoms, enhancement of social standards, empowerment of citizens, more transparent and accountable governments. Finally, the chapters note and discuss how the social innovation concept was interchanged with other terms used by the national partners and leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects, and how this might diminish the social innovation concept.
- *Chapter eight* summarizes and analyses the results of the research, and discusses perspectives of social innovation in post-Soviet republics. It offers the summary of evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia by pointing out whether and how they fared as social innovations. The chapter also discusses how the social innovation concept evolved in post-Soviet republics, and what the peculiarities of this phenomenon in the post-Soviet developing countries are. Finally, this chapter concludes the PhD thesis. It highlights the main findings of the study and identifies potential topics for the further research.

Chapter 2. Social innovations: History and a review of the literature

Introduction

The chapter seeks to trace the historical development of the concept of *social innovation* and to review the scholarly literature on the subject. Apart from discussing the concept's origins and development through different periods, the historical account also provides the outlook on social innovations from technological, institutional and governance perspectives.

This chapter also reviews scholarly literature on social sciences theories discussing social innovations. It critically analyzes these theories to point out their limitations, and to select the one that provides comprehensive analysis of social innovations. The chapter also reviews scholarly literature discussing different features of social innovation. While reviewing the literature, cases of social innovations from developed, developing and post-communist countries have been covered. Based on this review, the chapter identifies scholarly agreed common features of social innovations, and points out the scholarship providing different perspective on these features. Also, literature on typologies of social innovations from the experiences of developed, developing and post-communist countries has been reviewed. Finally, the review of the literature on social innovations from development perspective has been conducted. Based on reviewed literature, the gaps in the scholarly literature on social innovations have been identified. These gaps will be fulfilled by the current study.

2.1. History of social innovation

2.1.1. Innovation and social innovation before and in the 20th century

There are different opinions regarding the origins of *social innovations*. For instance, based on the historical overview in the Figure 1, Marques et al. (2018) argued that “the concept of innovation has been in use since at least the second half of the 19th-century, under different guises and definitions” (p. 563). It should be noted that according to Marques et al. (2018), “the results presented in the Figure 1 indicate the relative (not absolute) use of the social innovation concept, because it is based on the Google Ngram Viewer that uses its digital database to measure the amount of times that “social innovation” appears in English books published in the United States, relative to other bigrams” (p. 564). Also, the results are limited

to the English language literature and do not cover non-English language sources, where social innovation might be also mentioned.

Clearly, the concept of social innovation was earlier used to cover either important long lasting structural changes, or specific social-cultural shifts in the institutions and society (Marques et al., 2018). However, there is another view on the origins of the term “social innovation” that emphasizes that the concept has occurred before 19th century (see Figure 2). To prove that Godin applied his methodology to gather relevant data, Marques et al. (2018) point out that:

Godin used a database compiled by the author of texts dated from the 16th-century onwards, and found that innovation was initially used as a pejorative word, mostly in regard to changes in religious thought. As democratic revolutions started to take hold, the concept evolved to describe also significant political and social change, especially those changes that led to more democracy and to demands for an improvement on the welfare of citizens. Only in the 19th-century did social innovation come into full use, usually as a synonym for socialism, with the agitators and revolutionaries branded as ‘social innovators’ or later as ‘social reformers’. As the concept diffused, it later took on new and positive meanings. (p. 499)

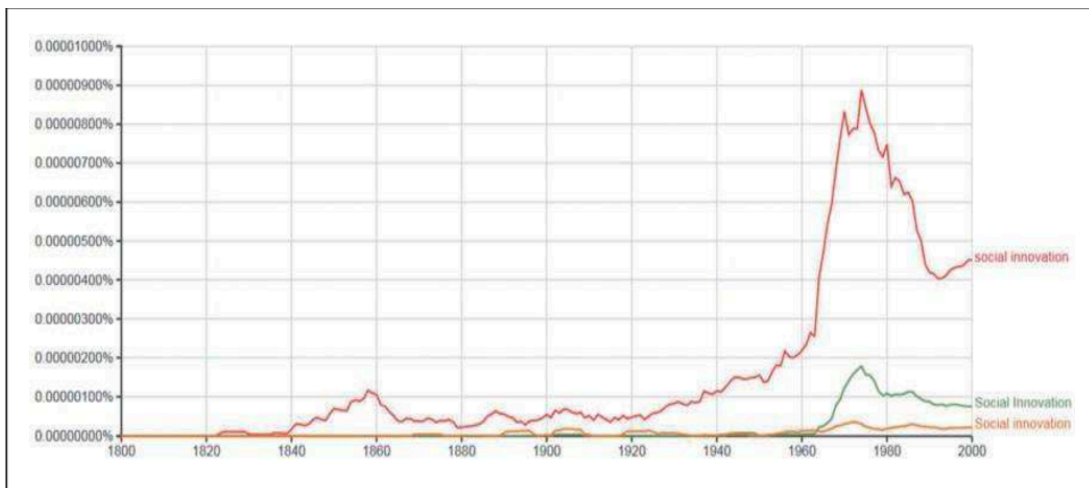
The first publication on social innovations was the book *Social Innovators and Their Schemes* by William Lucas Sargant, published in 1858. Though Sargant did not explicitly define “social innovation” in his work, he referred to socialism as innovation (Godin, 2012). He analyzed capitalism and socialism from the political economy point of view and attacked philosophers and political economists opposing socialist ideas that in his view, have been social innovations of that period. Sargant was the pioneer, who contributed to the discourse on social innovation and to the dissemination of social innovation as an independent category. As for socialism, it received some criticism from other scholars stating that it ignores limits on social measures by economic regulations.

Figure 1. Use of the bigram ‘innovation’ since 1500.



Source: Marques et al. based on the data from Google Ngram Viewer, 2018, p. 563.

Figure 2. Use of the term ‘social innovation’ since 1800.



Source: Marques et al. based on the data from Google Ngram Viewer, 2018, p. 564.

Based on his findings Godin (2012) distinguished three different meanings and representations of “social innovation”:

One is socialism, and this representation of social innovation is essentially pejorative. A second meaning is social reform. This meaning has both positive and negative uses, depending on the writer – and the country. A third meaning is anything new in ‘social’ matters. Such a meaning, although fuzzy, has certainly contributed to the diffusion of the term. (p. 67)

In contrast to Godin’s view, Cajaiba-Santana (2014) argues that in the second half of

the twentieth century “social innovation” could hardly be found in the academic literature. He said that during the 1980s, one could hardly find references to “social innovation”, except in Gershuny’s work *Social Innovation: Change in the Mode of Provision of Services*, where he discussed how social innovations may affect the organization of developed economies. He suggested that, later, social innovations have been discussed in management discourse. At that time, social innovations were still rarely mentioned in the scholarly work.

The historical overview informs about the absence of the agreement among the scholars on the precise historical point of departure for social innovation as an independent concept. It also demonstrates both the inadequate definition of the concept that interlinks with the genesis of the term and the vagueness about what was social innovation and what is it now. Therefore, scholars tried to define social innovation from the different perspectives and fields of research. For instance, in the 19th and 20th centuries social innovation was predominantly associated with institutional change.

2.1.2. Social innovation and institutional change in the 19th and 20th centuries

Historically, social innovation in the context of institutional change had a negative connotation, though not always. For instance, Godin (2012) mentions that:

Yet, among some writers, social innovation had a more positive meaning. The same socialists that have been criticized were praised as “social reformers” by others – another term which exploded in the 1860s. In fact, as Gareth Stedman Jones has suggested that socialism was to many the “new spiritual power” in post-revolutionary France and elsewhere in the Western world. (p.15)

Social innovation bringing revolution was something threatening and therefore less acceptable in the context of established social structure, norm, values and understanding. Anything new met resistance and caution. Nevertheless, against this vision, gradual and rational social and institutional changes were regarded as something certainly positive. Godin (2012) in this context points out:

While social innovation as socialism has a negative connotation, social innovation as social reform is generally seen as positive: any program, particularly if initiated by governments, for improving the social condition of mankind. France is certainly the country where social innovation in the sense of humanism has been the most prevalent,

starting in the 1830s. (p. 17)

Interestingly, the narrative about revolution that has been presumed as something negative earlier, has changed when social reform was discussed. Thus, social innovation also automatically got a positive connotation. Godin explains the reason for this change by emphasizing that social innovation has stressed positive impact of revolution on the social transformation (Godin, 2012). According to Godin (2012), under social reform many different things have been understood, but two major domains have been highlighted, namely education, and different forms of rights and equalities, such as that of salary between men and women. Obviously, while discussing social innovations, one implicitly meant socialism that was regarded as a social innovation at certain historical period.

Scholars emphasize the role of civil society in promotion of social innovations through social movements and, later, through global media such as the internet. For instance, Mulgan (2007) says:

In 19th and early 20th century Britain civil society pioneered the most influential new models of childcare (Barnardos), housing (Peabody), community development (the Edwardian settlements) and social care (Rowntree). During some periods the lead was taken by social movements. The 1960s and 1970s saw particularly vigorous social movements around ecology, feminism and civil rights which spawned innovations in governments and commercial markets as well as in NGOs. Another wave of civic innovation in movements is under way as the power of the internet and global media is harnessed to causes like world poverty and the environment. (p. 5)

Mulgan pointed out the outstanding role of social enterprises in the promotion of social innovations such as “mutual self-help, microcredit, building societies, cooperatives, trade unions, reading clubs and philanthropic business leaders creating model towns and model schools” (p. 5). He recalls that after 1945 democratic governments in Europe have introduced the social innovation that went beyond social policy – welfare state. This was an entire attempt to create a new type of economy in Europe with strong social components. Later, innovations have happened in different fields involving civil, private and public sectors. A totally new period of development has started with introduction of social innovations in the media. According to Mulgan (2007), the starting point was the launch of the “trade union newspapers in the 19th century through community radio and television networks to new media forms like Ohmynews in South Korea” (p. 7). Clearly, social innovations in media have developed a lot

in the era of internet, and entered almost all spheres of life. Internet enabled innovations by connecting people and organizations that sometimes could not otherwise collaborate. It allowed income generation and strengthened communication required for social action to solve social problems. Mulgan contributed to the scholarly debates on the history of social innovations. However, he has not provided clear dimensions of social innovation based on adequate and consistent terminology.

Later, to enhance clarity in interdisciplinary communication, terminological consistency became essential. But not in the case of social innovations. Pol et al. (2009) argue that there are four general dimensions of social innovation used in various ways in different disciplines. These dimensions are sometimes overlapping but help to understand social innovation. Pol et al. (2009) point out:

If consider social innovation as a mover of institutional change, it attempted both to provide oblique definition and an explicit definition of social innovation. Both definitions emerged from the perspective of structuration theory and accept John Maynard Keynes' deep insight that ideas are more powerful vehicles of institutional change than vested interests. (p. 31)

Indeed, social innovation might be the impetus for institutional change, but mostly it is not limited to the modification of the institutional framework, being, in fact, embedded into the broader social system. Meanwhile, social purpose is a detrimental factor for social innovation to occur. To discuss the 'social' in social innovation, it was contrasted to technological innovation.

2.1.3. Social and technological innovations in the 20th and 21st centuries

While discussing social innovations, mostly the newness is taken for granted and is not documented. Also, social innovation is regularly contrasted to technological innovation, and presented as a remedy for, or adjustment to, the undesired effects of technological innovation (e.g. Mesthene, 1969, Mulgan, 2007; Klein and Harrisson, 2007; Callon, 2007; Murray et al., 2009). In this sense, the concept of social innovation would necessarily have appeared after that of technological innovation (Godin, 2012).

Godin reproduces and repeats the mainstream description of the history of social innovations. But, in his further analysis he contradicts to himself, rejects his own explanation,

and emphasizes that social innovation has developed independently from technological innovation, not opposing it over time. In this regard Godin (2012) says:

In fact, social innovation dates back to the beginning of the nineteenth century – at a time when ‘technological innovation’ did not exist in discourses, emerging only in the 1940s. Social innovation entered the vocabulary of the Western world as a reliquat to the centuries-old pejorative use of innovation. To many writers of the time, social innovation meant socialism. To be sure, such a representation was not uncontested. To others it meant social reform. However, social innovation as socialism gave a definite pejorative orientation to social innovation, at least until the twentieth century. (p. 33)

In contrast to technological innovations, innovations in the society addressing social needs were, according to Godin (2012), applied much earlier. He says:

The use of innovation in social matters occurred over a century before innovation came to be applied to technology. In fact, technological innovation is only the latest development in the history of the category innovation. In the 1950s and the following decades, governments de-contested and legitimized a centuries-old and contested category – innovation. Supported by social researchers as consultants, governments made technological innovation an instrument of economic policy. To a large extent, the recent discourses and theories on social innovation are a reaction to the dominant and hegemonic discourses on technological innovation. (p. 36)

Scholars have not discussed social innovation as an independent category out of set of innovations. Ogburn (2014) said that “the use of the term invention does not apply merely to technical inventions in our context, but instead comprises social inventions such as the League of Nations; it is also used to denote innovations in other cultural areas, such as the invention of a religious ritual or an alphabet” (p. 15). Contrasting social and technological innovations helps to point out how social innovation is distinct from technological one. In this way characterizing the concept of social innovation is possible. In this context, while discussing social innovations, Marques et al. (2018) point out three major ways social innovation differs from technological or other types of innovation:

First, social innovation actively promotes inclusive relationships among individuals, especially those that are (or have been) neglected by previous economic, political,

cultural or social processes. In this sense, social innovation values the process of implementing a new idea as much as it does the outcomes of that implementation. Second, social innovation is explicitly about addressing need, whether it is in areas such as education, health or more broadly in dealing with social exclusion. Third, though this is not necessary, social innovation is often aimed at specific domains such as education, health or migration. We say that it is not necessary because there are human needs that fall outside these domains. (p. 500)

Other scholars also point out the distinction between social and technological innovation. Discussion of this aspect is especially important within the discourse of changing paradigms, and shift from technological innovations towards social innovations for the further economic, political and social development. In this context, it is a requirement to look at social innovation as an independent category out of the wide range of innovations. To the aspect of distinguishing between social and technological innovations Hochgerner (2012) mentions the following perspective:

The substantive distinction between social and technical innovations can be found in their immaterial intangible structure. Social innovation is not substantialized as technical artefacts but occurs at the level of social practice. A social innovation is a new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors in an intentional, targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices. An innovation is therefore social to the extent that it, conveyed by the market or non/without profit, is socially accepted and diffused widely throughout society or in certain societal sub-areas, transformed depending on circumstances and ultimately institutionalized as new social practice or made routine. (p. 7)

Based on this explanation, social and technological innovations can be distinguished based on one central element: social practice. The most important prerequisite for the social practice to be considered as a social innovation is being socially accepted and widely distributed. In this regard, social innovations, have been applied in various areas (health care, welfare systems, etc.). One of the areas where social innovations were applied is governance.

2.1.4. Social innovation and governance in the 21st century

Social innovations have been researched and analyzed in different domains (e.g. Barrket et al., 2015 in healthcare; Oosterlynck et al., 2015 in social policy and welfare studies; Moulaert, 2013 in development, etc.). Social innovations in the governance field have been also scrutinized by various scholars.

For instance, Goldenberg et al. (2009) in the study *Social Innovation in Canada: An Update* focus on the collaboration between different civil society organizations and groups in social innovations. The report analyzed the role of these non-profit organizations as well as community economic development organizations, social economy organizations, social enterprises and cooperatives in social innovations. Goldenberg et al. point out that new collaboration strategy between civil society organizations in social innovations is required to make a social change. Importantly, generation of social innovations as the result of collaboration among citizens, civil society, government and private sector, should be followed by handover of generated social innovations to other organizations. What Goldenberg et al. missed in the discussion is how exactly the collaboration between the state and non-state actors has been organized. His explanation lacks the clear determination of the state's role in governance, if governance is about collaboration of state with communities and civil society organizations.

Swyngedouw (2005) in the paper "Governance Innovation and the Citizen: The Janus Face of Governance Beyond the-State", being also concerned about relationships between the state and civil society, argued that those relationships are actually reshaped and changed due to innovations. He emphasized changing nature of democracy after enabling new forms of participation in governance through innovations. Swyngedouw supposed that relationships between the state and civil society as well as the notion of political citizenship have been redefined, such that the governance beyond the state is Janus-faced. Indeed, the role of civil society organizations and their relationships with government have been modified due to innovations. This did not, however, always increase the quality of public services to individuals in general. Thus, scholars and public sector innovations' practitioners suggest different frameworks that government should implement in order to meet social needs. Though Swyngedouw pointed out the changing relationships in governance due to innovations being applied in it, he did not touch upon the topic of elements that reframe those relationships. In general, Swyngedouw did not articulate the aspect of new governance framework that emerged, because of the new relationships among the actors involved in governance.

Discussion of the new governance framework would certainly raise debates and resistance to the emerging innovative trend in governance. Now, many innovative elements of the framework are being successfully implemented and used in governance systems in developing and developed countries. Truly innovative in the system of public welfare provision, social enterprises started playing a crucial role. For instance, Leadbeater (2007) in his work “Social Enterprise and Social Innovation: Office of the Third Sector Strategies for the Next Ten Years” argued:

Government needs a framework for social innovation in which social enterprise is likely to play a critical role. Social enterprise policy needs to be framed within a more comprehensive strategy for social innovation that is designed to deliver social impact by finding new ways to address unmet social needs. (p. 14)

Leadbeater suggested to embedding social enterprises within the government framework of social innovation which helps, in his opinion, to look at social innovations as the means to meet social needs. Obviously, according to Leadbeater, existing governance framework is not efficient enough to deliver social impact. Leadbeater’s argument could be deemed as quite contradictory, especially in the welfare states, but not surprisingly the need in social innovations by governments to deliver public services has actually been recognized primarily by the welfare states. This is because the old fashioned system of public services failed to meet occurring social needs and to make social impact.

Gibson-Graham et al. (2009) agreed with Leadbeater, but also emphasize the role of social enterprises linked to governance mechanisms. In the research “Social Innovation for Community Economies” while studying local social innovations, Gibson-Graham et al. (2009) argued that “innovation in governance is actually a useful metric for evaluating social enterprises, as the scope of success and failure extends beyond quantifiable outcomes of particular projects to more general changes in participation, practices and values” (p. 29). Hence, Gibson-Graham et al. (2009), indeed, showed the link between innovations in governance and social enterprises, by emphasizing the role of social enterprises in success of governance in general. However, Gibson-Graham et al. (2009) also claimed that “the success of innovative enterprises is not simply to be measured by their life span and growth but also by the ‘seeds’ and ‘sediments’ that may influence future practice” (p. 30). Further, Gibson-Graham et al. (2009) also pointed out the need in changing social relations and relations of governance, by development of governments’ capacity and the ability of institutional relations

in a social space, allowing government acting as a collective actor. This is possible only if the governance would develop from the bases in a socially innovative way. Moreover, Gibson-Graham et al. (2009) used local social innovations as analytical tools to argue that in that case “a focus on governance draws attention to the people involved in decision making and also to the forms and favors of such decision making. To resist prevailing modes of thinking and acting, innovative governance must involve a range of people, including ‘non-traditional actors’” (p. 31).

Discussion of the social enterprise and governance linkage highlighted by Gibson-Graham and Leadbeater did not mention the reasons of lacking public services. Indeed, this is a problem that should be situated into the context of analyzing provision of public services in comparison of provision of services in the private sector. Pott (2009) in his study addressed this issue. In the study “The Innovation Deficit in Public Services: The Curious Problem of Too Much Efficiency and Not Enough Waste and Failure” he argued that:

This [innovation deficit in public services] can be explained as an unintended consequence of the concerted public sector drive toward the elimination of waste through efficiency, accountability and transparency. Yet in an evolving economy this can be a false efficiency, as it also eliminates the ‘good waste’ that is a necessary cost of experimentation. This results in a systematic trade-off in the public sector between the static efficiency of minimizing the misuse of public resources and the dynamic efficiency of experimentation. This is inherently biased against risk and uncertainty and, therein, explains why governments find service innovation so difficult. In the drive to eliminate static inefficiencies, many political systems have subsequently overshot and stifled policy innovation. (p. 34)

Besides the aspect of efficient use of public resources, that predominantly borrowed from the logic of service provision in the private sector, necessary aspect is in partnership between citizens, civil society and government. This partnership could generate creative solutions to public services. Therefore, OECD also emphasizes the need of partnering with citizens and civil society organizations. OECD Public Governance Review (2011) reported that “partnership of government with civil society and citizens can offer creative policy responses that enable governments to provide better public services in times of fiscal constraints. However, implementation of such partnership involves risks, which governments need to take into account for their effective implementation” (p. 7). Later, OECD Report (2017) was

concerned “about how the different aspects of public sector governance can support innovation at all stages of its lifecycle, from identifying problems to generating ideas, developing proposals, implementing and evaluating projects, and diffusing them more widely throughout the organization” (p. 11). Thus, the most recent discussion of policy-makers has been focused on better mechanisms of public service provision. For this purpose, innovations in public sector aimed at rethinking processes in public sector are being discussed. In this context, the notion of public sector governance changing the notion of public sector management. This discussion actually goes beyond the foreseeable future, but intends to envision longer perspectives in new millennium.

In this context, Coe et al. (2001) in the study “E-Governance and Smart Communities” discussed what kind of governance people will need in the new millennium. Coe et al. (2001) argued that in the time of globalization and development of the new information and communication technologies, e-governance became an answer to this question. In the study Coe et al. (2001) suggested a more community driven model of governance. This model absorbs the capabilities of information and communication technologies that lead towards economic, social and political transition to smart communities. Coe et al. (2001) suggested how those communities and would function and how new governance mechanisms would perform. However, Coe et al. (2001) did not elaborate on how in the community-driven model of governance, social innovation can be applied and analyzed. She was mostly preoccupied with the role of ICTs in governance that are able to make communities ‘smart’, i.e. more technologically advanced in terms of governance. But how can such governance solve the issues occurring in the communities efficiently, and how can such solutions in the public sector be studied?

In this regard, Lévesque (2012) in his study “Social Innovation and Governance in Public Management Systems: Limits of NPM and Search for Alternatives?” made two conclusions. Firstly, he emphasizes that social innovations in public sector cannot and should not be studied through the prism of social innovations in the private sector because the purposes of social innovations in these sectors are different. Therefore, the course of social innovations in public administration over the past three decades should be changed. Secondly, due to the different purposes of social innovations in private and public sector, theory of innovation should not be limited to the private sector, but also developed within the public sector.

Hartley (2005) in the study “Innovation in Governance and Public Services: Past and Present” agreed with Lévesque that theoretical and empirical approaches to innovations in private and public sectors should be different. She argued:

There are some similarities in innovation processes and outcomes (from which it is important to learn), but also distinctive and important differences between innovation in private firms and in public service organizations. The private sector literature still focuses mainly on technological innovation, especially new product development, but there are limitations in applying concepts about product innovation to service and organizational innovation. Overall, these features suggest that the transfer of theory and empirical findings from private firms to public services is far from straightforward. Accordingly, there is a need for robust theory and evidence derived directly from the public sector. (p. 25)

Literature discussing social innovations in public and private sector limits its analysis to these sectors, without sufficient discussion of the role of civil society. This is a serious shortcoming that does not allow comprehensive analysis of the generation of social innovations as an inter-sectoral phenomenon. Some rare studies address this gap. For instance, Gerometta et al. (2005) in the article “Social Innovation and Civil Society in Urban Governance: Strategies for an Inclusive City” seek to explore the role of civil society in the new urban governance arrangements that will contribute to counter the trends towards social exclusion. Being focused on the governance aspect, Gerometta et al. (2005) missed another dimension of social innovation, which is contribution to sustainability in terms of socio-ecological interactions between the human-being and the environment. Baker et al. (2015) addressed this gap in the article “Social Innovation and the Governance of Sustainable Places”, where the authors try to contribute to the discussion of social innovations and sustainable development as well as resilience at the community level. Baker et al. (2015) emphasized socio-ecological context for introducing social innovations on community level:

Local identities, specific histories and social-ecological interactions upon which places are constructed, can act as vectors for transformative social innovation, which in turn can help nurture adaptive transitions. A clearer understanding of the links between social innovation and the construction of more resilient communities is important, as resilience at the community level provides the bedrock upon which sustainable futures are built. This perspective allows us to view social innovation in the context of the coupled relationship that exists between social processes and ecological systems. It makes the links between social innovation and sustainable place making more explicit, thus providing a better understanding of how social innovation can contribute to the

promotion of sustainable development. (p. 12)

Baker et al. (2015) discussed socio-ecological context for introduction of ‘social innovations’. The study argued about the role of social innovations in construction of places assuring sustainable development. However, it did not tell about the actors either enabling or disabling implementation of social innovations for development. Actually, in case of public sector innovation, public managers are among the crucial actors applying social innovations in practice. In this context, the UNDP in the report of the UNDP Global Center for Public Center Excellence (2014) provided three major features of social innovations for public managers:

First, social innovation brings an experimental approach to public service. Experimentation entails an evidence-based approach, acknowledgement of the limits of current knowledge, multiple small bets about what might work, and acceptance that some attempts will fail but provide learning that builds towards future success. Second, social innovation requires distributed systems where innovation and initiative are dispersed to the periphery and connected by networks. Public managers must support and partner with social innovators: people who initiate and lead social innovation initiatives, and who can be found anywhere within the system, but tend to be semi-outsiders and boundary spanners. Third, citizens and service users can bring insights and assets to help public managers achieve their policy objectives. Social innovations are developed ‘with’ and ‘by’ users and not delivered ‘to’ and ‘for’ them. Co-design and co-production are common elements of social innovation. As a result, social innovation can build community capacity in addition to delivering direct project impacts. (p. 4)

Though scholarly work on social innovations in governance has analyzed various aspects of social innovations in this domain, it nevertheless has not yet addressed ‘social innovation’ projects in governance in post-Soviet republics. Thus, this aspect remains not adequately covered and not sufficiently theorized.

2.2. Review of the Literature on Social Innovation

This section starts from the review of the literature on theories examining social innovations. It critically analyzes these theories, and selects the one that allows better and more

nuanced analysis of social innovations. While historically the concept of social innovation has been in use from the 19th century, its first theorization that was broadly applied in the research and in practice, starts from Mulgan's definition of social innovation in the first decade of the 21st century. Therefore, the discussion of theories starts from Mulgan's elaboration on social innovation.

2.2.1. 'Connected difference' approach and social innovation

From the historical overview it is evident that in the first decade of the 21st century, social innovations received significant attention from scholars and practitioners. After the time of the relatively low level of interest to social innovation, the concept again gained its momentum. This happened due to the need to find innovative solutions of the social problems existing in the societies. In this context, Mulgan's definition of social innovation concept as well as 'connected difference' approach to generation of social innovation have contributed to the knowledge about social innovations. This was one of the most referred theoretical approaches to study social innovations (Domanski, 2017).

Mulgan's 'connected difference' approach, as well as Mulgan and Murray's social innovation cycle, regarded social innovation as something new (idea, product, service, activity etc.) in social context, able to address social needs (social goals), and by this make social impact, involve (and cross) multiple disciplines/sector/actors, and progress throughout the process from the prompt to scaling up.

Mulgan's 'connected difference' approach emphasized three key dimensions of social innovation:

- they are usually new combinations or hybrids of existing elements, rather than being wholly new in themselves;
- putting them into practice involves cutting across organizational, sectoral or disciplinary boundaries;
- they leave behind new relationships between previously separate individuals and groups. These new relationships, which matter greatly to the people involved, contribute to the diffusion and embedding of the innovation. Also, they fuel a cumulative dynamic whereby each innovation opens up the possibility of further innovations.

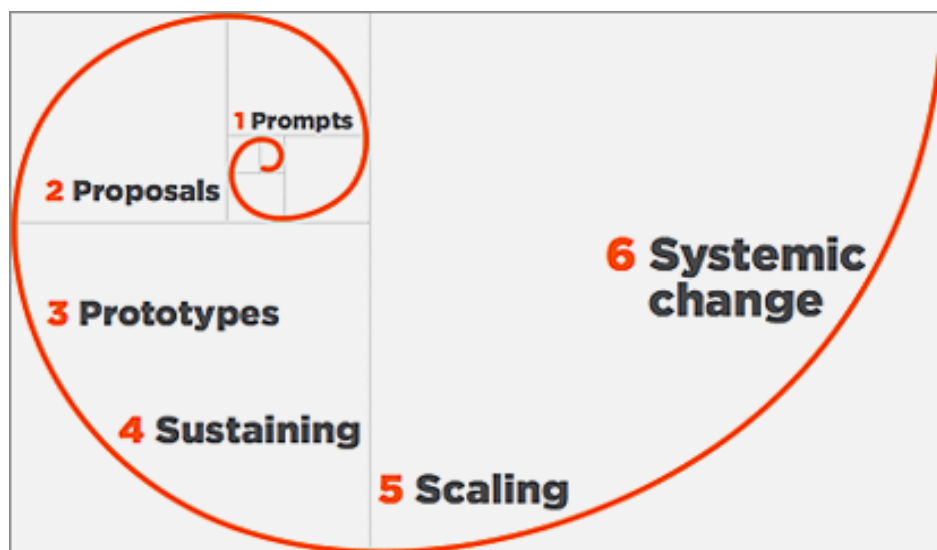
This approach highlights the critical role of 'connectors' in any innovation system – the brokers, entrepreneurs and institutions that link together people, ideas, money and power – who contribute as much to lasting change as thinkers, creators, designers, activists and community

groups (Mulgan, 2007). The ‘connected difference’ approach functions in the frame of practice-led approach that explains generation of *social innovation*. The essence of the approach is in connecting different elements, individuals, organizations and groups not otherwise connected. By doing so, it creates new social relationships which matter in generation of social innovation.

Social innovation cycle and social innovation

The process from the prompt to systemic change, explained by Murray and Mulgan’s ‘stages of social innovation’ (see Figure 3), is also known as the *social innovation cycle*. According to the social innovation cycle, the ultimate goal of any social innovation is systemic change that includes many elements and happens over long period of time (Murray & Mulgan, 2010).

Figure 3. Social Innovation Cycle



Source: Murray & Mulgan, 2010, p. 11.

European Commission Guide for Social Innovation (2013) describes this process as follows:

They [social innovations] start as ideas, which may then be piloted or prototyped. If successful there is a process of sustaining the new model in the implementation stage – perhaps as a new venture or as a new policy within an existing institution. The final stage is to scale up so that the new approach makes a real impact and becomes part of the norm. (p. 9)

Social innovation cycle starts from the diagnosis of the problem and identification of the need to innovate. This stage is dedicated to prompts, inspirations and diagnoses. The next stage is dedicated to proposals and idea generation. These stages are explained in the Table 1 below.

Table 1. Social Innovation Cycle

Stages	Prototyping	Sustaining	Scaling	Systemic change
Explanation	Testing ideas in practice	Idea becomes everyday practice	Growing and spreading innovation	New frameworks and/or architectures made up of innovations

Source: Murray & Mulgan, 2010, p. 12.

Mulgan’s ‘connected difference’ approach was the first systematic approach of conceptualization of social innovation as a new phenomenon in the societies, able to address social problems. However, Mulgan’s perspective was criticized for two major reasons. First, Mulgan emphasized the normative overtone of social innovation, which is debatable and not a completely analytical approach toward understanding social innovation. Second, the problem with Mulgan’s approach to social innovation is that as Domanski (2017) described “he [Mulgan] introduced the concept of social innovation with a significant normative element, and hence, this located social innovation primarily in the ‘social’ sector of NGOs, social enterprises etc., with less focus on the other societal sectors, namely government, economy, academia” (p. 21). Hence, the definition of social innovation provided by Mulgan (2007) emphasized that “innovative activities and services are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need, and are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social” (p. 8). Just pointing out the social purpose of social innovation, Mulgan did not discuss how exactly social goals could be achieved. He did not elaborate on what should be considered as an ‘achieved social goal’, and what kind of institutional, structural, social and other possible changes this should bring into the social system. To address these aspects, and fulfill these theoretical gaps, sociological theories have been further discussed.

2.2.2. Sociological theories and social innovation

Among the sociological theories, social innovation related aspect was well articulated

by *structuration theory*. According to this theory, Pol considers social innovation as a mover of institutional change (Pol, 2009). By looking at social innovations through this prism, he attempted to provide oblique and an explicit definition of social innovation. Pol (2009) acknowledged “John Maynard Keynes’ deep insight that ideas are more powerful vehicles of institutional change than vested interests” (p. 5). He tried to situate social innovation as a theoretical concept, into the broader sociological context and ‘structure’ – ‘agency’ discourse in social science. Being inspired by Keynes’ vision of the primary role of entrepreneur and his idea in generation of innovation, the theory fails to further discuss elements to be modified in the society to enable institutional change. Parson develops and applies *structural function theory* to discuss those missing features and to adds four elements, structural categories of social system – role, collective, norms and values. Parson believes that these categories link individual roles and social values and can be used to define social innovations. To distinguish, say social and economic innovations, typology would include above mentioned categories to define social innovations, as categories such as products, processes, marketing and organization, helpful to define innovations in the sectors of the economy (Hochgerner, 2012).

Despite important contributions that structural function and structuration theories have made for the analysis and explanation of social innovations, they, nevertheless, do not fully address theoretical and empirical problems of social innovations. These problems better addressed by social practice and actor-network theories. For instance, *actor-network theory (ANT)* considers implicit understanding of ‘social’ as ‘taking care’, common good as a strategic mistake in analysis of social innovations (Degelsegger & Kesselring, 2012). Latour explained that “social innovation as human-to-human interaction free from technological aspects and business motives is very simplistic and naïve understanding of social innovation” (as cited in Degelsegger & Kesselring, 2012, p. 34). Actor-network theory (ANT) has been, first dedicated to study the process of innovation. Later, Degelsegger and Kesselring have experimented with this theory to establish a framework theory for social innovation (Degelsegger, 2012). Focused on the link of human and non-human (technological artefacts) actors it is not restricted to social activities isolated from technological and economic innovations. Actually, according to Degelsegger (2012), “by going beyond high-tech solutions in the process of innovation, ANT looks at relationships that are also not purely social that include only human-to-human interaction isolated from technological and economic innovations” (p. 42). It allows mixture of elements encompassing social innovation in social and non-social dimensions. These key elements enabling innovation according to ANT, are covered and explained in the Table 2.

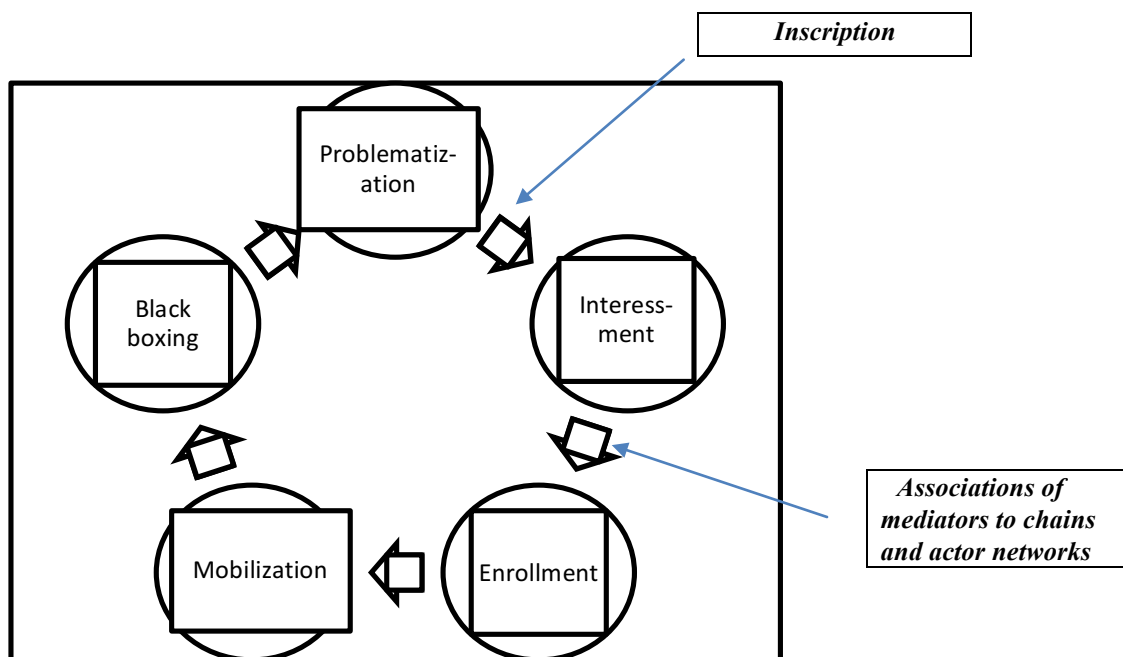
Table 2. Description of the key elements of innovation according to ANT

Disinterest	Interest	Composition	Obligatory passage point	Alignment	Black-boxing	Convergence
Different elements (potential actors) exist, but are not related. It is not yet clear whether they may become related and thus, whether they may become actors.	Events or actions create mutual relevance and interest. Elements become relevant for each other when for instance an action program fails or does not command appropriate means to reach its objective.	The actors in the making exchange properties, modify their action programs, and may ultimately compose a new goal.	The new actor becomes part of the modified action program. The actor becomes an obligatory passage point which means that the modified action program only works or functions because of this actor.	The modified action program including the actors and their relations become more and more routine. The new actor becomes a standard means	The actor network becomes black boxed which means that the actors and their relations that enable a certain program of action are made invisible.	The actors and their relations appear as one unified actor. Alignment, black boxing and convergence are strongly related.

Source: Latour, 2014, p. 7.

Innovation process also called translation in ANT, and covers five major components (see Figure 4) connected in the network allowing inscription and associations of mediators to chains and actor networks enabling innovation process.

Figure 4. Translation (innovation) process according to ANT



Source: Latour, 2014, p. 7.

ANT has made an important attempt in explaining the process of innovation and the ‘socialness’ of social innovation. However, Actor-network theory a) does not distinguish between technological, business and social innovations; and b) primarily considers ‘social’ in social innovation as communication/interaction between actors, rather than social impact. It does not mean, however, that actor-network theory ignores social impact as a required dimension of social innovation. Actor-network theory is criticized for treating human beings and non-human beings (artefacts) equally in its equation of social innovation. As Howaldt (2014) writes:

Things do not determine action, they can only enable, facilitate, offer, encourage, suggest, influence, prevent, exclude and so on, they can open or constrain the scope of action. In dealing with things there is always a variety of modes of action. In this perspective, the approach is not a radicalization of the socio-technology approach, but in fact connectable to social theories of practices. (p. 38)

In this regard, actor-network theory can be potentially combined with social practice theory, but only in a sense of regarding social practice as the network of elements (Howaldt et al, 2014). However, for better understanding and explaining social innovation and the process of its generation, actor-network theory is not sufficient. Therefore, discussing and applying social practice theory is required.

2.2.3. Social practice theory and social innovation

Hochgerner, in his study “The Analysis of Social Innovations as Social Practice” analyzed social innovation from the broader socio-economic perspective. Hochgerner (2012) claimed that “all innovations are socially relevant, and ‘social innovations’ may end up giving economically significant outcomes. But, to be considered as a social innovation, it has to bring a social change, as technological and economic innovations” (p. 11). Indeed, the value of Hochgerner’s analysis is in defining social innovation through the lens of social practice. His definition of the concept of social innovation is not entirely novel *per se*, nevertheless, it adds to the emerging theoretical discourse on social innovations, the role of ‘creative idea’ and ‘invention’. He emphasizes that social innovations are not solely determined by the potential of idea, but also to what extent the potentials of an idea are realized. It depends on whether the ‘invention’ yields benefit to target groups and thus ‘in the process of implementation and

dissemination a social idea mutates into a social innovation (Hochgerner, 2012).

To get a broader sense of such effects Hochgerner (2012) examines social innovations from the perspective of politics, culture, law and economics. In his work “The Analysis of Social Innovations as Social Practice” he analyzed social innovations from the perspective of politics, culture, law and economics. He emphasized that “all innovations are socially relevant both those with objectives and rationality criteria to change economic parameters and those with social intentions and effects in the field of social practices” (p. 55). He supposed that innovations in their effects do not restricted to certain functional system irrespective of their type. In other words, innovations in economy do not only change economy, but effect politics, law and culture. Vice-versa, social innovations do not only influence culture or politics, but have an effect on the law and economy. Thus, integration of these systems is vital for change (Hochgerner, 2012).

Hochgerner being predominantly preoccupied with the spread of social innovations across functional systems of the society, has not described how exactly social innovations effect politics, law, economy and culture. Remaining silent about mechanisms of action of social innovations Hochgerner also did not reveal theoretical concept of social innovation, allowing academic discussion about social change in the society. This gap was addressed by Howaldt et al. (2014) in the study on social innovations as drivers of social change.

Howaldt et al. (2014) concerned with development of theoretical concept of social innovation and contribution to the theory of social innovations in his work “Social Innovations as Drivers of Social Change – Exploring Tarde’s Contribution to Social Innovation Theory Building”. Howaldt et al. (2014) wrote:

The emerging concept of social innovation suffers as a result of its poor social theoretical foundations with the consequence that there is a lack of clarity, especially concerning the relationship between social innovation and transformative social change. (p. 67)

Howaldt et al. (2014) provided the conceptualization of social innovation by examining Tarde’s social theory. Howaldt et al.’s (2014) contribution to the development of theory of social innovations was not only in his critical analysis of Tarde’s theory, but also in suggestion of a new theoretical approach in the analysis of social innovations. Howaldt et al. (2014) analyzed social innovations through the lens of practice theory, emphasizing their role of the new social practices for social good. Howaldt et al. (2014) pointed out the need “to regard

social innovation as the multilayer phenomenon which consist of countless and nameless inventions and discoveries that change society and its practices through equally countless acts of imitation, and only as a result do they become a true social phenomenon” (p. 28).

Social practice theory emphasizes that social innovation is a new combination and/or configuration of social practices prompted by certain actors or constellation of actors in an intentional targeted manner, in certain areas of action or social contexts, with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices (Howaldt et al., 2014). For social practice theory invention is a central element for social development (Howaldt et al., 2014), but *imitation/repetition* the central mechanism of social reproduction and social change and social innovation (see Figure 5).

Tarde emphasized this key role of imitation of ideas as the mechanism of social innovation as a connection of new ideas to the previously existing ideas. Tarde (2009) pointed out that “the process is usually complicated and consists of numerous elements connected with each other, that after the intervention (of new ideas and elements) further become more complex elements of the more complex imitations” (p. 67). It is a connection between invention as the starting point of imitation, and imitation itself, that creates new social situation (Howaldt et al., 2014). Invention and imitation start at the micro and meso levels, but to bring about social change, and to become a social innovation, new social practices should spread across the society as the result of their diffusion. The social change in the social structure of the society appears as Zapf suggested “in its constitutive institutions, cultural patterns, associated social actions and conscious awareness” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 427). Therefore, development and change are according to Tarde, “enabled by invention, by successful [individual] initiatives that are imitated and hence become (social) innovations” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 363). While imitation, or in other words, scaling/diffusion of invention makes it a social innovation, it has to be also noted that social innovations are not necessarily (and in fact rarely) scaled by inventor (Howaldt et al., 2014).

The process of social innovation generation according to social practice theory, undergoes through the stages of implementation through planned or unplanned intervention, prototyping/piloting of a new idea in existing social context. Institutionalization follows implementation stage to assure that a new social practice became an everyday routine. Diffusion or imitation advance invention to the level of a new social practice that potentially changes existing social structure, and enables social change. These key stages of generation of social innovation are helpful for understanding how new social practice is able to make a social

change and create a new social reality. To embody anticipated social innovation, the following key elements of social practice described in the Table 3 should be considered.

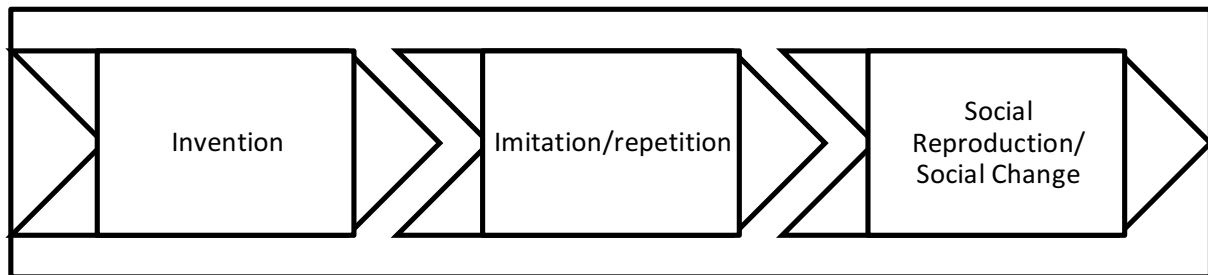
Table 3. Key elements of social practice

Physicality	Materiality	Competencies
Sociality and physicality carried out practices	Things, technologies in and for social practice	Know-how, practical knowledge, background knowledge, understanding

Source: Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 13.

According to Howaldt et al. (2014), “novelty can go out of each of these elements. New practices thus arise from the combination of new and existing elements” (p. 91). As mentioned above social change may occur through the mechanism translating invention through imitation into socially reproduced new social fact able to change social structure.

Figure 5. Mechanism of Social Reproduction and Social Change



Source: Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 19.

According to Howaldt et al. (2014), “social innovations are shaping the sub-processes and elements of social change on the micro, meso and macro levels” (p .7). These sub-processes displayed in the Table 4.

Table 4. Levels of operation of social innovation

Micro level	Meso level	Macro level
many small, locally embedded initiatives address a variety of distinct needs. By empowering vulnerable groups, they actively facilitate processes of inclusion.	it is about institutional change. That is, social innovators as “rule breakers” challenge existing practices, established welfare and market institutions (e.g., rules, laws, attitudes, modes of governance).	social innovation entails a new division of labor between the sphere of politics, i.e. welfare regimes and institutions that govern them, civil society and market-driven economy.

Source: Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 22.

Social practice theory was applied for the analytical purposes of the current study to

scrutinize full scope of social innovations covering micro, meso and macro level. To do so, the study refers to the social practice generation stages (see Table 5) that allows understanding the process of social innovation generation based on the social practice theory.

Table 5. Social practice generation stages

Stages	Invention	Implementation	Institutionalization	Diffusion	Social change
Explanation	Discovering the idea	Introduction of idea into context of use	Idea becomes a regular practice or made routine	Fast and sustained spread of innovation	Change in the social structure of a society, its underlying institutions, cultural patterns

Source: Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 19.

Discussion of social innovation as a social practice on micro-foundational level is a remarkable theoretical contribution of Tarde in understanding of micro-foundational social changes and inventions able to lead to social change. Social practice theory also allows more nuanced analysis of social innovations by positioning it in the different levels (micro, meso and macro). Also, theory provides the full scope of analytical instruments to scrutinize ‘social innovation’ project as a process (stages of generation of social innovation), and the outcome (enabling social change). Therefore, from the discussion of social practice theory, the following criteria have been picked up for the evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics: 1) ‘social innovation’ projects should be new inventions (new actions or new in social contexts); 2) they should be prompted by certain actors or constellation of actors (networking and collaboration); 3) they should have the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems (social impact). To become macro level social innovations, they should be 4) imitated (diffused), though not necessarily by the inventors, and finally, institutionalized.

At the same time, social practice theory, though covering many social innovation related criteria, has not dealt with ‘social innovation’ projects led by organization whose primary purpose is developmental. It misses the point of social innovation designed and implemented for development goals in developing countries with economic, political and social systems in transition. It also does not discuss the peculiarities such social innovation holds in relation to other kinds of social innovations. Thus, given the fact that the study focuses on the ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the development organization – the UNDP, in developing post-Soviet republics, transiting from Soviet highly regulated economic, political and social systems to market economies and democratic governance, considering developmental overtone of social innovations is truly important. But, before shifting to the

particular developmental aspect of social innovation, let us first discuss the features that social innovations mostly share.

2.3. Features of social innovations

This section is dedicated to the review of the scholarly literature to find out what social innovation is about. To do so, diverse studies about social innovation have been scrutinized. The literature review has identified commonalities and differences among the features of social innovations. In order to have a comprehensive and more focused interpretation of social innovation, it was categorized based on its six common features generated from the literature. These features have been found prevalent in reviewed cases of social innovations from different countries.

2.3.1. People-centeredness and inclusiveness of social innovation

Literature review suggests that people (human)-centric and inclusive approach in social innovations has a spectrum of three major areas where: the first, individuals are agents of change themselves, since people (human)-centric approach allows them to identify and address a particular social problem themselves; the second, individuals designing solutions for the problems, are themselves benefiting from these solutions, meaning, for instance, that they design social innovations to resolve issues in the communities they belong to; and the third, is that people (human)-centric social innovations allow better inclusion of previously neglected individuals and social groups. More elaboration on these areas follows below.

Individuals as the agents of change

The primary feature identified while analyzing social innovations is their human (people)-centeredness. For example, SI-Drive project that mapped 1005 social innovations globally, in case of South Africa, as Howaldt et al. (2018) found “though social innovations did not disregard the importance of collaboration with government, private sector, NGOs, universities, they nevertheless prioritized the role of individuals, be they public servants, civil society activists or end-users of services. Institutions could support this journey, but needed to put the citizens and their needs at the center” (p. 76).

Mulgan and Murray (2010) in their analysis of social innovation generation process, pointed out that the new solution should be prompted, later prototyped and piloted/tested by the individuals experiencing social problem. This is how social innovation achieves its social goal. Hochgerner (2012) and Howaldt et al. (2014) mention invention as the starting point for social innovation, if invented idea imitated and turned into the social practice. The invention, in this regard, is something initiated by the individuals experiencing the problem, and wishing to solve it. Santha (2019) in his article suggested “people-centered and context-specific systemic social innovation approaches as possible pathways to achieve the SDGs” (p. 9). He thought that focus solely on economic entrepreneurship while generating social innovations, disregards social and environmental aspects required for sustainable development (Santha, 2019). Human (people) – centered social innovation is a rewarding approach, effective in designing social innovations for those who really need them.

Despite the commonly agreed people (human)-centeredness of social innovations, recent literature suggests to look at this feature beyond just individualistic prism. For instance, the World Bank’s Report on social innovations in Colombia, emphasizes that social innovations should be co-designed with communities, they intend to help (World Bank, 2017). This approach suggests that broader participation of the community, and not just selected individuals, should be assured while planning social innovations. In that sense social innovations are, indeed, people-centered, meaning that even if designed by particular individuals, they effect communities from which these individuals come. Thus, social innovations not only designed by individuals and communities, but also have target effect on them.

Individuals and communities as the targeted beneficiaries

In Seoul, South Korea, people-centered design of social innovations was considered as the most useful approach to public sector innovations. Howaldt et al.’s (2018) findings from South Korea demonstrated that “by doing so [applying people-centered approach], one-sided public welfare services were switched to more interactive ones in which people could live their everyday lives with a stronger sharing spirit and sustainable city environment, and these innovative policies ultimately could be disseminated into basic administrative units” (p. 158).

Cases of human-centered design of social innovations, demonstrate that ideas/inventions/projects addressing needs should be planned and driven by individuals experiencing the problem which they intend to tackle. Solutions focused on those individuals,

would allow finding and applying the best option, relevant to the people (users). These solutions can be generated based on human-centered principal, in any area of actions.

However, just people (human)-centric design of social innovations is not sufficient. As Santha (2019) mentioned, social innovations besides being people-centric, should also be “context specific and systemic” (p. 9), otherwise they cannot satisfy social needs of individuals and communities. Moreover, “one size fits all” social innovations drawn from neo-liberal paradigm, are not able to achieve sustainable development goals focused on social and environmental issues (Santha, 2019), beyond economic entrepreneurship. In this regard, applying more inclusive mechanisms, encompassing social needs of previously diminished groups, is a prerequisite of social innovation.

Inclusion of previously neglected individuals and groups

In South Asian countries, Howaldt et al. (2018) identified that, people-centered social innovation programs were designed to address the needs of the marginalized groups. Howaldt et al. (2018) supposed that:

The future vision for social innovation in the region in ‘people centric social innovation’, which is transformative in its approach and aims to address societal needs by centering on the concerns of marginalized people, their context and strategies to address them. Thus, grassroots innovations that led bottom-up solutions for sustainable development responding to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved was the other key direction for future responses within people centric social innovation. (p. 160)

However, for assuring that people-centered approach leads to more inclusion, specific problematic areas should have been identified, so as the social groups (individuals) suffering the most due to the existing problems, and left behind the existing policy programs. Otherwise, people-centeredness would be missing its focused consideration of area-specific problems. For example, Barraket et al. (2015) specifically focused on social innovation for health equity promotion. Barraket et al. (2015) pointed out that “the greatest concentration of research on social innovation activity at the individual and daily living conditions levels of the health equity system that highlights contextual nature of social innovations addressing the needs of geographic communities and/or particular social groups” (p. 52). Barraket et al. (2015) stand

for people-centered program design when it concerns social innovations in the health sector, which positions the individual in the core of health policies and programs, and makes these programs more inclusive. It was also pointed out that besides people-centered approach, social relationships should be valued as changing attitudes and behaviors of different groups. This will further affect institutional changes and subsequently living conditions of individuals.

Asenova and Damianova discussed social innovations in the post-communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe. In their contribution to SI-Drive project, they argued that “social innovations in these countries is the result of the efforts of the third sector and social entrepreneurs mainly occurring as response to pressing societal challenges not addressed by public policies. Social innovation initiatives are mostly successful in the field of providing social services (mainly to vulnerable groups and Roma minorities), education and employment opportunities” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 35).

Marques et al. (2018) also emphasized that inclusiveness is one of the elements of social innovations. However, according to Marques et al. (2018), inclusiveness *per se* does not distinguish social innovation from other phenomena, for instance any development or political projects. Therefore, new social relationships should occur in the process of generation of social innovations. Thus, networking and collaboration among different actors should happen.

2.3.2. Networking and collaboration

Networking and collaboration of different actors to generate and spread social innovations is a requirement for them to succeed. Many cases of researched social innovations suggest that established collaboration and well developed networks contributed to the generation of social innovations. For instance, based on findings of Howaldt et al. (2018) experiences from the social innovations in Basque area, networking aspects have been particularly considered. Howaldt et al. (2018) argued that “the public-private alliances to support social innovations at different levels has been achieved (...). Social innovation spaces (networking and consortiums) to promote collective and open innovations in smart strategies to solve social problems have been created” (p. 116).

Different perspective on networking, is not through public-private partnership, but throughout built ecosystem. For instance, in Italy, according to Howaldt et al. (2018), it was found out the key role of “communities, networks, and spaces, such as co-working spaces, living labs, or incubators, that are an essential part of the overall ecosystem, and support social

innovation by experimenting and fostering new forms of knowledge sharing, socialization, and cross-sector collaboration and contamination was emphasized” (p. 113).

Certainly, social innovation is not a phenomenon emerging in a single sector. Experiences from the UK tell that partnerships and more collaboration should be promoted across the sectors and actors to embed social innovations broadly, and take social innovations out of solely social enterprises business. Moreover, networking as an alliance between public and private sectors, or the result of developed ecosystem allowing social innovations to be generated across different sectors, does not work if networking policies are not strategic. Saying that Howaldt et al. (2018) mentioned strategic networking policies to foster social innovations in Europe:

There is a strong need for a mechanism to foster partnerships and peer-to-peer support. Through partnerships, accelerators can provide better curriculum, connections, and expertise on specific dynamics. Foster collaboration amongst impact enterprises, starting a business to address these issues involves common growth challenges, which all impact enterprises face. The strength of the network lies in sharing, learning and scaling for the benefit of innovators. (p. 98)

In other words, peer-to-peer support of different enterprises might be another way of nurturing social innovations. But, being more business oriented, peer-to-peer support does not cover non-business sectors. Also, it disregards the possibility of collaboration of enterprises and other government and non-government actors. For instance, Barraket et al. (2015) emphasized that the “greater collaboration across health and non-health sectors and between civil society, government and the private sector should be mobilized in support of health equity promotion” (p. 59).

Theoretically speaking, Mulgan et al. (2010) and Howaldt et al. (2014) while discussing the role of ‘connectors’ or constellation of different actors in generation of social innovation, specifically emphasized their (actors) input in social innovation. Yet, Sørensen et al. (2012) went beyond collaboration between different actors/sectors for social innovation. Sørensen et al. (2012) pointed out “how public sector leaders and managers can advocate for collaborative innovations, that would require the change and transformation of the entire system from public management to public governance” (p. 147). Indeed, as Domanski (2017) indicated “social innovation cannot be limited to one focus, be it social entrepreneurship or social economy, (...) widening the perspective is crucial for understanding social innovation” (p. 21).

Networking and cooperation between the government and CSOs (or community leaders)

Government was an active actor dealing with social innovations in developing and post-communist countries. However, this is also true for developed countries, where government also tries to apply social innovations to address the gaps in government dominated systems (welfare, health care etc.). In practice, without cooperation with government and government's support, in developing countries social innovations were uneasy to generate. In developed countries, social innovations occurred outside of the government (or public) sector, and were, in fact, later spilled over to this sector from non-governmental sector.

Hence, in Nordic countries approach to social innovations was specific. As Howaldt et al. (2018) found, so-called Nordic framework for social innovation “serves to reconcile the standing of a strong state with individuals that take active part in fulfilling their needs, commonly benefitting from initiatives originating outside the realm of mainstream institutions” (p. 108). In developed countries, social innovations were usually considered as possible solutions to the problems that have not or could not be addressed by the existing social nets and welfare systems. This is how social innovations generated outside of the mainstream government institutions, later transferred to these institutions and applied to address existing gaps in delivery of required social services. Thus, this is where the cooperation between government and non-government actors happen.

In developing countries cooperation happened differently. For instance, in case of Chile, Damanski and Monge-Iriarte emphasize the pioneering role of the public sector and Chilean governmental entities, e.g. Chilean Economic Development Agency (CORFO) in promotion of social innovations (Howaldt et al., 2018). In practice, social innovations without government support were lacking sustainability. The case of Turkey is a vivid example of this fact.

In the case of Turkey discussed by Ecer and Dalagic, social innovations described as not sustainable, due to the lacking fundraising possibilities for them. Ecer and Dalagic informed that “in Turkey social innovations are mostly funded by the government or private sector” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 124). Ecer and Dalagic pointed out the “increasing role of the government in social innovation projects such as employment and poverty reduction” (as cited in Howald et al., 2018, p. 46). The government supported social innovations in the domains where social problems should be resolved. Otherwise, leaders implementing social innovations had to raise funds themselves, which was, for instance, problematic in Turkey. Basically, social innovations have had better chances to be

implemented, if they were aimed at the social problems set by the government. In reality this means that without government's strategic support, social innovations in developing countries had a risk of failure. The difference was, however, in government's application of social innovations in its policies. Differently from Turkey, where social innovations were supported in strategic areas prioritized by the government, in China social innovations were supported and coordinated more systematically.

China is an example of government extensive participation in coordination and support of social innovations. According to Howaldt et al. (2018):

Social innovation has been promoted as a national development strategy in China since the mid 2010s. New ideas, models of organizational behavior, schedules and policy programs have been tested for social innovation. These ideas support social innovative practices in different ways and thus support their development despite a number of social challenges. (p. 118)

Nevertheless, it was still unclear whether projects supported by the governments were true social innovations. For instance, in Russia projects supported by the government, private sector, NGOs and individuals have been mapped and labeled as "social innovation", though whether they were, in fact social innovations, has not been supported by the evidence. However, as Il'in et al. stated "being a new phenomenon for Russia, they ['social innovation' projects] remained mostly government led in the areas where the government considered them important" (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 126). These projects in Russia were very focused on the concrete domains such as social care, education, inequality reduction, employment, ecology. For all of them, missing government support and lacking financial resources were the major challenges (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 127). If put aside already identified challenges that social innovations encountered, if they do not have government's support, and look at how collaboration with government happened, it could be found that government cooperated with CSOs and local community leaders.

Hence, in Southeast Asia, according to the *UNDP Social Innovation for Public Service Excellence Report*, in Philippines showed that "the Enchanted Farm is unique combination of model farm, village, university and social business incubator. It is the 1st of 24 sites Gawad Kalinga plan to build around the Philippines" (UNDP, 2014, p. 20). In Malaysia according to the UNDP (2014), "Cure & Care Centers Partnership between a public agency and social innovation advisers have been promoting anti-drug policy of the government of Malaysia to

prevent crime or associated with drugs spread of HIV/AIDs” (p. 21). Above mentioned examples of social innovations demonstrate that in developing countries, successful social innovations could emerge from the cooperation between the public and civil sectors (or individual social innovators).

In case of Latin America and Caribbean, Bernal and Cecchini also emphasized the role of community leaders seeking cooperation with local administrations, professional and civil society organizations (Howaldt et al., 2018). Networking was something even more important, certainly more applicable and workable in Latin America. Interpersonal relationships, networks between universities and international networks in Brazil according to Cipolla and Afonso (2018), help to develop social innovations. In case of Columbia Bekier (2018) emphasized slightly different perspective. He stresses the input of community based social innovations that contribute to the peace and prosperity in the country. Moreno (2017) in the World Bank research in Colombia emphasized that “international donors and the state have to co-design socially innovative solutions with the communities they are seeking to help” (p. 9). This is a clear signal for cooperation with communities to generate social innovation.

The examples above, indicate that social innovations in developing countries were initiated by the community leaders in cooperation with governments, civil society organization, through networks and interpersonal relationships. This also confirms the findings of Domanski (2017), who argues that social innovations should not be any more regarded as something generated by the third (civil society sector), but has to be considered as the phenomenon spreading across the different sectors (e.g. government, civil society, academia. etc.).

The experiences from developing and post-communist countries, in fact, suggest that social innovations were generated as the result of cooperation of government and CSOs (or community leaders). It was also found that while in developed countries social innovations could be generated independently from the government (sometimes by social enterprises or social entrepreneurs), they could be later supported by the government, and/or used in the public sector. In developing and post-communist countries, in contrary, social innovations could be hardly generated without prior cooperation with government entities.

In fact, the level of government involvement in supporting social innovations was different in developing and developed countries. For developing countries, government support was simultaneously a blessing and a challenge. This is because in the settings of relatively underdeveloped mechanisms for raising funds, using institutional capacity of organizations, and weak civil society, government remains sometimes, the only actor able to support social innovations. At the same time, too much of government involvement bares the risk of not

allowing other actors to develop and engage with social innovations. Therefore, as Howaldt et al. (2018) suggest:

Policymaking needs to refrain from seeking dominance for its own sake. The lesson rather is that policy should strive to support generally favorable conditions for citizen engagement and step in to support the uptake of social innovation when that is clearly helpful for realizing the benefits. In other cases, policy should let social innovation run its course as a force capable of responding to, and filling, the gaps. (p. 110)

Ideally, government should contribute to the development of innovation ecosystem, allowing bigger number of actors to collaborate and choose which of the needs should be primarily tackled in the society. This would not damage government supported social innovations, but would rather create more opportunities and diversity for other actors. What reviewed examples also tell us, is that networking and collaboration among different actors/sectors was vital for the success of social innovations. These social relationships were helpful in solving social problems, especially in the areas where government alone cannot tackle pressing social issue. Well-developed social innovation ecosystem encompassing various actors and spreading social innovation across several sectors, has a potential to address unmet social needs. Reviewed cases confirm this, and demonstrate that cooperation with government was established to support social innovations.

2.3.3. Localness and focus on specific domain

Any social innovation starts locally, and later might be considered for diffusion across the society. Scholarship encompasses numerous examples of academic research in local communities and governments in developed countries, where social innovations have been generated. For instance, Evers et al. (2012) analyzed 79 cases of social innovation projects in different local communities and cities in Europe. Evers et al. (2012) specifically looked at local social cohesion for social innovation, and could point out similarities and differences of the locality of social effects from social innovation. Evers et al. (2012) found that local social cohesion and social innovation are contributing to emergence of a new local welfare system in Europe, addressing the gaps in welfare system overlooked by the government. Evers et al. (2012) researched local social cohesion for social innovation, but overlooked the connection between social innovation and local welfare state policy.

Oosterlynck et al. (2015) addressed this gap and contributed to Evers et al.'s (2012) research by analyzing "connection between social innovation and micro-level welfare state policy" (p. 4). Oosterlynck et al. (2015) specifically looked at "how local social innovations organize social interventions differently from conventional welfare state policies and social investment strategies" (p. 5). Generation and application of local social innovations is a new topic emerging in European social policies. Local social innovations are being able to address the gaps in local welfare systems, not accurately addressed by the government. If successful, local social innovations are spread across the welfare system. In developed countries, they serve the role of new approaches, practices and methods to address welfare problems.

In developing and post-communist countries social innovations were specifically launched to address social needs, or in order to address certain challenges locally (Howaldt et al., 2018), rather than being aimed at macro level systemic/social changes. Recent findings of the SI-Drive project also demonstrated that social innovations in developing and post-communist countries occurred in various specific domains.

For instance, Bernal and Cecchini mention 'Lots of Milk' project in Haiti, that was designed with participation of local communities, and micro milk producers (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p 48). In Brazil social innovation projects were built around the city of Rio de Janeiro. These initiatives were mostly based on interpersonal face-to-face relationships and encountered, i.e., the kind that occurred in small groups, on a small, local scale. To recall, due to the government support in numerous developing countries social innovations happened in government priority domains. They all have been also launched locally.

For example, in Turkey and Chile social innovations were designed to be implemented in the domains prioritized by the government. Those projects were led by the government (or public) institutions locally. For instance, in Turkey it is 'Karavan-Basin' rural development project, in Chile Chilean Economic Development Agency supported initiatives of social entrepreneurs. In China, based on Chinese strategic program supporting social innovations, in the public sector they were led and coordinated by the government on the local level. For instance, according to Howaldt et al. (2018), models of social management such as "Nanjing, empower local residential committees, Yantian and Shenzhen cities focused on separation of the residential communities and government agencies on the local level" (p. 58).

In the context of domain specific application of social innovations, it should be noted that in different countries, they have occurred in different areas. For instance, area wise, in post-communist countries of Eastern Europe, social innovations mainly occurred in the field of education, environment, transport, and energy. In the Middle East and North Africa social

innovations mostly focused on the areas aimed at poverty eradication, sustainable development and education. In the Arab states social innovations happened in the fields of empowerment and knowledge development (Howaldt et al., 2018). The rationale behind being area specific, was to design local social innovations aimed for addressing particular needs and problems, which in different countries were laying in distinct areas.

It is clear from the literature that social innovations in reviewed cases were launched as the local initiatives aimed at specific domain. In developing and post-communist countries, when the governments intended to use social innovations in their priority areas, they have anticipated to tackle pressing social and economic problems such as unemployment, better health service etc. The experiences from developing and post-communist countries also demonstrated that social innovations were aimed at specific domains (education, healthcare, governance etc.). As was mentioned already, in developing countries areas prioritized by the governments, by default, have had specific focus oriented to the solution of the certain developmental problems. When social innovations were initiated by the NGOs/NPOs/ individuals (social innovators or social entrepreneurs), they have been also addressing specific social challenges in the certain areas. In this regard, use of technologies, employing ICTs, was very helpful for assuring transparency, crowdsourcing of ideas, and better citizens' participation for solution of existing social issues.

2.3.4. Use of technology

Though it is not a strict prerequisite, the use of technology or digitalization of social innovation (Kaletka, 2018) has widely spread across different countries. Indeed, social innovations can be either low-tech or high-tech. The difference is that in developed countries high-tech social innovations help to develop services allowing more convenient, more cost effective and rapid service delivery in various areas (e.g. welfare system, health care, etc.). In developing and post-communist countries, besides earlier mentioned services, ICTs are helpful in assurance of more transparency, inclusion and participation of citizens in designing solutions of social problems. For instance, in Brazil, according to Cipolla and Alfonso's contribution to the SI-Drive project, "many social innovation initiatives rely on the use of ICT. These technologies prove to be useful for creating new communicative patterns in the city and promote new connections between slums and the outside areas (e.g. Papo Reto)" (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 37). These examples, however miss one important aspect related to the ICTs in social innovations. The fact is that ICTs might be used for social innovations with

different implications. It can improve existing social innovation, or even create a new one.

According to Millard (2014), ICTs are usually used for two major purposes:

First ICT is used to ‘support’ existing social innovations, or existing types of social innovation, which are significantly improved by deploying ICT. For example, ICT can support unemployed people to find employers or others needing work or tasks much faster and more accurately than traditional approaches. Second, ICT is used to ‘enable’ social innovations that would otherwise not happen, and this may sometimes even lead to completely new types of social innovation. For example, ICT is creating completely new social, business and governance models and value chains without unnecessary middlemen and which empower the individual looking for employment. (p. 7)

According to Millard (2014), “ICT can both support and enable social innovation” (p. 7). For instance, by using ICT unemployed person can faster and easier find a job, or ICT can empower new models of providing employment. ICT component in post-communist republics was used to provide new services that are more handy and convenient for users. For instance, in Bulgaria Jumpido is an educational software for primary school students that offers a new methodology of learning mathematics through a set of educational games and at the same time encourages children to engage in sportive activities (Howaldt et al., 2018). Technologies (ICT) help to address social issues in developing and post-communist countries in a different, more inclusive manner, also empowering individuals.

The use of technology might create different modes of technology and practice combination. The ultimate goal of the social innovations using technology might be also different. For instance, for development purposes, technology (ICT) is used very often to fight corruption or to assure transparency and participation. In this regard, Bruck et al. (2012) reviewed innovative projects submitted to the UN in 2012, “to fight poverty, hunger, disease, inequality, lack of education and environmental degradation with the use of ICT” (p. 268). Indeed, there is no surprise that the use of technology (ICT) in different countries is the common case, though the rationale behind the use of ICT can be different. In developed countries ICTs assure more convenience, accuracy and rapidity of the services. In developing countries, ICTs also serve for the purposes of inclusion, transparency, etc.

2.3.5. Scaling up

To replicate the socially innovative solution that addressed a particular local social problem, scaling up opportunities should be available. In this context, it was found that though it was required, scaling up social innovation projects in developing and developed countries was challenging. Among the main reasons for this were: (a) absence of institutionalization possibilities for social innovations; (b) problems of transferring social innovations; (c) conservatism of policy-makers towards new social innovation practices.

For instance, Asadova (2013) in her research compared social innovations in developing countries, namely Uganda and India, with social innovations in United States of America and United Kingdom. Asadova (2013) argued that “nature of social innovation in developing countries provide more opportunities for its spread due to larger number of unmet needs” (p. 45). She however, pointed out the need of institutions for social innovations in developing countries. So far, as Asadova found that “the lack of enabling institutions in developing countries put NGOs and grassroots at the forefront of social innovation pioneers” (p. 46). In other words, though the need for social innovation might exist, absence of institutionalization possibilities, hinder the introduction and spread of social innovation that is able to address this need.

In contrast, Barraket et al. (2015) researched social innovations for health equity problem and found evidence from developing and developed countries that suggested that “institutional frameworks can be adapted to accommodate innovative solutions to promote system-wide changes in health equity programs. A clearer understanding of the predictors of institutional barriers to innovation would assist decision-makers to target resources to systemic health issues more effectively” (p. 56). Clearly, institutionalization is not the only problem of developing countries, where institutions *per se* are usually relatively underdeveloped or function insufficiently effective. According to Barraket et al. (2015), developed countries also experience institutionalization problem when it comes to social innovations. However, in developing countries the scarcity of knowledge and skills to replicate social innovations (or at least elements of social innovation) does not allow scaling them up. This leads to the second reason of the scaling up challenge which is the problem of transferring social innovation.

For example, Chowdhury in his study in rural India was guided by a primary research question: “How are social innovations transferred to other organizations to increase their impact?” (Chowdhury, 2010). After field observations, interviews and processing archival data Chowdhury (2010) showed that “the scaling process is fraught with challenges, but can

nevertheless be managed by focusing on the “Arrow core” – understanding of which knowledge attributes are replicable and worth replicating, together with knowledge of how these attributes are created, and the characteristics of environment in which they are worth replicating, of elements which enable a social innovation’s success” (p. 4). He argued that the existence of the unmet needs did not provide more chances to diffuse social innovations. The question of whether social innovations should be either managed or governed for their success, left without convincing answer. Importantly, Chowdhury pointed out scaling up challenge due to the lacking knowledge of how to replicate the elements that enable success of social innovation. In contrast to Chowdhury’s findings, in case of social innovations researched by Buchegger et al. (2000) in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, it was found that the transfer of successful examples is possible as a matter of principle, however, it requires substantial effort to adapt models in the new social setting. These examples inform about the process of scaling up social innovations equally challenging in the context of developing and developed countries.

The third obstacle for scaling up social innovation is very well described in case of post-communist countries of Eastern Europe. Asenova and Damianova in their contribution to SI-Drive project discussed social innovations in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, that have been a part of communist bloc. Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic are under the research focus. Asenova and Damianova pointed out that “the spread of such initiatives is challenged by the unpopular view on voluntarism in the countries under scrutiny and the conservative attitude of policy-makers and institutions towards social innovations. There is a hope that young people could change this in the future, and push social innovations forward” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 119). Since, all post-communist countries inherited predominantly state-led policies in all areas, engagement of civil society in solving social problems has started emerging only recently. The value of volunteerism as a civic act, is still undervalued. Policy-makers remain pretty conservative about the wider civic participation in the problem solution of the society. Hence, scaling up social innovations in the environment of low awareness of the value of civic activism and missing support of policy makers impede the spread of social innovations. It is also true for other developing countries. For instance, in case of Brazil mentioned by Bernal and Cecchini, it is pointed out the problem of scaling up and replicating social innovations, and the lacking support of the governments and international development agencies in nurturing and replicating social innovations to solve social issues (Howaldt et al., 2018). In other words, scaling up social innovations across the social system remains a required, but at the same time a challenging task and a feature of social innovation.

2.3.6. Making a social impact

Clearly, social impact is something any social innovation is aimed for, be it resolution of a local social problem, or enabling social/systemic change in the society. Based on this, social impact has different scope and scale. Important is, in this regard, what is being implied under the notion “social impact” in various social settings. For instance, while analyzing social innovations in developing countries (e.g. Uganda and India), and developed countries (e.g. USA and UK), Asadova (2013) argued that the difference of social impact in developed and developing country social settings is “in nature of social innovation, which in case of developed countries characterized by the scarce government resources for certain type of social issues which spurs social innovation” (p. 54). In developing countries, according to Asadova, “the impact of social innovations is in their ability to meet social needs” (p. 55). Buchegger et al. (2000) also suggested that “within the last years, social innovations were seen as a solution for many social problems” (p. 2). What is still debatable, in this context, is how social impact should be assessed? Practically, the scholarly agreed measurement tools of social impact from social innovations are absent. Scholars so far proposed different assessment mechanisms of social impact, and largely disagree about its evaluation instruments.

For instance, Chowdhury (2010) in his study evaluated success or failure of the social impact based on the success or failure in transferring to other organizations, elements of locally generated social innovations that enable problem solution. In other words, if locally designed social innovations have been scaled up successfully and solved as many as possible social problems, then it is possible to claim about the social impact from those social innovations.

Another example is from the Latin America and Carribean where according to Bernal and Cecchini’s contribution to SI-Drive project, “the major goal of social innovations was to improve the living conditions of people, rather than innovate” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 128). To put it differently, in Latin America addressing social challenges was more important than ‘newness’ of the solution of those social problems. This is a vivid case of the emphasis on social impact as improvement of living conditions of individuals, rather than concentration on the means of achievement of this social goal.

Meanwhile, different methods are being discussed and applied to measure social impact of social innovation. One of them is accounting method described by Guenter et al. (2009), who stated that “accounting does not measure the impact of social innovations appropriately, and comes up with KPIs for measuring specific social innovation” (p. 156). The UNDP and inFocus social impact measurement consultancy firm came up with 7 steps to measure social

impact, but this approach was more focused on measuring impact of the UNDP development projects (UNDP, 2017), and not social innovations.

One more example of social impact measurement challenge is from Italy, where Howaldt et al. (2018) found that “the growing dynamism of social innovation is fostering awareness on the need to understand and evaluate the social impact produced by these new solutions. Social impact assessment has never been very widespread in the country, and this has been a weakness for all those organizations that, working for a social objective, are unable to demonstrate their impact” (p. 59). Barraket et al. (2015) also pointed out the missing evidence of the impact from social innovations in developing and developed countries, that also effect the diffusion of social innovation. Barraket et al. (2015) suggested that traditionally evaluation of the impact was based on case studies “with virtually no meta-evaluative evidence available, and very little comparative analysis across intervention types” (p. 58).

Essentially, experiences from social innovations demonstrated that the measurement of the impact of social innovation is a complicated task that entails measurement dimensions, criteria and data to conduct the adequate assessment. To demonstrate the impact from social innovation, relevant methodological tool should be at disposal of the researchers. One of the tools used by the NESTA is known as NESTA standards of evidence (Puttick, 2013) that provides qualitative standards allowing impact assessment from the social innovations. In fact, according to Osburg (2013), “several social impact measurement tools have been created and developed in the few decades” (p. 13), however, Bassi (2016) argues that scholars are still at initial stage of analysis and elaboration of tools for the measurement of the social impact of the organizations doing social innovations.

Evidently, problem of the social impact assessment reveals the need in raising awareness in the necessity to evaluate social innovations, so as in the requirement to proceed with development of the comprehensive methodology and methods of such assessment. It is true that, peculiarities of social contexts frame the social impact from social innovations. They also make any social innovation new in relationship to this context (Oosterlynck et al., 2015). In normative sense, in any social context, social innovation should tackle a social problem, that needs to be solved. Thus, social impact from social innovation is the solution of certain social issue.

Based on the literature reviewed above, dissertation provides in the Table 6, summary of the features of social innovations generated from the scholarly literature. Scholarly literature discussing the features of social innovation is mostly coming from the social practice theory. Several features (e.g. people-centeredness, networking and collaboration), besides social

practice theory, are also shared by the literature coming from actor-network theory and connected difference approach. Also, in the times of digitalization of social innovation, use of ICTs has been considered in the study by default, though not every social innovation should be digitalized. Inclusiveness of social innovation is guaranteed by any social innovation that follows people-centered design covered by social practice theory (and shared by some other theories).

Table 6. Features of social innovations gleaned from the scholarly literature

Features	Explanation
People-centeredness and inclusiveness	Individuals experiencing certain problems come up with solutions of these problems, which is in the core of any social innovation. They strive for more inclusiveness of individuals and social groups, left behind by the previous policies and programs.
Networking and collaboration	Networking and collaboration among different actors (government, CSOs, private companies, individuals) for the generation and progress of social innovations.
Localness and focus on specific domain	Social innovations start locally. They are aimed at specific domain (e.g. education, health care, governance etc.).
Use of technologies (ICTs)	Technologies (ICTs) used in designing and implementation of social innovations. Low-tech social innovations are also possible.
Scaling up	Scaling up/diffusion of social innovations across the social system.
Making a social impact	Addressing particular social problems and social needs.

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the reviewed literature, interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects.

2.4. Types of social innovations

Theoretical literature on social innovations discussed in this dissertation has revealed numerous definitions of social innovation, encompassing various reincarnations of this term. In practice, social innovation has been also used in different relationships to other concepts. For instance, Buchegger et al. (2000) connect social innovation to sustainable development, Lubelcova (2012) discusses it in relationship to modernization, Evers et al. (2012) analyze social innovation for social cohesion, Barraket et al. (2015) discuss social innovation in the context of health equity promotion, Oosterlynck et al. (2015) analyze relationship between social innovation and welfare state restructuring, Howaldt et al. (2014) examine social innovations as the combination of new social practices. Along with theoretical analysis of relationships between social innovations and other concepts, significant amount of research has been dedicated to the types of social innovations emerging in different realms. In the part

of dissertation dedicated to definitions of social innovations, areas of application of the concept, have been mentioned. Those areas covered broad scope of examples of social innovations, related to the various spheres, from sociology to practice-led social innovation domain.

It is required to point out that attempts to come up with typologies of social innovation are also not entirely new. Based on the focus of different studies, various types of social innovations have been generated by scholars (Buechegger et al., 2000; Evers et al., 2012; Marques et al., 2018; Howaldt et al., 2018). The research acknowledges the fact that typologies of social innovations are not limited to the certain field, but vary contextually across the stipulated topics, and focus of the research on social innovations. The study discusses different typologies of social innovations generated from the various studies, and relates them to the case studies in the post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects. It does so to determine whether ‘social innovation’ projects fall under existing types of social innovations? One example of typology of social innovations is Buechegger et al.’s (2000) research that analyzed local social innovations in three European counties, namely, in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. The typology under the rubric ‘sustainable social innovation’ was based on combinations of behavioral change provoked by these social innovations. The analysis revealed the following types of social innovations described in the Table 7.

Table 7. Types and examples of sustainable social innovations

Types of social innovations	Examples/Related projects
New lifestyles	sustainable living as a one-year-test; car-free settlements; eco-villages.
Networks	direct co-operation between First and Third world-projects; regional energy consulting network financed by company-pool; integrated transport solutions.
New services	car-sharing; consumer good sharing; mobility information center; (energy) contracting; maintenance and repair center.
New or modified organizations	local exchange trading organizations (LETS); multi-use of urban space; new NGO’s (e.g. climate alliance).
Public participation	participation models with expert working groups (e.g. in local agenda 21 projects); participation models for sustainable urban planning; “Leitbild”-assessment.

Source: Buechegger et al., 2000, p. 8.

Though, Buechegger et al. (2000) analyzed local social innovation projects and initiatives in three countries, typology generated in the study is irrelevant to the case studies in post-Soviet republics. Partly, because this typology bases on the case studies of developed countries that encompass features (technological advancement, development of civil society, social issues) that are different from the context of post-Soviet republics. Moreover, Buechegger et al. (2000) base the typology on the behavioral change and sustainability aspects of social

innovations. Those aspects are irrelevant to the focus of the current research in post-Soviet republics. Though being relevant to the development field, sustainability strongly connected to environmental issues, as it is positioned by Buchegger et al. (2000), what makes it a separate area of analysis, outside of the governance and development aspects covered in the current dissertation.

Differently from Buchegger et al., Evers et al. (2012) suggested other types of social innovations, namely “service and governance innovations that generated in the cities in Europe” (p. 25). Evers et al. (2012) discussed local social innovations in 20 selected cities in Europe. However, such analysis of the case studies in developed countries of Europe, where the new types of social innovations have been emerged, is not adequate and applicable for post-Soviet republics. In post-Soviet republics, characteristics of civil society, technological advancement, developmental challenges are different from European cases. On top of that, Evers et al. (2012) discussed theoretical and empirical implications of social innovations, and did not cover theoretical analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects supported by development organization (e.g. the UNDP).

Marques et al. (2018) partly addressed this gap and provided different perspectives on social innovations. Marques et al. (2018) questioned the concept of social innovation and its theoretical and empirical implications. Marques et al. (2018) provided typology of social innovation based on “scale and scope of change they make” (p. 563). Based on this, the following types of social innovations are offered:

Structural – innovation in social institutions or relationships as a result of wide political/social/economic change, *targeted structural* – activities that radically reshape how essential goods and services are delivered to improve welfare and that challenge power relations, *targeted complementary* – new processes and relationships that can generate inclusive solutions to societal challenges, *instrumental* – rebranding of political agendas, community development, corporate social responsibility. (p. 586)

The analysis conducted by Marques et al. (2018) covered macro level scale and scope of change caused by social innovations. By focusing on the scale and scope of the change social innovation made, Marques et al. (2018) provided typology that does not cover micro-level social innovations. Marques et al. (2018) examined the normative approach to social innovations, and pointed out that it is not clear whether local or global actors should be considered as the agents of change (Marques et al., 2018). Being predominantly preoccupied

with political agenda, this typology of social innovations is not helpful for the current research, analyzing ‘social innovation’ projects in development realm. Here, typology of social innovation from the context of developing country might be helpful.

For instance, some emerging types of social innovations are formulated in the section of the SI-Drive project dedicated to Brazil, based on regional projects implemented in this country. They are divided into four types, namely:

1. *Grassroots Innovation/Community led Innovation* – primarily focuses on the processes of intervention in addressing socio, economic and political problems at the local level, e.g. water unavailability in rural communities through peoples’ participation and community led solutions.
2. *Design Innovation* – focuses primarily on the outcome of an intervention through improving or designing a new product or service through new or better technology/design, e.g. internet based solutions for marketing of farm produce. Such innovations also often follow a hybrid model combining social and business objectives.
3. *Societal Innovations* – primarily focuses on changing both the process and product/service for tackling large and severe societal challenges like poverty, illiteracy etc.
4. *Structural Innovation* – focuses on changing the overall innovation environment in addressing the larger structural inequities and exclusion, e.g. gender/caste/race atrocities. (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 159)

This typology has not been considered because the types of social innovations described above, have been generated from the regional context of Latin America, and Brazil specifically, that is different from the institutional environment and social contexts in post-Soviet republics. Another reason to disregard this typology is that it has been produced based on the examples of finished projects in Brazil, whereas in post-Soviet republics, research deals with cases of projects that are progressing towards being social innovations, that require different approach. Finally, this typology, again, does not provide theoretical features of social innovation, seeing it primarily as a practical tool, rather than a theoretical concept.

Finally, to address existing gaps, the study discusses the typology of social innovations provided by Howaldt et al. (2018). In the SI-Drive project 1005 social innovations have been mapped across the globe. Based on the theoretical underpinnings of social practice theory, that

regards social innovations as the combination of new social practices, Howaldt et al. (2018) proposed the types of social innovations such as: repairing, modernizing, transforming and separating. All four types of social innovations are discussed in their interaction with the formal system. Table 8 displays explanations of each type of social innovation. As Howaldt et al. (2018) mentioned “the purpose of typologies lies in measuring the fit or deviance of variables of real entities to those of the ideal types. Accordingly, the typology may contain ideal types which are not observed in reality, but still represent a possible path for achieving an outcome” (p. 86). Howaldt et al. (2018) also acknowledged that “the typology described in the study only presents one of many possible typologies. Social innovations are diverse in terms of the actors involved, their level of maturity, their intended outcomes, and their sectoral alliances. All these aspects provide possible entry points for other typologies aiming to answer different research questions” (p. 87).

Table 8. Types of social innovations interacting with the formal system

Transforming	Modernizing	Repairing	Separating
change the system radically.	are leaving the system’s core identity untouched. Looking at the existing structures and is intending to improve the system.	does not question the system as such but repairs single subunits.	acts completely separate from the system.

Source: Howaldt et al., 2018, p. 86.

Howaldt et al.’s (2018) typology is valuable in terms of providing typology covering a broader spectrum of social innovations, also backing it up by the theory. However, this typology is not specific enough (as Howaldt recognizes himself), and cannot be fully applied to post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects. Thus, after reviewing scholarly literature on the types of social innovation, it is clear that scholarly discussion does not adequately capture ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. It is likely that in post-Soviet republics, new type of social innovation, which can be related to any of the above discussed types of social innovation, is emerging. Later in this study, detailed discussion is dedicated to this emerging type of social innovation. Further analysis of the ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet context, is going to demonstrate how this type has been generated, and how it is different from the types of social innovation discussed in the current section.

Since the dissertation deals with the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in the post-Soviet developing countries (and/or countries in transition), the next section is dedicated to the review of the literature on development and social innovations.

2.5. Literature on development and social innovations

Review of the literature on development and social innovations starts from the scholarly work on development theories and social innovations. In terms of development, innovation in general, is primarily regarded as modernization. While discussed in the context of modernization innovation is usually regarded as the source of economic productivity and competitiveness (Lubelcová, 2012), social context coming into picture with social innovation, makes innovation a solution of social problem. It should be noted that the relevance of development is contextual to the extent of what is understood as development in the specific circumstances and operational environment. Modernization theory does not address this aspect. In this regard, modernization theory is too deterministic, and does not consider nuances of development. To overcome this challenge other theories should be applied.

For instance, theories of sustainability and globalization are primarily preoccupied with social and societal changes with grassroots and micro resources, process and impact (Howaldt et al., 2014). Here, the theory of change mentioned by Millard (2014) is helpful “to evaluate whether a program as a whole is effective, but also for explaining how the methods it uses are effective, and for understanding how change is actually achieved” (p. 40). As said, the focus of development theories varies in accordance with changing theoretical approach to social innovation. For instance, according to Millard (2014), post-development theory while critically approaching development as “a ‘mental structure’ imposed by the West” (p. 41), reveals the fundamental cultural and mental constructivism which underlines much theorizing and practice of social innovation. This also helps to strengthen understanding of the behavioral and psychological processes and contexts in which innovations take place (Millard, 2014). Post-development theory has also highlighted technologies and ICTs as a tool for communication, that as Millard (2014) mentioned, “provide new types of governance models in public, commercial and civil realms, such as shared value, as well as both sharing and collaborative economies and societies” (p. 20). Though post-development theory emphasizes the importance of consideration of local cultures and values, it also criticizes the whole idea of development, and so ignores the possibility of “progressive transformation, and ignores tangible developmental improvements in ‘developmental states of East or South East Asia” (Sidaway, 2014, p. 229). Also, it only partially covers social innovation, considering its fundamental constructivist dimension (Millard, 2014). Post-development theory does not speak for the features and generation of social innovation. At this point the process of generation of innovations from *reverse innovation* perspective, also deserves special attention. Millard

(2014) pointed out that reverse innovation theory shows “how trickle-down innovations can be supplemented by trickle-up processes when social, economic and technical innovations emanating from frugal conditions can be scaled much more widely, further empowering and integrating poor societies” (Millard, 2014, p. 50). But how exactly empowerment through social innovation happens? What is the role of various actors, including development agencies, supporting social innovations for development? Above mentioned theories do not address these questions either. To answer to these questions more elaboration on theory and scholarly literature is required.

At this point, it is necessary to indicate that the topic of innovations for development *per se* has evolved from the Innovations System Framework. For instance, Eduardo et al. (2013) in the research “Innovation Systems and Development” introduced and discussed contributions that helped to refine the idea of innovations systems. Eduardo et al. (2013) pointed out four major contributions to innovations systems. The first is the macroeconomic conditions in the country influencing the dynamics of innovations. By macroeconomic conditions he means financial markets, education systems, and nationally determined institutions on industry competitiveness and international specialization (Eduardo et al., 2013). The second, is a broader understanding of the innovation process promoting opportunities for learning encouraged by policy-makers, besides just emphasizing R&D for innovations. The third is historical process in the countries that are usually situated in the different development trajectories. And, the fourth is trust in the national institutions (formal and informal) that reflects the level of solidarity and the degree of learning that can take place in the society (Eduardo et al., 2013). Indeed, innovation systems and development are strongly correlating in the society. However, innovation systems without high quality of governance have certain constraints implying bad quality of governance institutions, hindering economic development. Good governance characterizing one of the major components of capabilities (Fagerberg et al., 2007) for economic development is explained by Fagerberg et al. (2007) and complements Eduardo et al.’s (2013) contributions to innovation systems for development.

Fagerberg et al. (2007) in the paper “National Innovation Systems, Capabilities and Economic Development” analyzed capabilities for economic development. His analysis was based on 25 indicators and 115 countries from the 1992-2004 period. The study found four types of capabilities such as the development of the innovation system, the quality of governance, the character of the political system and the degree of openness of the economy. Fagerberg et al. (2007) pointed out that innovation systems and governance are of particular

importance for economic development. While discussing innovation systems in general, Fagerberg et al. (2007), however, have not specified the role social innovations might serve in the context of development.

More specific approach to social innovation in the context of development is dedicated to social innovation and sustainable development nexus. For instance, Buchegger and Ornetzeder (2000) emphasize the role of social innovations in stimulating sustainable development locally. While discussing social innovations in the context of development Buchegger and Ornetzeder (2000) have found that the concept of sustainable development is able to stimulate activities on a local level that rely on the capacities of socially innovative solutions. Scholars have connected two terms – sustainable development and social innovations in their analysis of 230 initiatives and projects located in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. They have pointed out the major input that social innovations provide for development, is a sustainability of ecosystem in general, where dynamic social change is constantly happening. In other words, to assure sustainable future locally and globally, social innovation solutions would be required. Moreover, social innovations should be generated in different areas where social need exists. One of such areas is knowledge production.

Scardamalia (2006) in her study has conducted historical analysis of different societies where knowledge was created. In her research she looked at different perspective on social innovations that has been presented by Scardamalia (2006) in the paper “Social and Technological Innovations for a Knowledge Society”. She discussed knowledge creation in different societies existed in different historical periods. Scardamalia (2006) concluded that “if we intend to democratize knowledge, creation of knowledge must operate at all levels of an organization and across a wide range of organizations. In order for this to happen, both technological and social innovations are required” (p. 6). In other words, social innovations are crucial for creation of knowledge and making it widely accessible at all levels that would make this knowledge more democratized. Scardamalia (2006) also touched upon a vital aspect of democratic knowledge creation in the society. Indeed, within the wide range of societies and organizations, there is a clear imbalance in knowledge generation that could be balanced by technological and social innovations. Actually, social innovations do not limit to knowledge creation, but, as mentioned above, usually go far beyond one or two sectors, usually being applicable in cross-sectoral manner. For instance, one of the recent social needs has been occurred in welfare system in Europe. In times, when welfare state is in crisis, new instruments are required to tackle new challenges for existing welfare systems across developed countries.

One of the possible innovative tools required for changes in welfare systems is social innovation.

Thus, Evers and Ewert (2012) in their study “Social Innovations for Social Cohesion. On Concepts and First Findings of a Cross-Country Study” have examined social innovations as a part of a welfare system across 20 cities in Europe and researched correlations between an innovative new generation of services and the debates about activating, enabling and social investment oriented welfare state concepts and respective government programs. They have analyzed all observed innovations and pointed out the raising need for a new culture of welfare services and governance of local welfare systems. Based on these findings authors argue about the need of revision of existing welfare systems and the role of social innovations that should be introduced in these systems. However, Evers and Ewert (2012), while studying social innovations in welfare systems have not explained how welfare services can be provided if a new welfare culture would be implemented. Here, social enterprises as a new actor providing socially innovative services might be of great help. Actually, in the times of raising need of new welfare services and welfare culture, social enterprises occupy a strategic niche in the new systems. Moreover, social entrepreneurs became drivers of social innovations globally and locally.

Therefore, Witkamp et al. (2010) in the paper “Strategic Niche Management of Social Innovation: The Case of Social Entrepreneurship” applied social entrepreneurship to test strategic niche management tool in case of technological and social innovations. The paper found that social and technological innovations, though might have minor differences in descriptive terminology of these terms, are in fact sociological and present common patterns signaling change. This argument is crucial for the general discussion of technological and social innovations for development. Moreover, it demonstrates that social entrepreneurship is a driving force of social innovations. Social innovations for sustainable development have been discussed by Witkamp et al. (2010) in the context of management of social innovations. Nonetheless, Witkamp et al. (2010) did not mention social innovations in dynamism of social changes. Essentially, social innovations are instruments useful when innovative solutions of social problem, in dynamic social process is required.

Lubelcová (2012) in her study addressed this aspect. In her paper “Social Innovations in the Context of Modernization” she pointed out the increasing role of social innovations in the dynamic social processes as a solution of social problems. She argues that:

Today’s social problems require innovative thinking and actions. In this context, social

innovations according to the author, can be regarded as strategies helping to adapt to social changes, by turning changing parameters into new options of actions that bring innovative solutions to people's demands, and by this improving their living conditions. (p. 18)

Though Lubelcová acknowledges that improvement of people's living conditions is required, she does not mention how to empower people to make change, and how to make them capable to move the required developmental change forward.

Later, the literature and research on social innovations from development perspective, started inclining towards the context specific analysis, targeting particular development challenges. For instance, Moreno (2017) in the research for the World Bank conducted in Colombia, analyzed social innovations for peace-building in this country. The study discussed different experiences in peace process, and the role of social innovations and social enterprises in peace-building scenarios. This and similar studies have been criticized by Santha (2019), who discussed future pathways to sustainable development goals (SDGs) in India, which should apply "context-specific, systemic social innovation approaches" (p. 9). He criticized previous development and social innovations related studies for being focused on "economic entrepreneurship without taking into account the social and environmental interlinkages" (p. 10). Thus, though the scholarly literature on social innovation and development nexus is growing, many gaps should be still fulfilled.

Gaps in the research and literature

The review of studies on *social innovations* revealed numerous gaps in the research and literature. First, although, a huge amount of scholarly and policy oriented literature on social innovations (Buchegger et al., 2000; Gerometta et al., 2005; Hochgerner 2011; Evers et al., 2012; Bhatt 2013; Barraket 2015; Howaldt et al., 2015; Ionescu 2015; Oosterlynck et al., 2015; Bassi 2016; Domanski 2017; Marques et al., 2018; Howaldt et al., 2018, etc.) in developing and developed countries is produced, scholarly research analyzing 'social innovation' projects in post-Soviet republics has been hardly conducted. Second, specific, not yet completed projects supported by the development agency (the UNDP) progressing towards being social innovations, have not been covered by the scholars. Third, scholarly literature has not yet analyzed how features of social innovation held in post-Soviet republics, what kind of peculiarities, gains and shortcomings they had in post-Soviet context. Finally, it is still not clear how existing typologies would cover 'social innovation' projects in post-Soviet republics, and

where these projects would fall. Yet, ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics, are not falling under any out of existing types of social innovations. They constitute a separate type of ‘social innovations’, that is still uncovered and not analyzed by the scholars. This study is going to address these gaps, and with this, contribute to the scholarly research on social innovations. While analyzing and critically evaluating ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, the current study also focuses on evolution of the social innovation concept in post-Soviet republics.

Conclusion

This chapter conducted historical overview of social innovations, and discussed its historical development. It also elaborated on the social innovation from different perspectives, namely institutional, technological, governance. It reviewed scholarly literature dedicated to the theories scrutinizing social innovation, namely, ‘connected difference’ approach, structuration and structural function theories, actor-network theory and social practice theory. It critically analyzed these theories, and selected social practice theory to apply it in the later analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. While conducting literature review the chapter identified the features of social innovations from the experiences in developed, developing and post-communist countries. The chapter also critically discussed types of social innovations and social innovations from the development perspective. Finally, the chapter pointed out the gaps in the research and the literature on social innovations that it intends to address.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework of the dissertation

Introduction

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation. The theoretical framework draws mainly from social practice theory, which has been selected in the current research after the critical review of the literature and theories on social innovations (in the previous chapter). After conducting a review of definitions of social innovation from the different fields, the chapter puts forward an adapted version of social innovation to incorporate the volitional and developmental character of the UNDP-supported projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It presents features of social innovations borrowed from social practice theory, but adapted to the post-Soviet setting. To evaluate the developmental aspect of the UNDP-supported projects, the chapter examines UNDP's development framework in the three post-Soviet republics through the prism of human development theory. The theoretical framework thus used in this dissertation combines elements from social practice theory and human development theory.

3.1. Definitions of social innovations

While the scholarly agreed definition of the concept of social innovation is missing, the term has absorbed a lot of meanings and understandings. This is a primary theoretical challenge that has been so far differently addressed by the scholars. Up to now, in regard to social innovation, the scholarship was primarily preoccupied with analysis of religious matters, revolutions, political economy issues related to the transformation of the society. Historically, social changes and reforms, even revolutions and systemic transformations had socially innovative character, leading to the dramatic social change. This by default, revealed contextual character of any innovation in the society, including social innovation.

One of the recent and extensively applied definitions of social innovation formulated by Mulgan and Murray in the past decade, configure two major aspects, namely means and ends of social innovation. Based on this, social innovation can be defined by its means (as a process), and by its ends (as an outcome). Murray et al. (2010) described social innovation as the “innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means. Specifically, Murray et al. (2010) defined social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other

words, they [social innovations] are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act" (p. 3). According to Oosterlynck et al. (2015), focus of social innovation on social aims gives social innovation its normative overtones. Taking social innovation outside of normative framework, involves transformation of social relationships. This remark is important for the analysis of social innovations in different social and institutional settings. It helps to evaluate social innovativeness in different contexts.

Pol (2009) referred to definition of social innovation as "innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social" (p. 94). Again, this definition carries another understanding of social innovation more oriented towards organizational basis of the entity scrutinizing new ideas. In accordance with this definition, Pol mentions a dimension of social innovation, associated with public good. According to Pol (2009):

Social innovation refers to new ideas that resolve existing social, cultural, economic and environmental challenges for the benefit of people and planet. A true social innovation is system-changing – it permanently alters the perceptions, behaviors and structures that previously gave rise to these challenges. Even more simply, a social innovation is an idea that works for the public good. (p. 880)

In fact, it is nothing wrong about pointing out normative overtone of social innovation. Murray et al. (2010) and Pol (2009) successfully accomplish this task. However, sticking to the normativity of the concept, does not tell the whole story about social innovation. Leadbeater (2007) complemented their definitions of social innovation and describes social innovation as a broader phenomenon, using institutional and personalized dimensions. Leadbeater (2007) said that "social innovation – like many other forms of innovation – is a process of collective innovation involving many players: social enterprises, companies, service users, regulators, funders, politicians" (p. 77).

It is quite debatable how to identify what is public good in different societies? Actually, there is a relatively vague set of instruments that are able to measure what is good or bad for public in different political, economic and social systems. Thus, is it correct to link social innovation to public good? Hochgerner (2012), in this regard, emphasized that innovation *per se* does not have to mean 'good' "as with every other innovation, 'new' does not necessarily mean 'good', but in this case it is 'socially desirable' in an extensive and normative sense.

According to the actors' practical rationale, social attributions for social innovations are generally uncertain" (p. 47). Thus, while conducting analysis of social innovations, mostly desirable implications are considered as public good, and this does not necessarily contradict to 'good' implications from innovation. The point is that anticipations from social innovations are usually uncertain at their ends (Howaldt et al., 2014).

Lastly, by referring to the needs of the society that have not been considered by the market, but could be addressed by the social innovation, Pol (2009) says:

It [social innovation] concern conceptually the process or product change, organizational change and changes in financing, and can deal with new relationships with stakeholders and territories. Social innovation seeks new answers to social problems by identifying and delivering new services that improve the quality of life of individuals and communities. (p. 880)

Even from the discussion above, it is clear that the term social innovation has been used in different contexts and in different versions. Aoo (2018) in his publication "Development and Challenges of Social Innovation Theories: A Comparative Analysis of Japan, Europe, and North America" compared the use of the term in Europe, North America and Japan. He points out that in Europe the social innovation concept mostly benefited from the business/technology oriented innovation theory, whereas in the North America studies on social innovations have changed their focus from business-led social innovation to multi-sectoral frameworks. In Japan literature on social innovation has been so far developed by scholars with business background, though their consultation with the relevant European literature was limited. Indeed, in Europe, business/technology oriented innovation theory is not anymore regarded as the imperative in theoretical discussion of social innovations. For instance, in Germany according to Howaldt et al. (2018), "technological innovations have the potential to positively impact the diffusion of social innovations and vice versa technological innovations frequently develop their full potential only in combination with a social innovation" (p. 48). In other words, social innovations are regarded as an independent class of innovations that correlate with technological innovations, and has a potential to equally contribute to the development of the economy and society. Social innovation, in fact, can shape both of them in the near future and launch the renaissance of the new social and economic system. The diversity of definitions of social innovation is problematic from theoretical point of view. However, different definitions are still used for characterizing social innovation from the perspective of different fields. The

summary of those definitions is presented in the tables below.

Summary of existing definitions of social innovation

Nia Choi & Satyajit Majumdar have covered fields, definitions and relevant examples of social innovations attributed to various scholars. However, the fields and definitions collected by Nia Choi & Satyajit Majumdar are limited up to the year 2005, and do not absorb the most recent definitions of social innovation. Therefore, their table of definitions of social innovations is extended based on the findings of Evers et al., 2012; Alfonso et al., 2015; Howaldt et al., 2018; Marques et al., 2018 (Tables 9, 10 and 11).

Table 9. Definitions of *social innovation*

Field	Author	Definition	Example
Sociology	Zapf (1991)	Social innovations, then, are new ways of doing things, especially new organizational devices, new regulations, new living arrangements, that change the direction of social change, attain goals better than older practices, become institutionalized and prove to be worth imitating.	Incentive-reward system in companies, new services, social technology, political innovation (Peace Corps), new lifestyles
Sociology	Gillwald (2000)	Social innovations are, in a nutshell, arrangements of activities and procedures that differ from previous accustomed patterns and that have far-reaching social consequences.	Environmental movement, assembly line work, fast-food restaurants, extra-marital partnerships, social security system
Sociology	Heiskala (2007)	Social innovations are changes in the cultural, normative or regulative structures of the society which enhance its collective power resources and improve its economic and social performance.	Democracy
Sociology	Kesselring and Leitner (2008)	Social innovations are elements of social change that create new social facts, i.e. influence the behavior of individuals or specific social groups discernably and align it with accepted – not primarily economic rationality following – goals.	Political reforms, new services, new forms of employee participation in corporations
Sociology	Howaldt and Schwarz (2010)	A social innovation is new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors in an intentional targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices.	New services, new business models, web-based social networking
Creativity research	Mumford and Moertl (2003)	Mumford (2002) defined social innovation as the generation and implementation of new ideas about people and their interactions within a social system.	Scientific management, standardized tests for college admission
Entrepreneurship	Swedberg (2009)	Social innovations are new combinations that produce social change.	Combination of microfinance and social group pressure

Source: Nia Choi & Satyajit Majumdar, 2015; Evers et al., 2012; Alfonso et al., 2015; Howaldt et al., 2018; Marques et al., 2018.

Table 10. Definitions of *social innovation* (continued)

Field	Author	Definition	Example
Entrepreneurship	Ziegler (2010)	Social innovation is the carrying out of new combinations of capabilities	The work of Gram Vikas forging capabilities of participation, health, and affiliation
Practice-led field	Phills et al. (2008)	We redefine social innovation to mean ‘A novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals’.	Microfinance, fair trade, community-centered planning, charter schools, socially responsible investing
Practice-led field	Murray et al. (2010)	Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships and collaborations. In other words, they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance societies capacity to act.	Innovative education model for slum children, organic farming school
Practice-led field	Caulier – Grice et al. (2012)	Social innovations are new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources. In other words, social innovations are both good for society and enhance society’s capacity to act.	Text messaging, crowd sourcing, information platform for disaster relief
Community psychology	Fairweather (1967)	To create a new social subsystem whose methods, include innovating models as alternative solutions to social problems, experimentally evaluating them, and disseminating the information to those who can make the appropriate changes. This is experimental social innovation.	Anti-poverty programs, rehabilitation programs for long-term residents in mental hospitals
Territorial development	Moulaert et al. (2005)	Social innovation is path dependent and contextual. It refers to those changes in agendas, agency and institutions that lead to a better inclusion of excluded groups and individuals in various spheres of society at various spatial scales. Social innovation is very strongly a matter of process innovation – i.e. changes in the dynamics of social relations, including power relations. A social innovation is very much about social inclusion, it is also about countering or overcoming conservative forces that are eager to strengthen or preserve social exclusion situations. Social innovation therefore, explicitly refers to an ethical position of social justice. The latter is of course subject to a variety of interpretations and will in practice often be the outcome of social construction.	Neighborhood development programs against social exclusion

Source: Nia Choi & Satyajit Majumdar, 2015; Evers et al., 2012; Alfonso et al., 2015; Howaldt et al., 2018; Marques et al., 2018.

Table 11. Definitions of social innovation (continued)

Field	Author	Definition	Example
Sociology (additional)	Howaldt et al. (2014, 2018) Domanski et al. (2015) Oosterlynck et al. (2015)	Social innovations are locally embedded practices, actions, policies; Combination of new social practices instead of inefficient old practices	Programs in the areas of employment, energy, health care, social care, education, introducing new social practices, making societies more resilient
Governance	Evers et al. (2012)	Ideas, turned into practical approaches that are new in the context where they appear. While this is basic it is not sufficient. New practices can be seen as innovative, once they present themselves as promising, rise aspirations and attract hopes for better coping strategies and solutions.	New organization and service models, innovations in governance and public domains
Social field	Alfonso et al. (2015)	New products, processes and methods that, in a creative and sustainable manner, offer a better solution to one or several social demands.	Products, processes, methods that address problems in welfare programs
Social field versus technological	Marques et al. (2018)	Three elements (inclusiveness, need and targeted domains) are important to define social innovation	Projects involving previously neglected individuals, addressing needs, and aimed at specific domain

Source: Nia Choi & Satyajit Majumdar, 2015; Evers et al., 2012; Alfonso et al., 2015; Howaldt et al., 2018; Marques et al., 2018.

Scholarly studies of Oosterlynck et al., 2015, Howaldt et al., 2014, Domanski et al., 2017, defined social innovations as practices, actions and policies. Evers et al. (2012) defined social innovations within governance and public domains. Marques et al. (2018) described and analyzed social innovations based on their types “according to the scale and scope of change they encapsulate” (p. 497).

As it is demonstrated in the tables above, definition and examples of social innovation vary across different fields. The commonalities of social innovations as they defined by the different fields, are focused on the newness of the idea, product, method etc., social relationships and social problems that should be ideally changed/solved. These points are critical for all fields and make those fields overlap with each other, despite reflexivity of the social innovation concept throughout all of them. Another aspect is the contextual application of social innovation, that actually varies not only across the fields, but also across the certain social, political, economic, governance etc. contexts. Saying that, social change that is the ultimate goal of social innovation, so as the public good that is supposed to be achieved by social innovation, are also became contextual. This is not quite clearly pronounced while scholarly discussions of the change addressing social problems, are conducted in different fields of application of social innovation. Moreover, while stipulating a social change through the changes in cultural, normative or regulative structures, social interactions along with interactions with formal social systems always happen. This aspect is not sufficiently addressed

by definitions of social innovations, which might cause misinterpretation of the notion of social innovation in different dimensions. In other words, various incarnations of social innovation in various fields should strongly consider the aspect of social and system interactions.

Finally, every field and, subsequently, the definitions of social innovation in these fields, are configuring the objectives that should be achieved, and the socially innovative means of this process. For instance, entrepreneurship field is more concerned about new ideas and capabilities to enable the social change, and to address the needs neglected by the market mechanisms. Entrepreneurship field, in that sense, is to some extent similar to the practice-led approach, that also aimed for motivation of social relations to meet social needs and to solve social problems, but at the same time it disregards market (or government). In contrast to this approach creativity field of application of social innovation, is concerned about the generation and implementation of the new ideas, and interaction of people with social system. Territorial field is going beyond the social relations caused by social innovations, but analyzes them in dynamics and variations (including power relations). Finally, sociology, prioritizes possibility of social change through the new ways of doing things/social practices in the certain social contexts.

Since, the critical literature and theoretical review conducted in the previous chapter has revealed that the common features of social innovation were mostly generated by the scholars adhered to the social practice theory, so as social practice theory better and in a more nuanced manner explains generation of social innovation, the study, refers to the definition of social innovation suggested by the social practice theory. Thus, social innovation is a new social practice that is imitated/repeated, i.e. reproduced. It prompted by certain actors or constellation of actors in an intentional targeted manner, in certain areas of action or social contexts, with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices (Howaldt et al., 2014). Such a new social practice becomes a social innovation, when it is socially accepted and diffused widely throughout society or in certain societal sub-areas, institutionalized, and ultimately, brings about a social change.

In the next section, social practice theory is going to be applied and adapted to the ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP in post-Soviet republics. The features of social innovation suggested by the theory, and mentioned in its definition, will be adjusted to the post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects, by taking into consideration particular characteristics of these projects. The next sub-chapter comprehensively discusses these issues.

3.2. Application and adaptation of social practice theory for the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics

In the previous chapter the features or criteria of social innovation from the social practice theory perspective have been discussed. In accordance with this discussion, the term social innovation has been only applied after the projects fulfilled these criteria, i.e. post factum. But, in the post-Soviet republics, the UNDP turned ‘social innovations’ into something that can be worked towards. In practice, the UNDP, the UNDP/UNV ‘Social innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab have used social innovation concept to design development projects in a new manner. Therefore, the UNDP labeled its development projects as ‘social innovations’, though they can be claimed as true social innovations only over some time. By doing so, the UNDP attached *volitional* character to its development projects.

But, primarily, ‘social innovation’ projects, should be matching the features of social innovation. Hence, projects can be social innovations⁸ if they: 1) inspire new (inventions, practices) citizen-driven⁹ ways of addressing pressing social issues; 2) encourage new relationships;¹⁰ 3) start locally and aimed at certain domain (education, health care, or governance, etc.);¹¹ 4) use technology (not always) (ICT);¹² 5) are scalable;¹³ 6) make a social impact.¹⁴ The detailed explanation of the features of social innovation is provided below.

- *People-centeredness and inclusiveness* means that individuals experiencing certain problems come up with solutions of these problems in designing social innovations. Social innovations should strive for more inclusiveness of individuals and social groups, left behind by the previous policies and programs;
- *Networking and collaboration* means that social innovations are supposed to encourage networking and collaboration among different actors (government, CSOs, private companies, individuals) for the generation and further progress of social innovations;
- *Localness and focus on specific domain* implies that any social innovation is launched

⁸ UNDP in Ukraine, 2017.

⁹ Kolba Lab, 2013.

¹⁰ SocialBoost, 2014.

¹¹ UNDP in Ukraine, 2017.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, Final Evaluation Report, 2014, p. 3.

¹⁴ *ibid.*

locally, and aimed at specific domain (e.g. education, health care, governance etc.);

- *Use of technologies (ICTs)* displays a particular technological (ICT) feature of social innovation used in designing and implementation of social innovations. At the same time, application of this feature does not mean that low-tech social innovations are not possible;
- *Scaling up* implies that any social innovation should be scalable/diffusible across the social system;
- *Making a social impact* suggests that social innovation should address particular social problems and social needs;

In accordance with the UNDP approach to social innovations, now all six features become volitional. Also, the fifth and the sixth features take longer time to be accomplished. For instance, scaling of ‘social innovation’ projects across the social system requires more time. Only over time, a new social practice can go through the process of socialization, replace (de-institutionalize) an existing social practice, and, itself, become an everyday routine, i.e. institutionalize (Howaldt et al., 2014). Therefore, ‘social innovation’ projects launched quite recently, might be just progressing towards scaling (diffusion) stage of social innovation generation.

Moreover, it is too early to gauge about the social impact of volitional ‘social innovation’ projects. While any social innovation is aimed for addressing social problems, the desired change in the society does not happen rapidly. Only after the project is diffused and accepted across the society (Howaldt et al., 2014), a social problem (and/or social need) can be fully addressed. Only then, a project qualifies as social innovation. Hitherto, ‘social innovation’ projects are only planned to be true social innovations, and it is premature to expect that they already made a social impact.

Due to the above mentioned peculiarities of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet context, the study adapts social practice theory accordingly. It clear that not all social innovation criteria (features) could have been already achieved in case of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. Therefore, while applying social practice theory in the analytical parts of the dissertation, researcher fully considers these adjustments.

Furthermore, features of social innovation inherited from the social practice theory are not sufficient to analyze the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects. Since, the dissertation deals with ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the development agency (UNDP), in developing countries (and/or countries in transition), the features of social

innovation should be complemented by the additional – developmental feature. To discuss this feature, human development theory has been applied. Human development theory has been picked up, since it has largely influenced the UNDP’s development work, and its policies in different areas in developing countries, including post-Soviet republics.

3.3. Human development theory, the UNDP’s perspective on governance for development, and developmental ‘social innovations’

Human development theory has been inspired by Amartya Sen, and had a huge influence on perception of development beyond the economic growth. Sen emphasized *capabilities approach* to development in form of freedoms and opportunities for individuals, mostly from the deprived communities. Sen’s perception of human development is valuable not solely from the scholarly perspective, but also from the standpoint of the UNDP, that is being guided by his scholarly views in its development work. It is enough to mention that the Human Development Index and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are inspired by Sen’s scholarly work. As Millard (2014) points out:

Sen emphasizes capabilities rather than needs, prioritizing what people can do and be, rather than the income focus of the – basic needs approach. This core idea also underlies the United Nations Human Development Index, a human-focused measure of development pioneered by the UNDP in its Human Development Reports. (p. 42)

To recall, in his book *Development as Freedom*, Sen pointed out and discussed numerous aspects related to development beyond economic prosperity. Sen (1999) attempted to see development as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Sen (1999) saw expansion of freedom as both primary (constitutive role) and principal means (instrumental role) of development. He considered five types of instrumental freedoms: 1. Political freedom; 2. Economic facilities; 3. Social opportunities; 4. Transparency guarantees and 5. Protective security.

Sen developed the idea of development by comparing different aspects of China-India contrasts mentioning that these instrumental freedoms directly enhance the capabilities of people posing interesting questions on ‘luxury’ of democracy for developing countries and linkage of priorities of social development, health care, education with economic growth of country. In this context, Sen showed different speed of development of China and India

comparing social preparedness and social arrangements in two countries. He talked about relationship between GNP per capita and development through public expenditure on health care and through the success of poverty removal. As examples of such relationships Sen mentioned China, Sri Lanka, Namibia, Brazil, South Africa, Gabon and Kerala. Sen described the relevance between low income of these territories (Kerala, China, Sri Lanka) and high level of life expectancy in spite of situation in Brazil, South Africa and Namibia where income was higher but the life expectancy was lower because of lack of ‘support-led’ process in these countries which might increase social opportunities and social development. The essential point was that impact of economic growth depends much on how the fruits of the growth were used. This explains how economies such as South Korea and Taiwan were able to raise life expectancy through economic growth (Sen, 1999).

While discussing human development Sen did not see economic development only in growth of GNP and proposed so called ‘support-led’ process by giving priority to providing social services even in developing and poor countries that reduce mortality and increase the quality of life what as the result leads to freedom and economic growth. He insisted on the importance of social arrangements in poor economies without waiting for ‘getting rich’ first (Sen, 1999). Moreover, Sen emphasized the role of democracy and political incentives/political liberty in avoiding economic disasters like for instance famine. Sen (1999) developed “the basic idea that enhancement of human freedom is both the main objective and the primary means of development” (p. 146). There is a need to develop and support a plurality of institutions, democratic systems, legal mechanisms, market structures, educational and health provisions, media and so on. Sen argued that people have to be actively involved in shaping their own destiny and not just being passively receipts of the fruits of development programs.

According to Sen (1999), “conceptualization of economic needs depends crucially on open public debates and discussions, the guaranteeing of which requires insistence on basic political liberty and civil rights” (p. 148). In this meaning, the *capability approach* developed by Sen has become an important new paradigm in thinking about development. Sen acknowledged that the achievement of social justice depends not only on institutional forms, but also on effective practice, and democratic institutions cannot be viewed as mechanical devices for development. Thus, Sen contributed to the human development theory and formulated the freedoms, namely economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees and protective security, that constitute a development beyond just economic growth.

With regard to human development theory, several aspects have been also mentioned by Millard. He emphasized that due to the human development theory, capabilities of people and communities have been considered in the process of societal change (Millard, 2014, p. 54). He also pointed out “the new understanding of governance as open, transparent, participative and empowering, underpinned by the human development theory” (p. 55). Those aspects have been also applied by the UNDP in its governance focused development work.

3.3.1. The UNDP’s perspective on governance for development

The UNDP, based on the paradigm of human development and inclusive growth, has designed global development goals known as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000-2015), and later, updated and extended to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015-2030). Since, the SDGs have extensive number of development targets and expected outcomes, this review will focus on the one aspect of development, of particular interest for the current research. It is the aspect of the strong, inclusive and accountable governance. The UNDP applies the definition of ‘governance’ formulated by the UNDP Oslo Governance Center (2009) as follows:

Governance is about the processes by which public policy decisions are made and implemented. It is the result of interactions, relationships and networks between the different sectors (government, public sector, private sector and civil society) and involves decisions, negotiation, and different power relations between stakeholders to determine who gets what, when and how. The relationships between government and different sectors of society determine how things are done, and how services are provided. Governance is therefore much more than government or ‘good government’ and shapes the way a service or set of services are planned, managed and regulated within a set of political social and economic systems. (p. 5)

Focusing on this particular aspect helps to understand how the UNDP frames its development work in this area. For instance, in the *UNDP Strategic Plan for 2018-2021*, organization sets the priority development setting related to good and effective governance for development, and formulates its second signature solution as follows:

Strengthen effective, inclusive and accountable governance. Inclusive and accountable governance systems and processes are recognized as crucial to sustainable development

and human security. This solutions package will therefore focus on supporting diverse pathways towards peaceful, just and inclusive societies, building on the UNDP comparative advantage and long track record in governance. Some development contexts may require support for core governance functions, establishing local service provision, rule of law, anti-corruption capacities and access to justice. Some may require assistance with accessing and using development finance and official development assistance (ODA), which may be provided in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNCDF and IFIs. Others may request innovative support for improved regulatory capacities, enhanced legal frameworks, strengthened institutions and local governance capacities. In crisis contexts, support may be requested for re-establishing core governance functions, to support long-term preventive solutions that address root causes of conflict and disasters. This solution will seek to build inclusive, effective and accountable institutions and mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflict and for advancing social cohesion. This requires ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, people with disabilities and other traditionally marginalized groups, working in partnership with agencies such as UNICEF, UNWomen and others. (p.13)

In this regard, the UNDP's strategic vision in the area of governance is focused on making it more inclusive, accountable and innovative. This is to guarantee local services, strengthen the rule of law, anti-corruption capacities and access to justice by citizens. It well corresponds with Sen's development vision including instrumental freedoms such as transparency, social and political opportunities, as well as assuring civil rights, democracy and political liberty. It also well corresponds with human development theory aimed for more inclusiveness, openness, transparency of governance, as well as participation and empowerment of citizens. The novel approach to guarantee this development perspective by the UNDP, was through social innovations. The UNDP Global Center for Public Service Excellence (2014) that is primarily preoccupied with these issues informs:

Governments around the world are grappling with societal challenges that are acting as a brake on sustainable economic growth, leading to inequality and instability in society, and impinging upon the general well-being of their population. Social innovation is a response to these challenges (...). It offers new solutions, new methodologies and new conceptual frameworks. Success can be seen through case studies from around the

world, including middle- and low-income countries. (p. 4)

This is how social innovations supported by the UNDP in the governance realm received developmental overtones. This aspect will be considered in the further analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. Yet, developmental feature of social innovation that has been framed by the human development theory and the UNDP development agenda, has been overlooked in the scholarly discussion of social innovations.

3.3.2. Developmental ‘social innovations’ in post-Soviet republics

From the developmental perspective, above discussed human development theory and the development framework that the UNDP applied in governance area, inform that while supporting ‘social innovation’ projects, the UNDP was specifically looking for the certain strategic developmental priorities it intended to reach in post-Soviet republics. From the scholarly point of view, developmental priorities have been presented by Sen as follows: Instrumental freedoms such as political freedom, social opportunities, transparency (Sen, 1999). These freedoms have been extended to the development targets such as: achieving democracy, assuring human development and civil rights, so as establishing institutional forms, effective practices and democratic institutions (Sen, 1999). Serving as the general guidelines, highlighting areas of actions required for inclusive, sustainable human development, Sen’s ideas inspired the UNDP to specify the fields where the UNDP’s intervention is required for the achievement of development goals.

The UNDP, based on its Strategic Plan has specified them as follows: accountable and inclusive governance; established local service provision; rule of law; anti-corruption capacities; access to justice; strong institutions and local government capacities; inclusion of women, youth, people with disabilities and other traditionally marginalized groups; work in partnership (also with other agencies) (The UNDP, 2018, p. 13). While testing new methods to deliver development assistance in post-Soviet republics, namely ‘social innovations’, the UNDP contributed to the creation of a new - developmental type of social innovation. This type might fall under other typologies of social innovations (typologies were discussed in the previous chapter), but still constitutes a different sort of social innovation, particular for developing countries (and/or countries in transition).

In post-Soviet republics, in accordance with the UNDP Strategic Plan mentioned above, the UNDP also conceptualized ‘social innovation’ projects in terms of development targets as

follows: 1) projects empower people to participate in development processes of their communities, to have the developmental outcomes desired by people;¹⁵ 2) projects position the user (individual/citizen) in the heart of development and government decision-making;¹⁶ This conceptualization of ‘social innovation’ projects formulated within the human development theory and the UNDP strategic development vision aimed for improvement of capabilities of people.

Since, the UNDP believed that its new methodology of delivering development assistance based on support of ‘social innovation’ projects is efficient, it has funded ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. All in all, the *developmental feature* implied that ‘social innovation’ projects should pursue improvement of capabilities of individuals by achieving economic opportunities, political freedoms, social facilities, transparency guarantees, through the empowerment, broader participation and inclusion of individuals in governance.

3.4. Theoretical framework of the study: Social practice and human development theories

Based on the literature review and critical assessment of social sciences theories social practice and human development theories have been selected to evaluate ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP in post-Soviet republics. Social practice theory has been applied in the study to discuss how ‘social innovation’ projects were generated, driven, possibly diffused and institutionalized, to make a social impact over time.

In the chapter two, while critically discussing ‘connected difference’ approach, structuration, structural function and actor-network theories, shortcomings of these theories have been pointed out, that do not allow analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP. It was found that several features (e.g. human-centeredness and networking) covered by social practice theory, are also shared by ‘connected difference’ approach, so as relationships generating social innovations, can be adequately explained both by social practice and actor-network theories. However, only social practice theory carries out the full spectrum of theoretical elements (e.g. elements and stages of social innovation generation) to analyze the process and the outcome of social innovations. This theory also allows positioning ‘social innovation’ projects on the micro, meso and macro levels, to conduct their nuanced evaluation.

¹⁵ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, Final Evaluation Report, 2014, p. 13.

¹⁶ Kolba Lab, 2013.

Another reason to opt for social practice theory is that it allows to scrutinize social innovations as a multi-sectoral phenomenon, that can be generated outside of just one sector. Despite, for instance, Mulgan's (2010) definition and approach to social innovation as something generated mostly in non-profit sector in organizations with social purpose, social practice theory does not make such strict limitations. It allows analyzing social innovations generated in other sectors, and/or generated by the combination of actors.

Moreover, none of the theories, besides social practice theory, address the micro-foundations of social practices that explain how social innovation, through diffusion of social practice, progress from the micro to macro level. Social innovation cycle of Mulgan and Murray (2010) discusses the stages of generation of social innovation, but it does not specify how the idea (or invention) while being prototyped, sustained and scaled, turns into the social phenomenon or social fact (Howaldt et al., 2014) that makes a social change.

Finally, social practice theory satisfies the research on social innovations by studying it both in terms of the process (stages of social innovation), and the outcome (social change). Thus, it covers the modes of generation of social innovation, and the normative overtone of it, reflected in the ultimate goal – to make a systemic (social) change. In this regard, social practice theory deals with formal system (Howaldt et al., 2018) and offers new social practices that should change inefficient existing practices.

To add and to discuss particular developmental feature, scholarly and the UNDP produced literature, as well as development theories in relevance to social innovations, have been discussed critically. Based on the critical discussion of theories, gaps in the modernization, sustainability and globalization, theory of change, reverse innovation and post-development theories have been identified. Being either too deterministic (e.g. modernization theory, theory of change), or not providing adequate evaluation criteria to assess 'social innovation' projects (e.g. post-development theory), these theories were disregarded.

Moreover, none of them, except human development theory, have been matching with the UNDP's development framework, and the UNDP's development vision in developing countries (and/or countries in transition). In fact, it is a human development theory that is situated in the core of the UNDP's development work. Moreover, it was acquired that the UNDP in governance area adhered to capabilities approach, originated by the human development theory. Finally, human development theory also shares human-centeredness feature with social practice theory.

Thus, social practice and human development theories constituted theoretical framework of the dissertation. The combination of two theories allows comprehensively

analyzing the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. Therefore, in the analytical chapters of the dissertation, post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects will be critically evaluated against theoretical criteria borrowed from these theories.

Conclusion

The chapter started from the review of definitions of social innovation from the different fields. After conducting a review of definitions, the chapter puts forward an adapted version of *social innovation* to incorporate the volitional and developmental character of the UNDP-supported projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It presented features of social innovations borrowed from social practice theory, but adapted to the post-Soviet setting. While the study deals with the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet developing countries (and/or countries in transition), the chapter reviewed human development theory that largely influenced the UNDP development work in developing countries, and the UNDP’s development framework focused on governance. It also explained how, in accordance with human development theory and the UNDP’s development approach, developmental feature was attached to ‘social innovation’ projects. Finally, the chapter explained why social practice and human development theories have been selected for the theoretical framework of the dissertation.

Chapter 4. The UNDP and its development work in the post-Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia

4.1. The UNDP and its development work in developing countries

Before starting discussion of the UNDP's role in developing countries, it is necessary to mention that United Nations after being established in 1945, has contributed to the different thinking about development. For instance, Ghai (2008) suggests that United Nations started broadly using the notion of 'development' as follows:

Development beyond economic growth, per capita income or structural change, but also the progress in promoting human rights, poverty reduction, employment generation, fairer distribution of the benefits of growth, participation in decision making at different levels, equality of men and women, child development and well-being, and social justice and environmental sustainability. (p.767)

Later, in 1965 the UNDP was established and became the largest UN development organization operating in approximately 170 developing countries and territories. The UNDP Institutional Assessment Report informs that "it [the UNDP] is governed by an Executive Board made up of representatives from 36 countries who serve on a rotating basis and meet three times a year. It has the most comprehensive mandate among all UN agencies, including a unique mandate on democratic governance, peacebuilding and state-building" (p. 6). The UNDP also plays a crucial integrative role in delivering development assistance. As the UNDP's Multilateral Aid Review (2011) informs:

The UNDP incorporates UN Volunteers and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). As well as delivering development programs the UNDP has a critical role in supporting the UN development system's collective impact. It funds and manages the UN's Resident Coordinators that lead the UN's effort in more than 130 countries. It administers many of the UN's Multi-Donor Trust Funds (MDTFs) and it often provides a platform for other UN agencies in country. The UNDP Administrator chairs the UN Development Group (UNDG), which seeks to improve the coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the UN's development effort. (p. 1)

The UNDP has been usually operating in the countries based on United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). This document is prepared by United Nations agencies, in cooperation with national governments, other development agencies, local experts and NGOs operating in the country. Based on the analysis of collected data from the country, areas where development aid is needed were indicated. After identifying the most pressing problems challenging development, UN offices in respected countries put these challenges in UNDAF document to present them for the final approval of national governments. If the national governments have international development commitments such as achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000-2015), or Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015 - 2030), then UNDAF document also complemented by these commitments. Once, development challenges are agreed among the government, the UNDP and civil society organizations, the UNDP launches development projects under its programmatic units, in accordance with organization's mandate.

Another possibility for the UNDP to deliver its development aid is to supply resources to special funds, as it did in case of the 71 Least Developed Countries. This funding was focused on adaptation to the climate change and its consequences. To deliver necessary actions to prepare population for the climate change, National Adaptation Programs have been launched and supported by the UNDP (the UNDP Evaluation Report with LDC Fund and Special Climate Change Fund Resources, 2009).

It is clear that in developing countries, the UNDP mostly collaborated with national governments, local NGOs and experts. Certainly, this approach to design and implementation of development projects in any area of the UNDP's operations, has had its limitations. In this regard, primarily the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI) was criticized. Sagar et al. (1998) emphasized that "HDI has lost its connection with reality in developing countries, because it has neglected links to sustainability by failing to investigate the impact on the natural system of the activities that potentially contribute to national income – and hence to HDI" (p. 263). Therefore, policy options recommended by the UNDP, according to Sagar et al. (1998), are not adequate for achieving human development.

Later, the UNDP was criticized for not enough support of another aspect vital for development – human rights. Surely, in supporting human rights and more democratic governance, the UNDP has encountered challenges, that organization has tried to overcome. Keeler (2004) criticized the UNDP for its limited support of human rights in development work. He mentioned that the UNDP has historically had limited human rights reporting, and tried to approach this aspect through projects in governance, poverty and gender realms, etc.

Keeler, nevertheless, stressed that “governance constitutes the bulk of the UNDP’s work in development along a human rights approach” (p. 54).

In this context, the UNDP has realized limitations of its development assistance. On the one hand, the UNDP while doing development work, has to establish efficient collaboration with governments that are also sponsors of the organization. On the other hand, the UNDP pursues particular developmental goals that should be achieved nationally in developing countries, to make their population more prosperous, freer, healthier, etc. Though it might be declared, in practice not all governments follow their international commitments to deliver development, and make their people better off. Thus, the UNDP has to maneuver smartly, to come up with new methodologies of delivery of its development assistance. In governance area, the UNDP has tried with social innovations to design its development projects differently. Now, with social innovations, the UNDP intended to allow citizens to identify their problems and to design and implement the solutions of these problems. This is how the UNDP’s governments and civil sector focused development approach has changed. To experiment with this new methodology of development assistance, the UNDP has started supporting ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. The next section is dedicated to the discussion of the UNDP’s different approach to development work in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia.

4.2. Different approach to development work of the UNDP in post-Soviet republics of Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia

In post-Soviet republics, civil society is not so developed as to allow all citizens experiencing problems on a daily basis to bring them up to their governments and international donors. Therefore, consulting with governments and civil society organizations did not allow the UNDP to reach out to the individuals experiencing the problems. Thus, the UNDP decided to embrace new methodologies and technologies in its development work – social innovations. Social innovation methodology introduced human-centered approach to development work of the UNDP in post-Soviet republics. Individuals experiencing the problem, and not the UNDP (or any other organization) has started being regarded by the UNDP as ‘development experts’ knowing about pressing social, economic and political problems better than development agencies. Consequently, social innovations and human-centered approach allowed the UNDP to better operate on the grass-roots level, and to tackle various challenges in local communities and governments. But, why was the UNDP willing to go into the social innovation concept?

The reasons for that have been outlined below:

‘Social innovation’ as a novel approach acceptable for national governments

‘Social innovation’ considered by the UNDP as the right thing to trigger development. The principles of development work, using ‘social innovation’ methodology were not discussed in advance by the UNDP headquarters and national governments (partners). The UNDP customized the concept and adapted it to the political and social contexts in the countries. By doing so, the UNDP could offer a ‘new’ approach that could be accepted (or at least not rejected) by the governments (partners) in post-Soviet republics. After realizing that ‘social innovation’ projects are not an additional burden on governments (partners), conservative governance systems started cooperating (or at least not resisting) with the UNDP in launching them, for further using their results. In fact, it is the UNDP’s global perspective to evolve and to become more innovative and efficient, to respond effectively to the new and emerging needs of Member States and UN Agencies. (the UNDP Strategic Plan for 2018-2021). Therefore, approaching national governments in post-Soviet republics, with socially innovative solutions, lies within the UNDP’s strategic plans.

For instance, in the case of Armenia, Ms. Tovmasyan recalls that “the government was very active in collaboration with Kolba Lab. It was good for government, because sometimes it is a good approach to implement innovations in day to day activities of government. That is why the government was eager to implement these projects”.¹⁷ In some cases, for instance in the city of Gyumri, Koba Lab “absorbed the risk of the government research process”¹⁸ by implementing ‘social innovation’ project, which is another example of first making the project ‘acceptable’ by the government (partner), and then moving the project forward.

‘Social innovation’ considered as something not too political

As an addition to the first reason mentioned above, ‘social innovation’ was, sometimes, the only option for the UNDP to work on the local level, with local communities. In Uzbekistan this was definitely the case, as the UNDP Good Governance Unit Program Associate Ms.

¹⁷ Interview, Lusine Tovmasyan. Via Messenger, January 24, 2018.

¹⁸ Interview, George Hodge. Via Messenger. Via Messenger. January 22, 2018.

Emiliya Asadova mentions that “doing social innovations was, probably, the only option for us as the UNDP to work on the local level, with local communities”.¹⁹

Differently from the terms ‘good governance’ or ‘democratic governance’, as usually conceptualized and promoted by Western development agencies, ‘social innovation’ has not been considered by the post-Soviet governments as a too sensitive issue. Doing development work on the local level by supporting ‘social innovation’ projects, was viewed more as a technical assistance to local communities and governments.

Positioning the improvements that ‘social innovation’ projects bring, as the new ICT solutions, or improvement of the existing government services, was a strategic approach of the UNDP to win the trust of the post-Soviet governments, and to decrease the level of caution towards ‘social innovation’ projects. The UNDP “has also provided services to the government”²⁰ to convince the policy-makers that ‘social innovation’ projects could make their work easier and better.

‘Social innovation’ as a different type of development project

For the UNDP, ‘social innovation’ was a different approach to sourcing ideas for development. As Ms. Marina Mkhitarian points out: “in the context of the UNDP we are thinking about it [social innovation] as a human-centered approach to development”.²¹

This was also true for Ukraine and Uzbekistan. For instance, in Ukraine Mr. Maksym Klyuchar mentions that “social innovation is tried and tested approach. And by tried and tested it is meant tried and tested by people, not by the UNDP or government, but rather than by actual future users”.²²

Traditionally it would be a consultation process among the UNDP, national government, other development agencies in respective countries, civil society organizations, etc., long before any work started, before any assumptions were tested. The idea of social innovation methodology was to work with different stakeholders, different actors in civil society. Ones that not usually get involved in development project, but might be interested in solving a particular problem, if well-articulated. The UNDP through ‘social innovation’ projects engaged unusual stake holders in the development process, and also in testing

¹⁹ Interview, Emiliya Asadova, August 27, 2017.

²⁰ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 22, 2017.

²¹ *ibid.*

²² Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 5, 2018.

assumptions very quickly, by quick design and implementation. In accordance with social innovation methodology, the UNDP involved the end-user (individuals) experiencing social problems in designing and implementing solutions of these problems.

‘Social innovation’ attuned to the particularities of the post-Soviet republics

Defining social innovation concept is a challenging task. The concept has been historically experiencing attempts to be used by social scientists to explain big transformational changes in the society (Godin, 2012; Marques et al., 2018). Marques et al. (2018) formulated different types of social innovation to distinguish them “according to the scale and scope of social change” (p. 501). Later, Domanski (2017) mentioned that “scholarly debate was happening around definition of it [social innovation] either through social relations, or ‘social’ in terms of societal impact” (p. 21). Some scholars (e.g. Evers et al., 2015) emphasized that conceptually debate is around the ‘social’ rather ‘innovation’. According to Phills (2008), “the term ‘social’ is used to explain ‘improvement’ in any way” (p. 28). Under the notion ‘improvement’ better answers to satisfy basic needs and improving social relationships are understood. Another trend is to relate other terms to “social innovation”. For instance, ‘social entrepreneurship’ as a phenomenon related to social innovation might be found being discussed by the scholars (e.g. Howaldt et al., 2018), who distinguished it from social innovation, and referred to it as a separate sub-section of social innovation (Howaldt et al., 2018). To find out the interlinks between social innovation and other societal phenomena, Evers et al. (2015) conducted research to study social innovation for social cohesion. Domanski (2017) argued that “the concept of *social innovation* cannot be limited to one focus, be it social entrepreneurship or social economy, and demonstrates that widening the perspective is crucial for understanding social innovation” (p. 21).

Along with the ongoing theoretical debates, the UNDP in the post-Soviet republics was clear about what the organization understood under the notion of ‘social innovation’. Those who led and implemented ‘social innovation’ projects locally, were, however, less concise. In practice, the essence and the goals of ‘social innovation’ projects were understood differently by the UNDP, leaders of the projects, and the governments (local partners). Concurrently, by having the concept ‘suitable’ both for the UNDP and the governments (local partners), made it, easier to introduce local projects labeled as ‘social innovations’. All these aspects are discussed in the analytical chapters dedicated to each case study of the post-Soviet republic. Remarkable is how practical application of social innovation might be disconnected from the

social innovation as a research concept. This is another confirmation of what Marques et al. (2018) meant while arguing that “social innovation was so far most effective concept in practice” (p. 506).

Volitional ‘social innovation’

The UNDP in the post-Soviet settings, viewed ‘social innovation’ as something that can be aspired and worked towards. Thus, in the UNDP’s approach, ‘social innovation’ was seen as something that can be volitional, while in other cases in developing and developed countries, anything has been recognized as social innovation only post factum, when the project or initiative were completed. For instance, in case of the ‘social innovation’ project in Armenia, consumers’ rights Chat bot project’s leader Ms. Tovmasyam says: “currently the team is developing the tool that is going to be used as the final product. It would be a Chat bot that we are developing to inform the basic consumers’ rights”.²³

Kolba Lab Lead Ms. Marina Mkhitarian while discussing ‘social innovation’ projects mentions that “Kolba will create more opportunities and mechanisms for citizen engagement and introduce tools and systems for the national government too”.²⁴

Another example in Ukraine, where according to Mr. Maksym Klyuchar, “participatory budgeting system in terms of transparency of local budget, was attempted to be a social innovation”.²⁵

In Uzbekistan, ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ Project has pioneered ‘social innovations’ to engage individuals in decision-making and development of their communities.²⁶ In other words, examples mentioned above, demonstrate that the UNDP in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia experimented with social innovation, and labeled the projects as ‘social innovations’ before they actually became ones. To become a true social innovation, any project would need time, and would require to match particular criteria. But, the UNDP conceptualized its development projects as social innovations, and believed that those ‘social innovation’ projects can bring development. Therefore, the UNDP has funded these projects, and introduced them in post-Soviet republics.

²³ Interview, Lusine Tovmasyan. Via Messenger. January 24, 2018.

²⁴ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 22, 2017.

²⁵ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 5, 2018.

²⁶ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, Final Evaluation Report, 2014, p. 14.

4.3. Application of volitional and developmental ‘social innovation’ in the post-Soviet context

As it was discussed in previous chapter, in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia social innovation had volitional and developmental overtones. Therefore ‘social innovation’ projects in these post-Soviet republics were not falling under any types of social innovations discussed in scholarly literature (Buchegger et al., 2000; Evers et al., 2012; Marques et al., 2018; Howaldt et al., 2018, etc.). They constitute a different type of ‘social innovation’ – volitional and developmental, that deserves a separate and more specific analysis. The current section demonstrates how volitional and developmental ‘social innovation’ has been applied in the post-Soviet context.

In the case of volitional character of ‘social innovation’ projects, the point is straightforward, and basically, means that ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia were planned forward by the UNDP as something that can be turned into true social innovations. In other words, the development projects have been conceptualized as social innovations in advance, and funded by the UNDP, because the UNDP believed that these projects can bring development.

In accordance with the UNDP’s development framework and human development theory, also discussed in the previous chapter, in post-Soviet republics the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects were, indeed, aimed for development. How the UNDP has conceptualized ‘social innovation’ projects as developmental, has been already discussed in the chapter three. In a nutshell, these projects sought to improve living conditions and ensure prosperity of people, through guaranteeing better participation and inclusiveness of individuals and communities in the process of governance, and by making governance more transparent and accountable to citizens (individuals and communities). ‘Social innovation’ projects were aimed at empowerment and inclusion of individuals (e.g. through ICTs) to resolve the challenges they had, and by doing so to achieve developmental goals.

In practice, due to the time and financial resources limitations any donor or developmental organizations always has, the UNDP could support ‘social innovation’ projects to a limited extent. Subsequently, the UNDP could not follow up on the scaling up and social impact the projects might bring about. Therefore, it looked for partnership with local organizations to hand over and institutionalize these projects, allowing them to sustain without the UNDP’s further support. While seeking for the implementation and ownership of the projects, the UNDP had to adapt its development aid to the in-country political and social

contexts. To do so, the UNDP rightfully assumed, as discussed in previous section, that labelling the projects as ‘social innovations’ will, probably, make them less politically sensitive, and more acceptable for national governments. Given the fact that the UNDP was supporting ‘social innovation’ projects in governance, which is a sensitive area for the governments of developing countries (and/or countries in transition), adjusting development assistance was an absolute necessity.

For instance, in the case of Uzbekistan, due to the sensitivity of work with local communities, the UNDP had to come up with less sensitive and at the same time efficient approach of delivering its aid to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Uzbekistan. Therefore, Ms. Emiliya Asadova from the UNDP says: “doing social innovations was, probably, the only option for us as the UNDP to work on the local level, with local communities”.²⁷ Other options allowing the UNDP engaging with locals were not acceptable for the government, and subsequently, not permissible.

In Ukraine, though the government seemed to be more in favor of innovations, nevertheless, the UNDP mostly either worked with non-profit organizations or directly supported ‘social innovation’ projects through Hackathons or Social innovation camps. In case of cooperation with government as Mr. Maksym Klyuchar from the UNDP recalls: “institutionalization of the idea/project was very difficult to implement, because due to change of the head of organization or leadership, earlier agreements about institutionalization of the idea were usually cancelled”.²⁸ In other words, successful institutionalization of the ‘social innovation’ projects, was possible only if they are supported by the particular head or leadership of the organization. Therefore, the UNDP had to adjust its projects to the perspectives and needs of the organization, envisioned by its leadership. Otherwise, ‘social innovation’ projects failed.

In the case of Armenia, Kolba Lab Lead Ms. Marina Mkhitarian says:

We could build the trust first, provided services for the government, so that people there understand that social innovation is not just kids playing technologies, but it is an impact and something you bring as a service for the government. Government realized that what Kolba Lab is doing, is not an additional burden. It was a long process and we had to play diplomacy to get there.²⁹

²⁷ Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 27, 2017.

²⁸ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 5, 2018.

²⁹ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messneger. December 22, 2017.

Again, to work with government, and to conduct development projects, the UNDP and Kolba Lab, first provided services to the government, and demonstrated the value of ‘social innovation’ projects in governance. Only, after realizing the benefits from ‘social innovation’ projects, government entities started cooperating with Kolba Lab and the UNDP. This was a strategy of convincing government to accept ‘social innovation’ projects, and to support them in governance realm.

Hence, the UNDP used social innovation concept to adapt its development assistance to the in-country contexts in post-Soviet republics. It did so with different degree of success, due to the differences in the in-country political contexts, and willingness of the governments to cooperate.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the UNDP’s development work in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It first, describes the UNDP’s development work in developing countries, to provide required information on how development assistance was organized by the UNDP previously, before application of social innovation methodology. Then, the chapter discussed the UNDP’s different approach to the development work in the post-Soviet republics, where ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP have been introduced. It particularly focused on the application of volitional and developmental ‘social innovation’ projects regarded as something less political and more acceptable from the development perspective, both by the UNDP and the national governments.

Chapter 5. Generation, features and assessment of the ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project

Introduction

This chapter discusses the process of generating UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects, and describes their nature and focus under the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ umbrella project. It also encompasses a discussion of the particular features of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, and their evaluation against social innovation features gleaned from scholarly literature and theory. In this regard, it emphasizes challenging collaboration with the government, and points out its little support of ‘social innovation’ projects. It also points out that occasional cooperation between the leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects and local organizations has occurred. The chapter scrutinizes the reasons behind the challenging diffusion of ‘social innovation’ projects, and the problems faced in measuring their social impact. It highlights UNDP’s particular perception on social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects, different from the understanding of social impact in other social innovation cases. Additionally, the chapter assesses the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects against the developmental feature of social innovation added by UNDP’s development framework, and the human development theory. Finally, it discusses the variety of terms intermixed with social innovation, that tend to erode the social innovation concept.

5.1. Generation of ‘social innovation’ projects: How it worked

Social innovations were not a priority area in Uzbekistan. The civil society and private sector had remained mainly not interested in social innovations. Only from 2012 had UNDP and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project started supporting small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects in local communities, that were aimed towards empowering individuals and fostering social innovations. These small-scale projects were designed to solve developmental problems such as scarcity of water and electricity, the inclusiveness of people with disabilities, and assuring the transparency and accountability of

local public institutions.³⁰ After the completion of this UNDP/UNV project, innovations in general and social innovations in particular were left out of government and civic sector plans and activities.

Only later under President Mirziyoyev did ‘social innovation’ projects again start to receive recognition, as the support of innovations in general became one of the government’s priorities. In 2017 the Ministry of Innovational Development was created to support innovations in various areas of the economic, industrial and social spheres. After the creation of the Ministry of Innovational Development, public discussions of the concept of innovational development of Uzbekistan had been conducted. In 2018 the Ministry of Innovational Development, the Center for Development Strategy, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation organized the First International Forum on Innovations in the social sphere, where social innovations were discussed with experts, government officials and representatives of civil society organizations. Later the USAID-supported project ‘Partnership for Innovations’³¹ has been launched in Uzbekistan, providing seed funding for local CSOs willing to introduce social innovations into Uzbekistan.

Thus, innovations and social innovations in Uzbekistan are an emerging trend, which should be further analyzed within the economic, political and social context of this post-Soviet republic. In this regard, learning from the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects would be a useful experience. Therefore, further discussion is going to be dedicated to the ‘social innovation’ projects supported by UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project.

Hence, in 2012-2014, the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project started providing funds for initiatives aimed at generating small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects and solving local problems by engaging with local communities and authorities in different regions of Uzbekistan. Called the Small Grants Program (SGP), it did not limit itself only to funding small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects across the country, but included training and mentoring elements crucial for program participants lacking basic project management, creative thinking, ideation and innovation techniques. According to SGP Manager Ms. Sevara Khamidova, two principle criteria were considered in selecting the ‘social innovation’ small-scale project ideas to be later funded by SGP. Those criteria were:

1. In the project, existing practices should be used in a new manner (new partnership, new elements and new combinations)

³⁰ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project. Final Evaluation Report, 2014, p. 1.

³¹ ‘Partnership for Innovations in Uzbekistan’ project, 2019.

2. The project should change life in local communities through the identification of a problem and offering a new solution to this problem.³²

Although the selection criteria were not sharp in themselves, the project developed the process based on the very detailed application form for small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects. In principle, the process of generating ‘socially innovative’ projects has been designed in a manner encouraging a *human-centered approach* to the social problem. This approach falls under the new UNDP philosophy towards development projects, with the central role being played by individuals affected by the given problem. UNDP, in accordance with the human-centered approach, should be encouraging citizens’ participation and engagement in solving problems they have in their communities, by equipping them with relevant skills, as well as necessary finances. Thus, based on this understanding, the project has followed the process of generation local ‘social innovation’ projects as described below:

1. Call for proposals/ideas (problem identification, presentation of the problem, by filling out the application form, presenting, and pitching)
2. Incubation (training about social innovations and project management) (2 days)
3. Working out prototypes and contentious work with mentors (several months)
4. Presenting prototypes (receiving feedback from mentors and other experts from private, public and civic sectors)
5. Adjusting and implementing the project
6. Institutionalization

After announcing the call for applications for the funding of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, the UNDP project has organized a two-day intensive workshop for project leaders. Since implementing ‘social innovation’ projects was a new practice for applicants, the UNDP/UNV project invited experts from the Austrian University for Business and Economics, the Department of Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship, and experts from the USA to conduct workshops and trainings in Uzbekistan for the ‘social innovation’ projects’ leaders. Also, representatives from private and public sectors judged the projects against their social and entrepreneurial potential, as well as their innovativeness. Later, small-scale projects were incubated and prototyped in periods ranging from several months up to one-year. During this period all projects were mentored by experts from private, public sectors and UNDP. Right

³² Interview, Sevara Khamidova. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

from the beginning, UNDP emphasized the need for the institutionalization of each project. For this reason, UNDP and the projects were looking for local organizations and partners who would be able to test and later use the ideas and methodologies generated by the ‘social innovation’ projects. Moreover, since the seed funding provided by UNDP was limited, necessary for the ideas to be sustained and developed, support from local institutions was needed. This could be achieved only in case of the interest of local communities and organizations in new social practices proposed by the projects.

In fact, ‘social innovation’ projects in the local context were considered to disrupt established practices by changing them to new practices. It was about the actions required to resolve problems, and to achieve desirable goals. In that sense, in Uzbekistan ‘social innovation’ projects, on the local level, served as integrators of new social practices. As per Tarde’s social practice theory, at the core of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, new social practices enable social innovation. In Uzbekistan, UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project intended to nurture inventions or ideas within small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, which were new for the social context in Uzbekistan. Later, through the imitation and repetition of them by social actions, it was intended that the new socially-desirable practices would be spread across the existing social system. This approach was in the core of the ‘social innovation’ small-scale projects supported by the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project. In Uzbekistan, ‘social innovation’ projects have had a diverse nature and focus, while being aimed towards the governance realm. Tables 12 and 13 group and describe ‘social innovation’ projects as supported by the UNDP/UNV ‘Social innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project.

Table 12. ‘Social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan

Category	Brief description of the projects
ICT (for people from vulnerable groups)	‘IT masters’ – teaching IT skills to unemployed individuals for better job opportunities; ‘Muynak website’ – a website for a small town experiencing an environmental disaster and economic challenges, to boost local and international tourism; ‘E-dairy’ – an electronic diary for parents to follow the in-class grades and accomplishments of their children at school; ‘Infobox’ – a mobile app containing information about the Bukhara city, available for tourists and locals.
Engineering/infrastructure	‘Mobile electro-station’ – an engineering construction allowing the generation of energy from wind; ‘Enjoying old age’ resource center – a physical space for elderly people to learn new skills and communicate with each other; ‘Shower and water supply’ in fields in rural areas, plus foil for warming up water – a water supply system allowing for the efficient collection, saving and distribution of water for hygienic purposes in rural areas (farms).

Source: Table compiled by the author based on UNDP data.

Table 13. ‘Social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan (continued)

Category	Brief description of the projects
Education/trainings and workshops	<p>‘Summer Camp and DIY Labs in Muynak’ – trainings and workshops have focused on the ‘Do-It-Yourself’ methodology for solving local issues;</p> <p>‘Debates tournament in Andijan’ – a training on debating techniques and methodologies for youth to strengthen their role in the local context;</p> <p>‘Training on reproductive health among the Roma population’ – a training based on the peer-to-peer methodology to promote reproductive health among so-far neglected parts of the population;</p> <p>Module ‘All the money under control’ – a methodology of keeping funding accountable and manageable;</p> <p>‘Awareness-raising campaigns for Breast Cancer prevention among women in Jizzakh’ – new approaches for promoting breast cancer awareness;</p> <p>‘Inspired Teachers’ – a new methodology of preparing English teachers from local schools;</p> <p>‘English guides’ – new guides on effective English teaching under supervision;</p> <p>‘Social Entrepreneurship skills’ – a training on teaching social entrepreneurship skills;</p> <p>‘Constructor’ – a scheme increasing young people’s interest in science, through developing design and construction skills;</p> <p>‘Peers club’ – a club of peers which enables skills and knowledge exchange, as well as coaching each other;</p> <p>‘Café Scientifique’ – a project promoting science through an untraditional (out of classroom) approach;</p> <p>‘Volunteers engagement (in the NatLib)’ – educating volunteers for the National Library of Uzbekistan. Sharing the culture and values of volunteerism.</p>
Specifically aimed at people with disabilities	<p>‘Fantasy-Club’ initiatives – courses on beading and jewelry for girls with disabilities, plus a new marketing approach for goods produced by the girls;</p> <p>‘Mohir Hunarmand’ – a course teaching new skills to children (including children with disabilities) from orphanages;</p> <p>‘The week of football’ – a football tournament for people with disabilities;</p> <p>‘Translations of audio and video for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’ – creating audio and video materials for people with disabilities available publicly;</p> <p>‘Taxi for people with disabilities with ‘Perekrestok’ Taxi’ – a taxi redesigned specifically for drivers with disabilities.</p>
Filming/Arts	<p>‘Afishka’ Festival of auteur theory and social films – a festival on short movies on social issues;</p> <p>‘Film on TB prevention’ – a movie which approaches the tuberculosis problem in a new (unusual for the Uzbek context) manner;</p> <p>‘Voice of volunteers’ – a radio program on pressing social issues, designed by volunteers;</p> <p>‘Theatre by children’ – a theatre of children for children, describing and solving pressing social problems;</p> <p>‘Video project about people living with HIV’ – a new approach to raising public awareness of the problem of HIV in Uzbek society.</p>
Others	<p>‘Eco bags with ‘Korzinka.uz’ – social enterprises producing eco-bags and selling them out through the retailing chain of ‘Korzinka.uz’ supermarkets;</p> <p>‘Promoting local tourism in social networks (with the LGSP project)’ – a new approach in promoting local tourism;</p> <p>‘Iact. Volunteers platform’ – a new online platform uniting volunteers in Uzbekistan. Connecting those who need volunteers with those who wish to volunteer;</p> <p>‘Do It Yourself (DIY) Lab’ – conducting the ‘Do-It-Yourself’ methodology through the lab works in different public places, to encourage solutions for problems through the local mobilization of human resources and waste.</p>

Source: Table compiled by the author based on UNDP data.

5.2. Evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan

5.2.1. People-centeredness and inclusiveness: The greater involvement of local inhabitants in solutions for problems

People (human) – centeredness, in a sense of the invention of solutions to social problems by those encountering the problems, is a concept contained in ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan. Projects that according to social practice theory should come up with inventions nurtured by individuals experiencing problematic issues has fully assured the fulfillment of this criterion. By the application of the human-centered principle, the inclusion of communities and individuals living in these communities, in addressing the problems they had, has been achieved by ‘social innovation’ projects. Now people themselves could identify the problem, design and apply their solution to the problem, as opposed to the solution that is donor or government-driven.

The people (or human) – centered approach was applied to all ‘social innovation’ small-scale projects in Uzbekistan. It was a priority element in designing ‘social innovation’ projects supported by UNDP. This is due to UNDP’s intention to design its development projects differently, by engaging directly with individuals and communities experiencing development challenges. Actually, people-centeredness is one of the features of social innovation as identified in other case studies. For instance, in the case of South Korea (Howaldt et al., 2018) or of India (Santha, 2019), the people-centeredness of social innovations has been specifically emphasized.

One of the good examples of the local ‘social innovation’ projects designed based on the human-centered principle is Infobox. Infobox was launched for the local government of the city of Bukhara in Uzbekistan. It allowed local inhabitants to provide information to the local government about the local communities where they live. The project was aimed to resolve existing problems of missing information about the different communities and locations in Bukhara, that could not be found on webpages or maps provided by the city government. Due to this problem, numerous communities and individuals were usually not considered by the local government’s development programs. Through allowing the crowdsourcing of missing information, Infobox ‘social innovation’ project planned to involve individuals and communities experiencing problems to address them themselves, by addressing the problem of a lack of data.

Since Bukhara is also a well-known tourists' destination in Uzbekistan, the problem of missing information also became a challenge for the development of local tourism. Many destinations in Bukhara could not be visited by tourists because they have not been mapped on available maps and/or on the electronic webpages of local government. Infobox also wanted to solve this problem by crowdsourcing information about different locations in the city. In this regard the leader of the project Mr. Umid Gafurov says that "the idea of Infobox is to create an online database which will help local people to find needed information and save their time. It is based on the Web 2.0 platform, meaning users can add information about places which they have visited, but which are not yet displayed on maps or websites".³³ This is how Infobox was planned through a human-centered manner, by attempting to put individuals (users) at the center of the project (web platform) to source data that could be later used for the good of themselves and others.

Another example is the E-dairy 'social innovation' project conducted at the school of the local community in the city of Tashkent. Mr. Ulugbek Musabekov, the leader of this project, made a preliminary analysis in one of the schools in the local community and identified the problem of lacking parents' involvement in the process of educating children taking classes at that school. Due to their workloads, parents could not regularly track the performance of their children at school. Teachers at the school also wanted to regularly report to parents about the grades, successes and problems of their children. The standard way of doing this so far was through a paper-based diary. However, this was an old-fashioned, inefficient approach, one that did not allow for the regular (everyday) reporting about the performance of children. Mr. Musabekov, an individual living in this community and a person who had previously attended this school, was aware about of this problem. He cooperated with the school management, parents and teachers, offering to introduce the E-dairy, co-designed by him, to parents and teachers at the school. He allowed parents and teachers to co-design the project and to add elements of the e-dairy that they think are required. Thus, Mr. Musabekov's 'social innovation' project identified a problem and allowed for the for design of a solution to the problem by those experiencing it. As he mentioned himself, "the project is aimed towards satisfying the needs of the local community we are working with".³⁴ Indeed, his project implied a focus on the needs of individuals that supposedly used the e-dairy, and so helped to make it human-centered.

³³ Interview, Umid Gafurov. November 2017.

³⁴ Interview, Ulugbek Musabekov. November 2017

A similar approach was applied in the cases of other ‘social innovation’ projects. The uniqueness and inclusiveness of the people-centered approach was also in its ability to involve previously-neglected groups (individuals), by allowing those groups experiencing problematic issues to design solutions. In other words, the problems should not be solved for them, but rather by them, because it was believed that people in trouble knew better than anyone else about the problems they have. Also, the inclusiveness of ‘social innovation’ projects was reflected in the intention to include people with disabilities in project design and implementation. It was believed by UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project that people with disabilities belonging to the vulnerable group usually do not benefit fully from the development projects. Therefore, several ‘social innovation’ projects have been designed for them.

For instance, Ms. Lola Yuldasheva’s project was designed for girls with disabilities in the local community of the city of Fergana. Ms. Yuldasheva, while talking about her ‘Fantasy club’ project for girls with disabilities, says that “each participant was able to share their creative idea and talent”.³⁵ Ms. Yuldasheva is a civil society activist who lives in Fergana, and is aware of the problems faced by persons with disabilities, usually excluded from the social life and left out without any economic opportunities. The girls with disabilities were in an even worse situation. She therefore decided to launch a project which helps girls with disabilities to gather and share the skills every one of them had. As the result of this Fantasy club, girls participating in the project could obtain sewing and handcrafting skills, and create unique products by using their imagination. Later these products could be sold out and generate income for the girls.

In this regard, the Manager of Small Grants Program of the UNDP/UNV project, Ms. Khamidova mentioned that the small grants program was designed to support ‘social innovation’ projects that solve the concrete problems of real people. She says:

We wanted to go small. We wanted to tackle small issues that at first glance do not look like serious and big problems, but indeed, these problems are something ordinary people deal with on a daily base. We wanted these people to speak up about the problems, and offer solutions that they think will work. You know, we in Tashkent, we in UNDP, we know nothing about these problems. People do.³⁶

³⁵ Interview, Lola Yuldasheva. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

³⁶ Interview, Sevara Khamidova. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

Certainly, applying human-centered design into ‘social innovation’ projects has allowed for identifying social problems and including previously-neglected individuals into the solutions for these problems. The UNDP/UNV ‘Social innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project has looked at this approach while supporting ‘social innovation’ projects, and has provided seed funding for such projects through the Small Grants Program. In this context, Ms. Emiliya Asadova from UNDP says:

We at the UNDP are not experts in the field anymore. As you well know, and as user-centered design of social innovations tells us, people experiencing the problems are the experts in this problem. We should ask them how they want these problems to be solved.³⁷

The people-centered design of ‘social innovation’ projects relate to the social practice theory which allows inventing to happen at a local level (Howaldt et al, 2014). In this regard social practice theory has been fully implemented. In practice, new elements introduced by the new people-centered project have allowed for focused interventions into problematic areas as articulated by those experiencing the problems. In fact, as suggested by Shove et al. “novelty can come out of any of the key elements of social practice, namely physicality (sociality and physicality of carried out practices), materiality (artifacts, things, technologies in and for social practices), and competences (know-how, practical knowledge, background knowledge, and others)” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 17).

Although this is what happened for people-centered ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, it did not mean that the specific aspects of the elements of social practice would easily connect to existing elements, and over time it would often lead to social innovation imitations (Howaldt et al., 2014). But what has happened already is that the UNDP-supported projects have encouraged people-centered inventions which have been implemented locally, and through further imitation, could be eventually institutionalized and diffused in order to create new social practices.

5.2.2. Networking and collaboration: Major challenges

Networking and collaboration, as per social practice theory, has implied the constellation and collaboration of different actors for the generation and progress of ‘social

³⁷ Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 2017.

innovation' projects. This criterion has been partly fulfilled in Uzbekistan. UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project also intended to establish cooperation with different actors, to assure the generation of 'social innovation' projects by different stakeholders, and to eventually achieve the further institutionalization of 'social innovation' projects. Although networking was undertaken with the government, the scaling and institutionalization of 'social innovation' projects was challenging. However, as will be discussed further, collaboration with the National Library of Uzbekistan and the Center for Youth Initiatives was established nevertheless. Particularly, collaboration between the government and community leaders was not easy. Usually the government support of 'social innovation' projects was missing.

In Uzbekistan, networking among different actors involved in 'social innovation' small-scale projects was the priority for UNDP. According to the MoU between the UNDP/UNV project and the Center for Youth Initiatives: "the purpose of activities was to provide a framework for cooperation and to facilitate collaboration between parties through (...) social innovations interventions".³⁸

In Uzbekistan, 'social innovation' projects had better chances of progression if they have the support of different governmental (public), private and/or non-governmental organizations. This feature of 'social innovation' projects in Uzbekistan that will be discussed later was similar to the evidence found from developed, developing and post-communist republics. In fact, as in cases of developing and post-communist republics, the government support of 'social innovation' projects in Uzbekistan is required for their success. In this context the leader of the Peers club project conducted within the local community of the city of Gulistan, Mr. Kholosboev, recalls that the "fundamental step for the planning of new projects was the base for uniting the local youth with local authorities".³⁹ Kholosboev's 'social innovation' project was aimed towards knowledge sharing and coaching in Gulistan city. Based on evidence from the field, Mr. Kholosboev, who lives in Gulistan, identified that knowledge is more efficiently acknowledged if it is shared among peers. Therefore, he offered the idea of a Peers club, where people (especially young people, but not only) can meet on their community premises and educate each other on various topics. To make the project happen, Mr. Kholosboev needed the permission and support of local authorities. Therefore, he tended to collaborate with them and could actually find a local partner.

³⁸ Memorandum of understanding between the UNDP and Center for Youth Initiatives, 2013, p. 3.

³⁹ Interview, Doston Kholosboev. November 2017.

Networks and collaborations which occasionally emerged while conducting ‘social innovation’ projects were workable and helped to introduce projects to different public and private organizations. For instance, Ms. Veronika Polyakova from the National Library of Uzbekistan claimed that “they at the National Library even benefited from having more volunteers, who started coming to us after cooperation with the UNDP project”⁴⁰ Ms. Emiliya Asadova from UNDP recalls another example related to eco-bags project with the ‘Korzinka.uz’ retail chain. She said: “Korzinka.uz still has the eco-bags on its shelves produced by the social enterprise supported by UNDP. This was the project we launched together in 2014”.⁴¹ Indeed, this UNDP-supported project helped connect the social enterprise ‘Ipak suzana’ with the private enterprise ‘Korzinka.uz’ in Tashkent. Due to the project with eco-bags, women working in the social enterprise, belonging to the vulnerable group of a usually-unemployed population, could work to produce the bags and generate an income after their bags were sold out. Also, purchasing eco-bags that could be re-used many times, instead of plastic bags that could be usually used just once, contributed to people’s more environmentally-friendly behavior, and saved money that would be otherwise spent purchasing additional plastic bags.

From the UNDP perspective, working in partnership was always a strategic priority. The organization always intended to partner with the government and with local (public and private) organizations, to strengthen their capacities and assure that ‘social innovation’ projects will be absorbed and replicated by them. Therefore, the UNDP/UNV project, operating within UNDP’s Direct Implementation Modality (without an attached national partner), was looking for partnerships with local organizations. Partnering with local organizations and government was, however, not always possible. This further led to the problem of the challenging scaling of ‘social innovation’ projects.

Theoretically speaking, Howaldt et al. (2014) mentioned that “networking is a key component for social innovation to happen since it is regarded to be a social practice prompted by certain actors or their constellation” (p. 26). This theoretical element of social practice theory has been considered, but as is evident from discussion, it has not been fully accomplished. To recall, Mulgan and Murray have also emphasized the role of relationships among different actors, as the ground for generating social innovations (Mulgan and Murray, 2010). Strictly speaking, UNDP has tried to introduce new practices by partnering with

⁴⁰ Interview, Veronika Polyakova. August 2017.

⁴¹ Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 2017.

governments (and local organizations). This should be happening through repetition in order to bring change. However, partnership has been limited to a couple of local organizations and has lacked permanent government support. Hence social practice theory has had limited implementation in terms of this particular social innovation criterion.

Absence of government support of 'social innovation' projects

In developed, developing and post-communist countries, governments supported social innovations in priority areas where solutions to pressing problems were needed (e.g. solving the problem of unemployment or poverty). In Uzbekistan, 'social innovation' projects to be implemented had to be also supported by national (and/or local) government. In practice, however, the governmental support of 'social innovation' projects was missing.

For instance, Mr. Gafurov recalls that "in case of government, the Infobox project can help them [local governments] to interact with local people by internet: answer their questions, and solve their problems. This did not happen though. Now, I do not plan to continue the project".⁴² Ms. Khamidova, also acknowledged that "several 'social innovation' projects have been cancelled due to missing government support".⁴³

Another example of the absence of government support is the project on promoting local tourism in social networks. The project was a new approach to promoting local tourism by involving local communities in taking pictures of the remarkable places in their regions, where usual tourist itineraries do not bring tourists. If successful, the project could bring more tourists to the yet undiscovered tourist destinations in Uzbekistan, and benefit local communities who could provide their services to the tourists and subsequently generate income. The project was supported by UNDP at the first stage, but was not later promoted by local governments.

The UNDP/UNV project Manager Mr. Bokhodir Ayupov says about this project:

We have equipped selected participants of the project with cameras and USB sticks with internet. They can use them to take pictures and post in the internet, in social networks, Trip Advisor, and other outlets. We taught them how to position their communities as tourist destinations. We piloted cooperation between our participants from Djizzak, joining with the local government of Zaamin in Djizzak, to promote the

⁴² Interview, Umid Gafurov. November 2017.

⁴³ Interview, Sevara Khamidova. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

beauties of Zaamin. Unfortunately, once we stopped funding the project, it operated just a light bit of enthusiasm from participants. Later, local government did not express interest in having and replicating it.⁴⁴

The examples mentioned above prove the fact of missing government support. In practice, in Uzbekistan, ‘social innovation’ projects did a good job of nurturing ideas. Those ideas (or inventions) have not been, however, always picked up by local organizations (or governments) to institutionalize them and further turn into the everyday routine. For instance, Asadova also points out that the lack of support from local organizations was a systemic problem for ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan. She says: “you know yourself what kind of problems we had. In some cases, the project ‘died’ if local organizations did not want to pick it up”.⁴⁵ Thus, while this support was missing, it inhibited possible positive effects from ‘social innovation’ projects. Moreover, for ‘social innovation’ projects, the absence of government’s support did not allow for imitation of the inventions, and prevented its progress along the full process of generation of a true social innovation that creates new social settings (Howaldt et al., 2014).

Occasional cooperation between leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects and local organizations

Since systemic government support was absent, UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project always intended to establish cooperation ties with partner organizations in Uzbekistan. The memorandum of understanding between UNDP and the Center for Youth Initiatives is one confirmation of this fact. It says: “the parties, on a regular basis, keep each other informed of and consult on matters of common interest, which in their opinion are likely to lead to mutual collaboration”.⁴⁶ Needless to say that UNDP was looking for cooperation also due to the need to further institutionalize ‘social innovation’ projects. In this regard, the UNDP web page dedicated to the UNDP/UNV project activities said: “social innovation lab or debates training have been developed and implemented in close collaboration with well-established partners who can guarantee the continuity of project activities”.⁴⁷

Occasional cooperation with local organizations has been, sometimes, pursued by local

⁴⁴ Interview, Bokhodir Ayupov. August 2017.

⁴⁵ Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 2017.

⁴⁶ Memorandum of understanding between the UNDP and the Center for Youth Initiatives, 2013, p. 3.

⁴⁷ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, 2012.

‘social innovation’ projects’ leaders. As Mr. Kholosboev tells about his project: “this project [Peers club project] was established in cooperation with the Society Monitoring Institute”.⁴⁸ The leader of a small-scale ‘social innovation’ project in Fergana, Ms. Yuldasheva, mentioned that she cooperated with a local public school in her community to have a physical space for courses for girls with disabilities. She says: “I cooperated with a local public school to have a room for us in which to conduct our activities. It should be a nice place where girls can come and take courses”.⁴⁹ This is how project leaders could, sometimes, collaborate with local organizations. Such alliances were irregular and could be arranged only occasionally.

As the literature suggests, in developing and post-communist countries, cooperation for ‘social innovation’ projects usually occurred between government and CSOs. In Uzbekistan, occasional cooperation usually happened between UNDP, leaders of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, and local organizations. Collaboration was possible if UNDP or project leaders had personal contacts with local organizations. Usually, as local civil society activists, project leaders could have previously-gained experiences of joint work with these local organizations. Sometimes personal contacts with public organizations (e.g. public schools) have been used. UNDP could also connect project leaders to partner organizations that used to cooperate with UNDP. Otherwise, any kind of alliance with local organizations for implementing a ‘social innovation’ project would require obtaining permissions from government organs, which was a long and bureaucratic process. Therefore, cooperation with government (local government) was challenging, if at all possible. This was a challenge for the local diffusion of inventions.

Therefore, in Uzbekistan, small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects in the form of local interventions injected new elements into existing social reality (Tarde, 2009), to further connect them with elements already existing in the post-Soviet social system. But, UNDP could only support and nurture inventions that have been implemented locally by ‘social innovation’ projects.

5.2.3. Localness of projects: Better opportunities for working at the community level

All ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan have been launched locally. As per social practice theory, they have addressed micro level problems, satisfying the local queries of individuals. The UNDP has also tried to go local with ‘social innovation’ projects, because

⁴⁸ Interview, Doston Kholosboev. November 2017.

⁴⁹ Interview, Lola Yuldasheva. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

UNDP wanted to primarily tackle local problems. UNDP also believed that if local solutions are successful, they can be later scaled up and become country wide solutions. Also, as social practice theory, scholarly literature and evidence from ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan suggest, small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects were conducted in a specific domain – governance. These projects addressed issues in local governments and communities. For instance, the manager of the UNDP/UNV project Mr. Ayupov says in this regard: “all projects, everything we did was implemented on the local level”.⁵⁰

Though the UNDP-supported projects were aimed towards local communities and governments, as we already know individuals in the governments (national and local), considered them to be very sensitive, because they were aimed at governance issues. Therefore, the UNDP/UNV project supported ‘social innovation’ projects that were operating on the local level, only after approaching national governments. These projects have been regarded by the government as being something less sensitive, and aimed towards providing technical assistance to local governments. As was mentioned already, receiving government permission was not a rapid process. After the project’s approval by relevant government authorities, ‘social innovation’ project was usually piloted by local governments and/or communities jointly with ‘social innovation’ projects’ leaders. This was the only option to get government institutions in Uzbekistan involved in the local ‘social innovation’ projects, or to receive their permission to introduce a project. In this regard, Asadova confirms that “doing ‘social innovation’ projects, was probably, the only option for us at UNDP to work on a local level with local communities”.⁵¹ This was different from the experiences in developing and post-communist countries, where, as literature suggests, social innovations were primarily launched as local initiatives without government intervention. These local social innovations could, however, later be borrowed by the government, or applied in the government’s priority areas, where certain social problems should be resolved.

In Uzbekistan, small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, despite difficulties faced in implementation, have played positive roles. They assured the greater participation of individuals in solving their local daily problems, by involving them in activities of ‘social innovation’ projects through creating new social relationships. For instance, Infobox that was planned for the local government in Bukhara was designed in accordance with this idea. As Gafurov says: “one of the main ideas of Infobox was to link government and local people, so

⁵⁰ Interview, Bokhodir Ayupov. August 2017.

⁵¹ Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 2017.

they can interact with each other using the website, or a later app”.⁵² Musabekov, who led the E-dairy project in a local community in Tashkent, emphasized that his project was primarily aimed to the local community. He tells about his project: “the project was aimed to satisfy the needs of the local community we were working with”.⁵³ Kholosboev, the leader of the Peers club project in the local community in Gulistan says that his project’s purpose was to empower people locally: “without any doubt our project empowered local people”.⁵⁴ In other words, ‘social innovation’ projects were aimed at local issues and intended to resolve these issues by assuring the better participation of individuals and generating social relationships between them and local organizations (e.g. local governments and/or communities). This is how UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project envisioned their work on the local governance level. Documents analyzed for the purpose of this study confirmed that UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ intended to work on the local level, closer to local communities. An MoU between UNDP and the Center for Youth Initiatives tells that the purpose of the cooperation between the two organizations was “to mobilize local youth, empower youth through social innovations, and provide seed funds for projects aimed at community improvement”.⁵⁵

All in all, it is clear that UNDP, the UNDP/UNV project, and small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects were primarily focused on the local needs of the project-related activities in governments and communities, through promoting ‘social innovations’. As per social practice theory, these projects started through addressing micro-level problems (Howaldt et al., 2014). They did so by encouraging the better participation of users/citizens in ‘social innovation’ projects. Sometimes this was achieved through involving individuals in engineering works and ICTs.

5.2.4. Limited use of technology in ‘social innovation’ projects

The use of technology is a particular feature of ‘social innovation’ projects. In Uzbekistan, ‘social innovation’ projects used ICTs in rare cases. In that sense, the criterion of using technology in ‘social innovation’ projects has not been fully fulfilled in Uzbekistan. In fact, social innovations should not necessarily be high-tech solutions. In Uzbekistan the biggest

⁵² Interview, Umid Gafurov. November 2017.

⁵³ Interview, Ulugbek Musabekov. November 2017.

⁵⁴ Interview, Doston Kholosboev. November 2017.

⁵⁵ Memorandum of Understanding between the UNDP and the Center for Youth Initiatives, 2013, p. 2.

share of the small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects were low-tech initiatives. Only 11 small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects out of 33 were using technology of any kind [ICTs or engineering works].⁵⁶

In Uzbekistan’s case, this was most likely due to the low coverage and speed of internet, and relatively underdeveloped ICT infrastructure, that resulted in ICT-based ‘social innovation’ projects being less in number. Out of 11 small-scale projects, only 4 used ICTs. Other 7 projects have rather constituted from engineering works addressing the local needs of communities.⁵⁷

Another reason for having less ICT-based ‘social innovation’ projects is that UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project tried to have more small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects in rural areas of Uzbekistan, involving individuals coming from these areas. Pressing social problems in rural regions of Uzbekistan did not often require ICT-based solutions. In this regard, Khamidova claims:

We wanted to go outside of Tashkent. A lot of things are going on in the capital [in Tashkent]. Youth have more opportunities here. But what about rural youth? What about rural problems? We wanted to give them a chance. We have even prioritized the selection of projects from rural areas. They have very basic problems with water, electricity and heating. If any project wants to address these issues, we picked it up.⁵⁸

One such small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects was ‘shower and water supply’, designed for local farms in local communities of the Bukhara region. It could be used in the fields of rural areas to keep and warm up water (a water supply system), allowing for the efficient collection, saving and distribution of water, for hygienic purposes in rural areas (e.g. farms). The project was conducted by a group of young people led by Mr. Ikhtiyor Kamalov. Knowing about the problem of scarce water resources in rural regions of Uzbekistan, Kamalov and his team from Bukhara region, came up with the invention which was helpful in saving and efficiently using scarce water resources. They planned to equip local farms with this system, helping them cope with the problem of water scarcity, and aiding them in using water to meet the daily needs of farmers who spend most of their time on farms.

ICT-based ‘social innovation’ projects were predominantly implemented in urban

⁵⁶ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, Final Evaluation Report, 2014, p. 24.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Interview, Sevara Khamidova. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

areas, where access to internet was relatively less problematic. For instance, Infobox project in Bukhara, or E-dairy project in Tashkent are good examples of such projects. In general, the cases of the use of engineering works and ICTs for small-scale projects, was a novel applied by UNDP in offering local development assistance in Uzbekistan. Though the use of engineering works or ICTs was not something entirely new for UNDP development projects, these ‘social innovation’ projects were the first cases when individuals experiencing the problem, designed and constructed solutions for these problems. These projects were supported by UNDP but UNDP did not implement them, and did not intervene in the process of generating them.

5.2.5. Scaling up: Scant possibility of diffusion

According to social practice theory, any invention should be repeated, or in other words, diffused or scaled. Repetition or diffusion/scaling is needed to achieve, over time, a sustainable social change. ‘Social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP/UNV project were expected to be scaled, and UNDP was seeking opportunities for this. However, this was problematic due to the lack of government (local and national) support of local projects. Some occasional collaborations could allow for scaling, but at the moment this criterion of social practice theory has not yet been achieved.

In fact, in Uzbekistan, diffusing ‘social innovation’ projects, was desired by UNDP. However, this was problematic due to a lack of commitment from policymakers. As it was found out, individuals leading ‘social innovation’ projects were looking for support from local (public) organizations, but could not always receive it. This problem was already mentioned while discussing the challenging networking possibilities with government partners (local and national). This challenge prevented ‘social innovation’ projects from being scaled. The problem was also pointed out by the leaders of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, Musabekov, who led the E-dairy project in his local community, recalled: “we tested our project in one school. It was possible, because it was the school where I studied myself, and the teachers knew me there. To spread my project across the city, I would need additional support”.⁵⁹ Gafurov also mentions similar problems with regard to his local project: “in case of government, Infobox helped them to interact with local people by internet, answering their

⁵⁹ Interview, Ulugbek Musabekov. November 2017.

questions, help to solve their problems. This did not happen though. Now, I do not plan to continue the project”.⁶⁰

Clearly, the inability to scale-up ‘social innovation’ projects was a problem which inhibited their further progress. Local organizations were not always eager to pick up ‘social innovation’ projects in order to make them more sustainable. Sometimes projects that have been successfully tested in Tashkent and could be replicated in other regions of Uzbekistan have not been supported by local governments in those regions. Khamidova recalls:

We wonderfully did the DIY [Do It Yourself Lab] in Tashkent. You remember that. So many people came to the ‘Gulshan’ park to construct something from the plastic bottles, boxes, wood, other reusable materials, that we, otherwise, used to throw away. So many nice things were constructed. Some occasional visitors to the park even wanted to purchase something. But, when we wanted to conduct the same DIY Lab in Muynak (The Republic of Karakalpakstan⁶¹), the local government first agreed to and later canceled the Lab. I still do not know why?⁶²

What all these examples tell us is that replicating ‘social innovation’ projects was a complicated task for UNDP, the UNDP/UNV project, and for the leaders of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects. This has demolished to some extent the possible positive effects of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan. The ‘social innovation’ projects could satisfy local needs, but the replication of their experiences was less possible. From the social innovation point of view, the inability to successfully diffuse projects prevented them from progressing towards meso and/or macro levels, that could eventually enable social transformation and social change.

It was found that out of 33 local ‘social innovation’ projects, only one has had the chance to be scaled. The project on producing eco-bags by a social enterprise for the retail chain ‘Korzinka.uz’ in Tashkent could be actually diffused. As it was mentioned earlier in this section, collaboration between the social (‘Ipak suzana’) and private (‘Korzinka.uz’) enterprises to generate the ‘social innovation’ project took place. According to the Final Evaluation Report of the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, after the project with ‘Korzinka.uz’ was launched in Tashkent, other private retail chains such as ‘Next’ and ‘Makro’ also ordered eco-bags. In total, sixteen thousand eco-bags

⁶⁰ Interview, Umid Gafurov. November 2017.

⁶¹ Karakalpakstan is located in the north of Uzbekistan.

⁶² Interview, Sevara Khamidova. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

were produced and sold by the year 2014.⁶³ In the case of further collaboration with ‘Korzinka.uz’, it was planned that eco-bags should be available for purchase in all supermarkets belonging to ‘Kozinka.uz’ across the country.⁶⁴ This gave some hope that the results of the project will be further scaled.

The scaling or diffusion of ‘social innovation’ projects was the major goal of the UNDP, that also very well corresponded with social practice theory. Making invention a regular practice or routine by institutionalizing it and diffusing it across the society (Howaldt et al., 2014), is what the theory advises to do in order to make a social innovation happen. Scaling (or diffusion) proved to be challenging in Uzbekistan. The UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects might be impetuses to the social changes later, while, for now, scaling some of their results (e.g. eco-bags project) would require more time and efforts.

5.2.6. Social impact: A different understanding and an assessment problem

Any social innovation is supposed to make a social impact. According to social practice theory, since social innovations operate on micro, meso and macro levels, they can also make impacts on those levels. On the micro level, social innovations can address local problems. However the ultimate goal of social innovation is to enable a social change on a macro level. In post-Soviet Uzbekistan, ‘social innovation’ projects were launched recently and had local character, and therefore, their social impact was evaluating prematurely. Moreover, to find out whether any social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects has happened, adequate measurement tools should be applied. Those measurement instruments to assess social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects were not available, and have not been applied by UNDP, and/or the UNDP/UNV project. Subsequently this criterion has not hitherto been fulfilled.

In fact, no data was found which confirmed that measuring the impact of ‘social innovation’ projects was articulated in project documents or other sources. This was a shortcoming of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan. Clearly, in Uzbekistan ‘social innovation’ projects were experiencing the same social impact measurement problem, as social innovations in numerous developed, developing and post-communist countries. Moreover, UNDP in Uzbekistan had a perspective on social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects

⁶³ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, Final Evaluation Report, 2014, p. 23.

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 20.

which was different from that existing in other countries where social innovations have been introduced. In Uzbekistan social impact from ‘social innovation’ project was regarded as the identification of a pressing social challenge, and the creation of new social relationships to address this challenge.

Social impact as the identification of challenges and the creation of new social relationships

UNDP and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project regarded social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects as being the identification of social challenges, and the establishment of new social relationships to tackle these challenges. For instance, Khamidova mentions the following criteria applied to small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects: “first, existing practices used in a new manner (new partnership, new elements and new combinations); second, changing life in local communities through identification of their problems and offering new solutions”.⁶⁵

The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project followed the logic of problem identification and the creation of relationships to solve the given problem. Actually, the UNDP/UNV project could help establish such relationships which would otherwise be impossible. For instance, the UNDP/UNV project could connect a person with a disability with the staff of the National Library of Uzbekistan to create audio and video materials for the deaf. Mr. Ayupov recalls this case:

The National Library wanted to have publicly-available video and audio material for the deaf, but they did not know how to produce them. We at the UNDP knew a guy, Andrey, who had participated in our other projects and who had some issues with hearing. We asked him, and he agreed to help with the audio material. We thought it is good idea if these materials were prepared by a person who experiences the problem. Andrey was this kind of person. He could tell what kind of video and audio material persons like him would need. He could understand how they should be better designed. The national Library would only benefit from a person like Andrey. So, what we did was we connected Andrey to the National Library, and he started helping them to produce video and audio materials. This is what we at the UNDP wanted. People identify the problem they have, and through new connections, the problem could be solved. Relationships between Andrey and the National Library now allowed the

⁶⁵ Interview, Sevara Khamidova. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

production of something that would be useful for many individuals with impaired hearing.⁶⁶

The project with the National Library demonstrates that UNDP was looking for project ideas corresponding with the above-mentioned condition. This perspective social impact was different to the one in developing and post-communist countries where, as can be understood from reviewed literature, social impact was regarded as something that satisfies existing social needs.

In the case of other ‘social innovation’ projects, for instance, Infobox, E-dairy, Fantasy club or Peers club, the impact from the projects was intended through establishing social relationships between people, and/or people and organizations, that otherwise would not be made. Infobox implied the collaboration of individuals and local authorities, the E-dairy project intended to establish cooperation between parents, teachers and students, the Fantasy club project encouraged networking between individuals with disabilities and the local public school, and the Peers club allowed for a partnership among peers in a local community. In other words, the intention to network and collaborate with individuals, local organizations and governments, was required not only for the implementation and scaling of the ‘social innovation’ projects, but also for making a social impact. It was believed by UNDP that these social relationships could work after the completion of the ‘social innovation’ projects, and bring about desired change.

UNDP intended to nurture new social relationships which according to Domanski, is about social relations and not only about social impact (Domanski, 2017), which is currently the core issue in the scholarly debate regarding social innovations. From the social practice theory perspective, new elements connected by the UNDP and the local ‘social innovation’ projects (that would not be otherwise connected), through new social relationships, could encourage the invention of the idea that would be later used by local communities and individuals. Social relations helped identify how the social problem could be tackled innovatively, and this experience, if imitated, has the potential to spread across society and create a new social reality (e.g. a new methodology of cooperation with people with disabilities in Uzbekistan).

⁶⁶ Interview, Bokhodir Ayupov. August 2017.

5.3. The developmental feature of ‘social innovation’ projects: More inclusion and empowerment of individuals

From the development perspective, Uzbekistan’s ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan corresponded with UNDP’s development framework and Sen’s human development theory. They were aimed to achieve more inclusiveness and transparency, enabling more freedoms and better social facilities – for instance the improvement of capabilities (Sen, 1999). In that sense, ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan fulfilled developmental criterion.

For instance, Kholosboev tells that his Peers club local ‘social innovation’ project was “aimed at fighting not only corruption, but also other lawbreaking issues such as human trafficking and social issues”.⁶⁷ In fact, through knowledge sharing the Peers club project supposed to help individuals obtain the missing information required to be aware of their rights and to enable them to request respect for social standards. Another example is dedicated to the inclusiveness of ‘social innovation’ projects. For example, as Yuldasheva mentions: “the Fantasy club project, was intending to create more opportunities for girls with disabilities living in local communities”.⁶⁸ The project helped to involve a usually neglected group of people with disabilities into activities which could help them generate incomes and improve their lives.

In the Infobox ‘social innovation’ project operating in Bukhara, one goal was to allow individuals to map new tourist destinations in the city to support tourism to yet undiscovered places in the city. It was believed that this would allow local communities located there, to benefit from tourist inflow because they could provide their services to the tourists. Since in the available maps and electronic web resources these destinations were not mapped, the communities living there also could not benefit from tourist flow, and were left without the opportunity to generate the income from local tourism. Infobox also helped individuals living in these communities to raise their voices and source information about themselves. Mapping was also helpful as a data generated about communities, if used by the local government, could help us know about city areas yet left aside from economic and social programs. This would assure a more inclusive character of such programs.

Essentially the UNDP and UNDP/UNV project intended to empower young people,

⁶⁷ Interview, Doston Kholosboev. November 2017.

⁶⁸ Interview, Lola Yuldasheva. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

women⁶⁹ and individuals in less privileged situations, who had remained neglected by existing development programs. Through the local ‘social innovation’ projects UNDP was intending to allow more local political, economic and social opportunities in communities. In this context, as Sen (1999) highlighted that “achieving justice, and conceptualizing economic needs are possible when democratic institutions, and effective practices as well as political liberty and civil rights are considered” (p. 148). Thus UNDP intended to design ‘social innovation’ projects in a manner addressing these aspects of development.

At the same time, given the difficulties faced in operating and introducing ‘social innovation’ projects, UNDP tried to adapt its development aid to the local context in Uzbekistan. Hence local ‘social innovation’ projects were designed in accordance with UNDP’s vision and approach to delivering development assistance. In this regard, UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project have primarily identified factors that might potentially contribute to risk for development (UNDP Human Development Report, 2014), and then designed for development aid in accordance with those possible risks. In practice, while government could be sensitive to UNDP’s development project in governance, or to its work with communities, UNDP has conducted ‘social innovation’ projects that have not been considered by the government as being something too political. At the same time ‘social innovation’ projects allowed UNDP to operate in the governance area, and on the level of local communities, closer to people. For example, when Asadova earlier discussed challenging collaboration with government, she mentioned how UNDP adapted its development aid in the course of these challenges in Uzbekistan: “as you know, working with government was not easy for us. Doing ‘social innovation’ projects was probably the only option for us at UNDP to work on the local level with local communities”.⁷⁰

All in all, the examples of ‘social innovation’ projects mentioned above demonstrated a developmental overtone of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan. In accordance with the UNDP’s development approach, they could tackle issues that have been formulated by the UNDP as development challenges in governance (e.g. corruption or lack of inclusiveness). What they also clearly demonstrate is how the UNDP’s development aid has been adjusted to the local context in post-Soviet Uzbekistan.

⁶⁹ The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, Final Evaluation Report, 2014, p. 7.

⁷⁰ Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 2017.

5.4. “Social innovation” intermixed with “social project”, “civic engagement” and “community volunteerism” concepts

The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project was intended to support social innovations and volunteerism and introduce them into Uzbekistan’s social context. In practice, however, UNDP’s national partners did not always understand what “social innovation” is. Given the fact that social innovation inherited many definitions, being clear about what should be delivered while designing and introducing ‘social innovation’ projects was a primary task for UNDP and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project. UNDP and project staff have had a clear understanding of what social innovation is, that could be later reached out to national partners. To demonstrate this let us look at definitions of “social innovation” provided by UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project staff in Uzbekistan.

For instance, Asadova says: “social innovations are solutions that work for the resolution of social problems/issues. They do not have to be scientifically new. Sometimes they can be new for a certain area/context. For example, something used in farming can be used in medicine”.⁷¹

Ayupov provides the following definition:

Social innovation is an innovation that is social, that is beneficial for the society, especially for vulnerable groups of the society, not as a priority, but as an additional aspect. I have never considered the financial component to be excluded from ‘social innovation’. In other words, ‘social innovation’ can be profitable, though the practice shows that such examples are quite rare. Many people see ‘social innovation’ as a charity. But the essence of ‘social innovation’ is delivering public good. As for innovation itself, it is about unconventional approaches and using existing systems and opportunities by integrating them for public good. It can be an invention in the core of ‘social innovation’.⁷²

Khamidova considers social innovations as:

Arrangements of activities and procedures that differ from previous accustomed

⁷¹ Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 2017.

⁷² Interview, Bokhodir Ayupov. August 2017.

patterns and that have far-reaching social consequences. Elements of social change that create new social facts, i.e. influencing the behavior of individuals or specific social groups discernibly and aligning it with accepted – not primarily economic rationality following – goals. New combinations that produce social change.⁷³

Ms. Shakhnoz Bazarova (Zafari) in charge of the coordination of volunteers at the UNDP/UNV project, understands social innovations as: “unconventional solution of social problem, which is less costly than traditional solutions. Social innovations evolve the usage of human resources”.⁷⁴

From the responses of UNDP and project staff members, two major criteria fully relevant to social innovation were stated by respondents: 1) social innovation is a new idea introduced into the social context; 2) social innovation should have social impact (make a social change). Thus in principle, despite mentioning different incarnations of social innovation, UNDP and UNDP/UNV project staff had no clear understanding about the major elements of social innovation.

National partners were quite in agreement with UNDP and project staff about the social component of social innovation, considering it as the possibility of making a social impact. For instance, Mukimov from the Center of Youth Initiatives says: “social innovations are innovative ideas for society, and for the public good”.⁷⁵

Polyakova from the National Library mentions that:

Social innovation is the support of areas helping people, making public good. Because we live in the society and ‘social innovation’ is the primary support of social initiative. And promoting volunteerism is a very good example. I remember you had a ‘Time bank’ initiative for volunteers that I liked. So, social innovation is a support of initiatives aiming at social problems and improving these problems/issues.⁷⁶

Thus, UNDP and Uzbekistan’s national partners were in agreement about the public good that should be delivered by the ‘social innovation’ projects. Public good desirable for society could be achieved as the result of the resolution of a social problem. Although cooperation with UNDP was desired by national partners to address areas were they

⁷³ Interview, Sevara Khamidova. Via IMO Messenger. November 2017.

⁷⁴ Interview, Shakhnoz Bazarova (Zafari). August 2017.

⁷⁵ Interview, Husan Mukimov. August 2017.

⁷⁶ Interview, Veronika Polyakova. August 2017.

substantially lacked financial resources and/or expertise, the concept of “social innovation” applied by the UNDP was not fully understood by them. For instance, Polyakova mentioned:

We have clearly understood what UNDP tries to do by promoting volunteerism. We at the National Library have even benefited from having more volunteers, who started coming to us after cooperation with UNDP project. But we did not understand what social innovation is, and what UNDP tries to do by promoting it. UNDP even wanted to launch a Social Innovation Lab in the National Library, but this goal was not achieved. Maybe it was a lack of communication from UNDP? We were often awaiting official requests from UNDP before doing its projects at the National Library, but we have not always received such requests with clear explanation.⁷⁷

Evidently, none of the national partners with whom UNDP had signed MoUs clearly understood the social innovations that UNDP wanted to launch. Considering ‘social innovation’ small-scale projects as being merely additional donor-driven initiatives, local organizations missed the point of what social innovation is about. Mukimov mentions in this regard:

In our understanding, UNDP tried to achieve its goals in delivering results and spending donor money. Volunteerism was already in practice in our center, and ‘social innovation’ was something the purpose of what we could not fully understand. If it was about doing social projects to solve social problems, then we at the center had implemented such projects even before collaboration with UNDP.⁷⁸

The major problem for the project in introducing social innovation as a concept and practice in Uzbekistan was the lack of understanding by partners about what social innovation is about. As Ayupov says: “our major problem was explaining to our partners what social innovation is”⁷⁹ Indeed, misunderstanding the concept happened because of the scarcity of knowledge of national partners about social innovations, and miscommunication between UNDP and its partners about the concept and ‘social innovation’ projects. Clearly, social innovation was a concept new in Uzbekistan’s context. It lacked clear definition and, subsequently, was implied and applied differently both by UNDP and local organizations. In

⁷⁷ Interview, Veronika Polyakova. August 2017.

⁷⁸ Interview, Husan Mukimov. August 2017.

⁷⁹ Interview, Bokhodir Ayupov. August 2017.

fact, national partners were usually looking at the UNDP/UNV project's initiatives either as another UN designed social projects, or donor (UNDP) driven development projects. The UNDP-led areas of activities were often considered to be something which already existed in Uzbekistan, but had not yet been properly labeled as "social innovation". Hence, in Uzbekistan the "social innovation" concept was intermixed with other terms, such as "social initiative", "social projects", "civic engagement", or "community volunteerism". A discussion of the terms, and how they have been interchanged with "social innovation", is provided below.

Social initiative or social project

Since UNDP's national partners have been regarding UNDP-supported projects as something aimed towards development, they usually saw them as something that should bring social value to the society and people. In this context, from the partners' perspective, irrespective from how a UNDP project is labelled, it should be a social initiative.

For instance, Polyakova says: "social innovation is supporting areas that help people, make public good. Because we live in the society, social innovation is a social initiative, and a form of civic engagement".⁸⁰ Project-wise, based on the understanding of national partners, social innovation should be a social project which solves social issues. Mukimov from the Center for Youth Initiatives thinks that "if it [social innovation] was about doing social projects to solve social problems, then the center has been implementing such projects".⁸¹

National partners of the UNDP/UNV project were primarily focusing on the social component of social innovation, completely missing the point about innovation, that should feature in any social innovation initiative. Consequently, mainly focusing on the social element led to the understanding and application of social innovation in Uzbekistan, predominantly as a social initiative or social project. Certainly social innovation is about addressing social issues. However, focusing only on its social dimension, gives a wrong perception about the term.

Civic engagement or community volunteering

The UNDP/UNV project 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan combined two major activities, including promotion of social innovations and support of volunteerism in Uzbekistan. Since these activity areas were organized in parallel, or even sometimes

⁸⁰ Interview, Veronika Polyakova. August 2017.

⁸¹ Interview, Husan Mukimov. August 2017.

overlapping with each other, ‘social innovation’ projects that were led by volunteers and leaders were considered to be civic engagement or community volunteering *per se*. Therefore, Ms. Asadova from the UNDP says: “since we were also promoting volunteerism in the UNDP/UNV project, our partners, especially from the National Library, were thinking that social innovation is about community volunteering, or some sort of civic engagement”.⁸²

In other words, ‘social innovation’ projects were regarded as being an arrangement of community or volunteering activities. Social relationships among individuals was one of the important components of ‘social innovation’ projects, but ‘social innovation’ projects were not solely about this. However, for the national partners of UNDP in Uzbekistan, social innovation is about engaging the community. This engagement was pursued as social innovation, but in practice substituted by the terms that seemed better when explaining it in the local context.

Respondents explicitly mentioned that social innovation is about new, unconventional approaches or combinations that address the established practices which cause problems. New socially-desirable arrangements/activities, or in other words *practices*, were required for solving problems and addressing needs. As already mentioned, the terms the substituting social innovation concept were used in Uzbekistan due to the scarcity of knowledge about social innovations, and the need to use wording that is clearer in the local context.

In fact, it was mostly about the interpretation of the term by organizations and projects, attributed to the activity that organizations/projects did. Interviews with UNDP, the UNDP/UNV project staff and national partners have unfolded the absence of agreements about the definition of social innovation concept. National partners have usually interchanged the social innovation concept with other terms. Since UNDP and national partners define social innovation differently, they have also used it in a different manner which is acceptable for both sides. Subsequently projects labeled as “social innovations” were adequate possibilities for perusing development goals in a manner acceptable to everyone.

At the same time, substituting the “social innovation” concept for other terms contributed to the diminishing of the concept. Since in post-Soviet Uzbekistan the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects had a volitional character, the projects have not yet fully gone through the process of generating social innovations. They have not fulfilled all six criteria for social innovations gleaned from the scholarly literature and applied in the dissertation. Since the social innovation concept was interchanged with other terms locally, UNDP and local organizations (governments and communities) have not been able, and in fact,

⁸² Interview, Emiliya Asadova. August 2017.

willing to follow up on whether all criteria of social innovation have been achieved, after the UNDP's support and funding finished. This is particularly true for the fifth and the sixth criteria of social innovation which require more time to be accomplished. In other words, it will be challenging to identify whether 'social innovation' project/s eventually became true social innovation/s. This is the problem that, in Uzbekistan, the shift from "social innovation" to other terms caused for the concept.

Conclusion

This chapter described and analyzed how the process of generating 'social innovation' projects were organized in Uzbekistan. It discussed the process and conditions that were applied by the UNDP/UNV project for the ideas of future 'social innovation' projects. It explained how UNDP approached local partners and provided seed funding to support 'social innovation' projects. The chapter also evaluated the 'social innovation' projects supported by UNDP and the UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' project against social innovation features gleaned from the scholarly literature and theory. In this context, it discussed particular features of 'social innovations' in Uzbekistan, and analyzed how 'social innovation' projects fared as social innovations. While doing so, the chapter identified contradictions, gains and challenges related to 'social innovation' projects in Uzbekistan, and analyzed how they were handled. The chapter has particularly emphasized the lacking government support of 'social innovation' projects, partly compensated by the occasional cooperation of the leaders of 'social innovation' projects and local organizations. It also highlighted the problems related to the diffusion of 'social innovation' projects, and measurement of their social impact. It identified the random use of ICTs in 'social innovation' projects in Uzbekistan, and explained how UNDP and the UNDP/UNV project considered a social impact from the 'social innovation' projects as a problem identification and creation of new social relations. Additionally, it examined how the projects followed developmental criterion in designing and introducing 'social innovations' as something developmental, i.e. improving capabilities of individuals. Finally, the chapter discussed how "social innovation" in Uzbekistan was intermixed with other terms, and how this might diminish the concept.

Chapter 6. Generation, features and assessment of the ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and SocialBoost in Ukraine

Introduction

This chapter discusses the process of the generation of UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine, and describes their nature and focus under the umbrella organization SocialBoost supported by UNDP. The chapter also embraces the evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine against social innovation features gathered from scholarly literature and theory. It emphasizes challenging collaboration with the government, and the government’s intermittent support of ‘social innovation’ projects. Concurrently the chapter indicates a more active role of civil society (e.g. CSOs) that gives hope to the diffusion and institutionalization of ‘social innovation’ projects. The chapter examines the problems faced in measuring social impact, and underlines UNDP’s particular view on social impact achieved from ‘social innovation’ projects. Furthermore, the chapter gauges UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects against developmental feature added by UNDP’s development framework, and human development theory. Finally, it discusses the variety of terms interchanged with the social innovation concept in Ukraine, which inclines to make the concept of social innovation more elusive.

6.1. The generation of ‘social innovation’ projects: How it worked

Besides UNDP, in Ukraine numerous organizations were dealing with “social innovation”. For instance, All-Ukrainian Centre for Social Innovations to Combat Poverty, that “was founded in 2013 with support from Austrian government, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and regional administrations. The Center’s aim was to teach regional novice organizations to work effectively and eradicate poverty on a local level”.⁸³

In the case of Ukraine, government authorities intended to promote innovations in the public sector, often linking these initiatives with EU-related framework programs for Ukraine. It made sense for Ukraine from the strategic perspective of getting funding for innovation, research and development, as well as helping to standardize existing practices in accordance with EU requirements. In general, this approach corresponded with the government’s policy of

⁸³ Social Innovation Community, 2013.

closer cooperation with European institutions. Another example is the Center for Scientific and Technical Information and Innovation Promotion of Ukraine (NIP). Supported by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, NIP was funded by the European Commission. According to the NIP statement:

The Principle Objectives of NIP Ukraine are aimed at solving several key problems of research and educational institutions of Ukraine. To this end the NIP Ukraine Regional Network was set up, and every region of Ukraine is represented in it, which will make it easier to know the science and technology burning issues of regions and optimize internal and external contacts and cooperation according to scientific priorities.⁸⁴

Though this Center was declared as to be dealing with innovations, it mostly focused on science and technology innovations, as well as on addressing regional scientific problems in the regions of Ukraine. It did not focus on governance issues, although had a clear regional dimension.

Another initiative in the western part of Ukraine led by Lviv NGO was launched jointly with Ukraine's Social Policy Ministry and OSCE. Lviv NGO "aimed to create new economic opportunities for victims of trafficking and vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons, as well as to strengthen NGOs' capacity to provide services to trafficked victims".⁸⁵ This initiative "supported NGOs in launching their social businesses, which would become a source of funding for their anti-trafficking activities".⁸⁶ It aimed at creating social enterprises on the basis of NGOs that "would help with on-the-job training and create temporary employment opportunities for actual and potential victims of trafficking, as well as for internally displaced persons. This would help them to gain experience and qualifications needed to become more competitive on the labor market".⁸⁷ The Lviv project was functioning in the area of preventing human trafficking, as well as social protection and employment of displaced people from the eastern part of Ukraine that was in a situation of permanent war. It did not go beyond these specific goals, limited to the topics mentioned above.

The next initiative called the Ukraine Norway Innovation Networking Initiative (UNINI) was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The consortium partners

⁸⁴ Center for Social Innovation, 2013.

⁸⁵ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, 2015.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

⁸⁷ *ibid.*

were Seed Forum Norway, Seed Forum Ukraine Foundation and International Development Norway. UNINI's primary goal was:

To contribute to the competitiveness of the economy in Ukraine by promoting and supporting innovation infrastructure and networks, SMEs development and investment opportunities in SMEs and start-ups with an innovative business idea. Its purpose was to develop an innovation eco-system with an interplaying set of local, national and international services and infrastructure to secure sustainable support for innovation and entrepreneurship in Ukraine.⁸⁸

Clearly, the goal was to secure infrastructure and an entrepreneurial environment enabling innovative business development. In this context, UNINI worked to achieve better perspectives for business innovations. In this regard, it did not deal with social innovations.

In a broader economic context Ukraine had initiatives aimed at contributing to the development of social economy. To achieve this goal more emphasis by the Center for Social Leadership was made on the development of so called 'soft skills', such as leadership. The Center for Social Leadership is an NGO working in Ukraine on its priority activities encompassing:

(a) aggregation of social initiatives and social services professionals in Ukraine; (b) the formation of national leaders' ecosphere state, social and business sectors; (c) promoting and implementing social marketing as a factor of social partnership business – the State – NGOs – academic institutions for the welfare of society.⁸⁹

The Center seeks to provide cooperation among social entrepreneurs, experts, national and international institutions in implementing projects which make the national economy more social. Actually the Center implicitly referred to social innovations in designing and implementing the projects. Nevertheless, it did not touch upon the public sector in a more precise manner, tackling problems of providing public services by municipalities or public sector organizations. The focus of the Center's activities is more on changing market economy mechanisms, by making them more societal-oriented. An overview of social innovation initiatives in Ukraine indicates that none of them concentrated on social innovations in the governance domain. Therefore, based on the focus of the current research, dissertation did not

⁸⁸ Ukraine Norway Innovation Networking Initiative, 2014.

⁸⁹ SocialBoost, 2014.

refer to any of the reviewed cases.

UNDP in Ukraine did not have an organization (like Kolba Lab in Armenia), or a project (like the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project) directly implementing small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects. As such, it financially and sometimes methodologically supported organizations dealing with projects that UNDP regarded as being ‘social innovation’s worth implementing for development in Ukraine.

Actually, UNDP in Ukraine discovered social innovations after the UNDP Regional Hub suggested the term as being a new logic for design development work. As Mr. Maksym Klyuchar from UNDP recalls, the “Istanbul Regional Hub and Bratislava Regional Center were suggesting to explore a new term which was ‘social innovation’. UNDP Ukraine tried it”.⁹⁰

UNDP independently conducted hackathons and innovation labs. In fact, in the case of local governments and communities, UNDP supported local initiatives through competitions focused on solutions for local governments and communities. Two examples from the municipal innovation lab were mentioned by Ms. Olena Ursu from UNDP:

Moya Oselya (Dolyna) allowing citizens of the municipality, dwellers of multi-apartment houses to track the condition of the multi-apartment houses and plan for financial support of the improvements, if needed. My e-school (Novograd-Volynskiy) allowed parents to better engage in the education of their children and to track their successes through online tools.⁹¹

Several web-based projects were also supported by UNDP. These projects allowed citizens to report on problems, corruption, ineffective services provided, and other matters of concern. Not all of the projects were complicated ICT solutions, but many of them were technologically adjusted to users for their convenience. They have been generated in the ‘Open ideas for UA’ event in Ukraine. Ursu mentions several solutions and their purposes:

The web-based application ‘POIZDka’ (TRAINride), allows train passengers to report a problem and file a complaint if it is not addressed. ‘I Gave a Bribe’ (later merged into CorruptUA) allows people to report and map the instances when they were asked to pay a bribe.⁹²

⁹⁰ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

⁹¹ Interview, Olena Ursu. Via Messenger. February 2018.

⁹² *ibid.*

The above-mentioned examples of projects demonstrate that usually, UNDP in Ukraine supported projects aimed at innovations in municipalities and local communities, through events organized for this purpose. In this regard, UNDP's primary focus was on promoting open government. Therefore it supported 'social innovation' projects aimed at implementing the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Initiative in Ukraine. In this context UNDP was primarily interested in introducing e-governance practices in local governments. For instance, UNDP reported about:

13 best practices of local self-governance bodies that were awarded in categories "Electronic Services", "Electronic tools for local community" and "E-democracy". Three out of eight winning municipalities were UNDP partners Ivano-Frankivsk ("Electronic line" and "Introduction of municipal electronic registry for admission of children to kindergartens"), Vinnytsya ("Internal Portal of Vinnytsya City Council") and Voznesensk ("Introduction of electronic document flow and internal portal in executive bodies of Voznesensk City Council").⁹³

In general, UNDP supported a countrywide process of introducing e-governance elements. E-governance was regarded as being an effective tool allowing more transparency, better public management, more citizens participating in local governance, and promising anti-corruption instruments. This corresponded very well with UNDP's program goal and development framework on promoting democratic governance. Significant emphasis was given to the quality of municipal services. UNDP also reported that "innovative projects like crowdsourcing-based 'ECOMISTO', a mobile application for smartphones and tablets with information about the Ivano-Frankivsk municipality and administrative services, and hyperlocal social network 'E-Idea' in Vinnitsya, were also supported".⁹⁴

Research identified numerous socially-innovative ICT-related projects supported by UNDP through special competitions, or as the result of cooperation with Ukraine's national authorities. For instance, UNDP in partnership with the National Centre for E-Government and the State Agency for Science, Innovation and Informatization "has launched a web portal of the OGP, and created a hackathon called 'Open Ideas 4U' dedicated to ideas on implementation of the Initiative. Mobile applications such as 'SemaSearch', 'Swiss knife', and 'B-beeper' have been implemented".⁹⁵ Many of the mobile applications were designed for the purpose of

⁹³ UNDP in Ukraine, 2013.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

informing Ukraine's citizens about military actions and dangerous situations and potential threats against people, to let them prepare and organize to avoid endangering their lives.

UNDP tried to attach its projects to any organization - otherwise they did not have sufficient time and opportunity to be scaled. Therefore, UNDP looked for organizations with the institutional capacity needed to deal with small-scale 'social innovation' projects. In accordance with UNDP expectations and goals, SocialBoost was selected for cooperation.

According to SocialBoost's webpage:

SocialBoost — is a tech NGO started in 2012, promotes open data and coordinates the activities of more than 1,000 IT-enthusiasts, biggest IT-companies and government bodies in Ukraine through hackathons for socially meaningful IT-projects, related to e-government, e-services, data visualization and open government data. SocialBoost has developed dozens of public services, interactive maps, websites for niche communities, as well as state projects such as data.gov.ua, ogp.gov.ua. SocialBoost builds the bridge between civic activists, government and IT-industry through technology. Main goal is to make government more open by crowdsourcing the creation of innovative public services with the help of civic society.⁹⁶

SocialBoost uses hackathons for launching ICT solutions. It works with civic, public and private organizations to promote open data, transparency, citizens' participation in government policies, and also the integration of applications created by civic activists into the government. A wide range of applications and IT products have been developed by SocialBoost to target diverse issues, such as human trafficking from the eastern part of Ukraine, or mapping damaged infrastructure in regions experiencing active phases of war. For example, according to SocialBoost:

In 2014 organization has developed and launched together with Ukrainian government: National Open Data Portal data.gov.ua, Open Government Partnership Portal (ogp.gov.ua), applications such based on open data, such as: edumeter.com.ua, citytransport.com.ua, tvoemisto.org.ua, zloch.in.ua. It aims at supporting creation of Civic Startups, developing Volunteer Network, development of Open Government Data.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ SocialBoost, 2014.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

One of the biggest projects, namely 1991 Incubator, was also launched by SocialBoost. Its priorities were “to help convert open public data in real startups that provide services to Ukrainian citizens, businesses and public authorities”.⁹⁸ SocialBoost got funding from private and international organizations, including UNDP. It cooperated with UNDP in launching hackathons and developing ICT products for the public sector in accordance with its priorities. Many projects supported by SocialBoost were implemented in partnership with national government bodies and/or other non-profit organizations in Ukraine. Mr. Denis Gurskiy, the co-founder of SocialBoost, describes the organization’s mission as follows:

SocialBoost is officially registered as a non-profit organization. SocialBoost is a pipeline. We do a lot of things ourselves; we have a lot of projects where we develop tools, and we do capacity building programs. But when we are talking about national challenges, incubations, contests for start-ups or civic groups, we call this the pipeline and we just provide absolutely free access for donors and funders to the pipeline, based on the will to find a particular project to solve a particular problem.⁹⁹

Thus, SocialBoost’s mission and experiences of cooperation with local governmental and non-governmental organizations matched UNDP’s plans and goals for introducing ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine. Tables 14 and 15 arrange small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects supported by UNDP in Ukraine.

Table 14. ‘Social innovation’ projects in Ukraine

Category	Brief description of projects
Anti-corruption	‘SemaSearch’ – a web platform for combatting corruption. An anticorruption website that accumulates open source data about the property and business interests of public officials, and analyzes links among them, their relatives and friends, to identify potential corruption risks; ‘I Gave a Bribe’ (later merged into CorruptUA) – a publicly-available web resource designed to combat corruption, that allows people to report and map instances when they were asked to pay a bribe.
Open data/data visualization	‘Open budget visualization’ – an IT tool allowing public access to the country’s budget lines; ‘Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk’ – a mobile app allowing citizens to check administrative procedures for service provision, and to report corruption cases; ‘Municipal Open Budget Platform’ – a platform allowing public access, transparency and accountability in the local budget; ‘Open Data Bot’ – a bot providing open data in a public space; ‘1991 Open Data Incubator’ – an incubator that promotes an open data approach and projects based on open data; ‘Navizor data set’ – an anti-corruption data set; ‘Agri-eye e-data set’ – an anti-corruption electronic data set.

Source: Table compiled by the author based on the UNDP data.

⁹⁸ 1991 Open Data Incubator, 2013.

⁹⁹ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

Table 15. ‘Social innovation’ projects in Ukraine (continued)

Category	Brief description of the projects
E-services	‘POIZDka’ (TRAINride) – an offline complaints opportunity on transportation services; ‘Moya Oselya’ – a service that allows municipality citizens and dwellers of multi-apartment houses to track the condition of the multi-apartment houses, and to plan for financial support for improvements; ‘My e-school’ – a tool allowing parents to better engage in the education of their children, and to track their successes online; ‘Participatory budget in 63 cities (IT tool)’ – a tool allowing citizens to participate in forming the budgets of their municipalities; ‘E-cemetery service’ – a service allowing booking places for dead in cemeteries, avoiding corrupted offline schemes; ‘Anchor is me’ – an e-service on energy utilities for households; Service for local petition/an online service for submitting petitions; ‘Marking dogs in the cities with censors’ – an online service to mark dogs with censors and to follow them if needed.
Security	‘Swiss knife’ – a mobile app that gathers information from government agencies and informs users about threats ranging from military actions to natural and made-made disasters; ‘B-beeper’ – a mobile app that maps dangerous spots and informs a user of potential threats and safety measures; ‘ReDonbass mobile app’ – a mobile app providing information about security alerts in Donbass (South-east Ukraine).
Public administration	‘One-Stop-Shop Centre for Administrative Service Provision in Novograd-Volynskiy Municipality’ – a service aimed towards developing the environment and physical space of the Administrative Services Provision Center in a way that helps citizens orient themselves in the process of providing the five most popular but complicated services: permits for urban construction; permits for outdoor advertising; assignment of state social assistance to poor families; permits for cutting and trimming greenery; and permits for the organization of touring events in the city. Through the approach, citizens can identify what goes wrong, and have ways to report about cases where their rights were violated.

Source: Table compiled by the author based on the UNDP data.

SocialBoost has introduced its selection criteria for the small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects. Gursky shares the process:

Proposition. We work with donors, partners and stakeholders in particular challenges to do proper wording and collect insights. Deloitte helps conduct interviews with people in particular industries, to understand how they see the challenge. This helps to design a particular solution to the challenge.

Prioritization. Then SocialBoost does open call for ideas to solve any of particular problems.

Incubation. We act as mentors in the future, and provide access to our main database of mentors. When then we select the best ideas through open call and application, and invite people to a related event. At this particular stage we intend to see not ideas but rather people, and to understand how exactly they perform, how committed they are, what drives them, and other factors. So, we do the Hackathon or the mentorship day where they work with mentors constantly, or undertake other types of event where we would like to exam people and see how they work. In other words, in this stage we

select teams that will go to the stage of incubation.

Implementation. After three month of incubation which includes lectures, mentorship sessions and some field work, we do the final event which is called the Demo Day. We invite all our potential investors and donors, and partners. This is where the decision about future funding is being made, if we have had any funding in the beginning. If we did not, we just do a Demo Day and then facilitate individual sessions between applicants and different organizations that are interested in funding ideas. This is always an equity free program - we do not charge any fees for that, we just make sure our pipeline and portfolio performs. We just want more successful projects that succeeded, because of our mentorship and support.¹⁰⁰

From Gursky's description it is clear that the selection criteria of SocialBoost corresponded with expectations and human-centered principles of UNDP, as a requirement for 'social innovation' projects. Numerous actors and organizations were involved in problem (or challenge) identification, and the projects selection process. However, ideas matching the challenge were proposed by end-users, not by SocialBoost. The role of SocialBoost, in that sense, is restricted to mentorship and consultancy work implemented for selected projects. Importantly SocialBoost has operated in cooperation with partners, having relationships with different individuals and organizations. Thus, designing the challenge in such a multi-sectoral environment involved various actors, putting selected projects addressing the challenge in the position to suggest solutions to problems, by generating ideas involving multiple sectors/actors/disciplines.

While cooperating with partners, SocialBoost operated in accordance with selection criteria established for them. In practice those criteria were not particularly different from the ones described above and applied by SocialBoost. However, they had some specific characters based on the focus of partner organizations. For instance, Ms. Kateryna Onyiliogwu stalks about the selection criteria for the Open Data Challenge where her organization TAPAS cooperated with SocialBoost:

We have criteria and they are similar in every cycle. First is the use of open data, number two is social or anti-corruption impact, number three includes innovation, number four is the existence of a team to implement the project. When we select the projects, we have a selection committee of people from different organizations, from

¹⁰⁰ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

our organization, from SocialBoost, and from the East Europe Foundation. Each organization has a particular, unique type of knowledge. That combination of knowledge and understanding across sectors gives us understanding and offers a different perspective on how innovative a given project could be. Our expertise helps narrow down what is innovative. But, the second standing point is that how does it solve the problem and anything of this exists in general. Can the project solve a given particular problem?¹⁰¹

All in all, it was found that in Ukraine small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects supported by UNDP and SocialBoost went through an incubation pace similar to the one discussed in Uzbekistan or in Armenia, and that is going to be discussed later in the dissertation. While applying a human-centered approach designed for end-users, small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects have absorbed significant amounts of technology and open data. The process of generation for ‘social innovation’ projects was, in general, organized in accordance with UNDP’s perspective on ‘social innovations’. UNDP could support ‘social innovation’ projects through hackathons and municipal innovation lab, so as by mainly cooperating with SocialBoost.

6.2. Evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine

6.2.1. People-centeredness and inclusiveness: Citizen-driven ‘social innovation’ projects for solving problems

People-centeredness has assured that any ‘social innovation’ project in Ukraine has been designed by individuals experiencing certain problems. The core of the projects was, as social practice theory suggests, a repeated invention that was offered by individuals as a possible problem solution. UNDP and SocialBoost have helped these inventions be generated by making open calls and innovation labs for ‘social innovation’ projects. For UNDP it was a necessary requirement to support projects led by individuals from communities having developmental issues, because UNDP was striving for a new type of development assistance focused on users (citizen)-led development projects. Consequently, this criterion of social innovation was fulfilled in Ukraine.

¹⁰¹ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

Thus a people (human) – centered approach for designing small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, has been applied in Ukraine. Mr. Maksym Klyuchar from UNDP says about the application of this approach that “in reality whatever you call it, it should be citizen-driven and citizen-verified to do things differently, or more efficiently and conveniently”.¹⁰² Klyuchar elaborates more about UNDP’s human-centered approach applied in accordance with social innovation methodology. He specifically emphasizes the role that users play in designing the service. He says:

Previously, the situation with development aid was the following: A donor used to come to the village, and say that the villagers need a hospital because their death rate is high, and a donor needs to take care of that. Nobody asked the residents of the village what they actually needed. It was a development project where the money, the donor made decisions. Now with ‘social innovation’, it is different. The donor has to ask the villager about their needs. Yes, maybe the village needs a hospital, and the death rate is really high, because people do not have access to medical care. But what if the primary need is not a hospital but rather a road, which is also not at its best condition. What if villagers decide that they primarily need a high-quality road, and then a hospital? Based on the human-centered approach, the donor has to listen to the people and build a road.¹⁰³

In practice, in Ukraine the donors’ funding was extensive and not always used efficiently. A lot of development projects spent funds on activities that could be less costly and more effective, if people were able to give their contribution. Mr. Oleksandr Krakovetskyi, who served as the adviser to the UNDP-supported innovation initiatives, emphasized this in regard to development projects:

Donor organizations spend a lot of money in Ukraine, but I think they waste money. For example, they want to educate women in rural areas to improve their IT skills. I do not think women in Ukraine’s rural areas need IT skills. They need other skills, perhaps? But nobody asked them. Donors had the money for these activities and they decided to spend it. This is what is going on in Ukraine, And this is why asking people is important.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Interview, Oleksandr Krakovetskyi. Via Messenger. January 2018.

As in the other cases reviewed in scholarly literature, the human – centered design of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine allowed precise problem identification, and enabled more inclusiveness for individuals from disregarded social groups, who are experiencing social problems. In Ukraine it also allowed for spending donor’s funds more efficiently and on purpose, and minimizing the number of cases of wasteful use of donors’ funds, mentioned by Klyuchar and Krakovetskyi.

One example of human-centered design is the ‘social innovation’ project providing an e-cemetery service, supported by SocialBoost. E-cemetery offers a service allowing booking places for the deceased in the municipal cemetery in the city of Kiev, and avoiding corrupted schemes usually applied in this business. Before this service was introduced, attaining a place at the cemetery was a corrupt and non-transparent procedure at the local government (municipality) level. Changing it to an online mode helped make it more transparent by avoiding information asymmetry between possible users and service providers. A team of individuals have decided to invent and implement this e-service, making it available for the public. The project was designed in accordance with a human-centered approach, since it was a solution of the problem designed by individuals living in the city of Kiev, aware of the problem. Given the fact that anyone would require the use of this service, the human-centeredness of the project was even more straightforward.

Another service developed with support from SocialBoost and UNDP is a ‘Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk’ mobile application which allows citizens to check the administrative procedures of service provision, and to report on corruption cases in the Ivano-Frankivsk municipality. This mobile application developed by a team of enthusiasts living in the city allows for a citizen-centric approach to local government services. Now every individual can check procedures of the particular local government service, and immediately, through the mobile application, report on corruption cases. This should be serving for improved and less-corrupted local government services, accountable to every inhabitant of Ivano-Frankivsk city.

From the theoretical perspective, UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine have emerged as inventions created to solve local problems. They were aimed towards introducing new practices in governance (Reckwitz, 2003). As a new approach to designing development projects, UNDP could help nurture projects that inject novelties into existing social reality (Tarde, 2009) in Ukraine. This has happened through locally-designed ‘social innovation’ projects prompted by individuals experiencing problems, or in other words,

‘citizen-driven’ projects.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the application of human-centeredness while designing ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine has been accomplished in accordance with the social practice theory.

6.2.2. Networking and collaboration: Intermittent government support and active civil society organizations

SocialBoost and UNDP have been intending to encourage cooperation between different actors in the private, government and non-government sectors. Usually leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects could be allied with CSOs and companies from the private sector. Collaboration with governments (national and local) has been occasional. Networking criteria has been fulfilled in that sense, with limitations existing when it comes to the alliance with government. Networking and collaboration were certainly a priority for the progress of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine. For instance, Gursky from SocialBoost said that “they just provide access for donors and funders to the pipeline absolutely free, based on the will to find a particular project to solve a particular problem”.¹⁰⁶ This means that SocialBoost organized its work in a manner which allowed for collaboration among funders/donors and projects’ leaders, that would help in generating ‘social innovation’ projects.

One of the options for UNDP to connect municipalities and citizens was through special events such as Municipality Innovation Labs, where ‘social innovation’ projects could be generated. The UNDP-run municipal innovation labs allowed ideas from and for municipalities to be nurtured. This is how UNDP tried to connect people living in cities to their municipalities. And this is how citizens could point out local problems that the municipality has. Clearly, UNDP gave significant emphasis to the quality of municipal services that allow citizens to connect to local governments. UNDP also reported that “innovative projects like crowdsourcing-based ‘ECOMISTO’, or a mobile application for smartphones and tablets with information about Ivano-Frankivsk municipality and administrative services, so as a hyperlocal social network ‘E-Idea’ in Vinnitsya, were also supported”.¹⁰⁷

To support ‘social innovation’ projects, SocialBoost has cooperated with different organizations on the stage of the development of project proposals. Gursky says: “we work with donors, partners, stakeholders on particular challenges, to do proper wording and collect

¹⁰⁵ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁰⁷ UNDP in Ukraine, 2013.

insights. Deloitte helps conduct interviews with top people in particular industries, to understand how they see challenges. This helps design a particular local challenge”.¹⁰⁸ This networking and collaboration element has contributed to the advancement of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine. Evidence from Ukraine also informs that UNDP could strengthen local government capacities through cooperation with CSOs. This has helped to connect people to their local governments, and make local governments transparent and accountable to citizens. This is how partnership could help to later scale ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine.

As Howaldt and Schwarz mentioned “social innovation is prompted by the certain constellation of actors in an intentional targeted manner” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 26). This constellation or collaboration of actors is a ground for generating ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine. Individuals leading the projects cooperate with public and private organizations and CSOs, to run the projects and seek their further institutionalization. In Ukraine, partnership has also helped collect insights about local problems in different areas that ‘social innovation’ projects could tackle. Thus the practice of partnership (Reckwitz, 2003) and connects between different actors (Mulgan, 2010) have allowed for the design of ‘social innovation’ projects focused on searching for desirable solutions to existing social problems.

Intermittent support of ‘social innovation’ projects by the government

In practice for local ‘social innovation’ projects to succeed, government support is needed. However, in Ukraine ‘social innovation’ projects were intermittently supported by the government. Government support was inconsistent due to the frequent change of policymakers previously committed to implementing ‘social innovation’ projects. As Gursky claims:

It is a lot of political turbulence, and this definitely has a lot of influence on our work. Many of the projects are somehow connected to the government, and to the political turbulence influence efficiency of our communication and cooperation. Frequent elections, when the government has to deal with political process rather than executive work, has an impact on any NGO activities.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

However, this was not the only problem. In the local governments, other challenges also inhibited the generation of ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, Onyiliogwu points out that “local government officials did not know how and why to use available open data, and why it should be published. They did not see any reason to support our projects using open data”.¹¹⁰ She also points out the lack of political will when it goes about governments’ actions to open the data. She says:

First of all, not all agencies have the same political will, despite we in general having high political will. We have champions that do a great job, but we also have some agencies that did not really open up the data required according to the law. For the projects, open data is essential. Otherwise we cannot run the project. So, it is another challenge.¹¹¹

Actually the intermittent government support of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine, was different from the situation with social innovations in post-communist, developing and developed countries, where governments strategically supported social innovations. In Ukraine it was a gain for a ‘social innovation’ project when the government supported it, and a shortcoming if/when not. For instance, for ‘Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk’ mobile application was supported by the local government of Ivano-Frankivsk, and therefore it could be successfully implemented. The local government wanted to be more transparent and accountable to citizens, and consequently the mobile application worked well.

UNDP and SocialBoost did a good job in nurturing inventions and establishing partnerships for local ‘social innovation’ projects. Thus, social relationships (Domanski, 2017), the involvement of different actors in social innovation generation (Mulgan, 2010; Howaldt et al., 2014), and the implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects locally, were often achievable goals. However, to institutionalize ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine, the support of government and policy makers was required. Evidently now this support was uneven, due to various reasons. Therefore, UNDP has looked for alternative options of cooperation.

¹¹⁰ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

Cooperation between CSOs and leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects

Since cooperation with the government was sporadic, UNDP wanted to have an alternative option to be able to implement ‘social innovation’ projects. As such, cooperation between CSOs and individuals leading ‘social innovation’ projects was established in Ukraine. For instance, Onyiliogwu mentions CSO, the East Europe Foundation, while discussing the Data Challenge initiative for local open data-based projects. She said: “the Data Challenge in Ukraine is run not just by us and SocialBoost, but also by the East Europe Foundation that manages the funding”.¹¹² The East Europe Foundation has funded projects submitted to the Data Challenge initiative by SocialBoost and TAPAS, and so has helped these projects to be launched.

Besides just financial support, Ukraine’s civil society organizations have had power to keep government accountable and more transparent. They could control if and how national and local governments fulfil their obligations (e.g. transparent budgeting). For instance, the website of one such CSOs, called Eidos, says that “their activity is aimed at the analysis and following up the reforms of public funds domain, fighting corruption, improving civic and political awareness, promoting local democracy”.¹¹³ Moreover, CSOs and specifically Eidos have participated in drafting and submitting legal documents impacting the institutional context in Ukraine, allowing the implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects. Mr. Volodymyr Tarnay in this regard points out that “their organization actually participated in drafting the law on Open Data for the national parliament. Later we could monitor how efficient local government authorities follow the legislation on open data”.¹¹⁴

Hence, the evidence from Ukraine informs that CSOs in Ukraine were engaged in ‘social innovation’ projects, and created the environment (e.g. enabling open data, drafting laws) where ‘social innovation’ projects could be designed and efficiently introduced later.

6.2.3. Localness of projects: A specific focus on solutions of local governance problems

All ‘social innovation’ projects were launched locally, and were aimed at the governance domain (local governments) in Ukraine. The projects have been operating on the micro level, and as per social practice theory, they have addressed primarily local problems.

¹¹² Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹¹³ ‘Eidos’ Center, 2007.

¹¹⁴ Interview, Volodymyr Tarnay. Via Messenger. March 2018.

They have been employing open data to introduce ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, Onyiliogwu recalls that “in one of the projects she worked with cities in Ukraine to open up the data on local level”.¹¹⁵ So, in Ukraine, the social innovation criterion on localness and focus on specific domain (e.g. governance) has been fully fulfilled.

As was already mentioned earlier, though not being limited in any way by the government, ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine have better progressed when they have received government support. The case of a participatory budget system for city halls is a good example of the project led by SocialBoost, and later supported by local governments: “SocialBoost developed participatory budget system for city halls (e.g. kyiv.pb.org.ua)”.¹¹⁶ The project allowed citizens to participate in their cities’ budgeting processes, to follow and decide how money from the local budgets is spent. While earlier this process was not transparent and local governments were not accountable to local inhabitants on matters of budgeting and spending municipal funds, now the participatory budget system solves all these issues and allows citizens to co-govern municipal funds.

But ‘social innovation’ projects did not have to be always hi-tech solutions, using ICTs. Some of them were low-tech services. They have also served to ensure the greater participation of citizens in local governance. One such project is the One-Stop-Shop Centre for Administrative Service Provision in the Novograd-Volynskiy municipality of Ukraine. Ursu tells about this service:

The One-Stop-Shop Centre for Administrative Service Provision in Novograd-Volynskiy Municipality/a service aimed at developing the environmental and physical space of the Administrative Services Provision Center in a way that helps citizens orient themselves in the process of providing the five most popular but complicated services, specifically permits for urban construction; permits for outdoor advertising; assignment of the state social assistance to poor families; permits for cutting and trimming greenery; and permits for the organization of touring events in the city. Through the approach, citizens could identify what goes wrong, and find out the ways to report cases where their rights were violated.¹¹⁷

Consequently, high or low-tech ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine were primarily focused on the solutions of local governance issues in Ukraine. They were introduced in local

¹¹⁵ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹¹⁶ SocialBoost, 2014.

¹¹⁷ Interview, Olena Ursu. Via Messenger. February 2018.

governments to resolve problems in selected municipalities. In developing countries, as known from the literature review, social innovations began as local initiatives of community leaders in cooperation with CSOs, through networks and interpersonal relationships. Later, as best practices they could be transferred to the government sector, or adjusted by the government to social problems existing in different areas. Social practice theory allows to position local ‘social innovation’ projects on the micro level (Howaldt et al., 2014) of the scale of social innovations. In that sense, the theory has not been violated in Ukraine. As said, to design local socially innovative solutions, projects in Ukraine have involved citizens by means of low-tech and hi-tech solutions. But, technology such as ICTs were applied more extensively.

6.2.4. Use of technology: Extensive application of ICTs and open data

Ukraine had a strong ICT component integrated into the design of ‘social innovation’ projects. In designing solutions for existing social issues, project teams applied ICT skills, and developed websites, mobile apps, etc. Almost all small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects (19 out of 21) have used ICTs.¹¹⁸ Though social innovations have not necessarily embraced a tech component, in Ukraine this particular criterion has been accomplished. Gursky has also added that “these days somehow ninety per cent of social innovations happen with the extensive use of technology”.¹¹⁹

The extensive use of ICTs for ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine can be explained through the availability and accessibility of open data in the country. According to Onyiliogwu, “central government supports open data because there is a law”.¹²⁰ Based on this law, government agencies are obliged to open data relevant to their activities. The same applies to local governments (municipalities). Onyiliogwu mentions that this process happens unevenly across Ukraine, but there are champions on open data. For instance, she recalls the situation in the Lviv municipality:

For example, the Lviv city council across other cities in Ukraine. They lead in publishing the data but they cannot make others use it in the city. They started doing their own analysis of open data, because others did not use it. They have analyzed data from the mobile operator Vodafone to understand the patterns of travelers in the city,

¹¹⁸ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

¹²⁰ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

and now they plan to use it for planning transport services based on the movements of people across the city. Where is the most traffic, where the least? It is like a social innovation with open data, but here it is also very smart through the government's use of data.¹²¹

Other examples are projects introduced in local governments as mentioned earlier, including the e-cemetery service and/or the 'Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk' mobile application that uses ICTs such as websites and mobile applications. Hence in Ukraine, 'social innovation' projects aimed at solving particular social problems were characterized by the employment of ICTs. This feature was similar to what was learnt from literature about social innovations from other developed, developing and post-communist countries. The digitalization of social innovation is now a common global trend (Kaletka, 2018), and the use of ICTs to design 'social innovation' projects in Ukraine fits well into this trend, constituting another feature of social innovation. Particular to the use of ICTs and open data in Ukraine is that it has included more individuals otherwise neglected by policies and development programs. Now 'social innovation' projects could involve more citizens, and CSOs can use data and offer solutions to existing problems in cities and communities.

6.2.5. Scaling up: Diffusion possible, but challenging

Scaling 'social innovation' projects in Ukraine has been possible with difficulties. Mr. Klyuchar from UNDP recalls the difficulties of scaling-up 'social innovation' projects: "it was possible, but difficult that due to the change of the head of government organizations or leadership, earlier agreements about institutionalization of the idea might be cancelled".¹²² Gursky has mentioned another less-significant problem for scaling up projects, being that the "challenge of scaling up could be sometimes caused by the increase of the company's organizational structure".¹²³ But the primary problem challenging the scaling possibility of 'social innovation' projects has been intermittent government support. Therefore, the scaling criterion for social innovation was not fully fulfilled in Ukraine.

If it was an open data-based solution generated by the 'social innovation' project, then scaling it requires the use of available service based on open data. In practice, this was not

¹²¹ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹²² Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹²³ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

always the case. Onyiliogwu said: “even in municipalities where open data was available for citizens, nobody used it for purpose. For instance, in Lviv the municipality had very good quality data, but citizens and local organizations did not use it”.¹²⁴ While discussing the localness of ‘social innovation’ projects it was mentioned that the initial target of ‘social innovation’ projects was to tackle local social problems. While a number of local ‘social innovation’ projects failed to be scaled up, due to organizational issues or the lack of commitment of by policymakers in government organizations, there still exists a possibility for local ‘social innovation’ projects to advance to the scaling stage, which is certainly a positive sign for Ukraine. It is known already that ‘social innovation’ projects were primarily implemented locally with support from UNDP and partners. The ‘Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk’ or e-cemetery, as discussed earlier, were such projects. They were designed for local needs, but the government was not interested in further scaling them, though they could be diffused.

In contrast when CSOs were active in pushing local governments to be transparent and to make data publicly open, in accordance with national legislation, local ‘social innovation’ projects, for instance, on participatory budget system for city halls could be scaled across the country. Thus, the participatory budget system developed by SocialBoost, as was discussed earlier in this section, was launched as a local initiative for city halls. Due to the active role of CSOs (e.g. SocialBoost and others), government had to cooperate, open the public data, and this gave hopeful signs of institutionalization and the further diffusion of this project in Ukraine. Now, as SocialBoost’s webpage informs: “it has been used by more than 800,000 people in 32 cities of Ukraine”.¹²⁵ Similarly the active role of CSOs has provided more opportunities in Ukraine, for conducting data-driven ‘social innovation’ projects that with help of these CSOs could be integrated into governance and further scaled across the country.

So the evidence collected in Ukraine suggests that the scaling possibility of local ‘social innovation’ projects is available, although it is still difficult to diffuse the idea or invention. From the social practice perspective diffusion is the means of turning imitation into a social practice (Howaldt et al., 2014). Thus social practice as the central theoretical and analytical unit (Tarde, 2009), and the diffusion of social practices as a desirable outcome has not been yet achieved in Ukraine. At least it is too early to judge about this, while social innovation, from the social practice perspective, should bring about a change in routine, institutions, beliefs and cultural patterns (Tarde, 2009). What has however been, is that ‘social innovation’ projects

¹²⁴ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹²⁵ SocialBoost, 2014.

could be diffused and institutionalized if CSOs push them forward and make government support available.

6.2.6. Social impact: A different understanding and an assessment problem

Thus far the effect from ‘social innovation’ projects, were noticeable locally, while gauging about their social impact in Ukraine is too early. This could be well explained by the social practice theory that covers social innovations on micro, meso and macro levels (Howaldt et al., 2014). In Ukraine, ‘social innovation’ projects have been situated on the micro level and they can achieve some changes locally. However, to make a social change and consequently a social impact, projects need to be diffused and institutionalized and that requires more time. Another problem is that instruments enabling the assessment of possible social implications from ‘social innovation’ projects were also not developed and adequately applied in Ukraine. In some cases, even the difference between measuring innovation and measuring impact from innovation was not implicit in Ukraine. Thus this criterion of social innovation has not been yet fulfilled in Ukraine.

For instance, Onyiliogwu says: “I do not think one can measure innovation”.¹²⁶ In other rare cases, there was an attempt to formulate how the measurement of impact from ‘social innovation’ projects should look like. Klyuchar formulated his understanding of social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects as being “direct impact on peoples’ lives”.¹²⁷ But, all this can be hardly qualified as being a cohesive and comprehensive measurement tool.

Clearly in case of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine, methods of evaluating them have not been used. This was a shortcoming of ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine. This shortcoming does not permit provable evidence of possible social impact and social change, even if ‘social innovation’ projects potentially enable any in the future. UNDP could possibly apply its evaluation methods that the organization usually uses to measure the impact of its development projects. However, evaluating ‘social innovation’ projects would probably require a more nuanced assessment method. In this regard, the problems of evaluating the social impact of ‘social innovation’ projects, is not entirely new phenomenon. To recall, as Howaldt et al. (2018) and scholars contributed to the SI-Drive project found, measuring social innovation is a complicated task, as measurement tools have not been fully developed and

¹²⁶ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹²⁷ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

applied. Those measurement tools either have not been developed (Bassi, 2012), or have been developed (Osburg, 2013) but have not been fully applied in specific areas where social innovation happens (for instance in health care) (Barraket, 2015).

Another element of this feature in Ukraine is that UNDP has considered social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects as a problem identification, and the creation of social relationships to solve the problem.

Social impact: Problem identification and social relationships for problem solution

UNDP and SocialBoost have regarded the identification of social problems and creation of new social relationships to tackle these problems as being the social impact produced by ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, Gursky tells about SocialBoost’s approach to ‘social innovation’ projects: “we facilitated individual sessions between applicants and different organizations that are interested in funding ideas. We just want more successful local projects that succeeded because of our mentorship and support”.¹²⁸ Onyiliogwu emphasizes that the major task is to figure out what is innovative, and this can help solve the problem. To make the local project happen these two components have to be connected. She says:

The combination of knowledge and understanding across sectors allows us to understand and gives a different perspective on how innovative the local project could be. Our expertise helps to narrow down what is innovative. But another standpoint is how does it solve the local problem.¹²⁹

Klyuchar mentions that UNDP did not think to solve anybody’s problem while applying social innovation methodology. He says:

We did not think we should solve a problem. Our task, as we saw it, was to listen to the people who have the problem, and think about how they can solve it themselves. If they cannot solve it themselves, who can help them? It is usually about cooperation and information asymmetry. Someone has a problem, and someone, probably, has a solution. But they do not know each other. We help them to meet up.¹³⁰

From the replies of Klyuchar, Gursky and Onyiliogwu, it is evident that the

¹²⁸ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹²⁹ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹³⁰ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

identification of a problem and creating social relationships to solve it was the central purpose of the impact pursued by ‘social innovation’ projects. This approach was also equally applied for cases of local projects on e-cemetery service and/or ‘Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk’ mobile application. For instance, the latter was aimed towards establishing missing relationships between the local government and citizens, through the ICTs (e.g. mobile application), so that citizens could communicate with local government and point out problems (e.g. report about their services, or cases of corruption), and so, contribute to the improvement of government services in the city. The effects of this relationships could fully occur later, but the fact that they could help to identify the problem and to help in its solution is what UNDP and SocialBoost intended to achieve.

This approach to social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet Ukraine was different from the perspective on social impact in other developing and post-communist countries, where social innovation was regarded as something that satisfies existing social needs. Certainly, addressing social needs by the projects was expected. However, the primary intended impact from the local ‘social innovation’ projects was to identify the problem, and create connections/relationships that would help to solve the problem. It was expected that while engaging with ‘social innovation’ projects, different actors (for instance individuals or organizations), that maybe have never collaborated before (maybe it was even hard to imagine such collaboration), will now jointly work over the ‘social innovation’ project. As a result of this joint work, innovative ideas that could be introduced into the social context would take place.

6.3. The developmental feature of ‘social innovation’ projects: Empowering people, addressing corruption, and ensuring more government accountability

The developmental feature has been assigned to every UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ project in Ukraine. The projects have been aimed to address social issues, corruption, and assure justice and inclusiveness. In other words, they aimed to guarantee more political, economic liberty and better social services for citizens, or to improve their capabilities (Sen, 1999). In that sense, developmental criterion gleaned from the human development theory was fulfilled in Ukraine. This was achieved predominantly through the use of ICTs. Gursky says that the projects SocialBoost supports are really life changing: “the projects that go out of our pipeline, or are implemented by our in-house team, are truly meaningful and

change the lives of many people”.¹³¹ How exactly do the projects contribute to changing lives? In Ukraine’s case, several examples can be brought up. For instance, Gursky tells about the project that allowed more transparency regarding road construction works. He specifically mentions the project that helps improve the quality of roads by receiving users’ feedback about roads: “after the project was launched it received over 100,000 users reporting about road quality, which allowed for precise maps of road quality”.¹³² This ‘social innovation’ project is a good example of crowdsourcing and citizen participation in solving problems. The project helps improve the quality of roads and subsequently improve the service these roads provide to users, so as to combat corruption in road construction works.

Another example of a ‘social innovation’ project that assures transparency and anti-corruption tools is a service provided by the government in reserving a place at the cemetery – an e-cemetery project which has already been mentioned in earlier parts of the chapter. Not particularly pleasant service provided by the local government in Ukraine, the allocation of cemetery plots became very corrupt. The use of a web application has helped make the booking service for places at the cemetery less corrupt and more accountable to citizens. As Gursky said: “booking a place at the cemetery service is very corrupt and not transparently provided by the government. The app helps users to approach this problem differently”.¹³³ Now, due to the e-cemetery ‘social innovation’ project, it is possible to make this service more transparent and less corruption while being provided by local government. Another example mentioned earlier is the ‘Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk’ mobile application, which allowed citizens to report about local government services and corruption cases in Ivano-Frankivsk city. This project was supposed to contribute to the improvement of services provided by local governments, making them less corrupt and more citizen-oriented.

The application of ICTs and open data in Ukraine has become powerful tools for assuring government accountability, guaranteeing justice and fighting corruption. Moreover, the use of open data has allowed for citizens’ empowerment and greater service inclusiveness. For instance, Onyiliogwu said in regard to the project conducted jointly with local courts: “this project aims to give accessible and recent information about court decisions, so that any person can find information from the registry much faster, helping to make this service accessible to every citizen”.¹³⁴ She also mentions that all ‘social innovation’ projects intended to empower

¹³¹ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹³² *ibid.*

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

citizens and make government more responsive, by bringing more citizens closer to the government. This, in a way, has helped to fight corruption in Ukraine. Onyiliogwu says in this regard: “all projects empower citizens because they bring open data closer to them about government, how it functions. They introduce new technology nationwide and fight corruption”.¹³⁵ As noted already, ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine have not always necessarily been high-tech solutions using ICTs. Low-tech ‘social innovation’ projects have also contributed to the transparency, justice and improvement of government services. For instance, the project ‘TRAINride’ catalogue could help “passengers use trains [railroad services] to protect their rights by referring to regulations featured in the catalogue”.¹³⁶

Examples mentioned above clearly demonstrate that UNDP and SocialBoost, through ‘social innovation’ projects, have been intended to ensure public control and transparency in governance, and to empower citizens, as well as to guarantee their civil rights (Sen, 1999). ‘Social innovation’ projects have been aimed towards inclusive development, offering capabilities to all citizens to fully participate in identifying and resolving problems they encounter. ‘Social innovation’ projects in Ukraine have been designed to tackle development problems formulated in the UNDP development framework. They empowered citizens, addressed corruption and helped assure more government accountability and responsiveness.

6.4. “Social innovation” intermixed with “e-tools” and “civic technology” concepts

In the case of the definition of “social innovation”, different aspects have been emphasized by UNDP. However, all definitions have elements corresponding with social innovation theoretical criteria. For instance, Ursu argues that social innovation is “a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions, and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than for private individuals”.¹³⁷

Klyuchar emphasizes a human-centered aspect that should prevail in any project that is supposedly called a “social innovation”. He argues that:

Social innovation is tried and tested approach. And by tried and tested I mean tried and tested by people, not by the designers of an idea, but rather than by actual future users

¹³⁵ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

¹³⁶ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹³⁷ Interview, Olena Ursu. Via Messenger. February 2018.

of this approach. So, it is a tried and tested approach of making a public service, or making a polity closer to citizens, more user friendly and accessible for the citizens, and trying to reduce the costs to deliver this service or make this service faster.¹³⁸

Accordingly, aspects that any social innovation according to the UNDP should absorb, namely to be new practices within the existing social context, to have social impact and to be human-centered, are all mentioned by UNDP staff members. Solutions that deliver public services faster, and cost less than traditional services were considered by UNDP while conducting ‘social innovation’ projects. Another important requirement was to make government closer to citizens, more accountable to them, and to enable citizens’ participation in decision-making on the governance level. Besides UNDP, other actors according to Onyiliogwu, should be civil society and private sector (e.g. start-up community) as those are able to lead to social innovation through collaboration with each other. She says: “I think it [social innovation] is innovation by civil society and startup community to create things that solve the most pressing social problems in the society”.¹³⁹ Strictly speaking, Onyiliogwu argues that social innovations could and should be generated as the result of collaboration of different sectors. It corresponds well with social innovation criterion on networking and collaboration.

While ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine were mostly matching social innovation criteria, the social innovation concept still experienced certain problems while being applied in practice. For instance, “social innovation” in Ukraine was usually intermixed by the notions embracing e-tools to solve social problems. Two of them were open data and civic technology (civic tech) that enable more e-services, promoting transparency, accountability, inclusion, and finally democracy.

Open data and e-services for democracy

Application of e-tools to solve predominantly-governance problems in Ukraine pushed extensive use of technology for innovation. Digital tools, ICT solutions combined with civic engagement to make governments more transparent, have been regarded as possible solutions of socially significant problems in Ukraine. In principle, the use of technologies does not contradict the essence of social innovation as applied by UNDP. In the civic sector as well, as

¹³⁸ Interview, Maksym Klyuchar. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹³⁹ Interview, Kateryna Onyiliogwu. Via Messenger. June 2018.

Tarnay has pointed out, “social innovation is something useful for society”¹⁴⁰, which implies that social innovation should be socially desirable. SocialBoost has intended to make social change in Ukraine, stressing the use of technology which is a good example of using technologies in projects to solve pressing social issues in Ukraine. Regarding the definition of “social innovation” from Gursky’s perspective, “social innovation in 2018 is definitely the reinvention or redesign of social, economic or political processes which directly impact peoples’ lives. And this definitely happens with extensive use of technology”.¹⁴¹ Though the use of technology in general is recognized as being one of the crucial elements in any innovation currently occurring in society, it is also acknowledged that social innovation could be high and low-tech. Despite this fact, in practice the term ‘social innovation’ has started to be used less and was later replaced in Ukraine by the term ‘civic technology’.

Civic technology (Civic tech)

Over time, the term ‘social innovation’ was substituted by technology-related terminology in Ukraine. As could be noted from the above discussion, the transition happened while the use of technology started to prevail over low-tech projects aimed at solving social issues. The assumption was that if civic technology solves the problem in any area field of its application, it could be considered a social innovation. In this regard, Krakovetskyi says:

Now we started to change our mind and we moved to civic tech. In my opinion, civic tech is a type of ‘social innovation’ that has an impact to people. It might be a business, it might be a social project, it might be a non-profit. But if it changes the behavior of people or business processes in any area, it might be called ‘social innovation’.¹⁴²

Gursky adds that ‘civic tech’ is the term operational in the organizations’ work:

We do not use the term ‘social innovation’ in our daily work - we rather operate the term ‘civic tech’. I think there is still room for non-tech projects in social innovation. Some of them include, for example, financial inclusion services for people in rural areas, or maybe the connection between prisoners and their families outside of prison. I am still trying to say that these days, somehow ninety per cent of ‘social innovations’

¹⁴⁰ Interview, Volodymyr Tarnay. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁴¹ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁴² Interview, Oleksandr Krakovetskyi. Via Messenger. January 2018.

happen with the extensive use of technology.¹⁴³

In the course of discussion of social innovation in Ukraine, what is remarkable is that civic technology has been regarded as a technology project, and social innovation as a non-technology initiative. In fact, the socio-technological nexus of social innovation is well recognized in theory (Howaldt et al., 2014), meaning that social innovation should be regarded within the socio-technological framework where social issues could be addressed effectively by using technology. What would make any civic technology a social innovation, is whether it would become a new combination and/or configuration of social practices resolving existing problems better than established practices. Hence, considering a civic technology as a type of or a social innovation, *per se*, is certainly a deceptive perspective.

Two aspects should be mentioned in this regard. The first is that, in Ukraine, UNDP emphasizes that any problem has to be prompted, tested and solved by individuals experiencing the problem. This is just another important point for stressing the human-centered principle. The second is that any solution of a social problem in any form, be it a civic technology or any other ICT solution, or a non-technological project, requires its practicing by people. Otherwise, any solution is going to be useless. In other words, the solution of pressing a social, economic or political problem might take a technological or non-technological form. The core and essence of social innovation is in the new social practices that make use of new options available for society. Hence, new social practices changing established inefficient social practices can be true social innovations.

In Ukraine, the terms substituting the social innovation concept, were used due to the relative scarcity of knowledge about social innovation, and the need to use the wording that is more-clear for users within the local context. Used terms varied based on the goals of the entities applying them, which is a sign of the customized application of the social innovation concept.

But, interchanging the social innovation concept with other terms familiar to local organizations and individuals might contribute to the further destruction of the concept. While in Ukraine the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects have a volitional character, as is the case in Uzbekistan, the projects hitherto have not fully gone through the process of generating social innovations. They have not accomplished all six criteria of social innovations gathered from theory and literature, and applied in the study. If the social innovation concept

¹⁴³ Interview, Denis Gursky. Via Messenger. March 2018.

is interchanged with other terms, UNDP, SocialBoost and local governments will not be concerned with whether all criteria of social innovation have been achieved. Thus, there will not be any possibility of following up on whether these criteria will continue to be fulfilled after UNDP's support and funding finishes. This is especially true for the fifth and the sixth criteria of social innovation that require more time to be accomplished. Thus, it will be difficult to discover whether 'social innovation' projects became true social innovations over time. In the case of post-Soviet Ukraine, this is the pitfall that the shift from the use of 'social innovation' to other terms causes for the concept.

Conclusion

This chapter described and analyzed how the process of the generation of 'social innovation' projects was designed in Ukraine. It discussed the procedure and conditions that were applied by SocialBoost, to the ideas of future 'social innovation' projects. It explained how UNDP and SocialBoost cooperated with local partners from different sectors, and how they provided consultancy services and funding to support 'social innovation' projects. The chapter also evaluated 'social innovation' projects supported by UNDP and SocialBoost against social innovation features. Based on this assessment, it discussed the particular features of 'social innovations' in Ukraine, and analyzed how 'social innovation' projects advanced as social innovations.

While doing the above, the chapter also identified the contradictions, gains and challenges of 'social innovation' projects in Ukraine, and analyzed how they were treated. The chapter has found that 'social innovation' projects were supported intermittently by the Ukrainian government. It also pointed out the problems related to their diffusion, and to the measurement of their social impact. The chapter highlighted the active role of civil society (CSOs) in enabling the possibility of diffusing and institutionalizing 'social innovation' projects. Moreover, it found that ICTs were often used in 'social innovation' projects in Ukraine, and explained how UNDP and SocialBoost envisioned a social impact from 'social innovation' projects, as the problem identification and creation of new social relations. It also examined how the developmental criterion was grasped in Ukraine, in the design and introduction of 'social innovation' projects as something that improves the capabilities of individuals in helping them to preserve their political, economic and social rights and freedoms. Finally, the chapter discussed how the 'social innovation' concept was interchanged with other terms in Ukraine, which tended to erode the concept.

Chapter 7. Generation, features and assessment of the ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and Kolba Lab in Armenia

Introduction

This chapter discusses the process of generation of ‘social innovation’ projects, and describes their nature and focus, under Kolba Lab, the umbrella organization supported by the UNDP. The chapter also contains evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia against social innovation features collected from the scholarly literature and theory. It stresses challenging cooperation with the government, and government’s intermittent support of ‘social innovation’ projects. Simultaneously, the chapter indicates a more active role of civil society activists and CSOs that gives a hope for the further diffusion and institutionalization of ‘social innovation’ projects. The chapter examines the problems with measurement of social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects, but points out that Kolba Lab has tried, though inconsistently, to apply an assessment tool, to find out the possible impact from ‘social innovation’ projects. The chapter also underlines the UNDP’s particular vision on social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects. Furthermore, the chapter assesses the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects against developmental feature added by the UNDP’s development framework, and human development theory. Finally, it discusses the range of terms interchangeably used instead of social innovation concept, and so contributed to making the concept vaguer.

7.1. Generation of ‘social innovation’ projects: How it worked

Kolba Lab contributed to the design of ‘social innovation’ projects in accordance with the following process of generation of social innovations:

Proposition. Kolba Lab and the UNDP worked together with other donors in Armenia to identify and set priority development challenges. After identifying development problems, they proposed the list of problems to call for innovative solutions from individuals. Individuals/users then come up with their shortlist of priorities.

Prioritization. Though Kolba Lab did preparatory work on identifying and setting development challenges, it however, allowed users experiencing certain problems to agree or disagree with proposed challenges. Actually, users could disagree with all propositions and prioritize different development challenges they intended to tackle. Kolba Lab, picked up end-users’ challenges to announce open call for ideas and projects able to solve these challenges. At this

stage Kolba Lab assisted potential trouble-solvers in learning pitching and idea/project presentation techniques. Those skills were required for presenting/pitching their ideas/projects in front of experienced selection board of experts from different sectors. For this purpose, Kolba Lab-organized Hackathons, Social Innovation camps etc. At these events ideas usually have been revised and selected for the next stage – incubation.

Incubation. Selected ideas were taken to the incubation process supported by Kolba Lab. Ideas received mentorship support, and assistance in connecting them to the existing eco-system in Armenia. Moreover, Kolba Lab provided seed funding to three best ideas, and helped in turning ideas into minimum viable products (MVPs) or workable business models.

Implementation. Once the ideas/projects were incubated, Kolba Lab and authors of the ideas/projects worked on implementation of these ideas/projects together with local partner organizations and government authorities in Armenia.

In fact, though the UNDP and Kolba Lab first conducted their analysis and consultations about development challenges with other donors in Armenia, they nevertheless, prioritized the list of challenges offered by citizens (beneficiaries of development aid). This corresponded with human-centered principle and prompting or problem diagnosis stage that should be fulfilled by the end-users (not the UNDP or other donors/actors). Prioritization also allowed idea generation through proposals at Hackathons, Social Innovation camps. Prototyping/implementation stage where Kolba Lab incubated projects to come up with minimal viable products (MVPs), or working business models, moved successful projects to the sustaining/institutionalization stage where Kolba Lab jointly with leaders of the projects, and other actors (e.g. CSOs), was helping project ideas to become regular practices in communities and governments. Later, those projects could be diffused to other communities and governments, and used as the best practices, preferably throughout the country, to make desirable social change.

Criteria for ideas/projects selected by Kolba Lab

Kolba Lab has selected ‘social innovation’ projects based on specific standards. For this purpose, Kolba Lab had customized criteria for selection of ideas. The following publicly accessible selection criteria guided perspective applicants with new project ideas:

1. Applicant’s understanding of the problem (up to 10 points)

Questions considered: To what extent project’s users’ insights (needs & preferences) were considered? How relevant and timely is the intervention against the identified problem?

2. Quality of the proposed solution (up to 20 points)

Questions considered: How innovative is the solution? To what extent does the proposed solution address the problem? Will the solution have social impact?

3. Capacity of the applicant team (up to 10 points)

Questions considered: How can the applicant's skills and experience contribute to the realization of the proposed solution? Does the applicant have commitment/motivation for implementing the project? (Kolba Lab, 2013).

The criteria were always customized for the needs of competition, for instance, including the needs of government agencies. Also, Kolba Lab had personalized requirements towards teams participating in competition. For this reason, Kolba Lab developed pitching requirements that every team should follow. For the local governance innovation contest, also called Kolba Lab #mylocgov Challenge, customized requirements have been formulated at <http://kolba.am/en/post/faq-loc-gov-challenge/> (Kolba Lab, 2013).

Selection was conducted by the jury that consisted of representatives of various sectors. Jury selected ideas that have been submitted by the individuals to solve problems in priority areas. Those project ideas were proposed based on existing problems defined by the applicants. As Ms. Marina Mkhitarian, leading Kolba Lab, emphasizes: "solutions are usually coming from grassroots level meaning involvement of citizens and crowdsourcing of ideas for innovation".¹⁴⁴

In case of local governments, Kolba Lab was able to support ideas coming from individuals inside of government (public) organizations, aware about the problem, and possessing required information and knowledge to offer solutions. These individuals actually understood the problem of public services they provide, better than end-users, citizens in local communities that consume these services. These individuals are '*policy entrepreneurs*'¹⁴⁵ who possesses the information about the problem from the inside of government organization, and able to take risks to tackle this problem. To make these projects work, two components were required: 1) involvement and commitment of individuals in governments and communities; 2) ICT tools and access to open data.

Social relationships between individual project leaders, business entities, public sector employees and civil society organizations were also vital for designing and further implementation of the 'social innovation' projects. Teamwork in the projects usually required flexibility, and consisted of combination of different visions to the development of the project.

¹⁴⁴ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁴⁵ Kolba Lab, 2013.

Hackathons, Innovation camps and labs were of helped in incubation of project ideas. Innovating in public sector went through the same, relatively complicated process. Many project ideas might fail. Therefore, Mkhitarian tells that “not all solutions, according to the philosophy of Kolba Lab, have to be replicated, accelerated or expanded, but they can provoke innovative thinking inside the existing system, which can be also a great achievement”.¹⁴⁶

This research covered and analyzed all small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects and discussed them in accordance with theoretical framework of the study. 14 small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and Kolba Lab are displayed in the Table 16.

Table 16. ‘Social innovation’ projects in Armenia

Category	Brief description of the projects
Anti-corruption	‘Monitoring the spending of government officials for business trips’ – a web resource allowing monitoring budget expenditures for business trips of government officials; ‘Monitoring relocation of public vehicles’ – a web resource allowing monitoring the use of government (public) vehicles only for government (public not private) matters; ‘Blood control application’ – the mobile app allowing public access to the information of all the blood samples in all public and private blood centers.
Open data/data visualization	‘Hosanq. Info’ project – an open source database of Electric Networks of Armenia that enables users to track his or her personal energy consumption history; ‘Armenian Meteo’ project – an IT tool aimed at finding technological solutions to climate change; Interactive city budget (in 6 cities) – an app visualizing city budgets.
E-services	‘Quality of life calculator’ – a tool which measures and visualizes quality of life in different districts of Yerevan; ‘Consumers’ rights protection Chat bot’ – a Chat bot allowing submitting petition or complain about consumers’ rights violation. Also used to inform consumers about their rights; ‘Accessibility map for users with disabilities’ – a web resource adjusted for users with disabilities to navigate in the city; ‘Free legal tool for analyzing court decisions and cases’ – a tool allowing analyzing different court decisions and cases to compare them and enhance legal literacy; ‘Smart City solution (condominium management system)’ – a platform that optimizes and eases the communication between residents and condominiums, increases efficiency and makes condominium operations more transparent. The platform enables trilateral cooperation between the municipality, building residents and condominiums; ‘Garbage Management optimization tool’ – a tool that uses datasets provided by Sanitek waste management company to track garbage collection routes, density of population and the number of trash bins installed in two districts of Yerevan. Based on this data, a prototype of the model would optimize the garbage collection; Online School registration/ a mobile app that allows access to the public schools’ database in Yerevan, to learn about available enrollment opportunities.
Others	‘Taghinfo’ – a web resource and info website about local social problems; ‘ARVest art education board game’ – an art game to promote interest to museums and culture of Armenia among local population; ‘Seeing hands’ – a project for people with disabilities to train and employ the visually impaired as massage therapists.

Source: Table compiled by author based on the UNDP data.

¹⁴⁶ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

7.2. Evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia

7.2.1. People-centeredness and inclusiveness: Supporting solutions coming from the grassroots level

People (human) – centered approach was applied in designing ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia. Individuals experiencing the problem could design solutions they need. People-centeredness allowed engaging with individuals/citizens whose voices was not heard earlier, and who were disregarded by the previous development programs. In other words, this criterion of social innovation was fully held for Armenia. Mkhitarian points out that “there are of course many incarnations of social innovation, but in the context of the UNDP we are thinking about it as a human-centered approach to development, as an approach which enables you to do things in a faster, more effective, and more user-centric way”.¹⁴⁷ As said, ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia allowed problem identification and more inclusiveness through the human-centered design of their initiatives. They supported discovered ideas and reinforced their primary introduction into local context. Human-centered design has also allowed leadership over ‘social innovation’ projects by the individuals aware about the insights of the problem.

For instance, ‘social innovation’ project ‘ARVest art education board game’ was launched in the capital of Armenia – Yerevan, by the group of enthusiasts led by Ms. Lia Mkhitarian. The team with the background in art education, has conducted the research, as well as used personal experience, and identified the problem of the low interest to art education in public schools in Armenia. It was found that the process of education of arts is not particularly interesting for students, visiting museums is not exciting for them, though the Armenian museums possess a valuable cultural heritage. To solve the problem, the ARVest art education board game was created. The idea behind the board game was to make the art education interesting for students, who could now learn about arts and culture through the game. The project started within the system of public schools in Yerevan, with the plan to spread it throughout the other cities and public schools. The project leader even received several requests from the Armenian diaspora abroad, to deliver this art board game for the kids living outside of Armenia.

¹⁴⁷ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

The ARVest art education board game project held human-centeredness and inclusiveness criterion, since firstly, it was designed by individuals, who experienced and knew the problem of the low level of interest to the art education, and secondly, because it was aimed for the students who otherwise were not involved in the art education, due to the old-fashioned education programs on this subject at public schools. In other words, it was an unconventional approach to educate on the subject, and to solve the problem by providing more interesting education methodology that could improve the quality of education in arts at public schools. In this regard, Ms. Lia Mkhitaryan says:

We have been working in this area and we knew the state of art education in public schools, we see how few people come to museums because museums are not the interesting place for them to be. We examined the state of academic education on arts, we examined the state of interest in arts, despite the incredible art heritage that Armenia has, we have been working in the area of arts in Armenia for five years, so we had extensive knowledge of what is missing and what is not.¹⁴⁸

This is one example of how Kolba Lab and the UNDP, in practice, tried human-centered approach. As Ms. Marina Mkhitaryan emphasizes: “solutions are usually coming from grassroots level meaning involvement of citizens and crowdsourcing of ideas for innovation”.¹⁴⁹ Saying that, ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia applied people (human)-centered approach in their activities. Now, projects designed based on people-centered principle, allowed more inclusiveness, and better local service provision, through strengthening local capacities that primarily address peoples’ needs. Crowdsourcing of ideas from individuals made projects more inclusive.

Another example, now of inclusiveness of ‘social innovation’ projects is demonstrated by the case of ‘Seeing Hands’ project. The Kolba Lab website informing about the essence of the project tells:

The traditional support methods for people with disabilities include welfare benefits provided by the government, reserved job posts with public administration bodies, and tax reductions for employers. ‘Seeing Hands’ is turning this paradigm on its head by actually empowering the people they work with, and who in turn, work for them.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Interview, Lia Mkhitaryan. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Interview, Marina Mkhitaryan. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁵⁰ Kolba Lab, 2013.

‘Seeing hands’ project was a novel approach to provide opportunities to people with disabilities, by creating jobs that they can make, and so generate income. This is how this ‘social innovation’ project could empower these people, and involve them in the job market. People-centered design of ‘social innovation’ projects is the element of social innovation generation mentioned by Howaldt et al. (2014), as a social practice related feature, allowed invention to happen on the local level (Howaldt et al., 2014). In that sense, in Armenia, new elements introduced by the new people-centered project, allowed focused interventions in the problematic areas articulated by individuals experiencing problems. In fact, as it is suggested by Shove et al. “novelty can come out of any key elements of social practice, namely physicality (sociality and physicality of carried out practices), materiality (artifacts, things, technologies in and for social practices), and competences (know-how, practical knowledge, background knowledge, etc.)” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 17). Since, in accordance with social practice theory, this criterion of social innovation worked well in Armenia, it allowed more end-users participation.

7.2.2. Networking and collaboration: Occasional government support and active role of civic activists/CSOs

Networking and collaboration was a priority for the progress of ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia. The UNDP and Kolba Lab have encouraged networking with different actors, to assist in generation and implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects. Also, Kolba Lab engaged with government employees through the local governance contest, to allow them to come up with ideas of ‘social innovation’ projects. Though Kolba Lab has tried to establish cooperation with different actors, partnership with government has not always worked well. Thus, networking criterion has been mainly fulfilled, with limitations related to the collaboration with government.

With regard to successful cooperation, for instance, Ms. Lia Mkhitarian while discussing her ‘social innovation’ project mentions the partnership that was established with other organizations to successfully execute the project idea: “we created this art game that was supported by Kolba Lab, and we had a bunch of other partners collaborating on the extension of the idea together with Kolba Lab”.¹⁵¹ In general, Kolba Lab encouraged partnership and

¹⁵¹ Interview, Lia Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

cooperation between the projects' leaders and local organizations. Kolba Lab itself, also tried to establish partnership ties with local governments.

Hence, Ms. Marina Mkhitarian emphasized the collaboration between Kolba Lab and local governments that she considers as very beneficial, and mentions that such collaboration could happen within the competition Kolba Lab arranged for the individuals working in governments (national and local):

Kolba Lab also does ideas competition inside the government. There are a lot of people seating in the ministries, who know how the system works from inside. Consequently, these people have interesting insights and problems of the system. By fixing those problems one could make the system more effective, allowing better work with citizens – clients of the government. People participating in Ideas Competition inside the government, being 'invisible talents' have otherwise no chance to speak up in the hierarchy. Once, Kolba Lab announces the call for ideas inside the government, these people can speak up, and propose their ideas to improve government services.¹⁵²

Networking and collaboration possibilities were clear gains for 'social innovation' projects, since established collaborations helped to extend beneficial cooperation beyond the 'social innovation' initiative launched jointly with Kolba Lab and the UNDP. Establishing partnerships, primarily with government, was a priority for Kolba Lab and the UNDP. 'Social innovation' projects tried to inject 'social innovation' projects into the government to strengthen its capacities, make it closer to citizens. By running 'social innovation' projects in cooperation with governments (local and national), Kolba Lab and the UNDP intended to establish better local services, and make governments more responsive to citizens' needs.

Theoretically speaking, according to social practice theory, networking was regarded as the key for imitation of inventions. Since social innovation is regarded as a social practice prompted by certain actors or their constellation (Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 26), in Armenia partnership was a cornerstone of local 'social innovation' projects. To recall, Mulgan and Murray also emphasize the role of relationships among different actors, as the ground for generation of social innovations (Mulgan and Murray, 2010). The UNDP has tried to introduce new practices through "purposeful intervention" (Howaldt et al., 2014) of 'social innovation' projects. While partnering with government (and local organization), 'social innovation' projects were designed as Conger suggested "as the new social inventions that might be

¹⁵² Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

introduced into the new settings” (as cited in Howaldt et al., 2014, p. 37). For instance, in Armenia, introduction of ‘social invention’ projects happened when the UNDP and Kolba Lab supported ‘social innovation’ projects in governance through local governance innovation contest for individuals working in the government of Armenia. Clearly, networking and collaboration among different actors was one of the features of social innovation gleaned from the experiences of developed, developing and post-communist countries (Mulgan, 2010; Barraket et al., 2015, Howaldt et al., 2018). But, in Armenia particular role of the government in such cooperation was identified.

Intermittent support of ‘social innovation’ projects by the government

‘Social innovation’ projects in Armenia were supported by the government intermittently. Once the project was launched within Kolba Lab’s local governance innovation contest, it usually received government’s support. For instance, a Chat bot for protection of consumers’ rights was offered by the government employee Ms. Lusine Tovmasyan working in the office of Prime-Minister of Armenia, and first tested in Yerevan. The problem of violation of consumers’ rights was in the focus of the project. The Chat bot could offer an online consultation and provide the relevant information on consumers’ rights for anyone, who felt that his/her rights were violated. It was found that consumers usually do not know about their rights, and do not have a rapid mechanism to familiarize with the consumers’ rights legislation. The Chat bot enables such opportunity. This project was consumers’-centered, but introduced by the government employee, since the local governance innovation contest offered such opportunity. By conducting the contest together with the government, Kolba Lab intended to nurture ‘policy entrepreneurs’ in governance – people who could innovate inside the government. Thus, Tovmasyan has conducted her project in the government institution. She recalls:

Government was very active in collaboration with Kolba Lab to implement this project. It was good for government, because sometimes it is a good approach to implement innovations in day to day activities of government. That is why the government is eager to implement these projects. It was also good for public servants to stop their day to day activities and to think what they would like to do to make their work more

interesting, more innovative, go beyond their routine and think more innovatively.¹⁵³

This was not a single example of government support. Ms. Lia Mkhitarian also tells about government support of her ‘social innovation’ project, ARVest art education board game: “when we first got the idea that we should create such a product, we requested an appointment with the Minister of Culture. We shared the idea with him and we got the verbal support that this is wonderful and you should do it”.¹⁵⁴

However, government support was not always available. Ms. Marina Mkhitarian says: “we had times of honeymoons and times of almost divorce. The government has changed during the project implementation. We had really dramatic changes in the government. It was for the best, but also means that the relations we are building which are always on the personal level”.¹⁵⁵ Hence, in Armenia, differently from the social innovations strategically supported by the governments in the post-communist, developing and developed countries, ‘social innovation’ projects were initiated without permanent government support. ‘Social innovation’ projects gained when government support was available, and experienced difficulties when/if not.

Kolba Lab and the UNDP could help in designing and launching inventions and establish partnerships for ‘social innovation’ projects. Thus, social relationships (Domanski, 2017), involvement of different actors in ‘social innovation’ projects’ generation (Mulgan, 2010; Howaldt et al., 2014), and implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects locally, were achievable outcomes. However, collaboration with government was irregular, and support of the ‘social innovation’ projects by the government was intermittent. Therefore, Kolba Lab and the UNDP tried an alternative option of implementation of ‘social innovation’ projects, which was through the cooperation between ‘social innovation’ projects’ leaders, civil society activists and CSOs.

Cooperation between ‘social innovation’ projects’ leaders and civic activists/CSOs

Since, cooperation between the government and individuals leading ‘social innovation’ projects, was occasional, the UNDP and Kolba Lab supported collaboration between ‘social innovation’ projects’ leaders with civic activists and CSOs. Kolba Lab had two possibilities to

¹⁵³ Interview, Lusine Tovmasyan. Via Messenger. January 2018.

¹⁵⁴ Interview, Lia Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁵⁵ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

promote ‘social innovations’ in governance. The first is, through engagement with ‘policy entrepreneurs’ working in the government entities, as was discussed earlier. Kolba Lab invited them to participate in the local governance innovations contest, to launch ‘social innovation’ projects in governance. For instance, the leader of the project on consumers’ rights protection Chat bot, already mentioned earlier, Tovmasyan says that “without cooperation between Kolba Lab and government, my project would have been simply impossible. Now, because my project idea won the local government contest organized by Kolba Lab, I can work on my web application with IT experts, to make it later of use for consumers”.¹⁵⁶

The second option was to establish partnership ties between the leaders of the projects and civil society activists and organizations (CSOs, etc.). For instance, Mr. Aleksey Chalobyan, another leader of the ‘social innovation’ project tells in regard of cooperation established due to Kolba Lab’s support: “Kolba Lab put me in contact with organizations that think that our collaboration can be beneficial. Recently, we have met with behavioral scientists, and we plan to cooperate with them in our project”.¹⁵⁷ Ms. Lia Mkhitarian also mentions the importance of cooperation established between herself and partner CSOs, with support of Kolba Lab: “we created this art game that was supported by Kolba Lab, and we had a bunch of other partners collaborating on the extension of the idea together with Kolba Lab”.¹⁵⁸ Those partners were CSOs that expressed their interest to support the idea of popularization of art education, as an important component of education in Armenia.

Another example of cooperation between the ‘social innovation’ project leader and the civil society activists is a Taghinfo ‘social innovation’ project led by Ms. Gayane Mirzoyan. The idea of the project was to highlight the local problems of individuals in Armenia. To do so, the Taghinfo local media platform was created to unite local civic activists and bloggers, who could spread “micro-narratives about the problems in the locations they live”.¹⁵⁹ Civic activists could constantly report about the local problems, and attract the attention of the local governments to these problems.

What the examples mentioned above tell us, is that when the cooperation between government and individuals leading ‘social innovation’ projects was impossible, Kolba Lab has put more emphasis on partnerships with CSOs and non-governmental partners. These alternative solutions of partnership could contribute to the progress of ‘social innovation’

¹⁵⁶ Interview, Lusine Tovmasyan. Via Messenger. January 2018.

¹⁵⁷ Interview, Aleksey Chalobyan. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁵⁸ Interview, Lia Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁵⁹ Hyper local media, 2016.

projects in Armenia.

7.2.3. Localness or focus on specific domain: Projects with local communities or local authorities

All ‘social innovation’ projects were launched locally, and were aimed at local governance. They effected previously neglected individuals and communities. The UNDP and Kolba Lab had a clear rationale behind this approach. For instance, Ms. Marina Mkhitarian says: “Kolba Lab goes to local government level because it finds it easier to work with end users of public services. Solutions were usually coming from grassroots level meaning involvement of citizens and crowdsourcing of ideas for innovation”.¹⁶⁰

Local character of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects were displayed on the webpage of Kolba Lab dedicated to supported ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, in case of Taghinfo ‘social innovation’ project it says that “the purpose of the project was to create a hyper-local media platform for Yerevan. Taghinfo is home to a community of bloggers and activists who write and spread micro-narratives about their communities”.¹⁶¹

Another example is related to the ARVest art education board game ‘social innovation’ project. Ms. Lia Mkhitarian pointed out that she and her team started approaching local governments, once they had support of her project from the Ministry of Culture, and personally the Minister. She says that “with that [the project] they started contacting local communities and local authorities”.¹⁶² Thus, this is how ‘social innovation’ projects supported by Kolba Lab have accomplished criterion on localness and focus on specific governance domain.

All in all, localness and focus on specific domain of ‘social innovation’ projects were followed in accordance with social innovation feature, also observed in other countries (Evers et al., 2012, Oosterlynck et al., 2015, Howaldt et al., 2018). Also, in Armenia, both high and low-tech local ‘social innovation’ projects have been striving for more citizens’ participation. But, broader participation of individuals ‘social innovation’ projects assured by using ICTs.

7.2.4. Use of technology: Extensive application of ICTs

In designing solutions of existing social issues, ‘social innovation’ project teams

¹⁶⁰ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁶¹ Kolba Lab, 2016.

¹⁶² Interview, Lia Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

applied ICT skills, and developed websites, mobile apps, bots etc. Those ‘social innovation’ projects aimed at solving a particular social problem, characterized by the employment of the ICT tools. Kolba Lab’s webpage informs and the interviews with Kolba Lab staff confirm that “almost all ‘social innovation’ projects (12 out of 14) used ICTs”.¹⁶³ It is a particular feature of social innovation, that is not always attached to all social innovations. However, in case of ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia, ICTs were used extensively, and therefore, this criterion was fulfilled.

A good example of using ICTs is a consumers’ rights protection Chat bot tested in Yerevan. The core of the Chat bot is a mechanism that allows communication with the users of this service, and provides requested information regarding consumers’ rights. This Chat bot can be uploaded on the mobile, and used in case of any doubt that someone’s consumers’ rights were violated. Basically anyone can chat (ask questions) from the Bot, that would answer to these questions, since it’s programmed for this. Another example of the use of ICTs in ‘social innovation’ projects is in the judiciary system of Armenia. Ms. Marina Mkhitarian recalls: “the UNDP and Kolba Lab have initiated a start-up within the government, which is an artificial intelligence tool in the justice system. The formula based on the promotion of social entrepreneurship, citizen engagement, and technological innovation”.¹⁶⁴

Though using ICTs is very convenient for citizens, convincing local governments to employ ICTs in ‘social innovation’ projects, was not always an easy task. It was certain level of resistance from local governments that did not want to introduce ICTs. Therefore, sometimes, Kolba Lab worked with local governments to absorb the costs associated with the introduction of ICT solutions in governance. As Mr. George Hodge says: “it was not something particularly innovative. I would even say, it was quite obvious that local government should introduce the ICT tool. But, they did not want, because it was costly for them. Kolba Lab absorbed this costs, and tested this solution for the local government”.¹⁶⁵

Evidently, the use of technologies (ICTs) was the core of ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia. As one of the features of social innovation, digitalization of socially innovative services is not entirely new. However, in post-Soviet Armenia, extensive use of ICTs in ‘social innovation’ projects was a new approach to development assistance, that assured inclusiveness and broader participation of citizens. In post-Soviet republics, it was a true breakthrough for the UNDP and Kolba Lab. ICTs allowed crowdsourcing of the ideas for ‘social innovation’

¹⁶³ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Interview, George Hodge. Via Messenger. January 2018.

projects. They helped to address social problems and governance issues by engaging with communities, where everyone could indicate a problem, and offer a rapid and cost effective solution. Now, to fix a problem, it was no need to appeal to the government entity, and wait long to receive a response. This is how ICTs integrated into ‘social innovation’ projects, have affected the everyday life of ordinary citizens locally. However, scaling these projects was still problematic.

7.2.5. Scaling up: Some possibilities to diffuse the projects

Scaling ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia was challenging. Nevertheless, some ‘social innovation’ projects could advance to this stage. It was clear to the UNDP and Kolba Lab that as Ms. Marina Mkhitarian mentioned: “not all social innovation solutions are sustainable, sometimes solutions play the role of catalysts of the process”.¹⁶⁶ In practice, due to the lack of commitment from the policymakers (government entities), ‘social innovation’ projects, sometimes, have not been scaled. But, as was discussed earlier, networking with civic activists and CSOs, proved to be useful for generation and scaling ‘social innovation’ projects. Consequently, due to the described factors, scaling up criterion has been accomplished partially in Armenia.

This problem was highlighted by Mkhitarian as follows: “if there is a change-maker in the government we are working with, is the one who is leading the whole process, and any changes are creating the risk for the impact of the project”.¹⁶⁷ When scaling-up ‘social innovation’ project was successful, it had its positive implications. Thus, if/when the commitment of policy-makers/government/local organizations was available, ‘social innovation’ project could be scaled-up efficiently. Once, support was not available, scaling was problematic.

Alternatively, as in case of Taghinfo project local civic activists and bloggers supported ‘social innovation’ project and contributed with their stories and news about the local issues in the neighborhoods they live. This helped to highlight the problems, and effect local governments’ policies towards them. Taghinfo tried to change local government’s focus from the national problems to the local problems that they primarily should resolve.

Numerous ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia have not yet achieved the scaling

¹⁶⁶ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁶⁷ *ibid.*

stage. For instance, Hosanq.info has been just prototyped to test the project locally in Yerevan.¹⁶⁸ Other projects, for instance ‘Seeing hands’, were planned to solve local problem of visually impaired people in Yerevan.¹⁶⁹ However, projects like ARVest art education board game, or Taghinfo, mentioned earlier, that could cooperate with CSOs and civic activists, and ideally (though not always), received government support, show hopeful signs of progress towards being diffused. Taghinfo that cooperated with local civic activists, hosted 170 local stories across the Yerevan, and continues to operate, and to extend its range of activities.¹⁷⁰ As it was mentioned, ARVest art education board game project started locally in Yerevan, and was supposed to be applied in public schools across the country. According to the Kolba Lab’s webpage: “in perspective, it is planned that the game might be used in public schools as additional material for art education”.¹⁷¹ Since, the project received the support of Kolba Lab, CSOs, and as Ms. Mkhitaryan mentioned “support of the Ministry of Culture”¹⁷², the project could be later successfully scaled.

The evidence collected from the interviews and documentary analysis in Armenia, suggests that scaling possibility of ‘social innovation’ projects was sometimes available, though it was quite complicated to diffuse the new invention to the level of a new social practice. Diffusion of the new social practice as the change in routine, institutions, beliefs and cultural patterns (Tarde, 2009) has not been yet detected in Armenia. Diffusion or scaling of ‘social innovation’ projects could be possible, when/if government supported them. This support might enable institutionalization possibilities for ‘social innovation’ projects. When government’s support was not available, CSOs and civil society activists, could support the projects, and help in their diffusion and institutionalization. But, it was still early and problematic to gauge either about projects’ diffusion or their possible social impact.

7.2.6. Social impact: Distinctive understanding and inconsistent attempts at assessing it

Since, ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia have been launched a while ago, gauging about their social impact is too early. Over time, some projects that could be diffused across the social system, can probably lead to remarkable social implications. Besides this, assessing social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia was also challenging. Adequate

¹⁶⁸ Kolba Lab, 2018.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, 2013.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid*, 2016.

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, 2018.

¹⁷² Interview, Lia Mkhitaryan. Via Messenger. December 2017.

assessment tools to evaluate the social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects were not applied. All this prevented ‘social innovation’ projects from the full accomplishment of social innovation criterion. However, Kolba Lab has sometimes applied NESTA Standards as a measurement, instrument of the UNDP and Kolba Lab, to measure social impact. Hodge says in this regard: “we used Nesta’s standards of evidence as a guide”.¹⁷³ Though Hodge mentions that Nesta standards of evidence were used, the study could not find the evidence that they were constantly and consistently applied in all ‘social innovation’ projects.

Individuals leading ‘social innovation’ projects have also sometimes used their own measurement tools, which was an attempt to have qualitative or quantitative (or both) measurement of the social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, Tovmasyan with regard to the Chat bot project says: “as a measurement tool of the impact we will monitor the number of written complains to the government body in charge of market regulations. We will evaluate how it has changed quantitatively and qualitatively, and probably than it will be more clear about the impact of this application in this sector”.¹⁷⁴ While discussing her project Tovmasyan indicated that measuring its impact locally is problematic, even if the measurement tools would be available:

In local context it is quite difficult to measure the impact on local communities, because in cities citizens are more active, and the life is different. In local villages everyone knows each other and every transaction is usually oral and not contractual. Usually, people talk to solve their issues. I do not think they report about violations.¹⁷⁵

The problem of measuring a social impact was also recognized by the Kolba Lab. As a problem of making and measuring a social impact Mkhitaryan mentions that Kolba Lab could not manage all factors influencing the possible social impact from the ‘social innovation’ project. She says:

In practice, solutions picked up by Kolba Lab go through very tough selection and scrutiny, and the difference is only to what extent selected solutions have expected social impact. The impact they produce depends on many factors, including human factor, workload of the person who is generating ideas, but not ready to implement them, readiness of the system to absorb etc. Kolba Lab tries to manage it, but it was not

¹⁷³ Interview, George Hodge. Via Messenger. January 2018.

¹⁷⁴ Interview, Lusine Tovmasyan. Via Messenger. January 2018.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.*

always the case.¹⁷⁶

All in all, social impact measurement instruments were used inconsistently in Armenia, and have not allowed to adequately judge the possible social impact they make. Nevertheless, this does not exclude the chance for ‘social innovation’ projects to make a social impact and a social change in the future. Positive sign is that in Armenia, certain standards (NESTA standards) of measurement of social impact (Puttick, 2013) from ‘social innovation’ projects were applied, though inconsistently.

In Armenia, ‘social innovation’ projects have been experiencing problems with measurement of social impact similarly to other countries, where social innovations have been implemented quite successfully. For instance, in India (Chowdhury, 2010), in Uganda and India (Asadova, 2013), in Italy (Howaldt et al., 2018) measuring social impact from social innovations was found problematic. Scholars could not agree if there are any adequate measurement tools available to assess social impact (Bassi, 2016), or there are various assessment tools that could be opted for relevant social impact evaluation (Puttick, 2013; Osburg, 2012). Besides this problematic aspect, hindering the possibility to measure social impact, in post-Soviet Armenia, the UNDP and Kolba Lab have considered social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects not as something satisfying social needs, but as the social relationships that help to identify and eventually solve a social problem.

Social impact as new social relationships for problem solution

The UNDP and Kolba Lab regarded the social impact as the possibility to identify the social problem and to create new social relationships to resolve it. In this regard Mkhitarian from Kolba Lab says: “provoking social relationships, and showcasing problems and possible solutions was the purpose of ‘social innovation’ projects we supported. This is how we wanted to make a change”.¹⁷⁷ In fact, small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects have considered establishing new social relationships and partnerships for problem solution, as a huge impact the projects can do. For instance, Ms. Lia Mkhitarian leading a ARVest art education board game project states:

As a result of our project, we could establish contacts with many museums across

¹⁷⁶ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*

Armenia. We could also contact the Minister of Culture, who supported us. We could raise the issues of our local museums in front of him, which is through our initiative, contacts and insights about the problems of our museums. Now we have a lot of partners willing to support us and our project. This is how we make change.¹⁷⁸

Kolba Lab's intention to make a social impact, and the example of ARVest art education board game are not the only cases where social relationships for problem solution were necessary. In case of, consumers' rights Chat bot, relationships between the government servant and the IT experts, helped the project to be conducted. Without these relationships, the project would not be possible within just the government sector. Thus, by establishing such relationships, that otherwise would not be possible, Kolba Lab and the UNDP intended to connect more actors in 'social innovation' projects, in order to demonstrate that such collaboration could bring benefits for all involved parties, and eventually resolve the existing problems.

This perspective was different from the one social innovations had in other developing and post-communist countries, where social impact was regarded in terms of addressing social needs (Barraket et al., 2015; Howaldt et al., 2018). In Armenia, Kolba Lab was certainly intending to make a change, in a normative manner, and as the end goal of 'social innovation' projects. However, the evidence from this post-Soviet republic suggests, that primarily the process and relationships enabling it, were regarded as a social impact Kolba Lab and 'social innovation' projects envisioned in governance realm.

7.3. The developmental feature of 'social innovation' projects: Empowered citizens, transparent and accountable local governments

Primary intention of the UNDP and Kolba Lab was to embrace new methodologies in development aid. The development framework that guided the UNDP's activities has been used in a sense assuring that development targets will be addressed through 'social innovation' projects. Mkhitarian confirms this perspective, and emphasizes that the UNDP understood the need in the new approach and tried to engage with citizens and governments differently: "the UNDP understood the need to embrace new methodologies and technologies in our development work. Kolba Lab acts as an interface, working with active citizens and the

¹⁷⁸ Interview, Lia Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

government to develop, test and incubate their ideas for reforms, social start-ups and development projects”.¹⁷⁹ Hodge also emphasized that the UNDP and Kolba Lab tried to have different approach to development, and source ideas for development different from the existing developmental approach of the UNDP. He says: “it [social innovation] was a different approach to sourcing ideas for development”.¹⁸⁰

Actually, Kolba Lab was intending to make government services more transparent, and the government itself more accountable to citizens. Kolba Lab was intending to empower citizens so that they can be involved in decision-making regarding the services they need from the government, to solve pressing problems. In fact, the principle idea behind ‘social innovation’ projects, was to allow individuals to identify problems that bother them, and offer relevant solutions. This is how Kolba Lab envisioned development through the improvement of capabilities (Sen, 1999) of people. In that sense, developmental criterion gleaned from the human development theory, was fulfilled in Armenia. ‘Social innovation’ projects were designed to solve local issues, and involve previously neglected individuals and social groups. For instance, the consumers’ rights protection Chat bot was supposed to serve for the protection of citizens’ rights by employing ICTs, so that every citizen could be informed about his/her consumers’ rights, and assure that these rights are protected. Another example, discussed earlier is the ARVest art education board game that was aimed for the improvement of art education in public schools in Armenia. More transparent and better informed decision making is a clear developmental target that ‘social innovation’ projects intended to achieve. Sen (1999) calls them instrumental freedoms such as transparency, social and political opportunities, as well as assuring civil rights, democracy and political liberty.

The whole idea of ‘social innovation’ in development, that the UNDP and Kolba Lab backed-up, was dedicated to the interaction with previously neglected actors, as Hodge says: “the idea of this approach was to work with different stakeholders, different actors in civil society. One that not usually get involved in development project, but might be interested in solving a particular problem, if well-articulated”.¹⁸¹

Moreover, ‘social innovation’ projects helped to empower citizens, and fight corruption. For instance, Chalobyan tells about his Hosanq.info ‘social innovation’ project, aimed at saving energy in the multi-apartments houses in Yerevan: “it [the project] intends to solve a social issue. There is not much of a business model there, and I do not expect any

¹⁷⁹ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁸⁰ Interview, George Hodge. Via Messenger. January 2018.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.*

revenues coming from it. The project contributes to transparency, and it makes energy saving more clear and attractive. Maybe it empowers citizens and fights corruption in several cases”.¹⁸² In other words, ‘social innovation’ projects were implied to empower individuals, include them in the development work, so as to assure more transparency and less corruption.

Also, Kolba Lab and the UNDP should be resilient themselves in delivering development aid in Armenia. Since, they were operating in the governance area which was very sensitive for governments (local and national), the UNDP and Kolba Lab had to deal with government in a way negotiating about ‘social innovation’ projects, and adjusting to government’s needs and queries. As Mkhitarian says:

Sometimes we spent a lot of energy and time to get support of social innovations by the government, because of resistance. Kolba Lab was intervening into the normal for the government processes. Kolba Lab wanted to make change that conservative systems do not like. We could build the trust first, provided services for the government, so that people there understand that social innovation is not just kids playing technologies, but it is an impact and something you bring as a service for the government. Government realized that what Kolba Lab is doing is not an additional burden. It was a long process and we had to play diplomacy to get there.¹⁸³

Indeed, collaboration with government required adaptation of development work to get support of ‘social innovation’ projects. Sometimes Kolba Lab had to absorb the risks that government (local government) did not want to take in order to implement a ‘social innovation’ project. In that case Kolba Lab absorbed the risk to make the government introduce ‘social innovation’ projects. Hodge, recalls in this regard:

What they [the local government authorities] were doing was just using the funds that we invested in them to test different technologies in Gyumri to test which was the best for Gyumri, and then the city government would make an investment in that. For me it was quite an obvious thing for the government to do, and basically, we absorbed the risk of the government research process, and it was not any particular innovation involved.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Interview, Aleksey Chalobyan. Via Messenger. March 2018.

¹⁸³ Interview, Marina Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

¹⁸⁴ Interview, George Hodge. Via Messenger. January 2018.

The evidence from Armenia mentioned above demonstrates how the UNDP and Kolba Lab envisioned and fulfilled the developmental criterion, as well as adapted their development assistance to the governance area in Armenia.

7.4. “Social innovation” intermixed with “civic/public sector innovation”, “e-services” and “social entrepreneurship” concepts

In Armenia, scholarly literature analyzing social innovations is missing. Nevertheless, there are numerous cases of organizations and special events related to “social innovations”. Reviewing them first, would help to understand the diversity of purposes of application of “social innovation” in Armenia, before discussing the interchange of the terms used by the UNDP, Kolba Lab and projects’ leaders. Let us first start from the overview of five social innovation initiatives in Armenia: 1) AYSOR4Innovation; 2) Impact Hub Yerevan; 3) Social Impact Days; 4) YouthActionNet Initiative; 5) mLab, that help to navigate in the ‘social innovations’ in Armenia.

Social innovations in Armenia were promoted through social entrepreneurship. For instance, AYSOR4Innovation NSC of EYP Armenia gathered 120 local and international participants under the theme of social entrepreneurship and innovation. AYSOR4Innovation is a National Selection Conference supported by European Youth Parliament. More than 120 young participants from over 30 European and Eastern Partnership countries have been gathered in Yerevan. In the meeting of AYSOR4Innovation NSC of EYP Armenia was the first Social Innovation Forum in this republic to be organized. The goal of this Forum was to develop ‘socially innovative’ solutions to the existing social problems in Armenia. This Forum was an attempt to provide social innovation instruments and start nurturing social entrepreneurship among young people, to stimulate their creativity for building more inclusive and sustainable societies in their countries.¹⁸⁵ Though, the Social Innovation Forum was an important stage of social innovation practices started in Armenia, it has not focused on local governance issues that are of interest for the current research.

In terms of financial sustainability of social innovations, Impact Hub Yerevan is a good example. According to the Impact Hub’s webpage: “Impact Hub Yerevan Social Innovation Development Foundation (also known as Impact Hub Yerevan) is a professional membership organization dedicated to individuals, enterprises, start-ups, and organizations making a

¹⁸⁵ AYSOR4Innovation, 2017.

positive impact in Armenia and around the world”.¹⁸⁶ Impact Hub had a relatively broad list of activities that does not cover any governance related issues, but more private sector and business oriented goals. Though development of social innovations in Impact Hub is not limited to the private entities, it however, does not have a clear link with public sector and governance.

Another initiative related to social innovations was the Social Impact Days event organized in 2015. Being not institutionalized and not attached to organizational entity in Armenia, this was an international event that was planned to learn from the experiences in two cities in Caucasus, namely, Dilijan in Armenia and Kutaisi in Georgia. The Social Impact Days Forum “was focused on social innovation from the cities’ point of view and sought to foster sustainable development by rethinking urbanity in a holistic way, ranging from urban livability to participatory citizenship”.¹⁸⁷

This event gathered professionals from different sectors in post-Soviet countries, EU and Turkey. The purpose of the Forum was to look at economic dimension of intensive development in the cities in Caucasus, and the role of social innovations in local economic success. Though its focus was on case studies of social innovations in the cities, and the social impact that social innovations can make, Forum, nevertheless, did not consider governance issues and the implications of social innovations on municipal governance.

Engagement of young people in social innovation related activities in Armenia is remarkable. Such an example is YouthActionNet initiative connecting young people “with the network, support, and resources to grow their enterprises and their leadership skills. Also, Armenia was one of 32 countries where Starbucks Shared Planet Action Grants provided funding to support youth-led social innovation”.¹⁸⁸ Again, as previous initiatives in Armenia, YouthActionNet is taking a broad scope of solutions that might be considered as social innovations. There is no clear definition of what exactly this initiative wishes to achieve as a measurable result from supported social innovations. Not to mention, that the focus of social innovations is missing.

More specific approach had a project called mLab (mobile Lab). This project was hosted by the Enterprise Incubator Foundation, in partnership with Republic of Armenia Government and State Engineering University of Armenia. The mLab, according to the evidence:

¹⁸⁶ Yerevan Social Innovation Development Foundation, 2014.

¹⁸⁷ The Social Impact Days Forum, 2015.

¹⁸⁸ Starbucks Shared Planet Action, 2015.

Is supported by the World Bank and the Government of Finland through infoDev global innovation program that provided a seed grant for the mLab concept in Armenia in 2011. mLab Yerevan is part of global network of mobile labs, which includes affiliates in Kenya, South Africa and Vietnam. The initiatives led by mLab ECA aim to make the region a global hub for mobile innovation, boosting high-growth businesses for job creation. It will also highlight how mobile applications can address economic and social needs in the region.¹⁸⁹

The purpose of the mLab clearly demonstrates primary business fostering incentives from launching the project. Though it supposes to address social needs, it does not automatically make the project a social innovation. Moreover, being not specifically focused on local governance, social innovations in Armenia mostly appeared as initiatives spread throughout different sectors, aiming at diverse topics, not always systematically approached. Clearly, social innovations, according to numerous theorists and practitioners can be used in a multispectral manner. None of the social innovations related initiatives in Armenia mentioned above, were, however, dealing with projects in governance. Only ‘social innovation’ projects supported by Kolba Lab and the UNDP were aimed for governance. Thus, what was implied under the notion “social innovation” by Kolba Lab, the UNDP and leaders of the local ‘social innovation’ projects, will be discussed further.

Since social innovation has various theoretical definitions and dimensions, practical application of the term is also quite diverse. For instance, the UNDP and Kolba Lab had in general common or very alike understanding of what is “social innovation” in terms of social impact as identification of social problem and creation of new social relationships to solve it. What was complementary to this aspect, constantly repeated by Kolba Lab Managers, are other features of social innovation (e.g. human-centeredness).

The UNDP and Kolba Lab regarded social innovation within development context, what explains the motivation to focus on making, through social innovations, social implications desirable for the society. It should be emphasized that definitions of social innovation used by the UNDP and Kolba Lab were mostly identical. In fact, there was a substantial degree of agreement about what social innovation should look like, such as something making social impact, being human-centered in design, new (invention) in social context etc.

¹⁸⁹ Mobile Lab project, 2013.

Interviews, however, have also revealed that in Armenia, “social innovation” was intermixed with other terms. Substitutions seemed to be more clear for the leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects, who applied different terms locally. But, before shifting to the leaders of the projects, first, let us discuss what Hodge brings about ‘social innovation’, as something that should happen outside of the public sector, otherwise it [social innovation] should be named differently. He offered the terms “civic and public sector innovations”.¹⁹⁰

Civic innovation and public sector innovation

Hodge distinguished between innovations inside and outside of the government (or public sector). This differentiation is remarkable with regard to specific application of the meaning anyone could use for social innovation concept, and once again demonstrated how different the application of the term has been in practice. Hodge says: “social innovation tends to be outside of the government. Something similar would be called civic innovation. This is innovation within government and connected to society. And then overlapping with civic innovation is public sector innovation, which is more clearly defined within public sector”.¹⁹¹ Hodge suggested a substitution for “social innovation” based on the areas (inside or outside of the government) where it [social innovation] could be applied. This was the only distinction made by Hodge in relevance to ‘social innovation’ projects.

Other substitutions were used by the leaders of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects. Their understanding about social innovation was based on the nature of the projects they led. If the project used technology, then social innovation became a technological tool to solve social issues. If the project was aimed for relationships changing government policies, then social innovation would be something that makes changes in those policies.

E-services involving technology

Interestingly enough is how the leaders of the ‘social innovation’ projects envisioned and understood social innovation concept. Their understanding was more focused on the aspect of novelty, or new disruptive idea, and technology that enables social innovation.

For instance, Tavmosyan emphasizes the change of traditional thinking and making

¹⁹⁰ Interview, George Hodge. Via Messenger. January 2018.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.*

services more efficient. She points out: “social innovation for me is a tool that eventually changes the mindset of its users, by using technological, IT aspect which is aimed to reduce process and make services more to the point, targeted and effective”.¹⁹² Mirzoyan highlights both technological advancement and novelty of the idea that ‘social innovation’ project brings:

Social innovations are projects with usage of technologies. But, primarily ‘social innovation’ is a novel approach to the existing problem. For example, we used to look at state budget as something regulated and defined by the government. But, it is time to look at it from the citizens’ perspective. Maybe it is not something new in general, but for me innovation is to look, say at state budget, from different perspective.¹⁹³

Thus, both Tavmasyan and Mirzoyan underline newness of the idea in the social context, and technological component that in combination, enable ‘social innovation’ project. Dolmajian goes further in his explanation of what is “social innovation”? He argues: “Social innovation is innovation that effects everyone, citizens and government alike. There are two types of innovation. The first, is when there is nothing yet, and you need to create something, and the second, is when there is innovation where you do research and then you try to apply or replicate successful cases”.¹⁹⁴ Actually, Dolmajian means that innovation might be new for a certain social context. Importantly, the role of technology and digital aspect have been put forward in his elaborations on ‘social innovation’.

Definitions of social innovation provided by ‘social innovation’ projects leaders, were pointing out that social innovation is about changing existing methods and practices. New practices as a core of social innovation, changing existing traditional approaches of ‘business as usual’, have been explicitly applied by the ‘social innovation’ small-scale projects in Armenia. Since, the essence of ‘social innovation’ small-scale projects, was to make desirable implications through introduction of new ideas in social contexts, those ideas were supposed to lead to the new social practices able to make desirable changes.

Social entrepreneurship

‘Social innovation’ projects as low-tech initiatives have occupied their niche in

¹⁹² Interview, Lusine Tovmasyan. Via Messenger. January 2018.

¹⁹³ Interview, Gayane Mirzoyan. Via Messenger. March 2017.

¹⁹⁴ Interview, Arthur Dolmajian. Via Messenger. March 2018.

Armenia. While implementing ‘social innovation’ projects, the term “social innovation” was interchanged with “social entrepreneurship” concept. For instance, Mkhitarian says: “social innovation is disrupting traditional, stereotype methods of approaching issues and finding innovative solutions for them. Maybe disrupting the areas connecting various types of areas that otherwise would not be connected. It can be called a social entrepreneurship”.¹⁹⁵ Mkhitarian used the term “social entrepreneurship”, because she assumed that what her ARVest art education board game ‘social innovation’ project is designed for, could be better described as social entrepreneurship. This is because the art board education game was supposed to apply entrepreneurial skills to solve a problem of art education in public schools in Yerevan. Entrepreneurial skills were aimed for producing a product, namely art education board game, that later, could be purchased by anyone interested.

The terms substituting social innovation concept, including “social entrepreneurship” concept, were used in Armenia due to the relative scarcity of knowledge about social innovation, and the need to use the wording that was either already applied in the local context, or was clearer for project leaders. Substitutive terms varied based on the goals of the entities applying them. But the problem with social innovation concept goes beyond its practical application in post-Soviet Armenia.

In fact, the term being loosely used is eluding its clarity and might be completely destroyed overtime. As in the cases of Uzbekistan and Ukraine, in Armenia ‘social innovation’ projects have volitional character, they have not fully gone through the process of generation of social innovations. This implies that they have not yet accomplished all six criteria of social innovations gathered from the theory and literature, and applied in the study. If the social innovation concept is interchanged with other terms, the UNDP, Kolba Lab, projects’ leaders and local partners will not follow up whether all criteria of social innovation have been achieved, after the UNDP’s support and funding have finished. This will happen just because anything other than social innovation would not require to fulfill the criteria of scaling it up, and making a social impact over time. Thus, it will be challenging to detect whether ‘social innovation’ projects became true social innovations after some time. This is the problem that in post-Soviet Armenia, the shift from “social innovation” to other terms causes for the concept.

¹⁹⁵ Interview, Lia Mkhitarian. Via Messenger. December 2017.

Conclusion

This Chapter described and analyzed how the process of generation of ‘social innovation’ projects was organized in Armenia. It discussed the course and the conditions that were applied by the Kolba Lab, for the ideas of the future ‘social innovation’ projects. It explained how the UNDP and Kolba Lab cooperated with local partners from different sectors, and provided the funding to support ‘social innovation’ projects. Particularly, it mentioned how Kolba Lab engaged with government, through the Local Government Innovation contest, to identify and to support innovations coming from the government employees, i.e. ‘policy entrepreneurs’. The chapter also dedicated to the assessment of ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and Kolba against social innovation features. Based on this assessment, it examined particular features of ‘social innovations’ in Armenia, and analyzed how ‘social innovation’ projects advanced as social innovations. While doing so, the chapter identified the contradictions, gains and challenges of ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia, and analyzed how they were addressed. The chapter has discovered the intermittent government support of ‘social innovation’ projects, and the problem of their diffusion, as well as the challenge of the measurement of their social impact. It has also found out the active role of civil society activists that, eventually, would allow diffusion and institutionalization of ‘social innovation’ projects. Moreover, it found that the ICTs were often used in ‘social innovation’ projects in Armenia, and explained how the UNDP and Kolba Lab envisioned a social impact from the ‘social innovation’ projects, as a problem identification and creation of new social relations. It also studied how the developmental criterion was seized, in designing and introducing ‘social innovation’ projects, as something improving capabilities of individuals by helping them to preserve their political, economic and social rights and freedoms. Finally, the chapter discussed how the “social innovation” concept in Armenia was interchanged with other terms, and how this tends to destroy the concept.

Chapter 8. Analysis and conclusion on ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia: Findings and perspectives

Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the analysis of the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects covering umbrella organizations in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia, and local projects in governance under these organizations. It discusses the evolution of social innovation concept in post-Soviet republics, and presents the assessment of ‘social innovation’ projects in terms of holding the features of social innovation. Also, the chapter examines the developmental feature of ‘social innovation’ projects that have been designed to deliver economic, political and social opportunities for individuals, to improve their capabilities, and to achieve a human development that is beyond just economic growth issue. Finally, the chapter draws conclusions on how volitional and developmental social innovations worked in three post-Soviet republics.

8.1. Findings, recommendations and perspectives of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia

The structure of the PhD study was organized in a manner allowing addressing the points raised in the argument of dissertation. For this purpose, the chapters have been logically arranged to cover all aspects claimed in the current research.

The first chapter introduced the reader into the background information about ‘social innovation’ in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It has formulated the research problem and the research gap that the dissertation was aimed to address. To do so, it also articulated the research questions and the argument of the study. It has explained how and why the cases of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia were selected, and indicated the significance of the research within the scholarly studies on social innovations. The chapter presented the methodology and the methods applied in the dissertation, and explained how the theory and the scholarly literature will be used for data gathering and scrutiny. It prepared scholarly instruments for the further critical analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP and umbrella organizations, in governance realm in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It explained how the data will be collected, analyzed and used in the research.

The second chapter was dedicated to the review of the literature on social innovations. It has conducted the historical overview of the literature on different case studies of social innovations. Historical overview helped to demonstrate the distinctive understanding and application of the social innovation concept throughout the different historical periods. Also, the chapter critically engaged with social science theories dedicated to social innovations that have been further applied for the critical assessment of ‘social innovation’ projects in governance in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. Moreover, it has specifically focused on and discussed the scholarly literature on diverse features and types of social innovations, so as on the literature on development and social innovation. Engagement with theory and scholarly literature allowed identifying six common features of social innovations that would be applied as evaluation criteria for ‘social innovation’ projects. Finally, it pointed out the gap in the scholarly research and literature on social innovations and discussed how this dissertation is going to fulfill this gap.

The third chapter was devoted to the explanation of the theoretical framework of the dissertation. It has primarily discussed various definitions of social innovations from different fields. It explained how social practice theory and six features of social innovations will be applied and adapted for the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics. Further, it discussed human development theory and the UNDP’s perspective on governance for development, and developmental ‘social innovations’. Finally, the chapter discussed theoretical framework of the dissertation, encompassing social practice and human development theories.

The fourth chapter has highlighted the UNDP’s development work in developing countries, to explain how the development assistance was organized, and to describe how and why it has changed in post-Soviet republics. To analyze how exactly the UNDP’s development work has changed with shift to social innovations, the chapter scrutinized volitional and developmental approach of the UNDP to ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It has also highlighted that ‘social innovations’ were considered as something not too political and sensitive in governance of post-Soviet republics, and therefore more acceptable and attuned to peculiarities of post-Soviet context.

Chapters five, six and seven were devoted to the critical analysis of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. The chapters discussed the projects supported by the UNDP and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab. They have explained how ‘social innovation’ projects were generated in three post-Soviet republics. The chapters, also covered critical evaluation of

‘social innovation’ projects against the six features of social innovations, to identify particular characteristics of ‘social innovation’ projects in the post-Soviet context. Based on this critical assessment, it was examined how the ‘social innovation’ projects have progressed as social innovations. The chapters also specifically discussed developmental feature of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan that contributed to the emergence of the new developmental type of social innovation, aimed at improvement of capabilities of individuals, more political and economic freedoms, advancement of social standards, empowerment of citizens, more transparent and accountable governments. Finally, the chapters discussed how the social innovation concept was intermixed with other terms used by the national partners and leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects. It notes that this might diminish the social innovation concept.

Chapter eight summarized and analyzed the findings of the study, and discussed the outlooks of social innovation in post-Soviet context. It offered a concise evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects in three post-Soviet republics, and indicated if and how they have advanced as social innovations. The chapter elaborated on how the social innovation concept evolved in post-Soviet republics, and what were the peculiarities of this phenomenon in the post-Soviet developing countries. Finally, this chapter concluded the PhD thesis.

On the basis of the research conducted in accordance with the above described structure it is evident that some of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics are moving towards being workable social innovations. It became also evident, that by adapting its development assistance to the local context in post-Soviet republics, the UNDP could deliver its development assistance by using new approach, through ‘social innovation’ projects in governance. A problematic issue, was, however, that it was, hitherto, too early to gauge about the diffusion and social impact of ‘social innovation’ projects. Clearly, to make a social change more time and as Howaldt et al. (2014) suggested “socialization of social practice” (p. 14) would be required for the new social practice to transform existing social structures.

Now, social practice theory applied in the study to provide scholarly assessment of ‘social innovation’ projects, allowed analyzing ‘social innovation’ projects in local governance in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. It helped to explain how invention through imitation translated into social structure, might lead to social change by introducing new social practices. It proved, that in post-Soviet settings, this scenario is not only possible, but it is actually happening, though with certain limitations.

Country-based assessment of ‘social innovation’ projects against social innovation features, conducted in the analytical chapters of the dissertation, allows discussing country-

specific findings, recommendations and perspectives of ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia.

In Uzbekistan, ‘social innovation’ projects affected individuals and communities (micro level). In case of generation and implementation, they have largely fulfilled the features of social innovation on human-centeredness, networking, localness and inclusiveness, as well as the use of technology. Since the projects experienced problems of missing government support, and only occasional possibility to cooperate with local organizations, they could not be further scaled. Also, measuring projects’ social impact was not possible due to the absence of the adequate ‘social innovations’ measurement tools. If these problems were solved, ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan could, over time, potentially lead to the measurable social change in the existing social structures.

The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project based on the evaluation conducted in the study, proved to be effective in generation of small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects on the micro level. Analysis also revealed strong influence of the factor of missing government support of ‘social innovation’ projects that reinforced the risk of ‘social innovation’ projects not to be scaled. Occasional collaboration with local organizations mainly has not helped in the process of diffusion of ‘social innovation’ projects, and has not made the projects sustainable, after the completion of the UNDP’s financial support.

The UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project was completed in 2014. Therefore, any further recommendations to the project have been skipped at the moment. However, for the possible next projects or programs, employing social innovation methodology, more advocacy and education about the social innovation concept would be advisable. This could be helpful for explaining the benefits of ‘social innovations’ for the governments (national and local), and so to assure better chances for ‘social innovation’ projects to be diffused and institutionalized. Additionally, instruments to measure the social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects should be available. Otherwise effectiveness of ‘social innovation’ projects, and their possibility to make a proved social change over time, would remain problematic.

In Ukraine, ‘social innovation’ projects have primarily enabled small-scale changes (micro level) affecting individuals and local governments. While being generated and implemented, they have largely fulfilled the features of social innovation on human-centeredness, networking, localness and inclusiveness, as well as the use of technology. Some of these projects may advance to meso level, by changing existing practices and introducing new practices. Scaling ‘social innovation’ projects was problematic, due to the government’s

intermittent support of the projects. However, because of the active role of CSOs, some ‘social innovation’ projects (e.g. on participatory budgeting, or using open data in local governments) may be diffused. If the shortcomings of impossibility of measuring their social impact would be solved, ‘social innovation’ projects in Ukraine might potentially lead to the social change in the existing social structures that can be verifiable. Yet, it is too early, and difficult to evidently judge about social change, because all projects have been launched quite recently.

SocialBoost proved to be effective in generating small-scale ‘social innovation’ projects, and giving some chances to be further diffused. Findings revealed the need to develop and to apply social impact measurement tools, to be able to measure the possible impact from ‘social innovation’ projects. The areas for further improvement should address: a) education about social innovation to increase the knowledge about its key features and methodology. This should improve, yet relatively problematic area of understanding of social innovation concept, and application of ‘social innovation’ projects in the local context; b) more advocacy for social innovation in government sector could be useful, to make the government support more consistent. This will most likely decrease the risk of ‘social innovation’ projects’ not to be diffused.

In Armenia, ‘social innovation’ projects have operated on the local governance level, and engaged with individuals and governments. Whilst being generated and implemented, they have mainly fulfilled the features of social innovation on human-centeredness, networking, localness and inclusiveness, as well as the use of technology. Scaling ‘social innovation’ projects was a relative problem, due to the irregular government support of the projects. However, due to the active role of CSOs and civic activists, some ‘social innovation’ projects (e.g. ARVest art education board game, Taghinfo, Consumers’ Rights Protection Chat bot) give hopeful signs of possible diffusion and institutionalization. To measure the social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects, measurement tools were used inconsistently, preventing further evidence-based judgment about the social impact. At the moment, gauging about the social impact of ‘social innovation’ projects, is, in fact, premature, because the projects have started recently, and have not had enough time to make a social change.

Kolba Lab could support individuals and governments (national and local) in generation of local ‘social innovation’ projects. Implications of the intermittent government support on ‘social innovation’ projects’ generation was moderate, due to the more active role of CSOs and civic activists, who helped to make the projects more sustainable. The areas for further improvement for Kolba Lab’s activities in supporting ‘social innovation’ projects are: a) consistent application of the measurement instruments, to measure social impact, and b)

spreading the knowledge about social innovation concept, to educate about its key features and methodology of application. This would certainly improve the process of generation of ‘social innovation’ projects. At the same time, though the external factor, such as government support, is outside of the Kolba Lab’s control, Kolba Lab, however, can advocate for social innovation and its benefits for the governance. Kolba Lab’s accumulated experience of cooperation with local and national governments, which demonstrated that advocating for social innovation in governance, and explanation of its benefits, proved to be effective. Once, local and national governments realized that ‘social innovation’ projects might be beneficial for them (e.g. helped to improve business processes in local government), they supported ‘social innovation’ projects. Thus, this strategy should be continued, also to decrease the risk of ‘social innovation’ projects not to be further scaled.

8.2. Evolution of social innovation concept, summary of the findings of evaluation of ‘social innovation’ projects, and their particular features in post-Soviet context

In post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia strong government representation in all sectors of the society is traditional, and rooted in the Soviet times. Therefore, for any development agency operating in these republics, including the UNDP, it was necessary to cooperate with government in order to proceed with organization’s development work. The UNDP in post-Soviet republics has been conducting its development assistance in the governance sector, which proved to be sensitive area for post-Soviet governments. Concepts of ‘good’ or ‘democratic’ governance have been regarded as too political, and promoted by the Western development agencies. To collaborate with post-Soviet governments, the UNDP has deliberately turned its development projects into “social innovations”. The UNDP assumed that projects labeled as “social innovations” would be regarded as less political, and more as a type of technical support for the local communities and governments. Thus, the UNDP has experimented with social innovation concept, and supported umbrella organizations, namely, the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ Project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab, and local ‘social innovation’ projects under these organizations in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia.

Based on the experiences of the UNDP-supported ‘social innovation’ projects, the concept of social innovation evolved in post-Soviet republics. First of all, ‘social innovation’ projects have been viewed by the UNDP as something that can be worked towards, *i.e.*, *volitional*. This was also one of the particular characteristics of ‘social innovation’ projects in

post-Soviet republics, different from social innovations in other countries, where social innovation concept was applied by scholars for finished projects. This characteristic, in post-Soviet countries, made all other six usual features of social innovation volitional. Thus, while social innovations (e.g. in developed countries) should achieve all six features, in case of ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics these features remain volitional. In this regard, it was found that ‘social innovation’ projects have mainly held four common features of social innovations on human-centeredness, networking, localness and use of ICTs. Below, these features drawn from the theory and scholarly literature, have been reiterated, and their peculiarities in the context of post-Soviet republics have been discussed.

Features (criteria) of social innovations largely met by ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics:

- *People-centeredness and inclusiveness* of social innovations meant that individuals experiencing certain problems come up with solutions of these problems. Social innovations should, then, strive for more inclusiveness of individuals and social groups, left behind by the previous policies and programs.

In post-Soviet republics, people-centered and inclusive ‘social innovation’ projects proved to be a new effective approach to design UNDP-led development projects. The evidence from the post-Soviet republics suggests that applying this principle enabled new types of projects to generate ideas from the grassroots level. These new projects, generally, allowed participation of new actors, social groups and individuals that were previously neglected. Certainly, human-centered feature also endorsed more engagement of government (public) servants (e.g. as in Armenia through local governance innovation contest, or the municipal innovation lab in Ukraine) in designing and implementing ‘social innovation’ projects in governance area.

- *Networking and collaboration* implied that social innovations were supposed to encourage networking and collaboration among different actors (government, CSOs, private companies, individuals) for the generation and further progress of social innovations.

In practice, in post-Soviet republics, intermittent or even missing government support of ‘social innovation’ projects, was found. This aspect was contrasted with experiences of social innovations in developed, developing and post-communist countries. The study found that governments in Ukraine and Armenia were mostly interested in supporting ‘social

innovation' projects when/if they realized that the projects were beneficial for them. Seeing the rationale behind any 'social innovation' project, usually took some time, therefore, many small-scale 'social innovation' projects were not immediately supported by the government.

Intermittent government support in Ukraine and Armenia, sometimes, happened not due to the lack of understanding of the value of 'social innovation' projects for the governance, but due to the dynamic political changes in the countries. Elections that led to the change of governments (both locally and nationally), or any other reasons for change of the decision-maker, who committed himself/herself to institutionalize and/or scale 'social innovation' projects, have influenced the overall success of these projects in Ukraine and Armenia.

But, when 'social innovation' projects were supported by the government, they could advance to the level of diffusion and institutionalization. In Ukraine, for instance, the UNDP could engage with government through the municipal innovation lab. In Armenia, successful collaboration has happened between Kolba Lab and the government, through the local governance innovation contest, where Kolba Lab could nurture 'policy entrepreneurs' – individuals inside the governments (local and national), who could offer problem-solving innovative solutions in governance.

Moreover, the UNDP, SocialBoost in Ukraine and Kolba Lab in Armenia, could, to some extent, compensate intermittent governments' support of 'social innovation' projects by establishing cooperation between the leaders of 'social innovation' projects, CSOs and civic activists. This allowed better scaling opportunities for 'social innovation' projects.

Concurrently, in Uzbekistan, the study found missing government support of 'social innovation' projects. Occasional cooperation between the leaders of 'social innovation' projects and local organizations has happened. Also, the UNDP could sign MoUs with National Library of Uzbekistan, and Center for Youth Initiatives, who have collaborated with the UNDP to support 'social innovation' projects.

- *Localness and focus on specific domain* deemed that any social innovation is launched locally, and aimed at specific domain.

In post-Soviet countries, all 'social innovation' projects were launched locally, and were aimed at governance domain. They were primarily aimed for solution of local problems in communities and governments. 'Social innovation' projects in Uzbekistan have been supported by the UNDP/UNV project locally, by providing seed funding, training and through establishing of cooperation with local organizations. Usually, launching and implementation of a 'social innovation' project without government's permission or support, was not possible.

In Ukraine and Armenia, ‘social innovation’ projects could be launched and implemented locally without governments’ permission or support. However, they benefited more, if governments’ (national and/or local) support was available. In other cases, cooperation with CSOs and civic activists helped ‘social innovation’ projects to sustain. The UNDP, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab have supported ‘social innovation’ projects by providing funding and training. SocialBoost and Kolba Lab also served as the pipelines for the projects, allowing their partnership with public, private and civic organizations. Municipal innovation lab in Ukraine, and/or local governance innovation contest in Armenia, also helped to nurture innovators and ‘social innovation’ projects locally.

- *Use of ICTs* displayed a particular technological (ICT) feature applied in designing and implementation of social innovations. At the same time, application of this feature did not mean that low-tech social innovations are not possible. In fact, in all three post-Soviet republics, respondents emphasized that social innovations could be low-tech, though digitalization of social innovation is, in general, a prevailing trend.

In Uzbekistan, most of the ‘social innovation’ projects were low-tech. This means that ICTs (and/or local engineering works in case of Uzbekistan) were used occasionally. Only 11 projects out of 33, have employed engineering works or ICTs. One reason for this could be the low level of internet coverage in Uzbekistan. Another reason, that was indicated by the interviewees from the UNDP, is the intention to support ‘social innovation’ projects in rural areas of Uzbekistan, where solutions do not require the use of ICTs.

In contrast, in Ukraine and Armenia, ‘social innovation’ projects, mostly, used ICTs and open data. In Ukraine, nineteen out of 21 projects used ICTs and open data. The international and local legislation on the open data, and the government commitment to make the governance more transparent, as well as the active role of CSOs, allowed generating data-driven and ICTs-driven ‘social innovation’ projects.

In Armenia, 12 out of 14 ‘social innovation’ projects used ICTs. Kolba Lab has supported ICTs and data-driven ‘social innovation’ projects, to assure greater participation of citizens in governance. Combined with the open data, ICTs allowed crowdsourcing ideas, monitoring government’s funds and services. In this regard, digitalization of social innovation as the generally emerging trend, in post-Soviet republics, is also raising.

While four features (criteria) of social innovations have been mostly achieved, ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia were still progressing towards the last two of them. It is too early to assess whether the UNDP-supported projects in the three

post-Soviet republics will fulfill two other standards of social innovation – scaling-up and social impact – but some of them, particularly in Ukraine and Armenia, do show encouraging signs of eventually moving towards them.

Features (criteria) of social innovations that ‘social innovation’ projects in post-Soviet republics are progressing towards:

- *Scaling up* implied that any social innovation should be scalable/diffusible across the social system.

Scaling or diffusing ‘social innovation’ projects was problematic in post-Soviet Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. Diffusion and further institutionalization of projects could be, in general, successful if the governments’ support would be available. However, as it was already recognized, in Uzbekistan, such support was missing. In Ukraine and Armenia, governments’ support was occasional, which caused challenges in diffusion and institutionalization of projects. However, in Ukraine and Armenia, due to the active role of CSOs and civil society activists, ‘social innovation’ projects have had the signs of possible diffusion. For instance, in Ukraine the project on participatory budgeting has been applied by the government in sixty-three municipalities, due to the efforts of the CSO’s pushing for making the governance more participatory, and budgeting more transparent. In Armenia, among the projects that could be successfully diffused are ARVest art education board game that received support of the government and CSOs, and/or Taghinfo project that was largely supported by the civic activists.

The UNDP, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab have also injected ‘social innovation’ projects in governance, through municipal innovation lab (in Ukraine), and local governance innovation contest (in Armenia). This gave some hope for diffusion and institutionalization of ‘social innovation’ projects. For instance, in Ukraine, Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk project generated through the municipal innovation lab, has received the support of the local government. Though it is currently not the case, diffusion and institutionalization of the project could be possible if the government decides to spread this experience across the other municipalities. In Armenia, one of such projects is Consumers’ Rights Protection Chat bot, that has been generated through the local governance innovation contest, aimed at nurturing ‘policy entrepreneurs’, received government’s backing. It also has a potential to be scaled if the government’s support will be continuous.

- *Making a social impact* suggested that social innovation should address particular social problems and social needs.

In post-Soviet republics measuring a social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects was mostly problematic. Out of three post-Soviet republics, attempts to measure the social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects have been taken only in Armenia. It was found that NESTA Standards of Evidence were applied by Kolba Lab. Though the attempts were inconsistent, they, nevertheless, demonstrated the intention to apply qualitative and/or quantitative tools to comprehend the social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects, to possibly relate it to the social change that any social innovation is ultimately aimed for. In fact, the major problem with post-Soviet ‘social innovation’ projects was that they have been launched quite recently. Therefore, it was too early to gauge about their social impact. Thus, along with the absence of the adequate instruments to measure social impact, in post-Soviet republics measuring social impact was, certainly, premature. Moreover, while based on the reviewed scholarly literature, in other cases, social impact from social innovations was regarded as satisfaction of needs, in post-Soviet republics social impact from ‘social innovation’ projects, was understood differently. It was found that the UNDP in three post-Soviet republics regarded social impact as identification of problem and creation of social relationships to resolve the problem. Tables 17, 18 and 19 below summarize and help to visualize above discussed particular features of ‘social innovation’ projects.

Table 17. Particular features of the ‘social innovation’ projects

Features	Social innovations	‘Social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan	‘Social innovation’ projects in Ukraine	‘Social innovation’ projects in Armenia
People-centeredness and inclusiveness	<p>People (human) – centered approach was a priority in all ‘social innovation’ projects.</p> <p>Projects are mainly inclusive.</p>	<p>People (human) – centered approach was a priority in all ‘social innovation’ projects.</p> <p>Projects are mainly inclusive.</p>	<p>People (human) – centered approach was a priority in all ‘social innovation’ projects.</p> <p>Projects are mainly inclusive (also with help of ICTs).</p>	<p>People (human) – centered approach was a priority in all ‘social innovation’ projects.</p> <p>Projects are mainly inclusive (also with help of ICTs).</p>

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the reviewed literature, interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects.

Table 18. Particular features of the ‘social innovation’ projects (continued)

Features	Social innovations	‘Social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan	‘Social innovation’ projects in Ukraine	‘Social innovation’ projects in Armenia
Networking and collaboration	<p>Cooperation usually between government and CSOs.</p> <p>In developed countries governments are supporting social innovations to address the gaps in the welfare systems. In developing and post-communist countries governments support social innovations in the areas prioritized by them.</p>	<p>Absence of cooperation between government and leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects.</p> <p>Occasional cooperation between the UNDP, the leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects and local organizations.</p>	<p>Intermittent cooperation of government with the UNDP, SocialBoost, and leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects.</p> <p>Cooperation of the leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects with active CSOs. CSOs have more power to keep government accountable and draft laws.</p>	<p>Intermittent cooperation of government with the UNDP, Kolba Lab, and leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects.</p> <p>Cooperation of the leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects with active civic activists and CSOs.</p>
Localness and focus on specific domain	<p>Social innovations emerge as local initiatives. They can be implemented without government’s support, and later applied in the government (public) sector, or in government priority areas.</p> <p>Social innovations introduced in health care, education, welfare, employment, governance domains.</p>	<p>‘Social innovation’ projects emerge locally. They cannot be implemented without government approval.</p> <p>‘Social innovation’ projects introduced in governance domain.</p>	<p>‘Social innovation’ projects emerge locally. They can be implemented without government’s approval, but are more successful with government support.</p> <p>‘Social innovation’ projects introduced in governance domain.</p>	<p>‘Social innovation’ projects emerge locally. They can be implemented without government’s approval, but are more successful with government support.</p> <p>‘Social innovation’ projects introduced in governance domain.</p>

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the reviewed literature, interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects.

Table 19. Particular features of the ‘social innovation’ projects (continued)

Features	Social innovations	‘Social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan	‘Social innovation’ projects in Ukraine	‘Social innovation’ projects in Armenia
Use of technology	Prevalent use of ICTs.	Most of the ‘social innovation’ projects are low-tech. Occasional use of local engineering works and ICTs.	Prevalent use of ICTs, emphasis on open data.	Prevalent use of ICTs, emphasis on open data.
Scaling up	Scaling up social innovations is possible in developed countries and largely problematic in developing countries.	Scaling up ‘social innovation’ projects is mainly impossible.	Scaling up of some ‘social innovation’ projects is feasible.	Scaling up of some ‘social innovation’ projects is feasible.
Making a social impact	Addressing social needs. Different methods to measure the social impact.	Identifying social challenges and creating new social relationships to address social problems. Problematic to assess social impact.	Identifying social challenges and creating new social relationships to address social problems. Problematic to assess social impact.	Identifying social challenges and creating new social relationships to address social problems. Inconsistent attempts to assess social impact.

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the reviewed literature, interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects.

Developmental feature of ‘social innovation’ projects

To recall, in post-Soviet republics, social innovation concept has evolved, primarily, as something volitional. This also made six common features of social innovations, volitional. Besides this, since ‘social innovation’ projects were supported by the UNDP, and implemented for development purposes in post-Soviet developing countries (and/or countries in transition), they have acquired developmental feature. Thus, aside from being volitional, social innovation concept in post-Soviet republics, now, also evolved as something *developmental*.

It was found that differently from social innovations in developed countries, the ‘social innovation’ projects in the three post-Soviet republics have been of a particular type – developmental – due the UNDP’s role in supporting them for development purposes. Specifically, they are developmental because they have been designed to help local communities and governments in a developing or transition context find solutions to existing

social problems. They attempt to carry better economic and political opportunities, so as social services, and for improving capabilities of individuals, as Sen (1999) suggests.

The UNDP in its development work was also guided by Sen's capability approach, and human development theory, that is beyond just income generation and economic growth. As Millard (2014) pointed out "human development approach was a shift from the idea of satisfaction of basic needs of individuals, to the improvement of their capabilities, and more human-focused measure of development" (p. 42). In that sense, capability approach became a new pattern in development that lies in the core of human development theory. Based on these theoretical accounts, human freedom, political liberty, civil and economic rights, and improved social services became the main objectives and the means of development work of the UNDP. With regard to human development theory, Millard (2014) also emphasized the novel understanding of governance, as open, transparent, participative and empowering. This is how, in practice, the main objectives of human development, namely, political, economic and civil rights, as well as social services could be guaranteed. The UNDP has adopted these objectives for its Strategic Plan for 2018-2021, where the UNDP sets its priority development settings in good (democratic) governance for development.

Thus, in post-Soviet republics, the UNDP-supported 'social innovation' projects were particularly striving for greater inclusion, participation and responsiveness through the extensive use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). They were aimed for improvement of local social facilities, assuring transparency, and empowering individuals. In Uzbekistan, 'social innovation' projects intended to empower individuals, and engage with them to solve their local developmental challenges. They helped to include people with disabilities, girls and young people neglected by previous development programs. In Ukraine and Armenia, ICTs and open data were used to greater extent, to generate 'social innovation' projects that could assure transparency and accountability of the governments. The 'social innovation' projects created more opportunities for users (citizens) to monitor and to comment on the quality of government services (e.g. quality of municipal roads, quality of services provided by the local government, etc.), to use additional economic opportunities (e.g. inclusive employment opportunities for people with disabilities), and to have better quality social services (e.g. electricity or water services in rural areas). This is, precisely, how 'social innovation' projects in post-Soviet republics obtained their developmental feature, and contributed to the evolvement of social innovation concept as something developmental.

Critical analysis of the development theories that have examined social innovations, has demonstrated that those theories, namely, modernization theory, reverse innovation theory, theory of change, post-development theory and human development theory have attempted to scrutinize and conceptualize social innovation in relevance to development. Simultaneously, in practice, social innovation concept has started being applied by development organizations. For instance, Moreno (2017) has applied social innovation in the World Bank research aimed for analysis of implications of social innovations in the peace-building process in Colombia. Santha (2019) has researched the transition of social innovations and the future pathways to Sustainable Development Goals. The current study is dedicated to the research of ‘social innovation’ projects in governance in post-Soviet republics, where the UNDP for the first time introduced ‘social innovations’.

Thus, social innovation is being introduced into the development work, and into the discipline of development studies dedicated to the multidisciplinary perspective on the issues of development, poverty reduction, inequality, as well as political, economic, environmental and cultural changes in the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. However, though the social innovation concept is being introduced into development studies and development work, it has been yet, insufficiently researched. Further studying social innovations in development context might be a rewarding task, that could contribute to the development studies as an academic discipline, and to the development work employing social innovations in different regions of the globe.

Danger of diluting a social innovation concept: Intermixing with other terms

Based on the findings of the dissertation, national partners and leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects have usually intermixed social innovation with other terms more familiar to them. The interchange of social innovation concept with other terms allowed making the concept acceptable both for the UNDP and for the governments (national partners), and, subsequently, to deliver UNDP’s development assistance. The study also found that the UNDP, the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, SocialBoost and Kolba Lab possessed fair knowledge about social innovation concept. This was, though, not always the case with leaders of ‘social innovation’ projects and national partners (local

organizations and governments). Intermixing social innovation with other terms might lead to the loss of potency of the concept.

In fact, in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia ‘social innovation’ projects had volitional character, meaning that they have not fully gone through the process of generation of social innovations. This entails that they have not still accomplished all six criteria of social innovations. If the social innovation concept is interchanged with other terms, the UNDP, umbrella organizations, projects’ leaders and local partners will not follow up whether all criteria (especially scaling up and social impact) of social innovation have been achieved, after the UNDP’s support and funding have finished. Thus, it will be challenging to detect whether ‘social innovation’ projects became true social innovation. This is the problem that in post-Soviet republics, the shift from “social innovation” to other terms causes for the concept. So, while being often interchanged or intermixed, in course of implementation, with such other terms as ‘social projects’, ‘civic engagements’, ‘civic technology’ and others, the social innovation concept tends to be diminished.

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Appendices

List of respondents¹⁹⁶

Armenia

Position/organization	Name/Second name	Date and location
The UNDP Armenia, Kolba Innovations Lab Lead	Ms. Marina Mkhitarian	22.12.2017/Tsukuba (via messenger)
The UNDP Armenia, First Kolba Lab Manager	Mr. George Hodge	22.01.2018/Tsukuba (via messenger)
Leader of ‘ARVest art education board game’ project	Ms. Lia Mkhitarian	27.12.2017/Tsukuba (via messenger)
Leader of ‘Consumer Rights Protection Chat bot’ project	Ms. Lusine Tovmasyan	24.01.2018/Tsukuba (via messenger)
‘Hosanq. Info’ & ‘Armenian Meteo’ projects	Mr. Aleksey Chalabyan	21.03.2018/Tsukuba (via messenger)
Leader of ‘Taghinfo’ project	Ms. Gayane Mirzoyan	10.03.2018/Tsukuba (via messenger)
Leader of ‘Quality of Life Calculator’ project	Mr. Arthur Dolmajian	14.03.2018/ Tsukuba (via messenger)

Ukraine

Position/organization	Name/Second name	Date and location
The UNDP Civil Society Project Coordinator	Ms. Olena Ursu	28.02.2018/ Tsukuba (via messenger)
Knowledge Management Expert at United Nations Development Program at Ukraine under the Democratization and Human Rights Program 2013 – 2016	Mr. Maksym Klyuchar	05.03.2018/ Tsukuba (via Messenger)
Lead of SocialBoost, Co-founder of 1991 Open Data Incubator	Mr. Denis Gursky	05.03.2018/Tsukuba (via messenger)
Open Data Team Lead of the ‘Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration and Services’ project	Ms. Kateryna Onyiliogwu	20.06.2018/Tsukuba (via Messenger)
Head of Department of Budget Policy at Center ‘Eidos’	Mr. Volodymyr Tarnay	27.03. 2018/Tsukuba (via messenger)
CEO DevRain Solutions. Former Coordinator at EGAP Challenge	Mr. Oleksandr Krakovetskyi	24.01.2018/Tsukuba (via messenger)

¹⁹⁶ Interviews have been carried out in person and via skype/messengers between August 2017 and June 2018 either face-to-face or via online messenger (audio/video) platforms. Respondents have given their consent to be cited in this dissertation. Privacy and ethics in the research have been provided by applying explicit confidentiality through coding of the names of respondents in the analytical parts of the dissertation.

Uzbekistan

Position/organization	Name/Second name	Date and location
Program Associate at the UNDP, Good Governance Unit	Ms. Emiliya Asadova	27.08.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Manager at the UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' project	Mr. Bokhodir Ayupov	07.08.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Volunteers coordinator at the UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' project	Ms. Shakhnoz Bazarova (Zafari)	11.08.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Small Grants Program coordinator at the UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' project	Ms. Sevara Khamidova	22.11.2017/Tashkent (via IMO)
Manager at Center for Youth Initiatives 'Kelajak Ovozi'	Mr. Husan Mukimov	17.08.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Leading specialist on methodological issues at National Library of Uzbekistan after Alisher Navoi	Ms. Veronika Polyakova	22.08.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Leader of 'Infobox' project	Mr. Umid Gafurov	04.11.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Leader of 'Peers club' project	Mr. Dostonbek Kholosboev	04.11.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Leader of 'E-dairy' project	Mr. Ulugbek Musabekov	04.11.2017/Tashkent (in-person)
Leader of 'Fantasy club' project	Ms. Lola Yuldasheva	07.11.2017/Fergana (via IMO)

List of questions for the UNDP staff members in charge of ‘social innovation’ projects, and staff of Kolba Lab, SocialBoost and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project¹⁹⁷

Q1. In your opinion, what is ‘social innovation’? Please propose your definition.

Q2. Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project/organizations have supported local projects to solve existing problems in local governments and communities in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. Please mention those of them you consider as ‘social innovations’.

Q3. Please mention projects supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project that you consider as NOT ‘social innovations’ and why?

Q4. Please mention projects supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, you consider as ‘social innovations’ in local governments/local communities. How have they been planned as the UNDP supported projects?

Q5. Why do you believe that these projects are ‘social innovations’ in local governments/local communities? In your opinion what makes them ‘social innovations’?

Q6. Please mention projects supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project that you consider as NOT ‘social innovations’ in local governments/local communities? Why you think so?

Q7. Based on your previous answer, if the projects supported by Kolba Lab, SocialBoost and the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project are NOT ‘social innovations’ in local governments/local communities, then how would you define these projects?

Q8. Please elaborate on the UNDP’s (umbrella organizations’) motivation to introduce projects labeled as ‘social innovations’ in local governments/local communities in Uzbekistan, Ukraine and Armenia. What development outcomes have been planned to achieve by these projects?

Q9. What was the social impact from the projects supported by the UNDP, Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project, and how you measured it?

Q10. Please elaborate on the cooperation between the government and community leaders/civil society organizations (CSOs) while conducting ‘social innovation’ projects.

¹⁹⁷ Questions were asked in English and Russian languages, based on the preferences of respondents. The list consists of the base questions, and is not exhaustive as it does not include background information and personal details, as well as specifying and leading questions. The questions in the questionnaire were adjusted to the specific respondent type (The UNDP staff and staff of Kolba Lab, SocialBoost and UNDP/UNV project).

Q11. In your opinion, how ‘social innovation’ projects supported by the UNDP, Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project enhanced development in local communities and governments?

Q12. Please mention projects labeled as ‘social innovations’, and supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project that promoted transparency of local governments.

Q13. Please mention projects labeled as ‘social innovations’, and supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project that encouraged inclusiveness of the previously neglected individuals.

Q14. Please mention projects labeled as ‘social innovations’, and supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project that empowered citizens.

Q15. Please mention projects labeled as ‘social innovations’, and supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/ the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project that fought corruption in local governments and communities.

Q16. Please mention projects labeled as ‘social innovations’ and supported by Kolba Lab/SocialBoost/ the UNDP/UNV ‘Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan’ project that introduced new technologies (including ICTs) in local governments and communities.

Q17. In your opinion, which out of the six criteria mentioned below have been fulfilled by the ‘social innovation’ projects in Uzbekistan/Ukraine/Armenia?

- (1) People-centeredness and inclusiveness;
- (2) Networking and cooperation with government and non-government actors;
- (3) Localness and focus on specific (governance) domain;
- (4) Use of technologies (ICTs, open data, engineering works);
- (5) Scaling up projects;
- (6) Making a social impact.

List of questions for the local civil society leaders, leaders of the projects and national partners (local organizations) implemented ‘social innovation’ projects in the local governments and communities.¹⁹⁸

Q1. In your opinion, what is ‘social innovation’? Please propose your definition.

Q 2. Please elaborate on the cooperation between your project/organization and the government (partners)/civil society organizations (CSOs) while conducting ‘social innovation’ project.

Q 3. In your opinion, how has the ‘social innovation’ project led by you enhanced development in your community/government?

Q4. Which of the following issues have been addressed by your ‘social innovation’ project:

- Ensuring more transparency
- Fighting corruption
- Using technologies (ICTs, open data, engineering works)
- Empowering citizens
- Allowing more inclusiveness
- Others

Q5. What were the major challenges in designing and implementing your ‘social innovation’ project?

Q.6. In your opinion, which out of six criteria mentioned below have been fulfilled by the ‘social innovation’ project led by you in Uzbekistan/Ukraine/Armenia?

- (1) People-centeredness and inclusiveness;
- (2) Networking and cooperation with government and non-government actors;
- (3) Localness and focus on specific (governance) domain;
- (4) Use of technologies (ICTs, open data, engineering works);
- (5) Scaling up projects;
- (6) Making a social impact.

Q7. How have you measured the social impact your ‘social innovation’ project does (did) in the community (or in the local government)?

¹⁹⁸ In several cases questions were translated into Russian (or Uzbek) upon the request of respondents. The list is not exhaustive as it does not include background information and personal details, as well as specifying and leading questions.