

**SOCIAL INNOVATION – THEORY AND PRACTICE FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF “CREATIVE CITY – SUSTAINABLE REGION” (KRAFT) NATIONAL PROGRAMME**

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**Abstract:** In this study we summarize the importance, research aspects of social innovation both from the theoretical and practical points of view. We begin with the introduction of the KRAFT Programme (started in 2012), a pilot regional development policy and its relation to social innovation. It is followed by presenting the interrelatedness of social innovation and the UN Sustainable Development goals, highlighting the various challenges which should be addressed. In accordance with many years of experience in regional development, we put much emphasis on the governance of social innovations and the variety of actors which could be the initiators. In this regard, we describe how different organizations can be engaged in such practices resulting in social change (social meta-innovation). Finally, we highlight some best practices in the field of social innovation at the Institute of Advanced Studies Kőszeg (iASK).

**Keywords:** *KRAFT Programme, Social Innovation, Social Change, Sustainable Development Goals, Quintuple Helix, Best Practices*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The KRAFT Programme is one of the three pilot regional development policies of the Hungarian Government which aims towards the sustainable development of small- and medium-sized towns. The development of the Programme started in 2012, however the concept has a longer history. In contrast to conventional regional and city development practices, the KRAFT Programme integrates so-called ‘soft’ factors (culture, identity, heritage) and their efficient management with ‘hard factors’ such as infrastructure, energy, communication networks and economic sustainability. Another novelty of KRAFT is to identify and utilize synergies of interdependencies among rural and urban development factors, thus properly revealing the full range of conditions required for the implementation of new, complex regional development strategies for urban areas and their surroundings. The Institute of Advanced Studies Kőszeg (iASK) was appointed by the Government as responsible for the preparation of the KRAFT Programme and its adaptation to other border regions in Hungary.

The KRAFT Programme can be seen as a living concept that perceives the effective regional cooperation among economic and social actors as the measure of successful investment and development. It is rooted in the conviction that the key to successful development initiatives and projects is the effective cooperation between the socio-economic stakeholders of the relevant region. The concept takes into consideration the individual (entrepreneurial, governmental, academic, etc.) and community interests in the region.

The KRAFT Concept, by providing an integrated analytical framework enables the collective recognition of individual (i.e., corporate, governmental, academic) and common interests, contributes to a more complex and profound interpretation of the middle- and long-term development objectives of the dominant actors. As Míszlivetz and Márkus (2013) point out this integrated approach is the key to future success and socio-economic and ecological sustainability. Another important aspect of the KRAFT Programme is that it combines the theory of regional development with the theory of social innovation in order to increase the capacity for adaptive and level of regional resilience in various territories. The success of the KRAFT Programme in Kőszeg, the Alliance of Pannonian Cities and the contribution to the Veszprém–Balaton 2023 European Capital of Culture Award are just some examples.

Generally, regional development is conceptualized as a strategic process aimed to maximize the welfare of inhabitants and to create a sustainable territorial structure for long term viability through the mobilization and exploitation of local resources. It should always, however, be kept in mind, as Simmie and Martin (2010) point out that regional development is far from a smooth and incremental process; instead, it is subject to all sorts of interruptions and disruptions (such as periodic economic recessions, the unpredictable rise of major competitors, unexpected plant closures, the challenges arising from technological change and the like), and the state responses to these challenges and the degree of decentralization and adaptive capacity of territories differs to a high extent even in the same national economy. How regions

adapt to these kinds of changes is dependent on the interconnectivity of different stakeholders, shareholders and the state's social innovation ecosystems.

This current study is structured as follows: Chapter 2 highlights the connection and interrelatedness of social innovation and the Sustainable Development Goals. We acknowledge the work which has been already done by TINLAB, summarized in the White Paper (2021), however, we suggest to provide a broader perspective for the SI by embedding it into the framework of the UN. In Chapter 3, we argue that the governance of the SI has a multilateral character which should be taken into consideration when designing the domestic legislation. The White Paper by TINLAB (2021) highlights link between SI and local development – we aim to enrich this topic by the various projects elaborated by the Institute, these are introduced in Chapter 4.

## 2. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The research on social innovation, as many scholars point out, is not coherent in terms of disciplinary focus or approach. It is rather approached as a phenomenon from different perspectives and therefore also defined in different ways (see for e.g. Backhaus et al. [eds.], 2017). On one hand, sociological contributions most often identify social innovation as new practices, or new combinations of practices (e.g. Howaldt and Kopp, 2012); on the other hand, urban studies according to Moulaert et al. (2005) distinguish between three dimensions of social innovation such as:

- 1) satisfaction of human needs presently unmet,
- 2) changes in social relations and
- 3) empowerment.

According to the book edited by Backhaus et al. (2017), a dominant group of researchers connect social innovation to social change (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014) or more specifically to societal transformations (Haxeltine et al., 2016; Pel and Bauler, 2014) while the latter authors (as part of the TRANSIT research project) approach social innovation as changes in social relations involving new ways of doing, organising, knowing and framing and consider transformative social innovations as those that challenge, alter or replace dominant institutions.

In this diverse theoretic perspectives, there are critical reviews of the definitions of social innovation, like Pol and Ville (2009) who defined social innovation as one based on “*new ideas that have the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life*” (Pol and Ville, 2009). Examples include innovations for:

- better education,
- improved environmental quality,
- and/or longer life expectancy.

This definition proves the direct connection between regional development and social innovation, as the target is to raise both the quantity and quality of life. In order to have a clue what kind of goals could be set, it makes sense to review the UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted on September 25, 2015 by the General Assembly as part of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the heart of the blueprint are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are

urgent calls for action by all countries – both developed and developing countries – in a global partnership. By their adaptation, the United Nations Member States recognized that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.



**Figure 1.** The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Source: <http://www.globaleducationmagazine.com/sustainable-development-goals/>  
(Accessed: 4 October 2021)

As the International Congress and Convention Association highlight the goals, they represent a fundamental shift in thinking, explicitly acknowledging the interconnectedness of prosperous business, a thriving society and a healthy environment. The goals integrate all sectors as key development actors and require an unprecedented level of societal cooperation and collaboration among civil society, business, government, NGOs, foundations and other stakeholders for their achievement – this links perfectly to social innovation.

Besides scholars who emphasize the aim of social innovation, Cajaiba-Santana (2014, p. 49) emphasized much more the nature of actions that led to the social innovation and defined it as *'new social practices created from collective, intentional,*

*and goal-oriented actions aimed at prompting social change through the reconfiguration of how social goals are accomplished*'. According to this definition the following questions arise: What kinds of actors participate? What kind of organizational framework is needed to bring and sustain social innovations?

Based on the work of Howaldt and Schwarz (2010) we can state that social innovation can:

- be realized both inside and outside of business;
- represent several forms of new services, business models for social networks and movements through governmental guidelines and support, intermediary and self-organized institutions (e.g., foundations);
- concern both inter- and intra-organizational processes;
- be started by charismatic individuals or social entrepreneurs;
- be embodied in social enterprises.

It is important to note that social innovation can be achieved by business innovation, since many business innovations do provide certain benefits to consumers and other social groups, although not all business innovations can be considered as socially beneficial (Pol and Ville, 2009). Describing their dissemination Howaldt and Schwarz (2010) state that it can be circulated in various ways, such as via:

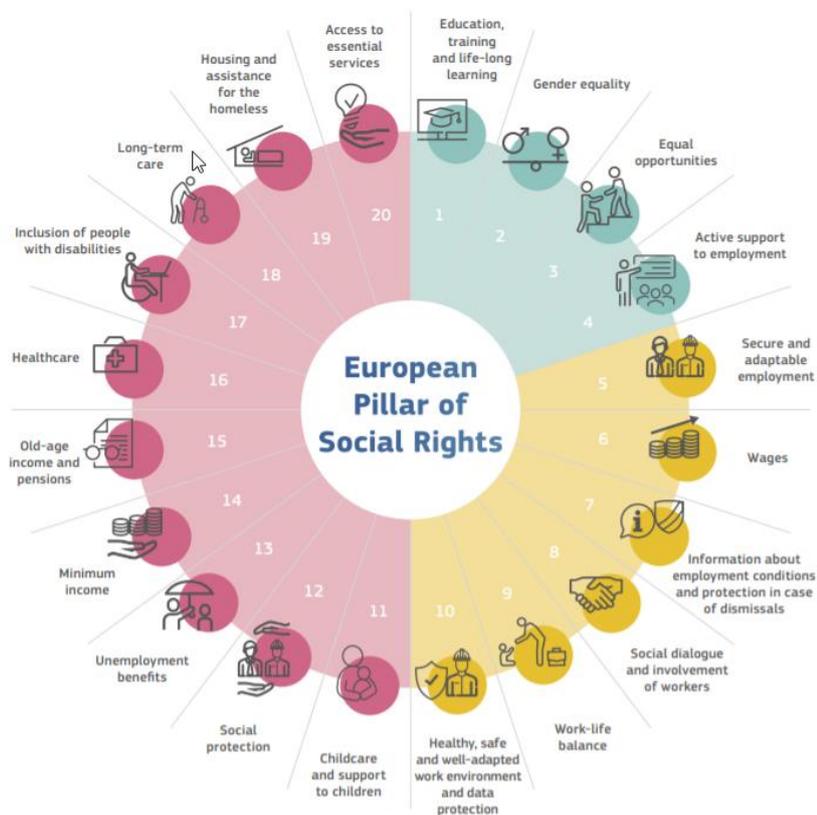
- the market (e.g., new services, business models),
- technological infrastructure (e.g., web-based social networking),
- social networks and movements (e.g., gender mainstreaming),
- governmental guidelines and support,
- intermediary and self-organized institutions (e.g., foundations),
- inter/intra-organizational processes, and/or
- charismatic individuals or social entrepreneurs, and their social enterprises.

In conclusion, social innovation can have a variety of goals. The challenge is not just how to combine the different approaches and definitions to create a general one for the purpose of supporting the local research, but to set an agenda to define the purpose and possible outcomes. Here are a few keywords that may help to clarify the aims and scope of Hungarian social innovation research:

- societal challenges,
- disadvantaged groups,
- human rights,
- equal opportunities,
- social responsibility,
- livable environment,
- local solutions, global effects,
- sustainability.

In many cases the thinking about how to ensure human rights, provide appropriate and effective services for people in need and to fulfil equal access reveal the challenges a country or a society faces and the social innovations that may respond to them.

In addition to the SDGs, focusing on the societal challenges with the aim of building a fair, inclusive society with equal opportunities for all citizens, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission proclaimed the European Pillar of Social Rights in 2017 at the Gothenburg Summit. The Pillar sets out 20 key principles and with the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan the Commission has set out concrete initiatives to achieve its goals. Stakeholders at different levels are identified, such as EU institutions, national, regional and local authorities, social partners and civil society for successful implementation. Social innovations are mentioned as key tools in the process.



**Figure 2.** *The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan*

Source: European Pillar of Social Rights, <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/downloads/KE0921008ENN.pdf>  
(Accessed: 8 October 2021)

Returning to the definitions of social innovation and phrases like: *new ideas that have the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life, changemakers, charismatic individuals or social entrepreneurs, effective cooperation between the*

*socio-economic stakeholders, socio-economic and ecological sustainability, etc.*, a framework for a social enterprise can be found.

There are several definitions for a social enterprise and almost all of them mention two determinant factors, one is the social purpose and mission and the other is business strategy. Further important features like leadership (European Commission), financial sustainability (NESsT), scaled social impact (NESsT), making profit are not the main purpose (Bornstein and Davis, 2000). Financial autonomy is dependent on trading activities, and embeddedness in the local environment is crucial (OECD) to this diverse picture.

The European Commission's 2011 Social Business Initiative was created because the European Union was convinced that the market needed new, inclusive growth that focused on employment for all, strengthening the aspirations of people in Europe to make their work, consumption, savings and investment more in line with certain 'ethical' and 'social' principles. In order to promote a competitive social market economy, the Commission has focused on the social economy and social innovation, and the fight against poverty and exclusion has been identified as a priority. According to the European Commission's definition, a social enterprise is an actor in the social economy whose purpose is to achieve a social impact rather than to generate a profit for its owners or shareholders. It operates by providing goods and services to the market in an entrepreneurial and innovative way, and uses its profits primarily to achieve social goals. This organization has to be managed in an open and responsible manner with the involvement of employees, consumers and stakeholders (European Commission, 2011).

### 3. GOVERNANCE OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

In the previous section the interrelatedness of regional development, social innovation and sustainability was highlighted. Taking into consideration that the 17 SDGs integrate all sectors as key development actors, it is quite evident that the development of social innovation ecosystems must pay attention to the organizational dimension as well. Carayannis et al. (2012) describe the evolution of the Triple Helix Model to the Quintuple Helix innovation model:

- the Triple Helix innovation model focuses on university-industry-government relations,
- the Quadruple Helix embeds the Triple Helix by adding as a fourth helix the 'media-based and culture-based public' and 'civil society',
- while the Quintuple Helix innovation model is even broader and incorporates another helix (and perspective), that of the 'natural environments of society' (Carayannis et al., 2012).

The Quintuple Helix stresses the necessary socioecological transition of society and economy in the twenty-first century; therefore, it is ecologically sensitive and corresponds to the 2030 SDGs. (Carayannis et al., 2012)

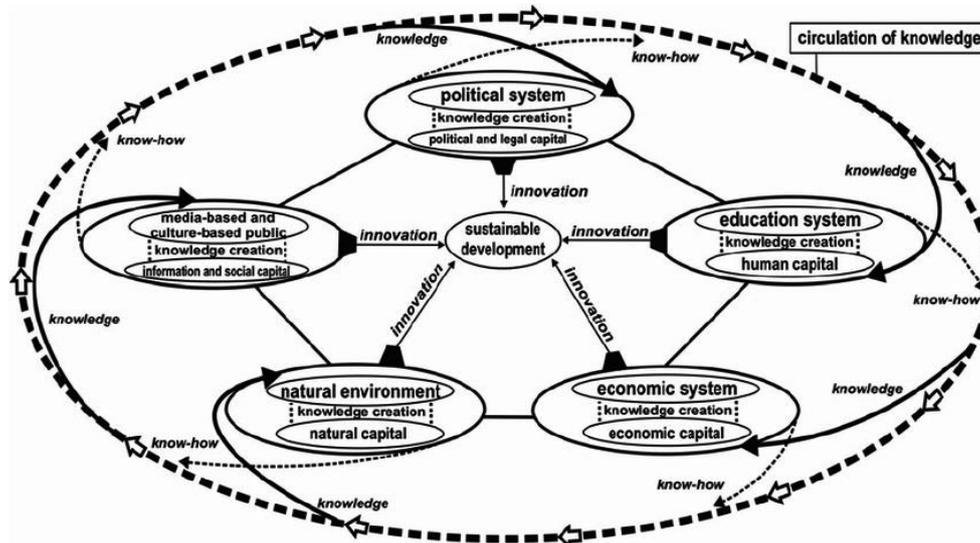


Figure 3. The Quintuple Helix model and its function (functions)

Source: Carayannis et al. (2012)

If we want to strengthen and enhance social innovation activity, the challenge is not just to describe how different organizations and people can be involved, but also how they can be engaged. This leads to finding direction through „social philosophies” that lie behind innovative solutions like: mediating best practices, augmenting individual and community-level entrepreneurial spirit, presenting problems to solve – a whole ecosystem of ‘social metainnovation’.

This ‘social metainnovation’ must meet the following requirements to enhance the level of activity, participation and network-building:

- Creating a culture of *initiation* – involving and including the young generation (digital natives, *digital initiates*) into local, community and civilization level problem solving projects as active partners. They are real resources as partners, passionate originators, promoters and not only target groups that need a nudge (Z. Karvalics, 2014).
- New forms, channels, and platforms of *horizontal value exchange* – shifting the alienated market forces into interpersonal and inter-group practices in newer and newer niche fields in increasingly new ways, redesigning traditional channels and forms of mutuality, fruitfully adapting new possibilities opened by fresh advancements in digital culture.
- *Community control regained*. Relying on the work of 19th century bureaucratic central institutions with diverse, pro forma practices, civic engagement and empowerment trajectories, including mobilizing families and small communities to come closer to a healthy and safe self-management culture is needed.

- *People first.* A basic normative goal is to revolutionize tools and institutions to create and maintain physical, mental, and social well-being, develop various solutions and technologies of self-support and social care. This is a way to approach the long-time predicted paradigm shift to a human/social economy and a hopeful sweep of human technology, following the revolutions in information technology and biotechnology.

When developing the ecosystem, it is highly recommended to analyse how social innovation's best practices are recognized and awarded. For instance, The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship, sister organization of the World Economic Forum, is a leading global platform that accelerates outstanding models of social innovation. As it is declared on their website ([schwabfound.org](https://www.schwabfound.org)) for 20 years it has fostered social entrepreneurship worldwide by highlighting leading social innovation models to top decision-makers in business and government. The organization has strong ambitions to recognize the diversity of social innovation models across multiple stakeholder groups and to further stimulate public-private impact collaborations; currently the Schwab Foundation awards social innovators across four categories (<https://www.schwabfound.org/selection-process>):

- 1) Social Entrepreneurs of the Year (outstanding leaders pioneering solutions for social and environmental challenges),
- 2) Corporate Social Intrapreneurs of the Year (leaders in the public sector, be it local or national governments or representatives of international organizations, who harness the power of social innovation and social entrepreneurship to create public good through policy, regulation or public initiatives),
- 3) Public Social Intrapreneurs of the Year (leaders within multinational or regional companies who drive the development of new products, initiatives, services or business models that address societal and environmental challenges),
- 4) Social Innovation Thought Leaders of the Year (recognized experts and champions who shape and contribute to the evolution of the field of social innovation).

The other well-known organization in this area is Ashoka. One of its mottos is '*The world is defined by change and requires a new mindset*'. Ashoka envisions a world in which everyone is a changemaker and all citizens have the power to make positive changes. The organization was founded in 1981 and since that time has elected 3,500 Ashoka Fellows from 92 countries. Ashoka has operated in Hungary for 25 years with a network of Hungarian Entrepreneurs. Ashoka Hungary has selected more than 35 Ashoka Fellows who are creating systemic changes in areas like health, civic participation, economic development, environment, education and human rights. (<https://www.ashoka.org/en-hu>)

#### 4. iASK'S BEST PRACTICES RELATED TO SOCIAL INNOVATION

In this section three best practices of the KRAFT Programme is presented that can serve as examples for social innovation activities. Not coincidentally, two were selected as Good Practices of the so called 'Local Flavours' INTERREG Europe project lead by the iASK.

##### 4.1. 'The way I see Kőszeg' – collaborative creative arts for the students from the secondary school<sup>1</sup>

'The way I see Kőszeg' art project shows an effective collaboration amongst the youth of Kőszeg, iASK and local entrepreneurs. This practice answers to the problematic question of how to maintain the image (the brand), the identity of a town in the locals' minds. This project of local high schoolers shows a great way to build or strengthen the image of a town living in people's minds and targets, first of all, the locals. The arts and crafts teacher at the Jurisich Miklós Secondary School and her students decided on an art project: they started to plan different designs for T-shirts and bags depicting Kőszeg and its main characteristics: its cultural heritage buildings and their smaller details (e.g., windows, doorknobs), typical landscapes and views (e.g., the usually cloudy skies), moments (e.g., a cat sitting in a window) and traditions or visualizing the colourfulness and diversity on a map of the inner city. The students also prepared a short introductory video for the project, showing the progress and results of their project. The video was shared through social media. iASK decided to fund the project: the Institute ordered the T-shirts and bags with the designs and organized an exhibition of the products to gain a wider audience. There was a full house for the opening exhibition, "Our children made this, for our town" – it is an important aspect of the practice. But how to sell the produced products? Local entrepreneurs found the project a unique opportunity: it represents special marketable value that local students planned and designed the products – products that are valuable to locals, but also for visitors. The resources needed for the project were the creative and proactive locals who were motivated to make an effort for the town; a public institution that saw and realized the opportunity and was able to cooperate. iASK financed the first batch of products, after that local entrepreneurs invested in the reproduction of the products. The main evidence of success is that after 4 years the products are still on market. This shows that local initiatives can rely on the creative ideas of youth, and that creative ideas can lead to physical products that enhance pride and a sense of belonging through personal, institutional and geographical networks. The key success factor is the cooperation between stakeholders: cultural and tourism organisations, the local high school, the public sector and local entrepreneurs.

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<sup>1</sup> Written by Anna Bokányi in the framework of the Local Flavours INTERREG Project. Available at: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/5184/the-way-i-see-koszeg-collaborative-creative-arts-for-the-students-of-the-secondary-school/> (Accessed: 10 September 2021).

#### **4.2. Cultural Heritage Management and Place-making through Storytelling: The Talking Houses in Kőszeg town**

This urban research project is based on the original idea of Elemér Hankiss. The built, silent witnesses – the buildings of Kőszeg – are animated to reveal the stories they hide. Dr. Mónika Mátay, the leader of the research, claims that besides the macro approach to history, the micro perspective is worth considering to develop a better understanding of our common past and experiences. As the website of the project<sup>2</sup> declares, the rich archival documentation of Kőszeg allows historians to investigate the lives of the owners and other inhabitants, tenants, maids, children of the buildings in the downtown area. By reconstructing the everyday routines of the inhabitants, their communication, and in general, their lifestyle as precisely as the archival sources allow, a better understanding of the people of the past is gained. By tracing individual life stories and practices, we can connect them to local identity building and shaping, and also its connection to more universal discourses such as value systems, religion, the Enlightenment, or nationalism. The historical past is embedded in urban spaces and buildings that connect contemporaries to their ancestors. Downtown Kőszeg provides an authentic baroque environment that is unique in Hungary and an important element of the cultural heritage of the city that has gone through major changes during the past three decades. (talkinghouses europe.com)

The research activity related to Kőszeg's sense of place, genius loci has been published in order to let the local community as well as interested people to acknowledge the human perspective of history and the innovation of earlier times. The first two books in *Talking House series* deal with the 'Stories of Kőszeg' (Mátay, 2019) and 'Festetics Mystery' (Poczei, 2019). The publication is ongoing, the second book of 'Stories of Kőszeg' will be published in the near future as well as a book 'Heredité Before Mendel: Festetics and the Question of Sheep's Wool in Central Europe' is in progress, too.

#### **4.3. Book Valley – an innovative rural development project**

The five small villages of Nivegy Valley (with a population of less than one thousand people), between Zánka and Nagyvázsony is a home of vineyards, natural beauty, silence, spirituality, and slow tourism.

After fertilizing Veszprém city's application to be the Cultural Capital of Europe (ECC) in 2023 with the idea to extend the geographical scope of the activity with the whole Balaton Area, iASK had the opportunity to provide recommendations for local/rural culture-building projects. Since one of the authors (Z. Karvalics, 2019) has just published a paper on the possibilities of created attractions (with a detailed presentation of the origins and gripping story of the international Book Village projects), we suggested to establish the first Hungarian Book Village in the proposed activity area.

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<sup>2</sup> Talking Houses les points de mémoire. Available at: <http://talkinghouses europe.com/en/home/> (Accessed: 10 September 2021).

Luckily, people of Nivegy immediately fell in love with the idea, the foundation of Book Valley and they easily imagined putting the book village development at the “center” of their future building strategy: i.e., forming thematic book lodges from rest-houses, situating open air small book cabinets everywhere, making and exhibiting book sculptures, organizing book art camps, providing roundtables, literary salons and festivals – to dream of a book sanctuary, a home of book culture, without disturbing the residents by armies of tourists.

The Book Valley is a “Blue Pond” – like innovation: a witty application of the well-known Blue Ocean strategy. Blue Ocean innovations are radically new fields of business or social activities, where there are no rivals, thanks to their pioneering nature. Blue Pond is a simple re-creation of a Blue Ocean project in a new environment, on a smaller “lake”, where the advantage of making the first steps to realize the local version of an internationally successful project is a key to catching promising strategic directions.

Blue Ponds projects can encompass very special and original features. In the Book Valley, it is the *transformation of tourism into community building*. Since the hosts provide special thematic collections of books as main attractions, their guests come from the same interest groups. Finally, it is a way to insert high culture into the everyday life of a small rural community.

## 5. CONCLUSION

It is time to pay attention to the fact that the need for social innovation is knocking on our doors since societal challenges are on the table and for solutions we need co-operation, co-production, and the involvement of the local environment and stakeholders.

“Think globally, act locally”, the slogan perfectly fits to contemporary developmental goals. Focusing on our local environment and stakeholders, and taking small but important steps that lead to social impact in fields full of disadvantages and exclusion add up reaching a critical mass that lead to changes first close to the intervention points then expanding to the community, state and regional levels in concentric circles like when a stone is thrown into a body of water. We do not have the resources for unsustainable attempts that is why only conscious, determined, coordinated steps are acceptable in this process.

The spirit of KRAFT and its insistence on cohesive and coherent interdisciplinarity is an excellent methodology and practice to strengthen the social metainnovation capacity of a region. Familiarity with the latest improvements and innovations, performed internationally, generates renewed possibilities for the creation of more and new Blue Pond-like strategic projects.

The presence of corporate and individual social responsibility can enhance social innovation developments and contribute to the public good with governmental support.

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