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**Beyond organizations: Responsible value creation and participation in
common platforms**

Doctoral Dissertation

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1. INTRODUCTION

My dissertation is based on a five year long journey that started with the exploration of three main interrelated areas of interest: the expansion of democratic, and especially direct democratic practices in society and organizations (Child, 2021), the recentring of economic activities around values based on human wellbeing (Ben Letaifa & Reynoso, 2015) and the organizational challenges of enacting the former two in an all-around responsible manner (Laasch et al., 2019). Initial research and peer discussions around these concepts revealed the need for a more focused understanding of the depth of these concepts, as most findings and feedback centered around the wideness of the research direction as well as the low applicability of these concepts from such a high level of abstraction. It was, however, in my opinion, a precise combination of them and a specific interpretation beyond them, which I believed to hold value.

Despite the topic only growing in complexity, among the many discovered competing scientific approaches and existing applications, core concepts and primary underpinning mechanisms have been identified that can be applied to organizational development efforts or social programs. What is presented as a result below is a multi-level analysis of these concepts that serve the widespread adoption and scaling of the three principles above. Much of the current discourse surrounding related topics and disciplines are connected to current application areas that can sound limiting in scope or a wider sense of profitability, like sustainability, or social integration or ones that are charged, like politics. However, wider conceptualizations propose more transformative effects that more deeply develop existing principles on multiple levels of societal organizing.

The concept of responsibility as both a technical and philosophical concept is presented as an underlying logic that when applied correctly, could alleviate many current challenges of organizations as well as the societal needs they aim to serve. The title “Beyond organizations” reflects this mentality as responsibility is presented as a situated concept that needs to be flexibly examined in any given case. Currently, responsibilities are distributed unevenly with many environmental and social issues being left unattended in absence of people responsible for dealing with them. The underlying assumption is that current factors of institutional inertia can be attributed to responsibilities derived from organizational priorities divorced from tangible, socially constructed responsibilities. What is observed throughout my research is a general willingness and motivation to enact change on the side of individuals. A disconnect is

occurring when responsibilities cross organizational barriers leading to simultaneous states of large individual resource dedications and collective resource constraints around actual responsibilities.

In my dissertation, I am detailing factors of a model of organizing that aims at bridging the gap between institutional scales. By thinking of the wider ecosystem level organizational frameworks in society as being made up of the individual communities and members contributions and needs at any given time, and rigorously constructing it around this idea, I believe that institutional design choices can guide individual pro-social participation patterns as well. One prerequisite being that the model needs to provide realistic options to reproduce this logic at all institutional scales, simultaneously present, meaning that it can be flexibly accessible independent of an organization's scale and role. This means that while normally, scale limits access to higher resources, in this model, community strength, similarly to financial assets, can be leveraged directly for access. Based on this conceptualization and the initial themes of the dissertation, the detailed research plan and research questions are presented below.

1.1. RESEARCH PLAN

In this section I am first presenting an overview of my research as interpreted through the final framework created by the synthesis of the articles included in the dissertation for the sake of clarity.

The central question of my research is the following:

How does responsible management facilitate participation in common platforms?

Additionally, integrating further relevant theoretical streams described later, I have formulated sub-questions which, although undoubtedly do not cover all relevant aspects of the field, represent, based on my early investigations, the bottlenecks of an extremely broad process. The table below presents these research questions, displaying the studied institutional levels, primary subjects of research, related initial core concepts as well as how these relate to each other and the articles included in the dissertation.

How does responsible management facilitate participation in common platforms?							
Institutional level	Core research questions	Subjects of research	Core concepts	Articles			
				1	2	3	4
Macro	How do institutional design choices influence participation in ecosystem collaborations?	Ecosystems	Institutional Design				
			Participatory Governance				
		Commons	Resource Pooling				
Meso	How can organizational factors realign value propositions with stakeholder needs?	Platforms	Value Co-creation				
			Facilitation				
		Communities	Meaning-making				
			Social Innovation				
Micro		Social Enterprises	Value Propositions				
			Responsible Management				
Individual	How does leadership mediate responsible organizational transformation processes?		Participants	Participation			

Table I. Research plan framework. Source: Own edit.

Both the subjects of research and the core concepts were selected as the minimal elements that my research indicates as necessary to be present in the models described later to result in systems that fit the introductory principles. Subjects are ordered both according to institutional levels as well as their perceived complexity. Core concepts are further displayed in a way that indicates the ideal organizational structures in which they should be interpreted and – as processes – deployed.

Participants (Child, 2021) represent any individual regardless of their position and are interpreted as the most tangible elements that responsibility should be based on. Social enterprises represent the current market logics as instrumental organizations translating needs into value propositions through social innovation across communities (Tung & Jordann, 2017). Communities are shown to be unique, more organic structures capable of providing safe social spaces for the articulation of these needs through a process of meaning-making that mediates individual and collective perspectives. Although not directly addressed in theory, they appear organically in each article included.

Serving as more independent instrumental frames, platforms facilitate the connection of several smaller organizations into co-creation frames (Temmerman et al., 2021). Through them, resources can be pooled to create shared commons (Berkes & Davidson-Hunt, 2009) that can be accessed by all participants through rules developed under participatory processes that are operated across wider ecosystem level institutional arrangements that can be further reproduced down the ladder.

The articles included in the dissertation focus on providing insight on all levels of organizing, individually and as parts of a larger picture in the development of social initiatives, with certain overlaps between topics. Their core concepts constitute parts of a larger process that can be interpreted from individual perspectives, with each article providing general practical insight into these sub-processes, while all articles aim to communicate the common transformative elements of the proposed model. The articles are the following, in the order presented in Table I.:

1. Responsible organizational transformation: social and systemic challenges, and the role of foresight
2. Open value creation for the common good: a comprehensive exploration of social innovation in the context of social enterprises
3. Platforms of commons: Testing value propositions of digital social innovation platforms through participatory design
4. Common values, responsible decisions: Opportunities for civil society in participation-based institutionalization

The introductory article was initially prepared together with my supervisor, Judit Gáspár (PhD), based on a single case, with another adding further context after a long time, eventually forming a coherent study in personal leadership perspectives of responsible organizational transformations. This article presents the most personal perspectives which first and foremost serve to explore the individual and humanistic approaches to management. The aim was to identify potential points of failure in management that can only be revealed through deeper exploration of lived experiences and contextual and cultural details. The central limitations to organizational transformation and increasing responsibilities are also explored, connecting the lived experiences to institutional perspectives.

Article two represents the first attempt at drawing up the transdisciplinary conceptual model of the dissertation. Social innovation is adopted as a framework that most generally fits the processual approaches of my research goals. It also provides a specific perspective related to

value creation, while being more generally applicable independent of context. The study includes two organizations engaged in ecosystem level social innovation, highlighting real examples of the studied conceptual cornerstones of the dissertation. Best practices and identified prerequisite and limiting factors are presented through expert interviews and field observations. A generalized model of social innovation is presented, which enables further operationalization of the wider ecosystem model. The study has also been published in the *Social Enterprise Journal* as a co-authored study (Nagy & Krátki, 2024).

Article three is a direct attempt at simultaneously operationalizing and testing the conceptual model drawn up for social enterprises and social innovation activities. The study includes a participatory design scenario where organizations and experts were invited to co-design the exact details of an organizational ecosystem based on the conceptual model presented in the second article. The model is also extended by applying it in a more complex institutional framework described by elements of platforms as well as the commons. This process led to results that both describe the principles of such a system as well as the practical steps and challenges of forming such wide collaborative platforms.

Article four is a summary of the conceptual findings of research included in my dissertation, refocusing on responsible management and the concept of responsibility and its formulation as an underpinning factor of the wider model. Through reflections on civil society organizations' role in facilitating collaborative practices, the article draws up a unifying framework integrating institutional and community factors into a process that aids the interpretation of the wider model of the dissertation.

Based on the general framework of the dissertation, I will present a case for several theses that can be summarized shortly in the following way:

Responsible facilitation of participation in common organizational platforms employs a three-layer social and digital architecture: 1. individual capacity-building tools 2. community decision-making interfaces, and 3. ecosystem-level impact accounting systems - maintaining open standards for interoperability.

1.2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

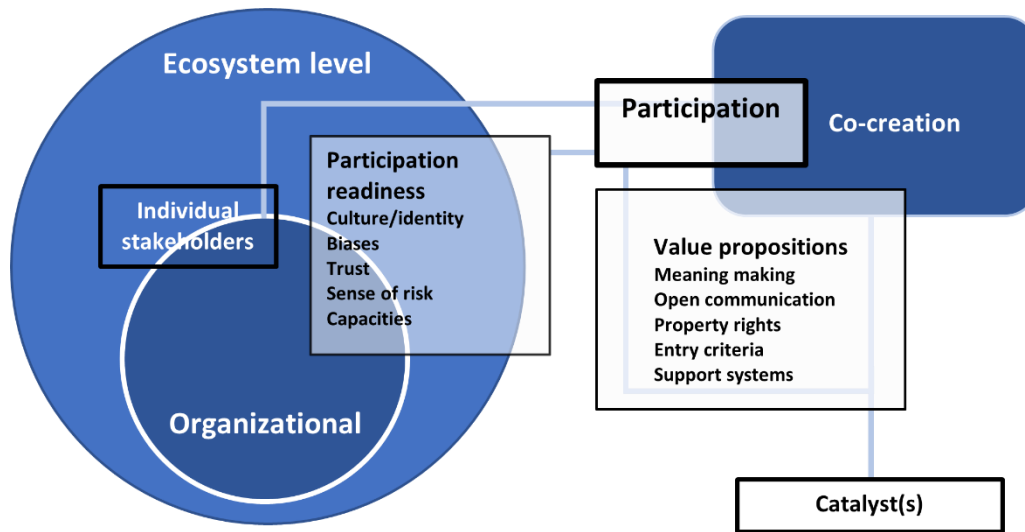


Figure I. Initial research model. Source: Own edit.

The initial research process based on grounded theory resulted in a framework of core constructs that helped outline further focus areas as well as the unique methodological approaches required for the study of subconstructs.

The starting point for my approach was the catalyst actor. Although the catalyst itself, which, broadly understood, seeks to become the engine of change, is not an element derived from the theory, the theory helps to situate it in relation to the other constructs. At the other end of the model, I have considered ecosystems, with their associated organizations and individuals. The reason for this choice is symbolic, in addition to fitting the service dominant logic that appeared earlier. The concept of ecosystems as a dynamic, complex natural world with mutual life-supporting capacities for its parts and the wider ecosystem informs my thinking beyond its clear environmental sustainability connotations.

The inclusion of the spaces between the catalyst and the ecosystem was necessary in order to delineate the field of study in a given cross-sectional sampling, which would otherwise be a moving target in the longer term based on the organizational principles laid out. Described in terms of its nature, these spaces were initially characterized by co-creation, which in many respects is only one of the possible conceptualizations, as related network or platform concepts also emerged. However, initially, due to its synergies with ecosystem logic and its broad literature background, I found the broader co-creation framework more suitable to support my thinking at this stage of the research. Its location in the model reflects both the possibility of

catalysts from outside the ecosystem and the concept of an 'invitation to play' (Frow et al., 2014) in ecosystem logic. In this sense, in the absence of concrete agreements on the scope of shared activities, it is not possible to determine whether it is indeed understood within the ecosystem under study, its position being generally understood within external spaces in-between organizations.

The central cohesive element of the model is the concept of participation, which represents the decision points and processes for cooperation between stakeholders. I also considered it important to include what I call the concept of participation readiness, which represents the preconditions that ecosystem actors face, directly influencing their processes and willingness to participate. In addition, from the catalyst side, I have highlighted the value propositions, which in this context also partially appear outside the co-creation spaces, acting through the filter of participation. The significance of these is that catalyzing does not in itself presuppose the emergence of co-creation, up to which point processes can only pass through the filter of participation. Importantly, the value propositions in the model come from the catalyst and are not the expected outcomes of co-creation, but promises to make it work. I make this distinction because the focus of my investigation is primarily on the factors of making it work, rather than the returns to participation.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. RESEARCH CONTEXT: CORE CONCEPTS AND INITIAL CASES

In my article-based dissertation, I explore a complex conceptualization of responsible management (Laasch et al., 2019), understood within a transdisciplinary theoretical framework, the dynamics of emergent ecosystem level service collaborations (Ben Letaifa & Reynoso, 2015) and the influencing factors of organizational participation. I derive the relevance of my research primarily from the complexity of today's societal challenges. Often referred to as grand challenges (George et al., 2016), various social crises and climate change can only be tackled through broad societal participation (Marques & Mintzberg, 2015) of a wide range of stakeholders from different backgrounds and sectors.

Actors in local social development describe this particularly well. When we talk about structural social deficits, it is not enough to focus on a single point of intervention, a series of interventions are needed in parallel, with certain prerequisite resources, infrastructure and knowledge that cannot all be maintained individually. However, even with sufficient collective resources, it is not easy to build consensus around the necessary interventions, and maintaining partnerships requires resources and attention. It is my basic assumption that a significant number of organizations could realize added value if the conditions were in place to create value together with their stakeholders. To this end, my research aims to explore what conditions and institutional activities are necessary for individual actors to realize these values. To explain the choices behind the diverging theoretical approaches, some initial studied cases are briefly presented below.

Despite the many-faceted nature of the research, the first goal of it was aiding social inclusion efforts, primarily in materially deprived regions, through civil society organizations. These organizations mostly acted as the scaffolding of emerging communities, maintained through grants, donations, volunteer work and increasingly, their own market income. They engaged institutions, founded enterprises and ultimately evolved into informal institutions of their own either locally or within their communities of practice. Crucially, these resource starved organizations shifted to accommodate local needs dynamically within the strict confines of their mostly human resources available locally. Keeping them financially viable while truly engaging and empowering locals with perhaps less, then ideal skillsets is an ongoing challenge. Social services could be provided in simpler ways, but achieving lasting impact usually included committed long-term effort of many stakeholders just to achieve complex outcomes

for single individuals. Work integration in particular required that the organizations also align operations to be compatible with the capabilities of those involved, often to the detriment of service quality. This paradox widened the research scope to the growing field of social enterprises. The systemically connected and community related nature of the described civil initiatives best fit the dual – market and social - purpose characteristics of social enterprises (Defourny & Nyssens, 2014).

Early research in this field revealed recurring challenges across various contexts, from grassroots initiatives to established organizations. Attempts at innovation often faltered due to limited employee motivation and capacity, ultimately requiring costly external support and leading to stakeholder distrust. Success frequently hinged on a few committed leaders, whose continuous personal sacrifices sometimes eroded collective trust as they became solely self-reliant.

Conversely, systemic approaches such as resource-sharing networks made valuable tools available to civil society groups, though access barriers and rigid, pre-set funding criteria often forced organizations to compromise their original missions. Many remained cautious of large-scale institutional collaborations, finding previous experiences with centralization or “free riding” to have drained resources and diluted community purpose.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the importance of localized, community-driven solutions (Child, 2021). New initiatives, like community-funded restaurants and farming cooperatives, flourished briefly but struggled to scale against larger competitors.

Two cases in particular sparked scientific interest in scaling such models. First, a Hungarian blogger’s platform connected validated local businesses with social causes via subscriptions, creating mutual benefits with minimal funds exchanged; an influential concept proposing new digital mechanisms for collective action. The second case somewhat complemented the first as its limitations could be in the flexibility in the management of funds. Buterin et al. (2018) presented a model for ideal philanthropic matching funds provision. A quadratic voting mechanism is employed to distribute funds non-linearly proportionately to the amounts people contribute to certain causes, redistributing some funds to causes supported by more people, leading to more social choices. While the idea and its applicability to philanthropy, public funding and open ecosystems are promising, not many great applications exist as of yet.

In all these cases, what is clear is that value is created by actors in-between them, around certain causes or communities by way of a shared recognition of interdependence. They act like an organizational ecosystem (Ben Letaifa & Reynoso, 2015), not just emergently, but through conscious choices. And these choices also rely on the choices of others, with trusted individuals

and platforms mediating between them. These choices are collectively referred to going forward as participation (Aronson & LaFont, 2022). The concept of participation as a central transdisciplinarily applicable construct emerged as these choices needed to be reframed to fit not only strictly economic, but also more complex organizational and political contexts.

2.2. RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT

Responsible management served as an introductory theoretical approach to unraveling deeper aspects of what could be interpreted from this perspective as widespread transformation processes. This approach aided the identification of complementary individual influencing factors behind transdisciplinary transformation, the characteristic challenge of a widespread responsible transition. It also set general organizing principles as well as practical expectations and toolkits to be integrated into the larger scale model later discussed.

In mapping the field, the framework of Laasch et al. (2019) builds responsibility around a transdisciplinary integration of ethics, sustainability and stakeholder approaches. The subject of study can range from the individual manager to society as a whole, and it generally addresses alternative organisational structures (Furnari, 2014; Tracey et al., 2011), organisational learning and innovation processes (Anlesinya & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2020; Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015), and everyday practices (Laasch et al., 2019; Laasch, Suddaby, et al., 2020; Willness et al., 2020).

Responsibility as a general concept can be grasped as commitments toward long-term sustaining of the well-being of certain objects identified as stakeholders. In light of modern technological advancements and their interrelated impacts, ethical reconceptualizations interpret these objects as present or future human or environmental stakeholders that human activities should take proactive care to maintain (Jonas, 1984). From a more holistic perspective, responsibility could focus on conceptualizing these elements as parts of a larger whole, like a complex organism on a planetary scale, where their interactions affect each other either directly or indirectly by influencing the well-being of the whole through feedback effects (Lovelock, 1979). Beyond individual responsible action, there are calls for broader paradigmatic transitions in how we organize our societies. Management itself is recontextualized from a short-term, firm-centric view to a new stakeholder theory that focuses organizational activities around human and environmental wellbeing goals. Across local, national and global levels, these goals should be identified within finite material boundaries, the basis of assessing priorities and feedback (Shrivastava et al., 2019).

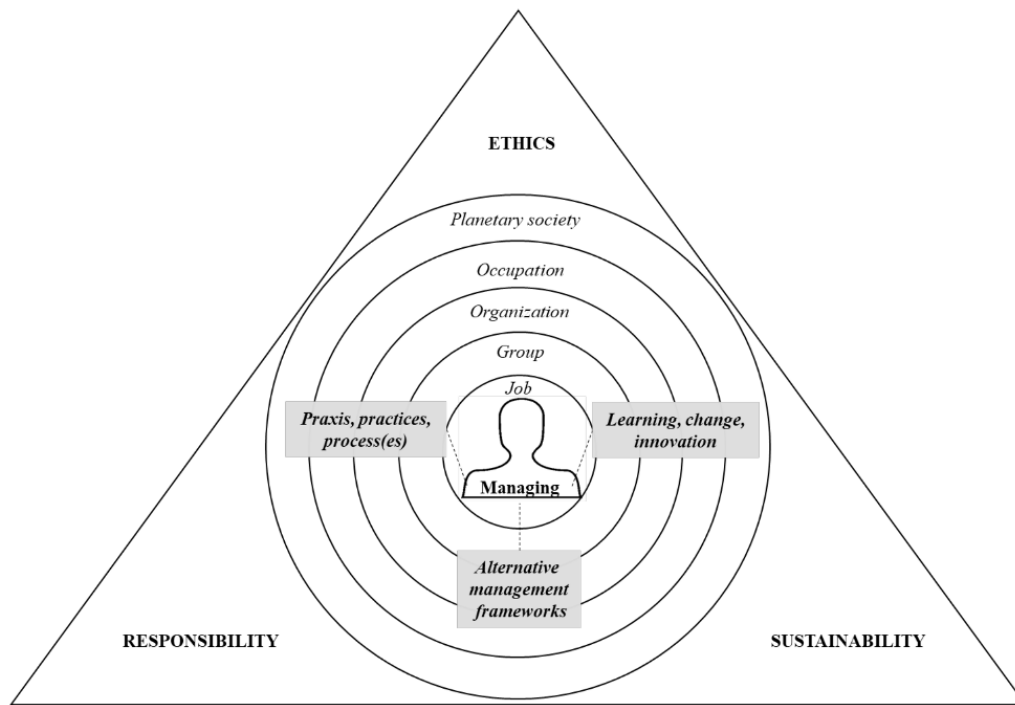


Figure II. Map of responsible management, Source: Laasch, Suddaby and Jamali, 2019 p. 7.

This complexity also reflects the collaborative focus of my dissertation, as the integration of so many disparate factors inevitably leads to conflict, or at least clashes between divergent goals. For responsible management, mediation of these conflicts is a central element. For example, based on early exploratory interviews, the management of the added responsibilities generated, the dilemmas arising from the differences between the different managerial role interpretations (Laasch et al., 2020a) such as CSR manager, humanistic manager or institutional manager, can emerge as a fundamental conflict. At a higher level of abstraction, responsible management needs to find solutions mainly along different institutional logics, such as market and social, or participatory and hierarchical (Pache & Santos, 2013; Radoynovska et al., 2019; Smith & Besharov, 2019), or even along different sustainability goals (Van der Byl et al., 2020).

Even at the most basic level, it is necessary to balance the existing mission and operational logic of the organisation or network with the directions supported by stakeholders in order to achieve institutional integrity (Radoynovska et al., 2019; Selznick, 1957), while the gap between external and internal actors, between short- and long-term thinking also needs to be filled (Carollo & Guerci, 2018). Responsible management sees these paradoxes as tensions to be resolved, not as obstacles (Besharov & Khurana, 2000; Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Raisch et al., 2018). By exploiting them, the individual perspectives of participants can be explored,

collaborations can be given a common framework of understanding, and this can help avoid misunderstandings and personal distances in joint work, increasing engagement (Furnari, 2014; Hahn et al., 2018; Sundaramurthy & Lewis, 2003; van Bommel, 2018).

Furthermore, responsible management can be understood from different perspectives and at different levels. The object of study can be the individual - what Laasch (2018) describes as the new dominant focus of the literature - an organisation, a community, or a network, a broad environment. Understanding these levels is in itself essential for a complex interpretation of the field, as embedded practices are an important horizontal element of the field (Laasch et al., 2020b).

Touching on each level of inquiry, individual transformation may emerge as a prerequisite, most notably through moral reflection (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015) or organizational learning (Raisch et al., 2018). At the group level, the focus is on the patterns of individual practices observed in microinteractional settings (Laasch, et al., 2020c; Pache & Santos, 2013; Raisch et al., 2018). For macro-level studies, the exploitation of particular synergies (Diaz Gonzalez & Dentchev, 2021), more broadly the responsibility that arises in the extension of the scope of organisational activities may arise, the fulfilment of which may lead to legitimacy, as well as the leadership of initiatives with the environment (van Tulder & van Mil, 2020).

These kinds of relationships naturally go beyond the traditional scope of the organisational leader's activities, connecting to and shaping networks or ecosystems. In addition to shared social values, these relationships can provide organizations with resources, transformative force behind the responsibilities towards others, goals, contextual knowledge, and legitimacy (Ben Letaifa & Reynoso, 2015; Cottafava & Corazza, 2021; de Moor, 2015; Diaz Gonzalez & Dentchev, 2021; Eiselein & Dentchev, 2020; Temmerman et al., 2021).

The exact role of the leader comes up again in this context. Although the conflicting ideas presented earlier focus on some aspects of responsible management, the role of the leader is not yet clear. First of all, it is important to underline that leadership appears in the literature as a borderline area of management, with different perspectives on it (Gomes & Marques, 2019). In Besharov and Khurana's (2000: p 1) formulation, organizations are "technical entities pursuing economic goals and value-laden entities pursuing non-economic goals arising from their members and their role in society." Carollo and Guerci (2018) further identify two similar points of conflict, which appear alongside the economic and other interests described above, between external and internal actors, and between short- and long-term thinking.

Selznick (1957) redefined the leadership role along the lines of a shift from "administrative management to institutional leadership" (Selznick, 1957, p. 4), describing four central tasks:

(1) "defining the institutional mission and role"; (2) "embodying the institutional purpose"; (3) "maintaining institutional integrity"; and (4) "resolving internal conflicts". Building on this, Besharov and Khurana (2000) divide the role of leadership into technical, political and cultural categories. Radoynovska et al. (2019), in the context of responsible management, decompose the technical parts of leadership along this division, deriving it from the productive activities of organizations. These are mostly the development of novel business models and value propositions, such as those for the Bottom of the Pyramid (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004b), ones emphasizing regenerative business models for resource preservation or de-growth economic models against over-consumption.

As responsibility by itself can hardly be an organizational goal, the development of organizational directions, and vision, particularly through participatory methods, is a key element in the responsibility paradigm (Gomes & Marques, 2019). In addition, the role of the institutional entrepreneur is worth mentioning, one who works on the development of new organizational forms, structures and business models (Tracey et al., 2011; Url et al., 2002), or even through exploring the composition of working groups, the configuration of their members, or highlighting the most functional settings (Furnari, 2014; Kreye & Perunovic, 2020).

2.3. ECOSYSTEM AND SERVICE THEORY

Following the individual focused conceptualizations of responsible management, further organizational perspectives were explored through the ecosystem conceptualization of social processes.

In-between co-creation and the service-dominant logic of marketing in particular, the service ecosystem approach has emerged and has been increasingly emphasized in recent years. Ben Letaifa and Reynoso (2015) defined ecosystems as networks or communities that bring together complementary resources to co-create value. Vargo & Lusch (2016) gave a more complex definition as "a relatively self-contained, self-adjusting system of resource-integrating actors connected by shared institutional arrangements and mutual value creation through service exchange". While Moore (1999) originally placed great emphasis on the role of leadership within the ecosystem, there has now been a shift towards understanding individual interactions in line with the service dominant logic (Letaifa, 2014; Vargo et al., 2017).

In this field, the literature identifies several overlapping concepts, among which the service dominant logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and co-creation have emerged (Prahalad &

Ramaswamy, 2004b). Vargo & Lusch (2004) describe a move away from the previous logic based on the exchange of goods, characterized by an emphasis on intangible resources, co-creation and relationships between different actors, with services at the centre.

The notion of co-creation (Kambil et al., 1996) was first formulated by restructuring value propositions with consumers at the centre. It was later described by (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a) as the creation of value by the consumer and the company, where consumers shape the experience of the service in context. They then described the main activities associated with co-creation around these interactions, further emphasizing the shift from organization-centricity to consumer-centricity and naming the building blocks of co-creation interactions as accessibility, communication of risks, transparency, and dialogue. As a result of the debates on the limits of a broad understanding of co-creation, I think it is also important to highlight the integrative model of (Oertzen et al., 2018). The model captures the diversity of how co-creation is manifested in practice in the process of services, on the one hand, and the preconditions and consequences at the level of the individual that can be of value to the stakeholders involved, on the other. Voorberg et al. (2015) highlight the role of goals, influencing factors and outcomes in the context of co-creation, as well as the individual cultural and socialization embeddedness and 'participatory readiness' of the target groups as preconditions.

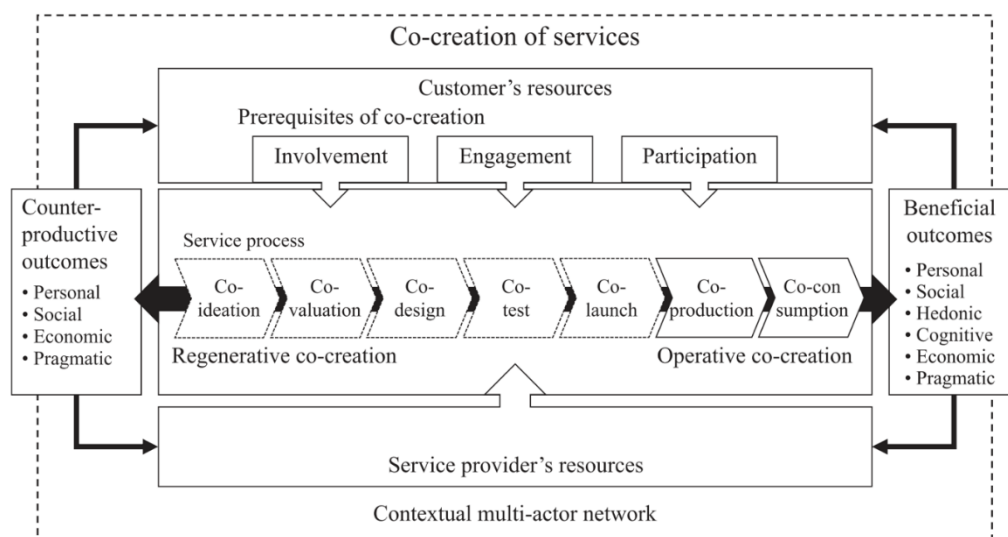


Figure III. Integrative framework of co-creation services, Source: Oertzen et al., 2018 p. 667

Within the broad literature on co-creation, there are diverging views on the nexus of participation and the responsibility for its realization. On the one hand, the control of the value-creating role of co-creation may appear in the intersection of the provider and the beneficiaries

as equal parties (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). On the other hand, the role of the provider as facilitator of co-creation may be highlighted (Grönroos, 2011; Voorberg et al., 2015). This role should be present if only because in some interpretations the value gained can be inferred primarily through the beneficiary's experience (Skålén et al., 2015), which requires a prominent actor to assess.

In the responsible paradigm, the practical responsibilities that ecosystem management can have that can influence participation have not yet been explored. The difficulties and good practices in the practical application of ecosystem logic have been described by Letaifa (2014), highlighting the role of value creation and value capture. In his case study, Fuglsang (2008) highlighted the building of local support, demand assessment, incentives for participation, and the promotion of entrepreneurship in the related process of strategic reflexivity.

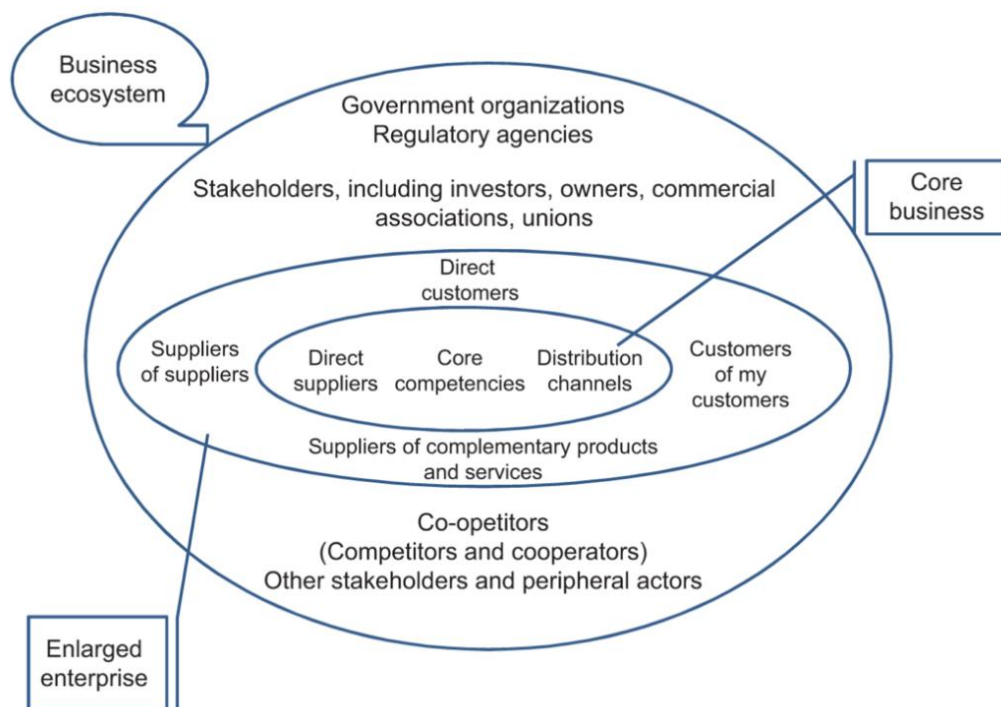


Figure IV.: The transition from supply chains to ecosystems, Source: Letaifa, 2014 based on Moore 1996 p. 27

As several researchers have pointed out in the context of SDL, (Merz et al., 2009; Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Wieland et al., 2012)(Vargo, 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2011; Wieland et al, 2012), in interactions understood in ecosystems, the traditional provider-consumer role is not applicable, as the consumer becomes part of the value chain's productive processes even with minimal contact (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a). In Maglio & Spohrer (2008) description of

service systems as ecosystems, the subsystems are all connected by value propositions, closing at the level of the individual. In the case of the shortcomings of the managerially supported accountability frameworks under consideration, the question arises: if we can equate this operation with ecosystem logic, what value propositions might the catalyzing or coordinating actor of the system itself have and how does it relate to its environment?

The factors that are considered as value propositions for beneficiaries could be described in many ways, including from the perspective of the value derived from services (Diaz Gonzalez & Dentchev, 2021), or from the role they play in initiating processes and system design (Vink et al., 2021). Frow et al. (2014: p 14) describe value propositions as “a dynamic and adjusting mechanism for negotiating how resources are shared within a service ecosystem”. In my work, I consider the details of this negotiation process as the initial value proposition of the facilitating actor, which represents the only possible promise, a commitment to value creation. Frow et al (2014) organize the elements of value propositions through three pairs of metaphors that follow the following logic:

- Avoidance of promises with an emphasis on offers in order to reach a bilateral agreement
- Reciprocity of resource sharing and mutual value proposition harmonization
- Resource sharing and stakeholder roles can be flexible in ecosystems along defined pathways towards common goals

Skålén et al. (2015) have developed a broad model that illustrates the different functions and roles associated with value propositions. They created three main categories of ten such functions, which they labelled service, representation and organization and management.

2.4. PARTICIPATION

The co-creation approach further complemented the core research goal of developing democratic organizational practices. Participation emerged as a transdisciplinary construct at the intersection of organizational, marketing and political sciences. In this section, focus is on organizational participation in particular. Participation is a useful construct because it reframes organizational elements as personal choices of participation. As such, it also serves as a layer of transversal factors that aim at cascading development effects in the broader responsible ecosystem agenda.

I have distinguished three main strands in the understanding of participation that have emerged in relation to it from the beginning. The first one applies the concept in its literal sense, focusing

on the joining of individual workers, and later other stakeholders, to an organization or initiative, on the factors that affect their very presence (Fenwick & Cieri, 2004; Hagburg, 1966). This interpretation may be over-simplistic in many respects, but I consider its inclusion important since the binary choice of participation is the most basic precondition for any deeper attachment and activity. Moreover, it is relevant to my research as the achievement of this step is a critical point and a subject of extensive discourse in inter-organisational initiatives to date (Antwi-Boasiako, 2019; Fenwick & Cieri, 2004; Grewal et al., 2001; Huang & Zhang, 2016; Medappa & Srivastava, 2020; Wiener et al., 2018).

The second interpretation focuses on the quality of employee and stakeholder participation. This type of approach links the concept to factors such as job engagement, satisfaction, performance, identification, proactiveness, innovativeness, organizational citizenship, or passion (Fachrudin & Sholihin, 2021; Kees Looise et al., 2011; Knezović & Smajić, 2022; Saraf et al., 2022; Singh & Mohanty, 2011; Uribetxebarria et al., 2021; Vander Elst et al., 2010; Von Krogh et al., 2003; Wickramasinghe & Wickramasinghe, 2012).

Finally, the third, most prevalent, traditional understanding of participation deals with engagement and involvement in organisational decision-making processes. This field most commonly examines organizational elements such as involvement in general operational or strategic decisions (Knezović & Smajić, 2022; Wickramasinghe & Wickramasinghe, 2012), in budgetary decisions (Fachrudin & Sholihin, 2021; Jatmiko et al., 2020; Oross & Kiss, 2021) or involvement in organizational change and learning processes (Jurburg et al., 2019; Purwaningrum et al., 2020). Although I have not found a similar integrative model so far, these three types of approaches can form a continuum in my interpretation, ranging from 'presence' based participation to a democratizing level of conceptualization.

It should also be stressed that participation can have an impact on the workers themselves, as well as on the organisations concerned. This can be manifested in more tangible ways, such as an increase in performance, or more complexly even in an increase in innovativeness (Feller et al., 2009; Füller et al., 2009; Jatmiko et al., 2020; Kees Looise et al., 2011; Knockaert et al., 2019; Uribetxebarria et al., 2021).

The first important elements to consider are quality of communication and the ease of accessing information, which helps to overcome uncertain situations and generally enables participants to use their abilities without barriers (Atouba & Us, 2022; Quental & Gouveia, 2021; Vander Elst et al., 2010). A specific proactive role is to maintain appropriate conditions, such as work-life balance, and to avoid burnout and deterioration of well-being, which also emphasizes the need to complement democratic forms of participation (Atouba & Us, 2022; Uribetxebarria et

al., 2021). I include in a separate category other supportive organizational elements and functions, as well as the supportive culture itself (Purwaningrum et al., 2020; Saraf et al., 2022; Wickramasinghe & Wickramasinghe, 2012).

From the perspective of the broader research, it is essential to address the issue of participation between organizations. It can be seen that in such contexts different instruments and dynamics emerge, for example, in the case of Finnish innovation ecosystems, where organisational mergers, learning and the involvement of some ecosystem actors in boards of directors led to higher production surpluses (Knockaert et al., 2019). In terms of motivations and influencing factors, we can also speak of different types, in many respects similar to individual perspectives, such as the role of ideology, mission compatibility, recognition, or the possibility to raise funds (Antwi-Boasiako, 2019). More specific factors are long-term organisational sustainability, openness, inalienability and ownership of the values created, popularity, or harmonisation with funders in the case of non-profits (Cornwall, 2008; Medappa & Srivastava, 2020).

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Although not in all cases and research phases, the specific research activities outlined in my research design are based on grounded theory (B. Glaser & Strauss, 2017) as the most broadly representative research approach. The aim of grounded theory, as originally defined by Glaser and Strauss (2017: 2), is "the discovery of theories from data systematically collected from social science research". (Charmaz, 2014) has more recently nuanced the definition as methods that form a collection of systematic yet flexible frameworks. At the level of data collection, it is important to note that grounded theory builds on continuous, iterative sampling with initial and focused coding, rather than a one-off exercise, as data enables the synthesizing of more and more information (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), becoming information and knowledge. At the beginning of my research, different theoretical constructs were in synergy with my research topic, but I did not find complete congruence, so the examination of tangible elements and theory building opened up as a way to explore. Throughout the investigations, refined theoretical frameworks emerged, which influenced the relationship of each empirical construct to the other. My original research design included, among other things, an analysis of the comparative advantages of different organizational structures in the context of open collaboration, but the early sampling did not reflect this aspect at all, but rather focused on the treatment of structures, and the focus shifted over time from structures to processes as the emphasis on human factors increased.

Another important element of the framework is its relationship to theories in the literature. From multi-level, iterative coding, the researcher can create new codes using theories and constructs found in the parallel literature. From these, theoretical models can be developed, inferred from the transformation of relational elements found in the literature into empirical elements (Holton, 2010). Since grounded theory takes a predominantly abductive approach, it is important to be aware that any application of a theoretical framework used to describe phenomena can be revised in the light of new information discovered until a coherent, theoretically saturated version is reached (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2025; B. G. Glaser, 2001). In light of this, my literary background provides not fixed conceptual structures but categorization possibilities for divergent interpretations throughout most of the process. In doing so, they also provide support for the description of phenomena and the possibility of connecting to existing discourses. Based on Starks and Trinidad's (2007) framework, the

emphasis on the purpose of theory building, observation in different contexts, or the emphasis on a coding-based analytical methodology also reinforce the purpose of grounded theory, in line with the research priorities.

It is important to underline that within grounded theory we can distinguish different trends that define the research toolbox. In general, three types of grounded theory can be distinguished: classical, interpretivist and constructivist (Sebastian, 2019). Sebastian (2019) provides a transparent framework for understanding the differences between the methodological trends. By adapting these frameworks to the aims of my research, it can be seen that mainly the interpretative and the constructivist approaches are close to my methodology. In contrast to the classical approach, this presupposes an active research approach that is interpretive and co-constructive with the subjects. As I explained earlier, I have chosen a middle ground in terms of attachment to the existing literature, in which the literature has a role in the data collection, can influence it, but cannot dominate the setting of directions. In terms of the interview guides formed from the research questions, it was a priority to allow existing ideas to resonate with emergent ones. This was best expressed as a means of clarification during the data collection process, as a means of direct feedback from the subjects, primarily in a more vague form that focused rather than constrained responses. I have then focused on maximizing flexibility in the coding process, which would be best described by a constructivist approach. However, in cases where I was examining more complex contexts, the three levels of the coding process, as in the interpretative approach, was more typical. Finally, it is important to emphasize that the research that forms part of this dissertation does not aim at a perfect verification of the results, and this may draw the sharpest line between the two approaches, as this is not expected in the constructivist approach, but is the case for the interpretivist approach, which is also more suitable for this purpose due to its more systematic methods.

The framework of grounded theory is suitable for the study of living processes and individual perspectives, such as those that occur in the context of organisational change or collaborative problem solving (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014), thus providing a suitable basis for the research on the topic of my dissertation.

3.2. METHODOLOGY

Case study methodology was selected as a dominant approach of most of the research included in the dissertation. The reason for choosing case study as a method is that the chosen topic is largely based on stakeholder interactions, so a high degree of contextual knowledge is needed

to interpret it. In management science, the case study is considered a well-established method, best suited to understanding complex processes and dynamics, and able to represent the meanings of the interactions of multiple actors (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; Eisenhardt, 1989). It is also an appropriate tool in this case, as it is capable of supporting multiple objectives, theoretical model building, and the combined representation of micro, meso and macro levels of investigation (Eisenhardt, 1989). The method has also been used previously to investigate several topics similar to the central constructs of my dissertation (Agapito & Chan, 2019; Fuller et al., 2015; Von Krogh et al., 2003).

Within case studies, following (Stake, 1995), qualitative case studies are employed dominantly to analyze contexts where individual data points do not tell the full picture and supplementary rich data is required to provide more generalized results. It is argued that these rich, concentrated datasets can potentially provide more information, than a wider, but less packed corpus. As a result, my research builds on a smaller number of cases, where the scope can widen based on relevance to the central constructs as understood within the specific studied contexts. As the research progressed, case studies shifted from more instrumental approaches of trying to understand underlying mechanisms through proxies, to collective case studies, where the goal was to integrate the instrumental elements into more generalized patterns. Once the core constructs of the studies were properly delineated, more intrinsic approaches could be employed, since constructs could be examined in their own right as opposed to acting as proxies. The dissertation itself takes a generally collective approach in that it collects data around central themes to create the larger model.

Core research questions	Case study (Stake 1994)	Sampling (Miles et al., 2014)	Subjects of research	Core concepts
How do institutional design choices influence participation in ecosystem collaborations?	Intrinsic	Snowball Criteria	Ecosystems	Institutional Design
	Collective	Opportunist Maximum difference Criteria		Commons
			Platforms	Resource Pooling
				Value Co-creation
How can organizational factors realign value propositions with stakeholder needs?	Intrinsic	Snowball Criteria	Communities	Meaning-making
				Social Innovation
	Instrumental	Opportunist Critical case	Social Enterprises	Value Propositions
				Responsible Management
How does leadership mediate responsible organizational transformation processes?	Intrinsic	Snowball Opportunist	Participants	Participation

Table II. Methodological overview of the dissertation. Source: Own edit based on Stake (1994) and Miles et al., 2014.

3.3. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES OF INCLUDED ARTICLES

This initial framework determined much of the later research methodology as the types of constructs under scrutiny were determined. Catalysts as well as individual participants' prerequisites were to be determined through personal perspectives. This further meant to determine the actors relations to each other and their perceived roles. Ethnographic style interviews and storytelling were tools to gauge meanings behind wide and differently understood concepts. Deeper understanding of the concept of responsibility was derived from these interactions, since the implied relationships themselves could be examined.

Spaces of co-creation activities were a difficult concept to pin down. Although analogous concepts were identified, they needed to be more generally applicable. Processes were instead described which align with the core mechanisms expected of these spaces, which then determined characteristics the spaces should possess to facilitate these processes. This was

approached primarily through the perspective of value propositions, which were considered to be mechanisms to co-construct the spaces. In this, the main goal was to identify and organize organizational elements through situated perspectives that can reflect on how they form coherent structures that can be interpreted as valuable to stakeholders.

The most important step in the research included an attempt at directly testing the presuppositions collected during the exploratory phase. In particular, after the reconstruction of theoretical concepts around empirical constructs, the connecting logics of the new model were to be evaluated by allowing participants to interpret it within their own contexts and make explicit judgements about their different configurations and boundary conditions for their participation. This was presented through a participatory scenario that had the interrelated goals of evaluating elements of the very processes leading to ecosystem collaborations as well as their specific expected characteristics as determined by the same formation process at some point. This concept of co-construction is where the research methodology is applied directly to practice.

A final article on responsible management finally used loose methodological framework to interpret initial theoretical queries through the more complex logics the research before it enabled. Interviews and mini cases aided in the ordering of the main concepts of responsible management into a more coherent structure, which also elevated the roles of facilitation as well as meaning-making processes, besides institutional implications.

3.4. SAMPLING AND DATA COLLECTION

Data collection methods are categorized based on Menter et al. (2016) as interviews, ad-hoc focus groups, and observations. Most data in the research can be categorized as conversations, discourses or researchers notes and journals. Sampling was overall based on some level of opportunism, but ultimate, as the research progressed, critical cases could be identified and eventually, a broader sample of stakeholders could be included who fit into criteria based on the more developed theoretical model. This progression is displayed in Table 4.1. based on (Miles et al., 2014). Within the strict confines of most studies, the basis were one-on-one interviews. In any case, deep familiarization with participating subjects was an important goal. Although many interviews provided more specific answers, most focused on iterating and understanding personal perspectives that determined attitudes towards established facts.

In several cases, in a planned, or ad-hoc manner, larger discussions formed constructive bases to represent shared understandings as well as social dynamics, detailed further in Articles II.

and III. Participant observation was also conducted to some extent in most cases, with specific environments or events observed which helped with identifying latent factors. A general understanding in all studies was the participatory effect – or lack-there-of, in some cases - of the researcher. Similarly to the meaning-making processes discussed in the studies, if alternative interpretations are co-constructed with participants for research purposes, the researcher similarly affects the imaginaries of participants. Mostly, these interactions could be observed when the core research agenda resonated with participants’ experiences, besides their level of involvement, with cross-pollination of ideas occurring in Article II. and III. A general overview of the overall level of engagement and involvement of participants is summarized below based on the continuum of community engagement (Key et al., 2019).

Article	IV.	I.	II.	III.		
Level of community engagement	No community involvement	Community informed	Community consultation	Community participation	Community based participatory research	Community driven/led

Table III. Continuum of community engagement. Own edit based on Key et al. (2019).

3.5. CODING AND ANALYSIS

The approach of the dissertation itself to data can be compared to that of the iterative data analysis described by Kvale (1996). Similarly to the constructivist grounded theory approach, Kvale describes analysis as the structuring of collected data to reflect on deeper meaning contents, either explicitly present, underlying, or emerging during the construction of meanings. This approach would accept the concept that several different, even contradictory conclusions can be drawn about data that each provide meaningful contributions to the understanding of research subjects. The nature of data in this sense becomes flexible and one step removed from its original source, while making it connectable to similar underlying factors.

Most of the research employs a narrative analysis of the included data. While initially, meaning categorization was the primary focus, the end goal in each case was to weave the categorical elements into larger narratives that can represent the shifting nature of the observed constructs within their contexts. Therefore, timely and social structural elements needed to be identified to interpret what these shifts could mean. Deeper interpretation as a specific step arises in this

process as synthetic concepts extracted from data become interwoven themselves, forming additional, only theoretically applicable ideas.

3.6. VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, GENERALIZABILITY

In qualitative analysis, validity, reliability and generalizability are less well defined, yet somewhat controllable factors. These terms relate more strictly to quantitative studies, while qualitative ones, especially ones using constructive or interpretive grounded theory methods may require different checklists. Menter et al. (2016) highlights trustworthiness as a generally applicable, yet difficult to operationalize threshold consisting of the core components of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These are described as being achievable through primarily diligent follow-through on the principles of data collection. This serves as a proxy to trustworthiness through a triangulation of data points from trustworthy sources which are methodically iterated upon.

Individual studies' trustworthiness can be assessed through their specific contexts, however, the central elements of the general research framework were directly constructed as well as evaluated alongside participants as the main basis for conclusions. Researcher participation both aided as well as potentially hurt these perspectives, as the construction of concepts provided the opportunity for live iteration, while these iterations were clearly influenced by the researcher perspective as well and through targeted questions. In multiple cases, growing familiarity with cases and participants opens up room for biases to influence observations as well.

It is important to highlight that this approach has pushed the researcher into an activist role in many ways. First, the relationship with participants was usually one based on mutual learning, with the process enriching both parties' understanding. From my perspective, this resulted in a need to balance responsibilities for both research integrity as well as the development of participants while acknowledging that the research topic itself is such that subjective values are inherently reflected upon, are co-constructed and ultimately constitute an inalienable part of the results. This builds on the second aspect which is that the research itself, besides aiming to provide objective models of reality to inform practice, also aimed at broadcasting its main values and demonstrating that they can be adapted to practice.

This contradiction has become more difficult to manage with increasing participant involvement, and the solidification of conceptual frameworks. An initial pure scientific curiosity, with open questions and more listening, has transitioned to more rigid structures and

transformative conversations sparking new ideas. It was important on many occasions to be aware of and to communicate the divergence between perspectives informed by theory and personal professional opinions on given questions, especially as the research transitioned into a common project to be managed with participants.

In general, it can be stated that all primary research constructs included in the conclusions are triangulated by several studies employing varied methodologies and subjects. This is deemed as sufficient to determine trustworthiness because the central model is presented as a construction of real elements as well as processes that were observed and only provides contributions to connecting them into a coherent, interpretable new model.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of each article included within the dissertation are presented along with a meta-analysis of the interwoven factors that contribute to the central research questions of the dissertation itself.

4.1. ARTICLE I.

The first article constitutes much of the humanistic and more philosophical elements of my research. Through the examination of lived experiences, the article primarily focuses on individual and organizational level influencing factors of responsible transformations. The research focused on the following question:

1. How could systemic challenges hinder responsible organisational transformations?
2. How could social challenges hinder responsible organisational transformations?
3. How could vision and implementation diverge in responsible organizational transformations?

The article presents two similar cases of leaders aiming at transformational organizational change. Cases are selected to represent transformations that go beyond responsible goals and focuses on more complex issues related to implementation. Responsible management was selected as the primary framing of this research due to its inherent individualized approach to collective solutions. The paradoxes inherent to this approach are taken as an axiom and the research moves from a goal-oriented perspective to a processual approach which views the responsible transformation process as a core component of being responsible.

Navigating these paradoxes is identified as the central overarching challenge, with consistent reiteration of these practices by committed managers being a prerequisite. Primary components would include an institutional approach of forming the organizational structure itself, along with connected resource allocations, political tasks of creating supporting coalitions and overall, legitimacy around the emerging responsible goals. While there are plenty of collective solutions, it was found that individual attention and a hands-on approach to the implementation of new systems are both key.

This is viewed, on the one hand, as a maximalist approach to responsibility, where the concept can permeate the organizational culture. On the other hand, it is obvious that this maximalist approach can not be easily implemented just anywhere, especially in small to middle scale organizations. Crucially, this also applies to any participants beyond management, since they are usually already at close to full capacity and asking more of them is not always realistic.

This highlights the need to take existing responsibilities into account before taking on new ones, especially for external stakeholders. Personal and organizational capacities are thus presented as the first limiting factor.

Currently, the prevailing conceptualizing of idealized future states, even under a perceived responsible umbrella is often misinterpreted as a free license to personally transform organizations. This often leads to rushed solutions and most importantly, irresponsible changes to not just operations, but the social fabric of organizations. Past states and especially the role of management in forming those states need to be taken into account, especially if previous top-down approaches have embedded cultural elements not compatible with responsibility. Cultural shifts are also observed as developing unequally, leaving temporary pockets of high and low responsibility. Neither high level nor individualized scopes of cultural influencing were observed to provide the proper spaces for articulating meanings that translate into action.

Instead, smaller group and community levels formed the ideal space for this as they provided more equal opportunities for participants to finding their own roles due to lack of ambiguities and an inherent level of transparency. While central initiation of transformation can induce the formation and reformation of these communities, the conflict arises when it is either not recognized or accepted that these interpretation spaces challenge central assumptions and ultimately invite them to be further elaborated. Culture, its continuous shifts and managements relationship to them is presented as the second limitation, with closely interlinked groups forming more stable spaces.

Similarly, certain characteristics of some groups were shown to be determining the level of their possible access to some opportunities. More technical, or back-office workers had limitations arising from lack of sufficient available information without proactive communication efforts. Conversely, those already being included in project management tasks and related groups had access to complementary resources and information on new initiatives.

Even when resources are allocated for new responsible goals, when the distribution of their responsibilities is continually uneven, negative reinforcing loops are introduced to social dynamics between groups. Balancing these can be somewhat aided through enhanced transparency and offering to introduce opportunities in more detail, preferably by sharing information in person and or even in smaller group chats.

Leaders were initially framed as catalysts of responsible transformations. This role essentially described the goals, not the tasks or properties of leaders. A general description of ideal transformation processes is given as occurring concurrently with leaders' transitions from a passive catalyst to proactive facilitator of change, elements of which needed to be selectively employed and balanced based on complex contexts. These contain the minimal task sets required to catalyze transformation, without going into further operative tasks down the line. One is the complex institutional leadership model prescribed by responsible management, while the other reflects on both the initial stages of transformations as well as potential long-term limitations to leadership agency.

A very important takeaway is that while the facilitative role prescribed represents an ideal conceptualization of leadership and management, it becomes apparent that the sets of tasks and possible tasks belonging to it can not be realistically, and more importantly, responsibly taken on by one individual.

This thinking represents the wider research agenda by delineating task sets that might be considered from an ecosystem perspective as opposed to a singular organizational one. On the one hand, responsibility was shown to have far-reaching consequences when taken to its conclusion at larger scales, while internal disruptions were simultaneously shown to grow if the scale of responsibilities is not properly determined.

The conceptualization of smaller scale entities were thus integrated through lessons learnt from cases of breakaway organizations born out of transformations, which reflect on how responsibilities challenge even organizational legitimacy. This process is further argued to be positively realigning organizations as ecosystems given the proper attitude of openness.

4.2. ARTICLE II.

Article two integrates previous findings of the research into coherent constructs around the interrelated concepts of social enterprises and social innovation. The article aimed to primarily focus on the economic and value creation considerations of ecosystem collaborations through the study of organizations that directly address constructs of the wider model in their operations. Placing the emphasis of the research from transformation to value creation, the article addresses operational challenges and solutions of facilitating collaborations that transcend organizational boundaries.

A processual model is presented which interprets social innovation as a recursive process of inclusion through platform formation, value creation along common needs and a recombination of resources through a shared meaning-making process.

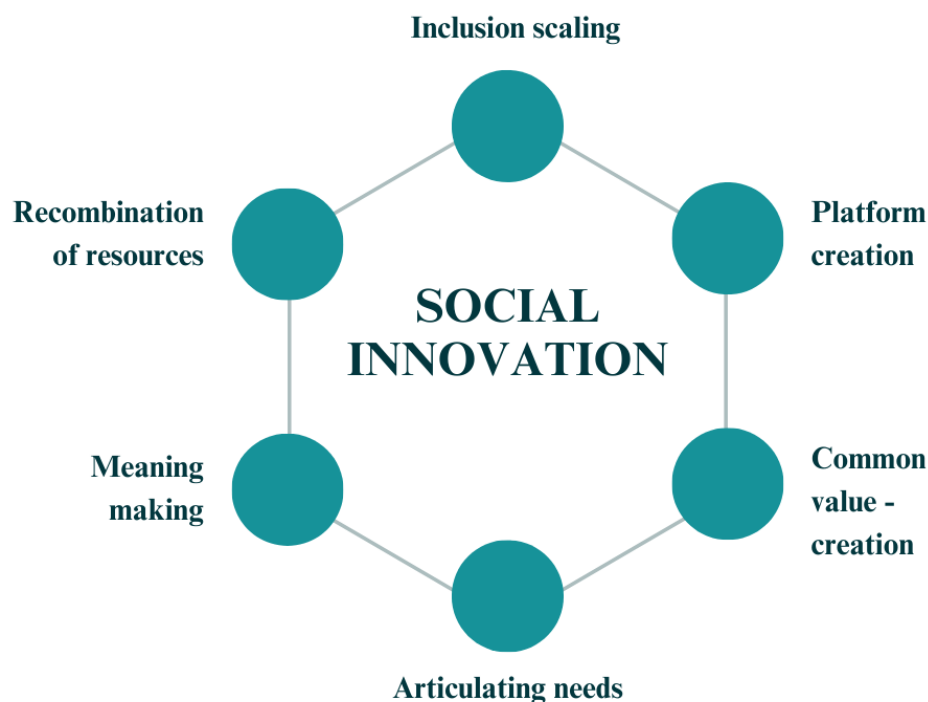


Figure V. Recursive model of social innovation. Source: Own edit based on (Nagy & Krátki, 2024)

It is an inherent underlying logic of social enterprise that determines the final values realized by stakeholders. These aspects are derived from the following research questions:

- How can social innovation be interpreted in the operation of social enterprises?
- How they create social value through their collaboration?
- What elements can be identified in the social enterprises' operations that affect the social value creation?

The operations of two organizations are analyzed and compared around their propositions of social innovation services through systems, and digital systems in particular, or human interaction and community facilitation.

In the initial steps, prerequisite activities and resources are outlined which enable the organizations to provide value by scaling the values provided by stakeholders. This is born out of catalyzing agents as discussed before, but is ultimately carried out by those with leadership potential that catalysts involve and mentor to adapt their own practices. These practices are born out of different traditions adapted by small groups recognizing their limited agency in directly influencing social conditions, eventually forming stable communities around innovative social approaches.

The resulting social innovation cycles were then organized into explicit platforms that outline common operating rules and provide coordination and resources within and across these nodes. These frameworks could be seen as social, in case of community and individual routines, technical in terms of the form and contents of documentations of projects shared, or legal in case of contractual and governance questions.

Following similar social enterprise literature, the organizations in many ways regarded reductions in social needs, that is, the increase of individual autonomy as well as social capacity as a central goal and their main impact. They also saw this as a good practical choice, as when they viewed their environments as ecosystems, it became apparent that these frameworks provided more long-term effects when they were also translated to the level of social routines.

These routines formed new markets operating under unique logics which provide an economic buffer for social innovation organizations that these markets view as valuable.

These markets are described by openness, trust and the commons, first introduced to my research at this point. Openness could be behaviorally described as providing a window into activities one considers socially relevant, viewing engagement itself as impact, especially when targeting inactive groups. Trust is understood in this context as a shorthand, that allows

participants to engage in less formalized activities besides their more advanced and institutional functions.

It is built on the understanding that reputation is as valuable as monetary resources and that one can generally be trusted to act in good faith. This is especially important in case of entrepreneurial members, that rely on providing stable services to other members, with the reciprocal expectation of them not outsourcing these tasks.

The commons is introduced as a good conceptualization to interpret the resources employed in social innovation.

Similarly to communities, commons also create a certain social fabric around socially accessible or inaccessible resources or conditions. Under the new market logics introduced, the work for autonomy is collectively translated as the commons, resources that are collectively managed and acquired.

Currently, most larger sets of resources, such as buildings or industrial equipment are more difficult to acquire, mostly through participants' offerings. Beyond that, these ecosystems have not reached the critical depth or width of cooperation required to establish complex supply chains. They are capable of establishing at least one agency-like enterprise stream around services like education or simpler IT development. However, their influence extends mostly to suppliers connected to their core offerings, and complementary material resources are still mostly acquired from external markets.

The article in some sense foreshadows following research through its focus on digital innovation in particular. When speaking of scaling and ecosystem level organizational frameworks, even in previous articles, a relatively unaddressed aspect is that these practices can only reasonably provide even a social return on investment if they are coupled with advanced data management systems.

Currently, many solutions are employed concurrently for similar task sets, however, the presented social innovation frameworks propose deeper integration of first and foremost, the underlying core data structures used to collect data on participants, organizations, projects, know-how, and related resources, among others.

The two studied organizations currently have smaller sizes, than would be ideal for fully realizing such efforts, as high consensus would be needed to establish such systems. If successful, such systems could further formalize the new markets created around communities and make impact naturally calculable, at least within one coherent ecosystem.

4.3. ARTICLE III.

Article three builds on a participatory backcasting framework through which participants deeply involved in social innovation provide a common imaginary space for connecting their individual initiatives into a larger interconnected framework that leverages their resulting scalability. The study builds on the models established in Article two and extends them around the concepts of platforms and the commons. Results reflect both on the institutional design elements proposed as well as the processes and resources that can be identified as the minimal social and technical prerequisites of materializing such frameworks. Digitalization is presented as a central challenge as well as the primary prerequisite resource for applying the practices across larger distances. The following questions guided the research:

1. How could digital platforms develop value creation in the social innovation process?
2. What specific management tools appear in the operation of digital social innovation platforms?
3. What thematic areas emerge among the various platforms that could serve as bases for joint development?

Participants provided alternative imaginaries for conceptualizing the larger ecosystemic social innovation models presented in my dissertation and these were eventually integrated into a minimal set of value expectations, system characteristics as well as operating models. The study was built from the ground up to fit the logic of the agenda by interpreting the value propositions higher tiers of the model as well as their digital implementation offer to potential key stakeholders. Digitalization was included as a specific focus due to participants familiarity with system innovation, while it was also recognized as necessary for any large-scale implementations.

Social enterprises, commons as well as platforms are interpreted in this study in the context of social innovation processes, which were described in earlier research as a generally applicable to the value creation paradigm studied in the dissertation. A more specific process is also elevated in the form of commoning, which fits the more general term of meaning-making from

earlier. It is primarily differentiated in its focus being a subject external to participants, but one constructed by their shared understandings of them. The process described follows this logic by participants interpreting what a shared system would mean in this sense.

Affective, social and economic expectations were all expressed by participants with varying weights, while an understanding could be reached behind the need to derive activities from explicitly expressed individual needs. This seemingly prescribed a bias in the constructed system to produce basic, underlying values first, building on a logic of innovation.

Besides explicit value expectations, more generally, increased openness and sharing within the ecosystem were expected with mutual access to knowledge and spare capacities. More specifically, many understood that simply growing the network of responsible actors promises mutual benefits, something already leveraged during the research process.

Besides autonomy and the freedom to choose ones level of participation, equitable access to the shared commons was expressed as the core challenge. While semi-coherent processes of value redistribution were proposed, time-banking was a simpler one that built on the idea of limited, but equal individual capacities. A much more complex model first integrated in article two has also been further developed that offers a simplified, yet digitally complex solution framework. Complementarily, the little discussed topic of cooperatives was also included as a shorthand to describe the trust-based system proposed.

Meta nodes of these systems were conceptualized as participants, organizations, goods, services and knowledge. Related to nodes, their validation was addressed as potentially the primary value proposition of such a system, with the expectation that base principles and the appointment of validation privileges could be sufficient in this case while still providing a unique offering. Feedback is provided if a validator also becomes somewhat responsible for those involved.

The research process itself attempted to model what the formation of a theorized ecosystem might entail. Strong individual facilitation of participation is identified as a sufficient prerequisite to catalyzing collaborations, while even one process that could lead to feedback taking several kinds of skills such as event management, group facilitation or complex data management. It is further argued that through entry criteria, defined meaning constructs and delegated validators, the system could self-start after one iteration if indeed the constructs properly reflect participants reflections.

In general, participants approved of proposals included in the study, but mostly of the wider concept and goals. Interestingly, governance issues were barely mentioned as participants found it unimportant beyond their own boundaries, and processual approaches became more dominant. One significant caveat identified is that while digital solutions accounted for many individual functions, imagining their shared interfaces was a challenge. Displaying the nodes of the model would require more spacial dimensions than is usual in regular end-user software and was thought of to not be properly meaningful without precise, authorized and at least middle scale datasets and resources to be made digestible and even immersive as a user experience.

4.4. ARTICLE IV.

Article four is essentially a summary of some core concepts examined in other articles, related back to the topic of responsible management. Civil society actors were interviewed and smaller cases were examined to order the individual concepts underpinning responsible management into a processual framework. The article informs the dissertation's central topics with this model, that can be related to the general framework to gain a deeper understanding into how the elements across disciplines might connect in a more overarching manner.

The article follows the following two research questions:

1. How does ecosystem-level responsibility change organizations?
2. What is the role of the community and the individual in understanding the ecosystem?

The constructivist approach of the article focuses on the interrelations of responsibility facilitation between individual, community and institutional actors. The research follows a social construction perspective on responsible management to examine how meanings around values are derived through discursive as well as systemic methods to generate common value interpretations.

This process is understood to be dynamically shifting depending on context and to be interpretable through the meeting points of individual perspectives. This is mediated in any case by a facilitative actor who is connected to both community as well as institutional actors in a given case. Roles within the model were described to be interchangeable and ultimately aid in identifying key actors in these situations. From a process perspective, two parallel interpretative streams with unique characteristics are presented. Communities provide

socialization which fundamentally forms individual decisions, while institutions form underlying logics that influence actions in more subtle ways.

Responsible organizational transformations – as the central processes – aid in conversions as well as convergence in-between these two streams, opening up institutions and making communities reflecting on individual needs. Bottlenecks in ecosystem level collaborations in practice are identified as the level of trust, centralization of resources as well as the lack of a collective level imaginary framework to situate responsibility in inter-local perspectives.

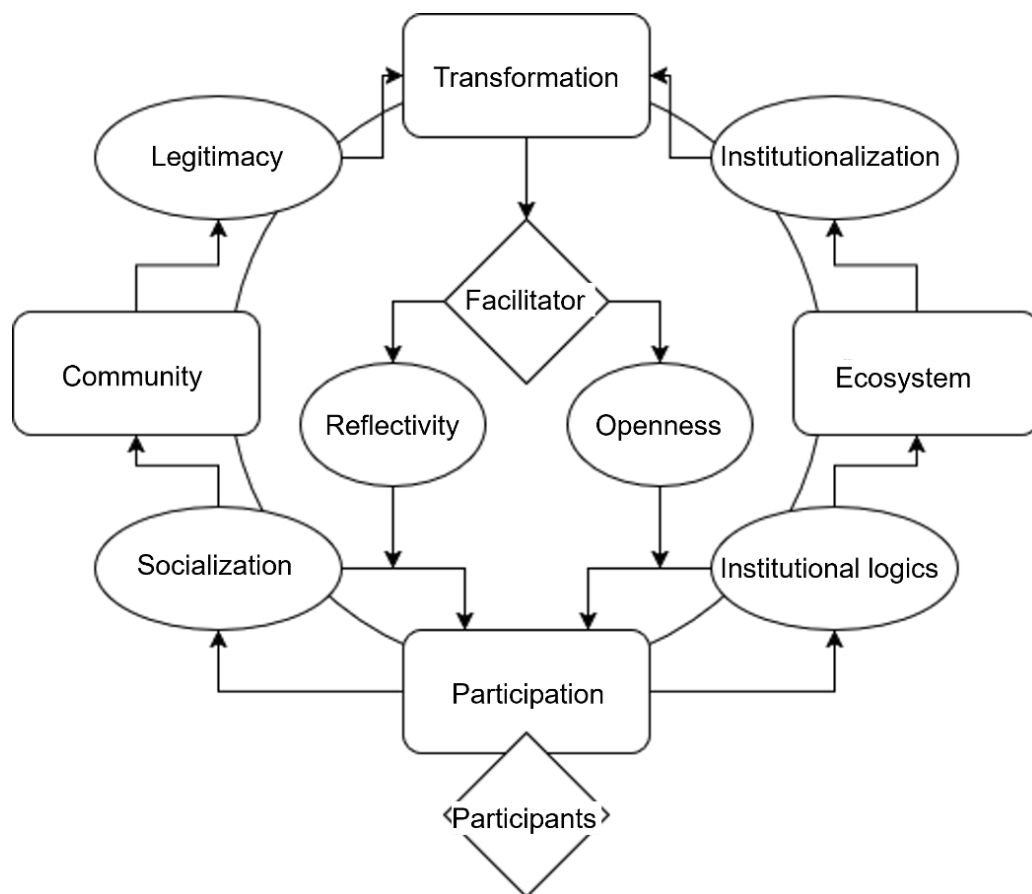


Figure VI. Responsible ecosystem processes. Source: Own edit.

4.5. OVERALL RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on an overarching analysis of the results included in the articles, I have compiled the main findings of the dissertation into four primary theses described in further detail below as well as a primary thesis as a summary. Although these correspond to the framework presented in Table IV., it would be more accurate to describe them as the minimal connections of the core concepts. The dissertation's main theses, starting with the summary, are as follows:

Responsible facilitation of participation in common organizational platforms employs a three-layer social and digital architecture: 1. individual capacity-building tools 2. community decision-making interfaces, and 3. ecosystem-level impact accounting systems - maintaining open standards for interoperability.

1. Responsible management proactively reconciles competing institutional logics through individualized participatory foresight, maintaining integrity while enabling organizational transformation
2. Social innovation builds on individual agency connecting to community platforms through co-created value propositions, feeding into institutional commons via negotiated resource-sharing agreements
3. Reciprocal responsibility in ecosystems depends on transparent participation metrics and digital reputation systems validating contributions to shared commons, reducing transaction costs for collaboration across organizations
4. Responsible ecosystems embed bottom-up governance protocols that preserve community autonomy while enabling resource pooling through subsidiarity principles - formalizing trust, not standardizing practices

How does responsible management facilitate participation in common platforms?			
Institutional level	Core research questions	Subjects of research	Core concepts
Macro	How do institutional design choices influence participation in ecosystem collaborations?	Ecosystems	Institutional Design
		Commons	Participatory Governance
Meso			How can organizational factors realign value propositions with stakeholder needs?
	Communities	Value Co-creation	
		Facilitation	
		Meaning-making	
	Micro	How does leadership mediate responsible organizational transformation processes?	Social Enterprises
Value Propositions			
Individual		Participants	Responsible Management
			Participation

Table IV. Research plan framework. Source: Own edit.

In my research of responsible organizational ecosystems – conceptualized under the theoretical frameworks of platforms and the commons – I have highlighted sets of responsibilities and systems that facilitate the participation of members of any community in large-scale social value creation efforts. The presented model describes processes as well as prerequisite organizational and digital systems which enable scalable social innovation models through transdisciplinary collaboration.

The model started from the institutional entrepreneurial perspective of forming new types of organizations across hybrid logics and multiple organizational levels (Tracey et al., 2011), in this case aiming to bridge the gap between the participant and the ecosystem levels. Communities and commons are taken as the basis for organizing of responsibilities, as naturally identifiable stakeholders by participants. Their collections through participative meaning-making processes (Szathmári et al., 2024) can constitute socially constructed sets of interpretations about responsibilities, forming a sustainable system of organizational priorities (Shrivastava et al., 2019).

With multiple paradoxical perspectives (Hahn et al., 2018) and resulting limitations identified in scaling these practices, social enterprises and platforms are presented as more functional arrangements that respectively help formulate value propositions and connect them to larger audiences (Tung & Jordann, 2017). They provide more open, formal frames for weighing the different, more particular value interpretations of the commons.

The logic of the model lies in the principle that these particular values of commons should be combined with the open logic of platforms for scaling. This means that the proposed model employs an ecosystem level institutional design that builds on close stakeholder needs while keeping open enough for connecting to wider commons through reciprocal responsibilities.

In practice this has been envisioned by research participants to be a process of building a wide transdisciplinary membership, determining their scope and degree of responsibilities over shared commons as well as the degree of openness of these commons for further members and organizations to connect to. The resulting framework is a hybrid with elements of market and non-profit elements, private and collective ownership where each member has stakes and responsibilities in the pool of common resources, with varying degrees of them according to their closeness to a given project.

The research plan presented at the beginning of the dissertation organized core concepts around primary types of subjects of the research. As the research progressed, the challenge was the delineation of why and how these very different types of organizations seemed to contribute to the larger idea and principles laid out in the introduction. The initial conceptualization of certain core concepts being grouped under certain organization types relied on the idea that the underlying logic of these organizations provided the ideal spaces for integrating these processes. These forms are of course not determinants, only presently dominantly applicable descriptives, and one of the more interesting things about this research was in fact the observation of atypical organizational roles, such as competition dominated NGO's, companies more adept at community organizing, then producing a surplus, or small organizations impacting large networks.

Essentially, the responsibilities prescribed under the foundational logics of responsible management itself needed to be conceptualized in a way that acknowledges their shared and interwoven nature. Currently, one of the central challenges observed in many organizations that even engage with concepts of responsibility is that they are primarily goal oriented and wish to leverage these processes for their goals directly. This has led to many observed "re-inventions" of existing frameworks that already exist and many overburdened managers that could barely engage with these external systems on their own. Connecting to each of these organizational layers separately is also either too time-consuming or costly if delegated to service providers operating under market logics.

These connections are, when viewed through specific goals, only temporarily relevant, while the prerequisite to their acquisition is in fact continual maintenance. It is difficult to decide what functions innovative organizations should integrate at any given time, but in the case of this research, the roles described build on each other's synergies and need to be present and interconnected for them to really work together to the point of observable returns.

The general model relies on the first step of participants being involved, both through their own agency and external facilitation. Their increasing involvement represents the first shift towards establishing social value. When internal goals behind these transitions are shared, and one articulates their responsibilities, ideas about related social needs arise. These can be further developed into value propositions.

Many participants of my research realized the clearest value when they facilitated the clarification of these ideas by connecting them to others in their closer communities. Social

innovation is interpreted from these points through the articulation of these value propositions with direct, documented participation of potential stakeholders.

The initial phases of these projects are best facilitated by the more flexible market logics of enterprises, where individual, literal or abstract investments can greatly influence whether ideas can ever emerge. As more people join initiatives, ideas can emerge organically through the new shared ideas, creating the need to make sense of what actually constitutes the subject of innovation. At these steps, how much each idea or individual participation contributes to the whole can be articulated as well. By directly addressing paradoxical perspectives, iterations can be negotiated or sometimes, entire new groups or whole enterprises arise through the diverging ideas. More often, however, the formed value propositions either have sufficient support, or have to be further connected to other actors.

The threshold here is that there be internal consensus on the meaning of the subject of participation so that propositions can be clearly communicated and be relatable to external parties.

In the middle of Table IV. above, the threshold between communities and platforms represents a shift. Previous steps could easily include direct social ties that are – in good cases – available at any time. Actors beyond these closer social ties are more difficult to connect to if for no other reason than the fact that less information is available about them, and there are more options. Platforms reduce this complexity by integrating information. Generally, when more trusted information is available, they are integrated in such specific ways that they provide little chance of matching more general needs. To increase the chance of a match, platforms may include more information, with decreasing trust in individual data points. Platforms mediate this by asking for increasing financial contributions to improve information validity. However, they require continual maintenance that is not fully relevant to the managers we started from and these providers generally take disproportionate profits to compensate periodic use.

The shift at this point is that at a smaller scale, a few supporters and one singular responsible manager was the prerequisite to furthering an idea. At this stage, new responsibilities need to be continually maintained that fall beyond the internal scope. These also possess significant burdens that make establishing individual platforms unfeasible, especially since the underlying data was the initial thing that was missing. However, others may share this need as well, and existing platform access fees could be shared, if only the responsibility of maintaining these agreements can be determined.

Similarly to how communities were formed by propositions to solving social needs, commons are interpreted at the end of this research as the shared agreements of separate participants to maintaining mutually beneficial auxiliary resources in common pools that are interacted with as their own platforms.

If the communities forming these platforms – that are in essence the channels for value propositions to connect to others – are constituted through participant control, then it would be natural for similar mechanisms to govern the commons that facilitate their creation. Since more people interact with these through platform logics connectivity at ever greater distances, this control usually transforms from trust-based consensus to a more formalized mechanism that may affect communities beyond the scope of their initial participation or exclude them from their related benefits. This is where active participation in forming institutional choices is important. From the perspective of the commons, constituting participants – usually, organizations – are generally important, while the commons are not equally important to all, and participants also contribute unequally to constituting organizations who ultimately all benefit from these choices' availability.

The presented model does not aim at describing roles of single organizations, or precise governance structures, limiting what it can offer at first glance to many. However, it is the awareness of the importance of these roles and their availability that is the takeaway.

Usually, we talk about improving horizontal relations, however, in the ecosystem model, contextually shifting vertical differences appear between stakeholders even within the most democratic frameworks. It is, however, through the interrelatedness of these factors that the values and functions of each can be interpreted. Governance design in this ecosystem logic therefore acknowledges the idea that different, competing value and participation interpretation interact.

As these higher, platform level activities are born out of lower level value propositions as the need arises, those involved in them can determine how much they value the platform functions compared to their resource pool, and these further propositions can be weighted by the different groups of contributors. This sets the initial decision-making powers, but if more participants are needed for maintenance, they would be weighted equally by the platform as long as operating requirements are met. This means that the platforms can determine based on the individual contributions to commons how much they value the addition of new participants.

Ecosystem level institutions in my concept differ from the currently observed sprawling model of both economic and social organizations and instead focus on maintaining the infrastructure necessary to articulate these value conversions at scales where individual contributions can be difficult to interpret. Large-scale systems were described by many participants involved in my research to be lacking in trust because what occurs in their smaller spaces can decouple either voluntarily or due to necessities. This is mostly a problem, because in the conceptualized model, these smaller spaces and their participants constitute the real organizing force, and their autonomy is presented as a basic right.

The presented model does not inherently prescribe specific actions to these communities internal life in solving this problem, only that in acting in their capacity as representatives of the larger system as their own little platform responsible for certain commons, they reproduce the basic organizing principles that constituted the original, organic group dynamics.

This too, is not, in fact, the regular way of creating standards. The term prescription fits better, since the system can give recommendations, but really, it is the inherent mechanisms that are supposed to steer actors towards responsible goals.

Essentially, already observed collections of concepts seem to hinge on a seemingly unquantifiable determinant, trust. Facilitation, clear responsibilities, meanings, and openness were considered as relevant proxies.

This is primarily related to the role the individual plays in transformations. If trust in reciprocal acknowledgement of community facilitated value creation is eroded, these agreements will inevitably fail due to increasing costs.

This is where institutional design can feed back into the system to strengthen this social fabric by creating a first ecosystem level consensus that includes and rewards all participations and contributions to commons valued by other participants, strengthening the agreement framework. This simple addition to an ecosystem, when properly implemented, could change the entire underlying market logic.

What these mechanisms contain in their essence is the incentive to be open as open as possible to the limit of the capacities one could responsibly take on. Producing surpluses and redistributing them is rewarded to the extent of participants valuations, while failing to deliver on promises can lead to reduced engagement compared to others. If we accept the idea that

crossing certain threshold concepts fundamentally alters certain outlooks, then transparency and openness, when exposed to people as a model of operations, should instill the very same expectation from their closer communities.

The usual dilemma in the current paradigm is that often, this expectation has no outlets in non-ideal social circumstances due to power differences and lack of real competition in many localities. One cannot simply make informed choices once they are aware of their ideal, if in fact, the choices are not available. By directly connecting people into the ecosystem as well, however, they can provide feedback on the quality of, say, their work opportunities. This directly influences the standing of their community, which ideally should lead to self-correction. Alternatively, the ecosystem can also provide resources to reform a new community, since needs are not met.

Returning to the smallest scale, dynamics of facilitating connections to other participants and meanings – that constitute the platforms representing commons – is the single central service any actor in the ecosystem model can take on.

It is a complementary concept to responsibility, since value does not always have to be provided directly, but paths to it should be provided as the basis of social functions. In a minimal case, as described above, the logic of responsible ecosystems can be described through one simple case where an idea needed further supporters, and basic facilitation practices, both internal and external, formed the primary value proposition of further collaboration.

Meanings and narratives can only be formed responsibly by participants with individual agency and proper self-definitions, to be able to fit themselves within the larger picture. This is coincidentally a prerequisite of participation, as significantly less able or new candidates can feel disenfranchised by entering spaces already dominated by strongly defined selves. Inequalities are inherent to any social fabrics and in ecosystems, even more so. The humanistic approach is deeply ingrained in the model presented in my research. Yet the extension of individual agency through responsibility is not, compared to many studies, the primary tool. In this case, fed back into a larger process, the limitations of agency are fundamentally highlighted. Not just as a barrier, but mostly as a way to acknowledge that responsibilities can and should be shared, as long as we can account for everyone's primary needs being met.

4.6. PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS, FUTURE RESEARCH

My research aimed to lay out principles for alternative organizational frameworks that can support human well-being, democratic principles as well as individual responsibility. The overarching themes of the research primarily served to add to the series of continual reiterations of the practices of responsible management by integrating the concept into practical frameworks. While many implementations have been studied, coherent recontextualizations of organizational principles around them are novelties.

Many other theoretical streams were included, which underpinned the true transdisciplinary nature of responsible practices. The research has built on a reimagination of service ecosystems around principles of the common good, with constituting elements of the resulting model interpreted themselves as – social – ecosystem services. Finally, by examining the rarely combined concepts of the commons and platforms, a detailed conceptualization was provided for the implementation of the principles of responsible organization.

From a practical perspective, my research has moved from a principles-based approach to approaching systems of enacting responsibilities. The research itself was designed from the beginning to facilitate earnest conversations about how people currently operate and how they could envision responsible alternatives by creating systems that would support them. The details of this very process constitute the first contribution. By rigorously building on participatory principles, trust and committed engagement could be achieved, and people could move from individual-centered incremental changes to envisioning more fundamental changes for the common good.

These committed participations have enabled the conceptualization of an ecosystem of digitally enabled platforms integrating commons voluntarily maintained by participants through shared agreements of mutual responsibility. While similar ideas have emerged since the beginning of the research, the transdisciplinary, community-focused aspects of my dissertation could be differentiating factors giving the model an edge in creating a widely implementable alternative for solving grand challenges. The full scope of these systems could support social development organizations, environmental conservation efforts, food producers, innovators, digital developers, freelancers, and in general, any bottom-up, small-scale organization, initiative, individual or community willing to share by connecting them and aiding their cooperation.

Limitations of the research lie mostly in this process, which has led to the emergence of new ideas beyond the research itself, moving the researcher into an activist role on multiple occasions. While proper triangulation of perspectives has occurred, without the systems described, truly equal participation of all direct stakeholders could also not be achieved responsibly, leaving gaps in the service provision perspective. Validation by participants was

also crucial in each article, but the final framework has only reached coherence later, in the form of the dissertation, leaving some elements untested.

Future research would first focus on filling these implementation gaps and more. Larger-scale quantitative validation of the described behavioral patterns could become simple if the scaffolding of the model is implemented. For this to be possible, related legal frameworks, privacy and data governance perspectives as well as platform validation mechanisms would need to be studied in detail. More directly, the research has built the groundwork for the testing of scalable, digitally enabled cooperative structures.

I have built on personal perspectives on responsibility to understand how they are built into the lives of individuals and how they might translate to collective imaginaries. There are inherent limitations in our current organizational structures in facilitating these individual perspectives meeting. We expect great responsibility from them, without reciprocity. We expect these transdisciplinary responsibilities to be implemented in frames limited by organizational boundaries. By engaging with people on a personal level, desires for more openness, community and caring were expressed. The concept of responsibility, drawn up on a blank canvas, has driven these desires to be articulated into forms that help make responsibilities themselves tangible and through connections, something to be shared. Because the common good is not an abstract concept, but something that people should build together. Because it is a shared cause, and building it together is always easier.

5. ARTICLES

5.1. ARTICLE I.

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Responsible organizational transformation:

social and systemic challenges, and the role of foresight

This study highlights dynamics of responsible organisational transformation processes from a leadership perspective. The challenges of balancing multiple responsibility agendas in shifting cultural and systemic contexts are explored, focusing on common foresight as a part of responsible transformations.

Two organisations are studied with focus on the leaders as catalysts and simultaneously boundaries barriers of change processes with attention to personal details which provides enriched data that can be internalised by practitioners. Qualitative case study methodology is employed on a green construction company and an education based social enterprise, both of which had shifted radically around responsible goals.

The paper highlights unique social challenges, new shades of established responsible management practices and presents a dynamic of organisational drift mediated by leadership. Foresight or lack-there-of is further found to be a factor of transformations that need to be constantly iterated, without which its inherent value is not harnessed. Divergence of stakeholder groups and their goals are presented as key moments of these processes that can lead to divided organisations.

Various aspects of responsible management and foresight had been explored over the last decades. The authors contribute to the field by focusing on organizational transformations, more lived experiences, a unique Hungarian, Eastern European context and the interplay between leadership practices, organizational culture, and the deeper learning needed for systemic change, offering practical implications for responsible management education and organizational development.

Keywords: responsible management, foresight, leadership, participation, stakeholders

I. Introduction

In this study, we are going to be focusing on the dynamics of catalysing a transformative responsible management learning process within organizations through theoretical and practical examples, with some unique aspects we believe to be characteristic of the Eastern European region and beyond. Responsible management as a discipline could distinguish itself from related fields like sustainability or ethics research for example, by providing complex frameworks that integrate more perspectives (Laasch et al., 2019; Laasch, Moosmayer, et al., 2020). Therefore, the question we have asked is how this complexity could present itself when looking at a case where an organisation's core operation is based around such a subfield of responsibility, yet leadership is motivated to provide a more all-encompassing responsible overhaul of operations. This paper primarily serves to highlight issues and dilemmas arising during such a transition from the perspectives of forward-thinking organisational leaders, sheds some light on their unique challenges, frustrations, as well as personal failings and responsibilities.

Responsible transformations are framed as learning processes (Fougère et al., 2020) that realign individuals and organizations around continually emergent, competing responsible goals (Radoynovska et al., 2019). A specific contextual focus of ours will be the conflict of trying to operate responsibly in environments where an initial grassroots approach is not viable, due to either social or cultural imperfections, where attempts are sometimes met with confusion and antagonism. Additionally, the systemic challenges of smaller organizations with flat hierarchies trying to engage with larger responsibilities provide a less studied context. The tensions that stems from motivated managers not being able to translate vision into action highlights the need for a reimagining of everyday leadership duties. We will be focusing on uncovering details of these processes around the following research questions:

1. How could systemic challenges hinder responsible organisational transformations?
2. How could social challenges hinder responsible organisational transformations?
3. How could vision and implementation diverge in responsible organizational transformations?

While the responsibility agenda has developed much during the last decade, there remain, among others, geographical differences in interpretation and mainly maturity in the

comprehension of the concept itself. Developed, yet still transitional regions such as Central-Eastern Europe provide unique challenges. These often arise not from acute resource scarcity or widespread poverty, but old cultural fixations and social dynamics, which help us in conceptualising transformative processes in close to ideal economic, but not ideal social contexts. Our aim in examining this context is also beyond aiding unique local issues. It is to shed light on the fact that responsibility is not something we are born with, but something that needs to be taught, and learnt as well as nurtured. On a more practical level, we point to the fact that individual conceptions and motivations towards noble goals must always be underpinned by proper social context, planning, and clear directions (Doherty et al., 2015). Hence, we emphasize that responsible management is, principally, not a goal, but a specific process to be maintained by itself which helps to construct temporary states and spaces of responsibility (Hays et al., 2020). We seek to present easily approachable examples of how the incorporation of responsibility into everyday management practices could pose deep challenges as well as some ways to alleviate them.

II. Theoretical background – Responsible management and the tensions around its implementation

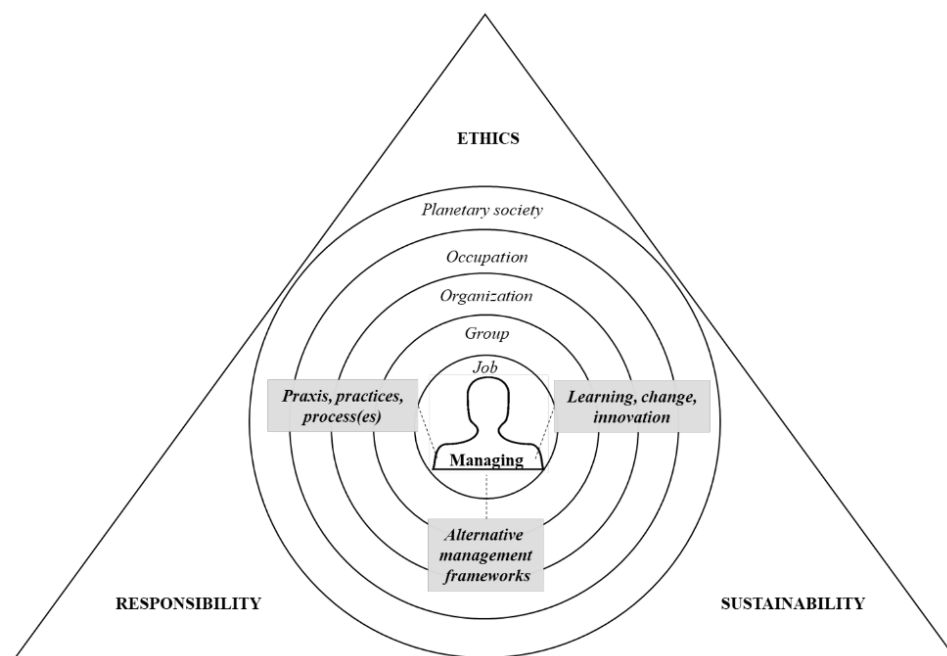


Figure 1: Framework of Responsible Management. Source: (Laasch et al., 2019)

The concept of responsible management combines the three disciplines of sustainability, stakeholder responsibility and ethics as an umbrella term through the lens of new practices, frameworks and learning methods in contexts ranging from the personal through the

organisational level all the way to society (Laasch et al., 2019) (See Figure 1). While responsible management has already matured to the point that it could produce plenty of independent literature, the perspectives of its constituent disciplines contain much of the field-level knowledge needed to push forward practical applicability. Depending on the exact conceptualisation of responsible management, we might look at actions relating to specified responsible jobs, such as CSR managers, at humanist approaches, negative externality reducing activities, responsible, institutionalising leadership movements, proactive stakeholder relationship creation, or reshaping organisations towards being resilient through responsibility (Laasch, Suddaby, et al., 2020). Specific responsible skillset portfolio conceptualisations also add to the list of specific ways of operating along the lines of intellectual, practical, and personal duties, with absorptive capacity, the ability to harness latent internal or external resources highlighted (Laasch & Moosmayer, 2016).

Different conceptualisations point to specific responsibilities of a responsible manager, with many borrowed from micro-CSR practices (Willness et al., 2020) for example. We are drawing from (Laasch & Conaway, 2018) for an overview of the ways in which these practices can be operationalised and categorised. They have described a general process of enacting responsibility as well as the scopes of leadership by deconstructing traditional managerial models. What we would like to highlight as good basis for future research and overall checklist for responsibility are the collections of competences and the associated management levels in an organisational hierarchy. We have adapted the original tables based on some case specific observations, mostly reflecting the complexity of the shifting boundaries of managerial roles and those of others.

Competence Group	Mainstream Management Competencies	Prime Management Competencies
Domain (to know)	Technical	Responsible management background domains, tools
Procedural (to do)	Conceptual and diagnostic	<i>Ecosystem thinking</i> Interdisciplinary work Decision making

Social (to interact)	Political Communication Leadership Delegation	Networking and communication <i>Facilitating change agency</i> <i>Providing critical feedback</i>
Self (to be)	Toughness Efficiency Effectiveness Loyalty	Meta-perspective Empathy <i>Advocacy</i> <i>Proactive problem discovery</i> <i>Managing a sense of urgency (patience)</i> <i>Critical self-reflection</i>

Table 1: Own edit adapted from: Examples of Salient Competencies for Prime Managers.

Source: (Laasch & Conaway, 2018)

The Table 2 displays some of the layered complexity of responsibilities. It is important to note that in our cases, and most likely in many cases of smaller organisations, the columns become somewhat interchangeable as roles shift since the flat hierarchy does not allow for such specialisation and legitimacy concerns shape who can take part in which tasks at any given time.

	Top Managers	Middle Managers	Frontline Managers
Plan	Strategizing the transition	Translate strategy into objectives and actions	Management of resources and involvement of employees
Organize	Institutional work, facilitation	Reorganizing management for responsibility	Adjustment of assignments
Lead	Cultural work and setting priorities	Leading managers in implementation of objectives	Leading day-to-day implementation
Control	Monitoring and iteration	Observation and improvement of performance	Supervision and optimization

Table 2: Own edit adapted from: Hierarchical Management Levels and Typical Responsible Management Task descriptions. Source: (Laasch & Conaway, 2018)

The UN PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) has set much of the initial agenda for this discipline, providing more unifying frameworks, while some argue that these attempts limit critical interpretation of what responsibility could entail contextually. This is because responsible management generally looks for transformational change where choices become decisions about integrated values (Millar & Price, 2018). What is central to this kind of change is that a shift in culture and identity as well as a systemic shift at multiple levels of organising should ideally occur to facilitate implementation (Doherty et al., 2015).

At a cultural or individual level transformation has been theorised for example through engaging moral reflexive practices through threshold concepts (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015), the creation of dedicated discursive spaces (Chapple et al., 2020), or organic socialization in the right institutional settings (Baden & Parkes, 2013; Blasco, 2012), with similar practical and social barriers that could curtail motivation such as a hostile environment or emotional exhaustion (Louw, 2019).

In the case of infertile grounds for responsibility, the role of leadership rises in integrating the new voices, which is why this role could pose unique challenges (Gomes & Marques, 2019). The difference between management and leadership becomes key here, as the latter deals with the issues of 'what' should be done and ordering the options. If a change catalyst choses this path, the value of personal authenticity also rises (Corriveau, 2020), especially as transformative leadership can be linked to improved organizational climate (McMurray et al., 2010) as well as pro-environmental attitudes mediated through shared green visions among others (Maqsoom et al., 2025).

In the case of catalysing change, whether bottom-up, or top-down, leadership must determine directions and specify goals as well as stakeholder groups on which explicit strategies can be built (Gomes & Marques, 2019). The question here is how actively and assertively leadership should shape these alignment processes, as responsible management usually advocates grassroots approaches.

Contextual embeddedness has been raised as a middle ground where the interwoven situated practices co-construct specific responsibilities (Price et al., 2019). These types of conceptualizations also highlight the role of boundary spanning objects or organizational spaces which provide transdisciplinary environments for reflective learning (Chapple et al.,

2020). At a macro level, the rethinking of organisational governance goals has been emphasized, with a move from organisational level reductions of negative externalities to proactive engagement of societal issues and stakeholders (van Tulder & van Mil, 2020), or the introduction of new legitimate market logics in conjunction with existing actors that generate legitimacy (Cashore, 2002). This newfound focus on looking beyond organisational boundaries for resources, goals, or community in combatting multisectoral challenges (Diaz Gonzalez & Dentchev, 2021) does, however, place specific new tasks on managers.

A primary issue during responsible transitions arises from the inherent plurality present. Most characteristic could be institutional inertia, where systemic routines and constraints like profit orientation or competing goals limit transformative opportunities (Cornuel & Hommel, 2015). Organizational paradox theory demonstrates that frictions occur across multiple domains during transformation (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Hahn et al., 2018). At a meta level, conflicts could arise between the disciplines of responsible management, or internal or external stakeholders. Another basic paradox that is discussed is the one between multiple institutional logics (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Radoynovska et al., 2019) such as ones dominated by hierarchy versus participation or ones with profit-based missions versus ones with social value creation in mind.

Facilitating the harnessing of these tensions and paradoxes as fuel, through balanced inclusion, rather than pushing down dissent could be task of the new institutional leader conceptualizations entailing new political and social roles (Besharov & Khurana, 2000; Laasch & Moosmayer, 2016). Working through them serves the purposes of common meaning-making, reducing ambiguities, and increasing commitment (Hahn et al., 2018; van Bommel, 2018).

Foresight is presented as a bridge in this regard, as a type of strategizing that can mediate underlying tensions. Foresight shows a shift in interpretation from toolkits and programmes of way-finding (Sarpong et al. 2013) to a deeper cultural shift generated from within, which permeates the everyday actions of the organisation in ways that are not always visible or controllable. It is a process of co-interpretation of the present with involved stakeholders, which results in a created vision that is inherently shared and commonly understood (Hirschhorn 1998: 115). In this process, stakeholders are more deeply anchored not only to objectives but to the underpinning reality that is co-constructed, which shapes and guides future decisions (Sarpong et al. 2013).

Foresight is not to be treated as a single intervention, rather a continuous process which everyone becomes familiar with either internally or externally to find the path to everyday

decisions (Sarpong et al. 2013). As part of the paradigm shift of future studies, these can be part of instinctive, reflexive or deliberate actions that can be understood from the perspectives of time, space or in terms of interpersonal relationships (Hideg, 2002). The collaborative nature of foresight in particular has been shown to generate value in sustainability oriented long-term strategizing, innovation and transformation processes between stakeholders (Cagnin et al., 2015; Wiener et al., 2018). On a practical level, we examine strategic foresight and specifically its qualitative adaptation as a “dual purpose task of 1) observing, perceiving, and capturing factors that are likely to induce future changes, and 2) dealing with these changes by deciding appropriate organizational responses” as described by Iden et al. (2017, 87).

III. Research method

Our main aim through our case studies is to demonstrate, at the level of everyday managerial dilemmas, as well as overarching stories, what challenges someone can observe when attempting to embark on a road to a responsible organisational transformation. Through a detailed breakdown of the questioned managers’ lifecycle together with their organisations, we could identify certain trends and points of interest, that explain the reasoning behind processes occurring the way that they did, and how the logic and implementation of responsible management enacted through foresight exercises could mediate these effects. Internal planning documentations further enriched our dataset, by making explicit certain strategic choices that we could connect to the big picture.

Organisation and strategy researchers use numerous case study methodologies, which fit well with the goals of trying to understand complex, intertwined social phenomena (Blatter & Haverland, 2012; Eisenhardt, 1989). In our research we follow the concepts of Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (1994), whose main objective with the case study-based methodology was to build a theory, however, we use this comparative case study method to refine and vitalise existing theories.

We have purposefully chosen a pair of organisations as our research subjects because we were sure that we can learn the most from them in terms of our topic, following the suggestions of Stake (1994). This is also recognised as an opportunistic sampling choice, while focusing on variation as well with a combination of for-profit and non-profit contexts (Riemer, 1977). We use instrumental case study methodology which starts from a particular analysis and aims at

the concept of responsible management in a more complex environment while capturing the factors that affect and influence it (Stake, 1995). Our chosen data gathering methods were life-world interviews with the leaders, as well as the processing of documents containing details of the initial strategic plans for the organisational transition projects they had initiated. Primary data collection occurred between 2020 and 2021 as a series of interviews conducted during active stages of the transformation processes of the organizations, while the topics discussed span about two decades. Altogether, five formal interviews were conducted with each leader over the course of about a year, as well as several semi-structured, more informal discussions about more personal perspectives and retrospective views after a few months of the initial sampling.

Due to the personal nature of much of our data, our interviewees consented to their inclusion and that of their organizations in an anonymized manner only. Our roles as researchers were, primarily, as collectors of narrative pieces around stories in these cases, as well as critical observers trying to understand more about the embedded dynamics of responsible management transitions.

We have chosen Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaser 1992; Strauss and Corbin 1990; (Charmaz, 2014) as our approach to analyses. We have chosen to adopt the methods of the interpretative paradigm (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Based on (Sebastian, 2019) this was because of our aim to be actively engaging with and interpreting our data, our relationship with existing literature - which we have kept more general and all-encompassing in order to allow more flexibility of discovery - and for the reason that it allows for single occurrences of data to be interpreted.

Our interpretative framework included us having some core, open questions initially, based on our interests as well as on our theoretical background, which served to define the main categories of our questioning. Our sample of interviews, documents and notes were independently analysed for key ideas. This was followed by the joint identification of common patterns, which we have sorted into themes that resonated with our initial questions. Key findings were subsequently grouped into these thematic categories. Finally, the themes were compiled into storylines that described the paths of the two leaders. This allowed for comparison between their paths as well as the interpretation of actions and events as part of a larger context, as well as the interpretation of relevant theoretical frameworks which

contributed to the understanding of the phenomena. We wished to focus on stories, that we can learn from, rather than simply emphasizing the established theoretical linkages, or creating a new model of our own.

During our short case studies based on interviews with the owner and chief executive of a middle-sized Hungarian construction firm working in green construction models, as well as the leader of a social work and sustainability education based social enterprise, many challenges relating to transformation have risen. We have attributed these to three core themes based on our research questions: systemic, social as well as implementation challenges. Table 3 represents our analytical coding framework summarizing key findings described below in an overarching narrative framework. They represent the primary answers to our research questions as well, alongside the narrative interpretations.

Primary codes	Main Theoretical Concepts	Analytical Codes	Empirical Findings
Social and Personal Barriers	Individual transformation barriers (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015; Louw, 2019) Cultural fixations in transitional economies (Bakacsi et al., 2002) Authentic leadership challenges (Corriveau, 2020)	Cultural resistance to change	Profit-sharing met with fear and confusion Staff thinking leader is mad for sharing ownership Employees wanting freedom but not asking for it Power differential perceptions persist
	Emotional exhaustion and hostile environments (Louw, 2019) Personal authenticity requirements (Corriveau, 2020) Transformative leadership climate effects (McMurray et al., 2010; Maqsoom et al., 2025)	Participation paradox	Staff expect ready-made routines and answers Leaders expect highly independent people No safe platforms for voicing opinions Ambiguity in participation expectations
		Leadership legitimacy crisis	Trust erosion when seeking external validation Internal stakeholders feel abandoned Leaders become common enemy unintentionally Emotional exhaustion from resistance
Systemic and Institutional Barriers	Multi-tier governance requirements (van Tulder & van Mil, 2020)	Governance tier-skipping	Attempting higher-level practices without basic foundations Missing license to operate at societal

	Institutional plurality tensions (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Radoynovska et al., 2019)		level No legitimacy for wider engagement
	Flat hierarchy role confusion (Laasch & Conaway, 2018) Institutional inertia and competing logics (Cornuel & Hommel, 2015) Organizational paradox management (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Hahn et al., 2018)	Structural capacity deficits	Single leaders fulfilling multiple hierarchy levels Role boundaries become interchangeable Quick burnout from trying all steps Flat hierarchy prevents specialization
	Institutional entrepreneurship demands (Smith & Besharov, 2019; Tracey et al., 2011)	Coalition-building failures	No clear internal allies identified Search limited to antagonistic upper management Missing functional sub-groups Organization treated as unitary whole
Vision-Implementation Conflicts	Strategic foresight as continuous process (Sarpong, Maclean, Alexander, 2013; Iden et al., 2017) Foresight as co-interpretation and meaning-making (Hirschhorn, 1998; Sarpong, Maclean, Davies, 2013)	Strategic anchor breakdown	Participative visions created but abandoned Action planning and responsibility distribution neglected No updates planned for years
	Collaborative foresight in transformation (Cagnin et al., 2015; Wiener et al., 2018) Paradox integration vs. dissent suppression (Hahn et al., 2018; van Bommel, 2018)	Tension avoidance patterns	No tactics to mediate conflicts Differentiation/termination preferred over integration Staff separations rather than working through tensions Ethical dilemmas around non-participants
	Stakeholder alignment and goal setting (Gomes & Marques, 2019)	Implementation-vision disconnect	Abstract goals like "focusing on people-first" No concrete operational translation Paternalistic empowerment without consultation
Cross-Cutting Meta-Theme	Contextual embeddedness and situated practices (Price et al., 2019) Boundary spanning and transdisciplinary learning (Chapple et al., 2020) Response-ability and resilience building (Laasch, Suddaby, et al., 2020) Absorptive capacity for transformation (Laasch & Moosmayer, 2016)	Leadership rhythm misalignment	"Swing metaphor" - oscillation between profit/responsibility states Leaders "swinging erratically" without organizational adaptation time Social transformation needing time

Table 3. Analytical framework of case study results. Source: Own edit.

IV. Analysis and findings

IV.1. Case context

Our choice of cases were two organisations which were interesting for us, because they were in very similar stages of their development, both entering a transformational phase after more, then two decades of operations. They also represent responsibility in their purpose as a green construction firm and a social enterprise, respectively, despite operating in very different fields, while also having similar social and resource-based challenges related to their transformations. Table 4 includes basic introductions of the two organizations and leaders.

	Case_1 Business org.	Case_2. Social enterprise
Main activity	Construction	Education, social work
Leader / owner	20+ years leadership, ownership	10+ years presidency / operative leadership
<i>Referred as...</i>	<i>Leader 1.</i>	<i>Leader 2.</i>
Number of employees	50+	20+
Geographical focus of activities	Urban, Local + international partners	Rural, Local + international network
meframe of the Interviews	2020-2021	2020-2022

Table 4: Basic organisational characteristics. Source: Own edit.

The goal in both cases was to initiate a complex responsibility oriented operational and cultural transformation within the organisations. High level, abstract goals were presented by the leaders that included topics such as focusing on people first, sharing in common tangible and philosophical values, as well as a realignment around a deeper focus on the initial missions. The intersectionality of responsibility quickly revealed itself, as the stories about the organisations' pasts emerged. As ambition towards great offerings for a better future were emphasized the traditional profit-oriented model in case of the company and the financial sustainability focused activities of the social enterprise, coupled with the gap created by the transition of the country to a market economy yielded great success. This success did, however, have two important consequences: both organisations and its leaders began to think like businessmen, first and foremost in the short term, seizing the fruits of their success, or simply not managing resources effectively, while also favouring efficiency over sustainable delivery of their products and services. Realisations around this would not have surfaced, had it not been for the leaders' personal revelations about a lack of meaning in what they were doing and a desire to shake things up.

The initial callings revolved around filling the organisations and the leadership role once again with meaning and focusing on the people involved, as opposed to chasing monetary resources. All the while, conducting individual search for answers towards responsibility from academia and advisors or wider networks have resulted in new connections and directions, while internal stakeholders were seemingly left blind as to the directions to come, as well as seeing a leader looking out for other stakeholders before them. The leaders, all the while, not having the right tools, however, having a relatively high awareness of some related meta concepts, such as ecosystems thinking or the importance of participation, decided to outsource most of the transition's process to groups mostly comprised of upper management, further distancing the field level from the source of the idea of transformation. This also meant that the anchor provided by the initial foresight-based strategy had been broken, with only elements being executed that were further underpinned by leadership support and no update planned for years of this process.

IV.2. Initial attempts at transformation

Exacerbating the situation was the initial structure and culture present. First, even though the organisations operated with sustainability-based value propositions, they began to do so in an entirely business-oriented, or opportunistic manner. These models strengthened since new upper management had been recruited, as they too, had goals mostly based on the streamlining of operations. Resulting in further financial success, the shift reportedly had negative effects on morale and service quality as well as increasing the divide between management and the leader. Dynamics around this first transition highlighted the fact that a responsibility-based business model by itself was not conducive of a cultural change towards responsibility. What happened instead was a gradual conversion around technical lines to early imitations (Kozminski, 2008) of the motions of popular responsible programs with a top-down method, as such knowledge has become available, yet proper use requires time to learn.

On the positive side, intention-wise, the leaders, beyond the initial actions, planned for later development to include, among others, coopetition-based (Walley, 2007) knowledge-sharing schemes aimed at generating new organisations with the same offering, instead of just growing their organisations, as well as new KPI-s that would incentivise participation along their plans.

It is important to note that what was described as a goal was the fulfilment of a specific individual calling towards responsibility, not any specific actions. Past actions and plans reflected this, as the owner initiated basic communication trainings and coaching aiming at

inclusion and cultural shift, which were widely accepted initial activities, while looking to create deeper change through profit-sharing, or partnering schemes with his workforce, beyond the promise of “*a fair salary that provides security*”, as well as progressive marketing campaigns and other methods to spread the green agenda. Among these was, for example a campaign targeted towards children that used visual storytelling to plant the seeds of sympathy as well as awareness of the importance of green spaces and the ecosystem. The fairy tale-based images contrasted, among other things, concrete based cityscapes with their associated issues, with the lush, lively views of cities covered with plant life and the harmoniously living population. This project highlights the implicit understanding on the side of management, of basic ecosystems thinking principles in the form of the tales told as well as through the fact that they recognised the potential of extending their sphere of activities to complementary areas. Extending to awareness-raising in such a way is a wise choice in some ways, as it is an area they could have an impact on, based on their core activities. The messages, however, also provide the potential to improve future performance, not even mainly through educating a future customer segment, but through the project’s marketing benefits, the importance of which the owner did not fail to emphasize, as honest self-criticism.

Meanwhile, the social enterprise had streamlined many background operations and had transitioned to employing full-time paid workforce, admittedly becoming increasingly dependant on grant funds that also predetermined many future activities. Similarly, but in different form to the company, the content was also often tailored to complex responsibility topics being included in youth education and training material. In both cases, one clear caveat that emerged is that a certain professional approach and commitment was not present. Content was often not suitably digestible to the target audience and was really a simplified measure to exploit available resources and opportunities that were also visibly missing in other areas at the same time.

“This is the first time that we work with mostly paid staff. That also means that we can not just focus on the projects that we think are the most impactful, we need to look for ones that bring in the most resources. Paying wages is a whole new responsibility.” (Quotation from Leader 2.)

Speaking of content, the very cultural shift was out of touch with current realities. When both organisations formed, the economic situation allowed for easy initiation of new products or services, with much weaker competition. Based on this and their own lived experiences and

skillsets, the leaders assumed that a high degree of control could be handed over to staff, since they should be able to operate independently. However, the more efficient siloed operation and the tougher economic climate only grew individual frustrations, as support was rarely offered in cases of actual initiatives, while leadership agenda was underpinned by access to discretionary resources.

“We often find people expecting ready-made routines and answers. That is not the case, we expect highly independent people that can initiate projects themselves and work alone in most cases, more like entrepreneurs.” (Quotation from Leader 2.)

The first organised attempts at strategic foresight activities were at the onset of the transformations with this mindset. Through participative processes, visions were created around new goals based on present activities to guide new directions. Driven by the new visions, leaders felt empowered, however it quickly became evident that action planning and responsibility distribution were neglected, leaving the new visions hanging over the organisations with little to contribute beyond serving as a reminder of neglected tasks.

VI.3. Individual responsibilities of transformation

At the outset of the transformation process, we see leaders with good intentions, individually attempting to catalyse cultural and operational change. As noted already, a glaring lack of clear directions could be observed. With most sentences about the topic describing individual actions, they were using responsible methodologies with seemingly little contextual and social considerations. Looking at a set of multi-tiered strategic planning documents, this trend becomes even more clear, as they not only show a glaring lack of involvement from the field level, they make explicit mentions about not trying to change things at the individual and group levels as well as limiting the reorganisations to certain fields, often leaving out supporting staff. This outlook, besides being limited, also helps us reflect on a wider issue. Laasch & Conaway(2018) point to three layers of responsible management practices based on individual positions in hierarchies, which begs the questions of what happens, when hierarchies are flatter, and when change is catalysed by a single individual. This is especially important given the fact, that small and medium sized organisations are usually prevalent, compared to larger firms, especially in transitional economies like Hungary. When acting as a top-level responsible manager in a smaller firm, one can either attempt to involve all steps, which could easily result in quick burnout and a lack of focus, while focusing on only the top-tier responsibilities like strategizing would leave unattended certain deeper transformational tasks, like operationalising goals and adjusting task sets.

Clear directions and goals are a prerequisite to transformation, as without shared meanings and knowledge, new perspectives have no ground to be planted in. An already relatively dissatisfied workforce was faced with the information, that some sort of intangible change was occurring in their environment and thus even reactions to the planned profit-sharing scheme were described as having involved fear and mainly, confusion.

“I said I wanted to make them partners, to share what I have, literally, to give shares, that one can buy cars with, or whatever. And I figure this to be a great idea, and then they say this man is mad. And I am the one trying to justify it and to work for it to be accepted.”

(Quotation from Leader 1.)

In terms of explicit strategy and mission as a result of foresight attempts, the company had basic written documents that did not stray far from their basic business model, with admittedly possessing *“no strategy or mission that was created by most of the company sitting down and discussing it in a structured way”* (Quotation from Leader 1.). Even though partnering schemes were described, the leaders had no clear allies they could identify within the organisation that could share their vision, nor did they give any indication of searching for them beyond upper management, who were specifically known to be antagonistic to these ideas. While the social enterprise had initiated strategic sessions around foresight, the same issues meant that these sessions did not translate into practical or cultural change, since the co-constructed new realities were not maintained by the leader.

At this point, it would be easy to put blame on the one catalysing change, mentioning neglected responsibilities. This is, however, an especially important juncture in the process of analysing such a situation, and one where personal pasts and local contexts tell a more nuanced story. What is important to consider in these cases is a dynamic relationship between the personality traits of leadership and how those are constructed by the requirements of the environment. The classic entrepreneurial mindset envisions mostly charismatic leaders with bold ideas, and this becomes especially important in transitional economies, as there can be a lack of people with the right mindset, and crucially, sufficient capacity to participate actively. In essence, these leaders, through their commitment and determination have the ability to uplift their chosen professional community. There is, however, an inherent lag between the development of the leader and his community.

“It is a great contradiction. I am facing great resistance trying to get discussions going about choices. It is highly ambivalent in firm management, people truly want freedom, yet on the

other hand they do not ask for it, they usually wish for me to tell them how things should be.”

(Quotation from Leader 1.)

We will try to make this dynamic and its implications clearer by presenting it through a metaphor. Imagine the organisations life cycle as riding a swing, first of all. The leaders, in these cases, would be the ones who lead the swing with his legs and body, constantly pulling the swing, the organisation and its constituents itself slightly after himself. The two peaks of the swinging motion represent two states of managerial and firm attitudes, one being the vision-based state (*Envisioned / real responsibility phase*) with varying levels of responsibility and the other one being a state characterised by profit- and growth-seeking attitudes (*Growth and Burnout phase*). Each stage of the swing carries within the momentum to propel the whole towards the opposite direction, which can be supplemented by the body’s further movements that determine how high the peaks get. It is, however, blatantly obvious, that constant heavy swinging can cause the rider to fall off and the swing itself to then fall aimlessly towards the lowest point. With the swing, we aim to describe the leaders’ and their actions connection to time. It is a non-linear path from one end to the other, with diffuse phases describing identifiable organisational states in our cases. Though clearly not fixed, these items can guide future thinking when a leader expects this non-linearity as well as their limited agency.

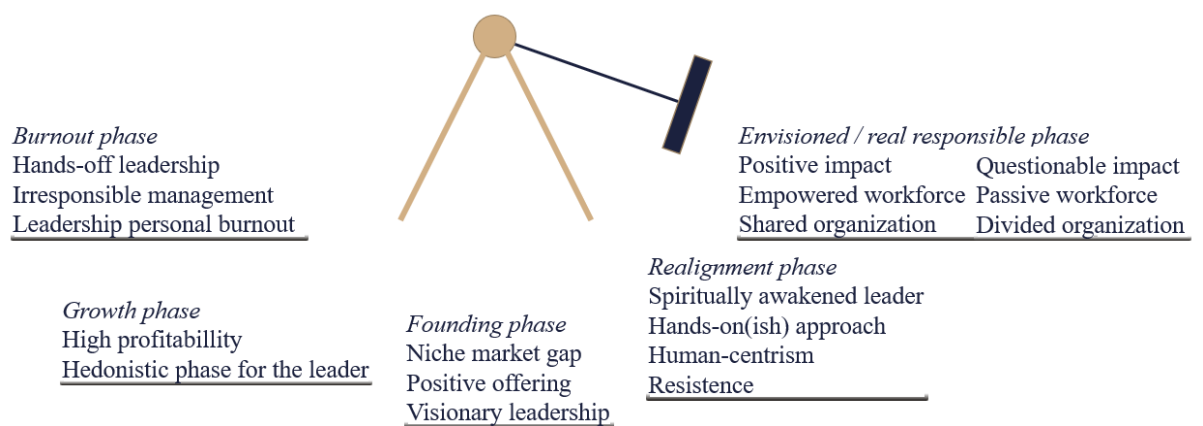


Figure 2.: Phases of leadership responsibility. Own creation based on interviews.

Through the leaders’ lived experiences, we could see that each transition in the organisations’ lives followed personal transitions. The motivation for the company owner at the *founding phase* to enter the field resulted in success and wealth, bringing with it its own norms, like living out loud and basking in the riches earned, as well as a shift to what was described as the “using” of people. Without intervention or conscious knowledge, competitive and similarly unfortunate socialisation has occurred within the company as well in it’s *growth*

phase, gradually pulling people to a technocratic approach that maximized success, while decreasing satisfaction. After a time, however – over the course of a decade – these norms caused havoc on the leader's personal life, resulting in a *burnout phase* which resulted in the discovery of newfound spirituality and a sense of responsibility. It is this spirit that was aimed at the company afterwards. Having defined the character of the company before, he had expected his proudly owned charismatic style to result in quick change, a *realignment phase* for all. The current responsible transition shows, however, that quick and forceful change leads the swing to destabilise as it reaches its limits of holding the rider. This is when the difference between *envisioned and real responsibility* come into conflict. At this point, the rider is faced with a choice though: does he fall off the swing, does he stop it in the middle, or does he decide to jump at one of the peaks? Jumping in this case represents a further peak, where the leader chooses to abandon those that can no longer carry him higher. He is, however, left without a swing, and with no more momentum, he inevitably falls back down. IV.4. Cooperation replacing control

This state, in our cases could be described as a top-down empowerment attempt, but through mainly paternalistic means. Although noble in intentions, the leaders in both cases failed to ask the key question of whether people wished to be empowered in these ways or whether this sort of involvement would put further strain on them, without any clear goal in mind. Furthermore, although they were viewed as equals, no formal attempts were seemingly made to involve the partners-to-be in defining directions in an engaging way. The initial green and social offers of the organisations were instead viewed by leaders as sufficient legitimating force towards alignment of individual goals. With frustration growing, the concept of the new KPI-s, even though they never were implemented, show that instead of drawing from internal motivations and attempting to create legitimacy, external factors were to be used, while having the added effect of being exclusive to the ones participating in the new ways. This dynamic was further underpinned by the fact that there were no real tactics to mediate tensions, in fact, the prevailing attitude moved towards the idea of differentiation or potential termination for non-participants in the short term, based on some sort of later determined criteria, which presents an obvious ethical dilemma.

The latter attitude reflects a broader failure to recognise institutional plurality, and its tensions, which are inherent to such transformations, not necessarily failures to begin with. Attempts to draw advantages from these tensions would take a further step in the right directions, but the initial misinterpretation of the base concepts is what truly derails change.

By the time the complexities of these responsibilities were understood by the leaders, trust was eroded on a level that made even the right steps seem illegitimate. This was, however, attempted to be further mediated by the owner, who purposefully withdrew from everyday operative management, instead internalising the position of a philosophical leader, acknowledging the divide between these roles. At a certain point, the social enterprise leader similarly acknowledged these limitations, but had chosen to give up the leadership position, retaining the role of a practical problem-solver and a guide in his field of expertise, while opening up the opportunity for each organisational unit to co-determine separate as well as common goals.

Perhaps we can, through our metaphor, explain the kind of change in thinking that would be needed. By thinking of the leader as the swing, we see that he only facilitates the rises to peak points, he does not directly determine the force or speed, merely providing the flexible, yet reasonable limits to change. Thinking in this way evokes the concepts of patience and moderation, as the leader as the rider needed to wait during each swing for the whole to follow with him, while in this paradigm, he gets to help the rider to the peaks, while also representing the knowledge about limits. Another, more obvious solution would be to stay in the saddle, but stop swinging so erratically, however, perhaps changing roles first is needed to learn how to play nicely. Contrary to some actions taken, the leaders actually had some conceptions about such a way of acting as first and foremost, a controlling, rather, then a directly determining participant. As the owner had put it, when talking about having support and internal cohesion:

“I know very firmly what I want from this, what I am projecting to others, and I am in very deep need of this knowledge, as I am getting no positive feedback. It is important that I have a solid grasp which shows that I know what goals I am aiming at and that in some, I cannot compromise, otherwise, I would just be contradicting myself... For some, I have become a common enemy, which at least aligned their own priorities between themselves.” (Quotation from Leader 1.)

“At some point, I had to realise that I cannot do this all alone, that perhaps my model does not work for the new staff anymore. I know what I do well and how that helps us, I need to focus on that. We now have responsible people leading each department, we have the systems set up, which I only need to maintain and it seems that after some time, everyone agreed to their place when left alone. We work with those that left us, when needed but mostly we just let them do their own thing.” (Quotation from Leader 2.)

This contradiction had surfaced in no simpler way than a group of members and employees leaving to form their own similar ventures shortly in both cases. The underlying tensions were, in fact, described to have been significantly released with the shifts in leadership structures. However, this had come in the form of certain unavoidable differences or incompatibilities being acknowledged amidst persisting challenges. The notable difference is that in case of the company, a total separation was described amongst less, then amicable circumstances, with serious setbacks to operations, while the social enterprise managed to retain contact and a sense of coordination with their former colleagues, with new services being developed as well. While the organisational forms certainly had a role to play, it is worth noting, that in the first case, operative leadership tasks were forsaken for the sake of maintaining a vision, while in the second, a greater flexibility and decentralisation of meanings was allowed, while maintaining operational stability.

V. Discussion

At this point, it would be easy to put blame on the one catalysing change, mentioning neglected responsibilities. This is, however, an especially important juncture in the process of analysing such a situation, and one where personal pasts and local contexts tell a more nuanced story. What is important to consider in these cases is a dynamic relationship between the personality traits of leadership and how those are constructed by the requirements of the environment. The classic entrepreneurial mindset envisions mostly charismatic leaders with bold ideas, and this becomes especially important in transitional economies, as there can be a lack of people with the right mindset, and crucially, sufficient capacity to participate actively. It is through this moment once more that we emphasize the coexistence of old and new social fixations as apparent power differential perceptions shape employee-employer relations even among good intentions (Bakacsi et al., 2002). In essence, these leaders, through their commitment and determination have the ability to uplift their chosen professional community. There is, however, an inherent lag between the development of the leader and his community.

To summarise, the first factor that could be observed as a barrier to enter responsible operations is the organisations capacity for participation on a practical as well as on a social level. Properly carrying out responsibilities at each tier of governance before attempting to influence wider parts of society as well as obtaining the proper “license” to operate at such levels also stands out as a clear prerequisite of organisational development at such a scale. These two factors also naturally interlink, as not meeting the requirements of internal stakeholders jeopardizes any further commitments towards looking outwards. A specific linkage to this is responsible

managements individual level focus. This focus could not be seen in our case, as systems and committees mostly replaced the role of individual agency. Both from the leader's and his constituent's side, with little effort placed into discussion, empathic methods, or critical review of the management strategies, the new systems were bolted on, never integrated into the core mission, or people's everyday experience.

This becomes an issue in our case, since several documents reference an expectation of widespread participation, manifesting in active engagement, and crucially, giving feedback, as well as providing accurate information and operative adaptation of the transformations progress. With no reasons given as to this expectation, on the contrary, there being mentions of a lack of honesty in the reporting structure, and a glaring lack of any planned contingencies, any further strategizing had no firm ground, emphasizing the need for deeper change in how the trickle-down effects of strategy-making operate at the individual level. The second dilemma which presents itself is that even if basic organisational criteria are met, due to simple personal or practical reasons, many might choose not to participate in endeavours aiming at proactive responsible actions. From a catalysing perspective, we argue that this state is something that is inherent to such transformations, especially in such capable, yet imperfect contexts and therefor, is something to be worked at, not fought. The already well understood concept of a need to mediate these tensions has, however, only been reinforced by our study. What is important to understand is that we can see a big picture which has the overall capacity to employ a progressive approach, but specific elements which hinder it. These are, however, social elements which cannot be easily circumvented if one employs a truly responsible approach. While a committed leader might choose to abandon those who are unwilling to participate, we can easily see that this becomes an ethical issue, emphasizing the intersectionality of a complex responsibility interpretation. Further research might aim at closely examining individual factors which make participation unappealing or impractical in the specific case of responsible agendas.

Looking at this dilemma through the institutional entrepreneurial lens (Smith & Besharov, 2019), a mistake here was looking at the organisation as a unitary whole that needs to be converted, instead of looking to create or find functional pockets that could nurture the new ideas and co-construct responsibility alongside the traditional business side of the organisation (Lewis et al., 2014). What we see here is an attempt at skipping what (van Tulder & van Mil, 2020) referred to as a Tier 1 governance challenge of carrying out basic duties and responsibilities towards the closest of stakeholders and missions and attempting to move onto higher tiers of responsibility. Although these actions are described as positive, following the

multi-tier operation model, what we see is that there were no attempts to create legitimacy around the new tiers of responsible management practices, and a practical failure to comply with the prerequisites of each higher tier. This core mistake represents an outlook of the duty of the leader as a change catalyst that is much narrower compared to the institutional leader concepts outlined by (Besharov & Khurana, 2000) emphasizing, among others, political tasks or (Gomes & Marques, 2019) who have included wide and structured stakeholder related actions.

An offshoot of this thought is that even though certain barriers cannot be fought, more attention should be paid to finding ways of circumventing some of their effects. A recurring element of our case was that even though strategies and systems were put in place around existing operative areas to open up the company to participation, no platform or specific call to action was created that would reduce the ambiguity of the situation or make it easier, safer and more meaningful to voice opinions in tense social settings. These tasks imply an active, hands-on approach to whole new systems which need to be managed in their own right. This time, confusion was instead felt by the leaders, as they had felt that their ideals and attempts would naturally convince everyone. Without clearly defined directions, however, the only concept to align with was the offer of profits and funds, if anything, conserving the business-as-usual state.

Furthermore, we would like to stress a potential need to rethink the very role of leadership in even deeper ways. Some of the most stressed issues we have faced are actually related to the personal perspective of catalysing change. Through our metaphor, certain implications to this have been presented. 'A radical way of thinking could lead to managers distancing themselves from their firm during transitions, especially if their approach appears far distanced from what seems compatible with the vast majority or if their presence is making the community too dependent on their guidance. Besides this, patience must be employed as conscious way of operating, as it cannot be understated that social transformation is not something that occurs overnight.

VI. Conclusion – Lessons learned

This study contributes to responsible management literature by identifying the specific mechanisms through which cultural and systemic factors interact to create transformation barriers in transitional economies. Looking through the eyes of an owner, leader, and manager,

we have provided a few simple lessons aiming at enriching the responsibility literature in our own way, as well as translating some outstanding concepts to very practical and lived terms that can aid any manager or leader who tries to engage in transformative action.

The greatest takeaway is the fact, that leading responsively is indeed more than possessing the right cause or calling or having knowledge of certain techniques to guide transformation. The leader must, principally, take responsibility of his own responsibility before expecting similar things from others. This means an understanding of the gravity of the many new practical duties placed upon the leader, the main one of which could be the facilitation of structured strategizing and sense-making. This constitutes a form of organisational foresight which builds on and aids more general management tools like ordering of organisational elements as well as coalition-building. Our research demonstrates three critical requirements for successful responsible transformation: (1) sequential attention to governance tiers, (2) patient leadership rhythm aligned with organizational capacity, and (3) trust-based culturally-adapted participation mechanisms. Our view is that these results strengthen earlier findings of similar nature, particularly about the responsible managers role clarity around institutional work, besides providing practical demonstrations of how and why such responsible management practices might emerge. In imperfect societal contexts, the concept of participation and responsibility might already exist, while specific characteristics might make grassroots approaches not viable. The recognition of a need to take charge in such cases is something to be deeply internalised, since without directions, institutional work, and a base capacity, true participation and responsibility cannot even begin to spread.

VII. Limitations and future research:

This study's qualitative case approach provides in-depth insights but limits generalizability beyond the contexts examined. The specific cultural and organizational contexts may not represent broader settings where responsible management occurs, however the findings could be more applicable to smaller organizations. Additionally, reliance on retrospective and internal data as well as the prolonged close engagement of the researchers with participants may introduce bias.

Future research could explore diverse industries and cultural contexts with longitudinal designs to better understand how responsible management and leadership evolve over time. The effects of framing responsibility through different threshold concepts could also serve to further the communicative aspects of the field. Integrating quantitative measures and examining the

interaction between responsible management and organizational leadership could also deepen understanding of how to bridge theory and practice effectively.

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5.2. ARTICLE II.

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Open value creation for the common good: A comprehensive exploration of social innovation in the context of social enterprises

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Abstract

Purpose:

The aim of the research is to explore the ways that social enterprises create value by embedding themselves in networks through the process of social innovation. The processes of achieving common social missions were studied through select organizations employing an open approach to social innovation. Novel operational structures as well as unique forms of created value were explored.

Design/methodology/approach:

Two organizations embedded in local and international networks were studied and were chosen due to their social innovation profiles. The study was based on qualitative exploratory research. In-depths analysis was conducted through interviews, open discussions, document analysis as well as personal observation to understand the dynamic interrelatedness of the main factors influencing success of social innovation ventures.

Findings:

This paper identified the role of social innovation in social enterprises embedded in networks. Furthermore, the social value creation processes of these organizations were explored as well as the value they create. Based on the findings, social innovation is rooted in the personality of the included members of the network. The tools of collaboration are platforms which connect the network members to each other. The embedded organizations apply the concept of community sharing with the aim of social value creation.

Originality: While providing a general summary of factors influencing social innovation (SI) activities from extent literature, the paper mainly contributes by providing deeper insight into complex models of SI practices employed by social enterprises (SE). The paper further contributes to popularizing the growing role of SI activities in SEs.

Research limitations/implications: By focusing mainly on system design principles, the sample consists of mainly those at the core of organizations in facilitator roles, leaving peripheral actor perceptions to be determined by secondhand observations.

Article classification: Research paper

Keywords: social innovation; social enterprise; social value; open innovation; platform

1. Introduction

The collaborative processes of social enterprises have deep connections with the concept of social innovation. Collaborations can happen in various ways with various stakeholders aiming to create innovative solutions for those communities who are interested in them or benefit from it. As part of social innovation, novel solutions are created to improve social challenges in ways that improve on previous solutions (Ungvarsky, 2020). The authors take a narrower approach to social innovation partially due to interest as well as the observed thematic elements within established literature. In the authors' interpretation of the concept of social innovation, social value is created through the reconfiguration of existing resources in their stakeholder networks. While collaborations are widely understood as vital parts of social enterprise, social innovation is increasingly seen to be adopted by entrepreneurs whose express purpose is to establish communities around value creation. This research focuses on two such Hungarian based social enterprises whose operations are embedded in international networks as well as local communities.

The goal behind social innovation is interpreted in the study as the detection of social and environmental challenges, the creation of inventive solutions for society as a whole in a collaborative framework and the distribution of the benefits. In support of social progress, collaborations are often needed among multiple, heterogeneous actors, such as for-profit and non-profit organizations as well as government actors. The resulting collaborations between actors should result in higher efficiency as well as social transformation (Ungvarsky, 2020).

Part of the authors' focus in examining social innovation processes is the value proposed by social enterprises that aim at transformative connection of stakeholders: how they create value for the customer, or beneficiary what resources and activities are needed for value creation.

This paper contributes to understanding the opportunities of social innovation collaborations, social innovation (eco)systems, and the methods and tools available to participating stakeholders. A deep exploratory approach is taken in a qualitative framework to map related activities of two social enterprises whose primary value propositions revolve around social innovation, in order to better understand the rich interrelated factors that might influence their success.

2. Theoretical background

This paper provides an overview of existing social enterprise definitions (referred to as SE from now on) to highlight the main characteristics of these organizations, their value creation

processes, conceptualized as social value creation, which can generally be considered their primary mission as well as the reason for their creation to begin with (Kokko, 2018). The paper examines those social enterprises which implement social value creation in a way which places the locus of these value creation processes outside the traditional organizational boundaries, instead having a decentralized approach. This approach is explored through the concept of social innovation (referred to as SI from now on) in the context of social enterprises.

Different interpretations of social enterprise

Through existing social enterprise definitions, SEs have various legal forms and business models which influence their revenue channels and affect their activities. The Western European approach of EMES (“EMergence des Entreprises Sociales en Europe”) refers to the combination of social and economic objectives of SEs, with democratic decision-making and innovative ways in which organizations can increase the social impact of their activities (G. Fekete *et al*, 2017). The market-based approaches are rooted in the United States of America, the (1) entrepreneurial nonprofit trend focuses on the market profit-making activities of nonprofit organizations, while the (2) social purpose business trend focuses on the business-based solutions to the social goals set by nonprofit and for-profit organizations. The SI approach refers to the social entrepreneur as an individual who is responsible for the creation of socially innovative solutions of their customers and beneficiaries (G. Fekete *et al*, 2017). The European Commission’s definition is a synthesis of these concepts, which involves their social value creation process, their business activities, the profit reinvestment into their operation, and their operation profile in connection with their social impact creation (European Commission, 2017). Hybridity, which is the feature of SE operations, involves the business and social goals of these organizations. *“Although hybridity allows social entrepreneurs to accomplish multiple goals in a single venture, it also presents challenges in optimizing the results of both dimensions”* (Eiselein and Dentchev, 2020, p.309). This paper examines how social entrepreneurs tackle these multiple goals with the help of SI.

About social value creation processes of social enterprises

Ryder and Vogeley (2017) distinguish between traditional nonprofit, social enterprise and traditional enterprise along the lines of their primary aims. Social enterprise fits in-between the models of charitable funding and profit-orientation because they reinvest their potential generated profit with the aim of generating social value. Kroeger and Weber (2014), have argued that social value occurs when *“an intervention reduces its treatment group’s relative social need”*. These processes are elaborated upon in the context of facilitated partnerships by

Ostertag *et al.*, 2021, which alleviate resource scarcity through network cooperation. In this context, they argue that an understanding of SE blended value creation “*might be found in the way they approach, orchestrate, and cooperate with partners*” (Ostertag *et al.*, 2021, p. 428). Members – organizations, or social entrepreneurs, described as the change makers who are responsible for creating innovative solutions for society (Canestrino *et al.*, 2019) - join networks because they have a common interest in the development of a given social mission and share their resources with the aim of social value creation. Among other things, such a resource can be knowledge, know-how or a better understanding of the given problem (Kokko, 2018). One way for these collaborations to succeed is through what can be conceptualized as an engagement platform, which provides physical or virtual touch points for the members with the aim of exchange and integration of resources and information. “*The platform coordinates open networks of nonhierarchical actors engaged in value cocreation processes, although typically in an online context*” (Kullak *et al.*, 2021, p. 630). Perspectives around these processes are further developed through the concept of social innovation.

Social innovation in the context of social enterprises

This chapter focuses on SI as a systematic approach for social entrepreneurs to manage their collective social value creation processes. SI definitions and the main thematic elements of extent literature on SI are presented as: organizations operative properties, leadership and governance, SI processes and their outcomes and hindering factors. As a pivot from literature to empirical analysis, open innovation is also presented as a perspective that is highly resonant with the selected sample organizations.

SI can describe a wide range of interrelated concepts based on different conceptualizations. Core definitional constructs are presented based on Portales (2019) as: the satisfaction of a need, the innovation of the solution, the change of social structures and relationships, and the increase of society’s capacity to act. In this approach, SI emerges primarily as a focus is placed on meeting societal needs through mechanisms which should ultimately result in social transformation.

The core concepts of SI have multiple possible loci. They can describe an inalienable part of social entrepreneurship (G. Fekete *et al.*, 2017), a tool social entrepreneurs utilize to develop their operations (Esposito *et al.*, 2012; Tasavori *et al.*, 2018) or as part of a wider tool - once removed from specific SEs - to enhance the growing social economy paradigm or a number of rural or urban development schemes (Chalmers, 2013; Kim and Lim, 2017; Membretti, 2007). Two main interpretations that the study focuses on are that SI is a process involving a more organic influencing or emergence of social processes, organizational cultures, institutional

logics, and communities through exposure to diverse actors and activities (Goldstein *et al.*, 2010) and that it is a process of deliberate ordering of the social environment of SEs through personal or digital tools of facilitation (Tung and Jordann, 2017). Further elaborating on the micro-processes of SI in a large market-based SE, Vézina *et al.* (2019) employ a dynamic capabilities approach and formulate a three-layered diagnostic model of SI processes involving sensing, the ability to identify opportunities, seizing, the ability to capitalize on them, and finally reconfiguring resources to fit the tasks at hand. The participatory – mapping of enabling resources of SE and SI operations is brought to the forefront by Moriggi, (2020) in contexts of place-based development, with local embedding being of particular interest as it elevates the importance of intangible, mainly personal resources. These could include ethical and emotional resources that drive individual motivations of participation as opposed to more materially grounded incentives.

Tortia *et al.* (2020) studied how the processes of SI fit SE operations, highlighting personal as well as institutional enabling conditions in the SI process that an SE can generally venture to improve while trying to induce social development as building on social motivations, encouraging collective action through novel governance structures and the socialization of resources.

With the advent of SI becoming mainstream, its framing and source signify a shifting of government responsibilities to the general population, while encouraging SI as a replacement (Bonifacio, 2014). This represents a top-down approach to SI, while out of this necessity, societal actors have learnt a lot about self-organizing and in some cases, they have recognized the shifting power dynamics and actively use these new tools to foster communal autonomy, leading to what Portales (2019) described as a democratization of collective organizing. Pasricha and Rao (2018) focused on the social factors at play, identifying ethical leadership practices as conducive of both increased perceptions of organizational social capital as well as SI tendency, with social capital perceptions directly influencing SI as well. A relationship was also discovered between positive employee relations and SI approaches in companies (Furmańska-Maruszak and Sudolska, 2016). Voltan and De Fuentes (2016) deal with the aspect of the dynamic between multiple institutional logics present within cooperative frameworks, describing diversity – the lack of a single dominant institutional logic - as well as compatibility – the existence of multiple logics that prescribe non-contradictory actions for actors - as factors related to successful ventures.

Phillips *et al.* (2019) have highlighted the difference between SI efforts that primarily aim at new opportunity identification, such as accessing new markets, stakeholders, communities or

sharing risk, and those aiming at building implementation capacities such as developing new knowledge, skills, or expertise. In terms of innovation emergence, opportunity identification and close cooperation with partners has proven the most effective strategies, with a new innovation broker role being assumed by SEs in terms of their SI activities. This means that rather than a unitary role in implementation, with new know-how being constantly integrated, outsourcing and partnering strategies are applied. From a complexity science perspective, which fits the dispersed nature of SI and interprets SI activities as emergent from contextual factors, the dynamic between the opportunity tension – the pressure to employ novel social organizing methods to solve issues that the existing social structures seem inadequate for - as well as information differences – the degree to which diverse perspectives and information sources are available and transparent – are highlighted as prerequisites for SI emergence (Goldstein, Hazy & Silberstang, 2010). Kokko (2018) similarly point to complementary stakeholders cooperations as bridging exercises that encourage explicit admission of gaps in individual operations which contribute to the emergence of SI value creation.

The need for somewhat formalized systems – in this case, Human Resource Management (HRM) systems – is elaborated upon from an organizational learning capabilities perspective by Urban and Gaffurini (2018). In an emerging market context, knowledge conversion, risk management, organizational dialogue and participative decision-making are pointed out as significant. The dispersed nature of SE networks implies a deeper need for making tacit knowledge explicit which can be readily distributed and accessed. In this context, the number of ambiguous elements in operations need to be reduced through open dialogue that is made accessible through a deep level of participation opportunities. Godói-de-Sousa and Valadão Júnior (2013) also point out the toughness of transitions from an individual-based learning process that contributes to SE capabilities to a shared dialogue based one that harnesses collective knowledge. This stresses the need for a conscious, iterative rethinking of taken-for-granted routines and operations to facilitate SI.

Further stressing the need for deeper cooperation through SI, Chalmers (2013) discusses barriers to success, such as localized protectionism and risk aversion of innovators, problem complexity –which necessitates transdisciplinary practices – and the dispersed nature of SE networks worldwide. He proposes that integrating the principles of the open innovation paradigm could help alleviate these barriers through *“a porous organizational structure, committed investment in developing absorptive capacity, the involvement of multiple stakeholders – including the user, and a systematic focus on reducing the risk involved with innovation through broad knowledge sourcing activities.”* (Chalmers 2021, p. 29.). Tsai *et al.*

(2020) similarly point to transparent operations as trust inducing in terms of SE consumer behavior, while also stressing the need to make explicit and actively communicate how SE services contribute to social missions, specifically by employing the aid of target groups of social missions as references for the validity of the social value creation efforts.

Zainol *et al.* (2019) have tested the relationship between certain SE capabilities and the scalability of SI ventures, pointing to earning generation, replication – of existing activities – and stimulating market forces as significant factors. Replicating in this case assumes a degree of formalization to ensure quality control, especially when it occurs through mechanisms analogous with open-source approaches where scaling occurs through external partners adopting existing activities. The synergies between SE and SI also become apparent as market forces need to be stimulated through both economic and social incentives that assume varied value interpretations inherent to SEs. This means that the SE logic is exported to different stakeholders, making them compatible with the non-capital-based markets created by SEs. Katonáné Kovács *et al.* (2016) have also pointed out that local development projects could require, besides the presence of strong embedded agentic initiators, an explicit institutionalization of social networks.

The balance between innovation targeting wider society, and employee-oriented innovation – even for the purpose of enhancing their working potential – in particular in case of disadvantaged groups has also been noted by Krejčí and Šebestová (2018) as a potential solution for internal social issues. The open innovation approach described above could have problematic or at least contradictory implications with social goals as noted by Lorne (2020). He describes open innovation spaces as conducive of entrepreneurial activity, while subordinating the individual to maximizing decentralized value creation potential by creating ambiguous circumstances that are in fact open but not necessarily easily accessible. This individualization-masked-as-collectivism can, as he argues, contribute to an erosion of responsibility as well as a regeneration of selective exclusion.

After summarizing theoretical constructs relevant in the context of our study, our methodological approach is presented below. Literature is further connected to thematic groups that informed our empirical analysis (See Table I. in the “Findings and discussion” section).

3. Methodology

The aim of the research is to explore the forms of cooperation of social enterprises and their relationship to the concept of SI in a broad frame. As part of their cooperations, the examined organizations create socially innovative solutions for solving and improving social problems.

Their distinguishing operational feature in the context of this research is the comprehensive openness to collaboration that is engraved in formal and informal systems of the organizations which they utilize to create social value. The processes involved and the value they create are scrutinized by the authors. To achieve this aim, the main research questions were:

RQ1. How can social innovation be interpreted in the operation of social enterprises?

RQ2. How they create social value through their collaboration?

RQ3. What elements can be identified in the social enterprises' operations that affect the social value creation?

Regarding the sampling method, two organizations were purposefully selected (purposeful sampling) based on the central structural role that SI plays in their operations (Patton, 1990). Specifically, maximum variation sampling was utilized, since this approach focuses on a rich, yet small sample with certain characteristics that diverge significantly. In this case, diverging approaches exist to SE as well as SI – with one building on personal methods that aim at cultural change locally while being embedded themselves in larger formal international networks and one deploying more structured IT based solutions aiming at connecting their informal networks – which allows for more varied organizational features to be uncovered. This divide is especially interesting given the specificities of the Hungarian context, which the authors presumed would imply potential challenges regarding low levels of societal trust as well as high collectivistic tendencies, which could impact these approaches in various ways.

A literature review was undertaken, with the search criteria being the presence of both SE as well as SI being included in a given study, after which the most relevant articles were selected. To answer the research questions about the nature of social enterprises, how they can create value, and what SI can mean in their context, qualitative exploratory research method was applied with the aim of understanding the dynamics of the interactions between the identified constructs involved. Data collection was based on semi-structured qualitative interviewing and open discussion sessions with key stakeholders, organizational document analysis as well as in-depth personal observations of internal organizational dynamics.

This method was born out of mutual openness and common understandings of the value of the research process. Conversations moved from a descriptive to critical dimensions aiming at leveraging the opportunity to gather expert feedback. The resulting discussions provided enriched data for analysis due to the established trust, as well as outsider input for the

organizations through open reflections on many aspects of their operations by detaching from formal structures.

The authors applied semi-structured analysis on interviews with 14 stakeholders from two SEs (namely: Envienta Association and Egyesek Youth Association), as well as 17 open discussion sessions with varying and overlapping stakeholder involvement. The pool of interviewees includes actors involved in local as well as international innovation networks with experience in operative work as well as varying degrees of management, leadership and facilitation roles. These key players in both organizations are deeply involved in the SI development of their organizations, which implied a complex understanding of the systems involved. In terms of data collection, the interviewing process and observation started in February 2023 and finalized in July 2023. Throughout the analysis, the experiences, and opinions of social entrepreneurs of the two examined organizations about the topic were explored. Beyond that, internal documentation, and notes about the observations of their everyday functioning served to aid the interpretation of cultural and social dynamic aspects.

The interview guide included questions about the profile of the partners in their network; their view about their associated partners (customer, beneficiary, partner, ecosystem actor); concept of their innovative solutions; invested resources and types of activities involved in their processes; the created social value of their SI processes; the ways they conceive of social value creation; as well as motivating factors of the joining members.

The interviews as well as other data sources were coded by NVivo software. The coding process was based on 10 preliminary codes which were derived from existing literature – as shown in Table I. – as well as by observing meta elements – items which were observed as generally applicable platforms where key SI elements can be analyzed, which provided opportunity for more inclusive integration of diverse constructs.

The subsequent coding process resulted in the formulation of key empirical constructs – represented in Table I. – that intersected several of the initial codes. The resulting complexity derived from the interconnectivity of these constructs necessitated the aggregation of some of the initial 10 codes into 6 aggregated thematic codes that represent key areas of SI operations as observed by the authors. It is important to note that the initial codes still represent independently interpretable information which serves to highlight points of interconnectivity between aspects of the main themes. In the following section, results are thus interpreted according to the main themes.

4. Findings and discussion

In this section the experiences collected from the examined SEs are presented. The main findings, represented by the coding structure, are presented in Table I. below. The table includes the primary stages of the coding process as well as connections between the different sources of constructs, including the initial research questions, the initial thematic codes drawn from established literature as well as the final codes, their connections to the initial codes, along with specific identified empirical constructs.

The examined social enterprises constantly interact with other members of their network locally and at an international level as well. They adapted the principle of community sharing into their operation, which type of operation is classified as socially innovative solution which is rare and not well known yet by the society. Thanks to this operation, they create social value and have multiple outputs regarding the social value they generate.

Table I: Summary of coding structure, empirical constructs, and theoretical connections
(Source: own editing)

Research question	Initial code	Connections to established literature	Final thematic code	Connections to initial codes	Number of connections	Empirical constructs
Q1	(1) social innovation	Canestrino et al., 2019; Esposito et al., 2012; Goldstein, Hazy & Silberstang, 2010; Tung & Jordan, 2017; Phillips, Alexander, and Lee, 2019; Chalmers, 2021; Tsai, Hung and Yang, 2020; Lorne, 2020; Krejčí and Šebestová, 2018; Tortia, Degavre and Poledrini, 2019; Pasricha and Rao, 2018; Furmańska-Maruszak & Sudolska, 2016; Vézina, Ben Selma and Malo, 2018; Zaional et al., 2019; Katonáné Kovács, Varga, and Nemes, 2016; Urban and Gaffurini, 2017; Godói-de-Sousa and Valadão Júnior, 2013; Moriggi, 2019; Voltan and De Fuentes, 2016; Kokko, 2018	Social innovation scaling	Individual needs	4	<i>Building groups</i>
Q1	(2) inclusion	Goldstein, Hazy & Silberstang, 2010; Phillips, Alexander, and Lee, 2019; Chalmers, 2021; Lorne, 2020; Krejčí and Šebestová, 2018; Vézina, Ben Selma and Malo, 2018; Zaional et al., 2019; Urban and Gaffurini, 2017; Voltan and De Fuentes, 2016; Kokko, 2018		Meaning making	2	<i>Exclusive inclusion</i>
				Platform	4	<i>Homogeneous membership</i>
				Process	3	<i>Meaning-driven commitment</i>
				Recombination	3	<i>Open-sourcing</i>
				Social	2	<i>Scaling by licensing</i>

				Agent	2	<i>Thresholds of inclusion</i>
				Value	3	
Q2	(3) platform	Kullak et al., 2021; Tung & Jordan, 2017; Chalmers, 2021; Lorne, 2020; Tortia, Degavre and Poledrini, 2019; Zaional et al., 2019; Katonáné Kovács, Varga, and Nemes, 2016; Urban and Gaffurini, 2017; Godói-de-Sousa and Valadão Júnior, 2013; Goldstein, Hazy & Silberstang, 2010; Kokko, 2018	Cooperative platforms			<i>Adaptable governance</i>
				Inclusion	3	
Q2	(4) cooperation	Kokko, 2018; Kullak et al., 2021; Phillips, Alexander, and Lee, 2019; Chalmers, 2012; Godói-de-Sousa and Valadão Júnior, 2013; Voltan and De Fuentes, 2016; Katonáné Kovács, Varga, and Nemes, 2016;		Individual needs	4	<i>Balance between standards and autonomy</i>
				Process	4	<i>Boundary-spanning operations</i>
				Recombination	2	<i>Involvement- and decision-making facilitation</i>
				SI	2	<i>Matchmaking platform</i>
				Social	1	<i>Platform maintenance cost</i>
				Value	3	<i>Platform replicability</i>
						<i>Project schematics</i>
						<i>Responsibilities based on flexible contracts</i>
Q2	(5) process	Tsai, Hung and Yang, 2020; Vézina, Ben Selma and Malo, 2018; Zaional et al., 2019; Urban and Gaffurini, 2017; Godói-de-Sousa and Valadão Júnior, 2013; Kokko, 2018	Value-creation process			
				Cooperation	2	<i>Brand as a guarantee</i>
Q2	(6) value	European Commission, 2017; Kokko, 2018; Kullak et al., 2021; Phillips,		Inclusion	1	<i>Facilitation of local activities</i>

		Alexander, and Lee, 2019; Tsai, Hung and Yang, 2020; Zaional et al., 2019;				
				Individual needs	1	<i>Initial joint project harmonization</i>
				Meaning making	1	<i>Transparent processes</i>
				Platform	2	
				SI	1	
Q3	(7) factors related to social and communal aspects	Goldstein, Hazy & Silberstang, 2010; Phillips, Alexander, and Lee, 2019; Tsai, Hung and Yang, 2020; Lorne, 2020; Krejčí and Šebestová, 2018; Tortia, Degavre and Poledrini, 2019; Pasricha and Rao, 2018; Furmańska-Maruszak & Sudolska, 2016; Katonáné Kovács, Varga, and Nemes, 2016; Urban and Gaffurini, 2017; Godói-de-Sousa and Valadão Júnior, 2013; Moriggi, 2019;	Common needs			<i>Building groups</i>
Q3	(8) individual needs	Kokko, 2018; Canestrino et al., 2019; Chalmers, 2021; Tsai, Hung and Yang, 2020; Lorne, 2020; Tortia, Degavre and Poledrini, 2019; Urban and Gaffurini, 2017; Moriggi, 2019		Cooperation	1	
				Inclusion	5	<i>Change-maker mentality</i>
				Meaning making	1	<i>Community-building schematics</i>
				Platform	6	<i>Creation of common resources</i>
				Process	1	<i>Development of members</i>
				Recombination	2	<i>Distance from the operative level</i>
				SI	2	<i>Divided focus</i>
				Value	4	<i>Ecosystem complexity as detriment</i>
						<i>Facilitating participation flow</i>
						<i>Focus on cohesive symbols</i>

						<i>High member fluctuation</i>
						<i>Horizontal decision-making</i>
						<i>Layered membership</i>
						<i>Matchmaking platform</i>
						<i>Merit-based responsibilities</i>
						<i>Missing personal communities</i>
						<i>Need for dedicated community management</i>
						<i>Providing basic individual needs</i>
						<i>Social value feedback</i>
Q3	(9) meaning making	Kokko, 2018; Zaional et al., 2019; Moriggi, 2019; Tsai, Hung and Yang, 2020;	Meanings	Individual needs	1	<i>Conflicts of mission drift</i>
				Platform	2	<i>Creation of common resources</i>
				Process	1	<i>Elaboration of shared goals</i>
				Social	1	<i>Focus on flagship projects</i>
				Value	1	<i>Individual need of fulfillment</i>
						<i>Transparent value flows</i>
Q3	(10) recombination of resources	G. Fekete et al, 2017; European Commission, 2017; Eiselein and Dentchev, 2020; Kokko, 2018; Kullak et al., 2021; Esposito et al., 2012; Phillips, Alexander, and Lee, 2019; Chalmers, 2021; Tortia, Degavre and Poledrini, 2019; Vézina, Ben Selma and Malo, 2018; Zaional et al., 2019; Moriggi, 2019;	Recombination	Cooperation	2	<i>Convertability of values</i>
				Inclusion	1	<i>Creation of common resources</i>
				Individual needs	4	<i>Ecosystem value interpretation</i>
				Meaning making	2	<i>Establishing communal markets</i>

				Platform	3	<i>Inclusion of ideas</i>
				SI	1	<i>Matchmaking platform</i>
				Value	2	<i>Overview of ecosystemic needs</i>
						<i>Platform value communication issues</i>
						<i>Transparent value flows</i>

Results are presented in the following structure around the main selected thematic elements: Social innovation scaling presents the primary modes of SI implementation as well as inclusion efforts by the organizations, which ultimately aim at scaling the SI models. Following that, the properties of Cooperative platforms – that is, the specific channels through which SI implementation occurs – are detailed. Value-creation processes are then presented as the actual work done together with network members, including their added value as well as the way in which value is created. Common needs follow as a complex construct involving network formation, the main motivating factors behind it as well as social barriers to success. Meanings are connected to this construct through the concept of social meaning-making, a process of internal goal-harmonization. Finally, the Recombination of resources is highlighted as the central mechanism driving the specific market models employed by the explored SEs.

Social innovation scaling

The process of creating social value starts from the innovation-based thinking of the founders and continues to be built with the similar vision of the joining organizational members. In all cases, the founders were open-minded to the world, they considered the role of relationships and involvement in the organization to be important, either through common work or financial capital. When establishing their organizations, their goals were to break away from the constraints of established social structures and to create value for society, in addition to the organization members doing what they really love, communally. Due to the resulting commitment, the creative and productive thinking of the organizational members increased in terms of project initiation.

Envienta uses a conscious approach of open innovation, allowing their unique solutions to be used by anyone in their ecosystems and beyond. If the other connected network members create a product based on the adopted approach, they can realize their own income from it. This process is mediated by formalized coordinating as well as control mechanisms as prescribed by Zainol *et al.* (2019). The main idea and the financial share of the original innovator is guaranteed by the license agreement and the supplementary contract. In this process, the entry of members into the network and its expansion takes place. *“You will have access to global knowledge and will be able to create products locally. So instead of chasing material resources around the world, anyone anywhere in the world can come up with something good, it goes up in the cloud, and the one with the smallest environmental footprint locally wins the assignment. Then he makes an agreement with the innovator and the user, and in the smart contract they agree on who will take a share.”*. (Envienta)

These mechanisms facilitate open access to many SI resources, making replicability (Zainol *et al.*, 2019) possible. Another aspect of this opening up of operations would be the very internal workings of the SEs to newcomers, new resources, knowledge and ideas (Chalmers, 2013), something which both organizations consider as valuable. The current logic, however, is that of efficiency, which focuses on homogenous functional groups, placing the burden of integration on those joining. *“Our goal was to create the ideal conditions for creative self-fulfillment. The interesting thing is that when people are truly free to work on what they desire, they organically find their place. If one is unable to achieve that within such open conditions, they might realize that they had wrong preconceptions about themselves to begin with.”* (Envienta)

When asked about these barriers to entry, in both cases the minimum requirement was to demonstrate compatibility by presenting an individual set of useful skills or a practical, executable pitch in case of new project ideas, preferably coupled with human resources. This approach highlights a potential challenge with the expected need for SEs to integrate varied stakeholders, (Voltan and De Fuentes, 2016) as these factors often limit joining to non-entrepreneurial individuals, who are also necessary for operations and could provide value in different ways.

Cooperative platforms

The organizations use organizational platforms (Kollok *et al.*, 2021), which connect independent actors with each other. General functions of platforms, their operational dynamics as well as specific use cases are discussed. The platform is a tool for implementing the dual-purpose combination of SEs (Eiselein and Dentchev, 2020), combining social and economic goals. Another responsibility is to connect actors with different capacities (Vézina *et al.*, 2019) (manufacturers, companies, inventors, marketers, PR experts, product developers) who are worth more together than separately. All this offsets the expenses associated with external experts, say the costs of an external PR employee or simply finding someone. The platform coordinates the members, all the contracts are accessible for them, it provides a service framework during which no disputes can arise between international members because of the international standards. It is a tool of horizontal communication and common decision-making. The parties decide on the future of projects, about the application of new ideas, the way of using capacities, and the involvement of financial investors. *“The open-source hardware and software technologies ensure the involvement of members in the implementation. Milestones regulate the process of creating a prototype, production, and the distribution. The platform*

connects all of this to a chain that ensures the trust of the paying parties, as the process itself becomes transparent.” (Envienta)

The platforms serve as key assets of cooperation for the organizations. The parties establish participatory nodes regarding which member works at which location and what they are doing which is involved in the cooperation framework agreement. *“We do not operate as a separate entity, but according to the participatory nodes, we have our place in the value creation process, and we are connected with the young volunteers.”* (Egyesek) The responsibilities of the members are clarified in each project, but in the case of Egyesek, the tasks are also clarified in the framework of voluntary contracts. It is problematized that due to the shifting nature of activities as well as individual capabilities and skills – upon which the tasks and responsibilities of member are based - these nodes should be iterated upon which is a time-consuming undertaking. The Envienta platform therefore employs flexible, smart contracts which enable a non-bureaucratic, accessible process of formal renegotiation.

Besides aiding decentralized processes, platforms also provide centrally deliberated standards, serving as governance platforms. The platforms – be they tangible or informal – in many cases supersede the regular organizational boundaries. The usual challenge would be creating shared decision-making structures, however, in both cases, the choice was to provide the frameworks for ad-hoc governance structures to be created around specific groupings. This level of accessibility creates a sense of trust in the system. Beyond this incentivizing participation, a certain cost is associated with maintaining platforms of cooperation, be it in terms of resources or surrendering of a degree of autonomy by accepting ready-made regulations and standards. In any case, some resources must be exhausted, however, the level of autonomy reduction is essentially negligible since from the start, new rules can be created by those choosing to take part. Participation is not limited to the umbrella of the platform, the logic and structure of the platform itself can be copied and iterated upon while not taking away from its benefits. The only limitation to this is that a certain degree of professional standards is expected to be created as per Zaional *et al.* (2019).

What was observed is that besides the legal organizational structures, certain members have formed councils for debating important arising issues. Entry requirements into these forums were, however, not properly elaborated, creating arbitrary positions of authority, problematized as eroding organizational trust. Although the goals of these structures were to allow open, non-hierarchical discussions, the lack of explicit structures seemed to create hidden hierarchies in some cases due to entropy as described by Lorne (2020).

Value-creation process

The created value of the SEs and the processes leading to its creation are discussed in the following section. The central created value of Egyesek is the support of local bottom-up initiatives and the motivation of youth to do something for the county. The aim of these initiatives is to reduce the poverty level of Nógrád county and develop the local ecosystem. The topics of projects are environment protection (introduction to organic farming), healthcare (organizing health-conscious summer camp for young people), culture (establish an application which involve the tourist attractions of the county and present the local traditions). The mission of this SE is to improve the local initiatives. Partners are helped to implement their ideas.

The created value is related to the organization's mission, it is an integral part of it (Kokko, 2018) because all of the projects increase the local initiatives. The 1st organization ensures an ethical open system as generated value, where members can access contract templates at any time. The name of the brand and the organization is a guarantee and security for members that the given product will not be lost and can be repaired at any time, since the members involved in this are included in the network. *“I think it is a very big advantage for the members that this source is completely open, so that you can see the contract templates, you can see everything. And precisely because this is such a general, open and ethical system, this alone constitutes such a value that it is worth coming here.”* (Envienta) The system makes it possible to access global knowledge, which enables partners to produce products locally, thus creating local value. This value can create autonomy for the customers. *“The other thing that our colleagues in Békéscsaba really liked is that if you can produce most of your energy needs with just one good solar panel, it provides you with incredible autonomy.”* (Envienta) The value creation process generally begins with potential partner identification, working group formation and planning activities. The members collect information about the legal background and possible pitfalls, the production and distribution process and the way of revenue generation of the new products and services. Then, they customize the software to handle the new projects and put it on the platform, so the mechanism of value generation process becomes transparent for the community. This essentially constitutes the automatization process of creating a new product or a service. In addition to the integration of new projects onto the platform, part of the value-creating process is the organization and conduct of meetings. In the case of organization 2, representatives of the networks take part in the kick-off meeting. The purpose of the meeting is joint brainstorming, the mapping of competing networks, and the harmonization of the steps of the given processes. *“After the kick-off meeting, we started to create an exchange guideline, with the aim of defining the minimum standards that we expect from an organization.”* (Egyesek) At the heart of both organizations is a deep focus on individual needs. These needs

are harmonized with collective needs through the social fabric of the organizations which helps participants identify with shared values, increasing their willingness to contribute to them.

Common needs

The formation and maintenance of the community is ensured by the project ideas of the network members. This is an emergent concept in the research that interviewees identified as “the commons”, and in this sense, as elaborated upon below, resources are transformed into common resources, meaning that as more projects are generated, the pool of commons increases (Agrawal *et al.* 2023). In practice both organizations oscillate between a facilitator role in the implementation of the ideas, and the role of an operative project member. Harmonization is approached in each case through a lens of socialization and social construction. This requires the presence of a social fabric and community building is sometimes difficult. “These ideas are not usual, with them you can change the world, but to get people to work just a little bit differently is difficult. So, community building itself and dealing with people is a separate magic.” (Egyesek) Conscious efforts and attention are being put into community building, for example by uploading documentation to the platform which describes how a self-sustaining community should function. Open-source communities define themselves in such a way that they exclude subordination relationships between themselves. Each member is responsible for his own task. These responsibilities are determined based on one's own skills. Predefined milestones show the steps to complete the whole process of value creation.

Especially in the case of local development, but in general as well, socialization is conceptualized as a key driver of social change. Socialization is thought of as occurring between individual interactions naturally through certain shared activities. It is supposed to result in a natural replication of organizational logics and activities.

A challenge that arises, however, is that many SEs conceptualize socialization as a networked, rather than a communal activity. Besides the core teams – making up the nucleus of SI organizational ecosystems – peripheral actors make up the majority of the active workforce that takes part in tangible value creation. These diverse actors – if not part of another functional community – often lack the social capital to develop individually and capture the potential benefits the SI process presents, while integration into the SI catalyzing community can be difficult without a certain level of pre-existing functional and cultural compatibility. Due to the SE culture of change-maker entrepreneur centrality, an underlying assumption is that this character can and should be just as easily replicated.

Educational programs have been developed to achieve just this, directly in the case of Egyesek and indirectly by Envienta. However, some observations indicate the need for a long-term committed engagement of certain target groups that the natural inclusion processes do not always provide, resulting in high fluctuation of participation. Envienta tries to rely on the mindset that project-based groups - when selected to maximize inter-group compatibility – provide an ideal framework to bring out the best in everyone. The short-term project-based nature of SE and SI operations resulting from the varied activities needed, however, do not necessarily provide stable environments that constantly create schemes that incentivize prolonged participation. This also reflects on inclusion efforts since the integration of new people becomes much more complicated.

This direct socialization thus becomes a central issue that the probed organizations are becoming increasingly aware of, but find problematic to solve due to their scale, as dedicated attention would need to be invested. In both cases, the desire for active community management is expressed, but it is admitted that this would require dedicated personnel that the SE model's financial constraints limit. The creation of digital facilitating platforms in both cases serves to aid with this. Especially in the case of Envienta, the platform serves as an open window to most elements of the ecosystem, creating the chance for all to participate according to their abilities, while reducing risk perceptions through transparency. At this point, the sophistication of the system in terms of the level of elaboration on entry points and the complexity of the ecosystem become the only bottlenecks, as openness also means that potentially a larger set of information can be presented, than what can be reasonably computed by someone on the periphery without guidance. This essentially means that the platform has could be supplemented by a customized social process of meaning making.

The issue of community values intersects with the factor of individual needs. With a sense of community already assumed and a number of other needs expressed through varied forms of value, time is interpreted as the most limiting factor. Envienta conceptualized its ecosystem in a way that basic needs of those involved are at the center of the innovation model. Though not yet implemented in practice, the idea is that participation within the ecosystem directly provides access to certain produced resources, similarly to a cooperative structure. In a simpler, but tangible way, Egyesek relies consciously on its material and place-based resources to provide the infrastructure for members in a working context. In theory, these models could provide solutions by alleviating pressures related to limited time and personal resources, however, due to the loose nature of both ecosystems, pooling resources for what is essentially a complex time-banking system that spans boundaries is not yet feasible.

It is proposed that individual needs should to be taken into account at least to the minimum extent that the greatest number of participants become unconstrained by the constant stress of individual or organizational survival, thus creating a sense of safety that can bring forward *“the natural state of being inherent to them which enables a sense of presentness where one can fully engage with what is in front of them and bring out the creative energies enabling them to do what they do best.”* (Envienta)

Meaning making

The creation of a shared vision and a set of meanings behind the daily operations of organizations is considered to be a prerequisite of engagement. They are the filters through which stakeholders make sense of their surroundings as well as their roles in it. Various participatory brainstorming and strategizing sessions are employed in both cases to create, iterate and strengthen shared goals. Shared symbols and meanings are being highlighted in case of the wider networks as tools to create such cohesion, viewed by member organizations as a prerequisite of cooperation. Participation in the creation of these meanings is maximized to a reasonable level, however, this poses a challenge in that those who are already on the periphery of those nodes might not directly interact with these symbols.

These meanings should be constantly held up and elaborated upon by those in close proximity to participants. Especially in case of farther members, a danger that arises is that the sharing of knowledge and resources – if not becoming outright unequal – can become based on needs rather than shared values, eroding the established trust through conflicting scenarios that are not properly mediated. It is proposed that even in the cases of sharing resources akin to bartering, the ways in which meeting individual needs contributes toward the furthering of shared goals should be elaborated. Needs also include a set of intangible needs, as individual meanings of importance are attributed to self-fulfillment, among others, which often conflict with the required shared tasks at hand especially given the proclivity of SE members to participate in many alternative networks. A typically controversial conflict is, for example related to the necessary prioritization of activities not connected to the social goals. The items that appear most often as inspirational are tangible goals related to short- to mid-term milestones that can be viewed as impactful. This often takes form in material achievements that can be easily grasped as something that creates stabilizing points for further scaling, such as the establishment of a community center or an invention that has the potential to reliably generate resources.

Recombination of resources

Resource scarcity is a central issue in the SE context. Organizations employing SI work towards finding and integrating complementary resources from within their networks. These resources can have many different variants, in the case of the studied organizations they are: monetary resources, time, goods or services, infrastructure, human resources, access, data, or knowledge. Similar factors are also considered in the most practical step of the pure SI processes, which is the recombination of resources. A big challenge in this case is the simple elaboration, structuring and distribution of information regarding available but dispersed resources including material or intangible resources such as social capital or knowledge, especially in case of small organizations attempting to facilitate SI while having to maintain their own core operations. Beyond the data handling aspects, recombining occurs in an ad-hoc way as well as through conscious strategic choices. The Envienta platform essentially serves as a facilitator of this recombination process, not only allowing for matchmaking but also providing an overview of interconnected factors and arising needs as well. As noted above, inclusion efforts in terms of people, resources and ideas have to be the starting points of combinatory efforts. In the case of non-IT-supported efforts, a marked loss of potential is noted when inclusion cannot occur due to the underdeveloped, not yet integratable level of these items. One of the IT supported approaches' main benefits can therefore be found in the capability to store information for when they become more developed or when the ecosystem become capable of absorbing them.

A complex task that also needs to be managed is the conversion between different forms of resources (values) when recombination happens between independent participants, especially when the SE interacts with other forms of organizations. Traditionally, varied funding schemes were established to channel public and private sector funds, for example in exchange for PR value, while increasingly, as noted by Zaional *et al.* (2019) the new practice is the creation of new market logics that are presented to stakeholders as alternative value propositions. Envienta especially strives to create novel incentive systems and a culture in which participants are not attempting to profit off of exchanges in the short term, by presenting both tangible long-term value and especially by emphasizing the interconnectedness of actors within the ecosystem, which implies a shared prosperity derived from contributing to new value creation. One of the advantages of the open platform especially can be grasped in the fact that these value flows become explicit and transparent instead of the more philosophical idea of the common good. Egyesek, in the meantime, focuses more on – often proactively -providing services that benefit complementary operations as well as participating in international volunteer exchange schemes based on both a transactional as well as a shared goal-oriented approach.

Symbolic, inspirational and strategic resource-creation is prioritized as having “flagship” resources such as a community center, or the existing training facility of Egyesek, or the Envienta platform itself as well as its pilot innovation projects serve both tools to increase autonomy as well providing opportunity to proactively share, therefore leading the way in establishing new ways of value exchange. What appears to be a complicated issue is that much of the SI related ventures themselves are important strategic assets that the organizations find hard to communicate the values of to date while they might be the most resource-intensive parts of their operations. In practice, the facilitatory recombination efforts occur as services that are provided pro-bono or serving specific, different value-creating ventures. This is a well-functioning system in terms of the SE model sustainability, however, they severely hinder the SI sustainability and scalability. SI is not thought of consciously as a core part of the organizational offerings by ecosystem members, meaning that the SE scaling is not occurring parallel with that of SI, since direct investments – out of a sense of urgency of developing more tangible capacities – are not placed so much into expanding the social facilitation efforts.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the concept of SI is rooted in the views and ways of thinking of those entrepreneurs who established the formal organizations. They are not afraid to break away from the views of the established market logics, and their goal was to break away from them. The process of generating change started from their way of thinking, members who were open to change, joined the organizations. Creating change based on community sharing is embedded in the missions and DNA of the organizations. The operation of organizations takes place through and is empowered by SI processes through joint value creation with network members, as they believe that they can achieve greater social impact by working together. They come up with innovative products and services that bring radical, - as of now – potentially disruptive change and improve people's quality of life by easing society's diverse everyday problems, be they material or intangible. With these outputs, social value is created, which is embedded in the mission of SEs (Kokko, 2018).

The main asset of the social value creation process of the members is the platform itself which provides information about legal and professional rules of common activities, the outputs and projects; a channel of communication; and presents the key milestones of the value creation processes. The members generate local values with the adaptation of open knowledge as well as through the commons approach of transforming individual resources into shared resources. The outputs of the local initiatives are the generated social value. The framework of the social value is the separation from systems with established power structures, mutual prosperity, and

the exchange of resources for the sake of common value creation. Under this framework, the examined SEs and their networks create value for youth work, education, healthcare, innovative products which serve as solutions for environmental problems as well as serving essential local needs such as food or energy. These values are based on a conceptualization of basic needs that are easily translatable to stakeholders.

Furthermore, the platforms themselves allow for complete bottom-up, non-bureaucratic integration of outside nodes as well as the reproduction of already integrated nodes by other parties, while the recombination mechanisms ensure that value feeds back into the given ecosystems. The recognition of the SI operations as well as the platforms themselves as strategic assets to be communicated as part of the core value propositions are identified as a potential development opportunity.

Finally, this feedback mechanism could ideally aid the creation of an optimal balance between an organic combination of human and material resources that provides ideally efficient value-creation and a structured, communally facilitated process of inclusion that does not subordinate ecosystem members to passively exploitative logics of collective individualism. There is no universally applicable balance, therefore, the basic structures of these ecosystems could be up for constant renegotiation.

6. Limitation and future research

The primary limitations of the research include limited sampling as well as a lack of wider contextual analysis. This was compensated for by the inclusion of rich data from the two SEs which are embedded in international as well as local networks, ensuring a certain level of general applicability, strengthened by the wide knowledge and experience of the field that SE leaders possessed. Furthermore, the inclusion of only key players weakens perceptions of peripheral actors, who were later determined to be crucial to the observed dynamics.

Future research of the topic could focus on the experiences of those SEs which do not focus on community value creation processes and compare the result of this study with them with the aim of exploring the similarities and differences among the entrepreneurial aspects and created value potentials.

The main contribution of the article is increasing the visibility of novel value creation mechanisms as well as aiding their comprehension through complex influencing factors, such as socialization. Understanding this complexity offers value for practitioners, as well as academia and policymakers.

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5.3. ARTICLE III.

Platforms of commons: Testing value propositions of digital social innovation platforms through participatory design

Abstract

Purpose

This research explores how digital social innovation platforms can be organized as commons to promote scalable social impact while maintaining organizational integrity. The study focuses on balancing social value creation with practical governance by integrating theoretical perspectives on social enterprises and cooperative ecosystems. It seeks to offer design principles for co-creating resilient organizational models that align with community needs and broader social goals.

Design/methodology/approach

The study adopts a participatory action research approach involving 12 organizations as well as experts through workshops, interviews, and group discussions. Using backcasting methodology, participants co-created adaptable organizational ecosystems for digital social innovation platforms. The process drew insights from institutional theory, commons-based governance, and digital innovation to design scalable and cooperative frameworks for social innovation.

Findings

The research identifies flexible organizational structures, transparent governance, and shared responsibility as essential for sustaining collaborative ecosystems. Decentralized governance and digital tools—such as blockchain—enhance validation and resource management. Placing individual and community values at the core of the platform promotes long-term engagement and adaptability.

Originality

This study advances commons-based governance in digital social innovation by presenting a scalable, cooperative platform framework. It emphasizes co-creation, decentralized governance, and minimal boundaries for flexibility. The findings offer practical insights for building community-driven systems that scale while retaining their social mission, providing a roadmap for practitioners and policymakers to foster collaborative ecosystems.

Keywords: commons; social innovation; platforms; social enterprise; institutional theory

1. Introduction

This study was created as part of wider research aiming at understanding ecosystem level organizational cooperations amongst actors of the social and solidarity economy. The primary subjects of study are, widely, social enterprises and social innovation platforms and the cooperations are approached from the theoretical perspectives of the commons. This approach

is meant to simultaneously answer questions regarding the recurring subjects of social impact and market scaling – through digital innovation - on the one hand and the maintenance of organizational integrity – through community management - on the other.

The possibilities of open social innovation and related digital knowledge management tools have been more and more studied in recent years, however, less information is available on the organizational side of managing wide and varied communities that make up, in practice, the active membership or market of these initiatives. It is not the aim of this article to argue for the merits of particular social movements. However, recognizing the rapid spread of novel – often even social - business approaches amidst current global crises and the perceived lack of proportionate social emancipation, it aims to discover pathways towards connecting these movements towards common action.

In this case, a participatory research initiative was presented to a group of organizations with value propositions related to social innovation. Several digital platform initiatives and actors with specialties expected to be complementary to social innovation design were approached, with the scope widening through participants recommendations but kept to a level that could still mimic smaller organizational dynamics.

The research is intended to build on research gaps identified by previous work (Nagy & Krátki, 2024) on the intersection of social enterprises and social innovation. Specifically, the current research builds on the premise that previous social enterprise platform formation attempts have not yet achieved breakthroughs due to unequal emphasis being placed on the social part of their innovation activities. This can be due to their perceived human resource intensiveness, however, these functions were found to be the core of the social enterprise value proposition, making optimization necessary for scaling. The experiment proposes minimal organizational design boundaries that properly mimic the natural social innovation processes and meaning spaces required to connect social functions beyond organizational boundaries.

The participants were invited to collaborate in a multi-stage backcasting process around a narrow social vision with their task being the design of an adaptable organizational ecosystem around their needs in serving wider social goals they represent. The participatory design included the common formation of research directions with the caveat that additions to the original plans would require their initiation and active involvement, simulating a common creation space. The systems designed were also kept to a level of complexity that the participants could themselves theoretically manage in practice, which surfaced the most valuable organizational findings in terms of volunteer motivations and institutionalization efforts.

This exercise was ultimately meant to gauge what value social innovation represents for typical direct and indirect stakeholders and to determine institutional design principles of creating common value creation platforms.

2. Theoretical background

The study draws on a diverse range of theory that has been observed to operate under similar, complementary logical frameworks that constitute a larger whole. While much more could be integrated, a minimal coherent “collage” is presented that accounts for relevant archetypical elements of the whole. In the larger model, social innovation as a process is enacted through social enterprises at localized levels first, while their scaling is achieved through platforms that mimic the dual characteristics of social enterprises by being embedded in common frameworks intended to account for all levels of institutional design as well as innovation stages. The model takes into account the dominant logics of each domain, aiming at a design that most closely matches organic activities of stakeholders to achieve the most impact without operational disruptions. These main characteristics are presented below.

Social innovation

Social innovation as the central underlying mechanism of the model presented in the study describes a general phenomenon of innovative value creation with inherent social characteristics that can be described in varied ways. An earlier related study focused our understanding of the phenomenon as “the detection of social and environmental challenges, the creation of inventive solutions for society as a whole in a collaborative framework and the distribution of the benefits.” (Nagy & Krátiki, 2024) Social innovation was understood to be ideally embedded in a cyclically iterative process following the general pattern of invitation of stakeholders into independent platforms around goals, common exercises of value creation and the subsequent evaluation and redistribution of created value, with adjustments occurring reactively or proactively. Basic characteristics were further laid out by Portales (2019) as the satisfaction of a need, the innovation of the solution, the change of social structures and relationships and the increase of society’s capacity to act.

Connected to the wide ecosystemic embeddedness of these operations as well as the initial research directions, institutional theory is an important backdrop. The general model adapted by the study was modeled around the work on bridging institutional entrepreneurship by Tracey et al. (2011) who identified social entrepreneurial responsibilities at three levels of organizing as: microinstitutional opportunity recognition, mesoinstitutional organizational design and

macroinstitutional legitimation. Integrating this design into a social innovation perspective, Tracey and Stott (2017) further provide a complementary typology of innovation organizing as social entrepreneurship through new forms, social intrapreneurship in existing settings and social extrapreneurship as combining different present actors. Primary enabling conditions of the emergence of alternative forms of organizing for social goals, including platforms have been identified by Mair and Rathert (2021) as issue salience: the clarity and availability of information on causes; institutional failures: issue areas unaffected or negatively influenced by existing institutions; and institutional incongruence, a mismatch or antagonism in the dynamics between central and local institutional levels. They suggest that issues or causes can be treated as convergences of institutional domains and that by identifying failures and incongruences around them, social enterprises can effectively facilitate the emergence of these alternative organizing forms. In a similar vein, Parthiban et al. (2020) point to finding complementarity in such institutional voids, like combining the activation of an aging population with the education needs of youth, while also pointing to ICT platforms to overcome distances between stakeholders affected by these voids.

Social enterprise

Social enterprises are interpreted in this study as contextually shifting initiatives aiming at achieving a set of social goals through the employment of market mechanisms, usually in the form of one or several organizations within a participatory or democratic framework, employing socially innovative solutions (Defourny & Nyssens, 2014).

They play a crucial role in organizing market activities around socially embedded goals. This duality, or hybridity is often discussed as the primary defining challenge – due to inherent logical paradoxes - and opportunity – due to the integration of diverse actors - of social enterprise (Goyal et al., 2017; Vickers et al., 2017). Organizations often adapt by employing novel market mechanisms or segmenting their organization similarly to their services, creating pockets operating under social or market logics (Vázquez Maguirre & Derbez, 2018). Some consider more organic emergence of these organizational forms depending on contextual needs (Young & Lecy, 2012), while others emphasize their purpose-driven nature and the resulting behavioral recontextualization of market logics (Köves et al., 2021).

In the wider model of this study, social enterprises represent the closest possible organizing definition fitting the social innovation paradigm while also integrating responsible resource management through market mechanisms. Simply put, most social innovation practitioners can be described as some form of social enterprise actors. As with social innovation, their activities

can be interpreted within new or existing environments or as new frameworks for many actors. More broadly, like the functionally similar non-profit sector, they work towards engaging their ecosystem around their social goals, making them important local integrators of value (Kim & Lim, 2017; Kiss et al., 2021; Tortia et al., 2020), acting as dynamic platforms for local innovation (Gupta et al., 2017).

Platforms

Platforms are abstract conceptualizations of spaces that can act as channels for information or participation. While today, we mostly think of platforms in the organizational sense as digital platforms, more analogue and even less tangible forms can be identified which signal the wider applicability of the approach. Generally, they act as connecting tissue for diverse social actors otherwise disconnected through a narrow set of activities, such as matching actors, facilitation or pulling on of network effects (Caridà et al., 2022). Specific activities or programs can also be thought of as platforms while even entire fields of activities can be seen as such. Mirvis and Googins (2018) describe four primary platforms of employee social innovation engagement: internal entrepreneurial opportunities, hosting external innovation partnerships, providing pro-bono professional aid or developing firm-wide social innovation initiatives. They also describe factors affecting engagement such as the possibility of continued participation in the given project (commitment), immersion, quality social connections and learning.

More closely related to the research topic, Presenza et al. (2019) study what they call social crowdfunding business ecosystems, a description signaling the wide, systemic innovation activities facilitated by the platform in their case. The duality of social innovation is also represented here, as activities related to both project support - through fundraising, communication and crowdfunding - and community facilitation are highlighted. The complexity of this unique value proposition is described in the composition of the conceived SCBE, which “consists of multiple actors and a set of relationships among them, whose total value resides in the capabilities of actors to co-operate and complement each other to create the value that they could not achieve as independent actors.” (Presenza et al., 2019, p. 197) In this role, the platform is an intermediary agent between ecosystem stakeholders with unique value represented through its capacity to integrate and distribute value and trust amongst them. Value is also identified here broadly, as cultural transformation, building local community strength, and project mentoring are integral to the approach, while limitations to this are set by certain personal and project entry criteria.

A similar model has been proposed with the integration of advanced digital communication and matchmaking functionalities to integrate design thinking and participatory principles into the social crowdfunding process (Tung & Jordann, 2017). The system theoretically reduces the intermediary role of the platform through direct matchmaking around pre-defined search parameters, or project themes while expected central support areas are identified. Notably, the authors also stress the importance of early networking to embed the platform in existing social fabrics.

Commons

The commons have long been a central theme in collective, grassroots social action, but their definition has fragmented over time. In the context of social enterprises, a general definition would apply to collectively managed resources or systems that are accessible to all members of a given community and are characterized by collective ownership, management, and governance (Berkes & Davidson-Hunt, 2009). Arguably, much of the organizing forms presented so far, when translated to a macro perspective, lack the social fabric functions integral to the localized social enterprise models. What is proposed and primarily tested in the study is that the commons – in the same way as communities and social innovation mechanisms are in dynamic interrelationships with social enterprises – offer a complementary functionality to the value integration opportunities of platform organizing that fills the legitimacy void. This way of organizing can act, in practice, beyond the boundaries of all levels of organizing and varying platforms of integrated values due to its diffuse nature.

It is important to understand that the commons describe a similarly wide range of organizing opportunities as platforms, from Fair Trade labels or protected natural environments to open-source development projects, cooperatives, urban grassroots community centers and ultimately, states. Vail (2010) studied decommodification, the process of reducing harmful market encroachment for social purposes by strengthening the commons. He noted the primary constituents of this approach to be the protection of common resources, the provision of public goods, the creation of socially embedded economic circuits, social protections and market transparency. The commons can be described, among others, by their levels of openness, criteria for access to the given commons and empowerment, the level at which governance of the commons is shared. Bianchi (2023) studied two cases of grassroots social programs and related policy initiatives, arguing for integrating the commons to wider ecosystems from the bottom-up. It was shown that mainly material and legal support as well as long-term commitment can be critical to maintaining the commons, while open access to them can be a

reciprocal requirement, as long as operational autonomy is maintained. It is also crucially laid out, that for solitary commons, open provision would be a difficulty, however, their localized cooperations can lead to more universal social provisioning.

A recurring distinction is also made between the common resources and their related governance through the term “commoning”, a continual social renegotiation of what constitutes the commons at any given time, making the commons themselves core nodes of wider social innovation efforts. This conceptualization also strengthens the spatial and temporal interpretations of the commons, as this negotiation occurs around the interaction of individual local value expectations and macro level discourses and actors. These are also dynamic states, as localities are abstract and commons can encompass, in practice, a single park, or something as large as the European Union, meaning that with scaling, power dynamics also shift and emancipatory efforts can turn disempowering or disruptive to communities if successful initiatives only scale their operations and not their social approach. (Apostolopoulou et al., 2022; Avdikos & Pettas, 2021)

To summarize, the articulated commons could integrate the myriad individual values of members and the ecosystem through social innovation processes. These processes collapse the organizational choices to rational, temporarily adequate forms of organizing: social enterprises to serve narrow social needs and wider collaborative platforms that are made up of similar commons to complement local capacities. Subsequent proliferation of these nodes would aim at universal service opportunities for communities, if indeed cohesion is maintained.

3. Methodology

The study can be described as loosely adapting elements of participatory backcasting design experiments. The methodology follows similar social innovation and commoning research approaches of deep stakeholder participation, with a focus on qualitative data to understand complex reasonings behind institutional design choices. Data collection is modeled on the one hand after the knowledge-weaving methodology of de Moor (2015) which aims to capture reusable lessons from collaboration patterns examined through a scenario-based design process.

On the other hand, participatory foresight methodologies are employed as transformative processes built around these methods have an inherent nature to realign social priorities towards sustainable choices (Köves & Király, 2021). Specifically the approach of combining backcasting and delphi methods concurrently, co-constructing an ideal future reality with

participants in a participative setting and working backwards from there to produce pathways towards those futures, with the involvement of deliberation and expert opinions (Szathmári et al., 2024).

The research focuses – loosely – on answering these three main questions regarding social innovation development through platform commons:

1. How could digital platforms develop value creation in the social innovation process?
2. What specific management tools appear in the operation of digital social innovation platforms?
3. What thematic areas emerge among the various platforms that could serve as bases for joint development?

Most participants were opportunistically selected, however, some can be considered co-initiators of the project, as initial participation co-constructed the basic practical frameworks of further engagement efforts. Altogether, twelve organizations of different activities and sizes were involved, with 37 individuals taking part in discussions to some level either on their own, or as members of an organization. The research corpus contains around 30 individual interviews, 10 group discussion sessions as well as two open workshops. Data about participants is available on different levels due to their different levels of involvement with the project and in this case, only organizations are displayed for simplicity.

Form	Activities	Participation
Non-profit	Open-source innovation	Co-initiator
Enterprise	Housing investment solutions	Co-initiator
Startup	Sustainable consumption platform	Partial participant
Startup	Sustainability-oriented volunteering platform	Partial participant
Startup	Community development and events	Co-initiator
Enterprise	Craft market	Partial participant
Enterprise	IT, sustainability	Co-initiator
Social startup	School lunch programs	Full participant
Non-profit	Social work	Full participant
Cooperative	Heritage preservation	Partial participant

Startup	Trading platform	Partial participant
Social startup	Mental health guidance	Partial participant

Table I. Information on participating organizations and levels of involvement. Source: Author's creation.

In the following sections, the case of the design process is presented, followed by analysis of the main findings of participants, including the main value propositions, functional elements as well as general considerations for forming idealized platform commons.

4. Case description

As described in the introduction, calls were made between September and October of 2024 to a number of organizations and experts. It was made clear ahead of time that the call for participation was an open one, meaning that everyone could choose their level and time of involvement. This was important partially due to respecting their limited capacities as well as to test the limits of involving weaker ties. It was also a communicated core principle that the process would follow participative guidelines, and the project would be envisioned as a common platform that the participants could articulate. In this time, initial interviews were conducted which specified some subtopics as well as participants' expectations of the research process and outputs. Crucially, most respondents were eager to engage at the networking and information exchange level, while a certain segment, mainly those operating more around market logics or those with limited capacity had explicit expectations of more direct value realization. As noted by one participant operating a digital social platform, "the core value of these initiatives is rarely seen by most, even the more socially conscious, what they can notice is their own path towards development reflected in them."

Deeper discussions evolved around this time with some initiatives I was familiar with beforehand. Shortly, the discussions led to recognition of the synergies between the activities of some actors and the research project, leading to early involvement of participant initiatives and invitations. It was very helpful that essentially, most elements not relating to organizational, but to potential digital features could be compared and discussed based on real examples, as the participants' own projects possessed much of the individual complementary functions expected of the envisioned common platform. This stream essentially provided the meaning space and social model for the rest of the project as well, as separate deep group discussions could articulate complex scenarios. This was possible because this group worked

around similar models and inherently saw the social value proposition. Many had individual callings or interest in certain project ideas, with many of these overlapping and recurring. The ability to acquire and co-design community spaces was an early wish, with many dreaming of incubating new micro-projects within these or even providing specific services and resources in them, like makerspaces, education or cultural events. Co-housing communities, decentralized agricultural production, modern village revitalization concepts and energy communities were among more complex visions that participants saw as providing sustainability through resource independence or community health. Individual support in the form of appropriate means, mentoring, coaching, social work opportunities, education, therapy or other forms was also viewed as a strategic area, since the proposed concepts revolved around organizing around individual needs, meaning that individual health is a cornerstone of the community design. These and other ideas helped in projecting underpinning resources and mechanisms of the design framework.

Simultaneously, the examination of particular pathways towards providing tangible value for some participants became fragmented, with separate discussions held with legal, fundraising and marketing experts, among others, which had taken up valuable time. It became clear to most that the process is more iterative, then they have capacities for. Two particular workshops were planned as the core design sessions for the project, one of which was delayed as a result. At this point, decisions were already discussed with participants about further focus areas as well as operative details, such as further invited participants, public communication of the events and channels for organizing. Offers were made for organizational aid, a temporary website design to more efficiently communicate some ideas to new invitees as well as a studio for short video or podcast recordings. At this point, as certain participants' activity overwhelmingly formed the project topics, an explicit differentiation was created between the wider common framework and the specific areas worked on by some, as these separate outputs were useful for their group, while not entirely compatible with the operations of all those present.

The first workshop was organized in December 2024 and held at the office of a participating organization by their offer. Mostly, core participants and those invited by them were present at this event. The main output was a clarification of philosophical and value dimensions of what could be expected of the envisioned commons as well as some early ideas about organizational details at the micro and meso levels.

Following the first workshop, some core ideas were further elaborated with participants in one-on-one sessions and a minimal design framework was presented that was to be finalized at the

second workshop. The second workshop, the closing event of the part of the project discussed in this article was held in January 2025 in a more formal university setting, with a more diverse set of participants, in terms of the forms of organizations represented, their individual values as well as their levels of involvement. The stated goal was reaching tangible consensus about the nature of the discussed commons. This was, depending on individual judgement, either partially, or more, then adequately achieved. The ultimate output of this workshop was the – almost trivially put - acknowledgement of the projects continued relevance and individual willingness for further participation. Most had by that point understood the implicit common value expectations as well to the level that further discussion streams were proposed, in some cases leading to the planning of more specific collaborations. Although no complete document had yet been produced to explicitly articulate the commons, minimal principles were laid out that can define the proposed commons' relations with its environment as well as members and these were agreed to be kept minimal and instead articulated together as their relevance would arise. In the following analysis, these core principles are laid out following descriptions of the articulated value proposition of the produced model as well as its basic operational expectations based on the model research process.

5. Analysis

Main value expectations of the model

In the simplest possible terms, the unique value proposition of the studied theoretical approach compared to most cases so far has been articulated as the possible phasing out of inefficient intermediary / agent models with embedded actors forming and maintaining a common interaction space. The other primary benefit of the model is its applicability to all levels of institutional design requirements by adopting platforms as organic spaces of value integration. In the backcasting process, some of these assumptions were removed and the initial vision was more simply to design a system for social cooperation that all participants could claim as their own and identify with.

This vision was later extended with more specific value expectations and features. A minimal value framework was proposed to include reciprocal responsibility for members and the commons' social and natural environment. For simpler communication of core concepts, especially in Hungarian, where the commons could hardly be translated properly, a cooperative platform framing was put forward by a participant, one representing the elements of a connecting fabric between the members of various social and digital platforms. Participants

primarily identified with certain abstract values, such as the possibility to provide a wider community for them, a sense of belonging, trust and more practically, responsibility sharing and risk reduction for common ventures. Very importantly, between functional and abstract values, independence and autonomy were highlighted, a chance to detach from existing institutional constraints. Within this, a deeply humanistic approach was expressed, one regarding the individual as the basis of commoning, their many expressed qualities, values and needs and how they fit together with those of others.

Tangibly, participants expectations revolved around a few main themes, such as the creation of and access to shared and public resources, infrastructure, knowledge, – mainly volunteer – capacities, and a common market operating under sustainable values. Communication support and wide community functions were also expected, such as mentoring, opportunities to share experiences, and a common set of meanings and values. More specifically, the network and economy of scale effects were also mostly understood, that is, the potential to achieve more together, then individually plausible as per Presenza et al. (2019), as well as the opportunity to leverage each other's networks directly. Examples of these effects included benefits in terms of further value integration due to the increased legitimacy of each member, such as opportunities to form consortiums for grants or fundraising as well as the possibility of supporting short supply chain developments and a more efficient division of common tasks between organizations. This latter factor became a more complex core expectation of finding ways of recognizing the value of tasks currently bundled into other jobs or done for free, such as the networking activities that can be associated with commoning.

Systems and functions

The most important functional value expectations were ease of access, minimal administrative workload and freedom to customize frameworks based on localized needs, that is, that the created platform interferes with their daily operations to the absolute minimum. Second, as the concept of the commons and co-ownership of strategic resources emerged, the fair distribution of access to these resources was examined. In a short-term sense, participants expected access to be somewhat proportionate to contributions and subsistence needs and completely open in case of public goods, mainly knowledge. Several specific, locally applicable alternatives as well as a general, bridging solution were also created, which are described later on, with further debate centering around options for units of exchange. Crucially, it was recognized that transparency would be the key issue, as it was a widely discussed topic that many similar initiatives disintegrated over certain scales due to lack of trust from excessive freeriding and even exploitation by colluding partners gaming the system. Transparency was proposed in this

context as a mediator of open access, as while one could theoretically resort to freeriding, this could seriously damage their localized reputation, or even incentivize reciprocity as a result. This expectation also led to a core service expectation, which was a validation framework and the subsequent main system channels needed to share information between members regarding the commons.

The first step towards this was the definition of meta nodes within the imagined ecosystem, the types of elements that would be integrated, and represented digitally in an interoperable language. The key meta node requiring representation was the individual, and specifically, how they define themselves individually within the social fabric, qualitatively, what values they represent and create for others and what needs they might possess. Further critical nodes were organizations, goods, services and knowledge. These can and should be, first and foremost, capable of transparently interlinked by their common descriptives, be displayed thematically, by node type, based on location and ideally be searchable using advanced network data visualization tools and AI search engines in the long-term. It is a perceived limitation that the idea of a common project management platform in this decentralized framework was met with skepticism due to the unique processual approach of existing dominant software solutions as well as their unique user bases, although more simple milestones could be shared.

The question of validation further solidified an initial service expectation, which was the social functions of the cooperative. Two defining values of the proposed framework have been articulated this way. The creation and curation of validated nodes within the system was viewed as the greatest signal of trustworthiness and is what was viewed as a differentiator from other platforms. The concept is that this work is currently done individually by most participating organizations, and can be channeled to integrate new members through common principles. The validating node would also hold a certain responsibility for the wellbeing of those integrated if they wish to be rewarded for social integration work, meaning that the incentive is in taking responsibility for only as many members as, well, one can take responsibility for. The other key value is seen in the ability for community leaders to leverage this layered social approach to find the ideal community spaces, working or entrepreneurial opportunities – importantly, even separately - for individuals once they are within the ecosystem. As the diversity of communities and enterprises grow, the more likely the match with individual values and roles. While most were expected to navigate an ecosystem like this well, like they do their lives, it was emphasized that facilitation is only activated if one becomes misaligned with their present community or job or if they request it. This was especially communicated as meaningful for freelancers, who are not necessarily entrepreneurial minded. What is, however,

clear, is that this role and the commoning process should ideally be available at the level of overlapping nodes of working groups, firms, communities and platforms and even at the ecosystem level, so that people do not fall through the cracks and movement between nodes can be as easy as possible.

Solutions were proposed to represent this framework at several levels of complexity. For a short term perspective, a participant operating a middle-sized social coaching platform shared experiences of management through shared excel tables for internal delegation and facilitation in a homogeneous environment, while a formal cooperative model was also proposed several times as it prescribes an inherent sharing of the central asset that is the information infrastructure. The most complex model proposed is yet to be approved by all participants but is the most dominant and well-articulated one, which is to employ a blockchain-based solution to provide a decentralized, transparent information system which would serve as the primary representation of the commons and primary tool of commoning. There is apprehension regarding current applications as well as the readiness of this technology, however, it was found that at the very least, it is compatible enough that it can be used as a theoretical testing ground and ultimately, much of the functionality can be reproduced through simpler means temporarily. The reason why it works as a good metaphor as well is because blockchains are inherently co-constructed by participants similarly to how the commons are articulated through stakeholders interactions with them while ultimately remaining under shared ownership. The other defining feature in this case is that this system can theoretically represent any real-world elements and processes and flexibly connect them together, enabling more complex coordination processes.

This also showed a shift in thinking, described in contrast to regular market logics. The innovation perspective was applied to describe distinct cases of participation in given commons through their resulting impact in terms of the value realized by others. Reversing the regular process of estimating demand based on past demand, the system would allow for innovation to target explicit demands for existing or new goods spelled out by ecosystem members and for organizations to weigh the relative contributions of participants – or task categories - towards the production of the given good. Responsibilities of and excesses from further reproduction of the model goods would be shared with all stakeholders according to these proportions, including producers or even beneficiaries who could – and do, inherently, through demand signaling - similarly invest proactively in the process.

A unit of measurement in terms of participation has also been proposed, with time investment being the most generally accepted concept. As time banking practices were mentioned to be

prone to corruption, time, similarly to integrations, was also proposed to only serve as an indicator of personal responsibility taken and to be measured against other factors related to task completion determined in agreements. This model does, according to some, rely on an idealized long-term vision referred to as universal basic income or service opportunities, though. This is because participation in this system presupposes that one has existing means of providing for oneself, since value is realized with a time delay and is contingent. Completing a logical feedback loop, it has, therefore been prescribed that such a forming cooperative would, upon establishment of the initial commons, increasingly rely on involving new platforms and enterprises that aid in the reproduction of these basic services based on member value expectations, similarly to how initial social cohesion of the commons is established by involving experts in social innovation.

Similarly to this model, participants had already experimented with replacing money with localized tokens representing added value, with the conversions of them being made possible in this case by transparently representing the available common assets within each platform common. Crucially though, it is recognized, that monetary contributions could create the simplest buffer to kickstart participation in these enterprises. While the model relies on enterprise logic to explain value creation, this is where the non-profit logic can be practically complimentary. The proposed system would further incentivize value integration by rewarding donations or investments in high impact projects, where these act as further information for validation. Besides demand-side expressions diminishing returns in case of overproduction, while time is reframed as a responsibility in this case, so are monetary and other tangible contributions, in the form of decision-making power. What sets a limit to this function is that within the aggregate of qualitatively interpreted individual value expectations, monetary contributions only make up a fraction. This means that while they influence decisions on which projects get funded and to what extent, when needs are projected to be met, some excess should be algorithmically distributed to match other projects proportionately to their own decision weights, similarly to the quadratic voting model of Buterin et al. (2018). It is very interesting to see that governance and leadership issues have not particularly come to the forefront, with the only similar concerns being whether and how key roles may be filled. People were more concerned about what it would take to generate the commons framework to achieve goals.

Commoning process and evaluation of required capacities

This article and many others argue for complex implementations of social innovation and commoning practices and spells out positive impacts and potential ripple effects of good design choices, while not giving much information regarding what contributions these may require

from community members. Even if promising, this makes it difficult to assess for a given organization if they have the capacity to engage in commoning activities, something expressed by some participants and being the most common reason for choosing not to participate at the moment of invitation. Similarly, some may find it difficult to determine their ideal level of engaging in these purely social functions. The possession of the will to continually and on an emergent basis engage in the process described below can be assessed when determining the initial capacity for forming commons that can act as platforms. Applications of this process would vary depending on the complexity as well as the nature of the given commons. In our case, the commons concerned has been articulated as the cooperative platform, the minimal administrative institutional framework designed to facilitate ecosystem level social enterprise proliferation.

Within this, two interlocking functions should be continually interpreted: the digital and administrative maintenance of the platform as it relates to the given commons and its continued social alignment to ensure the ecosystems framework properly serves welfare goals.

Stages	Steps	Supplementary advice	Roles introduced at each stage
Initial multi-level integrated network around the commons		Assessment of sufficient existing common actors at multiple network levels	Initiator Sponsor / partner
Invitation for commoning	Individual attention and articulating value propositions	Initial sponsor or partner necessary to jumpstart an equal dialogue. Results in temporary paradoxes during each new integration cycle.	
Facilitating the articulation of the commons	Individual value alignment	Early pressures to promise on delivering indirect value propositions	Facilitators Mentors
	Meta node identification, interoperable language and connection points		
	Establishment of channels and verification protocols	Transparency between partners as soon as can be mutually agreed upon	
Formalization, role setting and delegation	Collective decisions and goals	Distribution of widest set of responsibilities	Project leads Legal contributors

			Administration: IT and HR
Invitation and development of new commons	Rearticulation of the commons	Focus on integrating actors that aid reproducibility. Prescriptive task sets and explicit connections to stakeholders	Integrators Funding coordinators Event coordinators Communication specialists
Maintenance of continual feedback		Ensure equal access to participation and primarily needs based provision	Analysts, researchers and content writers, data managers

Table II.: Stages of proposed commoning process. Source: Authors creation.

6. Discussion

The experiment yielded surprisingly positive results in terms of participation in a project built around pure social innovation, with little short-term hope for tangible value creation and a time-consuming one at that. Many have given advice, even more participated, and most of them have taken initiative and made the project their own in a small way, through tangible contributions and commitments for further cooperation. The proposed framework has been shown to be digestible, supportable and most importantly, functionally compatible with varied sets of participants from social workers, artists, and entrepreneurs to industrial and agricultural producers, innovators and the average, potentially participating “user” as well.

The model shows how the primary value of novel digital tools in the social innovation process lies in the ability to represent the objects and processes of alternatively organized communities on the one hand, while being scalable to the complexities inherent to the market mechanisms of a networked society. It is argued that this transition is organically emerging, however, as for the current markets, distinct channels and institutionalized social agreements are needed to connect actors dependably.

It was shown that one can easily overemphasize the role of such a framework and overengineer it to fit particular use cases, creating oversized administration and burdens for participants, stretching resources on activities that participants could self-organize instead. Social environment and capacity, trust and commitment have been identified as factors which can facilitate collaborations. Extending and maintaining this fabric and providing guidance for

others to do the same is the first priority of social innovation. Great care must be put into maintaining personal and common integrity in this process, to differentiate between value provided for specific individuals and value integrated towards common goals.

The tangible value propositions appear less impactful from this perspective, then the inherent social innovation value. This does seem to limit initial enterprise integration capacity but does support volunteer motivations and discussions towards establishing enterprise value, sustainable resource streams focusing on meeting basic needs and internal processes. Similarly, rules and norms should only be applied to fields identified as belonging organically to the commons as the minimal framework application presupposes certain compatibilities. The limits to this are to be further tested, however, it is clear that late norm-setting can create certain negative feedback loops.

Transparency, appropriately delegated channels and individually customized roles make initial commoning a relatively intensive process requiring active participation from many actors iteratively over several occasions and ideally, continually, however, practice and the initial presence of digital support systems make these investments increasingly less costly as the benefits of connecting to the framework grow with new participants. There exists an inherent interest and sympathy in the target group, giving time and some room for error on the facilitators side. Take care to assess personal capacities and respect boundaries of volunteers and ideally, as in the case of this project, certain processes should become automatically taken on by others after initial formation.

The presented model is capable of cyclical realignment of participants' depth and position of participation around contextual enabling and barrier conditions, navigating each individual, in theory, to a position personally relevant at the time based on personal capacity. The multi-stage feedback nature of the mechanism cannot be understated as that is what allowed organic reproduction of directions around real needs.

7. Conclusions

The commons are a highly diffuse concept, refusing to be tangibly grasped upon any attempt, as they are, by nature, more dynamic manifestations of collective human values. In this study, one possible reproduction of this mentality and logic has been constructed by participating social actors in the form of a practical social and digital framework. By placing the individual, their values and evolving journeys at the center of a process empowered by the latest digital and social innovations, participants' contributions materialized tangible pathways towards

decentralized scaling of public goods provision. The participative design process has combined the functions of social enterprises, social innovation, platform organizing and the commons to describe ideal ways of connecting distinct and heterogeneous circuits of human activity to incentivize common welfare-based decisions.

The value potential of the framework has been articulated through primarily trust and community-based developments, as well as material independence. The prerequisite capacities of organizations to engage in the described commoning processes were also presented along with expected organizational roles for maintenance of the administrative framework of the proposed model.

The primary contribution of the paper lies in the expert-validated model of platform commons as well as a practical model of facilitating commoning practices in the long-term, at multiple institutional scales. By constructing an experiment with participants where real consequences and responsibilities were modeled, the compatibility of wishful thinking with the realities of practitioners was tested.

A limitation of the study is that while most research relied heavily on existing business cases to showcase the integration of financially sustainable business models under platform cooperations, the focus in this case was on the participatory and community elements underpinning the social model, with novel business models at the presented complexity only having been forecasted.

Further research might explore details of platform commons validation and privacy practices and quantitatively test behavioral patterns on large-scale digital applications compatible with the model.

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5.4. ARTICLE IV.

Common values, responsible decisions:

Opportunities for civil society in participation-based institutionalization

Abstract

This study examines the possibilities for responsible management and the civil sector to intertwine in the context of participation-based institutionalization. The central question of the research is how to develop organizational and community frameworks that are capable of handling the responsibilities that arise at the intersection of local and global challenges. By examining this issue, the study aims to explore the theoretical foundations of responsible management in domestic civil practices, with a particular focus on ecosystem-level thinking, community legitimacy, and institutional logics.

The research methodology was qualitative and interpretative: smaller case studies and semi-structured interviews were used to conduct an exploratory analysis of the functioning of civil society organizations. The organizations examined are active in the fields of education, community building, social welfare, and innovation, and in many cases, their work in boundary fields makes them particularly well-suited to respond sensitively to social problems. Using the literature on responsible management, the analysis reflects on the patterns observed in practice and proposes new interpretative frameworks based on these.

The results offer contributions in several directions. On the one hand, the practice of responsibility ranges from the simplest form of participation – mere presence – to the systematic sharing of community values. In the civil society organizations studied, responsibility is not seen as an external expectation but as an integral part of everyday work, yet they often face serious resource constraints when exercising responsibility. On the other hand, the research points out that the tension between community legitimacy and institutional frameworks is decisive: while community practices are based on reflection and participation, institutional logics often reinforce rigid structures and silo-like thinking. Finally, responsible management can also be understood as a process of organizational transformation, in which the role of leaders and facilitators in mediating between the community and institutional levels becomes crucial.

The study makes a twofold contribution: it presents the application of responsible management theory in the domestic civil context and interprets civil society organizations as laboratories for the reformulation of social responsibility. Based on the research, the civil sector's unique value-

based and participatory functioning can catalyze responsible thinking at the ecosystem level, while offering new solutions to the challenges of social cooperation and institutionalization.

Introduction

The following research is a conceptual summary of a broader research process, which primarily sought to answer the question of what organizational frameworks can be used to build broad social partnerships that can respond to intertwined local and global challenges. It would indeed be difficult to find a broader topic, as there are many different approaches to it, such as co-creation (cocreation) (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) to the ecosystem logic (Ben Letaifa & Reynoso, 2015) to social enterprises (Defourny & Nyssens, 2014) , or organizational participation (Wiener et al., 2018), which shed light on certain new dimensions or interpretations of the issue.

However, the starting point was provided by the literature on responsible management (Laasch et al., 2019) . This perspective is relevant because, although it refers to managers and leaders, it can be extended to any individual, and responsibility can also be used as a more general call to action. In addition, the concept has a significant overall impact on the binding of its sub-areas, sustainability, ethics, and stakeholder theory, into a fixed framework.

The difficulties in defining responsibility lie in the more recent emergence of a complex approach, as well as in the traditional, broader interpretations of the term and, in particular, in the challenges of self-definition in this field. My research examines the literature on responsible management, forming its central logical elements and building on the experiences of Hungarian civil society organizations for whom these central elements play a key role in their work to improve social relations. Its aim is to reflect on the theoretical sources of everyday practices and to process its findings in a domestic context.

Literature background

Transdisciplinarity

Transdisciplinarity, the interconnection between fields, can be interpreted as a fundamental principle of responsible management. The significance of this concept lies in the recognition that ecosystem-level challenges can only be solved through broad cooperation between many different actors. The challenges of sustainability already show that, although the will may be there, the lack of resources limits individual and local opportunities for action, especially in

developing regions (Frey & George, 2010). Its overall logic is largely shaped by a collection of related collaborative practices (Laasch et al., 2020). While its basis is fundamentally humanistic (Pirson, 2020), its transdisciplinary nature means that its subject matter often transcends the human sphere. Gherardi & Laasch (2021) describe these abstractions as the interconnection of various human, material, and discursive elements at the level of processes, which increases their scope through relationships. From another perspective, practices of responsibility can be understood through the nodes of these relationships as new elements emerging along the boundaries of individual elements (Chapple et al., 2020). Practices of responsibility can also be interpreted as transdisciplinary collections of these connection practices (Laasch et al., 2020).

Transformation

At the level of common practices, responsible management is in many ways difficult to distinguish from most modern HR or project management approaches and organizational culture development approaches. In general, it seeks to change the entire world of management paradigmatically. This is not surprising, of course, but what distinguishes this field is that, in addition to a horizontal developmental approach within the context of management, it complements broad operations with areas of responsibility which, if listed, would probably make it clear that so many competencies cannot be fitted into every corner of an organization, neither in large, knowledge-based organizations nor in small civil society organizations, not to mention the average SME.

It is important to note that when we talk about paradigm shifts, attempts to eliminate the previous situation are not nearly enough; re-legitimizing previous responsibilities is an active process. This presupposes an active, systemic transformation that permeates all levels of organizations (Doherty et al., 2015). The primary goal of the transformation is to have wide-ranging impact by making individuals accountable and incorporating responsible practices into their daily routines, thus placing the transformation process itself at the center (Hays et al., 2020). In this case, the involved party may require additional facilitation and balancing effort from the service provider. Responsibility fulfills this role when it creates stable spaces during unstable changes and manages the effects of instability (Kelley & Nahser, 2014).

The role of responsibility is unique in that, since its impact requires the mobilization of individuals, its central tool – which can also be formulated as a goal – is support. In relation to education in this area Cornuel and Hommel (2015) clarified this by removing the barriers, highlighting the mismatch between individual roles and time investments, the fragmentation of

target areas, and the shortcomings of external support systems and goals. These complex considerations can be broadly interpreted as community, value, and institutional constraints.

Community

A community barrier may be the lack of appropriate or sufficiently intense socialization, which, based on the principle of experiential learning or role models, could make values more acceptable (Baden & Parkes, 2013; Pyhältö et al., 2014). At this level, the impact of direct leadership on organizational culture, individual commitment, and stakeholder well-being is most evident (McMurray et al., 2010). Communities are also linked to the concept of legitimacy, which in this context can be thought of as the authorization to assume a certain level of responsibility in a given context. Legitimacy can be derived from the results perceived by those directly effected (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015), as well as from external sources (Borglund et al., 2019). Although systems thinking is a basic requirement, it entails more complex responsibilities (Doherty et al., 2015), and deriving principles of responsibility from outside sources may encounter limitations (Cornuel & Hommel, 2015).

Institutions

The role of institutions in the responsible paradigm takes on a broader meaning, in which their primary role is to provide flexible and adaptable frameworks for the communities within their sphere of responsibility. These frameworks are more systemic and less socialization-based, as they need to systematize broader and more diverse aspects like the management of resources and infrastructure, formal goal systems, bureaucracy, power structures, or higher-level institutions (Beddewela et al., 2017; Cicmil et al., 2017). In addition to their tangible tools, institutions play a role in shaping institutional logics, particularly in the context of responsibility. Similar to socialization, these logics shape the interactions and scope of action of those involved, primarily through rules, processes, and communication (Pirson, 2020). These tools are more costly than community-based ones, as they require complex monitoring and record-keeping due to distances, but without them, their role is questionable, which is reflected in the broader assessment of reputation and legitimacy (Tremblay-Boire et al., 2016). The challenge for institutions is that they have an impact on a wider range of transdisciplinary ecosystems, thereby coming into direct contact with different, even conflicting institutional logics, which may operate according to their own responsible paradigm (Bignall et al., 2016). The institutional principles of responsible ecosystems are therefore the subject of debate, as they are based on uniform principles, which highlights the need for open institutional logics

embedded step-by-step (Millar & Price, 2018). This is particularly important because these logics can appear directly or implicitly and can conflict with each other (Blasco, 2012).

Reflection and openness

The trend builds heavily on postmodern constructivist approaches, which leave room for a certain degree of maneuverability in both practice and scientific examination. Institutional logics and socialization are similar concepts with different meanings. Typically, neither is entirely tangible, yet both guide actions. These meanings can only be truly understood through the individual participants. In the context of shared meaning constructions, it is rare for those directly involved to be completely unbiased, but this is not expected, as useful shared meanings can be built from their most critical experiences (Radoynovska et al., 2019). In practice, responsibility becomes understandable from these contexts. Increasing receptiveness to the interpretations of others, openness, and active, continuously rearticulated reflection and attention to them appear as practical considerations (Gherardi & Laasch, 2021).

In a more technical sense, reflection can be translated into a more general competence that enables individuals to interpret the moral content of their relationship with their environment. This can be facilitated by experiential learning, especially along moral threshold concepts, which do not provide concrete actions but rather points for reflection (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015; Montiel et al., 2020). Alternatively, it can be viewed as environmental capabilities, as a means of channeling external opportunities and knowledge. Its unique feature is that, when applied appropriately, it can become a self-generating engine for responsible processes, increasing capacities and other organizational performance indicators as capabilities grow, especially in terms of supply chains (Dzhengiz & Niesten, 2020; Roy et al., 2020).

Leaders and Facilitators

The role of reflection can be particularly important in the case of success as a balance for growth, even in the case of practices aimed at responsible transformation. The focus of the leadership role is on value creation, which is particularly noticeable during transformation as it is complemented by stabilization between community legitimacy and institutionalization pressures. This can generally be managed through value commitments formed from a proactive, systemic overview of the environment and a deep examination of individual perspectives (Fleck, 2010; Kelley & Nahser, 2014). These value commitments are not necessarily tangible decisions; from a responsibility perspective, it is necessary to create the

conditions for openness in choosing the underlying logic behind the path leading to further commitments and decisions (Moosmayer et al., 2019).

Creating spaces for open discourse can help achieve this, as it can define the scope of these areas of responsibility across organizational boundaries (Chapple et al., 2020). Within these spaces, proactive information and knowledge sharing, as well as the creation of conditions for transparency, can increase willingness to participate (Gallardo-Vázquez & Isabel Sánchez-Hernández, 2014). This pushes the concept of leadership or management closer to the role of facilitator. Individuals who are well-connected within a given community or institutional environment can lend a unique, bridging, facilitative legitimacy to the transformation (Borglund et al., 2019).

Methodology

In this research, I analyze the findings of various smaller case studies and semi-structured interviews within a loose, qualitative methodological framework, reflecting on the relevant literary trends through their connections as illustrations and practical contributions. In relation to the central ideas of the research, I examine the following main questions:

1. How does ecosystem-level responsibility change organizations?
2. What role do the community and the individual play in the interpretation of the ecosystem?

I have included in my research organizations that play a civil role and whose operations, due to their movement in boundary fields, are both wide and deep, similar to the responsible paradigm.

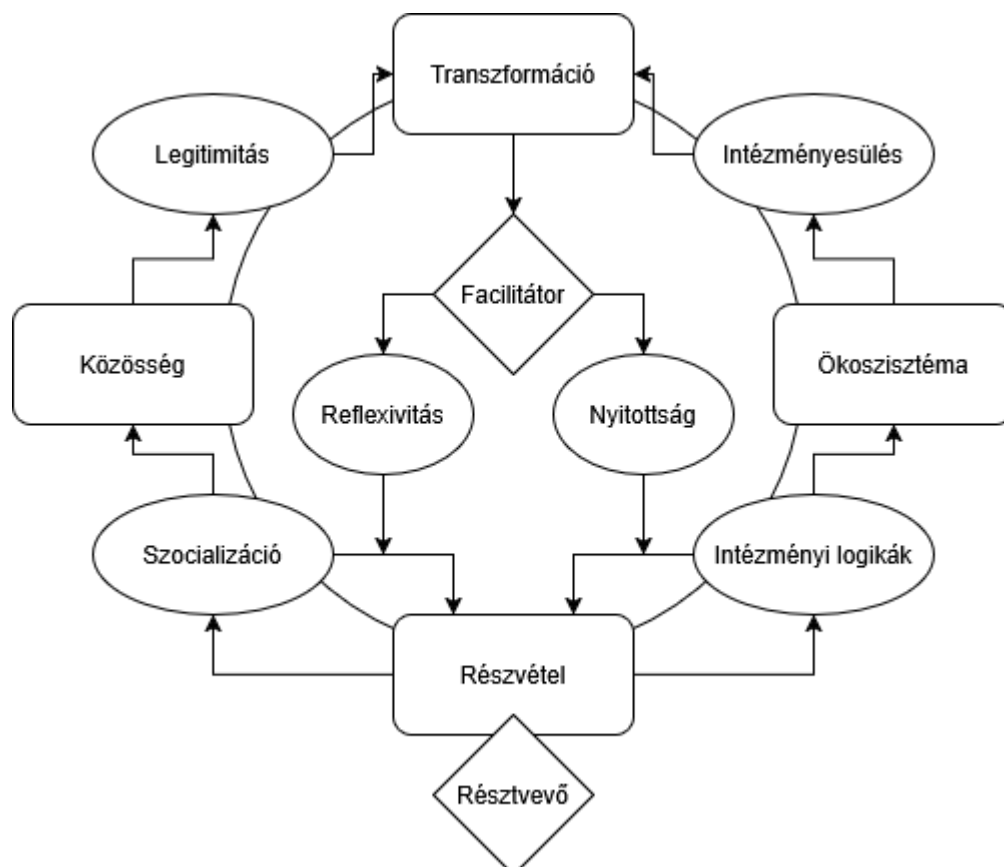
Organizational form	Activities	Active contributors
Non-profit	Education	15-20
Mixed	Regional development	10-15 people
Informal	Agriculture, community building	3
Non-profit Enterprise	Community space maintenance	5-15 people
Non-profit	Innovation, community building	10-15 people

Mixed	Employment of people with disabilities	20-25
Non-profit	Mental health counseling	40-50

I. Table: Organizations included in the research sample. Source: Own edit

The research is largely interpretative in nature, with limited joint participant construction (Sebastian, 2019). The analysis is based on practical grounds within the literary framework. The data is based on case studies and personal interviews, supplemented by narratives created during the research journaling process. The aim of the research is to present the central elements of a broad system within a narrow framework, thereby increasing understanding and seeking alternatives to solve existing challenges.

Analysis



I. Figure: Processes of responsible ecosystems. Source: Own edit.

The elements of the analytical framework are formed by the most important branches of the literature presented, and their arrangement was shaped by the experiences drawn from the interviews. The figure is intended to focus on the individual human perspective. The unique, flexible relationship between the facilitator and the participant is intended to illustrate the most important points of stability, while participation is a specific element that does not originate from the numerous literary trends indicated by this word, but from its more everyday interpretation.

This can be traced back to the fundamentals of this field, according to which responsible operation can be achieved primarily by setting the right priorities, as each actor has different capacities and abilities. In addition, it is clear that with a finite number of hours in a day, even the most active actors become fragmented above a certain point. The entry level to responsibility is participation. Within this, stakeholders can operate on an extremely wide scale, but the lowest level, presence, appearance in any initiative, even if only physically, must be achieved. A prerequisite for deepening participation into responsibility is that responsibility should not be an excessive burden, but should occur in parallel with something else, in synergy. This reflects the traditional approach mentioned above, according to which responsibility is not a burden and cannot be an added element to everyday work, but it must be recognized that in the beginning, personal sacrifices are indeed necessary. This is particularly relevant for this target group, as many of them work with sensitive social groups or with groups of experts who have limited access. In the case of an irresponsible, but even a neutral or partially responsible organization, the first step can only be to face up to this. This is the fundamental value conflict in efforts to initiate transformation processes, which triggers the discovery of responsibilities within limits.

This approach can be instructive because, in reality, many variations should be considered in every application, as each actor takes on different roles in each value framework. Civil society actors are often interpreted as a kind of institutional actor by their target group, which shapes its expectations accordingly. From another perspective, they are seen as service providers, with different expectations. This effect is more pronounced in the case of organizations that refer more strongly to the public good, as a kind of feedback system for responsibility. In other cases, organizations operating on the basis of market logics formed the core of communities. These organizations were able to fulfill this role when their core values were based on resources that almost incidentally enabled the creation of communities. Thus, community spaces, offices, and digital platforms have similarly emerged as independent spaces and, in turn, as core resources.

Other resources have gained their value from the community processes that have evolved around their development.

From these and other central resources, organizations, communities, institutions, and individuals shape their areas of responsibility in a variety of ways from their participatory perspectives, top-down, bottom-up, across great distances, and at the closest individual levels. In many cases, these narratives and processes were considered central resources themselves by the groups studied. In the case of beneficiary groups, recording and following individual interpretations proved to be an effective method for initiating individual development. The challenge arises when they try to provide a broader, unifying vision that can be translated into individual action. This is most typical in communities organized around specific professions. These interpretations serve to unite and mobilize actors by articulating and legitimizing values. According to this argument, it is this process itself that enables values to facilitate action. In many cases, it was possible to adequately articulate fundamental individual priorities and assess the practical consequences by questioning the dominant interpretations. However, the context of scarce resources leaves little room for flexibility, even with institutional support.

Transformation

In connection with the transformation, there is a recurring difference in approach between those who link responsibility to ethical principles and those who link it to a kind of rational logic based on interdependence, in practice and in communication. Based on field experience, it is worth considering a rational approach in early communication or when connecting more distant actors. This is an acceptable, widely identifiable message that can lay the foundations for ecosystem thinking by building a new interpretation based on individual identity. In addition to overcoming social distrust, it is a common experience that group-dependent trust issues arise if these interdependent relationships cannot be grasped. In practice, this means that ideas alone do not enable organizations to define and articulate their alternative, long-term value propositions.

Based on the reports, practices of value alignment between individuals appear to be sufficiently mature, while closer organizational collaborations tend to be more unequal, and broader collaborations are fragmented due to differing logics and short-term constraints on access to capacities, or are provided by international sources. Resource-based cooperation can therefore only partially exploit the synergies offered by reflective thinking.

It is also worth emphasizing that the fundamental principles of responsibility are by no means novel ideas, but rather concern very real, everyday interests that have always been with us. The additional tasks discussed have always been necessary, but digital transformation and the economic opportunities of developed regions have opened up space for their more efficient and distributed organization. According to many, the need and, to some extent, the knowledge for this already existed, but, simply put, there has not been the complex capacity to implement it until now.

The concept of responsibility, or its border areas, has become widespread at this point. In addition, even in the case of civil society organizations that are at the forefront of responsibility, it can be observed that a systemic approach is added to the end of the individual work organization priority list of those involved as a kind of supplementary activity. When we talk about authenticity, it is not primarily the wrong attitude that comes to mind, but rather the lack of a supportive infrastructure with appropriate, specific areas of responsibility.

Reflection and openness

Since responsibility always requires solutions that are appropriate to local needs and opportunities, the first challenge is to ensure the most transparent and easily accessible framework for information and decision-making processes. Ideally, we could view this as a window through which any stakeholder can gain insight into the "computer chassis" of the given context and attempt to integrate, apply, or modify the relevant elements on the "motherboard" in the most intuitive way possible. All of this can actually play an important role in any general organizational development context. Many organizations exercise these roles through internal knowledge bases and participatory democratic practices, but deeper practices or the use of systems have often led to dead ends due to their fragmentation and varying content and intensity.

Another contradictory situation is that knowledge-intensive, advanced organizations, which are typically conscious of their responsibilities, have repeatedly failed to realize adequate value precisely because of their own advanced routines. They found it more difficult to connect with their heterogeneous environment and even their internal subcultures, on which they should build their responsible efforts, because they offered too high participation thresholds or complex systems. In other cases, continuous transformation can lead to an accumulation of responsibilities, such as excessive commitments to grants, while existing areas of responsibility often remain unnoticed and without anyone responsible for them.

This raises the question of what will happen to those who are satisfied with their current situation, who may not even be working by generating significant negative externalities, and who do not wish to take on new or more complex tasks or participate more? At the social level, the answer, as interpreted through various social development initiatives, is to differentiate participation and, in some cases, limit it to internal circles if individuals may pose external risks.

In many cases, separate paths have been taken. However, reflection also offers those who offer the previously dominant institutional logic the opportunity to retain participants, partly under their own umbrella, but autonomously. In fact, several of the organizations studied can only be understood to a significant extent through these central elements, primarily offering channels between autonomous actors based on minimal value agreements. This describes the dynamic relationship between openness and reflection, in which the community offers individual knowledge and the institution offers open relationships.

Institutions

Responsible management is a principle-driven approach that seeks to integrate itself as widely as possible into the fabric of society by pursuing abstract goals. For this reason, at the process level, there are several stories about contradictory situations resulting from interpretations. Although the general goals are well known, their scope is not equally acceptable, as they are context dependent. The dissemination of the goals in understandable ways is primarily visible through institutional actors. Institutions here refer to a broad category, which, based on the interviews, is associated with a kind of formality, stability, and resources, even when it comes to civil actors. The parties involved thus see both advantages and disadvantages in fulfilling institutional roles. In addition to stabilisation, their role is to strengthen synergies, as they are able to connect participants to other communities through their networks.

Although several efforts have been made in this direction, the intertwining of local collaborations has been described as unsuccessful, primarily due to trust issues. In the absence of this, the frameworks of responsibility are dominated by the objectives of state and international institutions. The criticism levelled at these is that, in addition to their inflexibility, they compartmentalize thinking and shape lower-level objectives to the conditions of access to resources. In certain areas, this leads to a shortage of certain competencies, while in others it leads to overproduction, which often diverts resources away from necessary objectives. The most typical example is when someone collects signatures as proof of participation in

programs, while the same resources could have been distributed among the participants on this basis if participation were the basis for support.

In addition, it has been repeatedly pointed out that institutional logics continue to reward accumulation and irresponsible accountability. A recurring fracture in the lives of catalysts is the divergence in performance culture among stakeholders, which serves as a good example of this. When an organization that is set up to function in a certain way begins to look outward or more broadly beyond its original core, some of the participants typically induce a pace of growth that not everyone is capable of or needs. This poses a serious problem at the institutional level, because in a civil environment, if growth is accompanied by attrition, sensitive target groups will be harmed.

Ecosystems

Our current economies are based on underlying logics that are not obvious to us. These constitute their central meanings, which are present even when they are supposedly neutral. Any paradigm shift should focus on providing similarly well-defined reflexes that prescribe further individual action.

Responsibility and the thinking that stems from it provide a more practical conceptual framework for our social challenges in some respects. It is difficult to judge from an individual's perspective how sustainable their everyday decisions are. Interpreted at the ecosystem level, everything may be unsustainable, so it may be more worthwhile to identify and record the areas that an individual or organization can actually take responsibility for.

If we reorganize our thinking from the logic of accumulation that expects linear growth and the constraints of expressing exaggerated values through communication, we get a picture that is less intuitive at first glance but much simpler. If, instead of expressing the extent of resources, we focus on the interactions between the total finite resource framework and individual needs and capacities for responsibility, the principles outlined above can be translated into operational logics.

Although the model provides a simplified picture, it shows how flexible the necessary tools can be, while still having to meet certain minimum conditions when examined at the ecosystem level. The civil sphere plays a special role, as it performs activities that are difficult to express in monetary terms but have very expressible costs. In successful cases, we can see that it draws on external resources, typically deriving its legitimacy from the interests of participants or some natural resource. Others adopt market logics and provide services according to their

capabilities in exchange for tangible compensation from external sources. In this model, the buyer also becomes a donor. This model has begun to spread widely with considerable success, but a recurring dilemma is how to divide pricing and distribution between civil and maintenance purposes. If the beneficiaries are not also the workers, this may become more unbalanced as the business grows. However, above a certain level of success, it can lift communities and we can say that civil work has achieved its goal.

However, if we think through the lens of responsibility and in the longer term, we find ourselves in another logical loop. In some cases, external resources have disrupted the original basis of reference for communities, their reliance on participants, and have themselves become autonomous institutional actors. This has created new spaces from which the original community is now a closed channel accessible only to those with external resources, blurring the line between public and private interests.

If we could count the participants within a given environment, we could distinguish between private matters, business, and genuine public affairs based on how many people are affected. If we apply this humanistic principle consistently, in the example below we can take into account the interests of beneficiaries, organizers, employees, customers, and donors. If we could distinguish between legitimacy and access to institutional resources, we could achieve broader consensus by building on flatter systems. Along these lines, we can define proportionally distributed responsibilities at the nodes. There are countless tools available for coordination, from digital solutions to cooperative logics, but we must be honest about our responsibilities, which require nothing less than a systematic, individual-based open collection of our values.

Conclusion

The concept of responsible management is an organizational principle with ripple effects, which manifests itself as a comprehensive set of goals for sustainability, ethics, and a stakeholder-centered approach in the sharing of ecosystem-level values and responsibilities. The approach describes the relationship between communities and institutions formed around shared interpretations of individuals, and its development and transformation. The balance between legitimacy and institutional effects can be enforced by stakeholders through facilitators and responsible parties. In the case of institutional logics, it prescribes a broadly acceptable openness, while at the community level, it indicates a reflective, outward-looking socialization linked to the interpretations of individuals. In addition to the self-reinforcing

nature of the relationship between the two processes, reliance on the value set of existing dominant institutional logics can reduce the possibilities for value creation through negative socialization constraints.

Its presentation through the Hungarian civil sphere is intended to show the implications of the central logics of responsibility in the domestic environment, as well as specific solutions and challenges. The participating organizations use advanced human and technical resources to provide solutions that create social values beyond themselves. Their communities are formed around the creation and preservation of their resources and values, during which they build institutional routines through socialization.

In addition to the need for resources in the absence of a critical mass, the lack of trust between communities operating according to different logics and at a distance may be a barrier to the next steps in responsibility and ecosystem-level thinking. Significant progress can be achieved by combining existing community resources, systems, and institutions, but their effective use would require a continuous localized reinterpretation of responsibility.

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