

## CO-CREATION OF SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL AREAS

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### Abstract

**Purpose.** Rural areas are currently looking for effective, ground-breaking solutions that would enable the development of new models of cooperation and foster the co-creation of social innovation. EU investment has resulted in considerable changes within rural areas. The deep-rooted social problems found their ways into the spotlight, and various stakeholders are looking for solutions to deal with them in the most efficient way. As a result, scientific research has been addressing the co-creation of social innovation in rural areas, as it can serve as a tool that helps to solve these issues.

**Design/methodology/approach:** literature review.

**Findings.** Within the last two decades, the academic world has witnessed the emergence of the concept of social innovation that stems from a variety of innovation theories and raises awareness about a variety of issues it addresses. At the beginning, social innovations were not grouped or systemised, nor were they subjected to unified definitions, contextualised or placed in a clear innovation development system. However, the course of scientific research has led to the formulation of classifications, differentiation and identification of different dimensions of social innovation reacting to a more specific problematic field (Moulert et al., 2013b). As a process, the co-creation of social innovation developed from a classic stage-divided framework into the system constituted from a multitude of factors: stakeholders, various environmental elements, the emerging cooperative relationships, complex approach and the structuring of the process designed to co-create the social innovation. However, there is no sufficient research in the workings of the general systematic approach or the interaction between the elements acting organically in the co-creation process of social innovation. Each new interaction discovered, provides a fuller picture explaining how the co-creation process of social innovation results in the emergence of cooperation models among organisations in rural areas (Atkočiūnienė et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2017; Oeij et al., 2019).

**Research limitations/implications.** The co-creation of social innovation tends to address the stages of the process, rather than its participants. Scientific research, however, has revealed that they should be reckoned with, as the success of the co-creation of social innovation actually depends on the cooperation model developed by its participants.

**Practical implications.** Social innovation and processes related to the co-creation thereof is a rather new phenomenon in rural areas and a new practice for organisations operating in rural areas. This results in the vagueness of the topic analysed, especially in its relation to the development of suitable co-creation model by organisations which develop social innovation.

**Originality/Value.** The co-creation of social innovation in rural areas is affected by a variety of external and internal environmental factors. Therefore, the co-creation model developed should clearly establish the roles of organisation, their obligations, fields of responsibility and possible environmental influences. One can notice that organisations operating in rural areas are united by strong social engagement and shared interest in the development of the rural area. Therefore, the co-creation process of social innovation can serve as a sustainable model of cooperation oriented towards the solution of social problems in these rural areas where they operate.

**Keywords:** social innovation, rural areas, co-creation of social innovation

**Research type:** general review.

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