

# Mladá veda

## Young Science





# Mladá veda

## Young Science

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# PARTICIPATORY DESIGN OF SOCIAL INNOVATIONS FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY – CASE STUDY OF BÁNOV MUNICIPALITY

PARTICIPATÍVNY NÁVRH SOCIÁLNYCH INOVÁCIÍ PRE MIESTNU ROZVOJOVÚ STRATÉGIU – PRÍPADOVÁ ŠTÚDIA OBCE BÁNOV

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Autor pôsobí ako externý doktorand na Fakulte európskych štúdií a regionálneho rozvoja Slovenskej poľnohospodárskej univerzity v Nitre. Vo svojej dizertačnej práci sa venuje Sociálnym inováciám v integrovanom rozvoji vidieka.

The author works as an external doctoral student at the Faculty of European Studies and Regional Development of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. In his dissertation, he deals with social innovations in the integrated rural development.

## Abstract

Bottom-up planning is a participatory approach to local and regional development where local communities and stakeholders take the lead in identifying needs, setting priorities and implementing projects (Korten, 1984). This method contrasts with a top-down approach, where decisions are made by higher authorities with little input from the local population. Bottom-up planning ensures that development is more relevant, sustainable and inclusive. The contribution is a case study of a participatory design of innovations for the future development program of Bánov - the Slovak municipality (Nové Zámky district). The proposals were created in collaboration with the residents of the village, representatives of the village and a local action group focused on individual development areas, and students of the Faculty of European Studies and Regional Development of the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra and the Faculty of Management of the Technical University in Bratislava. The main challenges of the village and the administration of social innovation were identified. These outputs were processed in five participatory focus groups within four thematic areas: entrepreneurship and social economy; public spaces; social development; energy self-sufficiency and waste management. This resulted in eight innovative proposals: four are focused on the field of social development, two on entrepreneurship and social economy, two on the use of public spaces and one on energy self-sufficiency and waste management. The

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selected innovations will be incorporated into the new Program of economic and social development of the municipality as the main strategic development document.

Key words: co-design, co-creation, student participation, community participation, stakeholders, social innovation, local development strategy

### **Abstrakt**

Plánovanie zdola nahor je participatívny prístup k miestnemu a regionálnemu rozvoju, kde miestne komunity a zainteresované strany preberajú vedenie pri identifikácii potrieb, stanovovaní priorít a implementácii projektov (Korten, 1984). Táto metóda je v kontraste s prístupom zhora nadol, kde rozhodnutia prijímajú vyššie orgány s malým vstupom miestneho obyvateľstva. Plánovanie zdola nahor zabezpečuje, že rozvoj je relevantnejší, udržateľnejší a inkluzívnejší. Príspevok je prípadovou štúdiou participatívneho návrhu inovácií pre budúci program rozvoja slovenskej obce Bánov (okres Nové Zámky). Návrhy vznikli v spolupráci obyvateľov obce, predstaviteľov obce a miestnej akčnej skupiny zameraných na jednotlivé rozvojové oblasti a študentov Fakulty európskych štúdií a regionálneho rozvoja Slovenskej poľnohospodárskej univerzity v Nitre a Fakulty manažmentu Technickej univerzity v Bratislave. Boli identifikované hlavné výzvy obce Bánov a navrhnuté sociálne inovácie. Tieto výstupy boli spracované v piatich participatívnych fókusových skupinách v rámci štyroch tematických oblastí: podnikanie a sociálna ekonomika; verejné priestory; sociálny rozvoj; energetická sebestačnosť a odpadové hospodárstvo. Výsledkom práce týchto skupín bolo osem inovačných návrhov: štyri sú zamerané na oblasť sociálneho rozvoja, dva na podnikanie a sociálnu ekonomiku, dva na využívanie verejných priestorov a jeden na energetickú sebestačnosť a odpadové hospodárstvo. Vybrané novinky budú zapracované do nového Programu hospodárskeho a sociálneho rozvoja obce ako hlavného strategického rozvojového dokumentu.

Kľúčové slová: kodizajn, kokreácia, participácia študentov, komunitná participácia, zainteresované strany, sociálne inovácie, stratégia miestneho rozvoja

### **Introduction**

Social innovation is defined as a new way of meeting social needs and challenges. The goal of these innovations is the creation of social value, improvement of the lives of individuals and communities, support of positive social change and sustainable and fair results.

At the end of the 19th century, economic theorists Clark, Wieser and Stolzmans dealt with forms of societal value. This was quickly met with universal approval. Schumpeter (1909) was the first who tried to define social and societal value for the needs of the theory.

The term societal value (which in the current understanding includes social and environmental value) is used in the context of public benefit. Some sources define social value and impact as fulfilling a public or community interest (Cochran, 1974; Bozeman, 2007).

Societal value is, on one hand, the value of a change that can be identified or experienced, and on the other hand, the value that society (the state system) will gain if such a change occurs (financial - for example, saved public funds, non-financial - for example, a reduction of social tension) (Chreneková et al., 2021). Social value is created by actors within

a specific context through innovation and cooperative and reciprocal relationships (Lorenzo-Afable et al., 2023).

In current scientific works, the creation of social value is approached as a process phenomenon, which is formed in response to opportunities for the creation of social impact (Lorenzo-Afable et al., 2023).

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, the scientific discourse on the value bases of public policy intensified. The impetus for this discussion was Mark Moore's publication from 1995. In his work, the issue of the quality of public administration was not related to traditional tools of economic efficiency, but to the need to formulate the goals of public administration in such a way that they express the creation of societal value (Stoker, 2006).

The orientation of public administration to societal value is applied in the concept of "public value management" (Talbot, 2009; Taylor, 2003). The world economic crisis accelerated the process of the emergence of this concept. Little is said in the literature about issues of competence and power in relation to public value and its heterogeneity. For this reason, empirical testing of the conceptual framework of public value is problematic (Williams and Shearer, 2011). Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007) addressed the public value creation ecosystem.

Public or societal value has become a new paradigm of public administration and at the same time an essential component of public sector planning (UN-Habitat, 2009) and activities in the future. The creation of public (societal) value is the main principle of improving public services. The paradigm of this value focuses on the needs of the public as citizens and as consumers and the creation of value (Bojang, 2021b). Creation of the societal value is on local level preferably happening within implementation of development plan. Process of strategic plan design is the time, when real needs and values can be reflected to the strategy. Participatory approaches to planning, or the co-designing of strategic plans generate value-added, not only in terms of improved and optimized goals, action plans, and concrete local development projects, but also in terms of building and strengthening of local communities, delivering local-specific innovations (Hrivnák et al., 2021).

In the last 20 years there has been more talk about public, social and societal innovations. (Lehtola and Ståhle, 2014) talk about the expansion of the goals of the innovation agenda from entrepreneurial to societal and social. Social innovations are already an integral part of current regional development. Therefore, close cooperation with all interested parties and subjects is necessary (Cornwall, 2008; Mansuri and Rao, 2012). The principle of designing and introducing innovations is to find a way to achieve the greatest possible positive societal impact for the greatest possible number of inhabitants and their quality of life in the given territory with the resources available to the territory (Fung and Wright, 2003; Ostrom, 1990). Social innovation can take different forms. They are often designed and implemented in collaboration with various stakeholders, such as state and public administration, educational and consulting institutions, businesses, non-profit organizations and communities (Gaventa, 2004), with the aim of effectively solving complex social problems. Social innovations are considered as tools for territorial and community development. Hrivnák and Moritz (2024) studied social innovations in the conditions of grassroots communities, which have been repeatedly identified as a source of new,

sustainable, publicly beneficial products, services, technologies, processes, and organizational models. Authors concluded, that the majority of products and services provided by grassroots can be considered as social innovations.

### **Material and methods**

The aim of the presented work is the proposal of social innovations aimed at the creation of social value in the provision of services for different groups of residents. The investigated area is the Slovak village of Bánov located in the district of Nové Zámky. The municipality is one of the stakeholders in the Nitra region "BE-FOOD" Living Laboratory of Regional Sustainability.

Regional and local planning documents and datasets of the Statistical office of the Slovak Republic were used as sources of secondary data. Primary data were gained from five focus groups and five guided interviews. Main result of the study was innovation proposals for the strategy of the development plan of Bánov municipality. These outputs were developed within five focus groups aimed at, four thematic areas: business and social economy, public spaces, social development, and energy self-sufficiency and waste management. The focus groups were linked to participatory co-design workshops with student participation. Co-design workshops included 45 students of the Faculty of European Studies and Regional Development of Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (including 11 international students), and Faculty of Management of the Technical University in Bratislava. Citizens and local authorities participated in focus groups.

The work of these groups resulted in eight innovation proposals: four are aimed at the social development field, two at entrepreneurship and social economy, two at the use of public spaces and one at energy self-sufficiency and waste management. Proposals were presented and commented by the mayor of Bánov municipality.

### **Results**

#### **Bánov municipality characteristics**

The village is located in the southern part of the Nitra Region at an altitude of 121 m above sea level. It belongs to the Nové Zámky district and to the Cedron - Nitrava microregion. Administratively, the village consists of two cadastral territories - Bánov and Malá Kesa. It borders the district town in the south and the town of Šurany in the north and west. To the east, it borders the municipalities of Dolný Ohaj and Bešeňov.

The territory of the municipality belongs to a warm climate area and within it to a district of warm, very dry, with a mild winter. There are on average more than 50 days with a maximum temperature of 25°C or more, the average January temperature is -3°C. It is located in the warmest and driest region of Slovakia. There are several species and types of soils. Clay-loamy soils are primarily associated with heavier river sediments, and loess clays. There are mainly chernozems, alluvial soils and salt marshes. From the point of view of land use, agricultural land in Bánov occupies 1,529.09 ha, of which 1,458.85 ha is arable land and less than 1 ha is vineyards. Forest land 22.87 ha (where mainly poplar and ash grow), built-up area 121.32 ha. The total land area is 1788.55 ha. The most important watercourse in the Bánov cadastre is the Nitra river. It is an upland-lowland river with a rain-snow type of outflow. In



the cadastre of the village, the meandering branches of the original Nitra river bed, now mostly cut off from the modified river flow, or regulated by culverts, are preserved. In the southeastern part of the cadastre, there are the most preserved localities from the point of view of nature protection and the most valuable biotopes providing living conditions for various communities of plants and animals.

The village of Bánov is one of the large villages. As of December 31, 2023, the village had 3,603 inhabitants. The most numerous religion is the Roman Catholic religion (82.2%). Up to 99% of the population has Slovak nationality. The largest component of the population consists of people who have completed an apprenticeship without a high school diploma and who have completed secondary vocational education with a high school diploma.

Education in the village is provided by primary school with kindergarten. There is a health center (general practitioners, pediatrician and dentist) and a pharmacy. The cultural and social activities of the inhabitants are carried out primarily in the cultural center. The building of the cultural center is used by organizations and associations: Kesanka - wind music, Bánovčanka - children's orchestra, Mrchane - singing group, Association of Disabled People, Pensioners' Union, Hunting Association Dolina, Poľnohospodár a.s., TJ Lokomotiva Bánov, J. G. Tajovský Theatre, Dance School and others. There is also a library in the village. The municipality communicates with citizens using cable television, municipal radio, and the website [www.banov.sk](http://www.banov.sk). Three non-governmental organizations - civil associations are registered in the village of Bánov. The business environment consists mainly of micro-enterprises employing up to 20 employees. The largest employers are: Poľnohospodár Nové Zámky a.s., Juraj Oremus Bakery, Ltd., Sucharda & Sucharda, Ján Ščevlík, Autodoprava Rajan, Slovket, Ltd.

The village has advantageous geographical location with a connection to multimodal corridors and has a good location in relation to the main transport corridors of regional importance. The village has a direct connection to the first class road I/64, which connects the cities of Komárno, Nové Zámky and Nitra. The first class road I/64, which connects the district towns of Nitra and Nové Zámky, passes through the cadastral territory of the village of Bánov.

### **Development challenges and opportunities**

The first phase of research resulted in identification of main challenges of the territorial development. One of the main problems is lack of job positions. Municipality and the territory has low income from business and low visitors and tourism attendance rate. Marketing of the territory is not developed. Gastro services are not present at all. Low diversification of agriculture activities was identified. A complex product for visitors and local transport infrastructure are missing. Carbon footprint is high.

Lack of social housing and housing possibilities cause migration of the population. Selected types of social services are missing. The demand is increasing. There is specially a lack of facilities for aging population. Pedestrian infrastructure is incomplete. A SWOT of local development was formulated (table 1).

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Wakenesses</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location close to regional capital</li> <li>• Strong human and social capital</li> <li>• Ownership of land and buildings</li> <li>• Effective and intensive communication of the municipality with citizens</li> <li>• Reach cultural life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available housing</li> <li>• Missing public space amenities</li> <li>• Lack of facilities for the elderly</li> <li>• Missing some types of social services</li> <li>• Incomplete pedestrian infrastructure</li> <li>• Air pollution</li> <li>• Missing jobs</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of tourism and agritourism for short stays (weekend tourism)</li> <li>• Building intergeneration facilities</li> <li>• Using empty premises for social amenities</li> <li>• Promotion of healthy lifestyle</li> <li>• Marketing of possibilities for visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging population</li> <li>• Dependence of elderly people on family care</li> <li>• Flooding in specific areas</li> </ul>

Table 1 – SWOT of the Bánov territorial development

Source: Own elaboration

Opportunities formulated in the SWOT create main links to design of innovations. Identified issues and innovations will be used in the further process of formulation of local development strategy.

### **Innovations**

Research of the development and potential of Bánov territory and surroundings resulted in the design of eight innovations (table 2). These reflect real challenges which the territory and community of residents face. Some innovations can be realized by a simple project, and some are more complex. Objectives of designed innovations naturally overlap in certain aspects. The energy grid, for example, overlaps with Climatic park, Co-living, and Social enterprises. Objectives of the Climatic park are mostly overlapping with Bánov circuit. Projects within innovations are linked and overlapped from a territorial aspect.

Target groups and main stakeholders of innovations were also suggested. In most cases, the municipality is the main stakeholder. Results and impact would lead to a better quality of life in Bánov. Moreover, the territory would provide more amenities and possibilities for visitors from another territory and the regional capital residents.



Title	Description/Objective	Target groups	Stakeholders	Location	Result	Impact	Indicators
<b>Energy grid</b>	using renewable resources of energy for lightning and heating in public municipality buildings, central processing of biowaste	residents	municipality, businesses	territory of municipality	creation of energetic community, eliminating heat islands	lower energy consumption, higher environmental awareness	lower energy consumption and expenses
<b>Climatic park</b>	biodiversity meadow, water retention measures, greenery shading, community garden, making the area	residents and visitors	municipality, businesses	green area, park near basic school	creating space for leisure activities	strengthening climate measures, increasing attractiveness of space	number of visitors
<b>Bánov circuit</b>	connecting selected spots of Bánov and surrounding by bike path	families, children, seniors, visitors, disabled persons, sport and other clubs members	municipality, NGOs	territory of municipality and surrounding	strengthening local mobility	cleaner environment	number of users
<b>Bánov treasure</b>	local products sell and degustations, link to cyclo path	residents, families, young people	municipality, producers	old cinema	relocalization	healthy life	number of producers and visitors
<b>Relax park</b>	boat rentals	resident families, visitors	municipality, NGOs	Sihot' area	leisure activities	higher attractiveness	number of visitors
<b>Co-living</b>	shared neighborhood spaces, use of renewable energy sources also for further distribution (off grid)	young families	municipality	western part of municipality territory	reduced expenses and better services	more	number of housing units, greenness and built-up index, number of services, involved groups
<b>Social enterprise</b>	services to citizens for a fee	vulnerable and disabled people (Law 112/2018)	municipality	municipality	work inclusion, services	social inclusion	number of integration jobs, number of services
<b>Legacy bridges</b>	mobilisation and organisation, training and capacity building, agro tourism, indigenous knowledge, mental & physical wellbeing activities, community gatherings, recreational/cultural, volunteer activities	seniors and younger generation	municipality, Kesa Nostra, seniors, learning institutions	old cinema and back pub area	social inclusion, leisure activities, services	social inclusion and wellbeing, level of skill, self esteem, social connection and appreciation	number of participants, products and activities, revenue

Table 2 – Designed innovations and its characteristics

Source: Own elaboration

Designed innovations will be discussed in working groups of municipality council. Selected projects will be prototyped within the BE-FOOD living lab and implemented in the future. Material and financial resources for prototyping and implementation of designed innovations were also identified. Innovations are mainly based on endogenous resources of the territory and community of Bánov. Material resources are mainly based on land and buildings and other movable and immovable property of innovation stakeholders. Personal capacities of employees of municipality and volunteers are described. Several external financial resources are suggested. These are: vouchers, state aid, European funds. Private resources, income from business activities, sale of services, crowdfunding, and individual and legal donors were also mentioned. Substitute payment in the case of a designed social enterprise can be applied according to Law 112/2018 on social economy and social enterprises.

## Conclusion

Bánov municipality is a settlement with good location and well developed infrastructure and strong social capital. However, several development weaknesses were identified.

As a main research result, social innovations were designed in the participatory process. These innovations would contribute to solving identified problems. This is part of the bottom-up planning, that ensures more relevant, sustainable, and inclusive solutions. These outputs were developed within five participatory focus groups and workshops within four thematic areas. Local leaders, citizens, and students of regional development, management and the integrated rural development participated in the process. Bottom-up planning ensures that development is more relevant, sustainable, and inclusive. Students of different study programs brought a fresh and unbiased view to the process. Local leaders and citizens brought the advice on strengths, challenges and endogenous resources of the territory and community. The research in this participative connection resulted in eight innovation proposals: Energy grid, Climatic park, Social enterprise, Legacy bridges, Bánov circuit, Bánov treasure, Relax park and Co-living. Four of them are aimed at social development field, two at

entrepreneurship and social economy, two at the use of public spaces and one at energy self-sufficiency and waste management. Selected innovations will be incorporated into the new Program of economic and social development of the municipality as a main development strategy document.

Results and impact of innovations would lead to a better quality of life in Bánov. Moreover, the territory would provide more amenities and possibilities for visitors. Joining generations, sharing, and using endogenous resources of the territory are the strongest innovation features. Synergy in solutions would bring stronger effect with lower investments.

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