Chapter 3
Pathways towards Enhancing HEI's Role in the Local Social İnnovation Ecosystem

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Abstract Social innovation as a potential way of looking for new ways to combat the most challenging social problems is underdeveloped in Croatia and Europe. This chapter assesses the contribution of specific Higher education institute (HEI) to developing a social innovation ecosystem in the Zagreb agglomeration area (and beyond) in several dimensions: (a) research and evidence that informed social innovations (SI) and wider policies; (b) education; (c) creating networks and advocating, and (d) community engagement. Additionally, the introduction of the service-learning program is presented to illustrate that contribution. The capacity of the higher education institutions in fostering the development of the social innovation ecosystem is discussed through the prism of the local and national education, science and public (social) policy development in Croatia.

Keywords Social innovation · Social innovation ecosystem · Higher education institutions · Croatia

The Key Points of the Chapter Are the Following
- Higher education institutions (HEI) can have a significant contribution to developing local social innovation ecosystems.
- There are several areas in which that contribution can be realised (a) research and evidence that informed social innovations (SI) and wider policies; (b) education; (c) creating networks and advocating, and (d) community engagement.
- Opportunity or necessity can be HEI's drivers in developing the local social innovation ecosystem.
- As demonstrated in the Croatian example, in doing so HEI can have different specific drivers (personal enthusiasm, knowledge and networking capacities,

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embeddedness in local context) and obstacles that can relate to the overall conditions of the specific educational system or national innovation culture.
- Service-learning programs are one of the innovative ways to connect HEI's and the local community.

1 Introduction

The former economic crises that have stricken Europe in recent years have prompted many discussions on the search for new paths, creating new approaches and concepts of social and economic policies (Crouch, 2011). The current COVID 19 pandemic has put significant new challenges in organizing social and economic life. Social innovation generally is discussed at the international level (BEPA, 2010) with the notion of looking for new ways to combat the most challenging social problems.

On the other hand, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are key institutional players within their localities since they have been shown to have significant economic and social impacts on their communities (Glasson, 2003). The goal of higher education should not be to acquire only those skills that will enable permanent employability, but also those that will equip students for active citizenship, resulting in social cohesion and reduced social exclusion of the individual and social groups. Public and the private sector as well as the civil society are relevant for social innovations, but science and research are so far only taking a minor role in social innovation initiatives (Domanski & Kaletka, 2018).

Therefore, the goal of the chapter is to assess the contribution of the Institute of Social Policy, Study Centre of Social Work, University of Zagreb (from here on the Institute) to developing a social innovation ecosystem in the Zagreb agglomeration area (and beyond). The ecosystems are considered to be institutional, cultural, political and socio-economic aspects that operate in various combinations to support or restrict social innovation activity (more specifically formulated in TEPSIE, 2014).

After defining social innovations and presenting characteristics of a social innovation ecosystem in Croatia, we will look into different aspects of the Institute's work: (a) research and evidence that informed social innovation (SI) and wider policies, (b) education, (c) creating networks and advocating, and (c) community engagement. We will use specific case, the introduction of the service-learning program, to additionally highlight HEI's contribution. It demonstrates the capacity of the HEI in fostering community-based learning that leads to social innovation and inclusion. The methodological approach will be based on the secondary data analysis and researcher own critical reflection as part of HEI as well as an illustrative case of the specific service-learning program.

Challenges and scope of this specific HEI case capacity in enabling social innovation will be key aspects of the discussion. They will be connected it wider local and national education, science and public (social) policy development in Croatia. The conclusion will focus on the recommendations on how to further

developing the HEI third missions and enhancing their role as a driver of social change towards the paradigm of purpose-driven universities.

2 Social Innovation: Short Introduction

The concept of social innovation is not new as the writings of both Durkheim and Weber stressed the importance of social innovation in the creation of social order, especially in the context of social and technological change. Historical development of the notion of social innovation is developed in Godin (2012) and Moulaert et al. (2017). However, social innovation has become "fashionable" relatively recently. Some analysts consider social innovation to be no more than a buzzword or passing fad that is too imprecise to be usefully applied to academic scholarship. It should be noted that social innovations are by some viewed as a quasi-concept (European Commission, 2013; BEPA, 2014; Anheier et al., 2014).

There have been numerous attempts to define social innovation. More on the history of definition of social innovation can be found in Edwards-Schachter & Wallace, 2017.Social innovations can be defined as new ideas (products, services, and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words, they are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society's capacity to act (BEPA, 2010). Stanford Social Innovation Review (Phills et al., 2008) defines social innovation as "a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable or just than current solutions, and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals." (p. 36). Social innovation can be a product, production process, or technology (much like innovation in general), but it can also be a principle, an idea, a piece of legislation, trends in governance, a social movement, intervention, or some combination of them.

Some core elements are highlighted (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012; BEPA, 2010; Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010; Mulgan, 2007; Baturina & Bežovan, 2015). The first is a novelty. Social innovation needs to be new in some way (either new to the field, sector, region, market or user), or to be applied in a new way. Secondly, social innovation meets a social need and is explicitly designed for these purposes. The main goal is to find solutions to social problems. Social innovation should be effective, at least more so than the existing solutions. In the end, it enhances society's capacity to act by empowering beneficiaries, creating new roles and relationships, developing assets and capabilities and/or better using assets and resources. They leave behind compelling new social relationships between previously separate individuals and groups which matter greatly to the people involved (Mulgan, 2007). Social innovation often comes from the bottom up, are geographically dispersed and local (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012) and therefore can have a significant impact on the local level. They are often locally rooted and guided by demand, not supply, tailored because most solutions must be adapted to local circumstances and

individuals. In a wider context, the Atlas of social innovations captures different context and cases of social innovations around the world (Howaldt et al., 2019) and Terstriep et al. (2015) give a comparative report on social innovations across Europe.

There are different examples fostering social innovations to address social challenges in Europe, especially and the local (urban) level (Brandsen et al., 2016). They call for policy recognition of social innovations that are occurring today and wider support but acknowledge that social innovations are context depended. Moulaert et al. (2019) highlight bottom-linked governance' as central to the analysis of social innovations initiatives. Moulaert (2009) gives a perspective of social innovation in integrated area development, which is close to the community development process. He notes their possibilities in urban areas in developing new types of social relations and being drivers of alternative agendas.

On the other hand, understanding of social innovation in community-led local development initiatives in rural areas of Europe was studied by Bosworth et al. (2016). In considering local social innovation action within social and institutional networks authors found that incorporating social innovation goals into policy was seen to be highly subjective and dependent upon the support of local communities as well as the networks and human capital attached to key actors.

Putting social innovations into practice involves cutting across organisational, sectoral or disciplinary boundaries. One of the inherent characteristics of social innovation is that it is taking place across the boundaries between public, private, civil society and households. Their resources can come from academic research, political campaigns, civil society, the public sector, social entrepreneurship, new technologies and many other domains. People and organizations involved in them are diverse and HEI's have their important role.

Universities are increasingly expected to facilitate economic development and societal welfare (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), especially today in times burdened with complex societal problems. Universities are seen as in heart of innovation ecosystems (Rucker Schaeffer et al., 2018) but their role in social innovation ecosystems is rarely researched. The current research suggests that academia (and universities) have an underdeveloped role in the social innovation ecosystems (Domanski & Kaletka, 2018; Schröder & Krüger, 2019). Kumari et al. (2020) introduced key issues for social innovation in HEIs; how to integrate social innovation in the function and working model of HEIs, how to integrate societal needs into HEI activities and solve real-life societal challenges with generated knowledge. A systematic review of knowledge on the role of the university in enabling social innovation (Bayuo et al., 2020) is noting growing interest in the topic and consider three important domains teaching, research, and universities third mission.

HEI's are usually considered as a part of the helix model of social innovation or the institutional entrepreneur perspective focuses on the role of HEIs as a change agent (Leydesdorff, 2012; Kumari et al., 2020). Social innovations can be discussed in the concept of the third mission of the university (Bayuo et al., 2020), going beyond research and teaching, towards contributing to society. Other examples are specifically mentioning the role of HEI social innovation concerning some of the social problems (as SI's based on youth-related problems in Terstriep et al., 2015).

A specific aspect of looking at social innovations in HEI's is analysing social innovations within the educational system. In their analysis of numerous cases across the globe Schröder and Krüger (2019) found that new social practices are developed incrementally mostly with relation to the formal education systems, structures, frameworks, and policies, serving local demands and using leeway on the regional/local level. Loogma et al. (2013) similarly analysed educational changes by implementing the concept of social innovation. From recent developments, the intersection of higher education and social innovation in higher education institutions (related to research, teaching and community engagement) is studied comparatively in East Asia (Hazenberg et al., 2020).

Schuch (2019) recognized obstacles in the lack of material and immaterial professional structures available within higher education for supporting social innovation. The author also notes (Schuch, 2019) that neither social innovations initiated by higher education institutions nor practices and systems how to monitor, measure and promote their way from universities to society are regularly documented. Therefore, our goal is to contribute to those efforts with a specific Croatian perspective and enhance understanding of the role of the HEI's in developing the local social innovation ecosystem.

2.1 Social Innovation Ecosystem in Croatia

Croatian experience and understanding of the development of social innovations (Bežovan et al., 2016) suggest that social innovation is a neglected topic, the concept relatively unknown in the creation and implementation of public policy. On the other hand, taking about innovations generally analysis that looked at Croatian innovation system suggests that values like statism, paternalism and traditionalism make innovation system week and inefficient (Švarc, 2006; Švarc et al., 2011; Švarc, 2017). The concept arose more prominently from the academic community and it is relatively unknown to key stakeholders in designing social or other programs or policies (Bežovan et al., 2016). Previous research recognized some characteristics of social innovations in Croatia. Bežovan et al. (2016) recognize three types of social innovations in Croatia. First, there were social innovations from the public sector, which were often developed with the support of experts from outside the sector. Social innovations that come from abroad were second. They are often results of international financial opportunities related to specific projects. Problems of sustainability and embeddedness were recognized. Social innovations coming from civil society was the third type. Research has shown that they, in some cases, develop the social capital needed to produce visible positive social change.

Other research recognizes the third sector/civil society as the main source of social innovations. Respondents in the mapping exercise (Jelinčić et al., 2016) also saw that the greatest number of innovations comes from the civil society as well as OECD Social Innovation Competition (OECD, 2016). Third sector social innovations impact was studied by Baturina (2016) and impact was recognized in several

aspects such as modalities of action, social services, local community, social entrepreneurship and (social) governance. The local community is seen (Baturina, 2016) as a domain for innovative action as it is the one in which organizations are closer to the needs of citizens and where the impact can be more immediate.

Regarding strategic documents, the concept of social innovations was slowly introduced in the policy area but it became part of some documents, especially related to the third sector. In the Strategy for the Creation of an Enabling Environment for Civil Society Development 2012–2016 (Government of Republic of Croatia, 2011) social innovation and social entrepreneurship emerge as concepts described as one of the ways how civil society organizations can contribute to social and economic development. New Strategy (for the period 2017–2021) dedicates one measure to tenders for the development of new models of socio-economic development through social innovations. However, the Strategy is still not delivered due to political challenges. Strategy for development of social entrepreneurship 2015–2020 (Government of Republic of Croatia, 2015) mentions the concept in the sphere of stimulating the financial mechanisms for social innovation, the development of educational programs for social entrepreneurship and social innovation in the field of the public good. The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology entitled 'New Colours of Knowledge' do not mention social innovations, although mentions innovations in several aspects (Government of Republic of Croatia, 2014a).

There are a couple of institutional actors that shown interest in the topic of social innovations (Baturina, 2019; OECD, 2016). Among them is the Ministry for Work, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts, and the Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds. They made social innovations (in wider notion) eligible for financing in different tenders. However, generally funding for social innovations is sporadic as it usually goes through rare tenders, competition, and awards. EU funds were an important source of financing social innovations in different spheres (Baturina, 2019). Some academic institutions cover the topic related content in their research and teaching. National Foundation for Civil Society Development promoted the concept and organized the Social Innovation Award (in period 2012–2014). Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs advocates the concept and promotes it in strategic documents. Croatian Chamber of Economy is also becoming increasingly involved with social entrepreneurship (and social innovations) as a theme. International stakeholders had some impact too. For example, OECD South-East Europe Regional Programme organizes OECD Triple Helix Competitions and has published Social Innovation Policy Framework for Croatia. NESsT work was important for the introduction and development of social enterprises and initiatives. Overall, we can conclude that the social innovation ecosystem is in the initial phase of development, especially in comparison to some other European countries, with some recognized cases but underdeveloped institutional recognition and support (Baturina, 2019).

3 Institute for Social Policy as Space for Fostering Social Innovation Ecosystem

First, we will give a short introduction to the University of Zagreb and Faculty of Law in which the Institute for Social Policy operates, before zooming into the Institute of Social Policy role in fostering social innovation environment, especially at the local level.

Trends in the last two decades in higher education in Croatia are reflected in the strong growth in the number of higher education institutions and the number of enrolled students and the main institutional changes in the implementation of the Bologna process and principles (Babić, 2019). The 2005 higher education reform brought the Croatian higher education system in line with the Bologna principles (University of Zagreb, 2021). The University of Zagreb, founded in the second half of the seventeenth century, is the oldest continuously operating university in Croatia and one of the oldest in Europe (Agency for Science and Higher Education, 2021a). The University of Zagreb accounts for 44 per cent of students in Croatia (OECD, 2019) and employs about 40 per cent of academic staff. It has thirty-four constituents—thirty faculties, three academies and one university department—each with its own autonomy and governance (World Bank, 2019). In the academic year 2018/ 2019 it had 65,178 students. The Faculty of Law is one of the oldest institutions of the University of Zagreb and the only one with uninterrupted continuity. It was founded in the year 1776. In the academic year 2018/2019 it had 6931 students (Agency for Science and Higher Education, 2021b).

The beginnings of education for social workers in Croatia go back to 1952 when a vocational college for social workers is established, the first of the kind in the socialist world (Puljiz, 2008). Since 1972, a parallel system of education for social workers has been organized, one lasting two and the other lasting four years. Since the academic year 1982/1983 the study of social work was organized at the Faculty of Law in Zagreb (in the Study Centre for Social Work) for a duration of four years.

Following the changes within the Bologna Process, since 2005 the study centre has been organized for four years of undergraduate study and one year of graduate study. There are also two university graduate studies, social work and social policy. Postgraduate and doctoral studies are organized related to these topics. Study centre has two institutes, Institute for Social Work and the Institute for Social Policy. Both are engaged in teaching and scientific research. The two institutes of study centre for social work are in a way a "natural" place where students develop solidarity for social problems and groups affected by different social risks in the local community.

Through the lenses of the Institute for Social Policy of the Study Centre of Social Work, the University of Zagreb, we will highlight potential contributions to the dimensions a) research and evidence that informed SI and wider policies, b) education, c) creating networks and advocating and d) community engagement. Research and evidence that informed social innovation and wider policies are the first aspects in which the Institute of social policy contributes to social innovation ecosystems.

Regarding research and evidence, we may state that first relevant research project in Croatia on the topic of social innovations was FP7 project WILCO-Welfare Innovations at the local level in favour of cohesion (2010–2014) in which three members of the Institute participated. The project tried to understand innovations in local welfare to strengthen social cohesion and lower social inequalities. Institute members studied six social innovations in two Croatian cities and published the first social innovation typology in Croatia (Bežovan et al., 2016). TSI-Third Sector Impact (2014–2017) was the second FP7 project related to social innovation research. It was aimed to understand the scope and scale of the third sector in Europe, its current and potential impact, and the barriers hindering the third sector to fully contribute to the continent's welfare. Several scientific articles were published about the third sector and social innovation challenges in Croatia (for example Baturina, 2019; Bežovan & Matančević, 2017). Project produced the report „Social Innovation Impact—Unlit Road" (Baturina & Bežovan, 2015). These two research projects introduced the notion of social innovations in the research and policy context. Also, at the same time, from Croatia, organization Social innovation Lab participated in the FP7 project SI-DRIVE (2014–2017).

Currently, Institute members participate in several COST actions two of which are specifically orientated towards social innovations. First one is CA18236—Multi-disciplinary innovation for social change (SHINE) which aims to demonstrate, through the adoption of Multi-Disciplinary Innovation methods, how we can respond to social problems. The second one is CA16206—Empowering the next generation of social enterprise scholars (EMPOWER SE) which aims to foster evidence-based policy from local to European levels and to support the development of SEs and their eco-systems in synergy with main industry representatives and stakeholders.

Additionally, Institute members contribute to two other projects that are connecting them to a variety of stakeholders thought Europe and have partly research dimension. Some are Danube Interreg project "D-Care Labs-Developing Labs to Facilitate Home Care Innovation and B WISE- Blueprint for Sectoral Cooperation on Skills in Work Integration Social Enterprises is Erasmus + project which will, among others, study innovative WISE's in 13 European countries.

Besides, Institute members are editor and parts of the editorial board of the Croatian Journal of Social Policy, only one related to that topic in Croatia. The journal is also a valuable for informing policy and practice on topics related to social innovations and new development in social policy.

Education is the second important aspect. In the social policy master level studies social innovation is topic that is discussed extensively and is part of several courses (for example, *Methods of analysis in social policy* and *Social economy and social entrepreneurship)*. In addition, students study case studies of social innovations and as course assignments develop a project that is encouraged to be social innovative. In the development of the project, they use a template from tenders that are related to the topic: such as Social Impact Award, European solidarity corps, or European social fund tenders in Croatia. Other courses like *Civil society and social po*licy,

Croatian social policy or *Social policy and social development* also give examples and introduce students to social innovations.

Student practice fosters continuous engagement through bachelor's and master level studies with different actors in social sector, welfare institutions, centres for social care and civil society organizations. Evaluations (Sušac et al., 2015) show that when there are adequate support and guide student practice can be sources of new knowledge and expertise.

Creating networks in the social innovation area is a third important aspect of the work of the Institute fostering social innovations at the local and national level. Researchers are active in direct research networks that promote social innovations and innovative thinking in the wider third sector like ESSI- European Schools of Social innovation, EMES- International research network, CIRIEC International scientific network, International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR), or ARNOVA-Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action. Institute members are part of different research networks like European Social Policy Network (ESPN), which provide high quality and timely independent information, advice, analysis and expertise on social policy issues in the EU, or the International Network for Social Policy. This membership and their active role enabled them to create variety of networks throughout the world and gather relevant knowledge that can be used for the transfer of knowledge and development of innovative projects at national and local level. Institute members are also active in variety of the national and local research and civil society organizations.

For the development of networks within the country, it is important to mention that Institute researchers, in wider partnership with civil society organizations and research institutions, are currently partners in two projects within European Social Fund Tender: Thematic networks for socio-economic development and the promotion of social dialogue in the context of improving working conditions. One is "SUSTINEO- Collaborating, participating, researching and educating for sustainability" and the second one is "A new perspective for homelessness". The researchers also participate in wider policy bodies at national and local policies related to social innovation. Some examples are local partnership for employment, Zagreb's Social plan 2014–2020, Urban agglomeration development strategies Zagreb for period till 2020 or working groups like was one related to the development of Strategy of development of Social entrepreneurship in Croatia 2015–2020.

Community engagement beyond the work of the Institute is importantly done by CERANEO-Centre for development of civil society. It is a civil society organization that was founded in 1996 and whose president and several members are part of the Institute. CERANEO is oriented toward research and development of social services and innovations in the areas of social policy and civil society. It is a relevant stakeholder in Zagreb and at the national level in research and education and development of new services for vulnerable groups. CERANEO currently leads the Social Council of the City of Zagreb. An important outcome is a Social picture of city of Zagreb (first done in the year 2000, CERANEO is leading it since 2013).

The goal of establishing the Social Council of the City of Zagreb is the quality systematic planning of effective social interventions and social policy measure based

on realistic indicators of the situation and needs of the citizens of the City of Zagreb. Social picture establishes new relevant topics in the local social policy are contributed to modernization and Europeanization of local social policy. For example, the Social picture for 2014 was named "Good governance and social innovation in response to new social risks" (CERANEO, 2015). Besides, Institute's researchers cooperate and support numbers of other smaller community initiatives.

3.1   Service-Learning Program: Exemplary Case

Service-learning is a type of experiential learning which provides an opportunity for learners to enhance their understanding of concepts and theories in a practical environment. Experiential learning theory by Dewey (1938) provides a theoretical foundation for service-learning pedagogy. Service-learning can be seen as a teaching method by which students apply the knowledge and skills acquired through study to the development of a project that addresses a specific social problem (Mikelić Preradović, 2009). Service-learning connects academic expertise with social needs to deepen the learning process, develop long-term solutions to specific problems in the community, and to create new knowledge and build a knowledge society. Service-learning is very close to the third mission of the university concerning the integration of the university into the local community, the mutual partnership and interaction of the university and the wider non-academic community, the useful exchange of knowledge and resources and the integration of basic academic activities and needs of the (local) community (Ćulum & Ledić, 2010; Čulum & Ledić, 2011).

Development of a Service-Learning Program for Active Student Engagement in the Field of Homelessness Prevention and Social Inclusion of Homeless is the project which we will use as an exemplary case. Total funded with 672,827 HRK (around 90 thousand EUR) the project lasted 18 months. Project was funded by the ESF Call for Proposals for Supporting the Development of Partnerships between CSOs and Higher Education Institutions for the Implementation of the Program of service learning, which is the first tender aimed at developing service learning. The project leader was CERANEO and partners in the project were the Croatian Homeless Network and Faculty of Law, University of Zagreb.

The project consisted of two elements: Element I: Development and preparation of community-based learning programs, in which stakeholders were trained to prepare and implement community-based learning and developed mentoring programs and methodologies for systematically organizing student engagement in the local community. Element II was: Implementing mentoring programs that involve students in the direct activities of civil society organizations services in addressing the needs of the local community, which included implementing projects in the local community. Community service-learning projects were conducted in two courses *Methods of Analysis in Social Policy at the Graduate Study of Social Policy* and *Civil society and social policy, also in the graduate study of social policy*. Thematic

units within the services learning courses were preparation and implementation of homeless social integration projects, policy analysis in the field of homelessness, civil society and active citizenship and social innovation and social entrepreneurship. Implementation of this project corresponds to the field/discipline-based service-learning model (as one of the six service-learning models identified by Heffernan 2001, cited by Modić Stanke, Mioković, et al., 2019), which is created by replacing part of the teaching with community work/service.

The evaluation of the project (CERANEO, 2019) showed that students were very satisfied with the introduction of the service-learning principles and the innovative organization of classes in the course. Although this was the first time that they encountered these types of work, they recognized their importance. Besides, they were satisfied with activities within the course and with relationship and collaboration that they had with partners/community organizations. Students evaluated integrating the principles of service-learning as a step forward in the ways of teaching at the Study Centre for Social Work. It is recommended that it be continued and expanded to other courses (CERANEO, 2019). It also, according to the students 'experiences from the project (CERANEO, 2019), strengthened the specific students' skills to better integrate into the labour market. Service -learning can also be a framework for strengthening the student practice, this time in a more innovative and meaningful way than practices that often involve going to relevant social policy institutions or other organizations for a more passive approach.

4 Discussion: That's One Small Step for HEI, One Big Leap for Social İnnovation Ecosystem?

Universities can play important role in the social innovation ecosystem. Benneworth and Cunha (2015) establish three kinds of university-provided inputs, which could contribute to social innovation processes. The university could provide knowledge that helps progression between the stages in helping move the process forward, it might make its resources available, or support the social innovation process, either through advising social innovators how to access external knowledge resources or persuading others to support participation in social innovation. Knowledge sharing and experimentation in a social context is the important way through which HEIs can participate in the development and implementation of social innovation activities (Kumari et al., 2020).

Institute's example is aligned to those typologies with different demonstrated contributions in several dimension of education, research and evidence, creating networks and advocating and proactive community engagement. Institute introduced the social innovation as concept in the policy and research context, developed a wider network of collaborations and transfer of knowledge and developed innovative education as well as community advocacy and projects.

Social policy is in Croatia the most prominent area to develop social innovations. Advantages of social innovations seen in research (Jelinčić et al., 2016) are that they mostly fit to fill the gap in the market and satisfy social needs. Findings of mapping exercise (Jelinčić et al., 2016) showed that the majority (51%) of respondents see a high potential of social innovations´ contribution to society. It can be argued that the Institute for Social Policy is therefore an appropriate space for supporting the social innovations ecosystem in Zagreb and Croatia.

Some strength and weaknesses of the Institute in developing a social innovation ecosystem can be identified. Strengths are mostly internal related to, "pioneer" status in research, deep embeddedness and cooperation with local stakeholders, openness to new initiatives, and solidarity as the principle of „work". Academics who innovate in higher education have some characteristics such as motivation to change institutionalized practices, interest in change, experience in the field, multi-embeddedness, the authority to act, and the strategic use of social networks (Hasanefendic et al., 2017). That is in a way similar to characteristics that were found in Croatian social innovations (Bežovan et al., 2016) and work that Institute does. Researchers at Institute can be considered scholar-practitioners with multiple roles (Carton & Ungureanu, 2017). In that, they adopted a boundary spanning roles that involve communication of knowledge across boundaries within and external to an organization orientated toward the local community.

Weaknesses in Croatia are perceived as external in areas such as support to social innovations or enabling environment (Bežovan et al., 2016; Baturina, 2019), (very) gradual transformation of the education system in Croatia (World Bank, 2019), or lack of entrepreneurial spirit in the University. Constraints posed by institutional factors can delimit the level of success for innovation in higher education (Campbell & O'Meara, 2014). Becoming more flexible and deviating from silo thinking within bureaucratic structures is a relevant precondition for developing social innovations in wider context (Schröder & Krüger, 2019). In Croatia, several systemic factors limit innovation like the underdeveloped human resources management in HEIs, the strong autonomy at a faculty-level which goes hand in hand with the limited steering power of HEI leadership in non-integrated universities, and the sporadic funding availability for innovation and entrepreneurship (OECD, 2019).

Additional challenges related to the development of social innovations are that the public sector in perceptions of stakeholders is rather inflexible and puts more than needed administrative burden on the innovative organization (Bežovan et al., 2016; Baturina, 2016). Social intrapreneurs are not the usual phenomenon (Bežovan et al., 2016) and the concept of an entrepreneurial university is still an odd idea in Croatia (Dabic et al., 2016).

Putting weaknesses in national innovations context, Croatia is lagging behind EU countries measured by European Innovation Scoreboard. With Innovation Index score of 54. For example, the EU average is 102, and the best-placed Switzerland has a score of 164.6 (European Commission, 2020). Croatia is assessed as a moderate innovator. Global Innovation Index 2017 places Croatia on 41 place from 127 observed economies (Cornell University, INSEAD, & WIPO, 2017). Attractive research systems and finance and support parts are seen as weak dimensions.

Research and development expenditure is way below EU 27 average (Eurostat, 2021). The Strategy for Innovation Encouragement of the Republic of Croatia 2014–2020 (Government of Republic of Croatia, 2014b) states as crucial problem nonexistence of systemic innovation policy which is more than a relevant for the social innovation field. There are other strategies: like Croatian Smart Specialisation Strategy 2016–2020 but in general innovation policy has a status of an unwanted child among policymakers which means that was poorly understood, not a priority and mainly discussed within a narrow circle of experts (Švarc & Lažnjak, 2017). On the other hand, Croatian HEIs have been modestly improving their capacity to collaborate with external stakeholders to exchange knowledge and promote innovation (OECD, 2019). Strengthening public opportunities in the field of research and innovation is one of the key recommendations of the Croatia RIO report (Račić et al., 2018).

Similar to wider findings (Bosworth et al., 2016) we should consider are social innovations in each social innovation ecosystems driven by opportunity or necessity and how is that influencing their trajectories. Our analysis has shown the combination of both, but highlighting the opportunity as a driver. That can be instructive for other local communities (especially in post-socialist countries) with a focus on realizing different available opportunities in research, education, networks and community engagement (and funding). However, special attention should be given to other more general elements of the ecosystem already recognized as of key importance across Europe (Terstriep et al., 2015) like institutional context and resources.

Contextualizing results in the local Zagreb area we can say that compared to other agglomerations, the City of Zagreb is an above-average developed local self-government in Croatia. The City of Zagreb, the area of this research, as the capital of the Republic of Croatia, has a special status as a city and county and is significantly more economically developed than the rest of Croatia. For example, according to the development index of 117,758, Zagreb ranks first in Croatia (Ministry of Regional Development and EU Funds, 2021).

Zagreb has a particularly generously developed social policy. Researchers consider it a local welfare state (Babić and Baturina, 2019). The City of Zagreb is also developing numerous social services and programs, especially those at a disadvantage (City of Zagreb, 2014; Babić and Baturina, 2019). Social innovations in the Zagreb area are recognized in various strategic documents. The vision of the Development Strategy of the Urban Agglomeration of Zagreb is harmoniously developed metropolitan area of common innovative concepts (City of Zagreb, 2017). The connection with the academic community and a wide range of professional staff for the development of innovative services following the specific needs of individual user groups is stated as a strength is a local area (City of Zagreb, 2017). In addition, the Social plan of the city of Zagreb recognizes the necessity of social innovations in dealing with a high concentration of people who need help, often to overcome multiple problems. City of Zagreb is also a rare positive example of continuous financing of social entrepreneurship. Similar to social policy, we can say that the Zagreb area provides a more favourable infrastructure for the

development of social innovations. Part of the local advantages is related to being the business and education centre of Croatia and having a higher level of human capital (City of Zagreb, 2017; Babić and Baturina, 2019). As such, we may state that it represents a receptive context for the Institute's work and additionally highlight opportunity as a driver in developing social innovation ecosystem.

More generally, in the HEI context, different conceptual frameworks have been applied recently to descriptions of the role of academic research in "post-modern" industrial societies and stress new kinds of relations between universities and economic development. Some of them are Mode 2 concept (Mowery & Sampat, 2006), triple helix model (Leydesdorff, 2012), open innovation (Cai et al., 2020), socially responsible entrepreneurial university (Cai, 2018) or entrepreneurial university (Dabic et al., 2016). From the innovation spectrum besides social innovations recently the concept of inclusive innovation has become widely used (Brundenius et al., 2017).

Social innovation challenges universities in terms of the desirable outcomes, delivering socially innovative organisational forms and delivering social justice, which is socially desirable, but not universities' core missions (Benneworth & Cunha, 2015). Being part of and fostering social innovation ecosystem is therefore close to HEI third mission (Brundenius & Göransson, 2011). The third mission has different characteristics. Authors (Ćulum & Ledić, 2010; Čulum & Ledić, 2011) see it as a university contribution to economic development (economic, technological or commercial third mission); as a contribution of the university to the development of civil society and democracy (civilian mission); as an integrative concept of cross-sectoral cooperation in the contribution of (local) community development; and as the foundation of the academic profession and the responsibility of university teachers for university and local community development.

Croatia still faces significant challenges in creating an enabling environment for the integration of the third mission into universities. They are: incorporating a civic mission as an integral part of key legal and strategic documents, developing collaborative teacher relationships with experience in such projects, a space for education and training, and linking teacher performance evaluation and community engagement activities (Ćulum & Ledić, 2011). That also influenced the development of service-learning. Research (Ćulum et al., 2015) show that the interconnection of teaching and community engagement is absent which can be a burden for the development of social innovations.

Besides role on HEI in developing social innovation ecosystem, we reflect on service-learning as an exemplary case of social innovation in education. It is in its infancy phase of development in Croatia. For example, Modić Stanke, Mioković, et al. (2019) recognizes (in the year 2013/2014) 13 courses with a component of service learning in higher education institutions throughout the country. Besides, service-learning has become it became one of the measures of the National Youth Program (2009–2013) but without further policy recognition. Some other strategies have a broader perspective because they emphasize the importance of connecting higher education institutions and civil society organizations for the purpose of educating socially responsible and active citizens.

Service-learning, demonstrated by the exemplary case, can be considered as part of contemporary education that emphasizes the importance of critical thinking and practical experience in education. It can foster innovative thinking and provide social policy and social work students with leverage in the ongoing and future work to address important social problems and as such is considered social innovation in education. Social work/social policy students have a motivation to achieve social benefit in the community. This is, in our example, evidenced by their evaluations, which partly speaks to the character of the study centre itself (CERANEO, 2019). Implemented service-learning project is close to the "critical" approach to service-learning (Mitchell, 2008) with its explicit social justice aim. Service-learning can take a social structural approach looking for root causes of problems (Kronick & Cunningham, 2013). In that perspective project showed a notion of enabling students to be agents of social change.

Public and the private sector as well as the civil society are relevant for social innovations on a more or less equal footing, with science and research only taking a minor role in social innovation initiatives" (Domanski & Kaletka, 2018). In the end, the question that can be posed is how can HEI in Croatia (and in Europe) be a more significant part of the social innovation ecosystem? Promoting co-creation for social innovation is an important aspect. HEIs should actively encourage collaborative learning tools that focus on open platforms for collective action and systemic change that help them to engage with society and strengthen their collaboration with social actors (Kumari et al., 2020). The central role of (cross-sector) networks and collaborations from emergence to the diffusion of social innovations is highlighted (Krlev et al., 2019) and HEI could direct their efforts towards fostering and developing new networks and collaborations. Giving institutional visibility to knowledge exchange and collaboration is also recognized as a recommendation for Croatian HEI's (OECD, 2019). It is also important to reconnect the social dimension of education with the economic as social innovation in higher education stimulates and sustains diversity, social inclusion, citizenship, and local learning communities and partnerships (Elliott 2013).

The second question is what is needed for the more relevant ecosystem of social innovations in the Croatian (and European) context? The sustainability of social innovations can be guaranteed by new relationships that come into force, mediated by socio-economic factors in which sectors are increasingly referred to as co-operation, changing how things are done (Baturina, 2016). For the promotion of social innovation, further inclusion of social innovations in education programs, especially at the university level is crucial (Baturina, 2019) and a recent systematic review (Bayuo et al., 2020) is giving evidence that universities are increasingly doing so.

Obstacles and resistance to social innovation are primarily coming from the conflict between the culture of the context and the new culture that social innovations bring (Terstriep et al., 2015), which can be a threat in different SI ecosystems. That is shown in a very gradual change in Croatian universities (World Bank, 2019). The reforms in the science and education area from the 2013 led to certain organizational

improvements and the introduction of greater competitiveness in the research community, but that at the same time they produced several undesirable consequences, endangering, among other things, the material basis of scientific work and the transparency and publicity of the scientific system (Švarc et al., 2019). Another aspect in the Croatia case is the lack of modernization capacities of the welfare state (Bežovan et al., 2019). Those external constraints can highlight necessity as a driver of the development of the social innovation ecosystem.

The more significant focus on innovation-driven governance (Brandsen et al., 2016), which is characterized by the general orientation to innovation, is the search for synergy between economic and social policies is needed. Bosworth et al. (2016) conclude that there is evidence that rural communities are innovative when they have the necessary space and power to act. The openness of local structures and policy to social innovations could be a factor of further advancement of social innovation ecosystems in different contexts. Generally, local authorities tended to favour innovations that were complementary to their growth strategy (Brandsen et al., 2016). In the presented case, HEI's efforts align with the city of Zagreb strong orientations on social policy which could be a factor in creating a favourable environment for social innovations in the future. Therefore, innovation-driven governance and a high level of alignment in the orientations of universities and other stakeholders can be drivers of more supportive social innovation ecosystems.

5 Conclusion: Why Does HEI Matter in Social Innovation Ecosystem?

The twenty-first century's global challenges are entirely different to those of the 20th, but their solution requires innovative ways forward and wider cooperation's. Social innovation, although there are high hopes in the field, is not a panacea for resolving social problems. However, if encouraged and valued it can bring immediate solutions to the pressing social issues, which many citizens are confronted with. Universities can have a big role, especially at the local level.

Along the lines of the analytical framework of the knowledge gaps about the role of universities in social innovations (Bayuo et al., 2020) we discussed drivers, process and (in minor aspect) impact of HEI activities in social innovations on concrete example in a specific context. Analysis of Institute work gave a glimpse of how Croatian universities can be drivers of solidarity and social engagement, and thus socio-economic development. It recognized Social Work Study Centre as a "natural" place where students develop solidarity for social problems and develop social innovative initiatives. Analysis has shown that actions of the analysed Institute contributed to local (and national) social innovations ecosystems in several dimension of education, research and evidence, creating networks and advocating and proactive community engagement. They created knowledge spill-overs and

fostered wider policy engagement in social innovation areas. Although for social innovations context is important (Krlev et al., 2019) our analysis contributes to recognizing and promoting pathways (different drivers and potential factors) towards enchaining higher education institutions' role in the local social innovation ecosystem. It can potentially foster awareness of relevant actors about the social innovation landscape in academia and "open eyes" towards the opportunities and ways in making steps forward in developing the social innovation ecosystem.

Croatia may be far from the institutional changes that support service-learning that we analysed as an exemplary case of social innovation in education. But presented the project, as well as others implemented within first service-learning tender, may be guideposts towards making progress in those areas. Service-learning can become one of the essential vehicles to connect universities to communities (Kronick & Cunningham, 2013).

The Institute work also demonstrates how it is possible to aligning universities' core teaching and research missions with a contribution to enhancing the social innovation ecosystem. Global standards for training in social work state that social work studies (and social policies in this common context) should strive to involve practitioners and service users in the design and implementation of programs and to establish partnerships between educational institutions, social services and service users in decision-making refer to field teaching and evaluation of students' work in practice.

Fostering social innovations are especially important in Croatia, as its welfare state is very slow in changing, addressing new social risks and needs and developing appropriate and enabling social services (Bežovan et al., 2019). New challenges demand a new kind of (social) innovation, changing existing established routes and social paradigms, which can presumable, be easier to achieve at the local level. Social innovations are not recognized in Croatia but Universities with the knowledge they create and share and proactive action can foster a significant step in developing a social innovation ecosystem. The chapter has shown by the example of one Institute how this is work worth doing. Others are also acting in enabling social innovation ecosystems (OECD, 2016), and potentially others will join in doing so. An institutionalized framework for recognizing and valuing social innovation is also expected to develop, both at the university and beyond, at the policy level.

It is just an example of one Institute of the wider University but can have some lessons relevant to a wider European context. Social innovations can be bottom-up with „messages" or examples worthy of mainstreaming (Evers et al., 2013). Also, innovation has not just a rate but also a direction. It is important to know how that direction is set and what can different actors and socio-political forces (Mazzucato & Dibb, 2019) and in our case, Universities do. There are certain institutional limitations in higher education and the University of Zagreb (World Bank, 2019). However, the rigid institutional environment and lack of flexibility to adapt to changing social context are also factors that are reducing the effectiveness of HEIs in social innovation initiatives in a wider context (Kumari et al., 2020).

Many universities now seek to make a transition to greater impact in the local social innovation ecosystem but there is diversity in how this is pursued and what results are achieved. The HEI example analysed could be instructive for universities in Europe but there is a need for further researching other HEI's in their contexts. Future legitimation of HEI's may lay in the capabilities in going beyond teaching and researching towards "contributing" especially in local communities. Connecting our example to the wider European context, we may state the closeness of mission-oriented approach (Mazzucato, 2018) and social innovations which enable us to tackle societal challenges (in this case wellbeing at the local level), attract cross-sectoral partnership and investment.

Analysed HEI's shows a small step forward in developing purpose-driven universities (Haski-Leventhal, 2020) that would be an integral part of enabling social innovations ecosystems. The time for purpose is now. Universities can become strategic social innovation institutions. However, we need to see their work in a holistic view of their activities especially related to engaging the community and different stakeholders in research and practice.

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