



Article

Modelling of Cross-Organisational Cooperation for Social Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: *Objectives:* The objective of the study is to advance the conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship and report the results of empirical research related to the identification of the architecture of the model of interorganisational collaboration for the growth of social entrepreneurship potential at the local level. *Research Design and Methods:* The research presented in the article is based on a case study performed on an example of the Polish institutional landscape. Multidimensional empirical research methodology was applied in the form of participant observation, analysis of focus group results and business modelling techniques. The literature review contains an analysis of reports from the area of social economy and related fields. *Findings:* The result of the conducted research is the discovery of primary dimensions of effective interorganisational cooperation in the form of an analogue-representational model. *Implication/Recommendations:* In the process of strengthening the potential of social entrepreneurship, the cooperation of actors from different organisational fields is a key factor. An appropriate level of social capital is an essential requirement for effective cooperation. *Contribution/Value Added:* The developed model of cooperation for social entrepreneurship is based on an initiative that is unique and innovative on a national scale and is the result of empirical research. It also seems that the approach presented may be universal and could be extrapolated to other regions and cultural contexts. *Article Classification:* Research article.



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1. Introduction

For some time now, we have seen a growing interest in social issues within the broadly defined economic sciences. As proof of this interest, it is worth noting the recent decisions regarding some of the most prestigious economic awards. In 2019, the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel was awarded to researchers working on poverty issues (Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee). The previous achievements of Elinor Ostrom (Nobel in 2009) and her work on the concept of common-pool resources as well as Angus Deaton's (Nobel in 2015) study on consumption, wealth and poverty should also be highlighted (<https://www.nobelprize.org>, accessed on 5 September 2020).

The need to create jobs, improve the quality of life or develop new forms of entrepreneurship is increasingly emphasised as the context for stimulating local development, pursuit of cohesion and social responsibility (Roelants and Bajo 2002, p. 6). The culmination of this specific social turn is considered to be the emergence of a new trend or area of study, namely, social economy. Generally speaking, social economy, in a sense, encompasses the social and economic system, combining the achievement of social and economic goals. However, the field of social economy is a conglomerate of many different aspects, often difficult to grasp and analyse. Bearing in mind the essence of social economy, for example, one can seek references to the creation of social capital and the achievement of social benefits. It is assumed that social economy not only recognises and engages in socially important dilemmas but also creates social capital.

The context of social capital creation may lead, among other things, to directing attention towards the issues of social entrepreneurship and interorganisational cooperation and collaboration. The distinction between the concept of cooperation and the concept of collaboration is of course observable; however, from the perspective of the reported research, these concepts are treated as equally important for social entrepreneurship processes in the cross-sectoral perspective. Collaboration most often refers to a collective effort towards a common goal. Cooperation, rather, has a broader perspective and concerns a synergic combination of efforts of various entities. Intersectoral linkages are therefore more based on the phenomenon of cooperation. Social entrepreneurship, by participating in solving real-world social problems and facing the tough rules of the market, sees a need to develop cooperation with other organisations. Cooperation is increasingly moving towards collaborations between various organisations from different sectors of the economy. At the heart of engaging in cooperation and collaboration for purposes of social entrepreneurship is, on one hand, the development of interorganisational networks in a multisectoral environment and, on the other hand, the possibility of achieving synergistic effects. Combining the potential of different organisations from the social economy sector, the public and private sector or the academic community is conducive to discovering new, nonstereotypical and nonstandard ways of acting for the benefit of local communities, including effective identification of needs and solving important social issues. Simultaneously, within social entrepreneurship itself, as noted by [Jiao \(2011\)](#), research on the conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship is full of inconsistencies and conceptual ambiguities. Similar conclusions are reached by [Marshall \(2011\)](#) and [Zahra et al. \(2009\)](#), while on the other hand, [Murphy and Coombes \(2009\)](#) state that social entrepreneurship research is most often located within general entrepreneurship theory, but it requires a separate approach due to its specificity. Therefore, addressing the issue of entrepreneurship from the perspective of the institutional environment seems justified and relevant to the research gap that exists.

The research presented in this paper was performed in Poland. It should be mentioned that the social economy sector in Poland has a long tradition. This tradition, existing since the end of the 19th century, was related to the creation of cooperatives at that time, often associated with patriotic and independence reasons ([Brandeleer 2013](#)). Today, in line with EU policy ([European Commission 2020](#)), we can observe a slow revival of the social economy sector. In 2016, the social economy sector was formed by 91,000 nongovernmental (civil) organisations and 1500 active cooperatives, among which the majority 60%, were social cooperatives ([Social Economy in Poland 2020](#)). However, it seems that the sector is in its early stages of development, and these questions also need scientific reflection.

2. Literature Review

Spear points out the need for research in the field of conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship, as models of social entrepreneurship differ from the classical approaches to the analysis of SME entrepreneurship ([Spear 2006](#)). At the same time, he raises the issue of the importance of sectoral cooperativeness in the study of the specificity of social entrepreneurship. There are many examples of research on partnerships between non-profit organisations and the business sector to achieve a social mission. An interesting approach related to value creation in the chain of such cooperation is presented by [Austin and Seitanidi \(2012\)](#). However, it seems that further exploration of this complex topic, especially in different cultural and administrative contexts, is still justified. An example of research within a national context can be the analysis of public–private partnerships presented by [Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff \(2012\)](#). An example of research in the Korean context is presented by [Park et al. \(2018\)](#), conducting an analysis of power asymmetry in a partnership setting towards answering the question, “how social enterprises can successfully achieve their social missions through partnerships with large firms in order to pursue both economic and social goals” (p. 3). As noted by [Dacin et al.](#), research on social entrepreneurship requires capturing the multifaceted and transdisciplinary nature of the issue ([Dacin et al. 2011](#)).

The opinion that social entrepreneurship plays a special role in the socioeconomic space is one that is difficult to debate, in particular since the possibility of achieving benefits and scaling up social efficiency is indicated as the foundation for the development of social entrepreneurship (Perrini et al. 2010, p. 515). Social entrepreneurship, without doubt, contributes to the activation and involvement of local communities in social and economic initiatives and stimulates civic engagement and the creation of social capital. It also fits within the scope of integration and reintegration of individuals and groups that are excluded or at risk of social and occupational exclusion. What is highly important is that actions for the benefit of local communities are taken as part of social entrepreneurship efforts. Social entrepreneurship rooted in the local environment remains in close proximity to local communities. It responds to actual social needs and participates in solving important local problems.

One of the interpretations of social entrepreneurship focuses on entrepreneurial activities of individuals or communities oriented towards creating social value (Peredo and McLean 2006; after: Zahra et al. 2009, p. 521). If we were to extend this perspective a little, it is worth referring to the basics of conceptualisation of social economy. In the description of the functions of social economy, one may refer, for example, to social integration and cohesion policy. It is emphasised that social economy focuses on creating social capital as a result of reinforcing activities within the area of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship, in this case, creates space for the development of initiatives aimed at social and occupational integration and reintegration, as well as taking an active part in activating local communities. The aspect of stimulating civic involvement in socioeconomic initiatives is also significant (Figure 1).

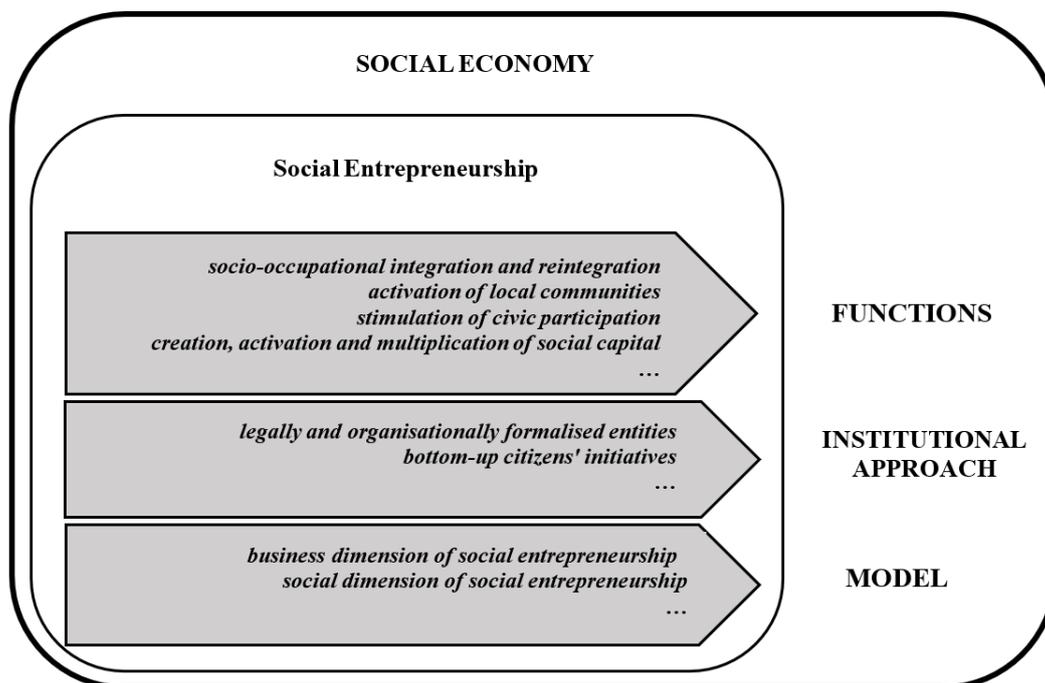


Figure 1. An attempt at the interpretation of social entrepreneurship against the background of social economy. Source: own study based on theoretical research.

The discourse regarding the development of institutional economics, in turn, directs attention to the theory of public goods. This theory may serve as a reference point for distinguishing social economy entities with a view to meeting needs, promoting grassroots initiatives and civic engagement. The institutional approach to social economy thus forms the basis for recognising social entrepreneurship against the background of the functioning of organisational entities (Figure 1). However, attention is drawn to certain difficulties in

distinguishing social entrepreneurship against the backdrop of institutional economics, particularly in view of the search for perspectives compatible with the applied theoretical basis and modelled practice of social enterprises. The literature postulates the need to pay attention to both the formal characteristics that define social enterprises and the experiences resulting from the practice of their functioning in the socioeconomic space. The features that characterise social entrepreneurship entities and are recognised against the background of social economy include the superiority of social objectives over economic objectives, voluntary commitment, democratic standards, management autonomy, independence from public authorities, needs of stakeholders, strict, defined rules for the distribution of financial surplus, etc. (Roelants and Bajo 2002, p. 5). However, against this background, significant deviations from the formulated cognitive theories can be observed in practice, all the more so as one of the areas in discovering the essence of social entrepreneurship is the context of independence. There are some doubts regarding the independence of the organisational environment of formalised social entrepreneurship entities. The literature discusses autonomy in the strict sense as a characteristic feature of social enterprises. This is because considerations regarding the independence of these entities against the background of financial support mechanisms from the state come to the forefront.

It is worth noting that activities in the area of social entrepreneurship are not exclusively reserved for formalised and constituted entities assuming specific organisational and legal forms. Entrepreneurship activities are undertaken by both social entrepreneurship entities and civil society (Figure 1). Civic initiatives are autonomous in nature and most often relate to social and occupational integration and reintegration, as well as individually provided social services. Undoubtedly, the development of social enterprises is conducive to achieving measurable benefits in the form of poverty reduction, prevention of social and occupational exclusion, reduction of pathologies, etc. Nonformalised civic initiatives respond to the actual needs and problems of local communities and are also geared towards scaling up social efficiency. Therefore, it seems important to view the activities of formalised and grassroots civic initiatives as a certain inseparable set of entrepreneurial activities for the benefit of society. Regardless of whether we are dealing with a formalised organisational environment or grassroots activity, social entrepreneurship requires involvement of, and increase in, social capital. It is worth remembering that although social entrepreneurship entities and local communities often have unique social potential, this potential is not always discovered and effectively managed.

The perspective of the social economy model sets another direction for the interpretation of social entrepreneurship (Figure 1). The literature points to the need to combine business and social approaches in finding new methods of addressing social issues (Chell et al. 2010, p. 485). In this case, the business approach is related to business activity that is geared towards creating products and services that are attractive in market and social terms and which serve local communities and society at large. Social orientation, on the other hand, concerns the implementation of the social mission and in a way obliges one to improve the methods of effectively recognising the needs of local communities and designing solutions to existing social problems. The characteristics of this form of entrepreneurship are therefore based, on one hand, on the balancing of the business and social approaches, so that the social mission is not compromised. On the other hand, this form of entrepreneurship requires overcoming the natural resistance to scaling up the economic efficiency of the activities undertaken in the area of social entrepreneurship. It can be assumed that the social mission, defined social goals and willingness to help others may, to some extent, limit the possibility of perceiving business orientation as an opportunity to increase the scope and scale of the initiatives undertaken for the benefit of local communities. It is worth noting the American model of social economy, where social entrepreneurship entities adopt a clear market orientation that does not limit the possibility of achieving social and economic goals (Hoogendoorn et al. 2010, pp. 6–7). Such an approach corresponds to the perception of social entrepreneurship in the business dimension. However, keeping in mind the fact that social entrepreneurship entities carry out, first of all, a social mission,

they are assigned a significant share in the shaping of social capital, demand and supply of social services, creating social innovations, meeting social needs and solving the problems of local communities—although, in this respect, it is also important to emphasise the importance of grassroots initiatives. From the perspective of the implementation of economic and social objectives, it seems, however, entirely possible to develop entrepreneurial behaviour among social enterprises and local communities towards the effective use of business orientation to increase the scale and scope of social activities. Looking at social entrepreneurship in the dimension of social business, the focus on creating social value added does not exclude the possibility of implementing entrepreneurial experience and tools. It even seems desirable to apply the methods and tools of typical business entrepreneurship in the area of activities aimed at recognising and solving contemporary social issues. Proven, effective business entrepreneurship mechanisms can help to scale up social benefits and achieve social efficiency. It is worth noting that although high significance is attributed to grassroots civic initiatives, many entrepreneurial activities are undertaken by social enterprises. It seems that the formalisation and establishment of the organisational environment may, in some respects, facilitate the implementation of entrepreneurial activities and scaling up of social efficiency—for example, within the perspective of increasing the scope and scale of social activities for local communities, job creation or diversification of funding sources.

The need to develop cooperation and collaboration activities is being increasingly recognised in the area of social entrepreneurship. The literature emphasises the importance of pursuing relationships and building a network of cooperation between organisations (Thorelli 1986; Cleland and Gareis 2006). Cooperation and collaboration in local networks creates an opportunity to jointly undertake a number of initiatives, both business and social. The literature points to active cooperation and collaboration in the social and economic space as a context for seeking and achieving efficiency by an organisation (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). Building and strengthening a set of shared goals, values and actions is considered particularly important (Finnis 2011). The joint efforts of different actors from different sectors in a local space requires the development of a set of shared goals and values based primarily on mutual commitment, honesty and trust. Maintaining a certain organisational closeness in a cooperation network stimulates the achievement of synergistic effects as well as mutual learning and exchange of experiences (Boschma 2005). Interorganisational cooperation and collaboration are based on combining the potentials of different organisations to achieve social goals, active and genuine commitment, as well as the creation, maintenance and taking advantage of lasting and continuous social relationships. Access to and sharing of resources, as well as joint creation of new resources, including new knowledge, is not without its significance.

The perspective of involving various partners from different sectors in local cooperation and collaboration networks is also reflected in business models (Prescott and Filatotchev 2020). From the very beginning, business models have paid particular attention to delivering value to the customer (Chesbrough and Rosenbloom 2002). The business model “visualises” the company in a simplified way, thus identifying the business idea and the method of generating revenue. It also often sets the direction for the required changes and leads to concrete actions. It seems that the recognition of the problem of business modelling for social enterprises requires paying attention not only to the business and social dimension of social entrepreneurship, but also to the role of internal and external customers. It is therefore essential to investigate in detail the problems and needs identified not only by customers as the final recipients of products and services, but also by representatives of local communities as the recipients of socially useful activities. This is due to the probability of achieving economic benefits from the implementation of a new business model, while concurrently fulfilling some social mission. It is also worth noting that crisis situations often become a source of attractive business ideas. Therefore, reaching out to groups of local communities and recognising their actual needs and problems may lead to joint development of interesting business solutions. This, in turn, may result in the creation of new jobs or the strengthening of the scope and scale of measures undertaken towards

achieving the social mission. The issue of building social capital and engaging the resources of local communities to increase civic participation, sense of belonging and community, as well as activism, decision making and shared responsibility for the undertaken activities is also important. On one hand, interorganisational cooperation and collaboration help to improve business models through the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practice. On the other hand, by combining the potentials of different organisations within the framework of local cooperation and collaboration, this cooperation can be directed towards developing a new business model. The model in this case may reflect a joint action plan or take the form of a project, developed for a specific organisation. This approach encourages the following reflections:

- Improvement of the business models of social enterprises favours the search for “new” values for the customer as a context for changes in products and services, distribution channels or methods of promotion and advertising, as well as for the reorientation towards previously served market segments and diversification of activities; and
- “Scanning” of the local environment allows for effective identification of the real problems and needs of local communities as a direction of activities for individuals suffering from social and occupational exclusion.

In this cognitive context, it is worth noting the foundations of (neo-)institutional theory as a reference point for interorganisational cooperation and collaboration for social entrepreneurship. At first glance, it may seem that since the subject of deliberations is cooperation or collaboration between organisations, the introduction of the category of an institution does not seem to be appropriate. This is all the more so, as it is commonly understood that the organisation can be attributed an institutional dimension. However, the theory of institutions applies to a broad cognitive context, where norms, rules and values are indicated which, in a way, identify the relationships between individuals that constitute an institution, which, *de facto*, define a certain social structure (Parsons 1990). That is to say, an institution is much more than just an organisation or organisational system or subsystem of an enterprise. Through the category of institutions, it becomes possible to recognise certain attributes which apply only to a specific social construct. It becomes, then, possible to grasp, within an institution, certain norms characteristic of a given community, reflecting the specificity of behaviours, activities or actions, while making them more predictable (North 1990).

An interesting dimension for describing the institutional environment from the perspective of cooperation and collaboration in the context of social entrepreneurship is the organisational field. In literature, the field is defined as a certain community of organisations that stand out contextually from others through certain characteristic, perceptible and identical dimensions of coexistence in an institutional space (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, pp. 148–49). The basis for the functioning of such a community is, on one hand, bringing together various organisations and, on the other, their unification around a set of common meanings (Scott 2008, p. 86). In a sense, an organisation can be seen as a social actor (Patriotta 2020); it is, however, created by individuals and reflects their preferences or priorities (Jackson 2010). It can be assumed that within the organisational field, there is a mutual convergence of organisations and imitation of certain behaviours or forms of communication. However, the merging of different organisational fields opens new perspectives for cooperation and collaboration. Agreeing with the opinion that research on social entrepreneurship should have a complex, multifaceted and interdisciplinary character (Murphy and Coombes 2009; Spear 2006; Dacin et al. 2011), it seems that the approach presented in the article fills the research gap within the addressed issue of social entrepreneurship.

3. Material and Methods

The empirical study was based on an exploratory approach design. This type of research is usually an initial qualitative research phase that precedes a deeper, often quantitative approach. As Casula et al. note, “deductive, exploratory research does not

have a framing device like the hypothesis" (Casula et al. 2020). Babbie recognises that this methodological approach allows the research to raise new questions and issues that require further exploration (Babbie 2007). It can be said that this type of approach leads to the formulation of a more narrowed research field for future investigation (Stebbins 2001).

The research problem concerned the analysis of mechanisms of effective interorganizational cooperation for social entrepreneurship. At the heart of this problem is the need to develop certain areas of joint action in which various organisations from different sectors can become involved. The following research question was asked: How can we pursue interorganisational cooperation for the development of social entrepreneurship? The study area was the northern subregion of the Silesian Province of Poland.

For the needs of the operationalisation of issues related to interorganisational and intersectoral cooperation, a research project was developed, including studies of the development of a model of cooperation for social entrepreneurship for the example of cooperation between a university and the Social Economy Support Centre (SESC). The applied research procedure included theoretical research and exploration of the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship in the practice of social economy entities, including social enterprises (empirical research). It is worth noting that the empirical research was conducted in the conditions of real-life cooperation between the university and the Social Economy Support Centre (SESC), including:

- Joint identification of areas for real activity;
- Active and genuine commitment to joint activities; and
- Real inclusion of groups and entities from the area of social economy in the implementation of joint activities.

These elements served as conditions for real cooperation and were negotiable and consequently accepted by each group and each entity involved in the implementation of joint activities. The cooperation initiative was initiated from the bottom up. The detailed scope of the initiative included (Figure 2):

- Activities aimed at strengthening the development potential of social economy entities for their possible transformation into social enterprises; and
- Activities aimed at real strengthening of the business potential of social enterprises in the form of developing innovative business models for their needs.

The first area of activity was addressed to social economy entities which are not social enterprises and have not yet carried out economic activity in the strict sense but are considering such a possibility in the future. The second was dedicated to social enterprises currently operating in the social and economic space (Figure 2). Conclusions from the conducted activities were the basis for developing an innovative model of cooperation towards social entrepreneurship.

In the area of theoretical research, deductive and inductive methods were applied. Empirical data were collected by the researcher through multiple qualitative research techniques such as participatory observation, focus group techniques (including projection and self-assessment), heuristic techniques (i.e., individual–group brainstorming) and business modelling tools from the practice of start-ups (Lean Canvas) (Figure 2). The empirical data set in the form of paper surveys, written records and audio recordings was analysed using content analysis and emergence of theoretical generalisations. Based on the conclusions of empirical research, a conceptual and empirical model was developed.

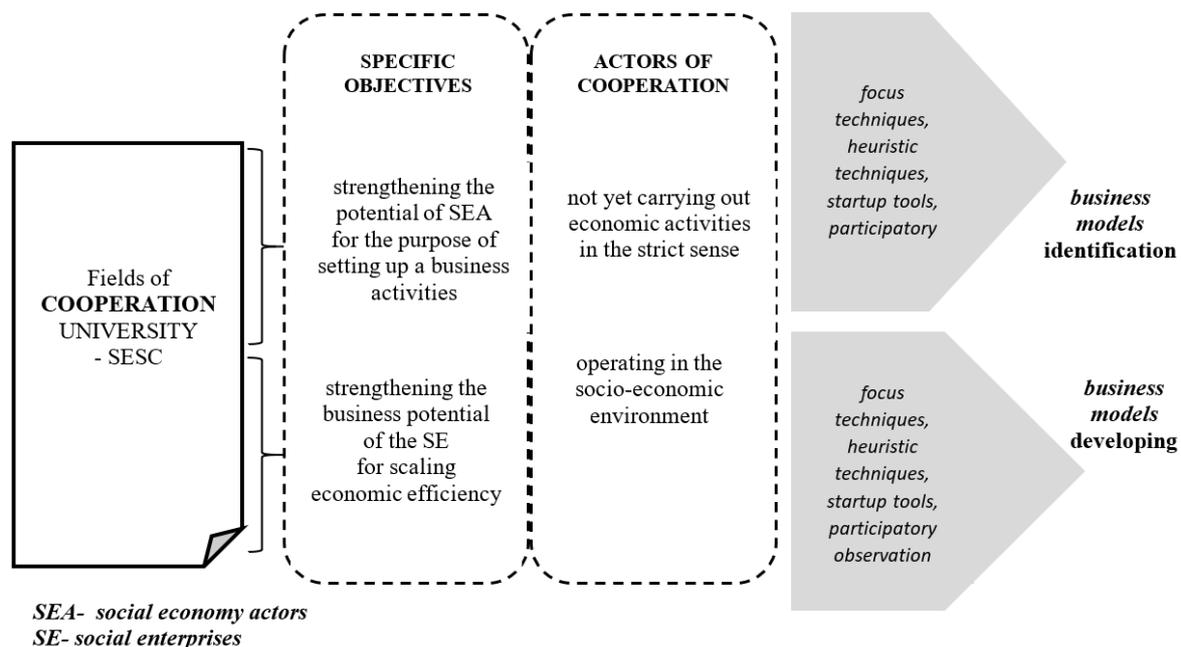


Figure 2. An exploration of institutional cooperation in social entrepreneurship areas of cooperation between a university and Social Economy Support Centre (SESC). Source: own study based on empirical research.

4. Results and Discussion

The initiative of cooperation between the university and Social Economy Support Centre (SESC) was started in March 2019. The development of cooperation towards interorganisational collaboration towards social entrepreneurship can be described as a process. In attempting to capture certain stages, it seems important to pay attention to the context of building trust, the flow of information and knowledge, the sharing of experiences and a mutual learning process. The undertaken cooperation evolved from the stage of preliminary preparations (stage I), through detailed identification of cooperation partners and trust building (stage II) to real interorganisational collaboration (stage III).

The stage of preliminary preparations (stage I) was characterised by a certain form of balance between openness and a manner of reticence in terms of the expressed opinions, views or expectations. As part of this stage, two formal meetings with representatives of the university and SESC were organised. The first discussions were marked by considerable anxiety and concern. Some attempts were made to share information, but this stage was mainly devoted to the transmission of nonsensitive information (Figure 3). A certain capital of trust was built during subsequent formal meetings and informal discussions (stage II). At this stage of cooperation, a set of shared objectives was developed. It was recognised that the values that accompany seemingly different organisations not only encourage interorganisational cooperation but can also provide a basis for collaboration based on combining potentials towards the development of social entrepreneurship. At this stage, areas of cooperation had been agreed upon, and the preliminary outline of the initiative was planned (Stage III). It was only the designs for specific joint activities based on the combination of the potential of the university and the SESC that triggered the processes of mutual learning, experiencing new practices and discovering further dimensions of joint activities (Figure 3).

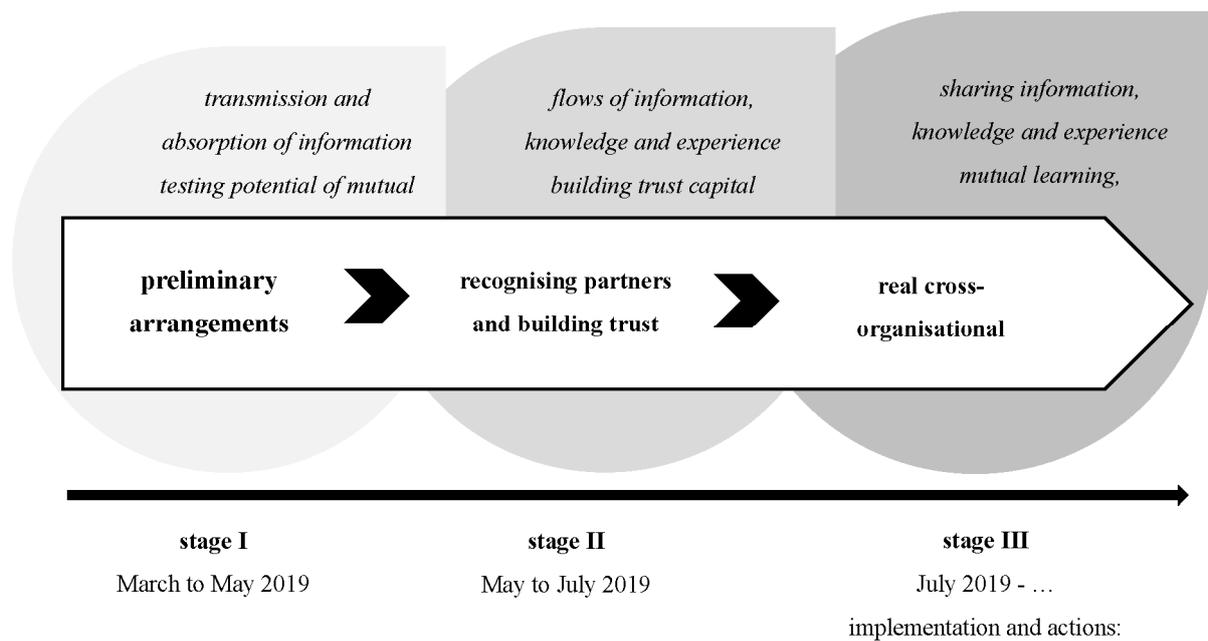


Figure 3. Development of cooperation between the university and Social Economy Support Centre (SESC) towards collaboration. Source: own study based on empirical research.

In the process of developing cooperation towards collaboration, the interorganisational and interpersonal relationships were somehow changed. Initially, these were of a rather occasional or accidental nature (stage I). The eventual basis for cooperation and practical implementation of the planned joint activities (Stage III) was permanent and continuous relationships between the university and SESC. During Stage III, specific activities were carried out (Figure 3), including:

- Conducting practical workshops for community leaders, mainly representing foundations and associations; and
- The inclusion of elements from the practice of social entrepreneurship in the didactic process and involvement of students in solving business problems of social enterprises.

The workshops were carried out in two groups: 25 September 2019 and 8 January 2020. A total of 18 community leaders, representing mainly foundations and associations, attended the workshops (8 in the first and 10 in the second group). The subject matter of the workshops concerned the conceptualisation of the business approach, including issues related to the creation of a business vision. The scope of the workshops included:

- Recognition of a business approach in the area of social entrepreneurship and visualisation of social business;
- Self-assessment of the entrepreneurial qualities of social leaders;
- Seeking and development of business ideas, as well as analysis and verification; and
- Recognition of business models.

The second area of activities, carried out within the framework of collaboration between the university and SESC, concerned the development of innovative business models for six social enterprises. Activities in this respect were carried out on the basis of a project process. Six interdisciplinary project teams were established. Each team consisted of three students and one or two representatives of a social enterprise. The project teams were involved in the process of solving real-life business problems of social enterprises. The detailed scope of activities included:

- Identifying the needs and problems of social enterprises;
- Study visits at social enterprises;
- Formal and informal meetings;
- Designing business solutions;

- Preparing specific business models for social enterprises;
- Evaluation of results; and
- Dissemination of the results among the community of social economy actors of the northern subregion of the Silesian Province in Poland.

The activities listed above were implemented in the period from 4 October 2019 to 26 February 2020, based on an original curriculum.

As a result of these activities, which also served as an area of intensive empirical research, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The development of competences of cooperation and collaboration for social entrepreneurship requires building interorganisational trust, acceptance of shared goals and values and sharing of knowledge, skills and experience (social capital context);
- Strengthening the competences of social economy entities, including social enterprises with the ability to design business ventures and apply business models, requires dedicated training, design and educational activities (context of strengthening business competences);
- Real involvement of the academic community in the practice of social entrepreneurship causes an increase in the awareness among the university community, which fosters intersectoral cooperation (context of knowledge transfer); and
- The interaction between the academic and commercial business communities within the framework of interorganisational collaboration for social entrepreneurship can strengthen the networking potential and build sustainable relationships between social economy actors (business and social networking context).

On the basis of these conclusions, resulting from the conducted activities and analysis of interorganisational collaboration, a model of cooperation for the development of social entrepreneurship was formulated. The construction of models in science is most often recognised as a process of describing or reflecting reality and its fragments for a better understanding of the essence of phenomena and organising knowledge about them. Importantly, at the same time, the models should always aspire to a certain universality, expressed, for example, in the possibility of operationalisation by modifying their components. A model most often also describes cause-and-effect relationships with respect to the studied phenomena, i.e., it can serve as an experimental tool.

In the case of conducted research, the model of collaboration towards social entrepreneurship emerged as a result of empirical activities. Thus, on one hand, it constitutes a conceptualisation of phenomena, therefore being an analogue model, but above all, it is a representational model in relation to the structure of real-world phenomena. The model presented in the form of a Venn diagram identifies the structure of collaboration between various organisations from different sectors. The (neo-)institutional theory and the concept of the organisational field inspired the development of the model architecture, based on the specific institutional fields of individual actors. Thus, among the structural elements, the following were distinguished (Figure 4):

- Field of social economy actors, i.e., self-government, Regional Development Agencies (ARR), Social Economy Support Centres (SESC) and social economy entities, including social enterprises;
- Field of commercial business, i.e., for-profit companies, market, customers, suppliers, etc.; and
- Field of academia, i.e., universities and research and educational institutions.

The highlighted organisational fields describe the primary structure of the proposed model of collaboration towards social entrepreneurship. However, it is worth paying particular attention to the perspective of merging the fields of social economy actors, commercial business and academia (Figure 4). At the core of the emerging common areas is social capital, with the creation of social capital and the possibility of its increase in interorganisational cooperation networks being crucial. As a result of the interaction between the fields of social economy actors and commercial business, it becomes possible

to include social enterprises in business networks (Figure 4). The sharing of resources, especially the transfer of knowledge and skills and the sharing of experiences and good practices as a manifestation of the merging of organisational fields, helps to improve the business competence of social enterprises. Thanks to this, they have a chance to develop partnership cooperation ventures not only in the local environment, but also in broader perspectives. It should be emphasised that the perspective of increasing economic efficiency does not have to threaten the social mission but opens up new possibilities of implementing social activities. The development of cooperation networks is based on the capital of trust, honest and authentic commitment and investment in lasting and continuous social relationships.

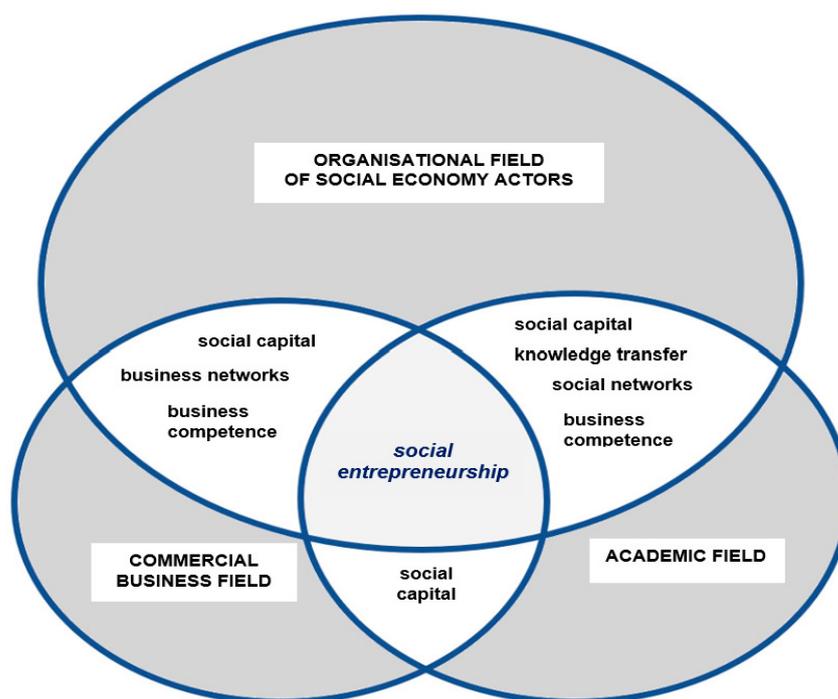


Figure 4. Model of cooperation towards social entrepreneurship in the form of a Venn diagram. Source: own study based on empirical research.

In order to strengthen the application value of the developed model of cooperation, it seems desirable to pay attention to the organisational, sectoral and localisation conditions in context. Interorganisational cooperation for social entrepreneurship is always embedded in the local context. Admittedly, one can think that in such a form, the model is universal, all the more so because its architecture is made up of three organisational fields which permeate each other. However, within each field, different organisations coexist, in a manner, connected to each other by a certain set of meanings. This does not mean that the merging of organisational fields cannot cause conflicts at the level of meanings or values.

Kusa presents the results of an interesting study on the issue of internationalisation of social enterprises, introducing a classification of types of international social entrepreneurs (solution providers, entrepreneurial charities, intermediaries) (Kusa 2016). Other research related to the conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship was conducted by Wulleman and Hudon identifying a typology of social enterprises using an empirical study in Mexico as an example (Wulleman and Hudon 2016). The results of the study lead to the proposal of archetypes of social enterprises (Bricoleur, Constructionist, Engineer); however, they do not lead to the identification of relationships between social entrepreneurship in the context of interorganisational relationships. Croatian research in the field of social entrepreneurship used the classification introduced by Wulleman and Hudon, also paying attention to the lack of institutional arrangements at the national level in this area (Kolaković et al. 2018).

Weerawardena and Mort, based on their research, state that “social entrepreneurship can be conceptualized as a multidimensional model involving the three dimensions: innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk management” (Weerawardena and Mort 2006, p. 31). This is an example of identifying a model and architecture of social entrepreneurship, but it does not refer directly to institutional intersectoral cooperation. Interesting research on trust between actors is presented by Smith and Besharov (2019), highlighting the role of leadership in trust-building processes. Therefore, it seems that the research presented in this article in a way fills the research gap in the study of social entrepreneurship, especially in the institutional environment.

5. Conclusions

The architecture of the proposed model of cooperation is a result of practical experience in the implementation of measures for the development of social entrepreneurship in the northern subregion of the Silesian Province in Poland. The model reflects the conditions of actual cooperation between a university and Social Economy Support Centre (SESC). From preliminary opinions of the institutions working in the field of social economy at the national level, it can be assumed that the implemented initiative is innovative in nature. The involvement of students in the process of solving problems of social enterprises, active involvement and participation of organisational partners, as well as feedback regarding the usefulness of the developed business models, obtained from representatives of social economy entities, including social enterprises, contradict stereotypical thinking about collaboration as something unattainable, impossible or unavailable.

The developed mechanisms of cooperation and collaboration between a university and SESC can serve as an example of good practice. The implemented joint activities allowed for real strengthening of the development potential for social economy entities and business potential for social enterprises. At the same time, there is a possibility of some repeatability to the sequence of actions. The developed model of cooperation opens a discussion on seeking even greater involvement of the local government and business communities. It seems that in the case of cooperation of various actors for the development of social entrepreneurship, the university can play a special role (Mangan et al. 2017). This can be not only an analytical, research or training role, but more importantly, the university can be an agent of changes. It seems that in the context of intersectoral cooperation, the academic sector can take on the function of an animator of activities and builder of trust and social leadership.

Activities undertaken towards the development of social entrepreneurship were implemented without support from external financing sources. From the perspective of the developed business models, particularly the prototyping of solutions and their practical testing in a business environment, this constitutes a certain limitation. Furthermore, the engagement of students in the process of solving business problems had to be adjusted to the structure of the academic year. However, in the opinion of all the actors involved, the project was a success. At the same time, the research results achieved in the course of its implementation concerning the factors influencing the efficiency of cooperation towards local social entrepreneurship may constitute an interesting contribution to the scientific discussion in the field of social economy.

There are many limitations in social entrepreneurship research due to the multilevel nature of the issue and methodological difficulties. The methodologically applied exploratory approach has its own limitations, such as basing inferences on a small number of cases. More than that, we are dealing with a very complex issue, and at the same time, classical methods related to the study of entrepreneurship or SME development are not fully applicable in this case. However, research should be aimed at the most complete and holistic understanding of the phenomenon of social entrepreneurship. In terms of interorganisational cooperation, the processes of hybridisation and structured flexibility, resulting in greater adaptability and cooperative behaviour, are indicated (Smith and Besharov 2019). Similar approaches can be applied in further research on the organisational context of so-

cial entrepreneurship. It also seems that research should aim to increasingly justify the importance of social entrepreneurship in the face of a changing business world and the rise of social economy, as well as problems associated with the disruption of classical economic cycles.

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