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FACTORS INFLUENCING SOCIAL INNOVATION PROCESSES IN LATVIA: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract. The research reflected in this paper aimed at the determination of social innovation influencing factors in the Latvian context. The qualitative content analysis of the scripts made from the video recordings of the focus group discussion organized with participation of representatives of the fields of entrepreneurship, education, communication, sport and charity, revealed that social innovation influencing factors have dual nature. That duality manifests itself as both promoting and hindering effects of social innovation influencing factors depending on the presence and development level of specific characteristics of the factor, as well as on the context within which the factor acts. The empirical data were analysed with open coding using AQUAD 6 software for the registration of conceptual codes, data processing and creation of frequency tables of categories developed. The research resulted in the revelation of ten social innovation influencing factors: openness to novelty, consciousness, responsibility, proactive thinking, lifelong learning, positive experience, passivity, conservative thinking, power distance and bureaucracy.

Keywords: social innovation, influencing factors, duality of influence, qualitative research, Latvia

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1. Introduction

Social innovation attracts the attention of researchers, policy makers, practitioners, governmental and nongovernmental organizations, entrepreneurs and individuals in Latvia as it is a relatively new concept to be studied and promoted for the sustainable development of the society. Therefore, being a topical issue, the research on the determination of factors which influence social innovation processes in Latvia was conducted in the project “Involvement of the society in social innovation for providing sustainable development of Latvia” which is carried out within the National Research Program 5.2. “Economic Transformation, Smart Growth, Governance and Legal Framework for the State and Society for Sustainable Development – a New Approach to the Creation of a Sustainable Learning Community (EKOSOC-LV)”. The qualitative content analysis of the texts of the scripts made from the video records of the focus group discussion revealed two groups of categories which promote or hinder social innovation processes in Latvia. The analysis of these categories showed that these are pairs of categories with opposite effects on social innovation. The literature analysis shows that the factors which influence social innovation processes positively or negatively are called

by researchers in different ways: drivers and barriers (Bund *et al.* 2013; Chalmers 2012; Howaldt *et al.* 2014; Mendes *et al.* 2012), pull-factors and push-factors (Antadze & Westley 2010; Bund *et al.* 2013; Mulgan *et al.* 2007a); enabling factors and disabling/inhibiting/hindering factors (Bund *et al.* 2013; Hubert *et al.* 2011); enabling framework conditions and disabling framework conditions (Bund *et al.* 2013). The approach in this research is not to divide social innovation influencing factors into promoting or hindering factors. On the contrary, each pair of categories with opposite nature of influence which emerged in the course of the qualitative content analysis served as a basis for forming one social innovation influencing factor. This is justified by the logic that any influence implies both promoting and hindering effects. This speaks of a dual nature of social innovation influencing factors. Duality of the social innovation influencing factors can be manifested in different ways. The researchers of the international project “Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change (SI-DRIVE)” funded by the European Union and conducted under the 7th Framework Programme (2014–2017) argue that “...barriers to social innovation can also be drivers or evolve into drivers. Probably, it is also possible vice versa.” (Howaldt *et al.* 2014, p. 155). A similar inference was drawn by the group of researchers of the European Commission project “The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe” (TEPSIE) under 7th Framework Programme (2012–2014); they state that the same combination of “...conditions can have an enabling effect or a more inhibiting effect on social innovation, and sometimes they are enabling for one organisation and inhibiting for another at the same time.” (Bund *et al.* 2013, p. 34).

The research aim: the determination of factors which influence social innovation processes in Latvia.

The objectives of the research:

- to conduct theoretical analysis of scientific literature and documents on the factors which influence, i.e. promote or hinder social innovation processes;
- to determine social innovation hindering and promoting factors in the Latvian context based on the empirical data obtained in the course of the focus group discussion;
- to compare the findings of the theoretical and empirical parts of the research for interpreting the results and making conclusions.

The research methods

- In the theoretical part of the research: qualitative content analysis of scientific literature and documents and generalisation of the theoretical findings.
- In the empirical part of the research: focus group discussion; qualitative content analysis with open coding; analysis of frequency tables of categories received in the course of coding using AQUAD 6 software.

2. Theoretical background

Social innovation processes are complex as they are conditioned by a web of mutually interacting and influencing domains of human, social, cultural, economic and political character. This complexity causes various barriers on the way of the realization of social innovation projects as most social problems are of difficult and multifaceted nature. On the other hand, the combination of these factors may turn into a favourable force which is able to push the social innovation processes ahead.

Literature analysis shows that social innovation processes are influenced by a multitude of factors which are classified in different ways:

- political, social, economic, and cultural (Antadze & Westley 2010);
- societal climate, resources, institutional, and political (Bund *et al.* 2013);
- external and internal (Antadze & Westley 2010);
- structural and agency (Mendes *et al.* 2012).

There are mutual interdependencies, influences and impacts between these factors (Antadze & Westley 2010; Bund *et al.* 2013; Howaldt *et al.* 2014; Mendes *et al.* 2012). In each social setting the contents, combination and interaction of these factors take a specific form which may have social innovation hindering or promoting effect.

Bund and colleagues (2013) conceptualize four different enabling framework conditions: political, institutional, societal climate and resources as enabling social innovation processes. These conditions are stimuli for the innovation processes making an appropriate context for the actors. Within these frameworks individuals and organisations take actions motivated by their entrepreneurial preferences. These actions are explained by their being proactive and willing to take risks in developing solutions for current challenges; in mobilising the necessary resources and in finally putting ideas into practice. This brings to the field specific outputs and outcomes (Bund *et al.* 2013). As the four frameworks make the scope of necessary conditions, within which social innovation processes take place, the characteristic elements of the frameworks may be considered as a scope of social innovation enabling factors related to these conditions (see Table 1).

Table 1. Social innovation enabling factors conditioned by resources, institutional, political and societal climate frameworks

Social innovation enabling factors conditioned by resources framework	Social innovation enabling factors conditioned by institutional framework
<p>Financial resources (dedicated to social purpose)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Monetary variables of the social economy – Public social expenditure – Private spending <p>Human resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Voluntary working – Professionalization/creative workplace in social fields <p>Infrastructural resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Academic resources deployed on social innovation – Social innovation relevant networks – ICT and overall infrastructure (as basis for social innovation activities) 	<p>Normative institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Tolerance – Gender equality – Solidarity – Environmental sustainability <p>Regulative institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Legislative background for social organisations – Legislative background for social security benefits – Legislative reforms in favour of social innovation – Commissioning and procurement <p>Cultural-cognitive institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Human rights
Social innovation enabling factors conditioned by political framework	Social innovation enabling factors conditioned by societal climate framework
<p>Policy awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Policy awareness about social innovation – Policy awareness about social needs <p>Political environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Political stability and democracy – Government effectiveness – Transparency – Legislation – Press freedom 	<p>Needs or demands as reference points for social innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Interest in shared social needs – Request for change <p>Social engagement and attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Political participation – Memberships in civil society organisations – Citizens attitudes towards entrepreneurship – Citizens’ openness for something new, risk taking

Source: Tabled by the authors based on Bund *et al.* 2013, p. 42-45

Only through the fruitful interplay of these factors the resources can be mobilized in order to enable social innovation processes. The absence, underdevelopment or lack of the conditions related to each of the factors may cause barriers for social innovation; this will be illustrated with a number of examples:

- “Citizens’ openness for something new, risk taking” is a social innovation enabling factor within the factor group “Social engagement and attitudes” conditioned by societal climate framework (Bund *et al.* 2013) (see Table 1). At the same time Brown and Wyatt (2010) argue that the barriers for social innovation are located in individuals’ mind set since many people have fear of failure and for them it can be difficult to accept that there is nothing wrong with experimentation or failure because they can be used as a source of learning (Brown & Wyatt 2010). Such people are not open to new experience and they don’t usually take risks which makes a barrier for social innovation. In this regard, it is argued that “promoting a learning culture and developing an infrastructure for social innovation is not an easy task. It involves changing minds and practices and taking risks within the public sector, and it calls for ongoing mutual learning.” (Hubert *et al.* 2011, p. 95).
- “Social innovation relevant networks” is a social innovation enabling factor within the factor group “Infrastructural resources” conditioned by resources framework (Bund *et al.* 2013) (see Table 1). On the other hand, lack of networks and network intermediaries (Mulgan *et al.* 2007b; Caulier-Grice *et al.* 2010; Chalmers 2012; Moore & Westley 2011) are determined among the barriers for social innovation.

- “Voluntary working” is a social innovation enabling factor within the factor group “*Human resources*” conditioned by resources framework (Bund *et al.* 2013) (see Table 1). Meanwhile not always social innovation may be wanted or may seem sufficiently useful (Mulgan 2006); that may cause reluctance to work on a voluntary basis.
- “Political stability and democracy” is a social innovation enabling factor within the factor group “*Political environment*” conditioned by political framework (Bund *et al.* 2013) (see Table 1). On the contrary, tight monopolization of power in the society and inhibition of free communication make the barriers for social innovation (Mulgan 2006).

The barriers to social innovation are systemized in two groups by the TEPsIE project partners:

- Structural barriers which include those that correspond to the characteristics of social, political, economic, technologic, etc. context in which social innovators operate.
- Agency barriers which include those that correspond to the characteristics and actions of individuals or organisations involved in social innovation processes and interactions among them (Mendes *et al.* 2012).

The barriers to social innovation can also be systemized as internal and external in relation to an individual or a group of individuals. The internal barriers can be people’s:

- minds (Brown & Wyatt 2010; Miller 2010; Mulgan *et al.* 2007b);
- poorly developed skills (Koch & Hauknes 2005; Mulgan & Albury 2003);
- distrust to the innovators (van der Geest & Heuts 2008);
- resistance to change (Koch & Hauknes 2005; van der Geest & Heuts 2008), etc.

The external barriers to social innovation are conditioned by more complex challenges such as:

- insufficient independent source of money and funding (Caulier-Grice *et al.* 2010; Hubert *et al.* 2011; Koch & Hauknes 2005; Mulgan 2006);
- too many bureaucratic rules, delivery pressures and administrative burdens (Clark, Good & Simmonds 2008; Chapman 2004; Koch & Hauknes 2005; Mulgan 2007; Mulgan & Albury 2003);
- preference for command and control forms of power (Chapman 2004);
- high walls dividing departments, agencies and professions or linked services (Mulgan 2007);
- turf wars between departments (Chapman 2004);
- absence of capacity for organisational learning at all levels (Clark, Good & Simmonds 2008; Koch & Hauknes 2005), etc.

3. The methodology and results of the empirical part of the research

The empirical data were obtained from the video recording of a focus group discussion on social innovation organised in Riga Technical University on 20 May, 2015 within the project “Involvement of the society in social innovation for providing sustainable development of Latvia” of the National Research Program 5.2. EKOSOC-LV. The researchers invited eight experts who represented the fields of entrepreneurship, education, communication, sport and charity. The questions discussed were related to: the understanding of the matter, examples and role of social innovation; factors which promote or hinder the development of social innovation in the Latvian society; the conditions which motivate governmental and non-governmental organisations, enterprises and individuals to participate in the solving of social problems; the changes which should be made in the system of education to motivate students to initiate and realise projects on social innovation. The focus group discussion was planned as a preliminary research for getting the first empirical insight into the Latvian context of these questions and forming the platform for a further larger scale research in both quantitative and qualitative perspectives with the participation of a bigger number of respondents with various demographic characteristics.

The scripts which were made based on the video-records of the focus group discussion were organised in 13 files each containing the text of the discussion on one question. The qualitative content analysis was conducted using AQUAD 6 software (Huber & Gürtler 2004). The demographic codes encompassed the gender: ‘Male’ and ‘Female’ and the field represented by the participants of the focus group discussion: ‘Education’, ‘Communication’, ‘Sport’, ‘Charity’ and ‘Entrepreneurship’. In the course of the qualitative content analysis

the conceptual codes were grouped into fifteen metacodes which contain from three to twenty two conceptual codes each. This paper presents the analysis of the categories which were included in the metacodes: ‘Social innovation promoting factors’ and ‘Social innovation hindering factors’. It is important to emphasize that these categories were developed in the course of the qualitative content analysis while coding the texts connected not only to the questions on social innovation promoting or hindering factors, but also on the other questions discussed. This can be explained by the openness and motivation of the speakers to share their experience, sometimes coming out of the frame of the question under consideration.

The categories which were developed in the qualitative content analysis were paired, each pair consisting of categories with opposite meanings like: “Passivity” vs. “Activeness”; “Conservative thinking” vs. “Creative thinking”; “Proactive thinking” vs. “Short-term thinking”, etc.

The emergence of such pairs of categories could be expected logically as these categories characterise two opposite phenomena - promoting and hindering, which in their turn are two opposite sides of influence. As the aim of the research was the determination of the factors which influence social innovation processes in Latvia, the main approach in this research was to:

- determine categories related to the promotion of social innovation processes;
- determine categories related to the hindrances to social innovation processes;
- unite these two groups of categories to form factors which influence social innovation processes deciding which category in each pair will make the base for each factor.

In the course of the qualitative content analysis the authors faced the challenge of deciding which of the categories with opposite meanings should be taken as the base. For instance, in the text of the discussion on the social innovation hindering factors the conceptual codes: “Inactivity”, “Passivity” and “Indifference” were assigned forty three times (see Table 2); they were united into the category “Passivity”. As for the conceptual code “Activeness” with the opposite meaning which emerged in relation to the promotion of social innovation, it was assigned twenty five times (see Table 2). Therefore it was decided to take “Passivity” as the basic category renaming “Activeness” into “Passivity neg.”. In the result ten pairs of categories were developed (see Table 2).

Table 2. Pairs of opposite categories related to promotion and hindering of social innovation and their frequencies

No.	Categories related to the promotion of social innovation	Frequencies of categories	Categories related to the hindering of social innovation	Frequencies of categories
1.	Openness to novelty	76	Openness to novelty neg.	30
2.	Proactive thinking	62	Proactive thinking neg.	14
3.	Consciousness	36	Consciousness neg.	5
4.	Responsibility	33	Responsibility neg.	7
5.	Lifelong learning	28	Lifelong learning neg.	4
6.	Positive experience	10	Positive experience neg.	8
7.	Passivity neg.	25	Passivity	43
8.	Conservative thinking neg.	6	Conservative thinking	18
9.	Power distance neg.	9	Power distance	13
10.	Bureaucracy neg.	5	Bureaucracy	8

Source: constructed by the authors

In order to illustrate the course of the open coding, in the result of which Table 2 was created, an example of assigning the conceptual codes “Proactive thinking” and “Proactive thinking neg.” will be considered. The fragment of a text which belongs to one of the participants who represents entrepreneurs: “I always emphasize that we shouldn’t be afraid of clever specialists! We need them as they are promoters and change agents. Even if they wish to work with others in other companies where they may be promoted to higher positions, we

shouldn't feel offended or create obstacles for them. On the contrary, we should respect their choice and act in a forward-thinking manner. Be sure all the new ties which they create, may be useful for us in the future..." was coded as "Proactive thinking". But another fragment of a text expressed by a representative of education: "In my opinion organisers of charity campaigns sometimes don't even think over in detail how all should take place. People lose their trust towards them; they won't will to donate any money in the future as they aren't sure that it will be used in a proper way for solving urgent social problems..." is about the short-term thinking or lack of proactive thinking as a hindering factor to social innovation processes. Therefore this text fragment was coded as "Short-term thinking" and further on renamed as "Proactive thinking neg."

The first six categories: openness to novelty, proactive thinking, consciousness, responsibility, lifelong learning, and positive experience, were spoken about by the participants of the focus group discussion in connection with the promotion of social innovation (see column 2 of Table 2). Meanwhile, the lack or absence of such qualities in individuals categorized as: 'Openness to novelty neg.', 'Proactive thinking neg.', 'Consciousness neg.', 'Responsibility neg.', 'Lifelong learning neg.', and 'Positive experience neg.', were mentioned by the speakers in the context of social innovation hindering effect (see column 4 of Table 2).

As to the rest four categories: conservative thinking, passivity, power distance, and bureaucracy, on the contrary, they have social innovation hindering effect (see column 4 of Table 2). However, human qualities or social phenomena opposite to the meanings of these categories which were mentioned by the participants of the social group discussion, and categorised as: 'Conservative thinking neg.', 'Passivity neg.', 'Power distance neg.', and 'Bureaucracy neg.', were considered in relation to social innovation promoting effect (see column 2 of Table 2).

3.1. Illustration of the emerging of the categories

Depending on the content of text fragments, one or more categories could correspond to them. For the illustration, a few episodes from the qualitative content analysis will be provided.

When the participants of the focus group discussion were speaking of the collaboration between science and entrepreneurship for solving social problems, one of the entrepreneurs shared his experience: "I had long term discussions and regular meetings twice a week with one scientist until finally I managed to convince him to collaborate and realise his ideas into new products in our company (*Passivity neg., Proactive thinking, Conservative thinking neg.*). In the beginning he couldn't take any decisions as he didn't see the possibilities (*Proactive thinking neg.*). In the course of time the results of our collaboration turned out to be successful; an innovative product – chocolate for tense nerves, high blood pressure and cold was created. Today it is sold in our drug stores (*Positive experience.*)"

The representative of the field of communication spoke on difficulties related to the inactivity of young people. He emphasized the role of "draugiem.lv", the largest social networking website in Latvia at the same time expressing his anxiety about apathy and lack of initiative from young people: "Why does Ghetto Games, the biggest street culture and youth movement in Latvia which propagandizes sport and healthy life style need such a partner like "draugiem.lv"? To inform! To ask young people 'Please, come to us! We have all now! Absolutely everything is provided! Everything has been done for you! Come and participate without paying for anything! Balls will be provided for basketball players!' (*Responsibility, Passivity neg.*). Why on the earth do we have to convince young people? (*Passivity, Openness to novelty neg.*)"

When speaking about factors which hinder social innovation processes in Latvia, another participant of the focus group discussion who represents the field of sport said: "We had a new initiative for children and their parents. We organised different games and sport activities for families at weekends. Unfortunately parents don't attend such sport events (*Openness to novelty neg., Passivity*). I don't know why but this is the reality. Maybe they are very busy, tired or they don't care. Therefore we had to change the days. Now we organise all activities on working days. Thus also this load has been put on teachers' shoulders (*Responsibility*)"

Conservative thinking was mentioned among the obstacles on the way of realisation of social innovation ideas in practice: “We established the Latvian Disabled Children's and Youth Sport Federation in 1993. For a long time I had to hear questions and arguments like ‘A disabled child and sport are two incompatible things. How do you imagine that? You know disabled children don’t even sport in school!’ These people can’t get rid of stereotypes! (*Conservative thinking*)”.

Another example of conservative thinking was given related to the attempts to educate school children concerning Paralympic Sports: “I always hear different arguments against, as some parents have prejudice and don’t let their children even sit in the wheelchairs to try and feel how it is to be disabled and how disabled people may participate in sport games (*Conservative thinking, Openness to novelty neg.*). Young people are more open minded (*Conservative thinking neg., Openness to novelty*) than people of the generation of their parents.”

Conservative thinking and lack of openness to novelty were pointed out through many different contexts. Another example provided, said: “Family doctors still write diagnosis and prescriptions manually with such an awful handwriting that sometimes it is impossible to read what is written on the paper. It is difficult to make them use technologies (*Openness to novelty neg., Conservative thinking*)”.

At the same time the participants of the focus group discussion spoke of various novelties in social relationships in Latvia; one of them concerning the relationship between schools, enterprises and banks: “Representatives of enterprises and Swedbank regularly come to schools and inform school principals about their work (*Proactive thinking*). The school authorities say that it inspires them as they see how useful this collaboration is for organisation of work in school (*Openness to novelty, Proactive thinking*). Such cooperation broadens the perspectives of school teachers and authorities as the meetings with successful people of different professions bring social innovation, creativity and novelties to schools (*Positive experience, Lifelong learning*). This is especially important as the school environment is sometimes too limited; the school staff contacts mainly with colleagues from neighbouring schools.”

Speaking about different social innovation campaigns, one of the participants of the focus group discussion said: “Lielā talka” (Great Clean-up) is a fantastic initiative which unites cities, villages and organisations all over Latvia (*Consciousness, Responsibility*). Yes, we go to “Lielā talka”, because it is stylish and it is broadly shown on TV; even the president goes there. At the same time, what do we do there? We drink coffee from plastic cups, throw work gloves somewhere on the ground or into sacks; thus we create bigger rubbish! (*Consciousness neg., Proactive thinking neg., Responsibility neg.*)”.

It was pointed out that even being within social innovation processes people don’t always understand to the full extent what real values are. Therefore their actions may be caused by the wish to impress rather than give a hand to those people who really need help: “When charity campaigns are organised, we go and donate 10 EUR as we see how nicely all is organised! Somebody is singing, some others are dancing and everything looks so soul-stirring! At the same time an old woman just living next door may really need 3 EUR for her survival but we don’t see that and don’t help her! (*Consciousness neg.*)” Or another example from the case of young people: “They sometimes dream of becoming worldwide known sportsmen and train their bodies all day long. At the same time when walking in the university, they won’t bend to pick a piece of paper from the floor, saying ‘It’s not my job. May the cleaner do that! (*Consciousness neg., Responsibility neg.*)”.

One of the key thoughts expressed in the focus group discussion was about the importance of understanding one’s own role in the promotion of social innovation processes for the sustainable development of the society: “I would like to say that each of us should have his/her own input in the development of our country (*Responsibility*)”.

When the question about bureaucracy in governmental organisations was raised concerning hindrances to social innovation processes, there were opposite opinions expressed by the participants of the focus group discussion: “Entrepreneurs often experience difficulties because of strict observance of rules in different organizations and too many formalities to be followed when they want to develop their businesses

(Bureaucracy)”. On the other hand, there were also optimistic experiences shared: “I am positively surprised by how open our people are to collaboration! In Pārdaugava board of directors, to whom we went to speak about the festival which we are going to organise in Lucavsala, they showed genuine interest in the idea of the festival, asked some questions and lent real support (*Bureaucracy neg., Openness to novelty, Positive experience*)” or “In Tukums the authorities of the regional government work perfectly. When we need to adopt a decision, we can always expect support from the Tukums Council as within two hours a special meeting can be organised and appropriate documents can be signed (*Bureaucracy neg., Positive experience*).”

However there was also a sceptical opinion about a related category: “I don’t think so positively about governmental organisations, though when I go to them now, they are so polite and attentive. But five years ago, when we weren’t well known yet, it was not so. Some friends of mine still say that they can’t reach the due authorities until they get some powerful contact persons (*Power distance*).”

Several times the participants of the focus group discussion emphasized the importance of lifelong learning and developing regardless of the age and profession: “We have a motto! Those who don’t learn, won’t work in our company! My team and I constantly learn what is new in our field in the world (*Lifelong learning*). We have always tried to bring in something new in our company. When we started, each day we had new ideas. We have never been afraid to experiment and produce new types of chocolate even if at that moment we were the first ones in the world who dared to try out the idea (*Openness to novelty, Passivity neg.*)”. It was emphasized that the means for lifelong learning can be very different especially today when the world is becoming more open and accessible with each new day: “I would recommend all the entrepreneurs to attend exhibitions and participate in them with their products or services not only in Latvia or in the Baltic countries but also in the entire world. There is huge exchange of information and opportunities to learn from all over the world (*Lifelong learning*). I have participated in an exhibition in China. I am really satisfied with the effect it had for our company. At this moment my colleagues are in Chicago with our chocolate (*Positive experience, Passivity neg.*)”.

Speaking on the pedagogical aspects of developing qualities and behaviours in students required in the context of social innovation, one of the entrepreneurs mentioned: “I remember when I was a teenager, my Dad made me wash cars in his enterprise. I sometimes had to do it even through tears. Only now I understand how important that was for me (*Positive experience*). Children should be taught to understand what it is to come to work at 9 o’clock when you are to come to work at 9 o’clock (*Responsibility*).”

Passivity and conservative thinking were mentioned among the key problems in today’s schools: “Students often attend the Museum of Pure chocolate. As a rule I speak to them and ask questions about where they plan to go after the Museum. They often give some vague answers. Then I say ‘Oh my God! That is so boring!’ They explain that the teacher said that they had to do so (*Power distance*); therefore they would go” (*Passivity*). Then I ask the teacher why they have to go there. The answer usually is something like ‘We must fill the day somehow and that is all!’ (*Conservative thinking*). The teachers complains that there is no initiative from the students! (*Passivity*). Then I offer that they can change their plans and go to some interesting places. She gets surprised and asks whether it is allowed (*Conservative thinking*). See, neither the teacher, nor the students express themselves or show real initiatives! (*Passivity*)”.

3.2. Factors influencing social innovation processes in Latvia

As it has already been mentioned, both promoting and hindering are two opposite sides of influence. Therefore the factors which influence social innovation processes in Latvia: ‘Openness to novelty’, ‘Proactive thinking’, ‘Consciousness’, ‘Responsibility’, ‘Lifelong learning’, ‘Positive experience’, ‘Passivity’, ‘Conservative thinking’, ‘Power distance’ and ‘Bureaucracy’ were determined based on the basic categories shown in Table 1. For illustration purposes Figure 1 is constructed to analyse how frequently the categories were spoken about

by the participants of the focus group discussion. For that, the frequencies of the categories with the index *neg.* were provided with the minus sign “-”.

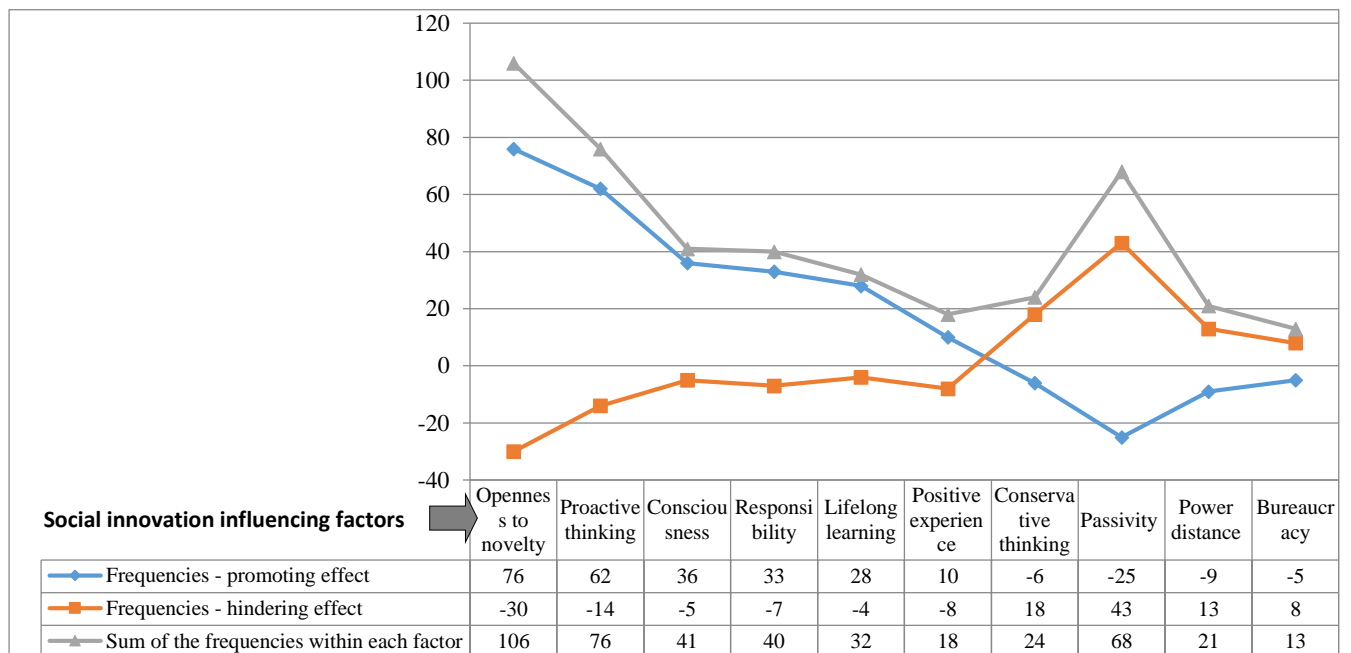


Fig.1. Social innovation influencing factors in Latvia: the results of the preliminary research

Source: constructed by the authors

The categories with social innovation promoting effect are marked with blue rhomb-shaped bullets in the chart line and the categories with social innovation hindering effect are marked with orange square-shaped bullets (see Figure 1). The chart line marked with the grey triangle-shaped bullets depicts the sums of the frequencies of the opposite categories within each social innovation influencing factor (see Figure 1). As social innovation influencing factors are formed based on these categories, in order to decide how many times each factor was spoken about, the frequencies of the opposite categories within each factor were summed up taking only their absolute values regardless of their social innovation promoting or hindering effects. Then the weight of each factor was calculated in percent assuming that the sum of all the frequencies corresponds to 100 % (see Figure 2).

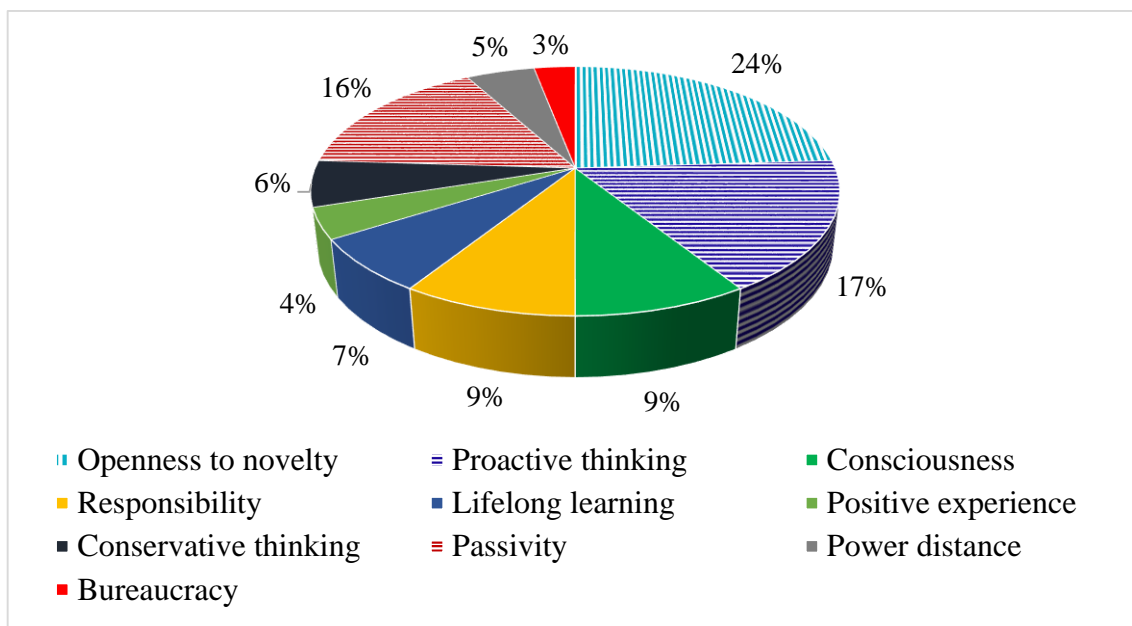


Fig. 2. The weight of the social innovation influencing factors (%)

Source: constructed by the authors

That shows that ‘Openness to novelty’ (n=24%), ‘Proactive thinking’ (n=17%) and ‘Passivity’ (n=16%) were spoken about more frequently than the other factors by the participants of the focus group discussion. However, it is very important to underline that each social innovation influencing factor has dual nature with both promoting and hindering effect. The factor ‘Openness to novelty’ encompasses both openness to novelty as a promoting force and lack of the openness to novelty as a hindering force; the factor ‘Proactive thinking’ implies both proactive thinking as a promoting force and lack of proactive thinking, i.e. short-term thinking as a hindering force; the factor ‘Passivity’ means both passivity as a hindering force and lack of passivity, i.e. activeness as a promoting force.

The duality is also in the nature of the rest of the social innovation influencing factors: ‘Consciousness’ (n=9%), ‘Responsibility’ (n=9%), ‘Lifelong learning’ (n=7%), ‘Positive experience’ (n=4%), ‘Conservative thinking’ (n=6%), ‘Power distance’ (n=5%) and ‘Bureaucracy’ (n=3%).

4. Conclusions

The research revealed the dual nature of social innovation influencing factors which may have both promoting and hindering effects depending on the presence and development level of specific characteristics of the factor, as well as on the context within which the factor acts.

The social innovation influencing factors for the Latvian context which were determined within this research show that the participants of the focus group discussion consider them mainly as internal factors in relation to an individual or a group of individuals: openness to novelty, consciousness, responsibility, proactive thinking, lifelong learning, positive experience, passivity, conservative thinking; only two factors: power distance and bureaucracy are external social innovation influencing factors in relation to an individual or a group of individuals.

Openness to novelty, proactive thinking and passivity as social innovation influencing factors were emphasized by the participants of the research more often than the other seven factors; this may serve as a basis for hypothesizing that these three factors can be especially topical for the Latvian context.

As this research has a preliminary character and it was organized with the participants who represent the fields of entrepreneurship, education, communication, sport and charity, the findings will make a platform for starting a survey – larger scale research both in quantitative and qualitative perspectives with the participation of a bigger number of respondents with various demographic characteristics. Besides, in-depth interviews are to be organized with experts of the social innovation field in order to explore the questions which were not disclosed in this stage of the research yet.

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