

EMERGING TRENDS: DIALOGUES BETWEEN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SOCIAL INNOVATION PROJECTS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Tendencias emergentes: diálogos entre la sostenibilidad ambiental en la gestión de proyectos de innovación social para un futuro sostenible

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Abstract

The management of social innovation projects and their relationship with sustainable development is a growing interest in the academic and professional spheres. This paper analyzes emerging trends at the intersection of environmental sustainability and social innovation project management. It sought to identify meaningful dialogues that contribute to the design and implementation of projects that promote a sustainable future. A qualitative approach was adopted using two complementary methods to address this objective. First, bibliometric search equations focused on the analytical categories of social innovation and environmental sustainability. Second, a documentary review was carried out using matrices, which made it possible to identify divergences and convergences between the different authors in this field. The results of this study underscore that incorporating environmental sustainability into the management of social innovation projects is desirable and essential to address contemporary social problems effectively. By adopting sustainable practices, fostering environmental

Resumen

La gestión de proyectos de innovación social y su relación con el desarrollo sostenible es un campo de creciente interés en el ámbito académico y profesional. El presente documento tiene como objetivo analizar las tendencias emergentes en la intersección de la sostenibilidad ambiental y la gestión de proyectos de innovación social. Se buscó identificar diálogos significativos que contribuyen al diseño e implementación de proyectos que promueven un futuro sostenible. Para abordar este objetivo, se adoptó un enfoque cualitativo utilizando dos métodos complementarios. Primero, se realizaron ecuaciones de búsqueda desde la bibliometría, centradas en las categorías analíticas de innovación social y sostenibilidad ambiental. Segundo, se llevó a cabo una revisión documental mediante matrices, lo que permitió identificar las divergencias y convergencias entre los distintos autores en este campo. Los resultados de este estudio subrayan que la incorporación de la sostenibilidad ambiental en la gestión de proyectos de innovación social no solo es deseable, sino también esencial para abordar de manera efectiva los problemas sociales



awareness, and seeking solutions that respect environmental limits, social innovation projects can play a crucial role in creating a more sustainable and equitable future.

Keywords: project management, cultural innovation, environment, social system.

Introduction

The management of social innovation projects represents a crucial discipline in the current landscape, where communities seek creative and sustainable solutions to address social problems (OCDE, 2020). This approach combines elements of traditional project management with the imperative to generate a positive impact on society (Gómez et al., 2023). Throughout this text, the fundamentals, challenges, and best practices associated with the management of social innovation projects are explored. Indeed, social innovation involves the application of novel solutions to address social challenges and improve the quality of life. It is distinguished by its focus on collective well-being and the creation of social value (Satalkina & Steiner, 2022; Navarro, 2017). In the management of social innovation projects, the process begins by identifying social issues and proposing solutions that are not only effective but also sustainable in the long term (López, 2014).

The management of social innovation projects often involves professionals from various disciplines, such as sociology, engineering, psychology, and more (Matus, 2020). Interdisciplinary collaboration allows for holistic approaches and comprehensive solutions, leveraging the expertise and unique perspectives of each field (Téllez et al., 2020; Maldonado, 2018). Consequently, the relationship between environmental sustainability and the management of social innovation projects is essential in the quest for effective and sustain-

contemporáneos. Al adoptar prácticas sostenibles, fomentar la conciencia ambiental y buscar soluciones que respeten los límites del medio ambiente, los proyectos de innovación social pueden desempeñar un papel crucial en la creación de un futuro más sostenible y equitativo

Palabras claves: dirección de proyecto, innovación cultural, medio ambiente, sistema social.

able solutions to contemporary social challenges (Springer & Domanski, 2016; MahdaviMazdeh et al., 2021). Focusing on addressing social issues, the management of social innovation projects has the unique opportunity to integrate sustainable practices that benefit not only directly affected communities but also the environment at large (Barbosa, Rojas y Gómez, 2021; Hernández y Arizamontes, 2016).

Environmental sustainability involves the efficient use of resources, reducing ecological footprints, and preserving biodiversity. In the management of social innovation projects, the design of sustainable solutions aims to address social problems without compromising natural resources and minimizing negative environmental impacts (Téllez, et al., 2022; Vries et al., 2016). This could include the implementation of green technologies, sustainable agricultural practices, or eco-efficient construction methods (Arora et al., 2020; Deng et al., 2022).

Consequently, the overall objective of this article is to analyze emerging trends at the intersection of environmental sustainability and the management of social innovation projects, with the purpose of identifying meaningful dialogues that contribute to the design and implementation of projects promoting a future. The hypothesis is that within the context of emerging trends involving environmental sustainability and the management of social innovation projects, the effective integration of sustainable principles in project planning and execution can generate significant synergies. It is expected

that the convergence of these two elements will provide a robust framework for the development of initiatives that not only address current social challenges but also promote environmental preservation, thus contributing to the construction of a sustainable future.

Methodology

The present research was framed within a qualitative approach, aiming to understand the relationship between Social Innovation and Environmental Sustainability. To achieve this, two complementary methods were employed:

The first method involved creating a search equation in the WOS, Scopus, Scielo, Redalyc, and DOAJ databases. The search equation included the analytical categories of Social Innovation and Environmental Sustainability (see table 1 and 2). The observation period spanned 20 years, from 2002 to 2022. Bibliometric analysis allowed the identification of scientific production on the research topic, as well as emerging trends and research lines (Cañas et al., 2013; Princhard, 1969). In total, 987

articles were identified, with 901 being research articles, 25 institutional documents, and 61 reviews. Indeed, search equations play a crucial role in information retrieval in databases, specifically in data fusion and mining processes. In this context, these equations were initially integrated with the Vantage Point program, dedicated to data analysis and text mining, along with the datasets from each database (Bensman & Leydesdorff, 2009; Rushforth, 2016).

Subsequently, 9 common fields were selected between the two main information sources of the research, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), to consolidate all relevant documents. For the same purpose, documents present in both databases were identified, leading to the elimination of duplicates and the initiation of the information cleaning process. This procedure addressed the normalization of author names, institutions, countries, and keywords. Lack of uniformity in publication metadata led to duplications in the mentioned fields (Aguilera et al., 2020; Barbosa et al., 2020).

Both Web of Science and Scopus host publications with globally recognized impact factors, considered

Table 1

The search equation included the analytical Category of SOCIAL INNOVATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

DATABASE	Search Equations
	Tema: ("SOCIAL INNOVATION OR INNOVACIÓN SOCIA") Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, AyHCI, ESCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
WoS	Tema: ("SOCIAL INNOVATION OR INNOVACIÓN SOCIAL") Refinado por: Años de publicación: (2016 OR 2017 OR 2010 OR 2013 OR 2015 OR 2012 OR 2009 OR 2011 OR 2014 OR 2008 OR 2020 OR 2021 02 2022 OR 2019 OR 2018 OR 2006 OR 2005 OR 2004 0R 2003 OR 2002 02 2001 0R 2000) Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, AyHCI, ESCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años Tema: ("SOCIAL INNOVATION OR INNOVACIÓN SOCIAL") Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, ESCI, AyHCI, SSCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("SOCIAL INNOVATION OR INNOVACIÓN SOCIAL") TITLE-ABS-KEY ("SOCIAL INNOVATION OR INNOVACIÓN SOCIAL")

Table 2

Example of search equation for the Category ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

DATABASE	Search Equations
WoS	Tema: ("SOSTENIBILIDAD AMBIENTAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY") Refinado por: Años de publicación: (2016 OR 2017 OR 2010 OR 2013 OR 2015 OR 2012 OR 2009 OR 2011 OR 2014 OR 2008 OR 2020 OR 2021 02 2022 OR 2019 OR 2018 OR 2006 OR 2005 OR 2004 OR 2003 OR 2002 02 2001 OR 2000) Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, AyHCI, ESCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
	Tema: ("SOSTENIBILIDAD AMBIENTAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY") Índices=SCI-EXPANDED, ESCI, AyHCI, SSCI Período de tiempo=Todos los años
Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("SOSTENIBILIDAD AMBIENTAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY")
	TITLE-ABS-KEY ("SOSTENIBILIDAD AMBIENTAL OR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY")

of high academic quality. Precisely, interest in the dissemination, measurement, production, and use of science has experienced a notable increase in recent decades, thanks to information systems contributing to the analysis of scientific production (Camacho et al., 2023; Gómez, Barbosa & Téllez, 2021).

The second method involved a documentary review supported by matrices to synthesize the articles identified during the initial search. This review focused on analyzing divergences and convergences among authors, drawing on references from various academic sources (Paramo, 2008; Cerda, 1988). The presentation of results was structured in a matrix, arranged in an Excel sheet with distinct columns for each key element. The first column was dedicated to identifying the overall objective through the search equation, providing a clear understanding of the argumentative line. Next, another column established the methodology used, offering information about the adopted approach. Subsequently, a results column summarized the findings, followed by one dedicated to the author's synthesis, providing a unique perspective from each author. Finally, a column was dedicated

to the overall synthesis of the article, consolidating essential information supporting the present document (Bensman & Leydesdorff, 2009; Gómez et al., 2016; Camacho et al., 2023).

Results

Next, the results of the investigative exercise are presented, starting with Table number 3, which establishes a triangulation between the overall objective of the article, using analytical and emerging categories as a guide. The latter represents the synthesis obtained from the documentary review conducted through the search equations.

Community Participation and Environmental Awareness

The management of social innovation projects encourages active community participation in problem identification and resolution. In this context, environmental awareness, and the adoption of sustainable practices at the community level can be promoted. For example, projects addressing waste management, conservation of water re-

Table 3

Relationship of Analytical Categories and Emerging Categories

General objective	Analytical categories	Popup categories
<i>analyze emerging trends at the intersection of environmental sustainability and the management of social innovation projects, with the purpose of identifying meaningful dialogues that contribute to the design and implementation of projects that promote a future.</i>	<i>Social Innovation</i>	<i>Community Participation and Environmental Awareness</i>
	<i>Environmental sustainability</i>	<i>Integration of Innovative Technologies.</i>
		<i>Alliances and Collaborations for Sustainability</i>
		<i>Long Term Impact</i>

sources, or the promotion of renewable energies can bring about positive changes in communities and contribute to environmental sustainability (Florez & Melo, 2018). Similarly, ethics play a fundamental role in these projects as they directly impact communities and vulnerable groups. Transparency, equity, and respect are key principles. Project managers must ensure that all actions align with the ethical and cultural values of the involved communities (Gómez et al., 2018; Laverde et al., 2020).

Integration of Innovative Technologies

Social innovation is often associated with the application of innovative technologies to address social problems. In this context, project management can focus on adopting technologies that not only improve the quality of life in communities but are also environmentally friendly (Hale et al., 2019). Examples include renewable energy technologies, intelligent resource management systems, and sustainable agricultural practices (OCDE and Eurostat, 2018). Examining successful cases in the management of social innovation projects provides valuable lessons learned (Garzón et al., 2022; Christensen et al., 2015). Projects like digital inclusion initiatives in marginalized communities or sustainable solutions for water access have demonstrated the positive impact that can be achieved through

effective management and careful implementation (Villa & Melo, 2015; Rendón & Gómez, 2022).

Partnerships and Collaborations for Sustainability

The management of social innovation projects often involves various stakeholders, including non-profit organizations, businesses, governments, and the local community (Garzón et al., 2023; Lozano et al., 2016). Forming partnerships and collaborations can enhance the ability to implement sustainable solutions and address environmental challenges comprehensively. Strategic partnerships can provide resources, expertise, and necessary support to ensure the long-term sustainability of projects (Acevedo & Dassen, 2016; Del Castillo, 2016).

Long-Term Impact

Environmental sustainability focuses on ensuring that current actions do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Lindkvist & Sánchez, 2008). In the management of social innovation projects, the aim is to create a long-term impact that not only addresses immediate problems but also promotes resilience and sustainability over time (Gieske et al., 2016; Gómez, 2023). This involves carefully considering the long-term conse-

quences of implemented solutions (Barbosa, Gómez y Téllez, 2021; Jurguen & Domanski, 2016).

Discussion

The dialogues between environmental sustainability and the management of social innovation projects represented a unique opportunity to comprehensively address current challenges. The incorporation of sustainable practices in project management not only contributes to environmental preservation but also strengthens the capacity of social initiatives to generate long-term positive impacts (Bason, 2018; Verdejo, 2019; Gómez, 2021). Environmental sustainability can act as a catalyst for social innovation, providing an ethical and practical framework for decision-making in project planning and execution (Eizaguirre, 2012; 2016). This convergence can generate more effective and holistic solutions benefiting both communities and the natural environment (Acevedo & Dassen, 2016; OCDE, 2020; Rodríguez et al., 2021).

The results of this article aligned with the propositions of Morales (2014); Purvies et al., (2019) and Gómez, Aldana & Rodríguez, (2021) when stating that, although integrating environmental sustainability into the management of social innovation projects is valuable, it is essential to consider potential tensions and challenges that may arise. In some cases, budget constraints and immediate demands of social projects may conflict with the investments and timelines required for implementing sustainable practices. Additionally, there is a risk that the added complexity of incorporating environmental criteria may dilute social objectives, leading to a more efficiency- and economically focused approach rather than social equity (Maldonado, 2017; 2023). This delicate balance requires careful consideration to avoid compromising the fundamental objectives of social projects (Van der Panne et al., 2003; Ramírez, 2011).

Similarly, the investigative exercise corresponded with the observations of Hinkelammert & Mora, (2008); Zurbriggen & González, (2014); Maldonado, (2014) when suggesting that effective reconciliation between environmental sustainability and social innovation involves a balanced approach that leverages synergies and mitigates potential conflicts. The adoption of integrative approaches and the identification of complementary areas can overcome challenges. Moreover, it is crucial to involve all stakeholders, from the local community to funders, to ensure a common understanding and commitment to both, social and environmental goals (Vega, 2017). Technology and innovation can play a key role in offering solutions that improve efficiency and reduce negative environmental impacts. Ultimately, continuous dialogue and adaptability are essential to progress toward a sustainable future where the management of social innovation projects and environmental sustainability coexist harmoniously (Gómez et al., 2017; FEN Universidad de Chile y Laboratorio de Gobierno, 2018).

Conclusions

The incorporation of environmental sustainability into the management of social innovation projects is not only desirable but also essential to effectively address contemporary social issues. By adopting sustainable practices, fostering environmental awareness, and seeking solutions that respect environmental limits, social innovation projects can play a crucial role in creating a more sustainable and equitable future.

Social innovation projects should adopt practices that not only address immediate problems but also contribute to building a more sustainable and equitable future. The intersection between sustainability and social innovation emerges as fertile ground for the development of initiatives that not only address pressing social issues but also respect

and protect the natural environment. An integral approach to project management, where environmental sustainability and social innovation strategically merge, is advocated. Only through this synergy can projects fulfill their maximum potential, generating positive impacts on both society and the environment and thus contributing to the creation of a sustainable future.

The management of social innovation projects is a dynamic field that continues to evolve. The combination of business and social approaches enables the effective tackling of complex issues. As social awareness grows, the management of social innovation projects is expected to play an even more prominent role in creating sustainable and meaningful solutions for global challenges.

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