Social Innovations in Tourism:

Their Potential for Swiss Mountain Regions

Inauguraldissertation

der Philosophisch-naturwissenschaftlichen Fakultät

der Universität Bern

vorgelegt von

Samuel Wirth

von Ursenbach

Leiterin der Arbeit:

Prof. Dr. Heike Mayer
Universität Bern

Co-Leiterin:

Dr. Monika Bandi Tanner
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Prof. Dr. Marco Herwegh

Summary

Swiss mountain regions cover two thirds of the country's territory and are home to a quarter of the population in Switzerland. In these regions, tourism plays a central role in providing jobs and income, but also in attracting guests pursuing their leisure activities or enjoying the beauty of nature, as the nature is the main motive for visiting Switzerland. Regional development in such regions is often concerned with economic development, such as efforts to provide jobs and opportunities for businesses. However, regional development seems to increasingly involve broader approaches that view such regions as "living spaces", which include local communities in regional development. Along these lines, social innovation is finding its way into the New Regional Policy (Switzerland's policy to develop mountain regions).

This dissertation focuses on the topics of social innovation, tourism, and growth independence. While acknowledging the importance of tourism, this dissertation considers the negative consequences caused by intense tourism and aims to reflect on growth-independent tourism. The dissertation investigated the development of social innovation in tourism and the contribution of social innovation to growth-independent regional development. It consists of four research papers, a discussion of the papers' results and an application of the results for tourism.

The findings of the papers I and II showed that growth independence inducing social innovations exist in the Bernese Oberland. They were characterised by four entrepreneurial decisions in relation to re-localization, de-commercialisation, low capital, and self-governance. Specifically, growth independence inducing social innovations operated on regional/local markets, established short and regional value chains, and maintained close relationships among economic actors. Furthermore, actors in these social innovations aimed for de-commercialisation of the social innovation's production and/or service delivery and made small or no efforts for advertisement and marketing. In addition, growth-independence inducing social innovation used low levels of debt capital and low levels of capital intensity in production/service delivery. Another entrepreneurial decision of the actors in these social innovations was to remain a small or medium sized social innovation with democratic ownership, equity and self-governance.

The findings of the papers III and IV showed that diverse actors – ranging from private individuals to tourism organisations to public policy actors to companies to associations – are involved in the development of social innovations in tourism. During the development process, social innovations could overcome a tipping point at which they began to spread to other regions and to unfold their full impact. They could do so as new actors joined the social innovation or stepped into action. These new actors were public, and/or public-private actors. During the development process the involved actors performed altering types of agency. At the beginning of a social innovation, innovative entrepreneurship (agency in a new field characterised by risk taking activities and the search for new (economic) opportunities) and place-based leadership (agency related to mobilising and connecting actors with different knowledge, resources and networks) were dominant. When it came to the implementation of the social innovation, innovative entrepreneurship, place-based leadership and institutional entrepreneurship (agency related to the introduction and implementation of divergent institutional change) were performed. When it came to operating the social innovation, again innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership were the main performed agencies.

The results of the four papers were applied for tourism. Specifically, the entrepreneurial decisions from actors in growth independence inducing social innovations were adopted for tourism in Switzerland. In doing so, the dissertation seeks to deduct how tourism could look like taking these entrepreneurial decisions into account. The dissertation aims to initiate discussions and provide thoughts and ideas concerning how a growth-independent tourism could look like. The results from the paper about social innovation and agency imply that the types of agency that were found throughout the whole social innovation development process could also be expected to transform tourism towards growth independence. It was hypothesised that of the three agencies, particularly institutional entrepreneurship is needed to implement the entrepreneurial decisions that were made in growth independence inducing social innovations for transforming tourism towards growth independence.

This dissertation was written as part of a project funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) including three PhD students and three supervisors. The project aimed at analysing social innovations in Swiss mountain regions and their contribution to shifting away from growth dependency in the tourism, construction and health care industries.

This dissertation takes an alternative perspective on innovation in mountain regions and innovation in tourism, namely through the lens of social innovation. It outlines a first approach how growth-independent tourism could look like. In doing so, the dissertation brings together the topics social innovation, tourism, and growth independence and provides entry points for future research on growth-independent tourism and in particular on the (transformative) impact of social innovation.

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This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of many people. I want to thank my supervisor, Heike Mayer. Her support has contributed to a great extent to this thesis. Heike infected me with her enthusiasm for economic geography during my bachelor-level studies and accompanied me in my personal and academic development. I would especially like to thank Heike for the numerous discussions, thoughts and feedback on research ideas and written manuscripts. I appreciate the way she was able to bring my work forward and motivate me to do another round of revision.

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Introduction

Mountain regions in Switzerland face manifold challenges related to the economy, society and environment. Starting with economic challenges, alpine regions are often considered peripheral and lagging behind regarding job opportunities, business attractiveness, and innovativeness (Peter et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Continuing with ecological challenges, mountain regions in Switzerland are confronted with massive consequences of climate change. If global greenhouse gas emissions continue increasing as they are today, the annual mean temperature in the alpine region is likely to increase by 2–4 °C by mid-century (NCCS, 2018). This will lead to an increase in the zero-degree limit (400 m to 650 m by 2050) and to winters with less snow. In particular, winter tourism in lower regions will be difficult to sustain (Nicholls, 2016). Tourism has recognised these challenges, and in the last few years, has implemented adaptation measures to meet the most urgent challenges (e.g., artificial snow, expansion to the summer season, etc.) (Müller & Lehmann-Friedli, 2011; Müller & Weber, 2008; Pütz et al., 2011). Conversely, tourism is not only affected by climate change but also contributes to climate change, with an estimated 8% of global CO2 emissions (Lenzen et al., 2018). Further negative consequences of tourism in Switzerland include its contribution to massive resource consumption and to a few overcrowded places (Gössling & Peeters, 2015; Lenzen et al., 2018; Siegert, 2022).

However, abolishing tourism to save the planet and to get rid of the negative consequences would be short-sighted, given the immense human desire to travel and the massive economic importance of tourism in mountain regions. As an example, in the Swiss mountain region, tourism is responsible for approximately 16% of direct jobs. In addition, there are approximately 11% indirect jobs. Thus, every fourth job in the alpine region is directly or indirectly dependent on tourism (Rütter & Rütter-Fischbacher, 2016). What remains is to rethink tourism, especially after COVID-19, a discussion on how tourism can be more sustainable and resilient (OECD, 2020) or how to transform tourism to be more social, ecological and just emerged (Everingham & Chassagne, 2020; Fletcher et al., 2021; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Furthermore, the ongoing growth of tourism has been questioned by the literature on degrowth in tourism even before COVID-19 (Fletcher et al., 2021; Hall, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). However, this literature remains on a general level for tourism and does not consider regions and actors in tourism.

In this dissertation, aspects of growth-independent tourism in mountain regions are presented and discussed. In doing so, the dissertation uses the concepts of social innovation and considers regional development beyond economic growth (Coenen & Morgan, 2020). Regional development is understood to contribute to social, political and noneconomic and alternative value orientations and therefore goes beyond the traditional notion of (economic) growth (Martin, 2021; Moulaert, 2009; Pike et al., 2007). Considering regional development, social innovation is discussed as contributing to regional development by solving regional challenges (Moulaert et al., 2013), empowerment (Murray et al., 2010), and creating new relations among different actors (Moulaert and MacCallum, 2019), without necessarily having an economic impetus (Neumeier, 2012). They can be defined as new forms of cooperation with a positive impact on society (Ayob et al., 2016; van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016; Van Dyck & Van den Broeck, 2013). Thus, social innovations might have the potential to contribute to growth-independent regional development, where a society (in a region or locality), including its economy and its institutions,

can continue to fulfil its functions without being existentially dependent on economic growth (Schmelzer & Vetter, 2019; Seidl, 2021; Seidl & Zahrnt, 2010).

An additional factor is the discussion of how such a transformation towards growth-independent tourism can be influenced. To induce a regional development path transformation, it is argued that agency, referred to as the social actors and their activities (Pel et al., 2020; Suitner et al., 2022; Torre et al., 2020), plays a crucial role. In doing so, agency can influence existing institutions and regional development paths (Wijk et al., 2019). On the one hand, social innovation is considered important for regional development beyond economic growth, and on the other hand, agency is considered important for changing existing development paths. In this dissertation, it is analysed whether agency can be found in social innovation and, if so, what kind of agency this would be.

To date, the context of tourism in mountain regions, in particular the need for rethinking tourism, the concept of social innovation, and the relation to regional development, have been introduced. This dissertation aims to connect the topics of social innovation, growth independence, and tourism, particularly growth-independent tourism and discuss them all together. In doing so, the following research questions will be asked:

- What can we learn from growth-independent inducing social innovation for tourism actors operating in growth-independent tourism?
- What would a growth-independent model of tourism look like on the level of the tourism actors?
- What role can change agency in social innovation play in growth-independent tourism?
- How could social innovation be supported by policy?

These research questions are addressed in synthesising and discussing the findings from four individual papers encompassing this dissertation. This dissertation has two goals. First, it aims to widen the discussion and understanding of innovation in tourism, including social innovation. Second, it aims to nudge the discussion for growth-independent tourism on an actor-specific level. The next chapter will provide information about the context in which this dissertation is written and embedded.

1.1 Context of the dissertation

This dissertation is embedded in a SNSF-Project entitled 'Social Innovations in Swiss Mountain Regions: Shifting Away from Growth Dependency in the Tourism, Construction and Health care Industries'. The project started in November 2018 with three PhD students and three supervisors (see Table 1). The three PhD students worked together on the topic of social innovation and growth dependence, and they worked individually on one of the three industries, namely, health care, construction and tourism. The case study region was the Bernese Oberland as a mountainous area. The primary output of the projects was three dissertations, of which this is one.

Table 1: Organisation of the team working on the project

PhD-Student	Pascal Tschumi	Andrea Winiger	Samuel Wirth
Supervisor	Heike Mayer	Irmi Seidl	Monika Bandi
Industry	Health care industry	Construction industry	Tourism

At the very beginning, the whole team agreed on a definition of social innovation and created an inventory of social innovations in the Bernese Oberland. The first analysis of social innovation was made in papers I and II and was written in a team by all PhD students and two out of three supervisors. The papers focused on social innovation and growth independent regional development. The industries were not part of the analysis at this point. Afterwards, the three PhD students focused their research on a particular industry. Pascal analysed social innovation in the health care industry. He conducted innovation biographies and focused mainly on knowledge and agency. Andrea shifted her focus away from social innovation because there were only a few social innovations in the construction industry. She focused instead on growth independence strategies from companies in the construction industry, conducting narrative and semi-structured interviews.

1.2 Article overview & structure of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of four articles on the topic of social innovation, growth independence, and tourism. Table 2 presents an overview of the dissertation's articles, showing titles, authorship, research questions, and status of publication. The following section will briefly summarise the articles and embed them in the topics encompassed in this dissertation.

Article I is embedded in the topic of social innovation and growth independence. The potential growth effects (economic growth stimulation and economic growth independence) of the social innovations were investigated using specially developed indicators. The article elaborated 20 indicators of growth independence and 19 indicators of growth stimulation from the literature on drivers of enterprise growth (Gebauer et al., 2017; Mewes & Gebauer, 2015; Posse, 2015; Richters & Siemoneit, 2019) and on strategies of nongrowing enterprises (Liesen et al., 2013; Posse, 2015). We assessed which indicators could potentially apply to which social innovation. From this, we received two ideal types of social innovations with potential growth effects. The ideal type, on the side of growth independence, encompassed the following four main

characteristics: little or interest-free outside capital, minimal advertising expenditure, and close ties between producers, consumers, suppliers, and short and regional value chains. The ideal type on the side of growth stimulation encompassed the following three characteristics: economic growth goals, advertising expenditure for commercial products, and spatially dispersed value chains. These findings contribute to providing a differentiated view of social innovation and economic growth. Furthermore, the article formed the basis for a detailed analysis of growth independence-inducing social innovation in article II.

Article II is embedded in the topic of social innovation and growth independence. Seven growth independence-inducing social innovations were analysed in detail. The article examined the social innovations according to their growth independence indicators. The results showed that social innovations can contribute to economic growth independence through entrepreneurial decisions that foster (re-)localisation, de-commercialisation, low capital intensity, and self-governance. These findings contribute to a wider understanding of innovation in rural contexts by showing how social innovations contribute to local/regional development by addressing regional challenges and promoting economic growth independence. Articles I and II focused more on social innovation and growth independence than on the three industries.

Article III is embedded in the topic of social innovation and tourism. The article examined social innovation processes in tourism and focused on the success factors around the so-called tipping point and the role of the actors involved in the social innovation process. We conducted innovation biographies (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016) of seven social innovations in the Bernese Oberland region and conducted 29 narratives and guided interviews with the actors involved in the social innovations. The results showed that social innovations that overcame the tipping point fulfilled three conditions. First, new actors joined the social innovations in the operating phase. Second, all the actors involved benefitted from the social innovation for their own business strategy. Third, the social innovation was accepted in the region and among the actors involved and did not face strong headwinds. These findings contribute to the discussion on actors and innovation processes of innovation in tourism. Furthermore, the innovation biographies formed the basis for further analysis of the agency in social innovation processes in article IV.

Article IV is embedded in the topic of social innovation and tourism. In this article, we examined the role of change agency in social innovations in tourism and health care industry. We applied the trinity of change agency concept to investigate the detailed activities of social innovation actors throughout the phases of social innovation processes. The article examined the activities of the actors involved in eleven social innovations and investigated the change agency. The findings showed that change agency is highly present in social innovation and that the significance of change agency alters throughout the innovation process. Furthermore, we found that all kinds of actors performed the types of change agency and that the same actors performed different types of change agency during the social innovation process. This article adopted the trinity of change agency concept for social innovation, contributing to the discussion on the potential effect that social innovation may have in changing regional development paths and perhaps even regional transformation.

Table 2: Overview of the dissertation's articles

Article number and title	Authorship	Research questions	Status
I. Growth independence through social innovations? An analysis of potential growth effects of social innovations in a Swiss mountain region[1]	Pascal Tschumi, Andrea Winiger, Samuel Wirth, Heike Mayer, Irmi Seidl	- What are the potential economic growth effects of social innovations in the Bernese Oberland region?	published in: B. Lange, Martina Hülz, B. Schmid, & C. Schulz (Eds.), Post-Growth Geographies: Spatial Relations of Diverse and Alternative Economies (pp. 115–135). transcript Verlag.
II. How do social innovations contribute to growth-independent territorial development? Case studies from a Swiss mountain region	Heike Mayer, Pascal Tschumi, Romario Perren, Irmi Seidl, Andrea Winiger, Samuel Wirth	- In what ways do social innovation actors take and implement strategic orientations that foster economic growth independence? - In what ways do these entrepreneurial actors perceive the impact of their initiatives in terms of economic growth independence? - In what ways do social innovations contribute to growth-independent territorial development?	published in: Die Erde, 152(4), 218–231. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.12854/erde-2021-592
III. Social innovations in tourism: Analysing processes, actors, and tipping points	Samuel Wirth, Heike Mayer, Monika Bandi	- How are social innovations in tourism develop? - What is the role of the actors' involved, especially in overcoming a tipping point?	published online: 15 Dec 2022. In Tourism Geographies. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2022.2155697
IV. Change agency in social innovation: an analysis of activities in social innovation processes	Samuel Wirth, Pascal Tschumi, Heike Mayer, Monika Bandi	- What types of change agency are performed in social innovation processes? - In which ways are these types of change agency performed and by whom?	Accepted, in publishing process in Regional Studies, Regional Science. https://doi.org/10.1080/21681376.2022.2157324

[1] This paper was originally published in German titled “Wachstumsabhängigkeit durch Soziale Innovationen? Eine Analyse potenzieller Wachstumswirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen im Schweizer Berggebiet.” In B. Lange, M. Hülz, B. Schmid, & C. Schulz (Eds.), Postwachstumsgeographien. Raumbezüge diverser und alternativer Ökonomien (pp. 117–137). transcript Verlag. (See annex for full paper)

None of the articles dealt with social innovation, growth independence, and tourism together. Therefore, I will bring these three topics together in this dissertation. In doing so, the theoretical chapters will introduce the concept of social innovation and will provide detailed information about (social) innovation in tourism and about degrowth in tourism. Chapter 3 presents the methodology and the tourism context in Bernese Oberland. Chapter 4 presents and summarises the four articles. Then, the basis is provided to link and discuss the three themes of social innovation, tourism and growth independence in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, I draw a conclusion, reflect on the research, and identify some limitations to the research.

2 Theoretical Background

This section begins by summarising the theoretical background of social innovation. It will then consider the context of tourism and summarise social innovation in tourism and innovation in tourism. It will then go on to the literature on degrowth and tourism.

2.1 Social innovations

Definitions and understandings of social innovation differ widely in the literature. This may be because various disciplines, such as transformation studies, sociology, regional science or business administration, use their own definitions (Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017). Meta-analyses of the social innovation literature suggest that there are different research streams (Ayob et al. 2016; Edwards-Schachter and Wallace 2017; van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016). One of these streams encompasses a societal impact dimension of social innovation. According to this literature, social innovation creates societal value and meets social needs (Mulgan, 2006; Mulgan et al., 2007). This can be exemplified by the definition of Pol and Ville (2009), who define social innovation as the potential to improve either the quality or the quantity of life. The development of social innovation in this stream is mainly conducted by actors whose purposes are primarily social (Ayob et al., 2016; Mulgan et al., 2007). The literature related to this stream focuses on societal outcomes. Another stream focuses on new forms of social relations leading to social innovation (e.g. Franz et al., 2012; Mumford, 2002). For example, Mumford (2002) takes an organisational perspective and regards social innovations as new ideas about how social relations and social organisation can be shaped to achieve a common goal. The literature related to this stream focuses on the social process perspective.

Howaldt et al., (2010) highlighted an emerging trend to connect the two presented streams into one. In doing so, the societal impact and the social process perspective are merged into a single concept such that new forms of social relations lead to innovation, which in turn leads to societal impact (Howaldt et al. 2010). This stream includes the literature that focuses on local development, in which social innovation is defined as having a positive impact on society, addressing social challenges, empowering people and altering social relations (Moulaert et al., 2005, 2013). For a rural context, social innovations are discussed as solutions for challenges such as depopulation or an aging society (Bock, 2016) without necessarily having an economic impact (Neumeier, 2012). Focusing more on the aspect of empowerment, social innovation became a focus on civil society to satisfy basic human needs (Moulaert, 2009). The clearest example of merging the two streams into one can be shown by (Murray et al., 2010), according to whom social innovations are defined as

> *"innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means. Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words, they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act." (Murray et al., 2010, p. 3)*

Due to the debate on societal outcomes, social innovation has become a normative discourse (Ayob et al., 2016; Moulaert et al., 2017). At the very beginning of this dissertation, we tried to avoid the normative aspect and focused instead on the social process perspective. Our working definition included a stringent requirement in the first sentence of the definition and a possible requirement in the second sentence. Specifically, our working definition, based on Ayob et al. (2016), was as follows:

> *"A social innovation consists of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organisations that lead to new ideas, of which the implementation is at least considered. In regional development, such innovations can have a positive impact on society, improve the quality of life and/or change social or power relations."*

2.2 Social innovation in tourism

Social innovation has gained increased attention in the academic literature, but its application in the tourism literature has still been limited (Batle et al., 2018). In the tourism literature, social innovation in tourism can be distinguished into four different research streams. In one stream, social innovation in tourism is discussed as community-driven innovation. It is argued that the community that lives in the region is involved or even leads the innovation process. Often, this social innovation aims to tackle a regional challenge through community participation (e.g. Antošová et al., 2020; Piñeiro-Antelo & Lois-González, 2019). Furthermore, social innovation in tourism focusing on the community also involves the community in co-creation (Martini et al., 2017) or includes the community in planning common development strategies for tourism destinations (Malek & Costa, 2015). In doing so, local communities are involved in the creation of innovative appropriate development strategies as key agents in the decision-making and planning of tourism destinations to ensure positive local attitudes and improvement in communities' quality of life (Malek & Costa, 2015). This stream includes the social outcome and societal process perspective presented in the previous chapter.

Another stream discusses social innovation in tourism as a new business model that brings an economic benefit to innovating actors and also contributes to solving social challenges and contributing to societal well-being (Aksoy et al., 2019). For tourism, this is often connected with the concept of tourism social entrepreneurship (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabet, 2016; Alkier et al., 2017), which means that entrepreneurs better meet the needs of guests and contribute to societal well-being. Innovation seeks not only profit but also societal and societal challenges (Aksoy et al. 2019). Tourism entrepreneurs minimise the negative consequences that tourism provides to the host community. This literature argues that tourism social entrepreneurship may lead to sustainable community development (Aquino et al., 2018). Tourism social entrepreneurs are seen as practitioners in social innovation understood as creating social values (Walker & Chen, 2019), including marginalised individuals in the community development process and solving social problems (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabet, 2016). Therefore, social innovation can be considered a strategy for tourism social entrepreneurship. This can be exemplified by a youth hostel in which 99% of the employees have a disability (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabet, 2016). This stream focuses on the social outcome perspective.

In a third stream, the literature discusses services as the core of social innovation. This literature argues that services demand interactions between suppliers and users and are, therefore, a co-production in a societal context (Gallouj et al., 2018). Therefore, the societal process

perspective in social innovation is already met. Furthermore, social innovations in services often consist of new or improved services with a social goal (Djellal & Gallouj, 2011). Therefore, the social outcome perspective of social innovation is fulfilled. The literature concludes that the service industry is a promising field to study social innovation (Gallouj et al., 2018; Garrone et al., 2018; Rubalcaba, 2016).

In a fourth stream, social innovation in tourism is discussed as a process of collaborative innovations (Sørensen, 2007). Related to this sharing economy, platforms such as Airbnb and couch surfing could, in their initial mode, also be considered social innovations because they consist of collaborations and create social capital through sharing (Martin et al., 2015; Molz, 2013). In this stream, the focus lies on the social relation aspect of social innovation and especially on creating social capital rather than a societal outcome.

The understanding of social innovation in this dissertation is most similar to the first stream. Compared to streams two and three, this dissertation adopts a broader understanding of the outcome of social innovation. Stream two focused on new business models as a central aspect of social innovation, and stream three focused on services (with a social goal) at its core. Compared to stream four, social capital as a central element is not that important in this dissertation.

2.3 Innovation in tourism

Research on innovation in tourism has been conducted from different perspectives and scientific fields. In general, three major review papers are relevant to tourism research (Pikkemaat et al., 2019). These papers are Hjalager (2010), who provided a comprehensive literature analysis of innovation in tourism, Gomezelj (2016), who provided the first systematic literature analysis, and Marasco et al., (2018), who provided a systematic literature review on collaborative innovation in tourism and hospitality. The next section in this dissertation will consider a business perspective and an economic geographical perspective on innovation in tourism. First, the business literature on innovation in tourism will be quickly summarised. Afterwards, the literature on innovation and tourism from an economic geographical perspective will be discussed.

From a business perspective, tourism enterprises are considered non-innovative for four reasons. First, the structure of tourism enterprises is dominated by small and medium-sized businesses, with lower capacity and financial resources to innovate (Sundbo, 2001). Second, tourism spends no, or a very limited amount of, money on research and development (Sundbo, 1998). Third, the tasks in daily business are very time-consuming; therefore, there is no or only limited time left to innovate or to deal with public funding instruments that would support innovation (Mattsson et al., 2005). Fourth, innovation in services is easy to imitate and hard to protect (Sundbo et al., 2007). One of the most cited literature reviews of innovation research in tourism concluded four major forms of innovation: product or service innovation (e.g., adding a summer season to a winter sports destination), process innovation (e.g., new information technology systems to facilitate automatic check-in), management/marketing innovation (e.g., the development of loyalty programs) and institutional innovation (e.g., the development of strategic alliances between airlines and hotels) (Hjalager, 2010). Furthermore, studies on innovation in tourism only focus on a specific actor group, e.g., the hotel industry (Orfila-Sintes et al., 2005).

However, much of this work does not consider spatial context and actors' embeddedness. An economic geography perspective tends to emphasise the embeddedness of tourism enterprises and entrepreneurial behaviour that is influenced by a spatial context and vice versa (Gibson, 2008; Hall & Page, 2009). Furthermore, an economic geography perspective often includes the roles of entrepreneurship in innovation processes in tourism (Debbage, 2019). Strategic networks beyond the boundaries of enterprises play a major role in shaping innovation processes (Shaw & Williams, 2009). In particular, the spatial proximity of enterprises is essential in developing strong levels of trust and common values (Shaw & Williams, 2009). Furthermore, external networks between the tourism industry, government and academia, and strategic partnerships with other industries were highly relevant for tourism innovation, but local embeddedness remained crucial for developing local core competencies and for tourism enterprise survival (Booyens & Rogerson, 2016). However, these (local) networks seemed to be relatively weak (Sørensen, 2007), and to understand the competitiveness of tourism enterprises and tourism destinations, further investigation on innovation needs to be done (Shaw & Williams, 2009). It can be concluded that innovation in tourism consists of an embedded process that influences and is influenced by local development. This dissertation considered the embeddedness of (social) innovation processes, which is in line with the evolutionary economic geography literature. Evolutionary economic geographers argue that tourism should be considered in the context of a region's development, its local community, and the development of other industries (Ioannides & Brouder, 2016). However, the literature defines innovation differently, depending on the research focus and the academic field (Pikkemaat et al., 2019). One of the spare papers considering innovation as developed in a network and clearly focusing on different types of innovation is Trunfio and Campana (2020). They considered co-evolutionary processes for innovation and distinguished between technology-driven and social-driven innovation. The traditional tourism innovation approach adopts the technology-driven perspective and neglects the complexity of the destination in which diverse actors interact (Trunfio and Campana, 2019). The interaction of the diverse actors in the destination includes factors of local contexts in which innovations are developed, namely, economic, social, and political factors (Kuščer et al., 2017). One of the research challenges is to overcome the limitations of the technology-driven approach (van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016) and make use of the connection between technological and societal changes (Paget et al., 2010). Trunfio & Campana (2019) deal with this challenge by distinguishing between technology-driven innovation and social-driven innovation. Furthermore, they included local destination management organisations, local communities, local firms, and institutional and political actors as drivers of (social) innovation. The research showed that innovation is developed in processes embedded in the spatial context and in which public and private actors, including the local community, are interacting in a co-evolutionary process (Baggio & Cooper, 2010; Carvalho & Costa, 2011; Flagestad et al., 2005; Gomezelj, 2016; Ozseker, 2019; Trunfio & Campana, 2019). This dissertation considered the diversity of actors included in innovation processes and contributed to the literature in focusing on social innovation.

2.4 Degrowth in tourism

On a global scale, it is usually highlighted that tourism causes massive problems among the following: pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions, unsustainable levels of resource consumption, causing social problems such as gentrification, and precarious low-wage jobs

(Lenzen et al., 2018; Mowforth & Munt, 2016). Meanwhile, tourism is an important economic industry that in pre-pandemic times contributed 10.3% of the global economy GDP and generated 333 million jobs worldwide (WTTC, 2022). Furthermore, tourism is seen as a tool for regional and local economic growth with a huge potential to contribute to sustainable development goals (SDGs) (Hall, 2019; UNWTO, 2006). However, there are significant concerns about the local and regional benefits of the global tourism industry, particularly with the dominant power of multinational tourism companies (Hall, 2008; Saarinen et al., 2011). The COVID-19 crisis was discussed as having the potential to transform tourism towards a more social and sustainable form of tourism (e.g. Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020) or even degrowing tourism (Butcher, 2021; Everingham & Chassagne, 2020; Ioannides & Gyimóthy, 2020; Prideaux et al., 2020). The discussion on degrowing tourism is hardly new; even before the pandemic, a discussion on degrowing tourism was taking place (Fletcher et al., 2019; Hall, 2009; Milano et al., 2019). Today, however, the dominant discourse is tourism as an engine of economic growth and development on the national tourism authority level (Becken, 2019), the tourism enterprises and the tourism academy itself (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles & Everingham, 2022).

One of the first who linked tourism to a larger degrowth movement was Hall (2009). He called for steady-state tourism, which means ensuring qualitative development in tourism but without growth in the throughput of matter and energy beyond regenerative and absorptive capacities (Hall, 2009). In doing so, he distinguished between two approaches. The first approach was on the production side and sought to reduce the rate of raw materials by using materials more efficiently (efficiency approach). The second approach was on the consumption side and includes consumer activism as well as industry and public policy initiatives to reduce the quantity of consumption. Today, the belief that greater efficiency would be able to solve problems caused by tourism must be questioned (Hall, 2019). Higgins-Desbiolles et al., (2019) called for a more socialised form of tourism with a community-centred approach. They argued that tourism should be redefined in a way that the rights of the local communities are prioritised above the rights of tourist and the rights of international companies to make profits (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). To do so, they outlined eight interdependent steps to a degrowth transition and called for a whole reorientation of values towards a justified form of tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019):

- Re-evaluate and shift values
- Re-conceptualize conceptualise entrenched capitalist concepts
- Restructure production
- Redistribute at the global, regional and local scales
- Re-localise the economy
- Reduce, reuse and recycling of resources

Büscher and Fletcher (2017) proposed, on a theoretical base, that tourism should move radically from a private activity to a common activity that contributes to the common good and is founded by the community. They concluded that tourism transformation is embedded in a broader degrowth movement and is not isolated by itself (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017; Schneider et al., 2010). Fletcher (2019) later expanded on this and suggested that proper postcapitalist tourism would encompass the following four characteristics: “(1) forms of production [are] not based

on private appropriation of surplus value; and (2) forms of exchange [are] not aimed at capital accumulation; that (3) fully internalise the environmental and social costs of production in a manner that does not promote commodification and (4) are grounded in common property regimes" (Fletcher, 2019, p. 532). Tourism should move radically from a private activity to one founded in and that contributes to the common good. Overall, the current literature on degrowth in tourism calls for a fundamental system change towards a more sustainable, just and equal form of global tourism (Fletcher, 2019; Fletcher et al., 2019, 2021). The next paragraph will show some ways in which the degrowth-oriented literature in tourism relates to the social innovation literature.

As mentioned in Chapter 2.1, social innovation may not necessarily have an economic impetus (Neumeier, 2012), and social innovation does not equal regional/local economic growth (Sousa & De Fátima Ferreiro, 2020). Rather, regional development is understood in a broader context, and social innovation can lead to broader social, political and even non-economic and alternative value-oriented outcomes (Martin, 2021; Moulaert, 2009; Pike et al., 2007). Furthermore, social innovation may imply an improvement for the community (Moulaert, 2009), as it also implies a degrowth-oriented tourism (e.g. Fletcher et al., 2021). Therefore, in this dissertation, I argue that social innovation could and should also be considered in the discussion on degrowth in tourism. Furthermore, the tourism literature remains on an abstract systemic level and does not consider what degrowth-oriented tourism would look like at the actor level (Fletcher et al., 2019). To address this research gap, I discuss the findings from growth-independent social innovations for degrowth-oriented tourism in Chapter 5.1. In the next section, the meaning of growth independence is clarified.

2.5 Clarification of growth independence

The concept of growth independence refers to the ability of a society and its economy to fulfil its functions and enable a good life for all without being existentially dependent on economic growth. This concept envisages resource consumption and pollution levels within planetary boundaries (Schmelzer & Vetter, 2019; Seidl & Zahrnt, 2010, 2021). As long as these conditions are fulfilled, it is irrelevant to the concept of whether the economy will continue to grow (Seidl & Zahrnt, 2019; Seidl & Zahrnt, 2021). In the broader degrowth debate, growth independence is a common goal of various streams encompassing the degrowth literature (Schmelzer & Vetter, 2019, p. 185 ff.). Therefore, in the following, I will discuss growth independence and growth independence induction. Growth independence counts not only at the actor level (e.g., company), a system level (e.g., tourism), and a regional level (e.g., Bernese Oberland) but also for society.

3 Methodology

At the very beginning of this dissertation, the project team generated a comprehensive inventory of social innovation in the Bernese Oberland. Out of this inventory, social innovations were chosen and analysed in detail through innovation biographies. This chapter first summarises how we developed the inventory, then presents the selection criteria for the social innovation we analysed and the methodology of innovation biography. It then provides some short information on the policy for mountain regions in Switzerland and on the context of tourism in Bernese Oberland.

3.1 Inventory of social innovation in the Bernese Oberland

The development of a comprehensive inventory of social innovation in the Bernese Oberland is described in paper I. This section provides additional information about the operationalisation of the working definition and the reasons for choosing the Bernese Oberland as the case study region. According to our working definition, we distinguished between mandatory requirements for social innovation and additional characteristics of social innovation. The mandatory requirement in our definition was that social innovation consisted of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organisations that lead to new ideas. The additional characteristics of social innovation were given by the second part of the definition, namely, "in regional development, such innovations can have a positive impact on society, improve the quality of life and/or change social or power relations." If a social innovation appeared to have a positive impact on society, it fulfilled addition I; if a social innovation could possibly change power relations, it fulfilled addition II[2]. In sum, 23 evaluation criteria derived from the literature were applied.

Conducting an inventory in Bernese Oberland made sense because the region was representative of the heterogeneous structure of Swiss mountain regions, which included urban, rural and remote areas. Furthermore, adopting cantonal boundaries for the inventory ensured the same cantonal regulations and policies for every social innovation. Moreover, we were acquainted with this region and had a dense network of contacts that we could exploit. The inventory of social innovation formed the basis for the further selection of the social innovations studied in detail.

3.2 Selection criteria for the social innovation studied in detail

In our first publication, we analysed the potential growth effects for each of the 68 social innovations. In paper II, seven out of 68 social innovations were analysed in detail through 13 semi-structured interviews with the social innovation actors. These seven social innovations were those with the largest potential growth independence effects that resulted from the first publication. For paper III, seven, but different from paper II, out of 68 social innovations were analysed in detail. The detailed analysis consisted of the methodology of innovation biographies (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016). In doing so, 31 narrative and semi-structured interviews with a length of 30 to 95 minutes were conducted. The selection criteria for the seven social innovations were that they were developed in the Bernese Oberland and after 2008[3]. Furthermore, social innovation had to be a touristic offer, and/or touristic actors had to be involved in the

[2] The discussion on limitation of the use of this definition is discussed in Chapter 6.1.5.

[3] In 2008 the NRP was established. To avoid biases from different politics, we excluded in the detailed analysis, social innovations from before the new policy.

development process. With this condition, it was ensured that tourist social innovations were researched[4]. Finally, the social innovation had to exist at the moment of starting the research. For paper IV, the biographical data from the social innovations from paper III were analysed with a focus on change agency. Furthermore, the paper included four additional social innovation biographies from social innovations from the health care industry. For paper IV, we referred to data from 11 social innovations.

3.3 Innovation biographies

For papers III and IV, we conducted innovation biographies, which allowed the study of time-space dynamics and development processes from a micro-level perspective. The principle was to follow an innovation process over time by analysing the activities and interactions of the actors and by applying an open, inductive approach to data analyses (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016). This means taking up the social innovations' development process from the initial idea to implementation and operation. At the heart of the methodology lay a narrative interview with a central person from a social innovation. The central person knew the development process in all its details. For the narrative interview, it was important to provide a narrative corridor so that the interviewee knew that he or she could tell the story and the interviewer just listened to it (Bohnsack et al., 2018; Butzin et al., 2013, p. 132). Out of a first narrative interview, a first draft of the biography was made, and additional actors were identified. The additional actors were identified according to the interviewees' statements through snowball sampling. With these additional actors, we performed further narrative and semi-structured interviews. Finally, the biography was enriched with document analysis and desktop research. As a main challenge of innovation biography, Butzin et al. (2012) named the lack of willingness to provide detailed information about the innovation from the actor side. This held especially true for high technological innovation, for which protection promises a comparative advantage for firms. However, this was not a limitation in our case. This could have been because tourism innovations are highly visible and easy to imitate per se (Sundbo et al., 2007). For our cases, one of the challenges was to find sufficient people who had detailed knowledge about the social innovation process. Furthermore, in two cases, only a few actors were involved in the innovation process, which was a very linear process. Therefore, even after three interviews, enough data were collected so that the biography could be drawn. In two other cases, where the process was much more complicated, two interviews with the same person were necessary to gather all the information that was needed for a comprehensive biography. Further methodological limitations are presented in Chapter 6.1.3.

3.4 Policy context for mountain regions in Switzerland

The case study region of this dissertation was the mountain region of Bernese Oberland. Swiss mountain regions are facing major challenges, such as out-migration and brain drain, ageing, diminishing public service, a shortage of skilled workers, and an increasing number of vacant buildings, all of which have led to economic and social destabilisation of mountain communities

[4] For a detailed discussion on the typology of touristic and nontouristic social innovation, see the publication entitled "Touristische Soziale Innovationen – Begriff und Phänomen am Beispiel Berner Oberland." In S. Brandl, B. Waldemar, M. Herntrei, G. C. Steckenbauer, & S. Lachmann-Falkner (Eds.), Tourismus und ländlicher Raum - Innovative Strategien und Instrumente für die Zukunftsgestaltung. Erich Schmidt Verlag. (See annex for full paper).

(Mayer & Meili, 2016). To face these challenges, Switzerland has a specific policy for mountain regions (NRP) with the goal of reducing disparities by increasing competitiveness (SECO, 2017). Furthermore, the government's tourism policy aims to improve entrepreneurial circumstances for tourism firms and support tourism entrepreneurship (Schweizerischer Bundesrat, 2022). In the Swiss Tourism Policy, the NRP is one out of four instruments[5]. Until now, the NRP and the tourism policy have focused strongly on economic growth and have not considered social innovation (Mayer et al., 2018). However, the NRP is currently under revision, and social innovation will be considered in the next period beginning in 2024 (SECO, 2022).
In this dissertation, some of the results presented in Chapter 4 will be discussed with implications for policy, particularly how policy could support the development of social innovation (Chapter 5.4).

3.5 Tourism in the Bernese Oberland

Bernese Oberland encompasses the alpine parts of the canton of Bern in Switzerland. It includes the regions around Lake Thun, Lake Brienz and the regions of the canton to the south of them.

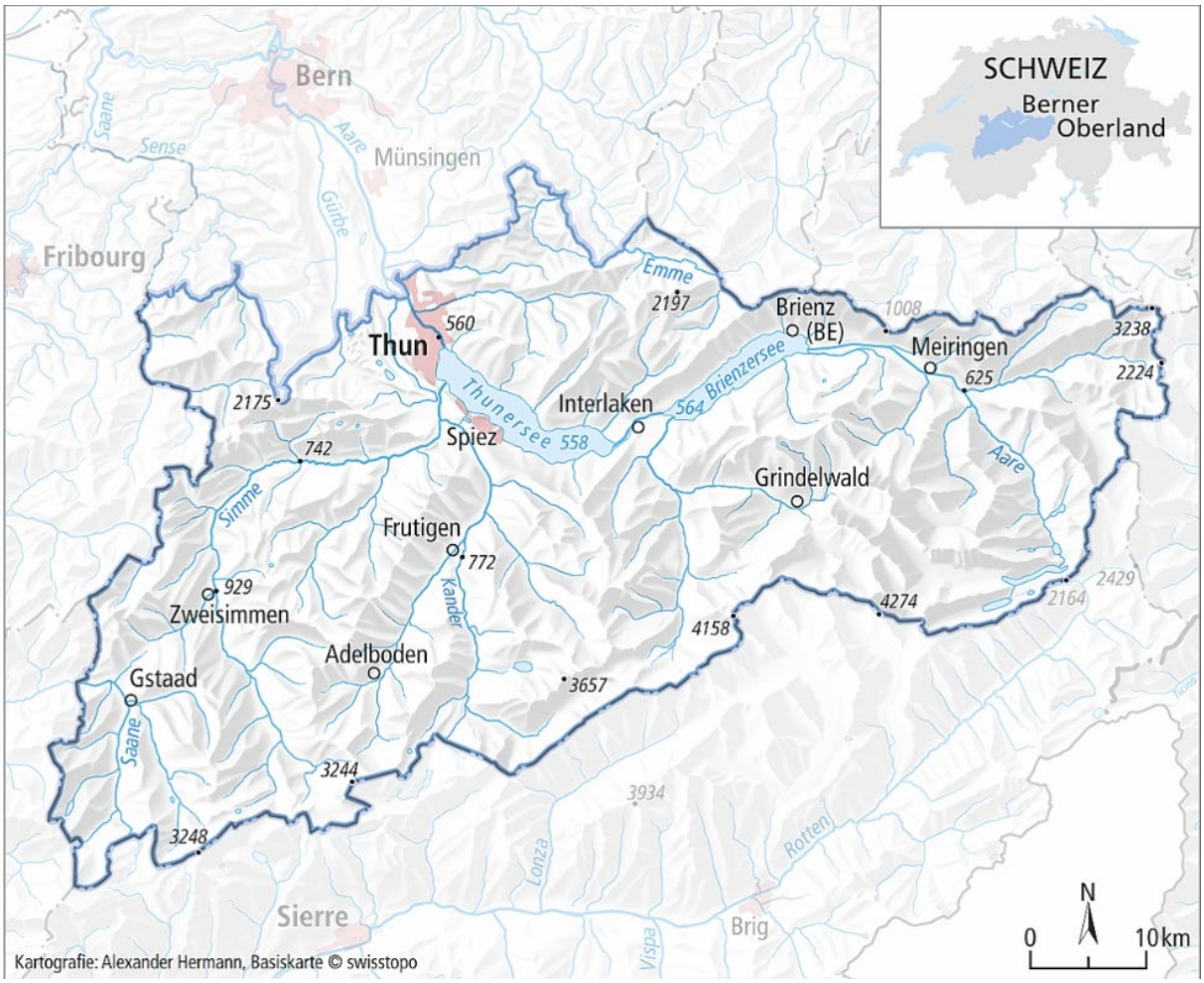

Figure 1: Map of the Bernese Oberland (Alexander Hermann)

[5] Swiss tourism policy has four instruments for the implementation of the tourism policy: Promotion of Innovation, Cooperation and Knowledge in Tourism (Innotour), Switzerland Tourism, Swiss Association for Hotel Credit (SGH), New Regional Policy (NRP).

Bernese Oberland is characterised by the three mountains of Eiger (3967 m), Mönch (4,107 m) and Jungfrau (4,158 m), which are a great attraction for tourists. Since the late 18th century, these mountains and the surrounding region of Thun, Interlaken and the Lauterbrunnen valley have been tourist attractions, especially for people from England (Wäber, 1904). Today, the region is highly dependent on tourism, and in the Bernese Oberland, more than a quarter of employment is generated directly or indirectly by tourism. For the Jungfrau Region around Grindelwald and Region Gstaad Saanenland, approximately 50% of workplaces are involved in tourism or are tourism related (Rieser et al., 2018). In 2016, tourism generated 7% (Region of Interlaken) up to 24% (Region of Jungfrau) of GDP. In contrast, in the canton of Bern, tourism generated 6% of GDP (Rieser et al., 2018). Furthermore, the number of guests in the region is another important figure that shows the importance of tourism in Bernese Oberland. Including overnight stays (9.5 mio.) and the number of daytime visitors (12.5 mio.) together, the Bernese Oberland generated approximately 22 mio. frequencies in 2016. The distribution of daytime visitors and overnight stays differed for each region. From the lowest number of overnight stays to the highest, the regions are as follows: Region Adelboden, Lenk, Kandersteg 33% (1.8 mio.), Region Interlaken 43% (4 mio.), Region Gstaad Saanenland 44% (1.2 mio.), and Jungfrau Region 54% (2.4 mio.) (Rieser et al., 2018). The numbers show that tourism is important for Bernese Oberland and generates many jobs and high levels of income, especially in more decentralised regions such as the Jungfrau Region and Gstaad Saanenland. Furthermore, there are multiplier effects of tourism on other economic sectors (e.g., construction industry, retail). However, tourism also has negative impacts on the region. For the Interlaken Region, the following challenges were identified (Lehmann Friedli et al., 2018):

- Conflict potential due to visible and noticeable tourist growth at certain hotspots
- Concentration of individual groups of guests in certain months
- Emergence of conflict points due to cultural differences
- Ecological footprint of (international) guests versus the high level of sensitivity and awareness of the finiteness of natural resources among the population
- Increased real estate prices pose a risk of out-migration of the local population
- High dependence on tourism-related sectors/areas
- Population and tourism development can lead to capacity limits for infrastructures, settlement pressure and conflicting objectives
- Risk of dependencies due to the sale of hotels to foreign investors

Based on this contextual information about tourism in Bernese Oberland, it can be concluded that tourism brings both benefits and harms to the local community. Therefore, it can be argued that tourism development has to be in line with the local community and at its core is 'tourism awareness'[6] instead of 'tourism understanding'[7] (Bandi Tanner & Müller, 2021; Zenhäusern & Kadelbach, 2018). The inclusive understanding of "tourism awareness" can also be found in the concept of social innovation that is used in this dissertation and that focuses on the social aspect in developing social innovation, namely, a diverse set of actors ranging from the local community, firms, universities, to government.

[6] Tourism awareness expresses a holistic perception of tourism with all its advantages, disadvantages, and the consequences of the economic, social and ecological contexts (Bandi Tanner & Müller, 2021, p. 222).
[7] Tourism understanding can also be named as tourism competence and focused on the economic context and benefits (Bandi Tanner & Müller, 2021, p. 223).

4 Summary of the Results

This dissertation encompasses papers on the topic of social innovation, growth independence, and tourism. The aim of this dissertation is to discuss the implication of the findings in the four papers together and from an economic geography perspective. In doing so, the previous parts introduced the topics of social innovations, growth independence and tourism in the Bernese Oberland. Table 3 summarises the results from paper I to paper IV.

Table 3: Summary of the results in papers I to IV

Number and title	Results

I. Growth independence through social innovations? An analysis of potential growth effects of social innovations in a Swiss mountain region	- Social innovations with potential growth stimulating and growth independence effects exist in the Bernese Oberland.
	- Growth-including social innovation:
	  - Actors primarily pursue economic goals
	  - Commercial product or service
	  - Non-economic goals take a backseat.
	- Growth independence-inducing social innovation:
	  - Frequently involves private individuals
	  - Alternative forms of production and consumption
	  - Focuses on social and ecological goals
	  - Conventional economic goals are rarely present.

II. How do social innovations contribute to growth-independent territorial development? Case studies from a Swiss mountain region	- Social innovations may contribute to post-growth development at the local and regional level.
	- Social innovations were developed in response to socio-economic challenges and when the actors saw opportunities to fulfil socially desired values.
	- Actors in growth independence-inducing social innovations chose organisational forms and strategies such as:
	  - (Re-)localisation
	  - De-commercialisation
	  - Low capital
	  - Self-governance

III. Social innovations in tourism: Analysing processes, actors, and tipping points	- Developers, supporters, and promoters are important throughout the entire social innovation process.
	- Social innovations that overcame a tipping point fulfilled three conditions:
	  - new actors joined the social innovations in the operating phase
	  - all the actors involved benefitted from the social innovation for their own business strategy
	  - the social innovation was accepted in the region and among the actors involved

IV. Change agency in social innovation: an analysis of activities in social innovation processes	- Change agency altered throughout the social innovation process:
	  - Beginning: Innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership
	  - Implementation: Innovative entrepreneurship, place-based leadership, institutional entrepreneurship
	  - Operations: Innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership
	- The same actors performed activities related to different types of change agency
	- All kinds of actors, ranging from private individuals to tourism organisations to public policy actors to companies to associations, were involved in performing the types of change agency.

4.1 Paper I: Growth-independence through social innovations? An analysis of potential growth effects of social innovations in a Swiss mountain region

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Abstract: Social innovations are being increasingly discussed as solutions to the diverse challenges faced by rural, peripheral areas. However, the economic growth effects of social innovations are unclear. One of the open questions is whether social innovations trigger new growth in regions or contribute to growth independence. This paper seeks to fill this research gap. To this end, an inventory of social innovations in the Swiss mountain region of the Bernese Oberland has been compiled and the potential growth effects (economic growth stimulation and economic growth independence) of the social innovations were investigated using specially developed indicators. Ideal types of social innovations with particularly marked potential growth effects are presented as the results of the investigation.

Growth independence through social innovations?
An analysis of potential growth effects of social innovations in a Swiss mountain region

Pascal Tschumi, Andrea Winiger, Samuel Wirth, Heike Mayer, Irmi Seidl

Social innovations are being increasingly discussed as solutions to the diverse challenges faced by rural, peripheral areas. However, the economic growth effects of social innovations are unclear. One of the open questions is whether social innovations trigger new growth in regions or contribute to growth independence. This paper seeks to fill this research gap. To this end, an inventory of social innovations in the Swiss mountain region of the Bernese Oberland has been compiled and the potential growth effects (economic growth stimulation and economic growth independence) of the social innovations were investigated using specially developed indicators. Ideal types of social innovations with particularly marked potential growth effects are presented as the results of the investigation.

The analysis of social innovations and their growth effects is undertaken in the context of the social, economic and ecological challenges facing Swiss mountain regions. Out-migration is quite high in Swiss Alpine regions, amounting to about 11% of the population between 1981 and 2010 (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung, 2012). The consequence is an aging population. In the course of the Euro crisis that began in 2010 the Swiss franc increased in value so that revenue from European visitors sank noticeably (Müller-Jentsch, 2017). Furthermore, scarcity of building land for new infrastructure and buildings is increasing (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung, 2017). In addition, the maintenance of basic services is threatened, especially in the health sector (Cerny/Rosemann/Tandjung et al., 2016). Last but not least, the mountain regions are particularly strongly affected by the numerous consequences of climate change (Schmucki/Marty/Fierz et al., 2017).

Swiss regional policy aims to promote entrepreneurship and innovation with the help of regionally initiated projects and thus to counter the economic challenges (Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft, 2017). This policy takes an export-based approach, assuming that economic growth in a region is triggered by key sectors that serve external demand. However, this growth-oriented approach has its limitations. Not every region has a leading export sector or the potential to develop one, not least because Swiss mountain regions are socio-economically heterogeneous (Mayer/Rime/Meili et al., 2018). Furthermore, the probability of the revenue generated circulating in these regions sinks as the mobility of people and goods in the Alpine area increases (Segessemann/Crevoisier, 2016). The Swiss regional policy of the late 2010s accordingly lacked 'situationally adaptable (also non-economic) perspectives' (Peter/Rink/Forster et al., 2016: 6, translated from German).

This is the background against which social innovations are recommended as a solution to problems in peripheral and rural areas. Firstly, social innovations are proposed by representatives of EU organisations as a means of increasing economic growth in such areas (European Commission, 2017; Nicholls/Edmiston, 2018). Secondly, researchers like Dax and Fischer (2018: 297) and Dewald and Rother (2019) argue that future regional development approaches should extend beyond strategies that target growth to address local participation and social innovation. Social innovations could help regions to solve their problems (Bock, 2016; Neumeier, 2012), for instance by successfully implementing knowledge from outside the region (Noack/Federwisch, 2019). Post-growth authors emphasis the potential of social innovation initiatives to contribute to a (more) growth-independent society and economy and thus to (more) growth-independent regions (Elsen, 2014; Seidl/Zahrnt, 2022). Much discussed examples include local currencies, community housing projects or repair initiatives (Burkhart/Schmelzer/Treu, 2020; Habermann, 2009).

This brief insight into the academic discourses shows that social innovations are attributed with various impacts on regional growth. However, research on these impacts is not particularly advanced (Pelka/Terstriep, 2016: 13; Secco/Pisani/Da Re et al., 2019: 10) and the extent to which social innovations can stimulate regional growth or contribute towards growth independence remains unclear. This is the point which this chapter seeks to address. The research question on which it is based is: What are the potential economic growth effects of social innovations in the Bernese Oberland?

The Bernese Oberland is a mountainous area that lies north of the Swiss high Alpine region and has about 200,000 inhabitants in an area of circa 2,900 km^2. With around four million overnight stays a year, the tourism industry accounts for over 35% of gross domestic product (GDP) for many places (Rütter/Rütter-Fischbacher, 2016). International tourism has a long tradition here and has always followed a growth-oriented strategy (Ebneter/Liechti, 2019; von Rütte, 2007). The economic structure, the culture and public and private stakeholders are correspondingly influenced by the dominant role of tourism (Haisch, 2017: 221 f.). Developments within the region are by no means homogeneous. Tourist centres like the Jungfrau region and the municipalities of Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen and their surroundings are characterised by high and slightly growing volumes of overnight stays (with annual overnight stays amounting to almost one million) (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2018a). In Grindelwald the population is also growing slowly (2010 to 2016). This contrasts with the far east of the region where the number of overnight stays in the municipalities Meiringen and Hasliberg fell from 2013 to 2018 (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2018a). With the exception of the central municipality Meiringen, the population in the far east is declining (Bundesamt für Statistik, 2018b).

Social innovations and growth (in)dependence

Social innovations are the goal of many political programmes (Grimm/Fox/Baines et al., 2013) and the focus of newly founded research centres (e.g. Stanford Center for Social Innovation or Young Foundation). However, the definitions and understandings of social innovations in the literature are most diverse. This may be because the various disciplines – transformation research, sociology, regional sciences or economics – conduct research on social innovations using their own definitions (Edwards-Schachter/Wallace, 2017). Meta-analyses of social innovations confirm the different research streams (Ayob/Teasdale/Fagan, 2016; Edwards-Schachter/Wallace, 2017; van der Have/Rubalcaba, 2016). One important strand of research expects social innovations to have positive effects on society. In particular authors who focus on local development are well-known for this research, especially Moulaert and Mulgan. They view social innovations as solutions for social problems and as impulses for empowerment and for changes in social rela-

tions (Moulaert/MacCallum/Hiller, 2013; Mulgan/Tucker/Ali et al., 2007). Another strand of research revolves around the work of Franz, Hochgerner and Howaldt (2012) and adopts a sociological and more neutral perspective to the effects of social innovations, focusing primarily on changed social practices and relations. Mumford (2002) sees social innovations as providing new ideas about how social relations and social organisation could be structured to achieve a common goal. The creative process of generating and implementing innovation is the focus here, also within businesses. Overall, it can be noted that some definitions focus more on the innovation process while others concentrate on the results or effects of the innovation. This paper uses a definition that integrates the different orientations and draws on the bibliometric analysis by Ayob, Teasdale and Fagan (2016). The definition is as follows:

A social innovation consists of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organisations that lead to new ideas, of which the implementation is at least considered. In regional development, such innovations can have a positive impact on society, improve the quality of life and/or change social or power relations.

This definition allows for a rather broad understanding of social innovations and an open approach to the phenomenon under investigation. It is suitable for application to the Swiss mountain region with its multifaceted socio-economic structures, as social innovations do not only emerge in connection with the problems or challenges of this rural area but are also developed in response to economic growth opportunities.

The basic precondition for our definition of a social innovation – a new form of cooperation – is based on a sociological understanding that conceives of 'new' as extraordinary for the geographical area of investigation. For a social innovation, it is crucial that this new cooperation leads to a new idea, the implementation of which is at least considered (Ayob/Teasdale/Fagan, 2016). Furthermore, the definition includes two characteristics that describe the effect of a social innovation: first, a positive effect for society; second, the transformation of social relations and power relations.

In order to examine the link between social innovations and growth, relevant concepts of growth are clarified in the following. Enterprise growth refers to both growth in volumes of sales, production and orders and also growth in the financial profitability of an enterprise (turnover, profit, cashflow, return on investment). We understand enterprises as organisations

that pursue business practices, i.e. they create and exploit 'deliverables to cover third-party requirements with due regard to economic efficiency' (Lück, 1990, translated from German). This includes 'classical' companies but also associations, foundations and cooperatives. Regional growth primarily refers to the growth of regional gross domestic product, i.e. the total of regional value added. Growth independence is not understood as the opposite of growth, namely shrinking. We rather adopt the meaning established in the post-growth literature (see Schmelzer/Vetter, 2019: 158 f.; 171): the ability of a society including its economy and its institutions to continue to fulfil its functions but no longer to be existentially dependent on economic growth (Seidl/Zahrnt, 2010; Seidl/Zahrnt, 2022). Basic social and economic functions include safeguarding livelihoods, participation in society for all, basic infrastructure and healthcare.

Methodology

There is currently no comprehensive overview of social innovations in mountain regions and existing inventories (for the Alpine region) are neither systematic nor do they extend beyond case studies (see SIMRA, 2018). Our comprehensive inventory of social innovations in the Bernese Oberland helps to close this gap. It utilises a database of innovative projects, organisations, offerings or initiatives that were planned or carried out in the Bernese Oberland between 1997 and 2018. To compile the inventory[1], various databases from regional development programmes[2] and innovation prizes[3] were identified and merged. An online survey of the municipal secretaries (the senior administrative officers) of all 76 municipalities of the Bernese Oberland was also conducted in order to identify other local projects and initiatives.[4] In addition, a systematic online search and newspaper review[5] was conducted

1 The inventory is publicly accessible on the website www.sozinno.unibe.ch

2 New Regional Policy (*Neue Regionalpolitik*, NRP); Innovation, Cooperation and Knowledge Development in Tourism (*Innovation, Zusammenarbeit und Wissensaufbau im Tourismus*, Innotour); Regional Conference East Oberland (*Regionalkonferenz Oberland-Ost*, RKOO); Social Innovation in Marginalised Rural Areas (SIMRA); the association 'vorwärtsbeo'.

3 Milestone, Prix Montagna, Swiss Mountain Award, Bernese Innovation Prize, PrixWINtutti

4 The survey was able to identify 26 potential social innovations.

5 Five regional newspapers were examined.

between January and June 2019. Overall, it was possible to identify 979 potential social innovations.

With the help of an analysis matrix consisting of 23 evaluation criteria[6], we identified the social innovations that corresponded to the definition above. The goal of the social innovation was assessed in order to determine if it fulfilled the two additional characteristics. A total of 68 social innovations were identified, 32 of which aim to achieve positive effects for society and six of which aim to change social relations and/or power relations. To identify the social innovations, all projects and initiatives in the database were independently evaluated by two researchers. The intercoder reliability of the analysis is 90%.

In a subsequent step, the social innovations that had been identified were assessed in terms of their potential growth effects using theory-based indicators. The set of indicators that we developed for this analysis is based on the literature on drivers of enterprise growth (Gebauer/Lange/Posse, 2017; Mewes/Gebauer, 2015; Posse, 2015; Richters/Siemoneit, 2019) and on strategies of non-growing enterprises (Liesen/Dietsche/Gebauer, 2013; Posse, 2015). The aim was to derive indicators from these business strategies that could be applied to the region and to economic actors. This involved identifying the mechanisms of the growth or non-growth strategies of enterprises. From these mechanisms, it was possible to derive 39 indicators which point to growth stimulating or growth independence effects. Hence, the indicators capture two different growth effects: first, the effects that stimulate economic growth in regions or enterprises (henceforth called growth stimulation effects); second, effects that make these regions or enterprises more growth independent (henceforth called growth independence effects). In order to analyse the potential effects of the 68 social innovations in our inventory, we assessed which indicators could potentially apply to which social innovation. To this end we gathered additional information on the emergence, implementation or goal of the social innovations through online research. The evaluation was independently carried out by two researchers with an intercoder reliability of 88%.

6 The analysis was based on criteria for the following categories: Cooperation / Novelty / Idea / Bernese Oberland / Improvements in quality of life / Changes in social relations / Changes in power relations.

Growth effects

The following table displays the indicators and their growth effects as developed from the literature analysis.

Table 1: Indicators of growth independence and growth effects / Sources: primarily Gebauer/Lange/Posse, 2017; Paech, 2012a; Posse, 2015

No.	Indicator	Growth effects
U1	Regional sales structures	Less price competition; some degree of guaranteed market; adaptation to consumer needs; promotion of small businesses (U8)
U2	Regional procurement structures	Less price competition; guaranteed market for manufactured products; promotion of small businesses (U8)
U3	Economic actors in close contact	Reduced price competition; adaptation to consumer needs; some degree of guaranteed market; building of trust with at best favourable financing and reduced pressure to generate returns
U4	De-commercialisation of production	Absence of the growth dynamic of capitalist market relations; greater self-sufficiency
U5	Reduction in hours of paid work	Decline in consumption and reduction of capitalist market dynamics
U6	Low debt capital and interest	Less pressure to generate returns to pay interest/dividends; less outside control by external investors
U7	Low capital intensity in production	Less pressure to generate returns to pay interest/dividends; less outside control by external investors
U8	Small or medium-sized enterprise	Less striving for growth, no negative scale effects (administrative costs etc.), improved crisis resistance and less dependence on market dynamics
U9	Communication in favour of limiting consumption and production	Limiting growth in line with consumer demand
U10	Communication of social and ecological indicators	Focus on entrepreneurial success through various enterprise goals

No.	Indicator	Growth effects
U11	Niche markets	Less price competition; some degree of guaranteed market
U12	Long useful life	Limiting growth caused by consumer demand
U13	Craft skills for maintenance and repair	Limiting growth through consumer demand; de-commercialisation (U4)
U14	Prosumers	Adaptation to consumer needs; limiting growth through consumer demand; niche markets (U11); de-commercialisation (U4)
U15	Self-managed enterprise	Broader understanding of entrepreneurial success than just growth; small and medium-sized businesses (U8)
U16	Substitution of products by services	Less economies of scale in providing services than products, i.e. less growth dynamics
U17	Product sales (fair prices, purchase guarantees, no bulk discounts)	Less price competition; reduced cost pressure, reduced incentives for economies of scale
U18	Low advertising expenditure	Limit on growth caused by consumer demand
U19	Short value chain	Limit on the number of enterprises involved that are striving for growth; production volume aligned with demand
U20	Regional value chain	Less price competition; involvement of smaller enterprises; guaranteed demand; production volume aligned with demand; possibly favourable external financing.

Table 2: Indicators of growth stimulation and growth effects / Sources: primarily Gebauer/Lange/Posse, 2017; Paech, 2012a; Posse, 2015

No.	Indicator	Growth effects
S1	Bulk discounts when purchasing	Incentives for more consumption or production
S2	Remuneration of management according to growth figures and market value	Strategic and operative growth focus
S3	Higher proportion of fixed costs in production	Incentive to increase production to realise economies of scale
S4	Higher leverage	Great pressure to generate returns to pay interest/dividends; more outside control by external investors
S5	Planned obsolescence	Increase in consumer demand
S6	Increasing consumption (psychological obsolescence, symbolic, emotional brand communication)	Increase in consumer demand
S7	Innovation (process, product, technology)	Increased production due to increased productivity of innovations; new demands due to new products (features)
S8	Volatile capacity expansion	Increased need for outside investment; long-term pressure to grow
S9	High capital requirement (for research and development)	Great pressure to generate returns to pay interest/dividends; development of products with scaling potential; high levels of outside control by external investors
S10	High capital intensity of production	Great pressure to generate returns to pay interest/dividends; maximisation of economies of scale; high levels of outside control by external investors

No.	Indicator	Growth effects
S11	Focus on communication of financial operating figures	Focus on the growth goals of enterprises
S12	Continuous development of new/differentiated products and services	Promotion of product sales by enterprises increased demand and consumption
S13	Legal form public limited company	Great pressure to generate returns to pay dividends/improve the share price; heteronomy by external investors
S14	Economic actors with loose contacts	Limited adaptation of products to consumer needs and therefore more consumption; price competition; marketing strategies like planned obsolescence and measures to promote consumption
S15	Entrepreneurial goal of economic growth and profit maximisation	Focus on the growth goals of the enterprise
S16	High advertising expenditure	Promotion of growth dynamics through consumer demand (needs); maximisation of economies of scale
S17	Spatially dispersed value chain (high spatial distance / increase in spatial distance)	Enterprises focused uniformly on growth and profit; increased competition; exploitation of economies of scale and extension of markets; little adaptation of production volumes to demand (potential for overproduction)
S18	Long value chains	Numerous companies involved with a drive for growth; increased competition; exploitation of economies of scale and extension of markets; production volumes not adapted to demand (potential for overproduction); low levels of trust between actors and thus increased need for capital and interest due to more insecure loans
S19	Great competitive pressure	Growth strategies like price and quantity competition; maximisation of economies of scale; strategies to increase productivity; active marketing

The following section presents by way of example the mechanisms that lead to growth independence and from which – amongst others – the two ideal types of social innovation can be derived. A low level of debt capital (U6) means there is less pressure to make profits in order to pay interest (Binswanger, 2009). An absence of outside investors is thus associated with lower profit expectations, better options for control by the management and greater transparency (Posse, 2015). A short value chain with few actors (U19) means that there are fewer debt financed enterprises involved who need to make profits (Paech, 2012b). Regional value chains have a similar effect (U20) (Gebauer/Lange/Posse, 2017; Gebauer, 2018; Paech, 2012b; Posse, 2015). They make it more likely that a strong bond develops between producers, consumers and investors. Product prices then become less important because consumers have a closer relationship with the producers. The latter therefore experience less pricing pressure (Posse, 2015). The involvement of consumers in production (U14) helps to align the product with consumer needs. This allows production resources to be more efficiently adjusted to actual product needs (Leismann/Schmitt/Rohn et al., 2012). The relations between the actors involved are also strengthened (Bakker/Loske/Sherhorn, 1999; Schor, 2010). Furthermore, guaranteed sales (U17) reduce pricing pressure for producers all along the value chain as a fixed price is agreed in advance (Gebauer, 2018; Gebauer/Lange/Posse, 2017). In addition, low capital intensity of production (U7) reduces dependence on outside investment because less investment in capital (in machinery etc.) is necessary (Paech, 2012b).

The indicators numbered S1 to S19 listed in the Table 2 describe the growth stimulation effects. These effects are, for instance, generated through the creation of consumer needs and emotions in advertising (S16) (Gebauer, 2018; Gebauer/Lange/Posse, 2017). A physically and spatially dispersed value chain (S17) can reduce trust between actors and thus increase the pressure to generate returns (Paech, 2012b). For instance, less trust means that a higher collateral is required for lending transactions; this takes the form of higher interest payments which need to be generated with profits (Paech, 2012b). Furthermore, production innovations are viewed as growth-inducing if the production of ever more new products is linked to capital investments (S7) (Paech, 2012a). Products for status consumption (S6) are primarily developed for saturated markets in order to generate more demand (Paech, 2012b; Posse, 2015).

Social innovations and their potential growth effects

Many different actors participated in the 68 social innovations that were identified. Most frequently involved are enterprises and private individuals (both 20%) and, in addition, state organisations, tourism organisations, associations, research institutes and foundations. One-third of the social innovations are located in the primary and secondary economic sectors, two-thirds in the tertiary sector. Social innovations are present in diverse fields like tourism, mobility, agriculture, health and education. They emerged both in remote shrinking areas and in economically growing central municipalities in the Bernese Oberland.

One aim of this paper is to identify those of the 68 social innovations that are characterised by pronounced potential growth effects. By focusing on these 'extreme types' in terms of growth effects we can identify ideal-typical forms of social innovations. A social innovation was only selected as an 'extreme type' if the number of relevant growth stimulation indicators corresponded to a maximum of 25% of the number of relevant growth independence indicators of the same social innovation (and vice versa, i.e. opposing effects are small). This ensured that clear tendencies can be recognised. In total, eight social innovations were classified as these two 'extreme types'. These innovations fulfilled at most 7 of the 19 growth stimulation indicators and at most 12 of the 20 growth independence indicators. The remaining 60 social innovations in the inventory are not further considered in the following discussion: either they display few growth effects or they have many growth effects in both directions.

The four social innovations with the most indicators pointing to growth independence are a cooperatively organised Alpine dairy and cheese company, a community supported agriculture (CSA) project, a cooperatively organised multi-generational house, and a building group within the framework of a solar energy cooperative in which members construct their solar systems together.

These social innovations have in common that they utilise no, little or interest-free external capital. The planned multi-generational house is partially financed by the interest-free capital of members of the housing association (Zukunft Hasliberg, 2019: 12). Interest-free finance is provided for the CSA in advance by purchasers of the products. A donation enabled the dairy and cheese company to be developed with little external investment.

The solar energy building group is financed by the group members. Those who install a solar system are supported by other members who already have such a system. The working hours invested by others are then worked off by those who already have the new system when they help construct another member's system.

These four social innovations are also characterised by short and regional value chains and close links between the actors involved. The cooperative dairy and cheese company, for instance, only uses milk from the surrounding farms, which leads to a close relationship between the suppliers and the processors of the milk. The same is true for the CSA where consumers purchase the products directly from the farm without an intermediary. The relationship between the producers (farmers) and the consumers is exceptionally close, in part due to direct cooperation in production.

For three of the four social innovations prosumers play an important role. Prosumers are consumers who are also involved in the production of the product or service that they later consume. The CSA is one such model, and in the solar energy cooperative a significant proportion of the solar systems is also built by those who will later use them. These forms of production represent a de-commercialisation of production. The work that prosumers put into producing the service is not remunerated in monetary terms. This is similarly seen in the concept of the 'caring community' that is pursued by the generational house. It states that the 'need for care should not be fulfilled only by professional institutions' but rather by cooperation between non-professional actors like neighbours or volunteers with state and professional partners (Zukunft Hasliberg, 2019: 7).

Furthermore, three of the four social innovations have guaranteed purchasers. For example, the dairy and cheese company can rely on sales to a major Swiss distributor, while the farmers of the CSA have guaranteed purchasers in the form of the prosumers. Three social innovations also have a low level of capital intensity in their production. In the solar energy cooperative, the solar systems are mostly installed by hand using little machinery. In comparison to industrialised cheese production, a great deal is also done by hand in the cooperative cheese company and there is little mechanisation. The same is true in the agricultural project thanks to the involvement of the prosumers.

The four social innovations with pronounced growth stimulation effects are a bad-weather insurance for holidaymakers; a tour package that com-

bines Alpine bus tours with historical hikes; a specially equipped direct train to a skiing destination; and a partnership between five golfclubs with a dedicated membership card.

All four social innovations are commercial tourist ventures that are actively advertised and are characterised by economic growth goals. The weather insurance is intended to bring new visitors and thus increased revenue to the tourist businesses at the destination where the insurance is available. The same objective is pursued by the direct train connection and the hiking package. The golfclub membership card aims to make paying to become a member of a club more attractive and to increase the golfclubs' revenues.

Another characteristic of all four social innovations is that production and consumption of their offerings occur in a (physically) spatially dispersed value chain. In three of four cases this is linked to the more distanced relations between the stakeholders involved. An illustrative example is provided by the weather insurance. It was developed by an established insurance company in a Swiss city outside the mountain region, is sold by a tourism organisation in an Alpine holiday destination and is purchased by tourists from all over the world. The profits go to the insurance company and the tourism organisation. The relationships between the actors are somewhat distanced, both spatially and socially.

Two of these social innovations are active in highly competitive markets. First, the bus/hiking tour which offers historical hikes combined with postbus trips to distinguish itself from other more unspecific hiking offers. Second, the weather insurance, which covers a very specific risk that is not yet catered for by the insurance market.

Two social innovations involve product innovations that are intended primarily for status consumption or are advertised using emotional brand communication. The genuine characteristics of products intended for status consumption serve the purpose of social display and not the direct satisfaction of needs (Reisch/Raab, 2014: 933). The golfclub membership card is an example of status consumption because the costs amount to several 10,000 Swiss francs, which can hardly be fully justified by the actual benefits – playing golf. It is possible to identify emotional brand communication in the case of the bus tours and historical hikes. Advertising draws on the well-loved Swiss tradition of postbuses and aims to trigger emotions and thus win customers.

Discussion and prospects

This paper reflects on the various effects of social innovations in growth terms. Based on an inventory of social innovations in a Swiss mountain region, we analysed the potential growth effects with a set of indicators specifically developed for this purpose. Eight of the 68 social innovations of our inventory can be assigned to two extreme types: social innovations with potential growth independence effects and social innovations with potential growth stimulation effects. Based on the characteristics of these extreme types we devised two ideal types of social innovations, as seen in Table 2.

Table 3: Ideal types / Source: authors

	Social innovation: Growth independence	Social innovation: Growth stimulation
Description of ideal types	A social innovation that promotes growth independence comprises a new form of cooperation, which frequently involves private individuals. The new idea is often an alternative form of production and consumption that focuses on social and ecological goals. Conventional economic goals take a backseat.	A social innovation that stimulates growth comprises a new form of cooperation between actors who primarily pursue economic goals. The new idea that is developed is often a commercial product or service that can be assigned to a specific sector. Non-economic goals take a backseat.
Main characteristics	- No, little or interest-free outside capital - Minimal advertising expenditure - Close ties between producers, consumers, suppliers - Short and regional value chains	- Economic growth goals - Advertising expenditure for commercial products - Spatially dispersed value chains
Other characteristics	- Prosumers - Guaranteed market / fair prices - De-commercialisation of products/services - Low level of capital intensity - Short value chains - Regional value chains - Regional sales structures	- Weak relations to consumers - Active communication of financial indicators - Symbolic consumption / emotional brand communication - High level of competition - Differentiated product innovation

The growth effects of social innovations presented here are potential effects and have not been measured empirically. To gain more robust results, the indicators and their interactions need to be empirically investigated and, to further improve understanding, research should focus on preconditions for

the emergence of social innovations in regional contexts. The motivation of the various actors plays an important role, especially with regard to the growth effects. Innovation biographies would be an appropriate tool (Kleverbeck/Terstriep, 2018). In addition, the set of indicators shows that further investigation must include both quantitative and qualitative dimensions.

In light of the diverse challenges facing mountain regions, this paper demonstrates that it can indeed be appropriate for regional policy to focus on social innovations. If regional policy aims to promote growth independence then it should not promote social innovations per se, but must rather target the characteristics of the social innovation projects and initiatives described above. It may therefore be helpful to promote a combination of characteristics in order to initiate sustainable and growth-independent regional development.

It seems necessary to ask whether such developments can advance the transformation to a post-growth society. Undoubtedly the examples identified here are niche projects of very limited economic significance. Nonetheless, they demonstrate what distinguishes social innovations and enterprises that contribute towards growth independence, and what aspects and factors should, for example, be promoted by regional and economic policy in order to expand growth independence. At the same time, the examples serve as role models and strengthen the economic independence and resilience of a region. They also show that the well-being of the population can benefit from economic activities in a post-growth society, compared to a growth-oriented economy. Impulses from peripheral areas are certainly not sufficient to lead to higher-level structural changes in, for instance, welfare and employment systems, as would be necessary for a post-growth society. However, regional-economic restructuring in such regions can reduce local socio-economic problems and improve quality of life.

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4.2 Paper II: How do social innovations contribute to growth-independent territorial development? Case studies from a Swiss mountain region

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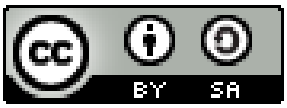
Abstract: In this article we investigate the role of social innovations in territorial development. More specifically we examine the ways in which social innovations can contribute to growth-independent local and regional development. By growthindependent territorial development we understand the ways in which a society, including its economy and its institutions, can continue to fulfill its functions such as providing public services, while not being existentially dependent on economic growth. Growth independence is a precondition for a post-growth society. Based on case studies of social innovations in the Bernese Oberland (Switzerland), this article shows that the examined social innovations can contribute to economic growth independence through entrepreneurial decisions that foster (re-)localization, de-commercialization, low capital intensity, and self-governance. These decisions help make the social innovation initiatives growth-independent and hence they contribute to a post-growth society. Our research adds to the literature on the role of social innovation for a post-growth society and clarifies the role of socially innovative initiatives in territorial development.



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How do social innovations contribute to growth-independent territorial development? Case studies from a Swiss mountain region

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In this article we investigate the role of social innovations in territorial development. More specifically we examine the ways in which social innovations can contribute to growth-independent local and regional development. By growth-independent territorial development we understand the ways in which a society, including its economy and its institutions, can continue to fulfill its functions such as providing public services, while not being existentially dependent on economic growth. Growth independence is a precondition for a post-growth society. Based on case studies of social innovations in the Bernese Oberland (Switzerland), this article shows that the examined social innovations can contribute to economic growth independence through entrepreneurial decisions that foster (re-)localization, de-commercialization, low capital intensity, and self-governance. These decisions help make the social innovation initiatives growth-independent and hence they contribute to a post-growth society. Our research adds to the literature on the role of social innovation for a post-growth society and clarifies the role of socially innovative initiatives in territorial development.

Zusammenfassung

In diesem Artikel untersuchen wir die Rolle sozialer Innovationen in der territorialen Entwicklung. Konkret analysieren wir, wie soziale Innovationen zu wachstumsunabhängiger regionaler und lokaler Entwicklung beitragen können. Als wachstumsunabhängige territoriale Entwicklung verstehen wir die Art und Weise, wie eine Gesellschaft, einschließlich ihrer Wirtschaft und ihrer Institutionen, weiterhin ihre Funktionen, wie beispielsweise die Bereitstellung öffentlicher Dienstleistungen, aufrechterhalten kann, ohne dabei existenziell auf Wirtschaftswachstum angewiesen zu sein. Wachstumsunabhängigkeit ist eine Voraussetzung für eine Postwachstumsgesellschaft. Auf Grundlage von Fallstudien sozialer Innovationen im Berner Oberland (Schweiz) zeigt dieser Artikel auf, dass die untersuchten sozialen Innovationen zu wirtschaftlicher Wachstumsunabhängigkeit beitragen können, indem die beteiligten Akteure Entscheidungen treffen, die (Re-)Lokalisation, Dekommerzialisierung, tiefe Kapitalintensität und Selbstverwaltung fördern. Diese Entscheidungen tragen zur Wachstumsunabhängigkeit der sozialen Innovationen, und dadurch zu einer Postwachstumsgesellschaft bei. Unsere Forschung ist ein Beitrag zu der Literatur zu sozialen Innovationen für eine Postwachstumsgesellschaft und verdeutlicht die Rolle sozial innovativer Initiativen in der territorialen Entwicklung.

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1. Introduction

The concept of social innovation is discussed in debates about alternative economies (e.g. *Jaeger-Erben* et al. 2017; *Nicholls* and *Ziegler* 2019). Social innovations (SIs) – understood as new forms of cooperation or new ideas that have a positive impact on society or solve social problems and challenges – may be potential means to achieve independence from unbridled economic growth (*Tschumi* et al. 2021). While there is emerging research on the impact social innovations may have on territorial development (*Ravazzoli* et al. 2021) and potential economic growth independence (*Tschumi* et al. 2021), not much is known about the ways in which the entrepreneurial actors who develop, run and implement social innovations conceptualize and act upon the economic growth independence paradigm. Accordingly, our research questions are:

- In what ways do social innovation actors take and implement strategic orientations that foster economic growth independence?
- In what ways do these entrepreneurial actors perceive the impact of their initiatives in terms of economic growth independence?
- In what ways do social innovations contribute to growth-independent territorial development?

In this article, we examine the ways in which social innovation actors act upon economic growth independence in terms of their entrepreneurial practices. Growth independence can be defined as the ability of a society, including its economy and its institutions, to continue to fulfil its functions, but not to be existentially dependent on economic growth (*Schmelzer* and *Vetter* 2019; *Seidl* and *Zahrnt* 2010, 2021). *Seidl* and *Zahrnt* (2010, 2021) define a post-growth society as an economy and society that pursues no policy to foster economic growth, reorientates its relevant institutions (e.g. social security, labor market) towards growth independence and limits its energy and resource consumption to a level compatible with the planetary boundaries. Note that post-growth makes no statement regarding a shrinking of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) whereas the concept of degrowth sees a need for such a reduction (e.g. *Kallis* et al. 2012). *Bakker* et al. (1999: 9) define growth-neutral enterprises as follows: these "do not produce to make a profit (which of course remains a secondary condition), but to deliver useful products and services. They do not produce to grow; rather, they welcome moderate business growth, but do their best to ensure that it does not frustrate their real objectives. In this sense they are growth neutral". In our understanding, growth independent enterprises are able to persist without having to grow.

To understand the various impacts social innovations may have on growth-independent territorial development, we provide empirical material from seven different case studies of social innovations in a Swiss mountain region. We deliberately chose the seven social innovations because as such they have the potential to influence territorial development trajectories in the direction of growth independence as we will argue based on the existing literature. What they have in common is an entrepreneurial motivation to orient the initiative not towards maximizing profits, but rather towards alternative economic, social and ecological goals. They also pursue alternative forms of production and consumption. The cases represent organizations that range from cooperatives to privately held businesses in fields as diverse as agriculture, renewable energy and housing. The seven social innovations were chosen from an inventory of social innovations in the Bernese Oberland that we developed in 2019 (*Tschumi* et al. 2021).

The presented cases and resulting data help us to better understand the ways in which social innovation actors perceive the effects their initiative has on the local and regional economy. Given that regional economies and in particular more peripheral rural and mountain regions face a number of challenges (e.g. demographic change, climate change, de-industrialization), the focus on traditional forms of innovation (technical, marketing, etc.) leaves out a range of possible solutions to complex problems. Thus, several scholars have called into question the narrow focus in innovation studies (*Coenen* and *Morgan* 2020; *Tödtling* and *Trippl* 2018). This paper contributes a critical analysis of the role of social innovations and offers insights as to their multidimensional effects, which is especially important for policymakers. In the case of Switzerland, for example, social innovations are not addressed in regional policy and can hardly get funded as they do not fit the underlying theoretical model (export-base theory, which is an economic growth oriented model) (*Mayer* et al. 2018).

The article is structured as follows: first, we provide an overview of the theoretical background of social innovations and their link to growth-independent development. Following this section, we present the methods. In the results section we discuss the ways in which social innovation actors conceptualize and act upon a set of indicators we identified that contribute to economic growth independence. We conclude with a discussion about our contribution and policy implications.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Defining social innovations

Definitions and understandings of social innovation differ widely in the literature. This may be due to the fact that various disciplines such as transformation studies, sociology, regional science or business administration make use of their own definitions (*Edwards-Schachter* and *Wallace* 2017). At the same time, meta-analyses on the SI literature suggest that there are different research streams *(Ayob* et al. 2016*; Edwards-Schachter* and *Wallace* 2017; *van der Have* and *Rubalcaba* 2016). One important stream is the literature on local development, in which SIs are defined as having a positive impact on society, empowering people and altering social relations (*Moulaert* et al. 2013; *Mulgan* et al. 2007). A more sociological perspective (*Franz* et al. 2012) focuses on changes in social relations and practices. For example, *Mumford* (2002) takes an organisational perspective and regards SIs as new ideas about how social relations and social organisation can be shaped to achieve a common goal.

For our study, we use a definition that integrates these different perspectives, based on the bibliometric analysis of *Ayob* et al. (2016). We define social innovation as follows:

A social innovation consists of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organizations that lead to new ideas, of which the implementation is at least considered. In regional development, such innovations can have a positive impact on society, improve the quality of life and/or change social or power relations.

This definition allows us to approach the empirical field with a broad understanding of social innovations. The context of rural regions/mountain regions provides for a rather diverse socio-economic environment with numerous challenges (e.g., demographic changes, economic dependence on resource-based sectors or industries such as tourism, environmental changes resulting from climate change, etc.). Next to such challenges, there are also various opportunities that actors take notice of and that they utilize when it comes to social innovations. In such a context, social innovations address societal challenges but also opportunities. Thus, we utilize a definition that incorporates two aspects: positive impact on society in terms of improvements of quality of life and changes of social and power relations.

2.2 Social innovation and growth-independent development

SIs are rarely a topic in the literature on economic growth and development *(Sousa* and *De Fátima Ferreiro* 2020). But studies on how SIs can promote socio-economic development of regions and countries have emerged in recent years (*Moulaert* and *MacCallum* 2019). The literature on the role of SIs in territorial development dates back to the 2000s with *Frank Moulaert* and his colleagues among the first authors (*Moulaert* et al. 2005; *Moulaert* and *Nussbaumer* 2005). In this literature, the notion of territorial development does not equal regional/local economic growth. Rather, it is understood in a broader sense, proposing an alternative to the vision on "economic growth, productivity and market-rational behaviour" (*Moulaert* and *MacCallum* 2019: 26). Territorial development encompasses people's empowerment, needs satisfaction, neglected or exacerbated by the state/market apparatus as well as new forms of ecological/institutional relations and polities (*Moulaert* and *MacCallum* 2019: 26). As such, SIs "may not necessarily have an economic impetus" (*Neumeier* 2012: 58) and "may contradict economic growth strategies as is reflected in the many cases of social innovations that refuse growth" (*Terstriep* and *Rehfeld* 2020: 4).

In this paper, we connect the aforementioned literature on the influence of SI on territorial development with writings on the question what constitutes territorial development. While traditionally local or regional development was equated with growth in employment, income or productivity, more recent definitions include broader social, political, and even non-economic and alternative value-oriented concerns (*Martin* 2021; *Moulaert* 2009; *Pike* et al. 2007). Thus, we follow the definition of local development

that describes a place-specific process that addresses the internal social needs rather than external markets and that aims to improve the qualitative dimensions "for example the sustainability (economic, social, environmental) and forms of growth, the type and 'quality' of jobs, the embeddedness and sustainability of investments, and the growth potential, sectoral mix and social diversity of new firms" (*Pike* et al. 2007: 1260). *Pike* et al. (2007: 1260) further argue that "depending upon the context, the sustainability of growth may be evaluated in terms of its ecological impact; the 'quality' of jobs might be assessed by their employment terms and conditions, […] and the extent to which each form of 'development' contributes to the enhancement of citizens' capabilities". In this sense local development does not merely depend on quantitative growth measures such as number of jobs, but also on development of more sustainable and even growth-independent forms of socio-economic activities (e.g. (re-)localization of economic activities or self-governance).

In the following we highlight the characteristics we were able to identify in the SI literature that most closely align with the literature on economic growth independence and post-growth. Some of these characteristics are neither new nor special, particularly when we take the literature on territorial innovation models (e.g. regional innovation systems, clusters, etc.) into account. The following characteristics have been central for a long time, for example, in the concept of regional innovation systems (RIS) (*Asheim* et al. 2019). Yet, recent writings on RIS acknowledge the dominant focus of technological and business innovations and call for an alternative understanding of innovation processes and one that pays attention to grand challenges and the role SIs can play in addressing these challenges (*Tödtling* et al. 2021). Thus, also the RIS literature calls into question the traditional focus on economic growth through, e.g. the promotion of traditional forms of innovation, and highlights the potential of alternative forms of innovation such as SIs. In the following, we discuss the characteristics and their implications for economic growth independence:

- *Close relationships between economic actors:* collaboration is one of the hallmarks of SIs. In the local/regional development literature, SIs are characterized as collaborations between actors with aligned interests (*Neumeier* 2012) , often with close ties and direct interaction between actors (*Terstriep* et al. 2020) as well as with actors from different sectors such as civic society, public administration or private sector (*Bock* 2016; *Kleverbeck* et al. 2019; *Neumeier* 2012). Close relationships between economic and non-economic actors may lead to building of trust and thus limited price competition, a certain guaranty for sales, consumer fit, and lower pressure for returns – all characteristics that are highlighted by post-growth authors (*Gebauer* et al. 2017; *Paech* 2012; *Posse* 2015).
- *Regional/local markets with short and regional value chains:* another frequent feature of SIs is that they are quite often locally or regionally specific and embedded, for instance through the integration of local and regional actors (*Moulaert* 2009; *Rehfeld* and *Terstriep* 2017): "[S]ocial innovators are not generally interested in spreading their idea beyond the actual context" (*Rehfeld* and *Terstriep* 2017: 13). Local and regional embeddedness is a crucial characteristic of growth-independent enterprises (*Banerjee* et al. 2020) in such a way that they aim for local and regional markets and they rely on regional value chains in the production of their goods and services (*Gebauer* 2018; *Gebauer* et al. 2017; *Paech* 2012; *Posse* 2015). As value creation is bound to a certain territory, value chains are short and small or medium-sized businesses/initiatives are involved (*Gebauer* 2018). Short value chains are defined by few actors involved in the production process. Hence, there is less pressure to generate returns (*Paech* 2012). In regional value chains, it is more likely that producers, consumers and capital providers create close relationships, which may lead to cheaper (low-interest) conditions for debt-capital (*Gebauer* et al. 2017; *Paech* 2012; *Posse* 2015). This, in turn, makes organisations and enterprises less dependent on generating returns (*Binswanger* 2009).
- *De-commercialization of production/service delivery:* users are often involved in the SI innovation process, acting as knowledge and solution providers or as co-producers (*Terstriep* et al. 2020). Integrating consumers in the product/service production process makes them prosumers and is considered one dimension of de-commercialization. De-commercialization may take place if prosumers (consumers who at the same time are engaged in the production of the product or service that they later consume) consume less due to an increased consumer-fit and due to their meaningful activities, which may decrease compensation consumption. Also, as the product is aligned with the needs of the consumers, production resources are used more efficiently, leading to

less waste of resources (*Leismann* et al. 2012). Additionally, relationships of the involved actors are strengthened (*Bakker* et al. 1999; *Schor* 2010).

- *Low levels of capital intensity in production/service delivery:* sometimes SIs are described as mainly non-material, their material outcomes only being a supplementary result (*Neumeier* 2012). Such low capital intensity of the economic activity reduces dependency on external capital because less needs to be invested in capital (machinery, etc.) (*Paech* 2012) which strengthens growth-independency (*Tschumi* et al. 2021 and above).
- *Democratic ownership, equity and self-governance:* integrating beneficiaries – users and others – in the SI development process is also mirrored in the fact that SIs incorporate governance structures such as co-operatives, self-management and self-reliance (*Bock* 2016). Self-governance, democratic ownership and equity characterise growth-independent organizations (*Banerjee* et al. 2020) and reflect an understanding of (entrepreneurial) success that goes beyond economic growth. Such organizations attempt to create value that is unrelated to growth and emphasize the redistribution of wealth (*Banerjee* et al. 2020).
- *Small or no efforts to advertise products or services:* this is a feature of SI activities and growth-independent enterprises (*Tschumi* et al. 2021). In this way, consumption and thus production of new products and services can be reduced (*Gebauer* et al. 2017) and this results in efforts towards de-commercialization.
- *Financing via interest-free or low debt-capital:* this feature, which is characteristic for SIs as well as growth-independent enterprises (*Tschumi* et al. 2021) makes enterprises less dependent on generating returns (*Binswanger* 2009) and on the capital providers' expected returns (*Posse* 2015).

This discussion indicates that SIs may comprise various features of growth-independent organizational and entrepreneurial behaviour. Besides these features that may contribute to growth independence, each of these can also lead to growth-inducing effects as, for example, has been shown in the literature on industrial clusters or regional innovation systems. For example, close relationships with economic actors and short value chains have significantly contributed to the competitiveness of regions like Silicon Valley, Baden-Württemberg or Northern Italy (*Piore* and *Sabel* 1986). Yet, the literature on social innovations has so far not taken a close look at the mechanisms by which social innovations and their involved actors can contribute directly to their economic growth independence and as a result more indirectly towards a post-growth society. If *Terstriep* and *Rehfeld* (2020: 4) are correct that "the many practices at the micro-level of individual initiatives can add up to patterns and regularities at the macro-level", SIs can contribute to growth-independent regions.

3. Research Methods

The seven social innovations (for a short description, see *Table 1*) were chosen from an inventory of SIs in the Bernese Oberland that we developed in 2019 (*University of Bern* 2021). The inventory includes 68 SIs, which emerged in the period between 1997 and 2018. We identified the SIs out of a database consisting of innovative projects, organizations, offers and initiatives, which we merged from separate databases of innovation prices and regional development funding programs. Additionally, we conducted an online survey of the municipal secretaries (the senior administrative officers) of all 76 municipalities of the Bernese Oberland. In this way, we collected data on 979 potential SIs. Applying a set of criteria that we derived from our SI definition, we found 68 SIs that fit the criteria. All identified SIs were analyzed in terms of their potential economic growth effects, applying a set of indicators, which we derived from the literature on enterprise growth drivers (*Gebauer* et al. 2017; *Mewes* and *Gebauer* 2015; *Posse* 2015; *Richters* and *Siemoneit* 2019) and strategies of non-growing enterprises striving for growth independency (*Liesen* et al. 2013; *Posse* 2015). In a previous publication (*Tschumi* et al. 2021), we illustrate the indicators and the various growth-related effects that can range from stimulating economic growth to creating economic growth independence which may, for instance, be the result of de-commercialization. All 68 SIs were qualitatively evaluated based on 20 growth independence indicators and 19 growth stimulation indicators (for a detailed description of all 39 indicators see *Tschumi* et al. (2021)). For this article, we focus on the cases of social innovations that contribute to economic growth independence. From the 68, we chose the SIs that fulfilled the largest number of the 20 growth independence indicators. Out of those SIs, we then chose the ones that at the same time fulfilled the least number of growth stimulation indicators. As a result, we came up with eight SIs comprising potential growth independence effects. Seven out of these eight were

further analyzed for the present study because they represent entrepreneurial initiatives that are incorporated as economic entities (cooperatives and small businesses) and not as a voluntary association.

To gain actor-centered insights about the ways the SI actors implement strategies toward growth-independent behavior and how they perceive their impact on growth independence, we further collected empirical

Table 1 Background information on the seven social innovations. Source: Social Innovation Inventory (University of Bern 2021: n.p.)

Selbstbaugruppe Energiewendegenossenschaft 2019 (ongoing) | Renewable energy | Cooperative | Individuals
The cooperative Energiebaugenossenschaft is characterized by its self-help model. Customers who purchase a solar system help with the installation. In addition, they contribute hours of work to the construction of further solar systems. This means that the systems can be built more cheaply.
Solidarische Landwirtschaft Erlengut 2017 (ongoing) | Agriculture | Private business | Individuals, companies
This solidarity-based agriculture project was founded by a small company (Biogemüse Erlengut). It equates to a community supported agriculture (CSA). The aim is to build food production in which producers and consumers organize themselves. In this way it can be planned how much and which vegetables are needed. The vegetables do not have to meet market standards and long transport routes are eliminated.
IG Kiley-Alpen 2005 (ongoing) | Agriculture | Cooperative | Companies
Seven farmers in the Diemtigtal recognized that more and more cheese dairies were disappearing and that it was becoming increasingly difficult for them to have their milk processed. They joined to form the Kiley-Alpen cooperative and took over the Kiley alpine cheese dairy. With the purchase of the dairy they were able to stop the disappearance of farms and secure their existence. The cooperative operates today's largest organic alpine cheese dairy in Switzerland and the organic status contributes greatly to its success.
Kuhleasing.ch 1976 (ongoing) | Agriculture | Private business | Individuals
A farmer couple founded kuhleasing.ch (leasing of cows). Today, their daughter has taken over the business and leases cows to customers for a summer. The latter receive between 70-120 kg of cheese per cow and work one day on the alpine farm. The aim of engaging the customers is to give them an understanding of life on the alp and thus strengthen the understanding between the urban and the mountain population. Also, it shows the ecological importance of mountain farming and thus ensures its preservation for future generations.
Wollreich Haslital 1996 (ongoing) | Agriculture | Private business | Companies
In 1996 a farmer family received three black-nosed sheep as a gift. More and more animals followed and today the family owns about 200 sheep. The product range expanded considerably. Innovations such as sheep's wool balls for pillows and nursing rings as well as duvets and bed pads filled with their own wool led to success throughout Switzerland.
Generationenwohnen Hasliberg 2016 (ongoing) | Housing | Cooperative | Individuals, educational and research institutions
For two years, the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts worked together on the "Future Hasliberg" project. This gave rise to the idea of this multi-generational housing project. The aim of the project is to create needs-based forms of housing and living for older people in Hasliberg. This requires a suitable form of living in a central location. During this time, a working group consisting mainly of the elderly population from Hasliberg has laid the foundations for a future generation house through voluntary work.
Genossenschaft Lebensraum Belmont 2013 (ongoing) | Housing | Cooperative | Individuals
Eight people founded the cooperative Lebensraum Belmont. With the perspective that people want to live in harmony with each other, the multi-generation project was created, in which different generations live together in a former hotel. The project aims to treat each other with respect and tries to build a benevolent community.

data. During summer and fall 2020, we conducted 13 semi-structured qualitative interviews with the actors that were most involved in the respective SIs. We identified the interviewees via desktop research and snowball sampling. We found that only one or two person(s) per SI had enough profound knowledge and experience in the SI to answer the questions adequately. Except for one interview, the interviews were conducted via telephone or video conference due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The interview guides were based on 10 of the 20 growth independence indicators. We chose to take only 10 indicators, which were most fulfilled by the seven selected SI cases. *Table 2* presents the 10 indicators, which we summarized into four categories, all of which comprise highly relevant features for SIs, as we showed in the previous section. It is important to note that the indicators describe potential effects, which can empirically go in either direction of inducing growth or reducing growth. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed with qualitative content analysis by three researchers independently, applying the categories in *Table 2*. All sev-

Table 2 Indicators and their potential effects on growth independence. Source: adapted from Tschumi et al. (2021)

Overall orientation of social innovation	Economic growth independence indicator	Description indicator	Enhancing economic growth independence
(Re-)localization	Regional/local markets	Social innovations aim for local/regional markets and relocalization of economic activities	Little competition based on price, certain guaranty for sales, consumer fit, support of small and medium-sized businesses/initiatives
	Short value chains	Social innovations aim or incorporate short value chains, which means that they include a limited number of economic actors in the production/delivery of their products/services	Limitation of number of involved (potentially debt-financed) economic actors and hence of actors with economic growth ambition; production volumes are adjusted to demand
	Regional value chains	Social innovations aim for local/regional value chains and/or relocalization of their value chains	Limited price competition, participation of smaller businesses/initiatives, secured demand, production volumes adjusted to demand, possibly favorable financing conditions
	Close relationships between economic actors	Social innovations aim for close, stable relationships with economic actors/partners such as investors, consumers, suppliers, other firms/initiatives	Limited competition based on prices, certain guaranty for sales, consumer fit, building of trust, lower pressure for returns
De-commercialization	De-commercialization of production/-service delivery	Social innovations aim to de-commercialize production/service delivery	Limitation of economic growth dynamics on consumption side, higher degree of self-sufficiency
	Small/no efforts to advertise/marketing	Social innovations aim for small/no efforts to advertise or market their products/services	Limitation of economic growth dynamics on consumption side
Low capital	Low levels of debt capital	Social innovations aim to reduce or eliminate debt capital or obtain low-interest capital	Lower pressures for returns in order to pay interests/dividends, low/no heteronomy by external capital providers
	Low levels of capital intensity in production/service delivery	Social innovations aim for or incorporate a low level of capital intensity and/or higher degree of labor intensity	Lower pressures for returns in order to pay interests/dividends, low/no heteronomy by external capital providers
Self-governance	Small or medium-sized business/initiative	Social innovations are organized as small or medium-sized businesses/initiatives or their organization leads/supports small size and little organization complexity	Low economic growth ambition, low economies of scale, higher resilience to crises, low dependence on market dynamics
	Democratic ownership, equity and self-governance	Social innovations choose a participatory organizational form, make use of prosumers and thereby incorporate demand side	Understanding of entrepreneurial success that goes beyond economic growth, fostering small and medium-sized business

en SIs are situated in the Bernese Oberland, which is a mountainous region in Switzerland. They emerged between 1976 and 2019. At the time of publication of this article, all of them still operated. Four of the seven take on the form of a cooperative, an organizational structure that is common in Switzerland. The remaining three are private businesses. The sectors range from renewable energy (1), agriculture (4) to housing (2). Stakeholders who are engaged range from individuals to companies and educational institutions. *Table 2* provides a short overview.

4. Results

4.1 (Re-)localization

Efforts to (re-)localize economic activities (production and distribution) are a central part of the social innovations we examined. Beyond a short supply chain, which implies that there are few economic actors involved, there is often also the goal to regionalize the value chain which means the value added remains within the region. (Re-)localization also benefits from close contacts among the economic actors. For all seven social innovations, we can observe conscious efforts to (re-)localize economic activities, albeit to varying degrees and in different forms.

Through the interviews, we learned that in all cases the social innovation actors consciously work towards (re-)localization. When we consider their efforts and strategies at building local/regional markets, we notice a few important differences. Local and regional markets are important for the energy cooperative, the community-supported agriculture initiative and the dairy cooperative. The energy cooperative made a conscious decision to limit its market to the region because the primary goal was to remain locally embedded. Cooperative members mentioned that through this local embeddedness they could see a higher level of acceptance of their activities, an important aspect considering that the cooperative would like to convince as many homeowners as possible to construct a solar roof. The community-supported agriculture (CSA) also consciously limited its market reach by opting out of delivering to an organic store and instead setting up four local pick-up locations. Even though the dairy cooperative counts a national supermarket chain as one of its main customers and thus its spatial market reach goes beyond the region, it also engages proactively with the regional nature park in order to market its products. This provides a niche to the dairy cooperative and averts price competition.

In contrast, the two housing initiatives do not limit their offerings to only those interested from the local/regional market. They instead are open to potential inhabitants from other regions in Switzerland. Yet, they pay attention to local sourcing when it comes to the renovation and building of their houses. The two agricultural initiatives do not limit their markets and they find customers for their products nationally and in one case even internationally. Yet, these they put emphasis on creating short and regional value chains. Overall, we observe a continuum of local embeddedness in terms of local/regional markets. While the energy cooperative places a very strong emphasis on local markets and represents a local/regional market-oriented social innovation on the one end of the spectrum, the housing cooperatives and the two private agricultural initiatives (while promoting local agricultural products) utilize a larger market reach in order to find inhabitants or sale opportunities and increase value creation. In sum, all initiatives actively search for ways to embed themselves with the local/regional market and to therefore foster economic growth independence through supporting of other local businesses, averting price competition, and ensuring consumer fit. While these efforts illustrate a conscious focus on the local, which is often mentioned in the literature on growth-independent enterprises (*Banerjee* et al. 2020; *Gebauer* et al. 2017; *Posse* 2015), we can also detect differences in the ways the SIs position themselves in the market due to the nature of the respective markets. This is something that the literature on SI has so far not taken up in a differentiated manner and which needs to be included in the analysis of social innovations.

Short but also regional value chains are elements that are common in the strategies of the SI actors. The interview partners mentioned that whenever possible, they either consciously limit themselves to a few partners and/or they place great emphasis on fulfilling the tasks themselves rather than engaging additional contractors or specialist firms and thereby extending the value chain. When they need to cooperate with other economic actors, they are interested in finding and working with those partners who are in the region (customers, suppliers, inhabitants, etc.) thereby strengthening regional value chains but also trust and social relationships. The CSA, for example, creates all the seedlings itself and does not involve any external

service providers such as accountants. In all cases that we examined, we found that value chains are kept short and regional whenever possible. Yet, they can also extend across many actors when external conditions force them (e.g., solar panels from China). In the case of the solar cooperative, there is a conscious effort to limit the number of actors that are involved once the raw materials and inputs are in the country or in the region. The interview partners mentioned that they deliberately work with only one wholesale dealer in Switzerland and that they engage only with local electricians and scaffolding companies. Through the interviews it became clear, that the social innovation actors see a long or non-local/non-regional value chain not only to lose control, but also as a danger to create impersonal and distanced relationships with other economic actors. Thus, as also argued in the literature, shortening and regionalizing the value chain allows the entrepreneurial actors to create economic growth independence through closer contacts with partners (*Gebauer* 2018), through increased control over their own activities and through fewer actors with potentially low growth pressures (*Gebauer* et al. 2017).

In all SIs we examined, close contact with other economic actors played a central role – something that is also relevant in traditional economic geography concepts such as industrial clusters, RIS, etc. (*Porter* 2000; *Asheim* et al. 2019). These concepts, however, usually discuss the interaction of economic actors such as research institutions, firms and state-led institutions (the so-called triple helix) with the goal of enhancing competitiveness and regional growth, whereas the actors in SIs are much more diverse (in the sense of the quadruple helix) and their goals may be less concerned with growth. The contacts differed depending on the activities. Yet, the effects and outcomes in terms of growth independence are similar. In four cases (energy cooperative, CSA, the two housing cooperatives), consumers are involved as co-producers and they thereby act as prosumers. The solar cooperative engages the consumers in the construction of the solar roofs. The CSA also engages their subscribers through voluntary work that amounts to four half days/year. In both cases, a reduction of costs results from the engagement of consumers in the production process and the products/services become more affordable in comparison to traditional commercial offerings. The housing cooperatives engage their inhabitants in the planning of the houses to fit them to their needs. In the case of the agricultural offerings, there are close contacts to consumers either through occasional visits (Kuhleasing), through direct marketing of the produce in public fridges (dairy cooperative) or through contact with specialty stores (Wollreich). From the perspective of the interviewees the implications of close contacts with customers are manifold: there is an increased appreciation of the products and services on behalf of the customers if they are engaged in the production/delivery of the products or services. In some cases, the price for the products could be lowered and the offerings become more affordable thereby promoting its distribution. This is something that plays in the hands of initiatives like the solar cooperative, which aim for an increased use of renewable energy. And lastly, through the actors' close relationships, the social innovation actors receive important feedback from customers and other economic actors that they engage with. This allows them to tailor their products and services more closely to their demands and needs. Thus, close relationships are consciously created, and as also argued by other post-growth authors they implicate smaller competition based on price (*Posse* 2015), affordable prices, and lower pressures for returns (*Gebauer* et al. 2017). Therefore, these entrepreneurial strategies contribute to greater economic growth independence. Additionally, being closer to consumer needs, the initiatives may not create additional consumer demand.

4.2 De-commercialization

The de-commercialization of production and service provision is an important element in five social innovations. We find different mechanisms by which a de-commercialization is achieved. One is the involvement of consumers as producers (so-called prosumers) and the other is voluntary work. As mentioned earlier, de-commercialization strategies in the case of our social innovations directly lead to cheaper solutions for the products and services. This is the case for the CSA and for the solar cooperative as the involvement of the consumer as producer edges out commercial solutions. This is but one effect. A secondary effect of engaging consumers as producers and in terms of incorporating voluntary work is related to conviviality, a non-commercial value that was mentioned by the interview partners: in four cases (solar cooperative, CSA and the two housing cooperatives) we find that the entrepreneurs engaged in the formation and running of the social innovations highly value the social benefits such as well-being, sense of belonging (*Mayer* 2020), etc. that

result from co-production and co-creation. The entrepreneurs noted these non-commercial benefits and they highlighted them as important additional goals.

The renunciation of advertising and marketing also contributes to de-commercialization as it does not create additional demand. In all cases we find that the social innovation actors are not engaged in extensive marketing or advertising efforts. Sometimes they mentioned that they had a concept or even a budget for advertisement, but that they did not use it much. Most tend to rely on word-of-mouth recommendations. In some cases, they were quite successful and were able to add additional users or customers through word-of-mouth recommendation. This however, led to a very cognizant understanding on behalf of the entrepreneurs of the negative effects a quantitative increase in demand would have on their initiatives. Hence, de-commercialization contributes to enhanced economic growth independence.

4.3 Low capital

All seven SIs are characterized by a low degree of capital intensity. We examined whether and to what extent the SIs rely on debt financing and we asked questions about the capital intensity of the operation. Regarding debt financing, only one of the SIs – namely the Belmont housing cooperative – relies to a large extent on debt financing. Yet, their model is quite interesting and aimed at reducing dependence on large-scale external investors. The need for around CHF 3 million was covered by a first round fund raising from friends and relatives of those engaged in the initial set-up of the cooperative. With this financing, the founding members were able to convince a local bank to give them a loan. A second round of investments by friends and family yielded another CHF 1 million (from around 50 different investors). This then convinced another bank that is specialized in cooperatives to give an additional loan and to even act as a fiduciary so that solvent private investors could invest further in the project. This yielded an additional CHF 700,000. The cooperative sees this type of financing as fitting to its needs. All other interviewees emphasized – often with both a sense of pride and noticeable relief – that they were not reliant on outside investors. This helps them reduce their dependency on external capital and relieves them from additional growth pressures through for example an increase in capacities or sales. This effect is also described in the literature on growth-independent enterprises (*Gebauer* 2018; *Posse* 2015).

In terms of capital intensity, the initiatives can be described as having a low degree of capital intensity and a conscious effort to keep machinery and other immobile production factors rather low. It seems that often the actors involved were afraid of possible diseconomies of scale that would be at work if they would have increased their capital intensity. When there is a need to invest, the initiatives did so with little to no debt financing as discussed earlier. This also decreased their pressure to grow, and it increases their economic growth independence.

4.4 Self-governance

Self-governance, democratic ownership and equity are important elements of growth-independent organizations and these characteristics can also be found among the seven SIs. The cooperatives offer very formalized opportunities for voice and accountability, for example at the general assembly meetings. In the case of the solar cooperative and the CSA, the interviewees placed an important emphasis on the value of participation of the consumers. They saw in the consumers' engagement not only purely economic benefits in terms of lowering the costs, but also social benefits in terms of 'having a good time together' by sharing the work and a good meal. Thus, these SIs also help to improve social wellbeing and quality of life for those involved. This may also contribute to economic growth independence as goals other than purely economic ones are valued.

In terms of size and organizational complexity, all seven SI initiatives were organized on a small scale and the actors involved mentioned that there is little to no desire to grow. When growth of capacities was desired, the goal was not based on making additional revenues, but fulfilling ecological or social goals. The CSA for example will expand its cultivated land to integrate additional buffer and compensation areas. The Belmont housing cooperative sees growth in the number of inhabitants to become more socially diverse. No initiative was decidedly economic growth nor revenue oriented. Often the interviewees made explicit statements about not wanting to create revenues. These arguments are understandable within the context of the literature on social innovation as there is a broad consensus that SIs emerge out of a recog-

nition of problems and needs (*Neumaier* 2012) and altruistic concerns to solve these problems (*Terstriep* and *Rehfeld* 2020).

5. Conclusion

With this study, we seek to contribute to a better understanding of the role of social innovations in contributing to increased economic growth independence and thus we explain how social innovations may contribute to post-growth development at the local and regional level. While there is a wealth of studies that focus on the impacts social innovations have on territorial development and specifically on rural or peripheral regions (*Ravazzoli* et al. 2021), these studies often claim positive socioeconomic effects without regard for the specific quality of the economic effects. More specifically the studies lack a differentiation between economic growth dependence versus independence. And there is rarely a detailed focus on entrepreneurial decisions to be made towards increased economic growth independence and their effects. Thus, one aim of the article was to examine a set of economic growth independence indicators and illustrate whether and how they are met by those involved in social innovations. For this purpose, we utilized seven case studies of social innovation that emerged in a Swiss mountain region.

We show that the examined social innovations can contribute to a post-growth society at the local and regional level. The involved entrepreneurial actors develop innovative initiatives in response to socio-economic challenges, but also when they see opportunities to change a situation, which allows to fulfill socially desired values. These social innovations target not only economic goals, but – and in many cases more importantly – social and ecological goals. In response to the challenges, but also in response to their own value systems, the entrepreneurs chose organizational forms and strategies such as (re-)localization, de-commercialization, low capital intensity, and self-governance that directly contribute to economic growth independence. These characteristics help make the social innovation initiatives growth-independent and thus they contribute to local/regional post-growth development (see *Fig. 1*). *Figure 1* illustrates this process and places social innovation in the context of local/regional post-growth development. As territorial development has to respond to socio-economic challenges and opportunities (such as demographic change, energy transition, health care provision, etc.), actors take up the opportunity to find alternative solutions and develop social innovations that not only target economic outcomes, but also ecological and social objectives. Through specific entrepreneurial practices such as (re-)localization, de-commercialization, low capital intensity and self-governance these SIs contribute to a region's economic growth independence.

Fig. 1 Social innovations and post-growth development at the local/regional level. Source: own elaboration

With this study we also show that there is a type of innovation – namely social innovations – that can contribute in post-growth-oriented ways to local and regional development. Innovations are often viewed as one-dimensional: technological innovations are favored because only those are seen to contribute to economic progress. Along the same lines some argue that (technical) innovation is indispensable for economic development because without innovation there will be no economic growth and our society would come to a standstill. Yet, the examined social innovations illustrate how local and regional challenges and opportunities inspire actors to become entrepreneurial and to take risks by developing socially innovative business initiatives that address social and economic well-being. In doing so, they choose organizational and entrepreneurial strategies that solve needs and problems of the local and regional population and economy and at the same time foster economic growth independence.

However, we need to consider certain limitations of our research. First, we were not able to measure the mechanisms by which the social innovations can induce growth independence, as we only conducted data on the social innovation actors' perceptions of how they contribute to growth independence and did not apply (econometric) evaluation methods. Second, our study is not representative for all SIs because we have limited our cases to one region and to a specific time period. Third, because we want to illustrate in which ways growth independence indicators were applied in SIs, we have only focused on those SIs which fulfilled the largest number of growth independence indicators from our previous analysis (*Tschumi* et al. 2021). We excluded all other SIs we identified in the study region, also those that might be growth-inducing.

Despite these limitations, regional policymakers need to consider ways in which they can support these types of entrepreneurial actors and social innovation initiatives. Peripheral rural and mountain regions or small towns that do not possess a strong export sector or that are plagued by demographic decline can benefit from this type of development as social innovations may allow these regions to develop based on a different, namely growth-independent model of development (*Franklin* 2020; *Sept* 2021). Yet, in the context of Switzerland, social innovations are currently not supported by the traditional regional policy efforts (*Mayer* et al. 2018). We argue in line with *Moulaert* and *Nussbaumer* (2005) that both theory and policy need to revise the reductionist view of territorial innovation and support community-based and post-growth oriented notions of territorial development.

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4.3 Paper III: Social innovations in tourism: Analysing processes, actors, and tipping points

Authors: Samuel Wirth, Heike Mayer, Monika Bandi

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Abstract: Social innovations consist of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organisations and they provide new solutions to societal problems. They typically evolve along three phases and have the potential to solve region-specific challenges. In the operating phase, social innovations can overcome the so-called tipping point. The tipping point is an elusive moment at which the social innovation can begin to spread or at which it could also fail. To examine the social innovation characteristics that contribute to overcome tipping points and to identify the role and motivations of actors to participate in the process of developing social innovations in tourism, we applied innovation biographies to seven social innovations in a Swiss mountain region. Data were drawn from 29 interviews with the involved actors. Our results show that social innovations in tourism that overcame the tipping point fulfil three conditions: First, new actors join the social innovations in the operating phase. Second, all the actors involved benefit from the social innovation for their own business strategy. Third, the social innovation is accepted in the region and among the actors involved and therefore does not face strong headwinds. Furthermore, developers, supporters, and promoters are important throughout the entire social innovation process. The findings suggest the need for a more comprehensive understanding of innovations in tourism that incorporates the complexity of different actors involved.

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Social innovations in tourism: Analysing processes, actors, and tipping points

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ABSTRACT

Social innovations consist of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organisations and they provide new solutions to societal problems. They typically evolve along three phases and have the potential to solve region-specific challenges. In the operating phase, social innovations can overcome the so-called tipping point. The tipping point is an elusive moment at which the social innovation can begin to spread or at which it could also fail. To examine the social innovation characteristics that contribute to overcome tipping points and to identify the role and motivations of actors to participate in the process of developing social innovations in tourism, we applied innovation biographies to seven social innovations in a Swiss mountain region. Data were drawn from 29 interviews with the involved actors. Our results show that social innovations in tourism that overcame the tipping point fulfil three conditions: First, new actors join the social innovations in the operating phase. Second, all the actors involved benefit from the social innovation for their own business strategy. Third, the social innovation is accepted in the region and among the actors involved and therefore does not face strong headwinds. Furthermore, developers, supporters, and promoters are important throughout the entire social innovation process. The findings suggest the need for a more comprehensive understanding of innovations in tourism that incorporates the complexity of different actors involved.

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Introduction

Innovation in tourism has been considered as a key factor for the competitiveness of enterprises, organisations and destinations and also as one of the main drivers of local development (Gomezelj, 2016; A.-M. Hjalager, 2010; Rodríguez et al., 2014). The body of literature in this field is growing and the approaches differ regarding their perspective on processes, context configurations, knowledge, technology and type of innovation (Pikkemaat et al., 2019). Still, the understanding of innovation in tourism

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is mainly technology-oriented (Gomezelj, 2016) and therefore neglects the complexity of diverse actors involved (Trunfio & Campana, 2019) and the network in which innovations in tourism are made (Kofler et al., 2018; Sørensen, 2007). The technological understanding has recently been challenged (Gomezelj, 2016; Trunfio & Campana, 2019) and the concept of social innovation in tourism is gaining interest (Aksoy et al., 2019; Batle et al., 2018). Social innovations consists of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organizations and they provide new solutions to problems (Ayob et al., 2016; Moulaert et al., 2013; Neumeier, 2012). As such, they have the potential to solve region-specific challenges (Edwards-Schachter & Wallace, 2017; Moulaert et al., 2017; Mulgan et al., 2007; Nicholls et al., 2015). In doing so, social innovations incorporate collective actions and they engage society in developing new solutions (Bock, 2016). At the heart of a social innovation lies the recognition of a social need or a societal problem (Bock, 2012; Moulaert & Nussbaumer, 2005; Neumeier, 2012). A social innovation starts spreading its solution if it overcomes a so-called tipping point. The tipping point is an elusive moment in the operating phase at which the social innovation is either widely adopted and spreads or at which it fails (Neumeier, 2012). The existing body of research on social innovations suggests that social innovations develop in three phases. The phases are especially relevant because they structure the development process systematically.

However, only a few studies have investigated the concept of social innovations in tourism. This is especially true, for the process and the actors involved. A focus on the process and the actors involved is highly relevant for two reasons. First, social innovations need to successfully pass a tipping point and only then can they fully unfold their outcomes (Neumeier, 2012). Second, the mainly technological oriented understanding of innovations tends to gloss over the complexity of diverse actors needed and included in innovation processes. Furthermore, independent of the understanding of a social innovation in general, the tourism literature agrees with the notion that more knowledge about the creation and facilitation of social innovation is needed (Trunfio & Campana, 2019). Therefore, the question on how social innovations in tourism develop and how actors involved can overcome tipping points is of great interest.

In this paper, we apply existing concepts about the development process of social innovations in tourism and examine the characteristics of these social innovations that help them overcome tipping points. Furthermore, we study the actors' role and motivations to participate in the process of developing such social innovations. In doing so, our analysis focusses on a select number of case studies of social innovations in tourism in a Swiss mountain region. We apply the method of innovation biographies (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016) and derive the development of seven cases over the past 13 years. In doing so, we draw on data from 29 semi-structured interviews with the actors involved.

Background

Social innovations in tourism

Innovations are considered to be crucial for a region's development and they are especially important for the tourism industry (Halkier et al., 2014). Still, the

understanding of innovations in tourism stems mainly from the literature on innovations in manufacturing. Therefore, a technology orientation dominates the literature on tourism innovations (Gomezelj, 2016) and a comprehensive understanding of innovation processes is missing (Sørensen, 2007). From a geographical point of view, the debates primary focus on knowledge networks and innovation systems in tourism (Booyens & Rogerson, 2017; Brouder & Eriksson, 2013; Carson et al., 2014; A. M. Hjalager, 2010; Rodríguez et al., 2014). However, studies often neglect the complex networks of actors who are engaged in developing and implementing innovations and the manifold kinds of innovation these actors engage in (Trunfio & Campana, 2019). Furthermore, innovations can take on many different forms as Trunfio and Campana have shown. In their review paper of innovations in tourism, they highlight four different types of innovations in tourism: social innovations, experience co-creation, smart destination, and e-participative governance. For them, social innovations are relevant due their potential to transform the organisational structure of destinations. Furthermore the destination resources and opportunities for innovation become visible due to the inclusive view of diverse actors such as local communities, local firms, political/institutional actors, and destination management organisations (Trunfio & Campana, 2019).

Studies of social innovations are quite heterogeneous in their understanding of what a social innovation is and how it comes to be. This is especially true for social innovations in tourism where most academic publications lack explicit definitions. Social innovations in tourism are mainly discussed in light of a social change: They are seen as an organisational change in tourism firms (Alkier et al., 2017) or as new business models that creates a social value rather than an economic value. In some studies, this is also referred to as social entrepreneurship in tourism (Sheldon & Daniele, 2017). This stands in contrast to Moulaert's critique that social innovations certainly have economic aspects, however, emphasizing them too strong, can lead to a reductionists view on the potential of social innovations (Moulaert et al., 2013). Generally, social innovations in tourisms are understood as new value propositions, new informal rules and cultures, different ways of thinking and ways to lead to institutional change (Alegre & Berbegal-Mirabet, 2016; Polese et al., 2018). They are also discussed under the assumption that this type of innovation can satisfy social needs that have not yet been met by private market provision or by the state (Batle et al., 2018). Furthermore, social innovations in tourisms can also be understood as a strategy to incorporate local communities in decision-making and planning of tourism destinations (Malek & Costa, 2015). For our study we use a definition that integrates all identified participating actors in the creation of the social innovations, and we focus on the development process rather than the outcome. Based on the bibliometric analysis of Ayob et al. (2016) we define social innovation as follows:

A social innovation consists of new forms of cooperation of individuals or organizations that lead to new ideas, of which the implementation is at least considered. In regional development, such innovations can have a positive impact on society, improve the quality of life and/or change social or power relations.

While the aforementioned studies focus primarily on a social outcome and changing social relations, a perspective on the development process of social innovations in tourism is extremely interesting but mostly missing. Studies about how social innovations in tourism came to be and which actors are involved are quite scant. Some

have argued that a focus on the social innovation process can enlarge the perspective to incorporate questions about participation, exchange, and collaboration with relevant stakeholders. It can help us understand the ways in which such innovations and the actors involved cross organizational boundaries (Voorberg et al., 2015). The latter is particularly relevant as social innovations in tourism need to be understood as managerial practices within or in between touristic actors. While it is correct that a diverse set of touristic actors need to be included, it is also crucial to consider non-touristic actors and to study tourism as one component of a destinations development (Ioannides & Brouder, 2016). Therefore, research on social innovation in the context of tourism needs to consider the diversity of actors and go beyond the tourism actors. In fact, our study considers a comprehensive understanding of collective actions addressing a regional challenge through a new configuration of multiple actors and resources. In the sense that local communities and local actors innovate to respond to problems experienced by local communities (Klein, 2009).

Process of social innovations

Several studies have examined the process of developing and implementing a social innovation (Murray et al., 2010; Neumeier, 2012, 2017). While Neumeier (2012, 2017) conceptualized three phases that range from the formation to the implementation of a social innovation, Murray et al. (2010) further took into account the scaling and diffusion as well as the impact of a social innovation in a six-stage model. The model by Murray et al. (2010) is much more detailed when it comes to the actors' execution of the tasks involved in the phases, whereas Neumeier's conceptualization highlights actor-network/participatory aspects. As the present paper's purpose is to focus on the development process and the actors involved at different phases, the model by Neumeier (2012) is more suitable because in the model, as in our research, the actors are central. Neumeier (2012) identified three phases that are important in the process of developing a social innovation. First, in the problematisation phase an actor or a small group of initial actors recognize a problem and has an idea how the problem could potentially be solved. Therefore, the problem and the initial idea lie at the core of this phase. Second, in the implementation phase, the initial actors proactively look for partners in order to implement their idea. If initial actors can see an advantage for themselves or the region, they decide to join them. Therefore, the reasons to participate are of central importance to this phase. Third, in the operation phase the social innovation is fully implemented and can reach a tipping point which is central to this phase.

This paper seeks to dig deeper in the development process of social innovations in tourism and provide answers with regards to question about the actors' reasons for participation and the differences in the individual stages of a social innovation development process in tourism.

Actors involved in social innovations in tourism

Innovations in tourism—and therefore also social innovations in tourism—result from a co-evolutionary process including public and private actors and the local

community (Gomezelj, 2016; Sørensen, 2007; Trunfio & Campana, 2019). Trunfio and Campana (2019) took a comprehensive approach and identified the following actors as drivers of innovations in tourism destinations: the destination management organisation, local firms, local community, and political/institutional actors. When focusing on social innovations in tourism, the literature has a rather limited view of actors: the only actors identified in the literature as being involved are the community (Alkier et al., 2017; Malek & Costa, 2015) and/or social tourism entrepreneurs (Sheldon & Daniele, 2017). However, this understanding of actors is not comprehensive and moreover, the tourism literature is not clear about the different roles these actors play in creating and developing social innovations in tourism. We can utilize, however, the literature on social innovations and follow the typology of actor roles developed by Terstriep et al. (2015):

- Developers: Actors that recognized the problem and had an idea how to solve it. They developed and implemented the idea in order to make it a social innovation.
- Supporters: Actors that actively helped to develop and implement the social innovation
- Promoters: Actors that were able to push the social innovation's development. They facilitated to operate, spread/diffuse/scale the social innovation.

Tipping point in social innovations

The tipping point—defined as a critical point in time at which the further development path of a social innovation is decided - is an elusive moment in the operating phase at which the social innovation is widely adopted and begins to spread to other regions or at which it fails (Neumeier, 2012). However, spreading can be about increasing the social impact (Deserti & Rizzo, 2020; Santos et al., 2013), increasing the number of people who have access to the social innovation (Dees et al., 2004) or increasing the number of emulations (Murray et al., 2010). On the contrary, failure means that the social innovation is not accepted (anymore) in the region (Neumeier, 2012). However, this understanding of failure or success is shortsighted in that it neglects the problem-solving characteristic of social innovations. Social innovations can be regional- and/or actor-specific solutions and as a result they can be successful even if they do not spread by simply offering solutions to local problems. Furthermore, Neumeier (2012, 2017) emphasized too little that a social innovation can also fail before reaching a tipping point. We assume that there are multiple critical tipping points in the development of a social innovation and they crystallize along the problematisation, implementation and operation phase. However, we focus on the specific tipping point in the operation phase, because a social innovation increases its capacity to provide a potential solution to a specific problem if more people have access to it and therefore if it spreads.

Methodology

For this study, we were interested in the ways in which social innovations in tourism develop in a Swiss mountain region. We examined seven case studies of social innovations in tourism. The cases were selected from an inventory that was created within a larger research project in 2019 (University of Bern, 2021). Back then, we screened

databases from regional development programmes and innovation prizes to compile the inventory. In addition, we conducted an online survey among the municipal secretaries (the senior administrative officers) of all 76 municipalities of the Bernese Oberland and a systematic online search and newspaper review between January and June 2019. In total, 979 potential cells of social innovations could be identified. With the help of 23 evaluation criteria, derived from the literature on social innovations (e.g Ayob et al., 2016; Pol & Ville, 2009) and consisting of the following categories - collaboration, novelty, idea, Bernese Oberland, improving quality of life, changing social relationships, changing power relationships - we identified 68 social innovations, which emerged in the period between 1997 and 2018. All potential social innovations in the data were independently assessed by two researchers from the team. The intercoder reliability of the analysis was 90% (Tschumi et al., 2021). Out of this inventory we identified the social innovations in tourism. This means that, the social innovation needed to be generated by touristic actors, the social innovation is a touristic offer, or both conditions are met. We identified 41 social innovations in tourism (Wirth & Bandi Tanner, 2020). In order to get our sample of analysis we further narrowed down the selection with the following three criteria, originated in the Bernese Oberland (1) after the year 2008 (2), and still operating (spring 2021) (3). The first two criteria guaranteed a comparison among the selected cases due to the same cantonal and national regulations. Criterion 3 enabled to do biographies because actors exist for interviews. This approach yielded seven social innovations, which we then examined in more detail.

The Bernese Oberland is located on the northern side of the alps in Switzerland. The whole region has a rich touristic history dating back to the 1820s. With mountains up to 4200 meters high, the region is especially attractive for mountaineering and skiing. The region is highly dependent on tourism and about more than a quarter of employment is generated directly or indirectly by tourism. However, there is internal migration to more central areas and some out-migration from the valleys, partly due to excessively high housing prices in the core tourist communities (Höchli et al., 2013). For each of the seven case studies of social innovations we conducted innovation biographies (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016). The innovation biographies enabled us to capture social relations and contextual settings along the development process of the social innovation in question. The method is especially suitable because it allows us to collect data on each case over time and thus it gave us insights into the innovation process from key actors' perspectives. Developing innovation biographies allows for the study of time-space dynamics from a micro-level perspective and involves a number of steps (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016). The first step were narrative interviews with persons who has been strongly involved in the process of initiating and developing the social innovation in question. Once we conducted these first interviews, we were able to analyse the data and write the draft innovation biography for each case study. In a second step, we added additional information to the biography from an extensive desktop research. Through this work, we were able to identify additional involved actors. The third step was to conduct semi-structured interviews with further involved actors to receive an exhaustive biography with detailed information about the initial idea of the social innovation, the actors involved and their motivation. The three steps yielded 29 interviews (3-6 per case) with an average duration of around one hour. This resulted in seven detailed innovation biographies.

For the analysis we subdivided every analysed biography into three phases according to Neumeier (2012) and examined the differences and commonalities among the seven social innovations. In doing so, we focused on the characteristics which were the most relevant in the appropriate phase. In the problematisation phase the problem and its solution are the key characteristic, which led us to focus on the problem and the solution. In the implementation phase the reason for participating is essential, which led us to focus on the motivation of the actors. For all phases, we looked closer at the role of the diverse actors involved. In order to overcome the technology-driven perspective on innovation in tourism, it is crucial to accept the complexity of the destination, in which diverse actors interact (Trunfio & Campana, 2019; van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016). Therefore, we investigated the roles of the actors included in all three phases. In doing so, we looked for the presence of the initiators, developers, and promoters.

The biography method allows us to explain, why some social innovations overcome a tipping point and how the actor constellation looks like in the different phases of the social innovation process. In the past, a lot has been done on finding a common definition of social innovations and explaining the formation and diffusion of social innovations. Yet these studies often lack an in-depth consideration of time and context in which the social innovation process took place.

Cases of social innovations in tourism

The following section provides information on the development process of the seven social innovation cases and assigns them into three different groups. The groups were created according to the social innovations' development paths in the operating phase. The social innovations assigned to group A remain in the operating phase and did not overcome a tipping point (yet). The social innovations assigned to group B overcame a tipping point and then failed. Those assigned to group C overcame a tipping point and succeed in the way that they spread their solution to other regions. The groups will be used to compare and contrast the cases when it comes to explaining divergence in the operating phase.

Hotel cooperation (group A)

In 2014 a group of hoteliers organized together with a consulting company informational events to inform and discuss a roadmap for a hotel cooperation. In 2016 the cooperation was founded with 11 participating hotels. The cooperation started with quick wins and the members saved money very quickly. It evolved and extended its cooperation activities. Nevertheless, it remained (is still) limited to a certain number of business activities. This hotel cooperation was the first institutionalised cooperation among hoteliers in the region. Back then, it was unique that hoteliers work that close together and that they share business figures.

Supporting program (group A)

In the mid-90s the cableway association recognized that smaller pre-alpine ski lifts faced challenges in maintenance work and in procurement of replacements parts. These smaller pre-alpine ski lifts are important for nearby larger mountain railways and cablecars. Because of their proximity to larger towns and/or villages, they provide an entry point, especially for children to start skiing. Therefore, they could develop

the guests for the larger mountain railways in the future. This mutual dependency led to the institutionalized supporting program, in which the larger mountain railways support the smaller pre-alpine ski lifts with know-how, especially regarding maintenance work and the provision of replacement parts. In turn, the pre-alpine ski lifts advertised the supporting larger mountain railway and offer special tickets for skiing these areas. The supporting program stands symbolically for the high dependency on tourism and especially winter tourism and that one wants to preserve ski tourism. Therefore, it is seen as a measure to attract future guests to ski. After the implementation of the program, the actors involved made no major changes and the program more or less remained in the form as it was implemented.

Renovation program (group B)

In 2014 the region's tourism director detected too many old and often unused second homes in the region. In 2016 he presented a program in which second homeowners received free advice on the conversion of their second home when they engage local firms. Additionally, the municipality paid a fee to lower the conversion costs. On the other hand, the homeowners committed to rent out the apartment after the renovation. The administrative work behind the rental was taken care of by a local rental agency. The program fits in this region, because they the percentage of second homes of 61% is quite high (ARE, 2017). These second homes often remained unused because they were not for rent and if so, they were not attractive. Therefore, the municipality faced high infrastructure costs with low incomes from visitor tax. However, to few second homeowners used the program and the expectation of actors working within the social innovation were not met sufficiently.

Consumption-free place (group B)

In 2017 young people searched for a room for an art festival. They found a former hotel that they could use temporarily. In order to organize events, they established a democratically organized collective and they engaged on a voluntary basis. For the youth, the work in the collective was a great opportunity to bring in own concepts and ideas. However, it was challenging to coordinate these different ways of work. Furthermore, the consumption-free place can be seen as a reaction to the region's development path. The region's primary policy orientation and spatial development focus is on satisfying tourist needs and therefore ignore to a certain extend locals needs, especially from the youth. Therefore, the collective's ideas could easily stand in contrast to the region's policy orientation.

Solar ship (group C)

In 2010 a local family founded a private company and started to construct a solar ship together with a chrome steel company and an electric cart company. After the first prototype created in 2011, they re-engineered the ship several times and improved it. In order to cover the expenses, the family provided charter trips. In 2017 the city's marketing department asked if the solar ship could provide a time scheduled connection in the region's lake basin. In return, the city council pays a fixed sum and acted as a door-opener for negotiation with the local shipping company to use their

landing docks. Today the solar ship operates with synchronised timetables. The solar ship stands for the circumstance that tourism has low entry barriers and for the ease for individuals become active in this sector. This case started as a collaboration between a family and two companies in the region in order to boat on the lake without causing CO2-emissions. Through the boat service, regional parks near the lake basin are now connected and can be visited by locals and tourists.

Bilingual snow-camp (group C)

In 2015 the cantonal exchange officer who is living in a tourism destination and his counterpart from another canton presented their idea of a joint snow-camp for school classes from the French and the German speaking part of Switzerland during low season. Together with the local tourism organization, they implemented the social innovation and included the local ski school, a local sport shop and local accommodations as additional actors. Due to interests of a nation-wide foundation that supports language exchange and an association that promotes ski sport, the program has gained increased interests. In 2021/2022 the main organizational part shifted from the tourism organization to the association and the program expanded nation-wide. This case is located at the language border where the awareness of bilingualism is quite common. In addition to the goal to improve the children's language skills another goal is to teach children how to ski. This also indicates the high dependence on winter tourism, especially because the children were seen as potential visitors in the future.

Museum (group C)

In 2008 a private person who owned a second home in a mountain village was bothered by the closure of shops in the village and as a result by the bleak view of empty storefront windows. She founded together with five other private persons a museum association with the aim to enliven the storefronts. They started an exhibition free of charge in five shop windows spread over the village. The exhibit items were borrowed from the locals as the association does not own a collection. In 2017 the local sport museum closed and for the region high valued exhibits were in danger of being liquidated as well. After a long process, in 2020 the preservation of the exhibits was secured together with the nation's premier Alpine museum located in Bern. Due to the regions strong history in tourism and mountaineering there exist many valuable exhibits that now belong to the museum's own collection.

Findings

Development phases of the social innovations in tourism

The following chapter is organized along the three development phases of social innovations in tourism (we denote them phase I-III). Figure 1 provides a structure of the results and illustrates the development process of social innovations in tourism as derived from our case studies. All our cases went through the problematization and implementation phase and reached the operating phase. There, they developed

in three different development paths (A-C). The following section provides the key characteristics of the social innovations in each phase and we discuss why some succeed and others fail and a third group continues without scaling at the moment of the tipping point in the operating phase.

Problematization phase

In the problematization phase we identified two types of problems that were the impetus for the social innovations: The first type are regional problems. Regional problems initiated the following four social innovations. First, the consumption-free place tries to tackle the problem of too few (cultural) places for younger people living in the region. Second, the renovation program tries to tackle the problem of too many old and empty second homes. Third, the bilingual snow-camp tries to tackle the problem of too few guests during low seasons. Fourth, the museum tries to tackle the problem of too many closing shopwindows and therefore a deadly looking village. The second type of problem are actor-specific problems that arose in the following three social innovations: First, the hotel cooperation tries to tackle hotel-specific challenges as for example the cost intensive business. Second, the supporting program for smaller pre-alpine ski lifts by larger mountain railways tries to tackle the problem of lack of knowledge and mechanical spare parts for smaller lifts and meanwhile the decreasing number of skiers which is a problem for the larger mountain railways. Third, the solar ship tries to tackle the problem, that the founder family could not enjoy the view of the lake anymore, because another building was built right in front of their house. Table 1 summarizes the problem and the central idea of the examined social innovations and highlights the initial idea with which the problem was approached.

We further examined the initial actors who recognized the problem and had the idea of the social innovation and we refer to them as developers (Terstriep et al., 2015). Interestingly, all but one developer, were individuals. In two cases the developers were not directly affected by the problem. In the bilingual snow-camp the initial actor was a teacher living in a tourism destination. Due to the fact, that he was anchored in the region, he was aware of the low utilization problem during low season but as a teacher, he was not directly affected by it. In the hotel cooperation the initial idea came from the local tourism director active at the time. While he was

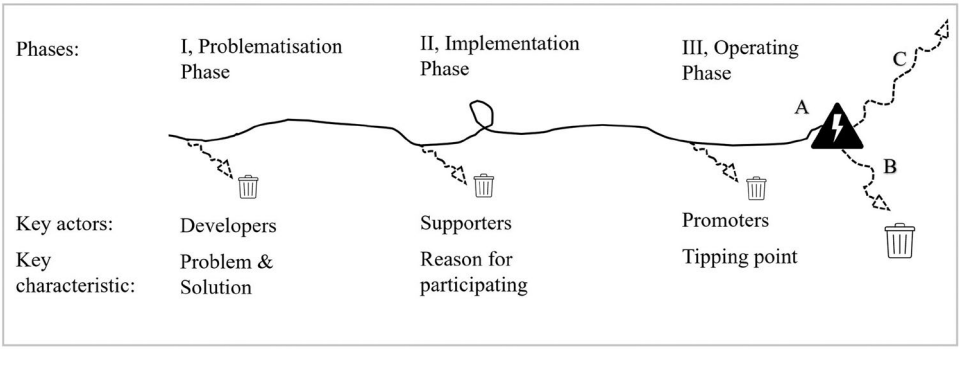

Figure 1. Simplified development process of social innovations in tourism (Source: Author.).

Table 1. Summary of the problem and initial idea (Source: Author.).

Social innovation	Problem	Kind of problem	Initial idea
Consumption-free place	Few places for youth	Regional/local problem	Temporary use of space
Renovation program	To many empty, old second homes	Regional/local problem	Support second homeowners with consulting service for renovation
Museum	Empty shop windows gave the impression of a dead village	Regional/local problem	Reanimate empty shop windows and regional storytelling
Bilingual snow-camp for school classes	Low utilisation during low seasons	Regional/local problem	Snow camp for school classes from different language regions
Hotel cooperation	Tough economic circumstances for the hotels	Actor specific problem	A hotel cooperation
Supporting program	Lack of know-how and mechanical spare parts	Actor specific problem	Cooperation between large and small skiing destinations
Solar ship	No direct view of the lake	Actor specific problem	A renewable energy ship

certainly interested in a healthy regional hotel industry, it was not his main task to establish a hotel cooperation. Therefore, he suggested the idea to a fellow hotel owner and left the implementation up to this person. In sum, across all cases individuals are central developers in this first phase of the social innovation process.

Implementation phase

In the implementation phase, supporters joined the social innovation and contributed to the implementation of the initial idea. The supporters were individuals, groups of individuals, and firms. Their contributing activities were similar to their professional work. As example a company that constructed handrails out of chromium steel, helped in manufacturing a ship hull out of chromium steel. There, the expertise to work with this material, is used in a new scope. In this sense, the social innovation could be seen as a new application field of the ordinary work. We found that low entry barriers for the supporters exist due to social innovation's informality and low risk to one's own business. This circumstance simplified the entry of the supporters into the social innovation.

Our results indicate three main motivations for the participation of the supporters in a social innovation process: First, in all but one social innovation the supporters reported an elusive, non-measurable benefit. They considered that there has always been an advantage and mutual benefit in working together. Although they were not able to quantify this benefit, a basic benefit and a positive attitude towards the cooperation was expected. This could be exemplified with the statement of a supporter-actor of the solar ship: ' […] You can not say how many orders it has brought me. But another statement says: If I do not do anything, then I know that no orders will come. And everything I do in one direction will eventually bear fruit.'This quote is from a specialised small and medium-sized enterprise, located in the region. Second, in more than half of the social innovations the work within them suited the actors' own day-to-day business and the collaboration fitted their own business strategy and objectives. Therefore, the social innovation might even have been supportive to achieve one's own business goals. As example the snow-sport school in the bilingual snow-camp social innovation taught snow sport lessons to school classes instead of mixed groups

or private lessons. Third, in two social innovations the supporters reported personal interests and enthusiasm for the idea as main reason to participate. This could be exemplified by a quote given from a collective actor in the consumption-free place social innovation: 'I just noticed that I was really missing that. So, on a grassroots level, enlightened conversations, having an impact and networking, that is what I really missed. And then I simply found, hey, somehow I would like to help out.'The quote illustrates the regional problem of missing places and activities for the younger generation and it emphasizes the willingness to participate and to improve the current situation. Surprisingly, at the beginning of a collaboration at any phase of the social innovation process none of the main reasons were related to financial benefits. However, in the development process of two social innovations, financial benefits occurred due to cost savings and ultimately became the main motivation for participate over time. This is especially exemplified in the hotel-cooperation where the actors could re-invest their savings in renovation of the hotel.

Overall, we found that the supporters were strongly convinced of the social innovation and furthermore motivated by the expected benefit for their own's strategy. In addition, they expected to contribute to solve the initial problem.

Operating phase

In the operating phase, we found that the social innovations developed in three different ways around the tipping point and therefore could be divided into three groups (Figure 1: Group A-C). Our results show that it is in the operating phase that tipping points play a crucial role. Two social innovations did not overcome a tipping point and remained in the operating phase (Figure 1: Group A). These two are the hotel cooperation and the ski-lift supporting program. Both social innovations were accepted and used by a small group of actors. Furthermore, in the operating phase both social innovations provided a benefit for the actors included. This can be seen in the hotel cooperation where the actors involved is a small group of hoteliers. The hoteliers reported the cost savings as most important benefit, followed by an informal, honest exchange and support, especially during uncertain situations. In the other example—the ski-lift supporting program—eight bigger mountain railways and around 22 smaller pre-alpine ski lifts participate in the social innovation. For the bigger mountain railways, the benefit laid in the higher publicity due to the presence at the smaller pre-alpine ski lifts and in easier entry-points for skiing due to the closer proximity of the pre-alpine ski lifts to metropolitan areas. For the pre-alpine ski lifts the benefit laid in easier access to replacements parts and the access to knowledge regarding administrative work for the technical security. Interestingly, after questioning if the two examples did not want to scale, they denied and argued that they benefit from it as it currently is. Overall, these two examples are successful in their own way, even though they did not overcome the tipping point.

Two social innovations reached a tipping point and failed in the way that they were not been able to establish themselves on a wider base and were increasingly rejected by the actors involved (Figure 1: Group B). Despite that, there were additional reasons for their respective failure that mainly originated in actor motivation and behaviour. As example, they consisted of actors who differed in terms of consensus, strategic intentions, and belief in broader benefits for themselves and the region.

These actors therefore failed to maintain the spirit and motivation to work in and for the social innovation. In addition, their intentions offended the region's political landscape or at least some of the region's powerful actors. These reasons for failure were exemplified in the temporary use of an area as a consumption free space. In the second example of a social innovation that failed, the missing benefit for the actors involved seemed to be the main reason. On the one hand, to few second homeowners made use of the renovation program, which in turn diminished its importance. On the other hand, companies from the building industry did not profit as much as they expected and therefore wanted to change the social innovation in particular aspects that were not negotiable for the tourism actors. In addition, the region's political actors did not agree with the actions of the destination management organisation and the social innovation lacked political support.

Three social innovations overcame the tipping point and succeed in the way that they began to spread (Figure 1: Group C). They were characterised by the following three conditions: First, in the operating phase new actors joined the social innovations. These actors count as promoters as defined in the previous theoretical section of this paper (Terstriep et al., 2015). The promoters were public actors or organised as public legal partnerships and they contributed to the social innovation in providing financial guarantees, political power, manpower, networks, and/or knowledge. For the solar ship the promoters provided financial guarantees and acted as a door-opener for negotiations with the local shipping company to use their landing docks. For the bilingual snow-camp the promoters provided manpower and a network to scale the innovation. For the museum, they provided knowledge to teach the former actors how to handle a historically valuable collection.

Second, all the actors involved gained from the social innovation. Interestingly, we noticed that none of the promotors was affected by the initial problem that gave rise to the social innovation. Nonetheless, the promoters' motivations were slightly different to that of the initiators and developers. We found that they were primarily motivated by the expected benefit for their own business strategy, and they were strongly convinced by the social innovation. For example, the promoter in the bilingual snow camp reported:

> '… just at the moment when they decided they wanted to take it [the snow camp] to the next level, they came to us and then we were just on fire again. […] And so, it was clear to us from the beginning, it is exactly in our sense and corresponds to our ideas and I know what they need, what we can do and that fits.'

In addition, the promoters expected a contribution to solving the initial problem. In this case the problem of low utilisation during low seasons, which was tackled by this social innovation, is a problem which is present in many touristic regions. Therefore, the promoters wanted to spread the solution (or at least a part of the solution) to other touristic mountain regions.

Compared to the elusive, non-measurable benefit that was presumed by the supporters in the implementation phase, the promoters in the operating phase were clearly more convinced that the social innovation benefits them or the region.

Third, the social innovation was accepted among the actors involved and in the region and therefore did not face strong headwinds. The acceptance in the region

can be exemplified with the following two quotes from the mini museum and the solar ship:

> '…The [locals] help, you can talk to them, they provide material. One woman just said that […] she still had her great-grandmother's wedding dress, children's items […] [and] […] a postcard album. […] I think a lot of things will come to light.'

This quote needs to be read in the context of a small mountain village, where the social innovation revived empty shop windows with exhibitions on the regions' history. In the case of the solar ship, acceptance is illustrated by the captain's reaction of another shipping company that recognised the solarship as an important contribution to the touristic value of the region in form of a complementary touristic offer:

> 'Now even the captains [from another shipping company] come out when passing by and wave. That is also a sign of greatness. The first few years they did not even look down. Now they have even put us very prominently on their homepage.'

Discussion and conclusion

The results of this study indicate that social innovations in tourism can overcome a tipping point in the operating phase if the initial promoters of the innovation step up and take action, the involved actors observe a benefit, and if regional encouragement exists. Furthermore, our analysis particularly of the operating phase and the role of actors in the tipping point showed that the specific constellations of promoters include public and/or public funded actors. These findings expand current knowledge about the key factors that play a role in successful social innovations (eg. Neumeier, 2017; Oeij et al., 2019). In particular, we present detailed knowledge about the characteristics of social innovations when it comes to the tipping point. Especially, the findings that the promoters were crucial in the operating phase enhance current knowledge on the role of the promoters (Terstriep et al., 2015) with knowledge about the point in the process by which promoters are particularly relevant. The fact public and/or public legal partnerships play a critical role as promoters in the social innovation process in tourism is especially relevant for policy makers who want to support social innovations in tourism. It can thus be concluded that innovation policy in support of social innovations in tourism does not simply mean providing money. Rather policy efforts could be directed directly or via public legal partnerships and efforts could act as a promoter in the operating phase. In doing so, policy can provide financial guarantees, political power, manpower, network, and/or knowledge.

In our innovation biographies we found three different development paths for social innovations at the tipping point. Such a differentiated perspective on the possible outcomes during operating phases of social innovations is important as it was previously lacking in the literature ((Neumeier, 2012, 2017).

Another important finding is that the different actors played specific roles in each phase of the development process of social innovations in tourism. Individuals acted as developers in the problematization phase, individuals and local firms as supporters in the implementation phase, and public or public legal partnerships as promoters in the operating phase. Despite that, the findings show that supporters were primarily motivated due to an expected, elusive, non-measurable benefit,

personal interests and enthusiasm for the social innovation, and the work within the social innovation suited the actors' own day-to-day business. Compared to that, the findings show that the promoters were primarily motivated by the expected benefit for their own strategy, they were strongly convinced of the social innovation, and they expected a contribution to solve the initial problem. These results confirm current knowledge that innovation in tourism occur in co-evolutionary processes among public and private actors (Gomezelj, 2016; Sørensen, 2007; Trunfio & Campana, 2019).

Further, it has been suggested that the actors for innovations in tourism are institutional/political actors, local firms, local community and the destination management organisation (Trunfio & Campana, 2019). This does not fully appear to be the case in our study. Although institutional/political actors, local firms and local community were also present in our study and played different roles as outlined above, our study identified the destination management organization only in one case as an actor within the social innovation process. This was the bilingual snow-camp in that a destination management organization played the role of a supporter. This inconsistency may be due to the way the field of activity of a destination management organisation is defined and perceived. If a destination management organisation focuses only on marketing activities, they miss out on working on ongoing projects in the region. However, as we concluded above, destination management organisations organised as public or public/private partnerships could play an important role as promoters in social innovations in tourism if they change their role towards regional developers and step into action as a such.

It could be argued that the social innovations studied for this project were very heterogenous and are therefore difficult to compare. Indeed, there are fundamental differences as one group of social innovations represent touristic offers while others do not. However, this reflects to a certain point the multiple forms of social innovations (Ayob et al., 2016). Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that we only examined social innovations that succeed or failed after reaching an operating phase because we were interested in the actors evolved in the sensitive situation around tipping points. However, there is no single successful path for the development of a social innovation (Oeij et al., 2019). Therefore, a social innovation can also fail before reaching a tipping point and it is questionable if the specific findings on failure of a social innovation in tourism can also be adapted to the problematisation and an implementation phase. Furthermore, the failure of a social innovation in the sense that it does not exist anymore, does not mean that it had no impact. We rather need to emphasize that the social innovation does not have its direct impact anymore and slowly disappear. Despite that, the possibility of overcoming a tipping point does not mean that social innovations need to overcome a tipping point and spread. A social innovation could be a solution to a specific local problem, which is not present in other regions. Therefore, there could be no incentives to spread. Scaling is not the ultimate goal here, but the goal is to solve an issue and therefore, the social innovation can still be considered as successful. Furthermore, a linear or chronological notion of time is inherent in the discussion of the three phases and the tipping point and we acknowledge the limitations of such a perspective. We would like to refer to Lippmann and Aldrich (2015), who illustrate in an interesting chapter about the role of time in the

study of entrepreneurship that one would also need a non-linear approach. For the study of social innovation process and the role of critical moments, future research should theorize and measure the ways in which nonlinear, heterochronic, and uncertain temporal contexts may influence the development process. Despite that, the classification in success or failure at the time of the study and therefore only represent a snapshot. A successful social innovation as identified for this study, could still fail and a failed social innovation could still reawaken and succeed at a later stage.

This study only focuses on the phase, the tipping points and particularly the role of different types of actors. Yet, besides the critical role these actors play in the innovation processes, there are also other factors that are important such as social capital (Trunfio & Campana, 2019), collaboration and knowledge exchange (Carson et al., 2014), social networks (Sørensen, 2007), etc. Future research should be undertaken to investigate the effect of these aspects on social innovation processes in tourism. A particularly interesting question could be to what extent collaborations and networks play a role in overcoming tipping points. Such a perspective would allow an orientation towards actor constellations and knowledge exchanges. Furthermore, future studies could focus on the regional outcomes social innovations in tourism have and how they contribute to regional development. In general, the concept of social innovations provides a useful framework to conduct comprehensive research on innovations in tourism.

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4.4 Paper IV: Change agency in social innovation: an analysis of activities in social innovation processes

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Abstract: In this paper, we examine the role of change agency in social innovations. Agency in social innovations can create new resources and capacities for transformative change in a region. To date, there is a lack of empirical studies investigating how agency manifests itself in social innovations. In particular, research has not yet investigated the detailed activities of social innovation actors throughout the phases of social innovation processes. In this paper, we apply the concept of trinity of change agency to investigate the activities of social innovation actors. Utilizing innovation biographies and data from 61 interviews for 11 case studies of social innovation in a peripheral mountain region in Switzerland, we analyse the social innovation process from an actor-oriented perspective. Our findings show that the various types of change agency are highly present in social innovations. The significance of change agency alters throughout the innovation process. Our analysis shows that all kinds of actors performed change agency during the social innovation process. Interestingly, same actors performed different types of change agency during the social innovation process. The findings suggest that change agency is as a significant element in social innovations and that we need to consider it as a transformative element of social innovation processes. When policymakers take change agency into account in creating an environment in which social innovations can flourish, there is a great chance that social innovations can contribute to changing regional development paths and perhaps even to regional transformation.

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Change agency in social innovation: an analysis of activities in social innovation processes

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ABSTRACT

We examine the role of change agency in social innovations. Agency in social innovations can create new resources and capacities for transformative change in a region. To date, there is a lack of empirical studies investigating how agency manifests itself in social innovations. In particular, research has not yet investigated the detailed activities of social innovation actors throughout the phases of social innovation processes. In this paper we apply the concept of trinity of change agency to investigate the activities of social innovation actors. Using innovation biographies and data from 61 interviews for 11 case studies of social innovation in a peripheral mountain region in Switzerland, we analyse the social innovation process from an actor-oriented perspective. Our findings show that the various types of change agency are highly present in social innovations. The significance of change agency alters throughout the innovation process. Our analysis shows that all kinds of actors performed change agency during the social innovation process. Interestingly, same actors performed different types of change agency during the social innovation process. The findings suggest that change agency is as a significant element in social innovations and that we need to consider it as a transformative element of social innovation processes. When policymakers take change agency into account in creating an environment in which social innovations can flourish, there is a great chance that social innovations can contribute to changing regional development paths and perhaps even to regional transformation.

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change agency; social innovation; innovation biography; tourism; healthcare; mountain region; Switzerland

1. INTRODUCTION

Agency, defined as human activities with their intended and unintended consequences, is gaining interest in the social innovation literature (Pel et al., 2020; Suitner et al., 2022; Torre et al., 2020). Agency in social innovation is related to all kinds of activities to establish and develop social innovations and it is performed by the actors involved in social innovation processes. These activities can lead to changes in agendas and institutions, profoundly influencing basic routines, beliefs, power relations and/or resources (Castro-Arce & Vanclay, 2020; Franz et al., 2012; Pel et al., 2020). As such, agency in social innovations is considered to have the potential to solve regional challenges. Generally, there is a lack of empirical studies investigating

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how agency, which may lead to regional transformation, manifests itself in social innovations, that is, how different forms of agency are performed.

While the social innovation literature emphasizes the role of diverse actors when establishing solutions to societal problems or when creating new types of partnership (Ayob et al., 2016) recent studies in economic geography have shifted their focus on the role of the agents and agency. This research has addressed more general regional development processes and not specifically social innovation. Given the fact that social innovations are important when it comes to regional transformation and to addressing societal challenges (Tödtling et al., 2021), we need to understand the role of agency and specifically, we need to better understand the kinds of agency that are the most prevalent throughout a social innovation process. It remains an open question what type of actors perform what kind of activities in what type of agency, and how agency evolves throughout the social innovation process. We address this gap by analysing the activities of social innovation actors throughout social innovation processes. For our analysis, we applied the trinity of change agency concept, which was introduced by Grillitsch and Sotarauta (2020). The concept is particularly suitable for examining how agency manifests itself in social innovation processes because it comprises three distinct types of change agency that are important for regional transformation. We pose the following research questions: What types of change agency are performed in social innovation processes? In which ways are these different types of change agency performed and by whom?

We address these questions through an analysis of social innovations in tourism and healthcare in the Bernese Oberland, a mountain area in Switzerland. In this region, the two sectors are critically important because they provide substantial employment opportunities and ensure the provision of services for basic needs. Healthcare and tourism are not considered as being particularly innovative in terms of traditional types of innovation. Yet, our research unveiled that there are many innovative approaches, initiatives, and projects in the region that tackle challenges or improve the local or regional tourism and healthcare sector. These innovative approaches were identified and defined as social innovations (Tschumi & Mayer, 2020; Wirth & Bandi Tanner, 2020). We examined 11 social innovations that emerged over the past 14 years in the healthcare and tourism sector. The selected case studies represent a broad set of social innovations. The social innovations in tourism represent new forms of cooperation that aim at solving tourism-/actor-specific and/or regional challenges and thus have a potentially positive impact on the region's socio-economic structure. Similarly, the social innovations in healthcare also represent new forms of organizations and aim at improving the living situation in this peripheral part of Switzerland. The 11 social innovations are characterized by a rather strong element of Schumpeterian entrepreneurship as the involved actors had to take risks and be entrepreneurially minded when trying to establish and run the social innovations. Some of the social innovations are organized as private sector initiatives, but many are organized as non-profit associations, cooperatives or public–private partnerships.

In recent years, the literature on social innovations started to turn its attention to the rural context (Bock, 2016; Neumeier, 2012), which also fits our study context of the Bernese Oberland as a mountain region. Social innovations in rural or peripheral regions are seen to address the deep-seated changes that take place in the rural context and provide solutions for challenges such as depopulation or an aging society (Bock, 2016). They may have the potential to provide solutions to the challenges emanating from rural marginalization. Social innovations in rural areas often incorporate collective action by a range of (often civic) actors, novel forms of cooperation and organizational structures, and they go beyond a narrow area of application like in former approaches of rural policy (Bock, 2016). By focusing on the context of mountain regions, we head the call by Pugh and Dubois (2021), namely addressing the problem of 'bad talking' about peripheries. We rather take a capacity approach when focusing on change agency

in social innovation in a peripheral context as we assume that this context offers plenty of opportunity to develop unique solutions to region-specific challenges.

A study of change agency in social innovation requires a micro-perspective on actors and their behaviour over time. We applied the method of innovation biographies and analysed in detail the activities of the involved social innovation actors along the innovation process.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. We start with a clarification of the concept of social innovation and the different types of agency. We then describe the unique set of activities that are associated with developing and implementing a social innovation and relate these activities to the types of agency. In the methodology section we present detailed information on our case study region and on the methodology of innovation biographies. In the results section we first describe the role that change agency plays along the social innovation process and how the actors perform change agency. To develop a more detailed understanding, we present the results for two selected social innovations. These two examples were chosen because they illustrate the changing role of agency in one healthcare and one tourism-related social innovation. In the final section we discuss our findings and draw a conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although scholars have increasingly been using the concept of social innovation over the past 20 years (Ayob et al., 2016; van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016), there is no agreed-on definition of social innovation (van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016). While some social innovation literature strands focus on the change in social relations and practices (Franz et al., 2012) or on creative processes in social innovations (Mumford 2002), one of the most influential strands is the local development strand centred on the work by Moulaert. This strand states that social innovations should be aimed at addressing social challenges, satisfying human needs, empowering people and changing social relations (Moulaert et al., 2005) and thereby departs from traditional enterprise innovations that mainly aim at profit maximization and developing new markets.

A common feature of social innovations present in all literature strands was deducted by Ayob et al. (2016) in their bibliometric analysis of social innovation research articles and other publications. They found that social innovations involve 'new forms of collaboration, whether at an individual or organisational level' (p. 648) that lead to new ideas. Whereas collaboration among actors from different sectors can be present in other forms of innovation, social innovations often comprise a much more diverse range of collaborating actors, including civic actors, third sector organizations, private entrepreneurs and the public sector (Nicholls et al., 2016). In contrast to the other literature strands, the local development strand perceives social innovation as a process embedded in a spatial context (Van Dyck & Van den Broeck, 2013). Social innovations satisfy local/regional actors' needs and address local/regional challenges faced by these actors (Moulaert et al., 2005). Social innovations can shape the way a locality or region develops and sometimes even lead to regional transitions (Suitner et al., 2022). This is in line with recent publications, which emphasize that social innovations can lead to social change and institutional transformation (Pel et al., 2020; van Wijk et al., 2019). However, it is not a common feature of social innovations that they must lead to such change (Ayob et al., 2016). Rather, it is the potential of social innovations to induce such change.

Based on these considerations, we define social innovations as new forms of cooperation that lead to new ideas on a local or regional level and aim at solving challenges faced by local or regional actors. These ideas can lead to changes in social and institutional structures, and regional development paths.

Studying social innovations in mountain regions is especially important because prior research illustrates that many innovative approaches, initiatives or projects aim at tackling

regional and/or actor-specific challenges and thus influence regional transformation (Mayer et al., 2021). To achieve such impacts, human agency in social innovation processes is crucial (Torre et al., 2020; van Wijk et al., 2019).

However, there is a lack of empirical studies investigating how agency indeed manifests itself in social innovations. In this paper we extend the theoretical developments of Suitner et al. (2022). Although they emphasize that agency provides directionality for transformative change and that agency is part of every stage of the social innovation process, their study does not focus on the detailed activities of social innovation actors throughout the phases of social innovation processes. Furthermore, their study does not consider the dynamics and in particular the temporality of agency, that is, how different forms of agency change during social innovation processes. Examining the activities and the changing character of agency in social innovation processes is important because we need to know what actors can do to initiate transformative changes. To investigate how agency evolves and changes in social innovation processes, we use the work by Grillitsch and Sotarauta (2020) who introduced the concept of trinity of change agency to explain transformative path development. They address the interplay between path dependency, structural conditions, and the construction and use of opportunities through agentic processes and argue that a trinity of agency shapes and transforms regional development paths. The concept distinguishes three conceptually and empirically derived types of change agency, which makes it particularly suitable for detecting how agency manifests itself in social innovation processes:

- Innovative entrepreneurship refers to agency in a new field by risk-taking activities and the search for new (economic) opportunities. In addition, it refers to activities that aim at breaking with existing ways of doing things and establishing new ones by combining knowledge and resources in novel ways (Feldman et al., 2005; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Weik, 2011).
- Institutional entrepreneurship refers to agency related to the introduction and implementation of divergent institutional change. It aims at changing existing institutions or introducing new ones (Battilana et al., 2009). Particularly, these are activities associated with crafting a vision for divergent change and mobilizing allies (Battilana et al., 2009).
- Place-based leadership refers to agency related to mobilizing and connecting actors with different knowledge, resources and networks so that they would be able to contribute to, and benefit from, development processes and outcomes. It includes negotiating with different actors at municipal, regional and transnational scales (Grillitsch et al. 2021), applying rather collaborative than hierarchical leadership (Beer & Clower, 2014).

Studies found that in processes of changing regional development paths, all three types of agency are performed (e.g., Grillitsch et al., 2021; Jolly et al., 2020). There is also evidence provided by Grillitsch, Sotarauta et al. (2022) that the performance of one type of change agency lays the foundation for other types to unfold. For example, 'institutional entrepreneurship … provided the grounds for mobilizing across actor groups and pooling resources (place-based leadership), which led to improved regional preconditions for stimulating innovative entrepreneurship' (p. 13). As collective agency plays an important role in changing regional development paths (Huggins & Thompson, 2022), the three types of agency are often performed in conjunction (Grillitsch, Asheim et al., 2022; Sotarauta et al., 2021). Particularly, Jolly et al. (2020) found that same types of actors can perform multiple types of change agency in one phase of a path development at a time and/or alter their performed change agency in the subsequent or preceding phase.

Although the trinity of change agency concept was developed for the study of regional (economic) growth paths and 'traditional' forms of innovations (Grillitsch & Sotarauta,

2020), the activities that are related to the three types of agency could potentially apply to all kinds of innovation processes (including social innovation) because innovation processes generally rely on agency to change extant practices (Kristof, 2022). This is even the case for innovative entrepreneurship, which is typical to 'traditional' forms of innovation (Weik, 2011), for instance, for activities related to risk-taking or combining knowledge and resources in novel ways. Since the notion of changing practices and finding solutions to challenges is central to social innovations (Franz et al., 2012; Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019; van der Have & Rubalcaba, 2016), the three types of change agency can also be present in the process of developing and implementing social innovations. Thus, some of the findings on change agency in processes of changing regional development paths can also be expected to be valid for social innovation processes. Social innovations generally result from co-evolutionary processes that involve various actors including people from the local community, public, and private actors (Butzin & Terstriep, 2018; Farmer et al., 2018; Moulaert et al., 2013; Nicholls et al., 2016). Social innovation actors engage in all sorts of activities when they are involved in the social innovation process, ranging from activities related to the initial idea generation to activities related to the implementation of the social innovation. The literature emphasizes that the actors take various roles and therefore perform various activities (Butzin & Terstriep, 2018). We can therefore expect that the same social innovation actors can perform different types of change agency. It is therefore particularly interesting to examine the various types of change agency and to focus on the actors performing the types throughout the social innovation process. Suitner et al. (2022) examined what determines and facilitates agency in social innovations for regional transformations We add to this by providing a detailed analysis of each change agency throughout the social innovation process.

In this paper we focus on activities of the actors involved in social innovation. The activities relate to intended or unintended actions to establish and develop social innovations. We define activities as sequences/series of actions performed by social innovation actors in different phases throughout the social innovation process. For instance, they encompass initial networking to find supporters for a novel approach, initiative or project, lobbying and negotiating and implementing the social innovation. The activities can be related to the three types of change agency:

- Innovative entrepreneurship involves activities that involve a high degree of risk-taking and we may typically find these types of risk-taking activities in the beginning of a social innovation process. As social innovation initiators search for new opportunities to get the social innovation started, they often take personal risks (Jungsberg et al., 2020). They may borrow money or capital or (partly) abandon their job to invest more time in initiating the social innovation. However, searching for new (economic) opportunities and thereby taking risks might also be present during later stages of the social innovation process as social innovation processes are open toward external influences, such as new regional development programmes (Neumeier, 2012). Social innovation actors can therefore be triggered to take risks and search new opportunities even after the social innovation idea has already been implemented.
- Institutional entrepreneurship generally involves activities to mobilize allies outside the realm of a social innovation. This type of agency might take place when the social innovation has already been established and there is a need to gain political support or support from third sector or private organizations (Jensen & Fersch, 2019; Jungsberg et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2010; Terstriep et al., 2015). For example, a midwife may talk to public representatives to get political support for the social innovation or a founder of a solar ship may negotiate with the government to get a fixed contract for offering boat trips.
- Place-based leadership typically involves activities to connect with actors outside the social innovation to gain access to knowledge, resources and network. These activities are likely

to be present in the same phase as activities related to institutional entrepreneurship. In this phase, social innovations begin to reach out for supporters, and the involved actors need knowledge and resources to get the social innovation's idea into practice/operation (Bock, 2016; Farmer et al., 2018; Jungsberg et al., 2020). For instance, the midwife from the example above may make efforts to integrate policy actors into the social innovation to get access to specific regulatory knowledge. Such collaboration among actors from diverse sectors and professional backgrounds is one of the main features and defining elements of social innovations (Moulaert et al., 2013; Nicholls et al., 2016). Collaboration and support is particularly important when the social innovation is being established as a new practice, service or product (Farmer et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2010). With the support of other actors at this stage, the social innovation can impact institutions (Terstriep et al., 2015), for instance by influencing social practices or policies (Howaldt & Schwarz, 2016; Miquel et al., 2013).

Apart from these three types of change agency, there might also be agency that involves activities to resist novel inputs and to hold on to existing ways of acting. In the literature on changing regional development paths, this sort of agency is referred to as 'structural maintenance' (Jolly et al., 2020) or 'reproductive agency' (Bækkelund, 2021). In the process of developing and implementing social innovations, there might be resistance to change practices and to introduce novel solutions, which could go in line with the marginalization of viewpoints and exclusion of actors (Arora et al., 2021). However, this type of agency is likely to be performed by actors who are not part of the social innovation process, since those actors who are involved in developing and implementing social innovations are commonly very eager to change extant practices and to find solutions to challenges (Farmer et al., 2018; Jungsberg et al., 2020). This paper focuses on the activities of social innovation actors who are involved in the social innovation process and therefore focuses on the role of change agency.

3. METHODOLOGY

We examine change agency in social innovation processes through the use of detailed innovation biographies of 11 case studies of social innovations in healthcare and tourism in the Bernese Oberland, a Swiss mountain region. We focused our analysis on the activities of involved social innovation actors from the initial idea generation to the implementation and operation of the respective social innovation. In the Bernese Oberland the dominating role of tourism influences the economic structure, the culture and the type of actors involved in regional development (Haisch, 2017). Most employment opportunities are in tourism and healthcare industry (Kanton Bern Amt für Wirtschaft, 2019). Even though healthcare services are declining like in many other non-core mountain regions, there are still five hospitals and several other healthcare organizations present in the region. In both sectors we find many grassroots initiatives that can be characterized as social innovations. These are either aimed at filling a gap (healthcare) or at creating new offerings and cooperation (tourism). The region is considered to be sparely populated and peripheral for the Swiss context. Tourism and healthcare are two interesting sectors to study since they are generally not considered as innovative in terms of more traditional notions of innovation (e.g., in the sense of new products or technologies). Innovation dynamics in tourism are rather limited due to low investments in research and development, high labour intensity in daily business and the small-scale business structure. Furthermore, innovations in tourism are hard to protect and are therefore easy to imitate (Sundbo, 2015). Therefore, we might expect that change agency is part of innovation in tourism. For instance innovative entrepreneurship may occur due to the need for a constantly search for new (economic) opportunities. Innovation dynamics in healthcare is hampered due to the sector's highly regulative nature

(Herzlinger, 2006). Therefore, we might expect that change agency is also part of innovation in healthcare. For instance, institutional entrepreneurship may occur so that agency can change the regulatory framework. Despite these limitations in terms of the sectors' innovative dynamics, we found a number of social innovations that emerged in these two industries (Tschumi & Mayer, 2020; Wirth & Bandi Tanner, 2020). These social innovations arose as new forms of cooperation among actors who usually do not cooperate in the context of mountain regions. They arose from cooperations among civil society actors, tourism and healthcare professionals, third sector organizations or public actors (Tschumi & Mayer, 2020). Each of the social innovations addresses a challenge faced by one or several regional actors. The social innovations we examined either have the potential to change institutional settings or in fact have been changing institutional settings and regional development paths because they had existed for several years (4–14 years) and involved many diverse actors throughout their processes. Over time they influenced activities of many different actors to advance ideas and practices beyond the social innovation itself. For instance, they could influence the practices of regional decision-makers and regulators. Furthermore, the selected social innovations address challenges and the involved actors searched for solutions to these challenges. Overall, they showcase new approaches to structure the region's society, politics and economy.

The purpose of choosing the 11 case studies in the two sectors was to illuminate the role of change agency in potentially transformative social innovations in a peripheral region. We did not intend to compare the two sectors. Rather, we were interested in studying the ways in which social innovations in two sectors that are dominant in a peripheral region and that are characterized by rather traditional modes of innovation and incrusted structures, incorporate different forms of human agency that might potentially lead to new forms of service delivery, collaboration, etc.

The innovation biography method is used to analyse social innovation processes from a micro-level, actor-oriented perspective (Jungsberg et al., 2020; Kleverbeck & Terstriep, 2018). It thus allows to capture the actors' roles and activities in the detailed trajectory of 'a concrete innovation process from its first idea until implementation' (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016, p. 221). The particularity of the innovation biography method is that it combines data from narrative and semi-structured interviews as well as from desk research. The narrative interviews and desk research reveal the events in the social innovation process and the actors involved in these events. The semi-structured interviews reveal the details of the events and of the involved actors. Our data analysis aimed at identifying the actors' activities in the process but we were also interested in examining why and in which ways the actors collaborated. The method is quite open to all sorts of micro-level, actor-oriented investigations (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016), including, for instance, the personal and psychological dimensions of agency (Upham et al., 2019, 2020). For our study, we focused on the actors' activities related to the different types of change agency.

The method involves a step-wise procedure (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016). First, we conducted a narrative interview with one of the actors who has been part of the social innovation for a substantial amount of time. With these interviews we gained data on the consecutive events of each social innovation and the actors involved in these events. We conducted extensive desk research to find more information about the events and the actors, especially about those events and actors that revealed to be important for the innovation process. We searched websites, newspaper articles and annual reports related to the social innovations using search engines and subsequently searched information on the events and actors within the websites or text documents. Based on this desk research and the narrative interviews, we created first drafts of the biographies for each of the 11 social innovations. Each biography comprised a comprehensive set of consecutive events and the actors involved in these events. To fill remaining gaps in the biographies and to gather data on the actors' activities during the events of the innovation process, we subsequently conducted semi-structured interviews with key social innovation

actors. In total, we interviewed 61 actors and created 11 comprehensive social innovation biographies. For each event from the biographies, we identified activities, that is, sequences and/or series of actions performed by the social innovation actors involved in the events (for an operationalization example, see Table 1). We then connected the activities to the different types of change agency by using a set of core questions, which we derived from pertinent literature (Table 1). This resulted in a comprehensive collection of activities, which were matched to the three types of change agency throughout the process of each of the 11 social innovations.

We wanted to analyse the process of social innovations systematically. To do so, we identified and distinguished three phases in the social innovation processes for our case studies. This allowed us to compare the activities and their related change agency among the three phases for all 11 social innovation cases. The identification of the phases was based on the biographies and guided by the social innovation phases according to Neumeier (2012). Neumeier's phase descriptions suited well to delineate the processes of all our analysed social innovations because they are rather broad. According to Neumeier, phase 1 involves the identification of a problem by one actor or a small group of actors. The actors develop a new idea how to potentially solve the problem. Phase 2 involves searching for actors to support and implement the idea. In phase 3, the social innovation is being fully implemented and can gain more supporting actors who spread the practices of the social innovation. Although these descriptions are rather broad, once we applied them to our social innovation cases, the descriptions of the three phases take a more detailed shape. In our analysed social innovation cases, the phases can be described as follows. In phase 1, the actors that were involved in the social innovations from the beginning recognized a regional and/or an actor-specific problem and created the idea of the social innovation. Furthermore, they clarified the conditions for implementing the social innovation. Specifically, they clarified the feasibility of the social innovation and searched potential helping actors. In phase 2, the social innovation was implemented and started to operate. This phase often marked the beginning of collaborations with actors within the social innovation and often included presenting the social innovation to the public. In phase 3, the implementation of the social innovation was completed and the social innovation began to operate. This phase included daily business activities towards running the social innovation, as well as activities for further development. We assigned each event of the 11 social innovation biographies (with its related actors and activities) to one of the three phases and merged all events pertaining

Table 1. Applying the concept of trinity of change agency according to Grillitsch and Sotarauta (2020).

	Innovative entrepreneurship	Institutional entrepreneurship	Place-based leadership
Core questions	Are the social innovation actors willing to take risks and do they search for (economic) opportunities to create something new?	Are the social innovation actors trying to influence existing opinions and attitudes towards a region's development and/or towards a social innovation?	Are the social innovation actors aiming to mobilize and connect diverse actors and institutions (beyond institutional boundaries) to achieve a common goal?
Pertinent literature	Shane and Venkataraman (2000)	Battilana et al. (2009); Pacheco et al. (2010)	Beer et al. (2019); Sotarauta and Beer (2017)
Example activities from the data	Searching for opportunities to increase the number of tourists during the low season	Holding press conferences and writing newspaper articles	Intensification and formalization of cooperation (e.g., through contracts)

to the respective phase. This resulted in one collection of activities for each phase. In this way, we could compare the activities among the phases. Nevertheless, when we identified the phases, we were aware that in practice the phases are highly iterative, overlapping and integrated. For instance, recruiting additional actors started to take place in the very beginning of setting up a social innovation and could last throughout the second and third phase of the development process.

4. RESULTS

In this section we present the results from our analysis of activities performed across the 11 social innovations. We focus on the type of change agency performed throughout the three phases of the social innovation process and we examine the actors who perform these change agencies. Our results indicate that the presence of each change agency alters throughout the social innovation process and that actors themselves alter their performed change agency. Second, we show that different types of actors (such as private individuals, companies, private–public organizations, policy actors and associations) performed the three types of change agency. After presenting these results in general, we illustrate them with cases from our sample of social innovations. These two cases exemplify rather well how various social innovation actors perform activities related to change agency.

4.1. Altering types of change agency in a social innovation process

Our data analysis across the 11 cases shows that the activities related to each change agency as well as to the presence of each change agency in the process altered throughout the social innovation phases (Table 2). Generally, we observe that in phase 1 innovative entrepreneurship was characterized by risk-taking activities. In the same phase, place-based leadership was characterized by non-binding, informal requests for collaboration. Also in phase 1, institutional

Table 2. Characteristics of change agency in social innovation processes.

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Innovative entrepreneurship	• Searching for opportunities • Risk-taking activities	• Activities that the actors never had done before	• Activities that the actors never had done before • Risk-taking activities
Institutional entrepreneurship	• Picking up local opinions and attitudes towards the social innovation • Presenting idea and vision of the social innovation	• Picking up local opinions and attitudes towards the social innovation • Propagating idea and intention of the social innovation	• Propagating idea and intention of the social innovation
Place-based leadership	• Looking for supporting actors with knowledge, resources, power and networks (non-binding)	• Bringing together actors with knowledge, know-how, physical space, financial resources (binding)	• Bringing together actors and on a non-binding and/or a binding level

entrepreneurship was only rarely present and, if so, it was characterized by searching for potentially collaborative actors through presenting the idea and vision of the social innovation. In phase 2, innovative entrepreneurship was characterized by activities that actors had never done before. Then, place-based leadership involved binding, formal requests, and negotiations for collaboration. In phase 2, institutional entrepreneurship was characterized by propagating what the social innovation was doing and searching for supportive actors. In phase 3, innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership were present as a combination of the characteristics in the first two phases. Institutional entrepreneurship in phase 3 was characterized by propagating the idea and intention of the social innovation. Our results suggest that innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership were the pivotal type of change agency during the whole social innovation process while institutional entrepreneurship seemed only to be pivotal in phase 2.

4.2. Actors performing the change agency

The three types of change agency were performed by different types of actors across the social innovation process. We identified private individuals (e.g., second home owners, local residents), private–public organizations (e.g., tourism organizations, hospital provider company), companies (e.g., handicraft businesses, transport services, hotels, construction companies), policy actors (e.g., city council, municipality, public administration offices), and associations (e.g., trade associations, foundations). Interestingly, actors could perform different types of change agency in the same phase. For instance, a cantonal exchange officer performed innovative entrepreneurship when searching for opportunities to increase the number of skiers and place-based leadership in looking for supporting actors for his idea of a bilingual snow camp. Moreover, we found that actors could alter the performed change agency during the social innovation process. For example, this can be illustrated for private individuals. In phase 1, they stepped into action by searching for opportunities and taking financial risks. For instance, a second homeowner searched for opportunities to reactivate empty shop windows and a local resident bought first components for the social innovation (innovative entrepreneurship). Furthermore, private individuals were looking for additional actors joining the social innovation. For instance, a second home owner asked local residents for membership in the social innovation (place-based leadership). In phase 2, private individuals mainly propagated what the social innovation was doing. For instance, a local resident presented the social innovation in front of the media (institutional entrepreneurship). In a third phase, private individuals again undertook conceptual activities and searched for additional actors. For instance, local residents searched for a new place for interim use (innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership). Another interesting finding related to the actors concerns public–private actors. Although they were present in phases 1 and 2, in phase 3, they enabled the social innovation to spread out to other regions in providing new opportunities. Specifically, they provided a network, know-how, and resources. In this phase, they played a crucial role in performing place-based leadership.

So far we generally reported on the findings and highlighted the ways in which social innovation actors engage with change agency. In the next section, we illustrate in more detail how change agency alter and we do this by focussing on two cases that were selected from our sample of 11 analysed social innovations. We chose these cases because they include all five actor types and therefore illustrate well how various actor types perform activities related to change agency. One of the detailed cases is from a tourism-related social innovation, the other from a healthcare-related social innovation.

4.3. Change agency exemplified by the case of a bilingual snow camp

The first case that we describe in detail is the example of a bilingual snow camp for school classes visiting the mountains from the French- and German-speaking parts of Switzerland. The social

innovation originated in a region that is highly dependent on ski tourism and is located on the language border in Switzerland. The initial idea came from two cantonal exchange officers (private individuals). The two officers were responsible for language exchange between school classes from the German- and the French-speaking parts of Switzerland. They identified a lack of opportunities for language exchange among school classes from different language regions. One of the officers was living in the touristic region where the social innovation started. He noticed the low skiing tourist numbers during the low season in winter and recognized an opportunity to address two issues: the lack of language exchange and the increasingly low numbers of winter tourists. His personal background may influence his performed change agency in a certain way. To improve both shortcomings, the two cantonal exchange officers had the idea of the snow camp, in which the children learned both a foreign language and to ski. What started as a cooperation between the two officers was later developed further through a cooperation with the local tourism organization that joined the cooperation. The bilingual snow camp can be considered a social innovation because it involves a new cooperation between actors (exchange officers and local tourism organization) and because it addresses the challenges of cultural and social inclusion (via language exchange). The snow camp influenced the practices of the tourism organization and affiliated actors such as ski teachers, sport shops but also public actors such as representatives of the local municipality. It thus has the potential to change the ways local enterprises develop their services and local public actors work towards cultural and social inclusion.

The bilingual snow camp evolved as a social innovation along the three phases and each phase was characterized by specific types of change agency. In phase 1 the two cantonal exchange officers performed place-based leadership. In doing so, they discussed their idea and the plan to implement the idea in several meetings with the local tourism organization. At the same time, the local tourism organization (public–private organization) performed innovative entrepreneurship. Innovative entrepreneurship was performed by the tourism organization and the officer to actively search for opportunities to increase the number of tourists during low season. The idea of a bilingual snow camp perfectly met the tourist organization's interests of attracting as many tourists as possible and increasing the number of skiers. The local municipality (policy actor) performed innovative entrepreneurship by taking on the financial risk as it provided a deficit guarantee for organizing and conducting the snow camp and thereby paved the way for implementing the social innovation. Institutional entrepreneurship was not performed in phase 1 and was characterized by picking up local opinions and attitudes towards the social innovation and influencing them. However, it seemed that at the very beginning of the social innovation, this was not important because the social innovations' idea did not face strong headwind and thus nobody needed to be convinced of the social innovation or a region's vision.

In phase 2, innovative entrepreneurship was related to doing activities that the actors never had done before. Specifically, the tourism organization organized a snow camp for school classes for the very first time. Place-based leadership was related to bringing together actors with knowledge, know-how and physical space. Namely the tourism organization mobilized a local ski school to teach ski lessons. Additionally, it mobilized a local sport shop to rent skiing equipment and a local accommodation to provide for the overnight stays. In doing so, the tourism organization's performed agency changed from innovative entrepreneurship (in phase 1) to place-based leadership (in phase 2). In the bilingual snow camp, institutional entrepreneurship was not performed during implementation.

At the beginning of phase 3, the activities served to operate the social innovation. These operating activities could not be clearly assigned to one of the three types of change agency because they did not match any of our core questions. The tourism organization had the lead and connected all other involved actors. The snow school organized and taught the ski lessons.

The local accommodations provided a place to sleep and eat. The local sport shop let the equipment for skiing. A foundation took over the matching of the school classes from different language regions. However, besides the operating activities, there were activities related to place-based leadership. The local tourism organization and a foundation with the goal to promote ski sport strengthened their collaboration up to a binding level so that the foundation and the tourism organization nowadays co-organize the snow camp. In the beginning of the social innovation process, the foundation's activities were limited to supporting activities, such as organizing the journey of the school classes. At the time writing this paper, the foundation organizes snow-sport camps for school classes all over Switzerland and made it possible to spread the social innovation all over Switzerland.

4.4. Change agency exemplified by the case of a regional healthcare network

This example is an integrated healthcare network, which is supposed to integrate several healthcare providers centred on a newly conceptualized regional hospital to improve cooperation and efficiency in healthcare provision. The network can be considered as a social innovation because it was initiated by a new cooperation of actors who had never cooperated before for the purposes of healthcare provision and because it aimed at addressing the challenge of maintaining the regional healthcare provision. The ideas and practices of the network reached out to many actors that were initially not part of the social innovation (for instance cantonal authorities) and could improve the well-being of the regional population.

The regional hospital had been running at a deficit for quite some years. As the hospital was increasingly threatened with closure, local mayors and municipality authorities held several conversations with the cantonal healthcare minister to find solutions. This was the starting point for developing the idea of an integrated healthcare network and the conditions under which the actors began to develop the social innovation. In phase 1, the local mayors (public policy actors), representatives of the regional hospital provider company (public–private organizations) and an external healthcare/hospital consultant (company) performed innovative entrepreneurship in searching alternatives to the current healthcare provision and new healthcare provision opportunities. They gathered some ideas and discussed their potential implementation. As they could not find the best suitable solution, the actors decided to organize several workshops together with the region's main healthcare players, local citizens, municipality authorities, associations and others. They performed place-based leadership to acquire those actors for the workshops.

In phase 2, the first workshops were organized and the participants took over several tasks. The external healthcare/hospital consultant and a representative of the regional hospital provider company performed place-based leadership through taking the lead in organizing and bringing the actors together. During, in between and after the first workshops, representatives of the regional trade association (association), the regional hospital provider and a regional elderly home provider performed innovative entrepreneurship together with local citizens (private individuals) by creating the financing plan for the healthcare network. These were activities they had never done before and involved searching for new economic opportunities. In this vein, they also performed place-based leadership in requesting and checking the regional players' willingness to take over the costs for possible new ways of healthcare provision. Local mayors and municipality authorities performed institutional entrepreneurship by picking up public opinions regarding healthcare needs, for instance during municipal assemblies. Furthermore, representatives of the cantonal health department, the chief executive officer (CEO) of a regional elderly home provider, the region's mayors and citizens performed place-based leadership in looking for supportive actors, and how they could work together in new forms of regional healthcare provision. What stands out in phase 2 is that several actors performed more than one change agency. For instance, the representative of the regional hospital provider first performed

place-based leadership, and afterwards innovative entrepreneurship and institutional entrepreneurship.

In phase 3, a second round of workshops was organized and held to elaborate on the concrete plan of the regional healthcare network. The same actors as in phase 2 worked together, and the tasks were quite similar, though now with the background of a concrete idea of a regional healthcare network. Accordingly, the actors performed the same types of change agency as in phase 2. What was new in phase 3 was that, after the workshops, the region's mayors, the cantonal healthcare ministry and the regional hospital provider performed innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership in founding a public limited company with the purpose to implement the healthcare network. For the actors, the founding was an activity they never had done before (innovative entrepreneurship). They also brought together actors on a binding level (place-based leadership) as they signed the contract for implementing the healthcare network.

4.5. Implications from the two examples

The two presented case studies illustrate our three major findings: First, the activities related to each change agency, as well as the presence of each change agency, altered throughout the social innovation phases (Table 2). Second, we found that actors could perform different types of change agency during the social innovation process. In the first example, we saw that the tourism organization and public–private organizations performed innovative entrepreneurship at the very beginning and changed to place-based leadership in later phases. In the healthcare network, local mayors, for instance, performed innovative entrepreneurship in the beginning, institutional entrepreneurship during implementation and place-based leadership during the phase 3. Third, in phase 3, new actors joined the social innovation because of place-based leadership. These three major findings expand current knowledge on agency in social innovation processes, which addresses agency (Suitner et al., 2022) but so far has not investigated the detailed activities of social innovation actors. The findings do so by (1) showing types of agency that are important in social innovation processes, (2) by showing that in different phases of a social innovation process specific types of agency are more present than others and (3) by showing that the types are performed by diverse actors. Specifically, the findings demonstrate that change agency, that is, agency, which is important for changing regional development paths, is present in social innovation processes.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The overall aim of this article was to analyse the role of change agency in social innovation processes and we illustrated how the concept of the trinity of change agency (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2020) can be applied to the study of social innovations in peripheral regions. We show that the types of change agency alter throughout the social innovation processes. In the beginning of the social innovation process (phase 1), activities related to innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership are the most crucial. When it comes to implementing the social innovation (phase 2), all the types of change agency where important. When it comes to operating and perhaps scaling (phase 3), innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership were again, the most crucial ones. Overall, we find that change agency in social innovations contributes to establishing and developing social innovations. This is an important finding, particularly when we think about the peripheral context of our study. The analysed social innovations have a transformative potential, and in some cases, they could even change existing institutional and organizational structures. Change agency played an important role in initiating and implementing social innovations. This highlights an often-overlooked aspect. Namely that peripheral regions do have actors with a diverse set of skills and capabilities who are not passive recipients

or even victims of structural changes but rather persons who act upon such changes. In the tradition of the capability approach to social innovation (Howaldt & Schwarz, 2017), we conceptualize social innovation actors as proactive agents of change who have specific abilities and who turn these into risk-taking, entrepreneurial action through innovative entrepreneurship, who aim to change existing structures and organizations through institutional entrepreneurship and who mobilize and connect with other actors through place-based leadership.

In the theoretical background section, we hypothesized that innovative entrepreneurship is the pivotal agency throughout the social innovation process – especially in the beginning. Our results show that innovative entrepreneurship is indeed the pivotal agency in the beginning of the social innovation process and that it remains a crucial agency throughout the process. This is not surprising because social innovations are a form of innovation and for innovations in general, the element of innovative entrepreneurship is crucial (Feldman et al., 2005). Our results add to this notion by highlighting the actual activities related to innovative entrepreneurship and how they changed over the social innovation process. In the very beginning, innovative entrepreneurship is performed as risk-taking activity. When it comes to implementation, innovative entrepreneurship is performed through activities the actors never had done before. When it comes to the operationalization of a social innovation, innovative entrepreneurship is performed through both activities. However, innovative entrepreneurship and its related risk-taking aspects – even when applied to social innovations – depends on the presence of favourable institutional conditions. Looking at place-based leadership, we hypothesized that it may come to the fore when the social innovation has already established its idea and is beginning to reach out for supporters. Contrary to these expectations, this study found that place-based leadership is pivotal even before implementing the social innovation. In the very beginning, actors like to share their idea of the social innovation and therefore are looking for supportive actors with knowledge, know-how, financial resources and physical space. Searching for supportive actors usually happens on an informal basis. We have to note that cooperation is an important element from the very beginning in social innovation processes. This is not surprising as cooperation is a common constitutive element in social innovations, which is unrelated to social innovation phases (Moulaert et al., 2013; Nicholls et al., 2016). In the implementation of the social innovation, place-based leadership is performed on a formal level in the sense that the initial actors start to collaborate with the supporting actors. Furthermore, place-based leadership encourages the joining of new actors. These additional actors helped the social innovations to continue to develop. In terms of institutional entrepreneurship, we hypothesized that it is particularly important when the social innovation is being established. This is in line with our findings, as institutional entrepreneurship is pivotal in phase 2. Furthermore, institutional entrepreneurship was performed with the intention to convince external actors of the idea of the social innovation and it seems that institutional entrepreneurship was important to build a positive attitude towards the social innovation among the external actors/decision-makers in the region. This is different from activities related to place-based leadership, which were directed towards finding additional actors working within the social innovation.

Our findings show that the various types of change agency are highly present in social innovations. Therefore, there is a great chance that social innovations can contribute to changing regional development paths and perhaps even to regional transformation. Thus, our research also contributes to the emerging realization that challenge-oriented regional innovation policies should consider the role of social innovations (Tödtling et al., 2021). Our results indeed show that change agency in social innovations contributes to establish and develop social innovations that in turn may contribute to regional transformation processes. While Suitner et al. (2022) highlight that agency in social innovation is indeed important for regional transformation, we extend knowledge about agency for regional transformation by illustrating what kind of change agency in social innovation processes is important for such transformation.

The concept of the trinity of change agency proofed to be very useful because of the lack of studies on the role of agency in social innovations. While some studies examined institutional entrepreneurship in social innovations (Jensen & Fersch, 2019), there are no studies that examine the trinity and its temporality in social innovation processes. Our analysis expands current applications of the trinity of change concept by demonstrating how the three types of agency can be broken down to single activities and can be applied to analyse (social) innovation processes in detail. However, such breaking down is also a limitation, since it is always a matter of the researchers' interpretation how the rather general descriptions of the three types of change agency in the literature are broken down to detailed activities.

It is very interesting that social innovation actors perform several types of change agency throughout the social innovation process. This is not surprising because actors in social innovations take various roles, and therefore perform various activities (Butzin & Terstriep, 2018). Furthermore, the thinness of actors in periphery leads to consequences that actors take on various roles and types of agency (Isaksen, 2016).

Our conclusion is particularly useful for the question how change agency can be fostered in social innovation processes. We found that different types of change agency are important, in particular innovative entrepreneurship and place-based leadership. Perhaps policy ought to be sensitive to what types of activities social innovation actors perform in at what point in time along the social innovation process. Ludvig et al. (2018) argue that social innovations differ from traditional innovations insofar as there is no 'for profit' motive and thus social innovations would need support regarding their maintenance (rather than policy support to create social innovations). This implies that support could differ depending on the nature of the change agency along the social innovation process. In addition, our results may indicate a similar challenge that Huggins and Thompson (2022) identified when they argue that 'perhaps the most fundamental but often overlooked, challenge relating to new regional path development is to harness the personal agency and intensions of, for example, entrepreneurially minded individuals in lagging regions' (p. 11). By analysing change agency in social innovation process, we contribute to a better understanding about what types of agentic behaviours at what stage in the process (types, mix and temporality of change agency) is needed to effectuate change.

Our findings should not give the impression that the actors performed change agency activities independent of any enabling or constraining factors. We need to consider that agency is always shaped by structural conditions, such as policies, regulations, laws, social norms and values (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014; Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2020). Although it can be suggested that there were structural conditions that enable change agency in social innovations, our study does not focus on the structural conditions. This limited our results to a certain extent. At the same time, it expands discussions on peripheral regions that primarily remain on structural preconditions and structural weaknesses of peripheral regions and are thus biased towards discussing structures at the expense of actions (Nilsen et al., 2022). In their conceptualization of change agency, Grillitsch and Sotarauta (2020) account for the structural conditions by introducing so-called opportunity spaces, which refer to 'the time or set of circumstances that make a change possible' (p. 713). Future research on the activities related to change agency could investigate such opportunity spaces to complement our results. In addition, it would be interesting to see whether the identified types of change agency can expand into more regional forms of transformative action (Huggins & Thompson, 2022). Future research could assess, for example, whether there is low or high tolerance for dissonant behaviour or whether there is a strong presence of individuals and elites that may hinder change.

The purpose of this paper was to contribute to the debate on change agency and relate the concept of trinity of change agency (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2020) to social innovations and therefore to the emerging debate on social innovation for regional transformation. We specifically add insights on the specific activities that actors in social innovations perform and conclude

that change agency is a significant feature in social innovations and should be considered as a transformative element of social innovations.

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5 Discussion

This dissertation provides novel insights into social innovation and growth independence development in mountain regions, with a special focus on tourism. In doing so, this dissertation contributes to current debates on growth independence, economic geography, and tourism development. In the following section, the results of papers I to IV will be discussed and connected with each other. The next chapter discusses the growth independence indicators in social innovation (results from paper I and II) for a growth-independent tourism context. Chapter 5.2 will discuss change agency in social innovation (results from paper IV) for growth-independent tourism and will therefore connect growth-independent social innovation, growth-independent tourism and change agency. Afterwards, the tipping point is discussed (results from paper III), and its policy implications are drawn.

5.1 Discussion of growth independence indicators in social innovations for tourism

In papers I and II, we presented specific characteristics of social innovation promoting growth independent (regional) development. The following chapter will consider these characteristics and prescribe them in the literature on degrowth in tourism. Furthermore, how the findings could be adapted for the actors in tourism on an actor level and under growth-independent circumstances is discussed. Table 4 presents the findings from paper II in the first and second columns. In the first column, the four groups of entrepreneurial decisions from growth independence-inducing social innovation actors are presented. In the second column, the economic growth independence indicators for growth independence-inducing social innovations are presented. In the third column, the table shows the implications of the economic growth independence indicator from social innovations for tourism actors. In the fourth column, the table shows the underlying economic growth independence effect adopted for tourism actors.

Table 4: Growth independence indicators for social innovation and its implications for tourism (own representation)

Entrepreneurial decisions	Economic growth independence indicators (for SI)	Implications for tourism actors	Economic growth independence effect
(Re-)localisation	Regional/local markets	Focus on domestic and nearby markets, and adjust offers for the changed target group.	Less price competition, reduced currency risk.
(Re-)localisation	Short value chains	Direct purchases, omitting intermediaries.	Limitation of the number of involved economic actors and those with economic growth ambitions, production volumes adjusted to demand.
(Re-)localisation	Regional value chains	Regional purchases (e.g., from regional farmers/producers), omitting intermediaries.	Limited price competition, participation of smaller businesses/initiatives, secured demand, production volumes adjusted to demand, and possibly favourable financing conditions.
(Re-)localisation	Close relationships between economic actors	Strengthen cooperation among tourism actors, sharing of infrastructure (e.g., wellness); furthermore, a close relationship between touristic actors and the local community.	Limited competition based on prices, certain guaranty for sales, building of trust, lower pressure for returns, and lower level of depth capital (see also low capital).
De-commercialisation	De-commercialisation of production/service delivery	Thinking about alternative business models (e.g., prosumer/exchange of goods and services without financial payment).	Less pressure for returns to pay interests/dividends and low/no heteronomy by external capital providers.

De-commercialisation	Small/no efforts to advertise/marketing	Abolition/reduction of the national marketing organisation (Swiss Tourism), and development of destination management organisations.	Limitation of economic growth dynamics on the consumption side.
Low capital	Low levels of debt capital	Alternative financing models.	Less pressure for returns to pay interests/dividends and low/no heteronomy by external capital providers.
Low capital	Low levels of capital intensity in production/service delivery	Alternative financing models (e.g., crowdfunding).	Less pressure for returns to pay interests/dividends and low/no heteronomy by external capital providers.
Self-governance	Small or medium-sized businesses/initiatives	Tourism companies are organised as small or medium-sized business, and/or their organisation leads/supports small size and little organisation complexity.	Low economic growth ambition, low economies of scale, higher resilience to crises, and low dependence on market dynamics.
Self-governance	Democratic ownership, equity and self-governance	Cooperation of the demand side can lead to co-production and therefore to better experiences, including the local community in tourism development.	Understanding of entrepreneurial (regional) success that goes beyond economic growth, fostering small and medium-sized businesses.

(Re-)localisation for tourism actors encompasses four economic growth independence indicators. First, the indicator regional/local markets would mean that touristic actors focus on guests from Switzerland and/or close foreign countries. The touristic actors who are highly dependent on tourists from the Middle East and Asia would need to adopt their offer for a different target group with different needs. Furthermore, the national tourism organisation would need to change its marketing spending in distant markets. These changes lead to lower price competition by focusing on guests of higher purchasing power and – for those destinations focusing on guests from within Switzerland – to a lower currency risk. However, the current business models in tourism focus on revenue maximisation and are only profitable with a certain number of guests. Therefore, it can be argued that with these business models, a focus on guests from Switzerland and the nearer foreign markets would not generate enough revenue to sustain businesses. Second, the short value chains indicator for touristic actors means a reduced number of actors involved in a single service provision and, therefore, a limited number of economic growth ambitions from multiple actors. For example, a hotelier that sells a room via a booking platform also needs to pay a fee to them. In doing so, he or she lowers its revenue gain. Furthermore, this fee does not flow back into the region or the local economy but rather off to a globally active enterprise, which is another argument for the indicator of regional value chains. Third, regional value chains for tourism actors could mean omitting or at least reducing intermediaries. For example, in the case of a restaurant, this would be to purchase the food directly and regionally, allowing smaller, localised businesses to participate in local tourism (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Fourth, the close relationship indicator between economic actors would mean cooperating with other actors. For a broad literature review and comprehensive analysis of cooperation in tourism, see Pfammatter (2022).

(De-)commercialisation for tourism actors encompasses two economic growth independence indicators. First, the indicator de-commercialisation of production/service delivery would mean that touristic actors could accept different forms of payments; i.e., in return for an overnight, the tourist could pay with services. As an example, a carpenter could pay with performing some maintenance work, or a tax consultant could pay with preparing the tax declaration for the hotel. Furthermore, models of home exchange in which two families exchange each other's homes have the potential for de-commercialisation (e.g., homeexchange.com). Second, the indicator small/no efforts to advertise/marketing is in line with the consequence of reducing and/or abolishing marketing activities on a national level. Furthermore, this would mean accelerating the transformation from destination management organisations from narrow marketing organisations towards a more regional development-oriented organisation (Presenza et al., 2005)[8].

Low capital for tourism actors encompasses two economic growth independence indicators. The low level of debt capital indicator and low levels of capital intensity would both call for alternative financing models. Because of high investment costs for tourism actors (especially for infrastructure, e.g., mountain railways and hotels), they are often forced to lend dept capital (Lütolf et al., 2021; Schmid, 2016). In Switzerland, approximately 60% of mountain railways are subsidised companies, which means that they cannot sustain themselves financially and rely

[8] This argument is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.3.

on grants (Lütolf et al., 2021). Furthermore, the infrastructure for mountain railways, hotels, restaurants, etc., is very cost-intensive; therefore, these tourism actors are confronted with high fixed costs (Lütolf et al., 2021). For tourism actors, this indicator raises the question of alternative financing models to lower the pressure for returns to pay interests/dividends (e.g., crowdfounding) (Lütolf et al., 2021) or for fundamental changes regarding the financial structure of touristic enterprises. Specifically, this raises the question of what a less infrastructure-dependent type of tourism would look like.

Self-governance for tourism actors encompasses two economic growth independence indicators. The small or medium-sized business indicator is already found in tourism in Switzerland because many businesses are organised as such (Lütolf et al., 2021). The indicator of democratic ownership is in line with the call that tourism "should move radically from a private and privatising activity to one founded in and contributing to the common" (Büscher & Fletcher, 2017, p. 664). Furthermore, if the local community can participate in tourism, tourism awareness should be encouraged (Bandi Tanner & Müller, 2021).

5.2 Discussion of change agency on growth-independent tourism

After discussing the entrepreneurial practices from growth independence-inducing social innovation in tourism, this chapter, examines the findings on social innovations in tourism regarding agency and the social innovations' potential for regional transformation. Change agency is discussed as human activities with their intended and unintended consequences and with the potential to change regional development paths (Pel et al., 2020; Suitner et al., 2022; Torre et al., 2020; Westley et al., 2014). In paper IV, we found that the trinity of change agency is present in social innovation processes but not equally distributed in the development process. However, none of the papers in this dissertation analysed the outcomes of social innovations; rather, it was hypothesised what the effect of social innovation could be. Specifically, in Paper I and II, we hypothesised that social innovation might induce growth independence regional development if the presented entrepreneurial decisions were made. In paper III, we hypothesised that social innovation might solve regional and/or actor-specific challenges and increase its impact after overcoming the tipping point. In paper IV, we hypothesised that social innovation could lead to change regional development paths because we found change agency in the social innovation process. Recent studies have shown that social innovation can have the potential to be transformative (Castro-Arce & Vanclay, 2020). However, what has not yet been done is to link the work on change agency in social innovation with the work on growth independence-inducing social innovation. In doing so, this could provide an explanation of whether growth independence-inducing social innovations could lead to changing regional development paths. I argue that different types of change agency are required, depending on the entrepreneurial decision. In doing so, in Chapter 5.1 I showed that (re-)localisation for tourism would mean a restructuring of production and closer collaboration among actors ranging from considering regional suppliers to cooperating with local competitors. Such changes would mean improving regional embeddedness and strengthening local business ties, leading to short and regional value chains with close relationships between economic actors. To organise such collaborations, place-based leadership – as an activity to connect with other actors and establish collaboration – is needed (Beer et al., 2019; Sotarauta & Beer, 2017).

For de-commercialisation, I showed that a shift in the organisation of the destination management organisation and a change in advertising on a national level are needed. Both changes would affect institutions. Such changes could be addressed by institutional entrepreneurship as an agency related to affecting institutional boundaries (Battilana et al., 2009; Pacheco et al., 2010).

In the case of low levels of capital, I raised the question by a type of tourism that uses less infrastructure. This would encompass innovative entrepreneurship as an agency related to searching for new (economic) opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000) and/or institutional entrepreneurship as an agency related to changing the structures and the so-called "rules of the game", meaning to question the way tourism infrastructure is financed and used.

For self-governance, I argued that the changes regarding the ownership of tourism enterprises and the purpose of providing benefits for whom need to be questioned. In doing so, institutional entrepreneurship would be the agency that is needed because such changes directly address the institutional construction of tourism enterprises. Furthermore, a change at the institutional level of tourism would also include a change in opinions and attitudes by tourism enterprises, which is another element of institutional entrepreneurship (Battilana et al., 2009; Pacheco et al., 2010). This is especially true if it is more directed towards a more socialised form of tourism enterprises (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020).

Table 5: Dominant change agency in growth independence entrepreneurial decisions with implications for tourism (own representation)

Growth independence entrepreneurial decision	Dominant change agency	Changes in tourism
(Re-)localisation	Place-based leadership	Strengthen relationship with suppliers, establishing collaborations with competitors, including local actors.
De-commercialisation	Institutional entrepreneurship	Institutional changes on an international level (regarding advertisement) and on a local level (regarding DMO).
Low capital	Innovative entrepreneurship Place-based leadership	Searching for different ways to finance tourism and/or a form of tourism with lower fixed costs.
Self-governance	Institutional entrepreneurship	Re-orientation towards a community-focused tourism

Interestingly, it was hypothesised that in three out of the four growth independence entrepreneurial decisions, institutional entrepreneurship that aims at institutional change is needed. This finding is in line with the literature on degrowth in tourism, which claims for institutional change and calls for new perspectives (e.g. Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Massarella et al., 2021).

The discussion of these papers clearly shows connections between the degrowth literature, social innovation, and tourism. Furthermore, in discussing the findings of the four papers together and with the connection to mountain tourism in Switzerland, this dissertation should encourage reflection on the current forms and structures of tourism.

5.3 Discussion of the tipping point and its implication for policy support

In paper III, the findings provided detailed information about the development process of social innovation. This paper is especially relevant considering the so-called tipping point, when a social innovation spreads to other regions. The findings showed that additional actors joined the social innovation and/or stepped into action at the tipping point, and therefore, the social innovation spreads to other regions and multiplies its impact. These additional actors are so-called promoters that are public or public-private actors. For tourism, this could be, for instance, a local tourism management organisation (DMO). Local DMOs are well connected among the actors in a destination and are organised more as an intermediary between government and touristic actors and (often) work beyond institutional boundaries. Therefore, local tourism management organisations could have the role of a promoter and act as the key actor for spreading a social innovation. However, DMOs often limit their activities to marketing activities instead of taking the role of a destination development organisation. As an organisation that is rooted in the region and that is well connected among tourism actors, the findings of paper III call for an active destination development organisation instead of a destination management organisation; at the least, it adds destination development tasks to external marketing and internal management tasks (Presenza et al., 2005). Furthermore, a destination development organisation could play an important role as intermediary between the actors of social innovations and policy actors on a cantonal and national level. In doing so, destination development organisations could also have knowledge about public funding (e.g., money from NRP, Innotour). Therefore, a destination management organisation can increase activities related to the functions of planning, offers, and representatives, instead of the marketing function. Interestingly, this reorientation of destination management organisation would also fit into one of the conclusions in another research project in the Bernese Oberland. The project called "CO2-neutral tourism region Oberland-Ost, Jungfrau, Interlaken" concluded that people working as intermediaries could bring together actors and coordinate projects aimed at fulfilling a common vision of the region's development[9]. This role of intermediaries could be assumed by local tourism organisations. It can thus be concluded that innovation policy in support of social innovations in tourism does not simply mean providing money or supporting established firms; rather, policy efforts could be directed directly or via public legal partnerships. In the next section, further policy implications that could be derived from these papers are discussed.

[9] For more information see: https://www.wyssacademy.org/post/co2-neutrale-tourismusregion-oberland-ost?lang=de and: https://www.cde.unibe.ch/forschung/projekte/lokale_energie_transitions_experimente_fuer_eine_klimaneutrale_gesellschaft/index_ger.html

5.4 Discussion of some policy implications

In the chapter on innovation in tourism (2.3), the business literature on innovation concluded that tourism is considered noninnovative (e.g. Sundbo, 2015). However, we found 68 innovative projects and initiatives in the region and identified them as social innovation. Looking more closely at social innovation in tourism, 41 touristic social innovations[10] were identified. Therefore, it cannot be concluded that tourism is not innovative. Rather, tourism should be considered a phenomenon in space comprising diverse actors, ranging from local residents, second-home owners, touristic and non-touristic firms, government, and even tourists themselves, who innovate. In doing so, a wider understanding of innovations is needed. This is in line with Trunfio and Campana (2019), who also call for a more comprehensive view of actors in tourism innovation and to consider the local system of relationships between different types of actors (Kebir et al., 2017; Peyrache-Gadeau et al., 2017) and the integrated regional development approach according to Moulaert & Sekia (2003). For regional policy in Switzerland, this means that current innovation-supporting programs (e.g., Innotour, NRP) should include social innovation as a specific type of innovation. In doing so, an orientation towards promoting and sustaining social innovation could also lead to a greater chance of addressing local challenges. This is in line with Suitner et al., (2022), who found that social innovation addresses challenges in the energy transition and calls on policy to support social innovation as part of funding programs to solve such energy transition challenges. As shown in papers III and IV, social innovation attempted to solve such local and regional challenges and may succeed in a way that could also lead to growth-independent regional development, as shown in papers I and II. In terms of policy, these findings provide arguments to support and promote the development of social innovation in mountain regions.

Finally, a policy focus on social innovation in mountain regions and a diverse set of actors, including the local community, would also focus on tourism awareness instead of tourism understanding and development. This argument was brought up in Chapters 3.5 and 5.1 and is especially relevant for regions with a high number of tourists. Furthermore, Stihl (2022) showed that private and public actors performed change agency to establish tourism in a traditional mining region.

[10] For a detailed discussion on the typology of touristic and non-touristic social innovation, see the publication entitled "Touristische Soziale Innovationen – Begriff und Phänomen am Beispiel Berner Oberland." In S. Brandl, B. Waldemar, M. Herntrei, G. C. Steckenbauer, & S. Lachmann-Falkner (Eds.), Tourismus und ländlicher Raum - Innovative Strategien und Instrumente für die Zukunftsgestaltung. Erich Schmidt Verlag. (See annex for full paper).

6 Conclusion

This dissertation provides insights into the topics of social innovation, growth independence and tourism. In doing so, this dissertation contributes to the discussion on innovation in tourism, particularly social innovation. Furthermore, it provides insights into the discussion on growth independence tourism. While in the individual papers only two of the topics were discussed together, this dissertation brings them all together and especially draws implications for tourism. In doing so, the dissertation reimagines how growth-independent tourism regarding the four entrepreneurial decisions (re-localisation, de-commercialisation, low capital, and self-governance) could look like. Furthermore, the dissertation shows that for such a transformation, change agency could play a key role. In doing so, it has been shown that change agency is present in the social innovation process, and it has been shown what change agency can be expected according to the four entrepreneurial decisions towards growth-independent tourism.

6.1 Reflection and limitations

To bring these topics together was not easy. However, during the last four years as a PhD student, I learnt a lot about all these topics, and it was my personal intention to bring at least some of these aspects together and show how they are interconnected. To start with this, in the next section, I provide some reflection and limitations that consider the bridging of the three topics but also the other restrictions of the dissertation.

6.1.1 Limitation of the connection of the three topics

A limitation of the connection of these topics is that they lose their theoretical roots. For instance, in papers I and II, we used growth independence indicators from the literature mainly from small and medium-sized enterprises (e.g. Gebauer, 2018; Seidl & Zahrnt, 2010) and adopted them on social innovation. In this dissertation, I took these results and, in turn, adopted them for the tourism industry. Therefore, it can be questioned whether the attributed growth independence effects could truly be transferred over these different scales from a company level to projects and initiatives (social innovations) to a whole industry (tourism). Therefore, I would again like to emphasise that the dissertation talks about "potential" growth independence effects on every scale. To observe such effects, further research could examine regional dynamics on economic growth and could closely examine the ways in which social innovation contributes to such a dynamic.

Furthermore, the dissertation showed how entrepreneurial decisions could change tourism. However, this discussion was made based on my own experience of what I learnt about tourism during the last four years as a PhD student. To support this discussion with empirical results, these findings could be taken as hypotheses and as a starting point to analyse how specific tourism enterprises are growth dependent or not.

6.1.2 Case study limitation

This dissertation is constructed as a case study in Bernese Oberland. This allowed us to gain very detailed information the social innovation cases. However, it is questionable how generalisable our findings are to other mountain regions in Switzerland and beyond. It is important to bear in mind that mountain regions are heterogenous with their own weaknesses and strengths. Even when a region is recognised as a touristic region, it may differ in terms of the

number of tourists, the size of enterprises, or the origin of the tourists and, therefore, are also confronted with different challenges.

6.1.3 Methodological limitations of the innovation biography

The methodology of innovation biography is not free of limitations. One limitation is the challenge of when an innovation biography should start and end and therefore define the process of social innovation. Is it truly possible to identify the beginning of an innovation or when an idea first emerged? Furthermore, it is difficult to specify when an implementation of the innovation starts and when it is established (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016). Another limitation of innovation biographies is the high dependency on the interviewees' abilities to remember and relate to the comprehensive development process of the innovation (Butzin, 2013). This holds especially true because the innovation biographies conducted for paper III were also used for paper IV. During the work on paper IV, we observed that the broader and wider an interviewee's story about social innovation, the easier it was to identify the activities of the actors for paper IV and the easier it was to merge the activities with the trinity of change agency. Furthermore, innovation biographies focus on the narrow innovation process and easily lead to the spatial and/or sectoral context (Butzin & Widmaier, 2016). We experienced this during the publication process through the reviewers' comments in paper III and paper IV. In both papers, we had to add additional contextual information that we probably lost slightly because of our narrow focus on the innovation biographies. Finally, innovation biographies were conducted with successful social innovation. However, failed social innovation could also comprise activities contributing to growth independence regional development.

6.1.4 Discussion on the role of structure

What we left out of our study was the role of structural conditions. Agency and structure are in mutual interplay (Giddens, 1984). Therefore, studying (change) agency should also consider the role of structure influencing the agency (Grillitsch et al., 2021; Wijk et al., 2019). Accordingly, not all actors produce the same effects through their activities because not all actors have the same abilities and power. The actors' roles and positions in societies influence the impact of (change) agency (Grillitsch & Sotarauta, 2020). Furthermore, regional development policies are one of the most important structural conditions (Rodríguez-Pose, 2020). Switzerland has a growth-oriented regional development policy based on the export-based approach (SECO, 2008). Therefore, some conflicts regarding growth independence inducing social innovation and a growth-oriented development policy might be expected. In addition, we have to reflect on how change can happen when regional, institutional, and/or political preconditions are against change.

Another limitation is the narrow focus on the trinity of change agency. As in the theoretical part is shown, agency often strengthens existing structures and does not necessarily induce change (Jolly et al., 2020). Reproduction and maintenance agency also play crucial roles in regional development (Bækkelund, 2021; Jolly et al., 2020). Considering agency more broadly, including the trinity of change agency and maintenance agency would have resulted in a more comprehensive view of the potential effects of social innovations on regional development paths. Specifically, the contribution of social innovation towards maintaining current development is not considered in this dissertation.

6.1.5 Operationalisation of social innovation

The broad field of definitions of social innovations often includes a "normative" aspect in the societal outcome of a social innovation. Examples include the improvement of the quality of life (Eduardo Pol & Ville, 2009) and the empowerment of certain groups of people (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012). These aspects raised the question of whom social innovation serves. We did not want to have this discussion while developing the inventory of social innovation and, therefore, focused on the social aspect in the origin of the social innovation (e.g., new collaborations) and not on the societal outcome. The "normative" aspects were part of our additional characteristics of social innovation and were not treated as a mandatory element for defining social innovation. However, compared to other kinds of innovation, e.g., open innovation (Chesbrough, 2007), this "normative" part would sometimes have been the main distinguishing aspect of social innovation. Sometimes, our exclusion of the "normative" aspects made it difficult to identify social innovation as such and to distinguish it from open innovation. This could be exemplified in the social innovation of a supporting program of the cableway association. This is an institutionalised supporting programme in which the larger mountain railways support the smaller pre-alpine ski lifts with know-how, especially regarding maintenance work and the provision of replacement parts. In turn, the pre-alpine ski lifts advertised the supporting larger mountain railway and offered special tickets for skiing these areas[11]. According to our operationalisation, the program fulfilled the criteria for social innovation; however, it was not that easy to defend such a collaboration as an innovation and especially not as a social innovation because of the lack of a social benefit.

6.2 Further research

Thus far, this dissertation has raised some of other interesting questions that scholars may address in the future. Additionally, I argue that future research could investigate the societal outcome of social innovations in more detail. As an example, future research could examine the potential of social innovation in solving regional challenges and which agency is important for a successful outcome of a social innovation, namely, what agency is crucial for developing social innovation in a way that it can solve regional challenges? Furthermore, this dissertation can be taken as an entry point for a discussion on growth independence tourism on an actor level. The hypothetical implications of what growth-independent tourism could look like could first be discussed more broadly and with touristic actors working in the tourism industry, which could also be validated, namely, by measuring (qualitative and quantitative) the potential growth independence effects of social innovation.

[11] For more detailed information about the example see Article III or https://www.sozinno.unibe.ch/soziale_innovationen/inventar/index_ger.html

7 Literature

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8 Annex

8.1 Publication: Touristische Soziale Innovationen – Begriff und Phänomen am Beispiel Berner Oberland.

Authors: Samuel Wirth, Monika Bandi Tanner

Status: published in: S. Brandl, B. Waldemar, M. Herntrei, G. C. Steckenbauer, & S. Lachmann-Falkner (Eds.), Tourismus und ländlicher Raum - Innovative Strategien und Instrumente für die Zukunftsgestaltung. Erich Schmidt Verlag.

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ISBN: 978-3-503-19530-5

8.2 Publication: Typen touristischer Sozialer Innovationen; Anstoss für ein erweitertes Innovationsverständnis im Tourismus und im Berggebiet

Authors: Samuel Wirth, Monika Bandi Tanner

Status: published: Tourismus-Impulse Nr. 24, Dezember 2020, Forschungsstelle Tourismus (CRED-T), Universität Bern

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TOURISMUS-IMPULSE

NR. 24
DEZEMBER
2020

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CENTER FOR REGIONAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Forschungsstelle Tourismus

Typen touristischer Sozialer Innovationen

Anstoss für ein erweitertes Innovationsverständnis im Tourismus und im Berggebiet

Die Coronapandemie verändert unser Leben in einer Weise, die wir bis anhin nicht kannten. Diese Veränderungen betreffen nahezu alle unsere Lebensbereiche und vieles, was bisher als gegeben angesehen wurde, scheint keinen Bestand mehr zu haben. Dies bietet auch die Gelegenheit, das bisherige Innovationsverständnis im Tourismus und im Berggebiet zu hinterfragen. Dieser Beitrag möchte aufzeigen, inwiefern es nicht ausreicht, touristische Akteure, sowie die Berggebiete als innovationsschwach zu bezeichnen, und möchte ein erweitertes Innovationsverständnis anstossen. Dafür wird das Konzept der Sozialen Innovationen aufgegriffen und daraus eine Ableitung von touristischen Sozialen Innovationen entwickelt. Die Untersuchung von 68 Sozialen Innovationen im Berner Oberland zeigt, dass in 34 Fällen touristische Akteure beteiligt sind und es sich zudem bei 26 um neue touristische Angebote handelt. Touristische Soziale Innovationen zeigen sich also geradezu ideal, um ein erweitertes Innovationsverständnis zu entwickeln.

Durch die touristische Soziale Innovation «Sanieren ist die halbe Miete» werden in Adelboden Anreize geschaffen, Zweitwohnungen zu renovieren und anschliessend auch vermehrt zu vermieten (Links: Vor der Sanierung, Rechts: Nach der Sanierung)

Ausgangslage

In unserer Wissensgesellschaft verstärken die urbanen Zentren ihre Anziehung auf hochqualifizierte Beschäftigte und attraktive Firmen, während ländliche Räume und Berggebiete zunehmend mit Herausforderungen wie beispielsweise Abwanderung, demographische Alterung und Mangel an Fachkräften zu kämpfen haben. Mit Innovationen in Industrie und Tourismus in den Berggebieten sollten diesen Herausforderungen begegnet werden. Doch dann kam Corona. In den Städten bleiben die Grossraumbüros geschlossen, da die nötigen Abstände schwierig einzuhalten sind. Homeoffice scheint plötzlich in nahezu allen Bereichen möglich zu sein. Die Bedeutung der eigenen vier Wände nimmt folglich zu und der Wunsch nach sicherer Erholung im Freiraum steigt. Die Einstellung von der pulsierenden Stadt und totem Berggebiet scheint sich in Zeiten der Pandemie zu einem sicheren und lebenswerten Berggebiet zu verändern. Jene Räume, die bisher nicht primär als fortschrittlich und innovativ, aber geprägt von Landwirtschaft und Tourismus wahrgenommen wurden, scheinen neue Bedeutung zu erlangen. Hinzu kommt, dass plötzlich der einfache informelle Austausch von Informationen und Ideen erschwert ist, der bis anhin als essentielles Element für Innovationen galt. Jedoch den Städten ihre Innovationskraft abzusprechen wäre angesichts der kreativen Lösungen, die aktuell entstehen, die falsche Schlussfolgerung. Es gilt vielmehr, das Innovationsverständnis insbesondere für die Berggebiete zu erweitern. Denn genau diese Räume und deren strukturprägende Akteure (namentlich die Tourismusakteure) sind es, die bereits vor der Pandemie als innovationsschwach bezeichnet wurden, wobei aber durchaus innovative Lösungen für spezifische Probleme in der Region ausser Acht gelassen wurden. Dies zeigt unter anderem auch ein auf der Homepage des Forschungsprojektes (www.sozinno.unibe.ch) veröffentlichtes Inventar Sozialer Innovationen im Berner Oberland.

Zielsetzung und Methode

Ziel dieses Beitrages ist es, einen Anstoss zu liefern, um ein bestehendes eher technisches Innovationsverständnis mit jenem der Sozialen Innovationen zu erweitern. Dafür wurde der Begriff der Sozialen Innovationen untersucht und in einer Arbeitsdefinition festgehalten. Damit wurde ein Inventar basierend auf Datenbanken von Regionalförderprogrammen und Innovationspreisen mit Daten ab dem Jahr 2000 erstellt. Zusätzlich wurde dieses mit Daten aus einer systematischen Online- und Zeitungsrecherche im Zeitraum von Januar bis Juni 2019 sowie einer Online-Umfrage bei den Gemeinden des Berner Oberlands ergänzt. Weiter wurde am Inventar Sozialer Innovationen im Berner Oberland die Adaption auf touristische Soziale Innovationen gemacht sowie Typen von touristischen Sozialen Innovationen definiert und beschrieben.

Soziale Innovationen

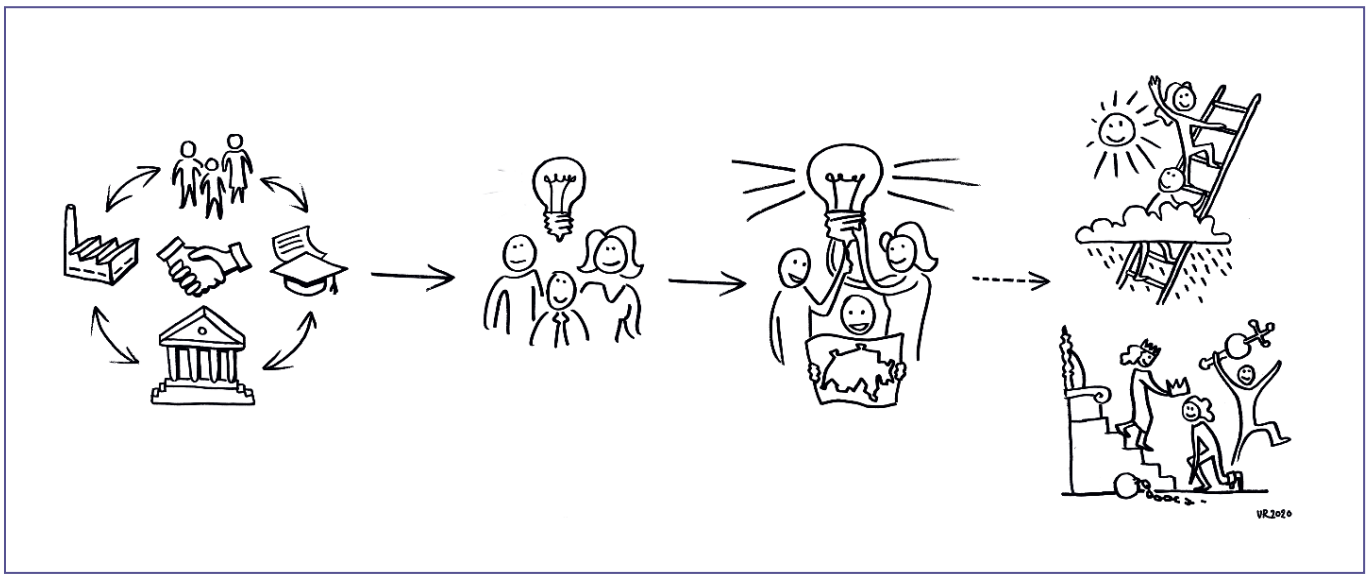
Unsere Definition von Sozialen Innovationen in Anlehnung an Ayob et al. (2016) wird durch die unten stehende Grafik veranschaulicht (vgl. Abb.1). Eine Soziale Innovation besteht aus einer neuen Form der Zusammenarbeit auf individueller oder organisationaler Ebene. In dieser Zusammenarbeit können neue Ideen entstehen. Deren zumindest angedachte Umsetzung bildet die dritte Bedingung in der Definition, die erfüllt werden muss, damit wir von einer Sozialen Innovation sprechen können. Der dritte gestrichelte Pfeil weist auf die möglichen Wirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen hin, die aber nicht zwingend als Kriterium erfüllt sein müssen. Zum einen kann eine Soziale Innovation zu einer Verbesserung der Lebensqualität beitragen und/oder sie kann die sozialen Beziehungen bzw. Machtbeziehungen verändern.

Ergebnisse

Mit dieser Definition konnten 68 Soziale Innovationen identifiziert werden, welche im Inventar auf der Projektwebseite einzusehen sind. Im touristisch geprägten Berggebiet stellt sich natürlich die Frage, inwiefern das Phänomen Tourismus eine Rolle bei diesen Sozialen Innovationen spielt. Hierzu haben wir die Sozialen Innovationen darauf hin untersucht, ob bei deren Entstehung touristische Akteure beteiligt waren und/oder ob die Sozialen Innovation ein touristisches Angebot sind. Sofern mindestens eine der beiden Bedingungen erfüllt ist, wird die Soziale Innovation als touristische Soziale Innovation bezeichnet. Diese Unterscheidung zeigt, dass bei der Hälfte der 68 Sozialen Innovationen touristische Akteure bei der Entstehung involviert waren. Zudem kann ein Drittel der 68 Sozialen Innovationen als touristisches Angebot bezeichnet werden. Daraus ergibt sich eine Summe von 41 touristischen Sozialen Innovationen (vgl. Abbildung 2: Violett hinterlegt).

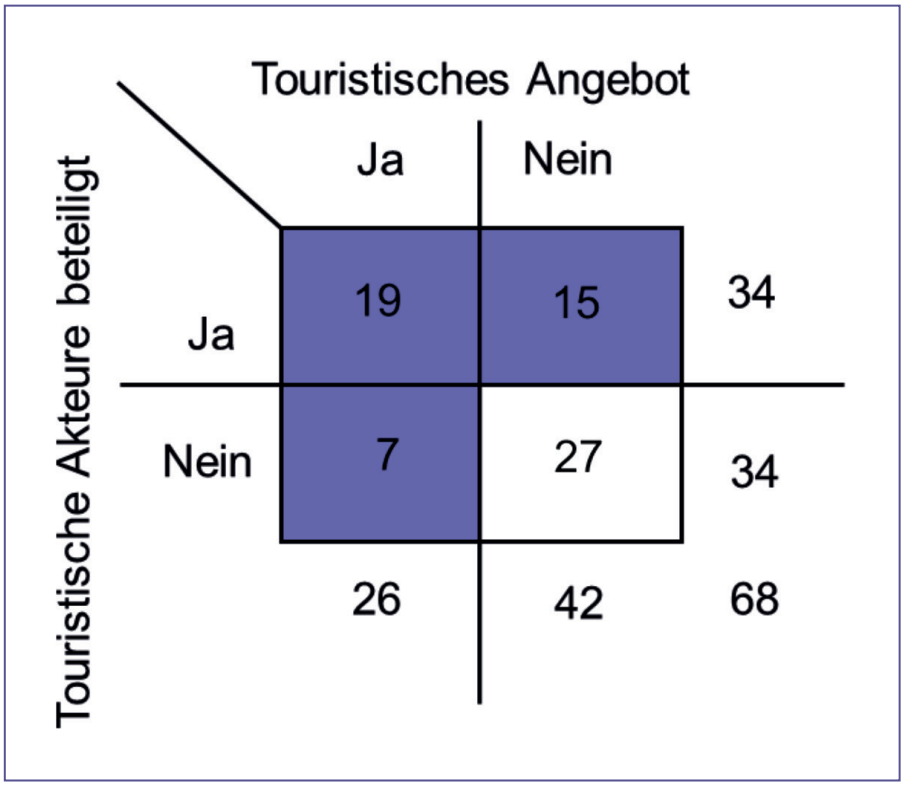
Eine genauere Analyse hinsichtlich der Akteure, die hinter diesen touristischen Sozialen Innovationen stehen, zeigt: Im Durchschnitt arbeitet jede touristische Soziale Innovation mit 2.5 Akteuren zusammen.

Abbildung 1: Definition Soziale Innovationen



Quelle: Grafik Valentin Rüegg

Abbildung 2: Anzahl Soziale Innovationen



Quelle: eigene Darstellung

Bei nahezu der Hälfte der touristischen Sozialen Innovationen sind touristische Unternehmen involviert (z.B. Bergbahnen, Hotelbetriebe). Am zweithäufigsten sind mit 37% nicht-touristische Unternehmen bei der Entstehung der touristischen Sozialen Innovationen involviert (z.B. Versicherung, Transportunternehmen). Zu rund einem Drittel ist die öffentliche Hand (Bund, Kanton, Gemeinden) beteiligt. Ebenfalls zu diesem Anteil sind Tourismusorganisationen als vertikale Kooperation involviert und bei rund jeder fünften touristischen Sozialen Innovation sind touristische Verbände als horizontale Kooperationen beteiligt. Bei 20% sind Privatpersonen involviert. Touristische Bildungs- und Forschungsinstitutionen nehmen bei 7% der touristischen Sozialen Innovationen teil. Vereine, Stiftungen sowie andere Bildungs- und Forschungsinstitutionen sind jeweils bei 15% bzw. 12% beteiligt.
Um eine systematische Betrachtungsweise auf diese touristischen Sozialen Innovationen einzunehmen, hilft eine Typisierung gemäss der vorangegangenen Analyse (vgl. Abbildung 3). Dazu lassen sich die vier folgenden Typen bilden:

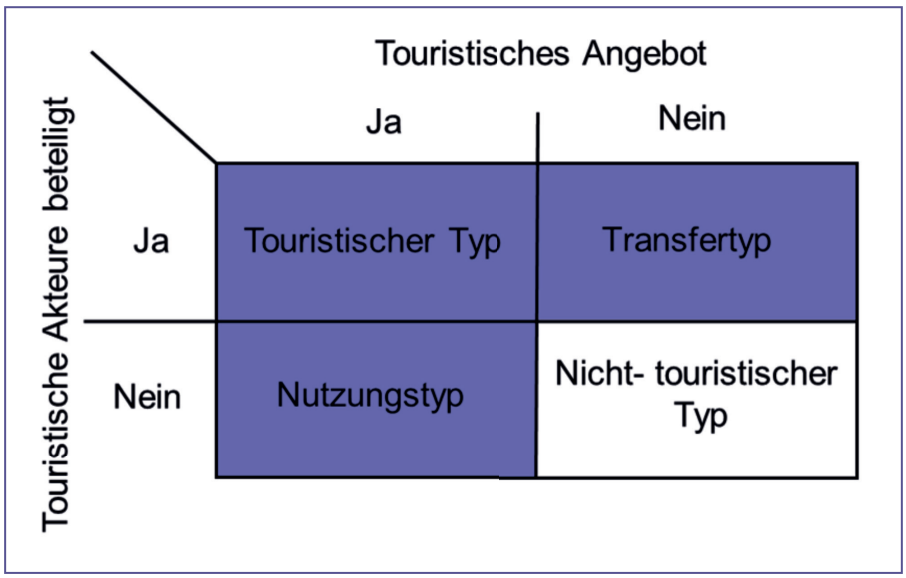
- **Touristischer Typ:**
  Soziale Innovationen dieses Typs (N=19) zeichnen sich dadurch aus, dass bei ihrer Entstehung touristische Akteure beteiligt waren und sie ein touristisches Angebot darstellen. Das touristische Angebot stiftet primär einen Nutzen für den touristischen Akteur. Ein Beispiel dafür ist eine Zusammenarbeit zwischen Tourismusorganisation, Bauunternehmen, Architekturbüro und Vermietungsplattform für Ferienwohnungen, welche Zweitwohnungsbesitzenden Beratungsleistungen für die Sanierung ihrer Zweitwohnung kostenlos anbietet. Im Gegenzug wird die sanierte Ferienwohnung während einer bestimmten Zeit im Jahr vermietet, wodurch das Bettenangebot in der Region attraktiver wird und weniger kalte Betten vorhanden sind.

- **Transfertyp:**
  Der Transfertyp (N=15) beinhaltet die Involvierung touristischer Akteure, die aber kein touristisches Angebot erstellen. Ihre Soziale Innovation dient nicht ausschliesslich einem ökonomischen Nutzen der involvierten touristischen Akteure. Oftmals spüren auch die Bevölkerung und die Region eine Wirkung davon. Als Beispiel dient eine Kooperation zwischen Hotels. Nebst Kosteneinsparungen für die Hotelbetriebe, kann sich auch das Angebot und die Zusammenarbeit von weiteren Unternehmen in der Region verändern.

- **Nutzungstyp:**
  Bei diesen Sozialen Innovationen (N=7) sind keine touristischen Akteure beteiligt und trotzdem entsteht ein touristisches Angebot. Nicht-touristische Akteure nutzen regional vorhandene Ressourcen und setzen diese touristisch in Wert, indem sie ein touristisches Angebot erstellen. Hierfür als Beispiel steht ein Museum in einem Bergdorf. Dieses Museum hat die Besonderheit, dass es von Privatpersonen aufgebaut und unterhalten wird und die Ausstellung in diversen Schaufenstern, verteilt im ganzen Dorf, zu betrachten ist.

- **Nicht-touristischer Typ:**
  Dieser Typ Sozialer Innovationen (N=27) hat keinen direkten Bezug zum Tourismus, da keine touristischen Akteure bei der Entstehung involviert sind und es sich um ein nicht-touristisches Angebot handelt. Als Beispiel kann eine Baugruppe im Rahmen einer Solarenergie-Kooperative, bei welcher die Gruppenmitglieder ihre Anlage zusammen mit anderen Mitgliedern bauen, genannt werden.

Abbildung 3: Typen touristischer Sozialer Innovationen



Quelle: eigene Darstellung

Hier zeigt eine vertiefte Analyse der involvierten Akteure, dass beim Nutzungstypen in sechs von sieben Fällen Privatpersonen beteiligt sind. Im Vergleich dazu überwiegen beim touristischen Typ und beim Transfertyp die Unternehmen. Bei Letzterem sind die lokalen Tourismusorganisationen die Akteursgruppe, die am zweithäufigsten vorkommt.

Fazit

Basierend auf einem zu engen Innovationsverständnis wird die Innovationskraft von den touristischen Akteuren und den Berggebieten oft als innovationsschwach bezeichnet. Bei der Betrachtung von touristischen Sozialen Innovationen im Berner Oberland sind jedoch zahlreiche touristische Akteure involviert oder es sind neue touristische Angebote entstanden. Der Tourismus scheint hierfür gerade ein ideales Feld für Soziale Innovationen zu sein. Gleichzeitig widerspiegelt die hohe Anzahl touristischer Sozialer Innovationen die Bedeutung des Tourismus im Berner Oberland als Leitindustrie. Dies alles bekräftigt die eingangs hinterfragte Bewertung der Innovationskraft vom Tourismus und den Berggebieten. Es reicht kaum aus, ein für die Städte gültiges Innovationsverständnis auf Berggebiete sowie touristische Akteure zu übertragen. Es benötigt Konzepte, die an die räumlichen Strukturen angepasst sind. Die bisherigen Erkenntnisse zu den touristischen Sozialen Innovationen im Berner Oberland zeigen auf, dass sowohl die Berggebiete, als auch der Tourismus durchaus als innovativ bezeichnet werden kann - aber oft für andersartige Innovationen. Allerdings gilt es weiter zu untersuchen, wie diese Zusammenarbeiten entstehen und aus welchen Motiven die Akteure zusammenarbeiten. Daraus sollen Hinweise abgeleitet werden, wie touristische Soziale Innovationen optimaler unterstützt und gefördert werden können.

Autorenschaft
CRED-T: Wirth Samuel, Bandi Tanner Monika

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Wirth, S., & Bandi Tanner, M. (2020). Touristische Soziale Innovationen – Begriff und Phänomen am Beispiel Berner Oberland. In S. Brandl, B. Waldemar, M. Herntrei, G. C. Steckenbauer, & S. Lachmann-Falkner (Eds.), *Tourismus und ländlicher Raum - Innovative Strategien und Instrumente für die Zukunftsgestaltung*. Erich Schmidt Verlag.

«TOURISMUS-IMPULSE» vermitteln in geraffter Form Ergebnisse unserer Forschungsarbeiten, die abgeschlossen sind (vgl. weiterführende Informationen). Bei weiterem und vertieftem Interesse steht unsere Projektwebseite (www.sozinno.unibe.ch) zur Verfügung.

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8.3 Publication: Wachstumsunabhängigkeit durch Soziale Innovationen? Eine Analyse potenzieller Wachstumswirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen im Schweizer Berggebiet

Authors: Pascal Tschumi, Andrea Winiger, Samuel Wirth, Heike Mayer, Irmi Seidl

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Wachstumsunabhängigkeit durch Soziale Innovationen?

Eine Analyse potenzieller Wachstumswirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen im Schweizer Berggebiet

Pascal Tschumi, Andrea Winiger, Samuel Wirth, Heike Mayer, Irmi Seidl

Soziale Innovationen werden zunehmend als Lösungen für die vielfältigen Herausforderungen in ländlichen, peripheren Räumen diskutiert. Allerdings ist offen, welche Wirkungen Soziale Innovationen haben. Eine der diesbezüglichen Fragen ist, ob Soziale Innovationen neue Wachstumsimpulse in den Regionen auslösen oder zu Wachstumsunabhängigkeit beitragen. Diese Forschungslücke will dieser Beitrag schliessen. Dafür wurde ein Inventar von Sozialen Innovationen in der Schweizer Bergregion Berner Oberland erstellt, und es wurden die potenziellen Wachstumswirkungen (Wachstumsstimulierung und Wachstumsunabhängigkeit) der Sozialen Innovationen mittels hierfür entwickelter Indikatoren untersucht. Als Ergebnis werden Idealtypen von Sozialen Innovationen mit besonders ausgeprägten potenziellen Wachstumswirkungen präsentiert.

Die Analyse von Sozialen Innovationen und deren Wachstumswirkungen erfolgt vor dem Hintergrund, dass Schweizer Berggebiete gesellschaftlich, wirtschaftlich wie auch ökologisch gefordert sind. Die Abwanderung in schweizerischen Alpengebieten war mit ca. 11 % der Bevölkerung zwischen 1981 und 2010 überaus hoch (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung 2012). Die Folge ist eine älter werdende Bevölkerung. Im Zuge der Eurokrise ab 2010 verteuerte sich der Schweizer Franken, sodass die Umsätze mit europäischen Gästen spürbar sanken (Müller-Jentsch 2017). Weiter wird Bauland für neue Infrastruktur und Gebäude knapp (Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung 2017). Zudem ist die Aufrechterhaltung der Grundversorgung gefährdet, insbesondere im Gesundheitssektor (Cerny/Rosemann/Tandjung et al. 2016).

Nicht zuletzt sind Bergregionen von zahlreichen Folgen des Klimawandels besonders stark betroffen (Schmucki/Marty/Fierz et al. 2017).

Die Schweizer Regionalpolitik möchte mithilfe regional initiierter Projekte Unternehmertum und Innnovationsdynamiken fördern und so den wirtschaftlichen Herausforderungen entgegenwirken (Staatssekretariat für Wirtschaft 2017). Als Grundlage hierfür dient ihr der Export-Basis-Ansatz, in dem davon ausgegangen wird, dass wirtschaftliches Wachstum in einer Region durch Leitbranchen, die externe Nachfrage bedienen, angestossen wird. Dieser wachstumsorientierte Ansatz stösst jedoch an seine Grenzen. Nicht jede Region verfügt über einen führenden Exportsektor bzw. hat das Potenzial dazu, einen solchen aufzubauen, nicht zuletzt, weil das Schweizer Berggebiet sozioökonomisch heterogen ist (Mayer/Rime/Meili et al. 2018). Zudem sinkt mit zunehmender Mobilität von Personen und Gütern im Alpenraum die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass die entstandenen Einnahmen in der Region zirkulieren (Segessemann und Crevoisier 2016). Der Schweizer Regionalpolitik der ausgehenden 2010er Jahre fehlen demnach »situationsbezogen anpassungsfähige (auch nichtökonomische) Perspektiven« (Peter/Rink/Forster et al. 2016: 6).

Vor diesem Hintergrund werden Soziale Innovationen als Lösung von Problemen peripherer und ländlicher Räume empfohlen. Einerseits sind Soziale Innovationen gemäss VertreterInnen vor allem von EU-Organisationen ein Mittel für mehr Wachstum in solchen Räumen (European Commission 2017; Nicholls/Edmiston 2018). Andererseits argumentieren Forschende wie Dax und Fischer (2018: 297) sowie Dewald und Rother (2019), dass zukünftige Ansätze der Regionalentwicklung über auf Wachstum abzielende Strategien hinausgehen und lokale Partizipation und Soziale Innovation adressieren sollten. Soziale Innovationen könnten Regionen helfen, deren Probleme zu lösen (Bock 2016; Neumeier 2012), beispielsweise, indem sie regionsexternes Wissen erfolgreich umsetzen (Noack/Federwisch 2019). PostwachstumsautorInnen betonen das Potenzial von sozial innovativen Initiativen, zu einer wachstumsunabhängige(re)n Gesellschaft und Ökonomie und damit zu wachstumsunabhängige(re)n Regionen beizutragen (Elsen 2014). Oft diskutierte Beispiele sind Regionalwährungen, Gemeinschaftswohnprojekte oder Reparaturinitiativen (Habermann 2009; Schmelzer/Vetter 2019).

Dieser kurze Einblick in den wissenschaftlichen Diskurs zeigt, dass Sozialen Innovationen unterschiedliche Wirkungen auf das Wachstum von Regionen zugewiesen werden. Allerdings ist die Forschung zu ihren Wirkungen noch nicht weit fortgeschritten (Pelka/Terstriep 2016: 13; Secco/Pisani/

Da Re et al. 2019: 10), und es ist unklar, inwiefern Soziale Innovationen regionales Wachstum stimulieren können bzw. inwiefern sie zu einer regionalen Wachstumsunabhängigkeit beitragen können. Hier setzt der vorliegende Beitrag an. Die ihm zugrundeliegende Forschungsfrage lautet: *Welche potenziellen Wachstumswirkungen haben Soziale Innovationen im Berner Oberland?*

Die untersuchte Bergregion befindet sich nördlich des schweizerischen Hochalpengebiets und zählt auf einer Fläche von etwa 2.900 km² rund 200.000 EinwohnerInnen. Mit rund 4 Millionen Logiernächten pro Jahr ist die Tourismusindustrie in vielen Orten für über 35 % des Bruttoinlandprodukts (BIP) verantwortlich (Rütter/Rütter-Fischbacher 2016). Der international ausgerichtete Tourismus hat eine lange Tradition und folgt bisher einer wachstumsorientierten Strategie (Ebneter/Liechti 2019; von Rütte 2007). Die Wirtschaftsstruktur, die Kultur sowie öffentliche und private AkteurInnen werden entsprechend von der vorherrschenden Rolle des Tourismus geprägt (Haisch 2017: 221 f.). Die Entwicklungen innerhalb der Region sind jedoch keineswegs homogen. Tourismuszentren wie die Jungfrauregion sowie die Gemeinden Grindelwald und Lauterbrunnen und deren Umfeld haben hohe, leicht steigende Logiernächte (bei jährlichen Logiernächten von fast einer Million) (Bundesamt für Statistik 2018a). In Grindelwald wächst zudem die Bevölkerung leicht (2010 bis 2016). Dies steht im Kontrast zum äusseren Osten der Region, wo die Anzahl der Logiernächte in den Gemeinden Meiringen und Hasliberg von 2013 bis 2018 abgenommen hat (Bundesamt für Statistik 2018a). Mit Ausnahme der zentralen Gemeinde Meiringen ist die Bevölkerungszahl im äusseren Osten rückläufig (Bundesamt für Statistik 2018b).

Soziale Innovationen und Wachstums(un)abhängigkeit

Soziale Innovationen sind Ziel vieler politischer Programme (Grimm/Fox/Baines et al. 2013) und Schwerpunkt neu gegründeter Forschungszentren (z. B. Stanford Center for Social Innovation oder Young Foundation). Doch die Definitionen und Verständnisse von Sozialen Innovationen gehen in der Literatur zum Teil weit auseinander. Das mag daran liegen, dass verschiedenste Disziplinen – Transformationsforschung, Soziologie, Regionalwissenschaften oder Betriebswirtschaftslehre – Soziale Innovationen mit ihren eigenen Definitionen erforschen (Edwards-Schachter/Wallace 2017). Metaanalysen zu Sozialen Innovationen bestätigen unterschiedliche Strömungen

(Ayob/Teasdale/Fagan 2016; Edwards-Schachter/Wallace 2017; van der Have/Rubalcaba 2016). Eine gewichtige Strömung erwartet von Sozialen Innovationen positive Wirkungen auf die Gesellschaft. Bekannt dafür sind AutorInnen, die sich mit lokaler Entwicklung beschäftigen, vor allem Moulaert und Mulgan. Sie sehen Soziale Innovationen als Lösungen für soziale Probleme, als Impuls für Empowerment sowie für die Veränderungen von sozialen Beziehungen (Moulaert/MacCallum/Hiller 2013; Mulgan/Tucker/Ali et al. 2007). Eine andere Strömung um Franz, Hochgerner und Howaldt (2012) steht mit ihrer soziologischen Perspektive den Wirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen eher neutral gegenüber und fokussiert vor allem auf veränderte soziale Praktiken und Beziehungen. Mumford (2002) sieht in Sozialen Innovationen neue Ideen, wie soziale Beziehungen und soziale Organisation ausgestaltet werden können, um ein gemeinsames Ziel zu erreichen. Der kreative Prozess der Innovationsgenerierung und -implementierung steht hierbei im Fokus – u. a. innerhalb von Unternehmen. Zusammenfassend kann festgehalten werden, dass die Definitionen einen unterschiedlich starken Fokus auf den Innovationsprozess oder das Ergebnis bzw. die Wirkung der Innovation legen. Für den vorliegenden Beitrag wird eine Definition verwendet, die diese unterschiedlichen Ausrichtungen integriert und sich an der bibliometrischen Analyse von Ayob, Teasdale und Fagan (2016) orientiert. Sie lautet wie folgt:

> Eine Soziale Innovation besteht aus einer neuen Form der Zusammenarbeit auf individueller oder organisationaler Ebene, die zu neuen Ideen führt, deren Umsetzung zumindest angedacht ist. Eine solche Innovation kann sich im Kontext der regionalen Entwicklung positiv auf die Gesellschaft auswirken, die Lebensqualität verbessern und/oder soziale Beziehungen bzw. Machtbeziehungen verändern.

Diese Definition ermöglicht ein möglichst breites Verständnis von Sozialen Innovationen sowie eine offene Perspektive auf das zu untersuchende Phänomen. Sie eignet sich für eine Anwendung auf das Schweizer Berggebiet mit dessen vielseitigen sozioökonomischen Strukturen, da Soziale Innovationen nicht nur im Zusammenhang mit Problemen bzw. Herausforderungen dieses ländlichen Raums entstehen, sondern auch als Antwort auf ökonomische Chancen und Wachstumsmöglichkeiten entwickelt werden.

Die Grundvoraussetzung unserer Definition für eine Soziale Innovation – eine neue Zusammenarbeit – basiert auf einem soziologischen Verständnis,

wobei »neu« als aussergewöhnlich für das Untersuchungsgebiet verstanden wird. Entscheidend für eine Soziale Innovation ist, dass eine neue Zusammenarbeit zu einer neuen Idee führt, deren Umsetzung zumindest angedacht ist (Ayob/Teasdale/Fagan 2016). Zusätzlich beinhaltet die Definition zwei Ausprägungen, welche die Wirkung einer Sozialen Innovation umschreiben. Dies sind zum einen eine positive Wirkung für die Gesellschaft, zum anderen die Veränderung von sozialen Beziehungen und Machtbeziehungen.

Um die Verbindung zwischen Sozialen Innovationen und Wachstum zu betrachten, werden im Folgenden relevante Wachstumsbegriffe geklärt. Mit unternehmerischem Wachstum ist sowohl Wachstum von Absatz-, Produktions- und Auftragsvolumen gemeint wie auch Wachstum der finanziellen Rentabilität eines Unternehmens (Umsatz, Gewinn, Cashflow, Return on Investment). Wir verstehen Unternehmen als Organisationen, welche unternehmerische Praktiken verfolgen, d. h., insofern sie »Leistungen zur Deckung von Fremdbedarf unter Beachtung der Wirtschaftlichkeit« erstellen und verwerten (Lück 1990). Dies beinhaltet »klassische« Unternehmen, wie auch Vereine, Stiftungen und Genossenschaften. Mit regionalem Wachstum ist in erster Linie das Wachstum des regionalen BIPs gemeint, also der Summe der regionalen Wertschöpfung. Wachstumsunabhängigkeit ist hier nicht als Gegenstück zu Wachstum, nämlich Schrumpfung, zu verstehen. Vielmehr wird das in der Postwachstumsliteratur etablierte Verständnis (vgl. Schmelzer/Vetter 2019: 158 f.; 171) verwendet: die Fähigkeit einer Gesellschaft inklusive deren Volkswirtschaft und deren Institutionen, »ihre Funktionen weiterhin [zu] erfüllen, aber nicht mehr existenziell auf Wirtschaftswachstum angewiesen« (Seidl/Zahrnt 2010: 17) zu sein. Gesellschaftliche und ökonomische Grundfunktionen sind beispielsweise Existenzsicherung, gesellschaftliche Teilhabe aller oder Basisinfrastruktur sowie Gesundheitsversorgung.

Methodisches Vorgehen

Aktuell gibt es keinen umfassenden Überblick über Soziale Innovationen in Berggebietsregionen, und vorhandene Inventarisierungen (für den Alpenraum) sind weder systematisch noch gehen sie über Fallbeispiele hinaus (vgl. SIMRA 2018). Unser umfassendes Inventar von Sozialen Innovationen im Berner Oberland leistet einen Beitrag, diese Lücke zu schliessen. Es basiert auf einer Datenbank von innovativen Projekten, Organisationen, An-

geboten oder Initiativen, die im Berner Oberland im Zeitraum von 1997 bis 2018 geplant und/oder durchgeführt wurden. Dazu wurden unterschiedliche Datenbanken von Regionalentwicklungsförderungsprogrammen[1] oder Innovationspreisen[2] identifiziert und zusammengeführt. Komplementär wurde eine Onlineumfrage bei den GemeindeschreiberInnen – den leitenden VerwaltungsbeamtInnen – aller 76 Gemeinden des Berner Oberlands durchgeführt, mit dem Ziel, weitere lokale Projekte und Initiativen zu identifizieren.[3] Zusätzlich wurde eine systematische Online- und Zeitungsrecherche[4] im Zeitraum Januar bis Juni 2019 durchgeführt. Insgesamt konnten 979 potenzielle Soziale Innovationen identifiziert werden.

Mithilfe eines aus 23 Beurteilungskriterien[5] bestehenden Analyserasters identifizierten wir daraus diejenigen Sozialen Innovationen, die der oben beschriebenen Definition entsprechen. Anhand ihres Ziels wurde überprüft, ob eine Soziale Innovation die zwei zusätzlichen Ausprägungen erfüllt. Insgesamt wurden 68 Soziale Innovationen identifiziert, wovon 32 auf eine positive Wirkung für die Gesellschaft und 6 auf die Veränderung von sozialen Beziehungen und/oder Machtbeziehungen abzielen. Zur Identifikation der Sozialen Innovationen wurden alle Projekte und Initiativen der Datenbank von zwei Forschenden unabhängig beurteilt. Die Intercoder-Reliabilität der Analyse beträgt 90 %.

In einem weiteren Schritt wurden die identifizierten Sozialen Innovationen anhand theoriegestützter Indikatoren auf ihre potenziellen Wachstumseffekte hin beleuchtet. Das Indikatorenset, welches wir für diese Analyse entwickelten, basiert auf der Literatur zu betriebswirtschaftlichen Wachstumstreibern (Gebauer/Lange/Posse 2017; Mewes/Gebauer 2015; Posse 2015; Richters/Siemoneit 2019) und zu Strategien von nichtwachsenden Unternehmen (Liesen/Dietsche/Gebauer 2013; Posse 2015). Ziel war es, aus diesen Unternehmensstrategien Indikatoren abzuleiten, welche auch auf die Region sowie ökonomische Akteure anwendbar sind. Dazu wurden die

1 Neue Regionalpolitik (NRP), Innotour, RKOO – Regionales Förderprogramm, SIMRA, Verein »vorwärtsbeo«.

2 Milestone, Prix Montagna, Swiss Mountain Award, Berner Innovationspreis, PrixWINtutti

3 Bei der Umfrage konnten 26 potenzielle Soziale Innovationen identifiziert werden.

4 Es wurden fünf regionale Zeitungen untersucht.

5 Das Analyseraster basiert auf Kriterien für folgende Kategorien: Zusammenarbeit/Neuheit/Idee/Berner Oberland/Verbesserung Lebensqualität/Veränderung sozialer Beziehungen/Veränderung von Machtbeziehungen.

Wirkungsmechanismen von Wachstums- bzw. von Nichtwachstumsstrategien von Unternehmen identifiziert. Aus diesen Wirkungsmechanismen wurden 39 Indikatoren abgeleitet, die auf Wachstumsstimulationseffekte bzw. Wachstumsunabhängigkeitseffekte hinweisen. Die Indikatoren erfassen zwei unterschiedliche Wachstumseffekte: erstens Effekte, welche wirtschaftliches Wachstum in Regionen oder Unternehmen stimulieren (fortan Wachstumsstimulationseffekte genannt), sowie zweitens Effekte, welche diese Regionen oder Unternehmen wachstumsunabhängiger machen (fortan Wachstumsunabhängigkeitseffekte genannt). Um die potenziellen Wachstumseffekte der 68 Sozialen Innovationen unseres Inventars zu analysieren, überprüften wir, welcher Indikator potenziell auf welche Soziale Innovation zutreffen könnte. Dazu wurden durch Onlinerecherchen zusätzliche Infos zur Entstehung, Umsetzung oder Zielsetzung der Sozialen Innovationen erhoben. Die Beurteilung wurde von zwei unabhängig arbeitenden Forschenden vorgenommen mit einer Intercoder-Reliabilität von 88 %.

Wachstumswirkungen

Die folgenden Tabellen illustrieren die Indikatoren und deren durch die Literaturanalyse entwickelten Wachstumswirkungen.

Tab. 1: Indikatoren Wachstumsunabhängigkeit und Wachstumswirkungen. Quellen: v. a. Gebauer/Lange/Posse (2017); Paech (2012a); Posse (2015)

Nr.	Indikator	Wachstumswirkungen
U1	Regionale Absatzstrukturen	Geringerer Preiswettbewerb; gewisse Absatzsicherheit; Passung an Konsumentenbedürfnisse; Förderung kleiner Unternehmen (U8)
U2	Regionale Beschaffungsstrukturen	Geringerer Preiswettbewerb; gesicherter Absatz von Produktionsgütern; Förderung kleiner Unternehmen (U8)
U3	Wirtschaftliche AkteurInnen in engem Kontakt	Verringerter Preiswettbewerb; Passung an Konsumentenbedürfnisse; gewisse Absatzsicherheit; Vertrauensbildung mit allenfalls günstiger Finanzierung und verringertem Renditedruck
U4	Entkommerzialisierung der Produktion	Absenz von Wachstumsdynamik kapitalistischer Marktverhältnisse; höhere Selbstversorgung

Nr.	Indikator	Wachstumswirkungen
U5	Reduktion der Erwerbsarbeitszeit	Rückgang Konsum und damit Verringerung kapitalistischer Marktdynamik
U6	Geringer Fremdkapitalanteil und Zins	Geringerer Renditedruck zur Erwirtschaftung von Zinsen/Dividenden; geringere Fremdbestimmung durch externe Kapitalgebende
U7	Geringe Kapitalintensität in Produktion	Geringerer Renditedruck zur Erwirtschaftung von Zinsen/Dividenden; geringere Fremdbestimmung durch externe Kapitalgebende
U8	Kleines oder mittleres Unternehmen	Geringeres Wachstumsstreben, keine negativen Skaleneffekte (Verwaltungskosten etc.), höhere Krisenresistenz und geringere Abhängigkeit von Marktdynamiken
U9	Kommunikation zugunsten Konsum- und Produktionsbeschränkung	Begrenzen von Wachstumsdynamik durch Konsumnachfrage
U10	Kommunikation sozialer und ökologischer Kennzahlen	Fokus auf Unternehmenserfolg durch verschiedene Unternehmensziele
U11	Nischenmarkt	Geringerer Preiswettbewerb; gewisse Absatzsicherheit
U12	Lange Nutzungsdauer	Begrenzen von Wachstumsdynamik durch Konsumnachfrage
U13	Handwerkliche Fähigkeiten für Pflege, Reparatur	Begrenzen von Wachstumsdynamik durch Konsumnachfrage; Entkommerzialisierung (U4)
U14	Prosumierende	Passung an Konsumentenbedürfnisse; Begrenzen von Wachstumsdynamik durch Konsumnachfrage; Nischenmärkte (U11); Entkommerzialisierung (U4)
U15	Selbstverwaltete Unternehmen	Breiteres Verständnis von Unternehmenserfolg als Wachstum alleine; kleine und mittlere Unternehmen (U8)
U16	Substitution von Produkten durch Dienstleistungen	Geringere Skaleneffekte bei Produktion von Dienstleistungen als von Produkten, d. h. geringere Wachstumsdynamik
U17	Produktabsatz (faire Preise, Abnahmegarantien, keine Mengenrabatte)	Geringerer Preiswettbewerb; reduzierter Kostendruck, reduzierte Anreize für Skaleneffekte
U18	Kleiner Werbeaufwand	Begrenzen von Wachstumsdynamik durch Konsumnachfrage

Nr.	Indikator	Wachstumswirkungen
U19	Kurze Wertschöpfungskette	Begrenzen der Zahl involvierter Unternehmen mit Wachstumsdrang; an Nachfrage angepasste Produktionsmengen
U20	Regionale Wertschöpfungskette	Geringerer Preiswettbewerb; Beteiligung kleinerer Unternehmen; gesicherte Nachfrage; an Nachfrage angepasste Produktionsmengen; evtl. günstige Fremdkapitalfinanzierung

Tab. 2: Indikatoren Wachstumsstimulierung und Wachstumswirkungen. Quellen: v. a. Gebauer/Lange/Posse 2017; Paech 2012a; Posse 2015

Nr.	Indikator	Wachstumswirkungen
S1	Mengenrabatte bei Einkauf	Anreize für höheren Konsum oder Produktion
S2	Entlohnung der Unternehmensleitung nach Wachstumszahlen und Börsenwerten	Strategische und operative Ausrichtung an Wachstum
S3	Hoher Fixkostenanteil bei Produktion	Anreiz zu erhöhter Produktion, um Skaleneffekte zu realisieren
S4	Hoher Fremdkapitalanteil	Hoher Renditedruck zur Erwirtschaftung von Zinszahlungen/Dividenden; höhere Fremdbestimmung durch externe Kapitalgebende
S5	Geplante Obsoleszenz	Erhöhung der Konsumnachfrage
S6	Konsumsteigerung (psychologische Obsoleszenz, symbolisch, emotionale Markenkommunikation)	Erhöhung der Konsumnachfrage
S7	Innovation (Prozess, Produkt, Technologie)	Erhöhte Produktion durch erhöhte Produktivität von Innovationen; neue Nachfrage durch neue Produkte (Eigenschaften)
S8	Sprunghafte Kapazitätserweiterung	Erhöhter Fremdkapitalbedarf; längerfristiger Wachstumsdrang
S9	Hoher Kapitalbedarf (für Forschung und Entwicklung)	Hoher Renditedruck zur Erwirtschaftung von Zinszahlungen/Dividenden; Entwicklung von Produkten mit Skalenpotenzial; hohe Fremdbestimmung durch externe Kapitalgebende

Nr.	Indikator	Wachstumswirkungen
S10	Hohe Kapitalintensität Produktion	Hoher Renditedruck zur Erwirtschaftung von Zinszahlungen/Dividenden; Ausreizen von Skaleneffekten; hohe Fremdbestimmung durch externe Kapitalgebende
S11	Fokus auf Kommunikation von finanziellen Kennzahlen	Fokus auf Wachstumsziele von Unternehmen
S12	Fortwährendes Hervorbringen neuer/ausdifferenzierter Produkte und Dienstleistungen	Förderung des Produktabsatzes durch Unternehmen (S6/S7/S16); erhöhte Nachfrage und Konsum
S13	Rechtsform Aktiengesellschaft	Wachstumsdruck zur Erwirtschaftung von Dividenden/Steigerung des Aktienkurses; Fremdbestimmung durch externe Kapitalgebende
S14	Wirtschaftliche AkteurInnen in losem Kontakt	Begrenzte Passung der Produkte an Konsumentenbedürfnisse und damit höherer Konsum; Preiswettbewerb; Marketingstrategien wie geplante Obsoleszenz (S5) und Massnahmen zur Konsumförderung (S6/S16)
S15	Unternehmensziel ökonomisches Wachstum und Gewinnmaximierung	Fokus auf Wachstumsziele des Unternehmens
S16	Hoher Werbeaufwand	Fördern von Wachstumsdynamik durch Konsumnachfrage (Bedürfnisse); Ausreizen von Skaleneffekten
S17	Räumlich disperse Wertschöpfungskette (hohe räumliche Distanz/Erhöhung der räumlichen Distanz)	Homogen auf Wachstum und Gewinn ausgerichtete Unternehmen; erhöhter Wettbewerb; Ausnutzen von Skaleneffekten und Erweiterung der Absatzmärkte; wenig an Nachfrage angepasste Produktionsmengen (Potenzial für Überproduktion)
S18	Lange Wertschöpfungskette	Zahlreiche involvierte Unternehmen mit Wachstumsdrang; erhöhter Wettbewerb; Ausnutzen von Skaleneffekten und Erweiterung der Absatzmärkte; nicht an Nachfrage angepasste Produktionsmengen (Potenzial für Überproduktion); geringeres Vertrauen der Beteiligten und damit erhöhter Kapitalbedarf und Zins wegen unsichereren Leihgeschäften
S19	Hoher Wettbewerbsdruck	Wachstumsstrategien wie Preis- und Mengenwettbewerb; Ausreizen von Skaleneffekten; Strategien zur Erhöhung der Produktivität; aktives Marketing

Im Folgenden werden beispielhaft diejenigen Wirkungsmechanismen vorgestellt, die zu Wachstumsunabhängigkeit führen und aus denen u. a. die beiden Idealtypen Sozialer Innovationen abgeleitet wurden. Mit einem tiefen Fremdkapitalanteil (U6) entsteht weniger Druck, Profite zu erwirtschaften, um Zinsen dafür begleichen zu können (Binswanger 2009). Damit gehen aufgrund der Abwesenheit von Fremdkapitalgebenden geringere Renditeerwartungen, bessere Kontrollmöglichkeiten durch die Unternehmensleitung und höhere Transparenz einher (Posse 2015). Eine kurze Wertschöpfungskette mit wenigen AkteurInnen (U19) impliziert, dass weniger fremdkapitalfinanzierte, unter Renditedruck stehende Einzelbetriebe involviert sind (Paech 2012b). Eine gleiche Wirkung haben regionale Wertschöpfungsketten (U20) (Gebauer/Lange/Posse 2017; Paech 2012b; Posse 2015). Diese machen es wahrscheinlicher, dass eine starke Bindung zwischen Produzierenden, Konsumierenden sowie Kapitalgebenden entsteht. Dadurch verlieren beispielsweise Produktpreise an Gewicht, weil die Konsumierenden einen engeren Bezug zu den Produzierenden haben. Letztere stehen folglich weniger unter Preisdruck (Posse 2015). Der Einbezug von Konsumierenden in die Produktion (U14) hilft, das Produkt auf die Bedürfnisse der Konsumierenden auszurichten. So können Produktionsressourcen effizienter auf den tatsächlichen Bedarf des Produkts abgestimmt werden (Leismann/Schmitt/Rohn et al. 2012). Zugleich werden die Beziehungen zwischen den beteiligten AkteurInnen gestärkt (Bakker/Loske/Sherhorn 1999; Schor 2010). Weiter kann durch Abnahmegarantien (U17) der Preisdruck für Produzierende entlang der Wertschöpfungskette reduziert werden, da der Verkauf zu einem fixen Preis schon vorgängig vereinbart wurde (Gebauer u. a. 2017). Zusätzlich sinkt durch tiefe Kapitalintensität in der Produktion (U7) die Abhängigkeit von Fremdkapital, weil weniger in Kapital (Maschinen etc.) investiert werden muss (Paech 2012).

Die in der Tabelle aufgeführten Indikatoren S1 bis S19 beschreiben die Wachstumsstimulierungseffekte. Sie werden z. B. dadurch generiert, indem durch Werbung konsumorientierte Bedürfnisse und Emotionen geschaffen werden (S16) (Gebauer/Lange/Posse 2017). Eine physisch-räumlich weit auseinanderliegende Wertschöpfungskette (S17) kann das Vertrauen zwischen den AkteurInnen senken und so mehr Renditedruck erzeugen (Paech 2012b). Weniger Vertrauen erfordert beispielsweise eine höhere Sicherheit bei Leihgeschäften in Form eines höheren Zinses, welcher mit Profiten erwirtschaftet werden muss (Paech 2012b). Weiter gelten Produktinnovatio-

nen als wachstumsinduzierend, wenn die Produktion immer neuer Produkte mit Investitionen in Kapital (S7) verbunden ist (Paech 2012a). Produkte für den Statuskonsum (S6) werden vorwiegend für bereits gesättigte Märkte entwickelt, um weitere Nachfrage zu generieren (Paech 2012b; Posse 2015).

Soziale Innovationen und ihre potenziellen Wachstumseffekte

An den 68 identifizierten Sozialen Innovationen sind viele verschiedene AkteurInnen beteiligt: Am häufigsten involviert sind Unternehmen und Privatpersonen (je 20 %). Weiter sind staatliche Organisationen, Tourismusorganisationen, Vereine und Verbände, Forschungsinstitutionen und Stiftungen beteiligt. Ein Drittel der Sozialen Innovationen sind im ersten und zweiten Wirtschaftssektor angesiedelt, zwei Drittel im dritten Sektor. Soziale Innovationen gibt es in diversen Themenfeldern wie Tourismus, Mobilität, Landwirtschaft, Gesundheit und Bildung. Sie entstanden sowohl in abgelegenen schrumpfenden Räumen wie auch in wirtschaftlich wachsenden Zentrumsgemeinden im Berner Oberland.

Ein Ziel dieses Beitrags ist es, von den 68 Sozialen Innovationen jene mit ausgeprägten potenziellen Wachstumseffekten zu erkennen. Durch die Fokussierung auf diese »Extremtypen« in Hinblick auf die Wachstumswirkung können wir idealtypische Formen der Sozialen Innovationen identifizieren. Damit klare Tendenzen erkennbar sind, wurden nur solche Sozialen Innovationen als »Extremtypen« ausgewählt, bei denen die Anzahl relevanter Wachstumsstimulationsindikatoren maximal 25 % der Anzahl relevanter Wachstumsunabhängigkeitsindikatoren derselben Sozialen Innovation entspricht (und umgekehrt, d. h. entgegenwirkende Effekte sind klein). Insgesamt repräsentieren 8 Soziale Innovationen diese beiden »Extremtypen«. Es zeigte sich, dass diese maximal 7 der 19 Wachstumsstimulationsindikatoren und maximal 12 der 20 Wachstumsunabhängigkeitsindikatoren erfüllen. Die verbleibenden 60 Sozialen Innovationen aus dem Inventar werden im Folgenden nicht berücksichtigt: Entweder weisen sie nur wenige Wachstumswirkungen auf oder sie haben insgesamt viele Wachstumswirkungen in beide Richtungen.

Die vier Sozialen Innovationen mit den meisten Indikatoren, die auf Wachstumsunabhängigkeit hinweisen, sind ein kooperativ organisierter alpiner Molkerei- und Käsereibetrieb, ein Projekt Solidarischer Landwirtschaft,

ein kooperativ organisiertes Mehrgenerationenhaus sowie eine Baugruppe im Rahmen einer Solarenergie-Kooperative, bei welcher die Gruppenmitglieder ihre Anlage zusammen mit anderen Mitgliedern bauen.

Gemeinsam ist diesen Sozialen Innovationen, dass sie kein, wenig oder zinsfreies Fremdkapital nutzen. Das geplante Mehrgenerationenhaus soll u. a. mit zinslosem Kapital der Mitglieder der Wohngenossenschaft finanziert werden (Zukunft Hasliberg 2019: 12). Das Solidarische Landwirtschaftsprojekt wird durch die AbnehmerInnen der Erzeugnisse zinsfrei vorfinanziert. Dank einer Spende konnte der Molkerei- und Käsereibetrieb mit wenig Fremdkapital aufgebaut werden. Die Finanzierung der Solarenergie-Baugruppe erfolgt über die Gruppenmitglieder: Mitglieder, die bei sich eine Anlage installieren, erhalten Unterstützung von denjenigen, die bereits eine Anlage haben. Die Arbeitsstunden, die von Unterstützenden aufgewendet wurden, müssen sie mit der Mithilfe am Anlagenbau eines anderen Mitglieds abarbeiten.

Weiter kennzeichnen diese vier Sozialen Innovationen eine kurze und regionale Wertschöpfungskette sowie eine enge Bindung der involvierten Akteure. Im kooperativen Molkerei- und Käsereibetrieb wird beispielsweise nur Milch aus den umliegenden Landwirtschaftsbetrieben verarbeitet, wodurch die Beziehung zwischen Milchliefernden und -verarbeitenden eng ist. Dasselbe gilt für die Solidarische Landwirtschaft, bei der die Konsumierenden die Produkte ohne Umweg über den Zwischenhandel direkt ab Hof beziehen. Die Beziehung zwischen Produzierenden (LandwirtInnen) und Konsumierenden ist ausserordentlich eng u. a. aufgrund der direkten Zusammenarbeit in der Produktion.

Bei drei der vier Sozialen Innovationen spielen Prosumierende eine wichtige Rolle. Dies sind Konsumierende, die gleichzeitig an der Produktion des Produkts oder der Dienstleistung beteiligt sind, das/die sie später konsumieren. Wie oben illustriert, verfolgt die Solidarische Landwirtschaft ein solches Modell, und auch in der Solarenergie-Kooperative werden die Solaranlagen von den späteren Anlagennutzenden zu einem bedeutenden Anteil selbst gebaut. Diese Formen der Produktion stellen gleichzeitig eine Entkommerzialisierung der Produktion dar: Die von den Prosumierenden geleistete Arbeit für die Erbringung der Dienstleistung wird nicht monetär entgolten. Im Konzept der »Sorgenden Gemeinschaft«, das vom Generationenhaus verfolgt werden soll, tritt dies ebenfalls auf. Demnach soll der »Sorge-Bedarf nicht alleine durch professionelle Institutionen gedeckt werden«,

sondern durch das Zusammenwirken von nichtprofessionellen AkteurInnen wie Nachbarschaften oder Freiwilligen mit staatlichen und professionellen Kooperationspartnern (Zukunft Hasliberg 2019: 7).

Weiter bestehen bei drei der vier Sozialen Innovationen Abnahmegarantien. Beispielsweise kann sich der Molkerei- und Käsereibetrieb auf eine Abnahmegarantie eines Schweizer Großverteilers verlassen oder die LandwirtInnen der Solidarischen Landwirtschaft auf die Abnahmegarantie der Prosumierenden. Ebenfalls drei Soziale Innovationen haben eine geringe Kapitalintensität in der Produktion: In der Solarenergie-Kooperative werden die Anlagen mit wenig Maschinen, aber mit viel Handarbeit installiert. Im Vergleich zur industriellen Käseproduktion wird im kooperativ organisierten Käsereibetrieb viel Handarbeit und wenig Maschinenhilfe eingesetzt, so auch in der Solidarischen Landwirtschaft aufgrund der Mitarbeit der Prosumierenden.

Die vier Sozialen Innovationen mit ausgeprägten potenziellen Wachstumsstimulationseffekten sind eine Versicherung gegen schlechtes Wetter für Feriengäste; ein Reiseangebot, das alpine Busfahrten mit historischen Wanderungen kombiniert; eine direkte Zugverbindung mit Spezialeinrichtung zu einer Ski-Destination sowie eine Partnerschaft zwischen fünf Golfclubs für eine besondere Mitgliedskarte.

Alle vier Sozialen Innovationen sind kommerzielle touristische Angebote, die aktiv beworben werden und sich durch ihr Ziel des ökonomischen Wachstums auszeichnen. Die Wetterversicherung soll den touristischen Betrieben in der Destination, wo das Paket angeboten wird, erhöhte Einnahmen durch neue Feriengäste verschaffen. Dasselbe Ziel verfolgen die direkte Zugverbindung und das Wanderangebot. Die Golfclub-Mitgliedskarte soll die Attraktivität eines kostenpflichtigen Clubbeitritts und den Umsatz des Golfclubs steigern.

Ein weiteres Merkmal aller vier Sozialen Innovationen liegt darin, dass Produktion und Konsumption der Angebote in einer (physisch-)räumlich weit auseinanderliegenden Wertschöpfungskette stattfindet. In drei von vier Fällen geht dies einher mit eher distanzierten Beziehungen zwischen den involvierten Akteuren. Ein anschauliches Beispiel hierfür bietet die Wetterversicherung. Sie wurde von einem etablierten Versicherungsunternehmen in einer Schweizer Großstadt ausserhalb des Berggebiets entwickelt, angeboten wird sie von einer Tourismusorganisation eines alpinen Ferienorts und gekauft von TouristInnen aus aller Welt. Die Gewinne aus dem Angebot ge-

hen zum Versicherungsunternehmen sowie zur Tourismusorganisation. Die Beziehung zwischen den AkteurInnen ist eher distanziert – sowohl räumlich wie auch sozial.

Zwei dieser Sozialen Innovationen sind in wettbewerbsintensiven Märkten angesiedelt: zum ersten das Busfahrten-Wander-Angebot, das sich gegenüber den umfangreichen, eher unspezifischen sonstigen Wanderangeboten abzugrenzen versucht, indem es historische Wanderungen in Kombination mit Postbusfahrten anbietet. Das zum zweiten in wettbewerbsintensivem Markt angesiedelte Angebot stellt die Wetterversicherung dar, die ein sehr spezifiziertes Risiko absichert, das noch nicht vom Versicherungsmarkt abgedeckt ist.

Zwei weitere Soziale Innovationen sind Produktinnovationen, die allen voran für Statuskonsum gedacht sind bzw. mit emotionaler Markenkommunikation beworben werden. Die genuinen Produkteigenschaften von Produkten für den Statuskonsum dienen der gesellschaftlichen Zurschaustellung und nicht der unmittelbaren Bedürfnisbefriedigung (Reisch/Raab 2014: 933). Die Golfclub-Mitgliedskarte ist Statuskonsum, weil die Club-Mitgliederbeiträge von einigen 10.000 Schweizer Franken den eigentlichen Nutzen – das Golfspielen – kaum vollumfänglich rechtfertigen. Emotionale Markenkommunikation ist beim Busfahrten- und Themenwanderangebot auszumachen. Es wird stark mit Rückgriff auf die Tradition der schweizweit bekannten und beliebten Postautos (Busse) beworben. So sollen Emotionen geweckt und KundInnen gewonnen werden.

Diskussion und Ausblick

Dieser Beitrag reflektiert die verschiedenartigen Wirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen in Bezug auf Wachstum. Auf Basis eines Inventars von Sozialen Innovationen im Schweizer Berggebiet haben wir die potenziellen Wachstumswirkungen mit einem dafür entwickelten Indikatorenset analysiert. Acht der 68 Sozialen Innovationen unseres Inventars lassen sich zwei Extremtypen zuteilen: Soziale Innovationen mit potenziellen Wachstumsunabhängigkeitseffekten und solche mit potenziellen Wachstumsstimulationseffekten. Ausgehend von den Charakteristiken dieser Extremtypen haben wir zwei Idealtypen von Sozialen Innovationen ausgearbeitet, die in Tab. 3 dargestellt sind.

Tab. 3: Idealtypen. Quelle: Eigene Darstellung

	Soziale Innovation: Wachstumsunabhängigkeit	**Soziale Innovation: Wachstumsstimulation**
Beschreibung Idealtypen	Eine Soziale Innovation, die Wachstumsunabhängigkeit fördert, besteht aus einer neuen Form der Zusammenarbeit, in welcher oftmals Privatpersonen involviert sind. Bei der neuen Idee handelt es sich häufig um alternative Formen des Produzierens und Konsumierens, welche sich an sozialen und ökologischen Zielen orientiert. Herkömmliche ökonomische Ziele treten in den Hintergrund.	Eine Soziale Innovation, die Wachstum stimuliert, besteht aus einer neuen Form der Zusammenarbeit zwischen AkteurInnen, die primär wirtschaftliche Ziele verfolgen. Die neue Idee, die entwickelt wird, ist oft ein kommerzielles Produkt oder Dienstleistungsangebot, welches sich einem spezifischen Sektor zuordnen lässt. Nichtökonomische Ziele treten in den Hintergrund.
Hauptmerkmale	• Kein Anteil, kleiner Anteil, zinsloses Fremdkapital • Kaum Werbeaufwand • Enge Verbindung zwischen Produzierenden, Konsumierenden, Liefernden • Kurze und regionale Wertschöpfungsketten	• Wirtschaftliches Wachstum als Ziel • Werbeaufwand für kommerzielle Produkte • Hohe räumliche Distanz zwischen den Wertschöpfungsstufen
Weitere Merkmale	• Prosumierende • Abnahmegarantien/faire Preise • Entkommerzialisierte Produkte/Leistungen • Geringe Kapitalintensität • Kurze Wertschöpfungskette • Regionale Wertschöpfungskette • Regionale Absatzstrukturen	• Schwache Beziehung zu den Konsumierenden • Aktive Kommunikation finanzieller Kennzahlen • Symbolischer Konsum/emotionale Markenkommunikation • Hoher Wettbewerbsdruck • Differenzierte Produktinnovation

Die hier dargestellten Wachstumswirkungen von Sozialen Innovationen sind potenzielle und nicht empirisch nachgewiesene Wirkungen. Um robustere Ergebnisse zu erhalten, müssen die Indikatoren und deren Wechselwirkungen empirisch untersucht werden. Weiter sollte sich, um das Verständnis zu erhöhen, die Forschung mit den Voraussetzungen für die Entstehung von Sozialen Innovationen im regionalen Kontext auseinandersetzen. Dabei spielt auch die Motivation der unterschiedlichen AkteurInnen, vor allem

in Hinblick auf die Wachstumswirkungen, eine wichtige Rolle. Zu diesem Zweck würden sich Innovationsbiografien eignen (Kleverbeck/Terstriep 2018). Darüber hinaus zeigt das Indikatorenset, dass weitere Untersuchungen quantitative und qualitative Dimensionen umfassen müssen.

Angesichts der vielfältigen Herausforderungen der Berggebiete zeigt dieser Beitrag, dass ein Fokus auf Soziale Innovationen in der Regionalpolitik durchaus angemessen sein kann. Wenn Regionalpolitik wachstumsunabhängigkeitsfördernde Ziele verfolgen möchte, dann sollte sie nicht nur Soziale Innovationen per se fördern, sondern sie muss sich gezielt auf die Charakteristiken der oben beschriebenen sozial innovativen Projekte und Initiativen fokussieren. Es kann demzufolge sinnvoll sein, bestimmte Charakteristiken in Kombination zu fördern um somit eine nachhaltige und wachstumsunabhängige Regionalentwicklung auszulösen.

Die Frage steht im Raum, ob solche Entwicklungen die Transformation zu einer Postwachstumsgesellschaft voranbringen können. Zweifellos sind die identifizierten Beispiele Nischenprojekte von sehr begrenzter ökonomischer Bedeutung. Doch sie zeigen, was Soziale Innovationen und Unternehmen auszeichnet, die zu Wachstumsunabhängigkeit beitragen, und welche Aspekte und Faktoren z. B. die Regional- und Wirtschaftspolitik fördern sollten, um Wachstumsunabhängigkeit zu verbreiten. Gleichzeitig haben diese Beispiele selbst Vorbildfunktion und stärken die wirtschaftliche Eigen- und Widerstandsfähigkeit einer Region. Und sie zeigen, dass wirtschaftliche Aktivitäten in einer Postwachstumsgesellschaft das Wohlergehen der Bevölkerung durchaus erhöhen können, verglichen mit einer wachstumsorientierten Wirtschaft. Für einen Umbau übergeordneter struktureller Veränderungen für eine Postwachstumsgesellschaft wie der Systeme der sozialen Sicherung oder der Erwerbsarbeit reichen die Impulse aus peripheren Gebieten zweifellos nicht aus, aber der dortige regionalökonomische Umbau kann die sozioökonomischen Probleme vor Ort verringern und die Lebensqualität erhöhen.

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