Article

The Potential and Need to Implement the New Concept of Social Innovation into the Management Practice of Modern Energy Companies

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Abstract: The research results presented in the paper show that it is important that not only state institutions and foundations but also energy companies engage in solving environmental problems by introducing specific social innovations. This need results primarily from the fact that in the environment of energy enterprises, problems of a social nature as well as those related to ecology are observed. The occurrence of social and environmental problems is related to the fact that the solutions developed so far to eliminate them are not fully effective, and the currently functioning political and economic systems as well as financial mechanisms do not sufficiently support the interests of society members and the biological systems of the planet. Hence, people constituting a layer of the social environment of energy companies also expect support from them, in the elimination of specific problems. It appears that the active participation of energy enterprises in counteracting or eliminating social and environmental issues may result in an increase in the economic efficiency of their management systems. Therefore, the benefits may concern not only the environment in which these companies operate, but also the companies themselves.

Keywords: social innovations; energy companies; management practice

1. Introduction

In the literature on management in the energy sector, the concept of sustainable development has recently become increasingly important. One of the fundamental questions that researchers are now trying to answer is: “how can we build a more sustainable energy system for the existing one?” [1]. The answer to this question, however, is not simple, but is complicated: “methodological approaches to analyzing energy systems need to be further enhanced to discover the subtleties of long-term transformation processes” [2]. At the same time, it seems that the introduction of the so-called social innovations to management practice may be one of the appropriate ways for energy companies to combine activities aimed at achieving a balance between the achievement of economic, social and environmental goals.

This paper attempts to reflect theoretically and empirically on the problems of the potential and need to implement social innovations into the management practice of energy enterprises. Using a survey of the literature and the results of their own research, the authors decided to verify whether, in addition to specific premises, there is also a real need to implement new ideas and necessary remedial strategies into the management practice of energy enterprises, which are aimed at meeting human needs and solving social (difficulties with finding a job, health deficits, unfavorable living conditions, crime, etc.) as well as environmental problems arising in connection with state restrictions [3].
Achieved results make it possible to detect a relationship between technological and social commitment in energy companies, and to somehow open a debate on future research developments.

A systematic review of the literature, as well as the performance of a preliminary survey in the form of a free interview among selected representatives of the management staff of energy companies from the Słaskie Voivodeship resulted in the evolution of the research problem. A research problem, or phenomenon as it might be called, is the topic one would like to address, investigate or study, whether it be descriptively or experimentally. It should be interpreted as a question or a set of questions that the study aims to answer [4]. For the purposes of the undertaken project, the research problem is articulated in the form of a decisive interpellation: should energy companies consider in their management practice the need to undertake innovative activities of non-profit-making character, that result in progressive changes in the natural environment and social life in the area where these entities operate? The explanation of the basic conceptual apparatus in the field of social innovation constitutes the introduction to the empirical part of the work.

2. Literature Review—Potential of SI

Drucker indicates that innovations are not something accidental, but the result of a deliberate search by entrepreneurs who are seeking specific inspiration [5]. At the same time, the desire to obtain certain benefits, which then translate into profit is usually the primary impulse by enterprises for undertaking them. The development of innovations is highly significant because it finally leads to economic growth [6]. Innovation not only can, but also should be the primary determinant of an organization’s success, which results from the European Commission’s strategy and government strategies, provided that organizations are willing, ready and able to create innovations and use them effectively in the context of value creation [7]. However, there is also a specific type of innovation that in their assumption are not intended to be purely commercial. They are the so-called social innovation, also referred to as SI in the expert body of literature [8]. Bisgaard defines them in terms of new products, services, business models, processes, distribution channels, etc., which are able to help overcome global challenges related to both the environment and issues that are bothersome for society members [9]. Kesselring and Leitner claim that such innovations can only be referred to when an idea for solving a social problem is implemented. They should not be assessed on the basis of economic criteria. Contrary to technical innovations, they are much more related to the value system, and are not oriented towards economic utility [10]. Yet another definition is presented by Phillips, Deiglemier and Miller. They conclude that they are simply unprecedented ways of solving a social problem that are more efficient, effective, sustainable or fair than the existing solutions, and the benefits from innovation do not fall to private individuals but above all, society as a whole [11].

On the basis of the comparison and synthesis of the cited definitions, it can be generally stated that as the name of the considered type of innovation suggests, they relate to a specific area of reality, i.e., the environment (all elements that are outside of the organization and which at the same time can also significantly affect its functioning [12]) which consists of structures, relationships or behaviors between society members. The social environment creates the framework of the reality in which each personal and institutional unit functions. Social innovations, similar to any other kind, should be considered in terms of solutions:

- Non-standard and innovative from the point of view of the entities that initiate them or their beneficiaries;
- Being of a practical nature [13];
- May take various forms, e.g., products, services or processes;
- As a consequence, this should lead to measurable effects.
On the other hand, the special nature of social innovations is proved by the fact that they concern the stakeholders who form a social environment stratum. In other words, they respond to identified, real problems and challenges related to the desire to improve the quality of life of individuals and entire communities, which occurs in the environment of the entity. They are designed to initiate specific, progressive transformations that are intended to provide an advantage, not so much to the very initiator, but beneficiaries that are outside of it. As Michelini notes, “social innovations should be a means leading to social change, increasing the quality of life and finding solutions and approaches to a non-identical set of human problems” [14]. Therefore, they are semantically related to the concepts of sustainable development conducted in the literature, which has become an important part of the corporate management philosophy in recent years, as well as the circular approach taking into consideration eco-design, reuse, low energy consumption, zero emissions, etc. [15].

Vrontis et al. pay attention to the growing interest in recent years in social innovations on the part of enterprises. The authors write that “the growing presence of new players—beside those belonging to the institutional and third sectors—committed to supporting social and environmental causes through innovative approaches and tools leads to the profile of a for-profit enterprise increasingly committed to the pursuit of social goals” [16]. On the other hand, however, the authors of Oxford Business School emphasize that apart from the practical sphere, there are still surprisingly few scientific publications on social innovations, compared to the huge number of studies on innovations in business and science [17]. This fact is confirmed by Weerawarden et al., who say that business model innovation literature in the social purpose context “has grown in significance, yet remains fragmented and in need of a conceptual framework to facilitate the development of a unified body of knowledge” [18]. In fact, although the term social innovation appears at the beginning of the 20th century (in the field of sociology), in the work of Ward of 1903: Pure sociology: a treatise on the origin and spontaneous development of society (Macmillan Books, New York), and increasing frequent use of the term, under consideration since the 1960s until today, has created a sense of unity and progress in this field, researchers are of the opinion that: “in contemporary organizations, the processes of innovative activity aimed at society remain insufficiently operationalized in a decision-making context ” [19].

At the same time, it is a fact that the analysis of the existing state of knowledge allows for considering a relatively new concept of social innovation as potentially appropriate to be implemented into the management practice of modern energy companies. This is because modern energy companies should not only focus on creating new solutions that may directly translate into the level of profits achieved by them in the future. Demanding conditions of running a business and increasing energy needs (after the World War, the second and throughout the second half of 21st century, consumption of commercial energy boomed on a worldwide scale, from 2 Gtoe in the end of the War to more than 11 Gtoe in 2010; this growth is still increasing and is the consequence of unprecedented economic growth, combined with the discovery of apparently unlimited deposits of coal, oil as well as natural gas resources [20]) do not release representatives of the energy business sector from initiating activities aimed at preparing (and then implementing) such new solutions that may contribute to the development of the quality of social life in the environment in which their companies are functioning. This necessity results from three fundamental facts presented in the literature on the subject:

− First, from the need for a wise and humane sense of shared responsibility for the reality and living conditions in a given community. It should constitute a natural element of the management practice of each entity familiar with the principles of business ethics.

− Second, from prudence, which is manifested in caring for one’s own interests. This is because the prospects of proper functioning of companies are related to the state of the environment, including, among others, the condition of human and natural resources around the entities. The development of every enterprise depends on the
health and stability of the community in which it operates, and on how well the mem-
bers of the community are doing. The company is a part of the environment in which
it operates. There are certain interactions between the company and the representa-
tives of the community. A healthy society in which the company operates supports
its own development.

Finally, the described need is characterized by a preventive value. Market realities
often force energy companies to implement such activities that in the public’s perception,
may seem to be characterized in a pejorative way (e.g., an increase in tariff rates for energy
consumption). People often forget that such entities not only enable the functioning of the
economy, but also contribute to the development of local communities, providing jobs,
wages and benefits, as well as tax revenues. Researchers note that by contrast, people are
often inclined to express the opinion that such corporate entities “use their size and power
to behave in an anti-social way” [21]. Actually, running a business in a socially responsible
way allows for winning the trust of society and gaining the favor of the authorities, and
yet decisions directly concerning the company and its activity especially in the energy
sector depend on them. Therefore, it seems that there is no better way to counteract the
spread of this type of opinion than by adopting an attitude expressing dialogue with the
environment: “adopting responsible business standards is a reflection of respecting the
popular trend that allows the environment to gain favor for implemented projects” [22].

3. Materials and Methods

The selection of research methods resulted in the effective adoption of both second-
ary and direct (primary) methods of collecting information. On the other hand, in terms
of methods of processing and analyzing the collected information, both quantitative and
qualitative methods (economic analysis of mathematically unmeasurable phenomena)
were selected. Triangulation, i.e., a strategy for solving a research problem, which means
using a package, several different approaches and methods, as well as adopting different
depth perspectives and using different data sources in one study [23], was justified by the fact
that “especially in the face of exploratory and descriptive problems, it may appear that
using only quantitative methods is insufficient to explain their essence, conditions and
causes of their occurrence or course” [24].

Thus, bibliographic and factual survey in the field of management sciences con-
ducted by the authors constituted the basis for the development of the theoretical part of
the paper (approximation of the conceptual apparatus in the field of social innovations,
combined with the determination of their potential to be introduced into the practice of
energy enterprise management). The authors decided to conduct a bibliographic inquiry
in accordance with the adopted methodology of a systematic literature review, i.e., one
that focuses on a clearly formulated research question and uses the described, scientific
methods of identification, evaluation and synthesis of all sources adequate to the question
directing the cognitive effort [25]. Thus, unlike traditional reviews, a systematic review
follows specific standards. It took the form of a sequence of actions that the researchers
undertake to exhaust the state of ignorance about the issue under consideration. These
activities created a series of logically consecutive stages, the execution of which measura-
ably increased the chance of success in the review. They ranged from defining the purpose
of the review, through searching and obtaining sources, qualification up to data extraction
and reporting in the form of this article.

Such an approach is consistent with the recommendations of researchers who claim
that obtaining knowledge from classical literature on the subject may be an appropriate
starting point for defining research problems [26]. In the theoretical area, the aim of the
work was therefore achieved by analyzing source materials and literature using the
method of deduction. The factual data and the used literature allowed for viewing the
described reality from a sufficiently broad perspective, as well as describing and evaluat-
ing the phenomena from an expert level of theoretical knowledge. However, the conducted inquiry primarily allowed for presenting specific conclusions concerning the possibility of implementing social innovations into the practice of management in energy entities operating on a commercial basis.

Next, the potential of social innovations to be implemented into the management practice of modern energy companies was confronted with the real needs identified on the basis of the results of our own research conducted in 2020 [27]. This allowed for collecting data for the basic qualitative and quantitative analysis, which was the basis for the preparation of the empirical part of the article. An interview consisting of direct communication between the researcher and the respondents was the technique used to obtain information used in the research. It involved answering the questions asked during direct personal or telephone contact between the respondent and the interviewer. The adopted research procedure also forced a decision on the selection of an appropriate measuring instrument to obtain empirical data for further analysis. It was decided that a questionnaire, i.e., “a collection of questions written in a specific way on sheets of paper or other medium in order to elicit the desired answers” should be used [28]. The questionnaire is an operationalization of a specific research issue, which means that the problem formulated in theoretical terms was translated into the language of the questionnaire addressed to a specific group of respondents. From the point of view of the content of the questionnaire, it consisted of three parts: an invitation, a set of questions and respondent’s particulars.

The interview with the questionnaire was conducted in the region of the Slaskie Voivodeship. This results from the fact that conducting research in a selected area is consistent with contemporary trends in the field of scientific research. The researchers conclude that “due to the growing significance of economic and spatial units, such as regions, in the world arena, many concepts associated with entrepreneurship and enterprise began to be analyzed in relation to regions” [29].

Thus, the surveyed population included the inhabitants of the Slaskie Voivodeship, who can be further differentiated according to demographic characteristics, such as age or place of residence. At this stage, however, the issue of selecting specific units of the research sample emerged. For this purpose, a probabilistic form of selection based on the probability theory is often applied. However, researchers indicate the fact that “this method may be impossible or inappropriate to use in many research situations” [27]. This is because the logic and techniques of probabilistic selection require large financial outlays [28], and in practice they are often characterized by the so-called loads. They are mainly related to the fact that in connection with the selection of a sample in random research, it is not difficult to make a mistake in the selection of people who are not typical or representative for the research [30].

Bearing this in mind, as well as considering the specificity of a particular research situation (e.g., a wide research frame, which translates into the inability to precisely identify all persons from among whom it would be possible to select individuals for the study), it was decided that a method especially recommended in such situations, consisting of the selection of the so-called informants should be used. The selection of the members of the group speaking on behalf of the population was made randomly, bearing in mind that their group should meet the numerical condition of representativeness. The minimum sample size was calculated using the formula, where: \(N_{\text{min}}\) — minimum sample size, \(N_p\) — amount of population, \(e\) — assumed estimation error, \(f\) — fraction size, \(\alpha\) — confidence level for the results, the value of the Z score in the normal distribution for the assumed level of significance:

\[
N_{\text{min}} = \frac{N_p(\alpha^2 \cdot f(1-f))}{N_p \cdot e^2 + e^2 \cdot f(1-f)}
\]

It allows us to calculate the minimum number of people in the sample (in the study, the sample which comes from the population), assuming individual parameters. In other
words, it allows us to estimate how many people should be tested, so that the results are obtained with a certain confidence level and the assumed maximum error estimates real results in the population. The final group of members who spoke on behalf of the population included a several dozen adult and working age people. Their average age was ≈ 30 years. They all came from and/or lived in the Śląskie Voivodeship at the time of the interview. They represented such poviaiats as: Częstochowski, Rybnicki, Tarnogorski, Gliwicki, Pszczyński, Bielski, Kłobucki, Mikołowski, Myszkowski and magistrate districts, including Katowice, Częstochowa, Bielsko-Biała, Ruda Śląska, Gliwice, Sosnowiec, Jaworzno, Zory. They were diverse in terms of demographic characteristics, such as the level of education, and in terms of the declared professional situation.

4. Results

Primary research that was performed according to the methodology of conducting research exploration, described in the previous subchapter, allowed us to establish that there is not only the possibility, but most of all the necessity to implement potentially useful social innovations into the management practice of energy companies. The first of the facts confirming this thesis is the observation resulting from the research that the social and ecological conditions observed in the environment of energy enterprises in the research area are not fully satisfactory. They require intervention not only from public administration or public benefit organizations, but also from companies operating on a commercial basis.

The overwhelming number (∼70%) of the surveyed inhabitants of the Śląskie Voivodeship declare that they notice certain social problems in their immediate environment. They include such issues as poverty, problems in finding employment, crime, health deficits in the population, insufficiently good level of health protection, unfavorable living conditions or addictions. Then, the respondents manifesting a form of dissatisfaction with the state of the social environment determined the importance of individual problems. Only 4% of the respondents did not encounter poverty at all in their immediate environment. According to 42%, this phenomenon is noticeable, but it is not a major problem. More than half of all the people felt the lack of sufficient livelihood or know people who are experiencing the situation under consideration and 4% of them consider poverty a very big problem.

Although over 41% of the surveyed respondents assessed that the issue of health deficits is not socially troublesome, at the same time for the remaining half of people, their own, or their closest relatives' health situation should not be underestimated. In total, 33,(3)% of all the respondents assessed that this is a problem, and over 24% considered it to be a big or very serious problem. A significant part of the surveyed inhabitants (60%) indicated the need to overcome this type of challenge [28]. The results of the survey on unfavorable living conditions are presented in Figure 1.
The group of factors that decrease comfort in a given environment include problems with access or inadequate condition of the housing and communication infrastructure; poor access to education; too high of a level of prices and living costs; the existence of regulations and restrictions that make life difficult and which have their source in legal provisions and customary practices; limited access to culture and entertainment; no prospects for development; etc.

It proves that the inhabitants of the region also feel discomfort resulting from fear of criminal activity. According to 38% of respondents, the occurrence of activities that are ethically reprehensible and prohibited by law is a problem in their environment. In total, nine people indicated crime as a big or very big problem. Opinions regarding the rank of the unemployment problem are similar, although not identical, as shown in Figure 2.

The healthcare system being not efficient enough and the occurrence of addictions were also considered significant problems. A total of ≈35.9% of respondents indicated that in their opinion the first issue was a problem. A similar number (≈34.6%) was even more uncompromising in their opinions. They expressed the view that the problem related to
the poor level of health protection was significant or extremely significant. The results concerning the occurrence of addictive behaviors are presented in Figure 3.

![Figure 3](image.png)

**Figure 3.** The problem of addiction in the respondents' opinions. Source: own elaboration.

In the case of each of the specific social problems that were discussed, it can be stated that there is a relative balance between people who indicated their presence in the immediate environment and those who perceive them to a lesser extent. However, such a regularity cannot be noticed in the case of the question whether there are noticeable problems related to the poor condition of the natural environment in the respondent's environment. As many as 90% of all surveyed people objected to the condition of their natural environment. The occurrence of such results is related, among others, to the fact that the respondents come from a highly developed area with respect to the economy. Due to its specificity, i.e., the highest level of industrialization, high population density and urbanization, the research area is one of the regions with the greatest number of problems resulting from anthropopression, i.e., all human activities (both planned and incidental) affecting the natural environment [31]. The manufacturing activity conducted in Silesia along with its accompanying processes are associated with significant pressure on the natural environment, the result of which is noise generation or irreversible transformation of the natural landscape, among others.

The presented results show that the socio-ecological situation of the region is not considered satisfactory by its inhabitants. Problems rooted in the imperfection of the system of diverse social roles and positions, behind which there is the acceptance of rights and obligations as well as norms and values, among others, are noticed there [32]. Ecological problems related to such issues as air pollution, landscape deformation, contamination of surface and groundwater, degradation of fauna and flora, among others, are also noticed there.

The unsatisfactory condition of the social and natural environment is one of the arguments confirming the need to involve the energy enterprises in the region in the creation of specific social innovations. It is true that the organs of public and state administration should mainly be responsible for undertaking initiatives, including innovative ones aimed at eliminating the negative effects of the phenomena under consideration. In reality, however, they are not always able to meet the challenges they face. The participation of energy companies in activities aimed at preventing or eliminating social and environmental problems is additionally justified by the fact that community members clearly expect that such entities should join the work of building common welfare.

Over 80% of respondents expressed an affirmative opinion when asked whether enterprises, apart from activities aimed at generating their own profit, should engage in solving social and environmental problems by introducing new solutions for the members
of the communities in which these companies operate. Only six of these people considered that such involvement was not very important. A much larger number of people considered it important or very important.

Therefore, there is no social consent to passivity in counteracting the social and environmental problems observed in the region. At the same time, it is believed that energy companies should also implement innovative ideas aimed at positive transformations in the environment. This fact should not raise resistance from the representatives of the managerial staff of enterprises which were not originally established to act for philanthropic purposes. As confirmed by the results of further studies, starting activities to support the environment does not have to be associated only with additional expenses and an increase in workload related to the evaluation of ideas and solutions that are new to the enterprise. It also offers the companies a vision of the possibility of achieving certain internal benefits (directed at the energy company).

Conducted research shows that almost 87% of respondents admit that the fact that a company focused on profit also implements activities aimed at eliminating social problems would be a reason to be interested in the company’s offer. For over 28% of these people, being socially involved would be a serious argument in support of this. Such results show that the greater involvement of enterprises in social life may be perceived by their potential customers as additional value, which is in a way offered to them with the product. A similar distribution was also observed during the analysis of the answers to the question of whether the awareness that a specific company conducts activities for the protection of the natural environment would be an argument for the respondent to choose its offer. The concentration of indications within specific options of answers to this question is presented in Figure 4.

![Figure 4. Answers to the question of whether the fact that an energy company also implements activities for the protection of the environment would be an argument to become interested in its offer. Source: own elaboration.](image)

On the other hand, thanks to involvement in social and environmental activities, the external image of an energy company could also improve. Over ninety-five of respondents are convinced that in their opinions, the prestige of a company that is involved in social activities would increase. Almost the same percentage of respondents reflects the opinions of people who would start to be more favorable towards companies that care about the natural environment (only 5,45% of people answered that they had no opinion on this subject, and one decided that it would not matter). This means that the inhabitants of the region assume that the conditions in which they live, what they breathe, whether they have access to clean drinking water, etc., determine the basis of their existence. They consider the right to decent living conditions and clean environment in terms of an inalienable civil right, which should be defended by all institutional actors on the market. Consumer expectations are changing. Quality and affordability, and even the added value combined with customer service are proving insufficient these days. Nowadays, clients closely monitor the social and environmental practices of companies. Brands that want to
develop in the future must adapt to these needs and expectations of their stakeholders, finding a purpose that goes beyond the core business.

5. Discussion

Modern civilization’s path of development is paved with the innovative achievements of human ingenuity. Scientific authorities also share a quite unequivocally positive opinion about the significance of innovations. It should be mentioned at this point that it has now been over a hundred years since J. A. Schumpeter recognized innovation as a determinant in the development of an organization, and more than a quarter of a century since C. Freeman stated that: “not to innovate, means to die” [33]. On the other hand, however, it should not be forgotten that in practice many new ideas are not finally successful, and the very term of innovation may not always be synonymous with the word progress. Despite the right intentions of people who develop inventions and discoveries, some of them may be associated with technical or organizational regression, cause losses in the economic or social reality or may not be beneficial to either the initiator of changes or other people around them. This is highlighted by Glinka and Gudkova, among others, who state that many innovations have their dark side and cause numerous negative side effects [34]. Such innovations should be described as not only ineffective but also unnecessary.

However, it seems that there is a type of innovation that cannot be viewed in terms other than unequivocally positive. Such innovations include new solutions aimed at environmental protection and the development of human communities in the environment of enterprises. The expenditures incurred for this purpose should not be perceived in terms of additional and unnecessary costs. These innovations’ unequivocally positive assessment results from the fact that “today’s world is struggling with many problems, including among others such issues as increasing social inequalities, growing unemployment, aging society, social exclusion, climate change or increasing environmental pollution and its impact on public health” [35]. This is related to the fact that traditional forms of counteracting these phenomena are either exhausting or failing. The inefficiency of the dominant solutions regarding the quality and comfort of people’s life, defects in the structure of the mechanisms of organizing social systems, and especially the negligence in healthcare systems, have recently been especially exposed, among others, during the development of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, as the findings of this study show, there is the need to implement the concept of social innovation into the management practice of modern energy companies. This is because the prospects for the proper functioning of companies are related to the state of the environment, including, among others, the condition of human and natural resources around the entities. As the results of the research have shown, implementing socially oriented innovative activities by energy companies may not only be a source of necessary (and required by the community) transformations in the environment, but also specific benefits for themselves. Voluntary consideration of social interests and the good of the natural environment in company activities may, among others, lead to offering customers a surplus of value (which may further convince them to choose the company’s offer), or result in the occurrence of effects related to the improvement of the company’s reputation or image.

6. Conclusions

In the article, the authors undertake an attempt to consider the impact of the state of the social environment, and the degree of its uncertainty as an external determinant of the need to take specific management actions in energy companies. Taking up such a topic was justified by the fact that in the market nowadays there are still companies that do not see the potential of social innovations in the creation of a new, better order, as well as the possibility of obtaining internal benefits. Hence, all kinds of publications in which atten-
tion is drawn to the fact that recent concern for economic interests must be related to observing that the ethical principles of responsibility towards society should be considered appropriate in terms of value. At the same time, however, the authors are aware of the fact that the subject matter undertaken in the work does not fully exhaust matters resulting from the frame of reference: social innovations and the management activity of energy companies. However, it can successfully be treated as an inspiration and starting point for further studies.

As part of the continuation of research in the area in question it seems necessary, inter alia, to analyze internal factors, such as the impact of energy company’s profile of the organizational climate on the possibility of providing social innovations. One can also consider the broadly understood features of managerial staff (the role of the company’s management and the characteristics of managers/leaders) as a factor influencing the possibility of socially directed activities in the company. Considering the characteristics of management team members as determinants of organizational innovation in the social area should, inter alia, involve determining whether the leader of a socially engaged energy company should be transformative, i.e., one who achieves his goals through the ability to observe and identify future trends, create a bold and inspiring mission and react quickly to changes. Such a manager is convinced that both managers and regular employees interact with each other by referring to values that are important to both parties. In the transformational model, the leadership style is therefore based on striving to change the values inside the organization and achieving goals by making co-workers supporters of a joint vision, not only hired employees, as in the transactional model, for example.

It is also worth investigating the opposite relationship to the one presented in the article, i.e., to examine whether the management processes currently taking place in energy companies are conducive to the occurrence of social innovations (whether they can be their source and/or inspiration). At the same time, however, it should be remembered that researchers dealing with the methodology of scientific research warn against studying problems that are too broad [36]. They indicate that for the sake of transparency of research, one not only can, but even should keep research simple. They emphasize that it is not possible to investigate everything, every relationship between the two issues under consideration. These recommendations also apply to the study of relations in the frame of reference: social innovations in the management of energy enterprises.

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