

**Serving Communities During a Global Pandemic:
Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on Ukrainian Social Enterprise**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in
International Development and Global Studies

December 2022

Graduate School of International Development and Global Studies

Faculty of Social Sciences

University of Ottawa

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Dedications

For my parents, Anya and Karl Roberts. Nothing could have been possible without your love, patience, and unconditional support.

For Baba and Dido. Thank you for always keeping a copy of New Horizons for me, for instilling your love of Ukraine in me, and for teaching me how to make holopchi and borscht the right way.

Acknowledgements

Foremost, I would like to acknowledge the guidance and support of Dr. Dominique Arel during the completion of this thesis project. His kind words and thoughtful insights have been invaluable to me throughout this process.

A heartfelt thank you to Dzvenyslava Shcherba, Ania Vozna, and Myroslava Buchak for their support with research and translations. I am so grateful to have met you during this process and to have had you on my team.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa for believing in the value of this project and for their generosity.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Paul Haslam and Dr. Lauchlan Munro, for their diligence in providing constructive feedback to improve the quality of this work, and their dedication to the students in the School of Development Studies.

Lastly, thank you to Jasmine Ghadban for her emotional support, encouragement, and good company.

Abstract

Due to their innovative capacity and social mission, social enterprises build resilience and cohesion in communities by providing for vulnerable groups that governments and markets tend to overlook. In the recovery from COVID-19, while countries attempt to regain lost ground towards their sustainable development goals, protections and support to social entrepreneurship will be vital. This study examines this issue in the context of Ukraine, where the social and economic effects of the pandemic had been exacerbated by the war in Donbas and a decades-long history of unstable economic development. The February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, which occurred while this research was concluding, is factored into the analysis. Social entrepreneurship presented an opportunity to contribute towards the development priorities laid out by the Ukrainian government, but various challenges – including a lack of corresponding legislation and negative public perception – stood in the way of the sector’s progress. By analyzing scholarly articles, policy documents, and news reports related to Ukrainian social enterprise, as well as the responses of 13 social enterprises to an electronic survey, this study explores the experiences of self-identified social enterprises in Ukraine during COVID-19, before the Russian invasion. This inquiry brings awareness to the socially-oriented businesses that were working towards sustainable development in Ukraine before the country was forced into the newest iteration of war at the hands of Russia.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Research Design and Methodology	9
3. Context	13
3.1 Historical Background	14
3.1.1 <i>Mass Mobilization and Economic Reform in Ukraine Since Independence</i>	14
3.1.2 <i>Ukraine’s Sustainable Development Priorities</i>	20
3.1.3 <i>Development Challenges Due to the War in Donbas</i>	23
3.2 Social Enterprise	26
3.2.1 <i>The Value and Purpose of SE</i>	26
3.2.2 <i>Ukrainian Civil Society and SE</i>	31
3.3 The COVID-19 Pandemic	35
3.3.1 <i>COVID-19 in Ukraine</i>	35
3.3.1.1 <i>The Experiences of Ukraine’s Vulnerable Groups during COVID-19</i>	36
3.3.1.2 <i>Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ukraine and Support to Small and Medium Businesses</i>	42
4. Theoretical Framework	46
4.1 <i>The Welfare State & The Social and Solidarity Economy</i>	46
4.2 <i>Contingency Theory and Organizational Sustainability</i>	50
5. Results	55
5.1 <i>Legal Registration of Companies</i>	55
5.2 <i>Enterprise Goals</i>	57
5.3 <i>Challenges During COVID-19</i>	58
5.4 <i>Adjustments Made to Business</i>	60
5.5 <i>Support from Government or Other Organizations</i>	63
5.6 <i>Consequences for Social Impact</i>	64
5.7 <i>Lessons Learned from Operating During the COVID-19 Pandemic</i>	66
6. Analysis & Discussion	69
6.1 <i>The Development Impact of SE in Ukraine</i>	69
6.2 <i>Flexibility, Innovation, and Adapting to Challenges</i>	72
6.3 <i>Discrepancies in SE Law and Integration into National Policy</i>	75
7. The 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine	78

8. Conclusion	84
List of Abbreviations	89
Annex - Electronic Survey Questions	90
Works Cited	92

1. Introduction

To say that the process of writing this paper contained horrible twists of fate would be an understatement. Allow me to start from the beginning and to situate myself in this research. Growing up in the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora, I had heard about the history of Ukraine, about its former Soviet past and the lives lost during Holodomor, but I had found it difficult to identify with. Born and raised in Canada in the late 1990s and early 2000s, I felt largely removed from this Soviet history – a history lived by my grandparents. When I left home and moved across the province to pursue my education, I largely left my participation in the Ukrainian culture behind.

As I progressed through my undergraduate studies in political sociology and conflict, I found myself drawn back to Ukrainian history. Its magnitude had once escaped me, but as I began to learn more, I was angered by what I discovered. I was upset at the politics that had pushed my grandfather out of the country during the second world war, when he was only 15. A political climate that had forced my grandmother to escape to England without telling anyone outside of her home. The stories my grandmother had told me about her youth under Soviet rule suddenly took on a new meaning, contextualized by my studies on fascism and imperialism.

After the anger came the reverence. I began to study Ukrainian resistance and identity, researching extensively key periods in Ukrainian history: the Holodomor, the 2004-05 Orange Revolution, and the 2014 Euromaidan. This research brought into focus the acute resilience of Ukrainians. Ukrainians have withstood attempts at genocide, the attempted extinguishing of the Ukrainian culture, the culling of the intelligentsia, land grabs, and the installing of political figures favorable to the country's imperialist neighbor, Russia. Despite it all, the country stands

independent today and Ukrainian culture is celebrated across the world. Major political action in the past two decades has epitomized the Ukrainian spirit of resilience and perseverance.

My fascination with Ukrainian history and politics and took me to Harvard University, where I was a student in the 48th cohort of the Harvard Ukrainian Summer Institute. Later, it took me to the University of Ottawa, where I began my master's degree in Globalization and International Development as an affiliated graduate student with the school's Chair of Ukrainian Studies.

It was during my graduate work that I was introduced to the economics of development and the power of markets to shape societies. Knowing Ukraine's history as a former republic of the Soviet Union, I understood that the free market in Ukraine had been at the disadvantage of having less time to develop than in the rest of Europe and in North America (as was the case in all former-Soviet states). I also knew that years of persistent aggression from Russia and the resulting war in the Donbas – the southeast regions of Ukraine – had been taxing on the economy, on government resources, and on the collective wellbeing of the population.

The juvenility of the Ukrainian free market, along with the stress to government and citizens posed by the Donbas war and other recent political/economic challenges, caused me to wonder about the prevalence of (SE) in Ukraine. While the definition of “social enterprise” is often contested due to the many forms that such ventures can take, the term commonly refers to businesses that prioritize social and/or environmental impact over profit generation for owners (European Commission, 2017; Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2020, pg. 6). Given their dual social and commercial objectives, SEs must generate enough revenue to both invest into their business operations and to maintain some form of social impact. For example, SEs are often trusted for the delivery of food and clean water, housing services, and the employment of vulnerable people. Due to the services that they

provide, these enterprises are relied upon by those who are disadvantaged and those who the government and markets fail to account for (Moizer & Tracey, 2010, pg. 252).

Some countries in Europe have attempted to delineate SEs by creating specific legal forms and/or a transversal legal status. Others – like Poland, Germany, Finland, and the United Kingdom – have created methods of certification to give SEs a distinct identity and generate visibility of these types of enterprises (European Commission, 2014, pg. 3). While Ukraine does have some legislative instruments to regulate, in part, the operations of enterprises with social objectives, there is no legislation that formally recognizes SE as an organizational and legal form (Pact, 2018, pg. 14). I will expand on this in more detail during my review of relevant literature.

In my preliminary research, I found that while legislation specifically pertaining to SE did not exist in Ukraine, there were indeed businesses that identified and operated as SEs. This interested me greatly, and I was looking forward to performing field work in Ukraine to better understand Ukrainian SE.

Then, the pandemic hit. In 2019-2020 the SARS-CoV-2 virus resulted in a global outbreak of the disease COVID-19, with cases reported in almost every country worldwide. By the end of March 2020, measures had been implemented around the world to limit the transmission of this respiratory disease. Flights were canceled and border entry restrictions were installed; social distancing became a new standard in human interaction; work and school, for many, became an entirely virtual experience. The world braced against the threat of COVID-19.

With COVID-19 came a tremendous shift in social norms and in the realities of daily life, to the point where governments and media were calling pandemic-era conditions the 'new normal'. I

knew that I wanted to continue following my research interest in Ukrainian SE; as I saw it, to not investigate this subject matter in relation to the challenging reality the world was suddenly facing would be a missed research opportunity. I wondered how SEs in Ukraine, with no supportive legislation and operating in the presence of several political/economic obstacles, would fare under the unforeseen stress of a pandemic.

The global shutdown impacted businesses both large and small, and the effects continue to be realized throughout the progression of the pandemic (which at the time of this writing is ongoing). Within the first few months after the shutdown, there were reports that businesses in countries around the world were uncertain of their futures, afraid that they would be bankrupt in a matter of months. Additionally, the emergency conditions presented by the COVID-19 pandemic amplified the need for vulnerable communities to access necessary goods and services. Some governments were better situated than others to provide financial assistance to struggling businesses and communities within their borders. Nonetheless, even those governments who are large, wealthy, or have developed preparedness for a health emergency of this magnitude were put under immense strain by the spread of COVID-19.

Solidarity, responsibility, and community cooperation were vital in the months following the global shutdown, and have continued to be necessary throughout the response to the pandemic. The aforementioned principles are foundational to organizations in the social and solidarity economy (SSE). SSE refers to various forms of economic activities which prioritize social objectives and are undertaken by enterprises and non-state organizations (Utting, 2018, pg. 1). An example is the SE, which generates profit via commercial means while fulfilling one or more social goals. Other examples include cooperatives, mutual funds, fair trade organizations, and mutual associations. These forms of economic activities are guided by principles of democratic management, solidarity, and the pursuit of social good.

Organizations operating within the SSE are uniquely positioned to assist in the realignment of post-crisis economies. Around the world, SE has been recognized as a key player in the response and recovery to COVID-19 due to its social innovations and alternative methods of organizing economic activities (OECD, 2020, pg. 2). However, mandatory social distancing, regulations on gatherings, and other long-term public health measures over the past two years have affected the operations of these enterprises. SEs have therefore been forced to adapt to this new reality while facing unforeseen financial struggles, even potential bankruptcy. Inevitably, these challenges have impacted the ability of disadvantaged communities to access the goods and services which they typically rely on SEs to provide.

Then, on February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion on Ukraine under the fallacious pretenses of “demilitarization and denazification”. There was an onslaught of attacks on cities and towns across the country, with Mariupol, Kherson, Kharkiv, and towns on the outskirts of Kyiv being hit especially hard during the first several weeks. The war quickly captured global attention and united countries in their condemnation and sanctioning of Russia, which has remained undeterred in its hostility. Very early in the invasion, it was clear that Russian forces were not limiting their attacks to military facilities; they were attacking civilian infrastructure and areas of Ukrainian cultural significance. The humanitarian crisis caused by these attacks has been monumental, and there has been a mass exodus of Ukrainians seeking asylum in neighboring countries. However, emerging from this tragedy is the spotlight on Ukrainian resistance, which the world has looked upon with awe and reverence. This resistance has come not only from the Ukrainian authorities and military, but from citizens nationwide and from the Ukrainian diaspora. Ukrainians everywhere, with financial and logistical support from countries across the world, stand united against Russian imperialism.

In the time elapsing since 2020, Ukraine has been forced to deal with the challenges brought on by two concurrent emergencies: the pandemic and the escalation of Russian aggression. These intense situations – both of which are ongoing at this time and involve a high degree of uncertainty – continue to have a debilitating effect on the country, both socially and economically.

The majority of research for this project was completed prior to the recent escalation in Russian aggression. Originally, this paper was intended to advocate for the investment in Ukraine's SSE as a possible means to attain progress towards economic recovery from COVID-19. Social entrepreneurship, after all, is recognized as a tool to attain sustainable development and thereby build social resilience (Bansal et al., 2019). Additionally, given its history of support for public associations and civil unions (Bibikova, 2015), Ukraine had the ingredients needed to develop its economy with enterprises operating on a social model. However, the invasion by Russia (while COVID-19 persists in the background) has thrown a layer of uncertainty over the future of Ukraine. This paper therefore now serves as a record of the experiences of social entrepreneurs at a very specific point in Ukrainian history: in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, before nationwide efforts shifted to the war against Russia.

At the start of this research, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was very limited research on how Ukrainian SE adapted and coped with the pandemic's impacts. The particularities of the pandemic's influence on the sector and its implications for development in Ukraine remain unclear, which presented an opportunity for original research.

Acknowledging this gap in knowledge, this research paper sets out to answer the following questions:

1. What challenges were most impactful for SE in Ukraine during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- a) Did these challenges affect their capacity to make an impact in their communities?
2. What type of adjustments were made to Ukrainian SE operations during the pandemic?
 3. What support was provided by the Ukrainian government or by organizations to help Ukrainian SE cope with the pandemic?
 4. What lessons were learned by SE decision makers operating a social business in Ukraine during a pandemic?
 5. What are the larger implications for sustainable development in Ukraine?

Several hypotheses can be made in advance of this research. First, my presumption that most – if not all – of the SEs in my sample group experienced periods of suspended operations, as was the case for enterprises across much of the world. This occurred due to the prevalence of community transmission of the virus and the lockdown measures that came in response from the government. I can also presume that some enterprises have been forced to come up with creative solutions to continue generating profit and/or to continue to make a social impact. I imagine that some of these SEs have worried about their ability to stay financially afloat during this uncertain time, as revenues are likely to have decreased as a result of restrictions to business and the unease of populations due to the spread of COVID-19. For others, COVID-19 may have been an opportunity to expand their business or clientele, as the pandemic increased the need for their service. I am curious as to whether any of these enterprises have contributed to the effort to contain COVID-19 through making donations, using their facilities for alternative purposes (like developing personal protective equipment or aiding those most at risk for contracting the virus), or in some other way.

To investigate the answers to my research questions and to determine the validity of these hypotheses, I begin this paper by exploring related literature in greater detail. I look at literature

on SE, its purpose and value, and then narrow my focus to literature on SE in Ukraine, as well as Ukraine's development priorities.

Next, I present my theoretical framework, which draws from contingency theory, organizational sustainability, and concepts of the welfare state.

Having established a basis of knowledge on the state of SE in Ukraine and my theoretical approach to this study, I then describe my research design and methodology. To gather first-hand accounts from SE decision makers, I conducted an electronic survey. The results section of my paper outlines the responses to this survey, which were received from 13 Ukrainian SEs with diverse purposes and goals. Next, my analysis applies what has been learned from the literature and theory to interpret these results. I contextualize the responses of the SE decision makers and analyze patterns within their pandemic-era experiences. I then speak more to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the way in which those events changed the concept of civil society in Ukraine, as well as the very nature of this paper.

Finally, the conclusion of this paper will highlight the key points made and will suggest areas for future study.

2. Research Design and Methodology

Given that I prepared this study in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, I was required to develop my methodology with consideration given to the restrictions on international air travel and other public health measures. For this reason, my research and communications were performed entirely virtually. To establish context surrounding my research (articulated in Chapter 3: Context), I began by conducting a review of publicly available policy documents and scholarly articles concerning key issues related to my research questions. These included publications related to social entrepreneurship in Ukraine, the country's policy landscape surrounding socially-oriented business, and Ukraine's sustainable development priorities.

Next, I reviewed statements released by the government of Ukraine and by Ukrainian and multilateral organizations on COVID-19 in the country, specifically regarding the federal response to the pandemic and corresponding public health measures. This helped to establish context on the government's position on the virus and how enterprises in the country are expected to operate under the pandemic conditions.

To better understand the experiences of vulnerable groups in Ukraine during the pandemic and war, as well as support to small business in the country during COVID-19 shutdowns, I looked at reports from multilaterals, including the United Nations (UN) and OECD. In addition, I reviewed articles from the popular Ukrainian news outlet Kyiv Post concerning the challenges that enterprises face during the pandemic, particularly in Ukraine, and the support that has been given to businesses either by the Ukrainian government or other external groups to alleviate financial stress.

Having researched the foundational information necessary to understand the area of research, I determined the type of approach and impact that I wanted to have with this study. Since social entrepreneurs cannot legally register their businesses as SEs due to the lack of legislation around those forms of business, they often will register as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or limited liability companies (LLCs). According to the last recorded estimate of the 2016/2017 SEs Directory, there are about 150 SEs of various legal status in Ukraine (Kornetsky, 2019). Given that the SSE of Ukraine is relatively novel and that the definitive count of enterprises is relatively small, a positivist approach using quantitative methods of inquiry would not be ideal for collecting rich data. Instead, I decided to rely on qualitative analysis, taking an interpretive approach to understanding Ukrainian SE. I constructed my survey using exploratory questions aimed at examining the individual cases of Ukrainian SEs that had operated during COVID-19 (see survey in Annex). Since the contextual conditions – the presence of COVID-19 – was a deliberate and pertinent aspect in my research, I leaned on a multiple-case study method. This approach was appropriate, as my research investigated a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 2003, pg. 13).

To achieve a cross-section of the population, I identified known SEs in Ukraine by searching through articles and directories, including via the Directory of SEs of Ukraine on the site <https://socialbusiness.in.ua/>. Using the articles and directories, I compiled information on the goals, services, and profit/financial indicators of these known Ukraine SEs. I also compiled a spreadsheet of contact information for the selected enterprises. I opted to collect a purposive sample, as the population of existing SEs is quite small and I was able to include as many SEs as I could identify in my sample. Purposive sampling is a nonprobability sampling technique whereby subjects are chosen from a population based on the qualities they possess and the contributions that participants possessing those qualities can make to the research. Purposive sampling – also called judgement sampling – is subjective, and therefore is not ideal for use in

research that aims to make generalizations about an entire population. However, this form of sampling can be used when the researcher decides what needs to be known, and searches for participants who specifically are equipped to provide that information or relate that knowledge in order to assist with the research (Etikan et al., 2016, pg. 2). In my research, I applied the maximum variation sampling – or heterogeneous sampling – method of purpose sampling, which entails selecting participants across a broad spectrum who can contribute various perspectives to the research (Etikan et al., 2016, pg. 3). In doing this, I could ensure that my sample contained a greater diversity of perspectives. I aimed to gather insight from SEs with an array of social and environmental goals, located in various oblasts across Ukraine. Different areas of Ukraine face different challenges due to regional specificities and the presence of conflict, so surveying enterprises located in a variety of these areas would produce more robust data. In the end, my sample size consisted of 59 SEs.

Prior to distributing my letters of information and e-survey, I contacted the organization Social Business in UA, which advocated for SE in Ukraine, to ask whether they would promote my study via their social media. In the past, they had shared links to similar research studies and solicited input from Ukrainian SEs; this led me to believe that they would be amenable to my request. Unfortunately, I did not receive a response from the organization.

I connected with the management teams of the selected SEs via email, distributing the e-survey that I prepared using the secure cloud-based tool SurveyMonkey. Given that Ukrainian and Russian are the primary languages spoken in Ukraine (with preference for each depending heavily on the region of the country), I ensured that my e-survey was available in both languages, as well as in English. Translations were possible with help from my dedicated research team, through support offered by the Chair of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Ottawa. For this survey, I anticipated a response rate of around 12-15%. Of my sample of 59

SEs, a total of 13 completed survey responses were received. This equals a response rate of 22%.

As results from the survey were received, I began to analyze the responses and draw cross-case conclusions. My interest was in commonalities of the lived experiences of those operating Ukrainian SEs during a pandemic. Through these first-hand accounts from respondents, I sought to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their operations and how social entrepreneurs had altered their businesses.

While the sample size used was estimated to be a significant proportion of the population of Ukrainian SEs, the anticipated number of responses was not expected to be representative of the entire population. Broad conclusions were not intended to be made based on the data. Instead, the area for analysis was the experiences as reported, focusing on the commonalities and differences. Although indeed not extensive, the data collected was meaningful; it allowed for an understanding of the respondents' subjective understandings of managing a social business under extraordinary circumstances. My goal was not to reduce these experiences to figures or develop generalizations, but to interpret the perceptions revealed through the collection of survey data.

Due to the timing of events, the incorporation of the 2022 Russian invasion into this paper came after the majority of the study had already been completed. Given the magnitude of the situation and its sweeping impacts on Ukraine, I recognized the importance of incorporating the war into my research. For information regarding the invasion, I revisited Kyiv Independent, Kyiv Post, and other news outlets to find reports on the events unfolding. I also read translated transcripts of Russian President Vladimir Putin's addresses rationalizing the invasion.

3. Context

This component is split into three chapters. The first aims to develop a foundational understanding of Ukraine since its independence, looking specifically at instances of mass mobilization and economic restructuring. This allows the reader to better understand Ukraine's history of collective social action and the major economic shifts that have taken place over the last three decades. I then proceed to examine the development priorities that Ukraine seeks to achieve in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This sets a baseline for understanding the goals that Ukraine had for its development, prior to the full-scale invasion by Russia in February of 2022. I end this section by discussing how the war in Donbas and the humanitarian crisis that has transpired is a hindrance to Ukraine's pursuit of its development priorities.

The second chapter relates to SEs, their role in society, and their potential to contribute to a country's economic and social development. I examine the SSE in Ukraine, looking specifically at Ukrainian SEs and the challenges that they commonly face.

In the third chapter, I discuss what is known about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine. I look at the statistical data on COVID-19 in the country, specifically at the areas most affected and the effectiveness of the vaccine rollout. Due to the nature of the SARS-Cov-2 virus and the regulations installed to limit its transmission, some populations were more vulnerable than others. I discuss the effects on the populations hit hardest by the pandemic in my literature review.

3.1 Historical Background

3.1.1 Mass Mobilization and Economic Reform in Ukraine Since Independence

The transformation of the Ukrainian economy since independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 has largely failed to build the country's economic viability. Ukraine has been in the process of shifting from a paternalistic country with an economy that is heavily regulated by the state, to an economy that is market-driven (Pact, 2018, pg. 14). This process has not been linear, and has long been plagued by mismanagement, oligarchic corruption, and the rapid stratification of society. Following independence, large industrial enterprises were privatized and clans of oligarchs emerged, monopolizing certain sectors of the economy – particularly the energy sector (Khomyachenko & Yuldashev, 2020, pg. 36). As was the case in many former-Soviet states, Ukraine took over the Soviet bureaucracy that existed on its territory (Libman & Obydenkova, 2016, pg. 257). Economic downturn, including the standard of living, continued.

In the years following independence, the lack of reforms and lack of institutions to support private sector development were impediments to Ukrainian economic development (Pivovarsky, 2016, pg. 226). Additionally, the sudden economic liberalization that came with independence was not accompanied by a social protection system or by consistent industrial and employment policies (Silenko, Bezrodna & Lyasota, 2020, pg. 153). While educational and professional potential of the Ukrainian population was high, quality of employment and labor potential was lacking.

In 2000, the tides began to shift for the Ukrainian economy. With the economy in a precarious state and fearing for their own livelihoods, local oligarchs promoted senior economic politician

Viktor Yushchenko to the post of prime minister. With aggressive policies that privatized large business and worked against the oligarchical system, Yushchenko was able to significantly raise state revenues. Driven primarily by steel production, food processing, and machine building, the economy saw a 5.9% increase in GDP in 2000 (Åslund, 2005, pg. 329). The trend continued into the next 5 years, and Ukraine enjoyed the highest growth rate in Europe.

In 2004-2005, massive fraud and election tampering during the second round of the 2004 presidential elections resulted in mass protests across the country. The election had seen pro-Russian, Putin-backed Viktor Yanukovych – the former Prime Minister of Ukraine under the pro-Russian former President Leonid Kuchma – face off against the pro-West Viktor Yushchenko. Evidence was found that the Yanukovych team made changes in the Ukrainian Central Electoral Commission's electronic database, in addition to ballot stuffing and voter intimidation (Yekelchik, 2007, pg. 216-217). The Kuchma-approved Central Electoral Commission named Yanukovych the winner, and Putin was quick to give his congratulations. In response to this massive upset, hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians flooded to the Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in central Kyiv to protest. Some of the protesters came from the western and central regions by bus, and were offered free lodging with local supporters (Yekelchik, 2007, pg. 217). Many stayed for several weeks, despite the harsh winter conditions. Protesters set up a tent encampment; volunteers handed out food and blankets, and donations of other necessities were brought to protesters at the square. These demonstrations were dubbed the Orange Revolution, and it was indicative of the developing civil society in Ukraine.

Unfruitful negotiations between Kuchma, Yanukovych, and Yushchenko were held, until finally the Supreme Court of Ukraine decreed a second runoff election. In this highly-monitored election, Yushchenko was voted President of Ukraine, having won over western and central Ukraine. Yanukovych had, however, maintained significant support in the Russian-speaking

east and south oblasts. This regional division was commonplace in Ukrainian elections, as the industrialized regions of eastern and southern Ukraine tended towards pro-Russian candidates, while the western regions persistently favored market reforms and closer ties to Europe (Åslund, 2005, pg. 330). This regional divide meant that election results were often decided by central Ukraine.

After the Orange Revolution, the NGO Freedom House classified Ukraine as the only 'free' democracy in the post-Soviet sphere, with the exception of the Baltic states (Pivovarsky, 2016, pg. 226). This temporary improvement in the country's democracy rating, as well as the rallying of a large share of Ukrainians around the vision of a collective future, brought new hope for the introduction of institutional reforms (Pivovarsky, 2016, pg. 226; Khomyachenko & Yuldashev, 2020, pg. 37). In anticipation of these changes in governance, organizations like the UN, OECD, and World Bank drafted advisory economic programs with the ultimate goal of integration with the world economy (Åslund, 2005, pg. 338). However, the reality that followed did not meet the high hopes that had been placed upon the new administration by Ukrainians and the international community. The Yushchenko government put economic integration on the back burner and institutional reforms were not carried out to the degree expected.

Nevertheless, the Revolution brought Ukraine the status of a market economy country (Khomyachenko & Yuldashev, 2020, pg. 37). Perhaps the most significant development emerging from the Orange Revolution was the liberalization of trade, with Ukraine joining the World Trade Organization in 2008 (Pivovarsky, 2016, pg. 227). However, this change overall proved inconsequential for altering Ukraine's economic course leading up to the major challenges of the coming years. Economic growth had slowed, and inflation was steadily rising (Yekelchuk, 2007, pg. 220).

Before the 2008-2009 world financial crisis, which was a major setback for the country's economy, Ukraine's economy was heavily dependent on its external environment. Ukraine had relied heavily on the export of raw materials and the competitive advantages of a low cost of energy and labor (UN Development Programme [UNDP], 2015, pg. 12). As the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine notes, "[t]his created an illusion of national economic competitiveness and a successful competition model, causing delays in addressing key systemic imbalances and necessary structural reforms" (2017, pg. 6). When suddenly faced with the global crisis, cracks in the country's economic structure began to deepen. Ukraine struggled to adapt due to its lack of attention to addressing modern competitive factors, along with the decrease in global demand for chemicals and metals (Pivovarsky, 2016, pg. 227). The economy plummeted. Its recovery in 2010 was based primarily on the recovery of foreign markets, rather than on reimagined production strategies or changes in domestic policy. Again, Ukraine was at the whim of fluctuations in foreign markets; the negative impacts of its export-oriented model were felt when the slowdown of global economic growth decreased demands on world markets (Min. of Economic Development UA, 2017, pg. 6). The raw-export economic model could not sufficiently withstand the crisis, and likewise could not ensure Ukraine's sustainable development.

Following the 2008 crisis, the Ukrainian government made some progress towards improving the country's business environment. Yanukovich, who was elected as president in 2010 following Yushchenko, introduced measures to streamline registration and tax filing for businesses, as well as to counter corruption. However, the reforms suffered from delays and poor enforcement, and businesses felt immense pressure from a government determined to raise tax revenues (Pivovarsky, 2016, pg. 227). Overall, improvements in the economic structure and trust in institutions were negligible.

Protests erupted at the Maidan Nezalezhnosti again in November 2013, caused in part by the Yanukovich government's decision to suspend the signing of an association agreement with the European Union (EU) in favor of greater ties with Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union. Widespread corruption in government and violations of human rights were other sources of anger that fueled these intense protests, which famously became known as the Euromaidan. In the three months that followed, the Yanukovich government imposed several anti-protest laws and the state special police violently attempted to disperse protesters. Calls for Yanukovich to resign amplified. Clashes between protesters and state police had resulted in over one hundred dead before Yanukovich fled to Russia at the end of February, 2014.

Many thought that the Euromaidan would be a turning point for Ukraine, with reforms an inevitable consequence. The ousting of Yanukovich opened a window of opportunity for change, but also brought about significant geopolitical turbulence (Pivovarsky, 2016, pg. 235). Following Euromaidan, Russia quickly moved to illegally annex the primarily Russian-speaking Crimean peninsula. The events in Crimea triggered demonstrations in eastern Ukraine, as crowds gathered to assert their Russian identity and express their fears that their rights as Russian-speakers in Ukraine would be rescinded. Alarmist reports from Russian media had fueled these fears and had condemned the demonstrations at the Maidan (Sakwa, 2015, pg. 148). Gradually, the rebellion developed into an insurgency in the eastern Donbas region, and then into a full-scale war. Russia supported the insurgency, while the Western powers backed the Ukrainian forces.

In the years following the start of the war, which remained largely contained to the eastern oblasts, there appeared to be a greater appetite for reform in the political establishment. The state moved to introduce legislation for restructuring Ukrainian economy, law, and authority. The new Ukrainian government under Petro Poroshenko indicated that it was willing to change

formal institutions in alignment with the guidelines of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the EU (Libman & Obydenkova, 2016, pg. 261). A process of business deregulation was undertaken in order to align with EU legislation and in hopes of attracting more foreign and domestic investment in the Ukrainian economy (Fouani, 2021). Furthermore, the government committed to improving the quality of the bureaucracy in order to combat corruption and build trust in authorities amongst the public.

Since 2014, Ukraine has been undergoing a process of decentralizing public administration. According to the Ukrainian government, the reform is for the purpose of empowering communities, increasing democracy, and the improvement of public service delivery (“Decentralization Reform”, n.d.). The reform involves the voluntary consolidation of local communities and the establishment of local governments. Majority portions of personal income taxes are directed to the budgets of united local communities, and other sources of tax revenue remain directly in the communities. Local governments were given the power to create and follow their own local development plans. According to the Ukrainian government, bills were prepared to delineate services like education and healthcare, along with socio-economic development and infrastructure powers, between the local authorities and territorial executive bodies of the state’s administration (“Decentralization Reform”, n.d.). Overall, the reform intended to increase the quality of life for Ukrainians and allow for greater coordination between state and local government. However, the decentralization process meant that competences would be distributed between the central, regional and local public authorities (Ronsandic & Smal, 2018, pg. 30). Skeptics warned of the possibility of inefficiencies while the new public authorities attempted to adjust to the shifts in responsibilities. The OECD noted that a significant challenge of the decentralization reforms was a lack of human capital and capacity to carry out the duties related to local governance (OECD, 2018, pg. 240). It was assumed that substantial

capacity-building work was necessary to ensure that local governments had the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out their duties to citizens.

3.1.2 Ukraine's Sustainable Development Priorities

Persisting in the background of the major events and shifts in political power that Ukraine experienced was the country's sustainable development agenda. At the 2000 Millennium Development Summit, 189 nations adopted the UN Millennium Declaration, which put forward eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. The MDGs laid out a blueprint and associated targets necessary to achieve development in the areas of poverty reduction, education, environmental sustainability, gender equality, and health. The MDGs galvanized global efforts to meet social and environmental challenges to a degree previously unseen. Many countries, including Ukraine, refined the MDGs and created development targets that were specific to their country contexts.

Fifteen years later, new development targets were introduced at the 2015 UN Sustainable Development Summit. The final document from the Summit, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* introduced 17 new sustainable development goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030 with 169 supporting targets. Following the Summit, Ukraine launched its process of building a national strategic framework and adapting the SDGs to the Ukrainian context (Min. of Economic Development UA, 2017, pg. 7). In 2016, Ukraine conducted a number of national and regional consultations to best achieve an integrated approach to the goals. The four areas of focus included equitable social development; sustainable economic growth and employment; effective governance; and environmental balance and building resilience. The consultations concluded that a national effort was needed to bridge these gaps towards sustainable development. To better understand how the national areas of focus for

sustainable development relate to the evolution of the Ukrainian social economy, the four focus areas established by the government of Ukraine are worth examining in greater detail.

Equitable social development

Economic turbulence and political instability in Ukraine since the country's independence left little room for improvement to citizens' standard of living. The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine stated that "38.5% of Ukrainian residents in 2019 lived on less than 2,000 UAH [~\$87 CAD] per month and in 2020, there will be 45% of them" (UNICEF, 2020, as quoted in Silenko, Bezrodna & Lyasota, 2020, pg. 149). Evidently, social programs implemented by the government did not adequately fulfill their goals to shield vulnerable groups from economic hardship.

Gender inequality, poverty, risks to health and personal security, and a lack of access to opportunities and services were among the most significant barriers to development at the time when the SDGs were adapted for Ukraine (Min. of Economic Development UA, 2017, pg. 8). Together, these factors contributed to the diminished human potential of the Ukrainian population. Additionally, frustration with inequality in the country and distrust of public institutions had persisted following the revolutions and was an added barrier to development.

Sustainable economic growth and employment

In its National Baseline Report on the SDGs, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of Ukraine noted two basic principles that state and public institutions should follow to ensure sustainable economic growth: support to the development of business and the promotion of safe and reliable employment (2017, pg. 8). The underutilization of labor potential was a persistent problem that the country faced. Expansion of the workforce was a primary concern for the Ukrainian government and increasing employment in the working-age population was a national priority (Min. of Economic Development UA, 2017, pg. 8). A sharp decline in the social

protections offered by the state had negatively impacted the labor potential of the population (Silenko, Bezrodna & Lyasota, 2020, pg. 153). Therefore, to address the priorities related to the labor force, the enhancement of social policies and programs were to be considered in tandem.

According to Ukraine's Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the achievement of progress towards the SDGs, gender segregation in the workforce was a lasting problem, with frequent discrimination against pregnant women, women with small children, and young women who could plan pregnancies (UN Ukraine, 2021, pg. 46). Due to this inequity, women were often pushed into the informal sector where their opportunities to receive social protection were further diminished. Age-based discrimination against women and men over 45 years of age was another factor that had a negative impact on Ukraine's pursuit of the SDGs. According to the VNR, addressing these problems would require enhanced partnership between government and business to promote innovation; the undertaking of infrastructure projects; and structural changes in the economy to cultivate diversification, digitization, and effective resource management (UN Ukraine, 2021, pg. 6-7). In a move towards this positive change, the government of Ukraine envisioned a change of exports from raw materials and primary processing products to products and services with high added value. It also intended to base its economic growth on a sustainable model with an emphasis on clean, efficient energy (Min. of Economic Development UA, 2017, pg. 7).

Efficient governance

Corruption and distrust of public institutions is a major challenge in Ukrainian society. The process of improving trust in government and institutions must begin with those authorities themselves, as social cohesion occurs in the presence of trust. Combatting these challenges would involve the promotion of transparency and accountability at all levels of government; adherence to the rule of law and the fair administration of justice; and putting an end to the

organizational and financial structures that allow for criminal activity and corruption (Min. of Economic Development UA, 2017, pg. 8). In recent years, the Ukrainian government has endeavored to implement reforms of fiscal institutions by digitizing the services offered. By removing as much of the human factor as appropriate, it was assumed that the opportunity for corruption to influence the fiscal environment would decrease and the performance of public services would be expected to improve.

Environmental balance and building resilience

Ukraine experiences environmental issues common to developing countries – like under regulation and abuse of natural resources – but due to the industrialization that has taken place in the country, Ukraine also experiences issues related to pollution and ineffective waste management (UN Ukraine, 2021, pg. 8-9). The environmental and infrastructure damage caused by the war in Donbas has further contributed to this problem. Awareness, resource allocation, promoting the establishment of protected areas, and the prioritization of innovative solutions are necessary steps to achieve this development priority.

3.1.3 Development Challenges Due to the War in Donbas

Ukraine made notable progress towards its sustainable development goals until 2014 when the occupation of Crimea and parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions began (UNDP, 2015, pg. 23). The annexation of the autonomous republic of Crimea and the occupation of areas of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions resulted in a series of additional challenges to Ukraine's sustainable development. Shelling led to the destruction of infrastructure, including schools and production facilities in the region, and complicated the subnational logistical network.

The emergence of COVID-19 deepened the devastating humanitarian crisis faced by the local population. Hostilities and landmine contamination impacted the ability of those living nearby the

conflict line to move freely, and restrictions on public transportation as a result of COVID-19 contributed to the many left isolated. The impact on human capital has been substantial, as it is estimated that at least 3.9 million people in the Donbas were directly affected by the war (Havlik et al., 2020, pg. 35). By the end of 2021, it had claimed the lives of more than 13,000 people – with over 3,000 civilians – and left more than 30,000 injured.

Prior to the war, the Donbas region was thought to hold significant potential for Ukraine's economic advancement due to its industrial capacity (Semenenko, Halhash & Sieriebriak, 2019, pg. 326). When hostilities broke out, both oblasts experienced a rapid decline in gross regional product from their previous above-national-average values. Some industries in the conflict area halted operations for a minimum of several months (Semenenko, Halhash & Sieriebriak, 2019, pg. 327). Overall, enterprises in Donbas have experienced substantial losses in the years following the start of the conflict, and many had permanently closed. Environmental initiatives in the region decreased, and the instability gave rise to greater social insecurity. The conflict left more than 5 million Ukrainians in sudden poverty or vulnerable to poverty, as they were either internally displaced or forced to stay in their permanent residences within the conflict areas (UNDP, 2015, pg. 23). From a foreign relations perspective, the conflict has translated to a risk for investors and disrupted foreign economic relations, particularly with the Russian Federation, Ukraine's primary trading partner (UNDP, 2015, pg. 13).

According to the Millennium Development Goals Ukraine National Report,

“All forms of poverty and vulnerability present new challenges for policy, as they cannot be overcome by conventional methods only. It has become obvious that the system of state social support is not adapted to the country's current situation and is unable to respond to the new challenges. Furthermore, the current system of economic measures

has failed to perform its core functions and should be restructured to be effective in preventing or mitigating any adverse developments.” (UNDP, 2015, pg. 23)

Evidently, Ukraine’s development will rely on innovation and partnership with entities outside of state institutions to adapt to the social and economic situation facing the country. The turbulence caused by the compounding crises of the war and the pandemic have increased the importance of job security and social provisions for vulnerable groups in the conflict areas, as well as for the general population of Ukraine. The MDG Report cites economic growth as a prerequisite to the elimination of poverty, but notes that inclusive growth is necessary to mitigate the potential for a rise in income inequality.

3.2 Social Enterprise

3.2.1 The Value and Purpose of SE

Through the sustainable development of the social sphere, SEs aim to solve or attenuate social problems. This is typically achieved through reinvesting in the social and environmental needs of the community, often realized through the distribution of profit to several shareholders (Kim & Lim, 2017, pg. 2). The social purposes of SEs may include providing social services to low-income groups, the employment of vulnerable populations, caring for the homeless, and more (Kim & Lim, 2017, pg. 3).

As previously mentioned, the definitions of 'social entrepreneurship' and 'social enterprise' are controversial due to the many types of ventures and activities that may be included under these seemingly broad terms. Choi and Majumdar (2014) call social entrepreneurship a "contested concept" (pg. 363), and indeed, different stakeholders within the voluntary and community sector may approach the concept of SE from their unique and divergent standpoints. Alter (2006, pg. 216-217) asserted that market intermediaries, like cooperatives and handicraft groups, are a model of SE since their social impact is inherent to the program itself. Likewise, it has been posited that fair trade organizations should be included under the SE label, since their social purpose is embedded in the ability to develop business partnerships that link producers to markets (Huybrechts and DeFourny, 2009; Alter, 2006, pg. 217). These extensions of the SE definition are, on one hand, inclusive to a greater number of businesses with social objectives. On the other, they contribute to the fuzziness of the concept's boundaries. Ventures like those listed above may be better understood as entities under the umbrella of the SSE.

It is widely agreed that clear definitions around the concepts of SE and social entrepreneurship are needed, and the lack of this clarity poses a problem for the sector. Skeptics of social entrepreneurship point to various issues with the concept of SE, in particular the challenges of definitional and conceptual clarity, to argue against its potential and legitimacy (Dacin, Dacin & Tracey, 2011, pg. 1203). Short, Moss, and Lumpkin (2009) note that the disparity in terminology surrounding SE “hinders empirical research seeking to examine the antecedents and consequences of social entrepreneurship.” (pg. 162). Others propose that social entrepreneurship holds significant promise, but the lack of a clear definition could ‘muddy the waters’ and see all manners of socially beneficial activities added under the umbrella, causing social entrepreneurship to fall into disrepute (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

This paper aims to relate and analyze the experiences of entrepreneurs who operate self-proclaimed SEs in Ukraine, not to cross-examine those enterprises against a prescribed set of criteria (apart from ensuring that they fulfilled a social purpose through economic activities) or to delineate the SE definition. In this research, I was interested in the goals of businesses that Ukrainian social entrepreneurs determined to be SEs, and how these fared under the circumstances presented by COVID-19. While definitions around the concept of SE in academic literature may be incomplete, there are businesses that operate under this distinction and their experiences are worthy of documentation and analysis. Therefore, my approach to reviewing literature on social entrepreneurship is to identify common elements within the existing definitions to differentiate SEs from related phenomena.

SEs are able to provide for communities at risk by encompassing three primary attributes that distinguish them from other third sector organizations and traditional enterprises. First, since SEs are entrepreneurial entities, they are expected to display the features of an enterprise – namely the continuous production of goods or services, the reliance on the use of costly

production factors (like paid work), and take on a significant level of economic risk (OECD, 2016). Next, the social dimension requires that, as the OECD notes, “[SEs] pursue an explicit social aim of serving the community or a specific group of people through the production of general-interest or meritorious goods/services” (2016, pg. 25). Their social or environmental impact is deliberate, not a byproduct. The last distinctive feature of a SE is that the decision-making processes undertaken are not based on capital ownership, but rather on collective and participatory governance with all relevant stakeholders. Further to this, SEs must comply with a total or partial non-distribution constraint, where profits cannot be distributed to stakeholders, in order to avoid profit maximizing behavior (OECD, 2016). Evidently, SEs are set apart from other social purpose organizations, like charities, by their strong focus on commercial viability and generating revenue through market-based activities, along with their emphasis on participatory and democratic governance (Moizer and Tracey, 2010, pg. 254).

The literature recognizes social entrepreneurs as ‘opportunity agents’, ‘agents of change’, and ‘engines of sustainable development’ in society (Ratten, 2020, pg. 505; Bansal et al., 2019, pg. 1; Patzelt & Shepherd, 2011). These designations are due to the fact that social entrepreneurs employ entrepreneurial means to address systemic social and environmental problems, all while ensuring their own viability. Innovative thinking and creative business models allow social entrepreneurs to carve out a space for themselves in the economy, recognizing the business opportunity that lies in sustainable development.

Social entrepreneurship drives the social innovation processes necessary for a given enterprise to effectively fulfill its social and economic purposes in concurrence. Social innovation processes require innovative thinking about how to create efficiencies and maximize social impact, allowing an enterprise to emerge and maintain social services (Kim & Lim, 2017, pg. 3).

Since SEs are required to participate in the market, social innovation is both unique and fundamental to SE.

SEs build horizontal social cohesion, strengthening the bonds that hold a community together by focusing on inclusive development through the amelioration of shared problems. As mentioned in the introduction, SE is one element of a larger whole: the SSE. The non-state organizations and enterprises involved in this economic sector (which also includes cooperatives, mutual associations, community organizations, and savings and loan groups, among other entities) prioritize social objectives and adhere to principles of cooperation, self-help, solidarity, and democratic self-management (Utting 2018, pg. 1). SSE represents an approach to the economy which is radically people-and-planet-centric, contrary to the commonly accepted practices in traditional for-profit enterprise. The theoretical underpinning of SSE is that in order for society to flourish, economic activities must serve to uplift people and nurture the planet (or otherwise leave it unharmed). At a time when the global population faces immense challenges – like climate change, growing wealth inequality, and recovery from a pandemic – inclusive, sustainable, and innovative economic approaches are vital.

A source of SE's potential for change lies in its ability to foster inclusive local and regional development (LRD). This is due to its ability to address diverse needs and build solidarity. As is the case with development in general, past conceptions of LRD relied heavily on the fostering of economic growth and efficiency. However, cultural shifts in the last several decades have led to a recognition of the systemic linkages between economic, social, and environmental well-being. Acknowledging that quality of life, social integration, and environmental protections must be considered alongside economic development has led to changes in approaches to sustainable development (Kim & Lim, 2017, pg. 2). The interconnectedness of these issues has been translated into modern implementations of LRD, and a unique product of this cultural shift is SSE activity.

The primary purpose of social economic activity is to satisfy social needs to create a more democratic, inclusive society. Rather than monetary worth, its worth lies in its community-based practical value. This type of value connects challenges like job creation, income inequality, education, and access to health services to the community issues that impact the relationships among stakeholders (Kim & Lim, 2017, pg. 2). Organizations which employ social economic activities include NGOs, non-profit organizations (NPOs), volunteer organizations, community businesses, and SEs. SEs are unlike the other organizations listed since they have dual social and economic purposes, which are fulfilled simultaneously. Given their entrepreneurial nature, SEs act as a source of innovation for solutions to local and regional problems.

SEs also have the unique ability to enhance regional cooperation and foster solidarity through their coordination of collective activities (Blagoycheva, 2019, pg. 489). Engaging local stakeholders (including citizens, policymakers, activists, and entrepreneurs, among others) allows social entrepreneurs to develop new, cooperative ways of working by pursuing collective goals and engaging the complementary assets of various actors (OECD, 2020, pg. 4). By practicing inclusive, democratic governance, SEs strengthen the social bonds of the communities that they operate within. Employing this form of governance allows SEs to make informed decisions about social and environmental priorities, and increases the level of democracy in society (OECD, 2020, pg. 4). To achieve the LRD objective of achieving a high quality of life for citizens in a particular region, an intimate understanding of that region's economic and social potential is essential. Since SEs are locally anchored, they have unique insight on what works (and what doesn't) in their locality. With this insight, they can respond quickly to issues that arise in their communities and can contribute to sustainable LRD.

In the last forty years, significant work has been done to develop a sophisticated and interconnected system of funding opportunities, certification bodies, and peer networks for social entrepreneurs. The literature refers to this as the impact ecosystem, and it has been largely affected by the emergence of COVID-19 (Bonnici, 2020). Globally, and particularly in emerging economies, the crisis threatens to push development back by decades, putting progress towards all twelve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at risk. Decades of progress made in the impact ecosystem are at stake, as is the trend of decreasing poverty; it is estimated that the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis could push an estimated half a billion people back into poverty (Sumner et al., 2020; World Bank, 2020). The pandemic therefore significantly challenges progress towards SDG 1: end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

3.2.2 Ukrainian Civil Society and SE

According to Silenko, Bezrodna & Lyasota, a “strong state” is one in which the government has agreed to take on greater responsibility for the welfare of citizens. If this responsibility lies with non-state bodies, then it is in fact a “strong civil society”. (2000, pg. 152). In Ukraine, landmark protests in the form of the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan were highly influential in post-independence state-building and gained ground in the transformation of Ukrainian civil society (Kauffmann, 2014, pg. 219). In separate assessments occurring in 2014, Freedom House and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) determined that the civil society in Ukraine was “sustainably evolving”, had outperformed other dimensions of democracy in the country, and its performance surpassed that of other post-Soviet countries (Freedom House, 2014, and USAID, 2013, as quoted in Kauffmann, 2014, pg. 221-222). Progress towards a more robust civil society in Ukraine was evident.

However, Ukraine's economic development had been tumultuous and public wellbeing had been impacted by war, civil unrest, and a lack of promised reforms. Silenko, Bezrodna & Lyasota write, "[t]he path to a welfare state is complicated by the fact that we have to simultaneously address issues of economic development and urgent current problems associated, for example, with the search for new models of social protection for a significant part of the population of Ukraine." (2020, pg. 154). The authors point to a need for a model of social protections that is both socially and economically efficient and has buy-in from the state.

Meanwhile, research on social entrepreneurship in Ukraine shows that it remains in the early stages of development but has significant potential to improve the country's national/regional economies and welfare systems (Ronsandic & Smal, 2018, pg. 5). The country's social entrepreneurship ecosystem, while nascent, is expanding quickly. Research indicates that support from international donors to SE endeavors in the country has grown throughout the last two decades (Pact, 2018, pg. 7; Malinkin, n.d.). Donors who have contributed to the funding and launch of projects supporting the Ukrainian SE sector include the UNDP and the governments of the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States (Bibikova, 2015, pg. 6). This international support has come in response to the realization that Ukrainian SE has significant potential to address social and economic challenges against a background of socioeconomic deterioration and the ongoing war in Donbas (Pact, 2018, pg. 7; Rosandić, 2018, pg. 5).

In addition to the surge in international funding, there has been an annual increase in the number of third sector organizations launched in Ukraine that are foundational to the country's civil society. The number of cooperatives and associations went up by 68% between 1996 and 2012 (Bibikova, 2015, pg. 6). By 2014 there were 75,414 NGOs, 28,851 trade unions, and 15,708 charitable foundations (Kauffmann, 2014, pg. 220). The rapid expansion of the third sector caused a diffusion of the SE concept within Ukrainian academic and practitioner circles,

but there remain various obstacles facing social entrepreneurs. These have continued to impede the evolution of the country's SE sector. If SE is to be leveraged to build back the economy and serve the needs of the public, there requires a shift in public perception and a push for a comprehensive legislative foundation.

Foremost, there is an absence of the necessary legislative basis for social entrepreneurship in the country. As previously mentioned, existing Ukrainian legislation contains a number of regulatory instruments that partially regulate operations of SEs (Pact, 2018), but there are no legally approved definitions of "social entrepreneurship" or "social enterprise" in Ukrainian legislation (Rosandić, 2018, pg. 24; Bibikova, 2015, pg. 7; Malinkin, n.d).

Ukraine is not unique in this case; many countries worldwide – and certainly many former Soviet countries – do not have a thorough legal framework for SE. For those countries which have ventured to build environments that enable the growth of SE, like in many EU member states, the results have been advantageous. SEs have proven themselves able to contribute towards addressing challenges faced by these states, including public budget constraints and demographic changes (OECD, 2016, pg. 24). Given their ability to respond to such challenges, SEs have contributed towards building economic and social resiliency in the communities that they operate within.

Apart from the lack of a legislative basis, there are additional barriers that exist which inhibit the development of Ukrainian SE. One is the low public awareness about these types of enterprises and their mischaracterization as charities or social integration projects, rather than entrepreneurship (Ronsandic & Smal, 2018, pg. 5). Another hurdle for social entrepreneurs is the lack of financial resources for launching and operating these types of businesses. As a result, Ukrainian social entrepreneurs tend to rely on international grant-givers for financial

support to their businesses (Ronsandic & Smal, 2018, pg. 28). Furthermore, the business environment in Ukraine can be inhospitable due to the unstable economic and political situation, the weakness of law, the lack of government transparency, and corruption (Bibikova, 2015, pg. 9; Ronsandic & Smal, 2018, pg. 28).

Despite these obstacles, there are numerous entrepreneurs who have launched businesses in Ukraine which they identify as SEs. These self-identified SEs take on a wide spectrum of organizational and legal forms for their operations, but share a common commitment to making some form of social impact in their communities. In Ukraine, limited company (25%) and private enterprise (15%) are the most common forms used, but other forms can be observed as well (Pact, 2018, pg. 17). Some examples of Ukrainian SE include MAMA 1 bakery in Dnipro and Pizza Veterano in Kyiv, which direct proceeds towards solving Ukrainian social issues and seek to create employment opportunities for those who otherwise may be excluded from the job market. MAMA 1 employs mothers staying at a nearby women's shelter and helps to finance the shelter using its profits (Ruslova, 2020); Pizza Veterano helps ex-combatants of the war in eastern Ukraine adjust to civilian life through steady employment, and donates a percentage of profits to supporting veterans of this war and their families (Ukraine Crisis Media Center [UCMC], 2016). These are just two of a variety of self-identified SEs operating in Ukraine, all with diverse business models and goals for their social impact.

In April, 2020, the Ukrainian independent media Hromadske published a brief article on the experiences of three SEs in Ukraine during the first two months of the COVID-19 shutdown. This story exposes a number of challenges facing Ukrainian SEs during this time, including: how an enterprise focused on social reintegration has been unable to employ the vulnerable persons it previously could; how financial struggles have lessened the ability of consumers to spend at these businesses; how the capacities of suppliers have been impacted; how the loss of revenue

has made financing business and paying wages difficult; and how some businesses cannot simply be repurposed or find alternative revenue streams (Ruslova, 2020). The emergence of COVID-19 has increased the necessity of socially-oriented business in Ukraine, while at the same time inhibiting the capacity of existing SEs to deliver their services.

3.3 The COVID-19 Pandemic

3.3.1 COVID-19 in Ukraine

Ukraine experienced two waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first was in autumn 2020 and the second in spring 2021 (OECD, 2021, pg. 1). As of December 10, 2021, Ukraine had a confirmed COVID-19 case count of 3.72 million. There were 95,952 deaths in the country as a result of the virus (Dong et al., 2021). The city of Kyiv experienced the highest number of cases (311,000) and deaths (7,825) of all areas in Ukraine. The locations with the next highest rates of confirmed cases were Kharkiv Oblast (239,000 cases; 5,965 deaths), Dnipropetrovsk Oblast (237,000 cases; 8,321 deaths), Odessa Oblast (234,000 cases; 5,363 deaths), and Lviv Oblast (214,000 cases; 5,701 deaths) (Dong et al., 2021). Given that the oblasts listed are among the most populated in the country, and with Kyiv being the most densely populated municipality, this data makes logical sense.

On February 24, 2021, Ukraine began its national vaccination campaign (OECD 2021, pg. 1). While the Ukrainian government aimed to have 24 million people vaccinated by the end of 2021, only 14 million had been vaccinated by December of that year (Mathieu et al., 2021). Ukraine has the third lowest vaccination coverage in Europe, above only Moldova and Bulgaria. As of December 2021, only 28% of the Ukrainian population was fully vaccinated, with 4% partially vaccinated (Mathieu et al., 2021). The study also found that those in Western Ukraine, those

living in regional centres, and particularly those under the age of 30 indicated a relatively higher readiness to be vaccinated.

The rollout of the vaccine was hindered by challenges related to its demand. Public opinion was the driving force behind these challenges. As was the case in countries across the world, misinformation about the vaccine was spread via social media in Ukraine. The Kyiv-based market research company Research & Branding Group conducted a survey in Ukraine in March 2021 which found, alarmingly, that 10% of the respondents were convinced that COVID-19 vaccination is for the purpose of human experimentation. However, the main reasons behind Ukrainians' refusal to receive the vaccine were fears of negative side effects and distrust of all available vaccines against COVID-19 (Lyashenko, 2021, pg. 8). Distrust in authorities, a lack of information and organization of the vaccination process, and medical contraindications to vaccines and the COVID-19 disease were cited as other reasons why Ukrainians refused to be vaccinated.

3.3.1.1 The Experiences of Ukraine's Vulnerable Groups during COVID-19

More than ever before, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed deep-rooted systemic inequalities in our global economic and health systems. The pandemic constitutes a health emergency, a humanitarian emergency, as well as a development emergency. In advanced economies, marginalized groups are the ones who have been bearing the brunt of the virus' impacts, and these communities have experienced higher rates of mortality (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020; Mohammed, 2020). International and intergovernmental organizations, like the UN, the OECD, and the World Bank, have conducted analyses during the course of the pandemic to determine the state of wellbeing of vulnerable groups within Ukraine. To reach a better understanding of who are the most vulnerable groups in the country and how they have been impacted by COVID-19, it is necessary to review the results of these analyses.

The most vulnerable group in Ukraine is the elderly, a population which comprises 16.95% of the country's population (accounting for those 65 and older, as of 2020) (Statista, 2021). It is known that the elderly population is particularly vulnerable to COVID-19, as this age group has experienced the highest rates of hospitalization and death. In Ukraine, almost all elderly persons have at least one chronic illness (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], Jun. 2020, pg. 9), which makes them susceptible to complications as a result of the virus. Many of these older persons live alone and have limited physical mobility or a form of disability, which makes accessing healthcare and other social services even more difficult in the face of pandemic lockdowns (OCHA, Jun. 2020, pg. 9). There are also considerations around gender to be made, as two-thirds of Ukrainians who have reached the age of 65 are women, and this disproportion increases with age. Older women are economically marginalized at higher rates than their male counterparts, and the pre-existing gender wage gap exacerbates this problem (which, in turn, contributes to a gender pension gap).

Ukrainian women have been more vulnerable during the COVID-19 crisis than their male counterparts. The Rapid Gender Assessment conducted by UN Women in March and April 2020 found that the female employment rate in Ukraine is lower compared to the male rate, and women are more dependent on social assistance (UN Women, 2020, pg. 19). There are significantly fewer women in leadership positions than men, and women in Ukraine earn lower salaries, on average, than men. Women in Ukraine constitute the majority of the low-income population applying for state social benefits, with a total of 72.2% of those identified and registered (UN Women, 2020, pg. 21). Due to the sectors that they typically work in and the roles they take on in Ukrainian society, women are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19. During the pandemic, women in Ukraine have been at the frontline of the country's response, as they make up the majority of those working in healthcare and social services. Women in Ukraine

are also more engaged in work that requires contact with service recipients, like pharmaceuticals, banking, and the food industry, and are often caretakers for other family members. The pandemic has exacerbated other issues related to the wellbeing of women, including increased rates of domestic violence and the problem of gender role distribution, with women taking on the burden of unpaid care work in the home.

For those with disabilities, the pandemic presents new challenges and aggravates existing ones. The briefing note entitled “Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine” (Oct. 2020), from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, details the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Ukrainians living with disabilities. In large part, the pandemic has heightened the barriers that this population faces to healthcare, rehabilitation services, education, social protection, and employment (pg. 1). The briefing note explains the large gap between the needs of people living with disabilities and the social services that are available in the community. Access to healthcare for persons with disabilities was an existing issue in Ukraine, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given the close proximity of people in aggregate living situations (and thus the difficulty involved with social distancing of residents and carers), COVID-19 posed an increased risk to those with disabilities (as well as the elderly) living in institutionalized settings. To enable persons with disabilities to live in a more independent way, community-based support services must be fostered.

For children, the closing of school and educational facilities in favour of online/distance learning meant disruptions to their educational – and oftentimes social – progress. For children from families experiencing economic difficulties, a lack of access to telecommunications technology meant a lack of access to educational opportunities. Children have also been at increased risk

of neglect or abuse. In the first three months following the discovery of the first case of COVID-19 in Ukraine in March 2020, the NGO La Strada-Ukraine received over 2,000 appeals from youths, with other 40% related to child violence and abuse (as cited in OCHA, Jun. 2020, pg. 10).

National minority ethnic groups in Ukraine, including the Roma people, have experienced discrimination which increased their vulnerability during the crisis. Since they often lack civil status documents, they experience difficulty with accessing employment, healthcare, quality education, and other services (UN Women, 2020). The inability to access these services puts minorities like the Roma at risk of being marginalized when seeking protections during the pandemic.

Having identified the most vulnerable groups within Ukraine, it is important to note that these are not discrete groupings of people. Many Ukrainians exist at the intersections of these vulnerable populations, falling into more than one of the aforementioned groups. These individuals are at increased risk of experiencing multiple discrimination, whereby discrimination against them is due to separate, but culturally connected, facets of their identity. This fact is particularly visible when looking at vulnerable groups in the context of the war in Donbas.

The war in Donbas created an environment of instability in Ukraine years before the country experienced the pandemic along with the rest of the world. The armed conflict has exacerbated the effects that existing social issues have had on Ukrainian well-being and standard of living. The conflict created difficult circumstances for already vulnerable people, who struggled to access social services and move freely long before COVID-19 entered the global purview. The instability resulted in the emergence of new vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons (IDP) and veterans transitioning from war. The women included in those groups, as

well as widows of soldiers who have lost their lives in the conflict, have been particularly affected (Pact, 2018, pg. 14). IDP have, for years, experienced challenges with accessing documentation identity, civil status, and property documentation (OCHA, Jan. 2020, pg. 52-53). For those living in non-government-controlled areas, crossing the conflict line is necessary to obtain these essential documents, as well as documentation verifying their disability, verifying illness or injury, or enabling collection of pensions. Naturally, this poses a significant problem for the high proportion of elderly people in the conflict-affected oblasts, particularly in isolated settlements (OCHA, Jun. 2020, pg. 6), as well as the estimated 15% share of the disabled population living within 5km of the conflict line in government-controlled areas (OCHA, Jan 2020, pg. 18). A distressing number of elderly people living in non-government-controlled areas have experienced suspension of their pension and social benefits payments, resulting in economic isolation (OCHA, Jan 2020, pg. 52). The closure of checkpoints along the conflict line since the end of March 2020 inhibited access to vital services, and the restrictions on public transportation due to COVID-19 added to this challenge.

Infrastructure in the region is poor, and the region's healthcare system has been deteriorating for years due to the conflict (OCHA, Jun. 2020, pg. 6). Education systems are fragmented, rates of food insecurity and unemployment are high, access to clean water is limited, and the personal security of families in the region is at risk. There is a lack of specialized medical personnel remaining in the region, and as of June 2020 healthcare services in the region were staffed at 60-70% of the required capacity (Havlik et al., 2020, pg. 2).

While there is certainly a need for emergency provisions closest to the conflict line, there is an 'urban disconnect' whereby those living in rural communities have been cut off from the urban centres that they would normally rely upon to fulfill their service needs (OCHA, Jan. 2020, pg. 5). Those in conflict-affected areas live with restrictions on their freedom of movement, which

limit their ability to access health services, pharmacies, schools, and other social services and businesses. For those willing and able to travel to receive services, they can expect high costs associated with that travel.

A report from the Kyiv Post in May 2021 describes the experiences of those living in the Donbas villages of Travneve and Hladosove (Ponomarenko & Petrov, 2021). These villages were isolated due to the war and have been further devastated by COVID-19 in the past year and a half. While the residents hoped that their isolation would protect them from the virus – and it did for a large portion of the pandemic – unfortunately this did not last. Cut off from emergency medical care and government support, many people in the villages were not able to get a hospital bed at either of the two closest hospitals, both of which were overwhelmed. Supply shortages meant that charity workers were forced to receive and administer essential drugs, whether they had the necessary training or not. While the isolation of the community as a result of the war had been troubling in its own right, the requirement to socially distance took its toll on the mental wellbeing of the village residents. Having banded together to support each other when their home was the site of conflict, the solitude necessary to fight the spread of COVID-19 distanced them from the community they relied upon to bring them joy.

Psychological unrest and mental illness resulting from the pandemic and associated restrictions has been common. Isolation, financial stress, and general uncertainty about the future have been contributing factors to the distress felt by people across Ukraine, and across much of the world. For those in conflict-affected areas in Ukraine, the mental health effects of the pandemic are augmented by the high levels of psychological trauma resulting from the war. According to a 2016 survey of internally displaced persons, 42% of those surveyed suffered from mental illness; 75% of families living nearby the conflict line reported that mental health services were unavailable or that they didn't know where these services could be accessed (Roberts et al.,

2017, as cited by Havlik et al., 2020, pg. 36). In a 2019 report by the Kyiv Post on the psychological effects of the Donbas war on local children, a representative from UNICEF in Ukraine stated that a “lack of consistent psychological support and specialized mental healthcare continues to be a key gap in conflict-affected communities” (Grytsenko & Petراسиuk, 2019).

3.3.1.2 Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in Ukraine and Support to Small and Medium Businesses

Small and medium enterprises (SME) are integral to the Ukrainian economy, providing 64% of added value, 81.5% of jobs, and 37% of tax revenues (“Supporting Small and Medium Businesses”, n.d.). SEs in Ukraine (when legally registered as businesses as opposed to NGOs or other public organizations) fall into the categories of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises. When disaster struck in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukrainian SME sector was hit hard. The UN in Ukraine cited the following as the main concerns for SME owners during COVID-19 (UN Ukraine, 2020, pg. 86):

- a lack of cash flow for rent, utilities, salaries, and supplies;
- failure to meet contractual deadlines related to the provision of raw materials;
- debts owed to banks;
- administrative burdens; and
- penalties for late payments

The disruptions in supply chains, the collapse in demand for many goods and services, and the partial or full closure of businesses resulted in financial hardship for many businesses. In April of 2020, a survey conducted by the Federation of Employers of Ukraine, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), found that more than half of surveyed enterprises reported a high level of financial impact (meaning a decline in revenue or sales over 50%) (ILO,

2020). Almost 40% of enterprises assessed the impact at medium. Further, almost half of the enterprises in the survey indicated that they did not have access to funding to help their enterprise to recover from the financial devastation of the pandemic. The study also found that 11% of enterprises surveyed were not able to retain employees, with a quarter stating that they had to lay off over a third of their workforce. By June of 2020, the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry reported that up to 700,000 small businesses, employing between 3.5-4 million people, had been closed (Manos, 2020; UNDP Ukraine 2020). By the end of 2020, Ukraine's unemployment rate had risen to 10%, up from 8.19% in 2019 (OECD, Feb. 2022, pg. 4; Statista, 2021).

On March 18, 2020, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a law stating that the quarantine resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic constituted a force majeure situation (Query, 2020). This measure was intended to ease the burden on small businesses and workers by ensuring a level of flexibility in the face of unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances. A force majeure certificate (granted by the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce) may exempt a business from fines and penalties, as well as delay the requirement to fulfill obligations of an agreement until the circumstances causing the force majeure situation to reach a conclusion (Kalnytska, 2020). The law was intended to help towards easing rents and negating penalties for the inability to pay taxes during the quarantine (Query, 2020). However, not every agreement contains the clause that would allow for force majeure to be brought into effect and obtaining a certificate of force majeure is not always straightforward. As a result, the declaration of force majeure did not offer respite for some businesses.

In May 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the 2020-2022 National Economy Stimulus Plan to support the Ukrainian economy while necessary restrictions were in place to limit the spread of COVID-19. Focused on stabilizing the economy and addressing

unemployment, the reform aimed to support SME by providing access to finance and markets, as well as creating infrastructure for SME development. More specifically, the government of Ukraine stated that the reform would implement measures aimed at preserving jobs and streamlining access to finances; would engage SME in the socio-economic development of certain regions of the country, thus enhancing access to markets; and would create an effective infrastructure to support entrepreneurship by better regulating and streamlining administrative processes for SME (“Supporting Small and Medium Businesses”, n.d.; UN Ukraine, 2020, pg. 106). In its pursuit of sustainable economic development, the Ukrainian government stated that it plans to engage SME in the socio-economic development of certain regions, in turn enhancing access to markets (“Supporting Small and Medium Businesses”, n.d.).

That same month, President Zelenskyy signed amendments to the Tax Code of Ukraine, aimed at supporting individual taxpayers during quarantine restrictions. Among other supports, these amendments canceled or postponed tax debt for those whose taxes and fees did not exceed designated amounts and offered the possibility of obtaining partial unemployment assistance for entrepreneurs who lost income due to quarantine restrictions (Interfax-Ukraine, 2020).

As part of the Stimulus Plan, the Ukrainian government aimed to introduce a portfolio loan guarantee facility, as well as develop training programs and materials related to financial literacy and the creation of sustainable business models. The government also intended to develop a methodology for the alternative financing of SME, offering access to this methodology via online platforms. Expanding on its goals for the reform, the Ukrainian government stated that it was committed to the Affordable Loans 5-7-9 Plan, which aims to make entrepreneurship accessible to Ukrainians. The program involved having banks lend money to small and medium businesses at market rates, with the government covering part of the interest payment. The borrower would, in turn, only have to pay 5, 7, or 9 percent on their loan rather than the usual 11 percent, plus

the cost of unsubsidized borrowing (Hunder, 2021). However, the Kyiv Post reported in early November 2021 that the loan program was failing to boost business, instead supporting the budgets of established firms. According to the news report, experts called the conditions to qualify for the program too restrictive, leaving startups unable to qualify as they did not have sufficient assets to put down as collateral. Additionally, it is estimated that one third of the loans were used to refinance older debts, meaning that, as Ukrainian financial expert Oleksiy Kushch states, “there is no multiplier effect for the Ukrainian economy” (Hunder, 2021). The news report describes the conflicting views on the 5-7-9 Plan, with some stakeholders saying that it is worthwhile and others saying that its inefficiency will destroy the appetite to create a well-functioning loan subsidy in the future.

In December of 2020, the Verkhovna Rada – the parliament of Ukraine – adopted a law that would provide a one-time financial assistance of up to UAH 8,000 (about \$376.86 CAN) to employees who had lost part of their salaries due to COVID-19 and to private entrepreneurs who lost part of their incomes. There were some stipulations to this law, notably that private entrepreneurs had to be registered for more than three months before the establishment of this law and that their activities must have been subject to quarantine (Interfax-Ukraine, 2020). The law also provided one-time financial aid to companies for the payment of hired workers to avoid laying them off due to the quarantine. This applied to companies that, at the time when the law came into effect, were required to reduce employee hours due to the quarantine (Interfax-Ukraine, 2020).

Despite efforts to mitigate the economic impacts of the pandemic, Ukraine, like countries globally, suffered significant financial losses. Looking to the future, all levels of Ukraine society anticipated a lengthy and fragile road to recovery.

4. Theoretical Framework

Considering the function of the welfare state, along with competing perspectives on the SSE, will set the basis for understanding the social purpose of SEs and the significance of challenges they face as a result of COVID-19. Additionally, looking at contingency theory will contribute to foundational knowledge on how an enterprise's external environment dictates the boundaries of its decision-making. Relating contingency theory to the "triple bottom line" often ascribed to SE will contribute to discussion on organizational sustainability.

The intention is that this framework will lend insight to how Ukrainian social entrepreneurs, operating within a nascent SSE, have approached decision-making during the pandemic to maintain business continuity.

4.1 The Welfare State & The Social and Solidarity Economy

The welfare state tends to refer to the state-backed activities that aim to reduce the effects of poverty and inequality. The objectives of social institutions in the welfare state include efficiency, supporting living standards, inequality reduction, and social integration. In *Economic Theory and the Welfare State: A Survey and Interpretation* (1992, pg. 758), Nicholas Barr describes how all countries, despite their dominant ideology, have converged upon similar industrial structures – compositions of economic activities. According to Barr, the emergence of a welfare state is, to varying degrees, an inevitable and naturally occurring result of that process. Market failures necessitate state intervention, and that intervention arises only if voluntarism is likely to be sub-optimal (pg. 751). There are, however, significant variations in the scope and objectives of the welfare states. As Esping-Andersen explains in *Why We Need A New Welfare State* (2002), some (like the US and increasingly the UK) favor individualism and markets with the welfare

state playing a minimal role. Others, like the Scandinavian countries, prioritize “social democracy, universalism, egalitarianism, and comprehensive social citizenship” (pg. 2). Nonetheless, whether the state aims to implement a “safety net” approach or universal approach to the provision of social services, there are still opportunities for vulnerable groups to fall through the cracks of the system.

Not all welfare states are created equally; politics, history, ideology, and structural variables shape their outcomes. These social factors are determinants in the kind of welfare state that develops, and where the gaps in the system form. The socialist welfare regime was formed as a central feature of state socialism in the Soviet Union, and state enterprises were responsible for welfare provision (Kutsenko & Gorbachyk, 2014, pg. 68). While wide social security systems were created, they were largely tied to employment status, rather than to more general system of universal social rights, as is the case in forms of welfare state seen in Western Europe (Kutsenko & Gorbachyk, 2014, pg. 68). After the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine leaned towards liberal democracy and market economy in its political and economic reforms, drawing from liberal policy rather than the social-democratic model of welfare development. Generally, social programs implemented in Ukraine post-independence did not fulfill their purpose of protecting the vulnerable (Silenko, Bezrodna & Lyasota, 2020, pg. 149-150).

The welfare state involves government intervention in the socio-economic sphere to ensure the wellbeing of citizens. When a government agrees to take on greater responsibility for the social and economic welfare of citizens, it is an indicator of a strong state (Silenko, Bezrodna & Lyasota, 2020 pg. 152). When the responsibility to account for citizen welfare falls to non-state actors or bodies, this indicates a strong civil society. It is the SSE which provides civil society with the means necessary to fulfill its needs (Borgaza, Salvatori & Bodini, 2017, pg. 1). While not always necessarily the case, a strong civil society or SSE may reflect inadequate state

capacity or effort. A strengthening of both civil societies and state institutions is necessary to deepen democracy and to address injustice, particularly when it's caused by private economic power (I. M. Young, 2000, pg. 156). The state, the economy, and civil society are social aspects that may act in support of each other or may limit each other.

The SSE was born out of a need to protect and promote collective interests (like production, consumption, and credit) in a market-based economy (Fontan & Shragge, 2000, pg. 4). Cooperatives sprang from this recognition for shared solutions to shared problems. However, until the late 1970s, the SSE concept existed at the margins of society and cooperatives were considered simply part of the broader economy.

The issues resulting from the decentralization of services, state cutbacks and high levels of unemployment in developed capitalist countries motivated the return of the SSE idea to mainstream thinking. It wasn't social activists who revitalized the concept of a SSE, but rather those in public institutions who recognized the crisis that the state was in. Those involved in collectives and in the mutualist movement did, however, help to usher this revival along (Fontan & Shragge, 2000, pg. 5). Therefore, social change was not a fundamental element of the SSE at the conception of the concept or in its historical development.

Approaching the 21st century, states began to reduce spending on social services and the process of rapid globalization led to a restructuring of the world economy. These reforms worked against the advancement of the Keynesian welfare state but made room for new initiatives in the community sector.

While indeed important and valuable, the normative basis within this research tends to rest on a utopian vision of the SSE. This view – the new-society utopian/social change perspective – is

one of two competing approaches to SSE. From this perspective, the decentralized institutions present in the SSE represent the basis of a shift in power. The new society view is closely related to social change movements of the late 19th century and the traditions of anarchical social thinkers like Proudhon and Kropotkin (Fontan & Shragge, 2000, pg. 3). Such thinkers believed in radical decentralization; that in the absence of government and capital ownership, each person would be free to govern themselves and take ownership through workers associations. Through direct democratic organizations that allow for self-managed production rather than state ownership, the SSE was believed to be able to bring into practice the ideology of the social democratic movement (Fontan & Shragge, 2000, pg. 3).

The second approach to SSE, in contention with the new-society utopian/social change view, is that of the pragmatic/reformist (Fontan & Shragge, 2000, pg. 2). This approach is concerned with the use of the SSE as a tool to ameliorate existing social problems, rather than fundamentally changing the social order. As Fontan and Shragge explain in their essay *Tendencies, Tensions, and Visions in the Social Economy*, the pragmatic/reformist perspective “regards the social economy as playing a role in the management of individual and group social welfare through initiatives which target and are limited to specific problems and groups” (2000, pg. 2).

In his 2018 article in the Harvard Business Review, John Elkington (who coined the term ‘triple bottom line’) reflected on the evidence of the sustainability sector’s impacts on social, environmental, and economic well-being (2018). According to him, there have been successes out of the sector in ensuring the security of facets of sustainability, but the evidence shows decidedly mixed results. The biodiversity, and all natural resources are increasing at risk of critical depletion, and climate change is a persisting issue. The purpose of his article is to ‘recall’ the triple bottom line management framework to undergo some strategic revisions. Elkington

notes how the concept has been diluted by accountants and reporting consultants; thousands of triple bottom line reports are produced annually, yet they tend to not be particularly helpful in informing decision-makers on the systemic impacts of human activity. Subsequently, he implores business leaders to pursue all three aspects of the triple bottom line concurrently, or at least seek advancement in two while the other remains unaffected.

4.2 Contingency Theory and Organizational Sustainability

To better understand the adaptations that SEs have made in response to the pandemic, I will approach the data collected through the lens of contingency theory. This is an organizational theory which asserts that there is no best way to structure an organization; the optimal course of action is dependent on the environment in which the organization exists (Husted, 2000; Scott, 1981). According to Bryan W. Husted, “the firm’s response needs to consistently match the nature of the diverse social issues it faces to achieve a sustained level of high corporate social performance” (2000, pg. 25). Essentially, a firm’s interactions with stakeholders, as well as any unintended consequences of its business, will be impacted by the quality of that firm’s response to the social issues it encounters.

Contingency theory encourages consideration of how an enterprise’s external environment dictates the boundaries of its decision-making. As mentioned, social enterprises in Ukraine register as different legal forms, have different capacities in terms of staff and partnerships, and operate in different ways to fulfill their social and business goals. Through my research, I wanted to look at these entities as contingent on the environment that they’re acting within, balancing that with what’s happening internally in the organization. COVID placed enterprises in an unprecedented environment with which they were forced to interact and adapt. Examining

the survey responses through the lens of contingency theory, I aimed to observe these interactions.

Moizer and Tracey (2010) examine the tension present in SEs which stems from the need to invest resources in business activity while simultaneously investing resources in social action. This tension, over time, may impact the organizational sustainability of a SE if not managed appropriately. Moizer and Tracey represent sustainability as a function of three causal influences: “the accumulations of capital, a recognizable community need and perceived organizational legitimacy” (2010, pg. 258). The depletion of any of these influences to zero would thereby cause the enterprise to become unsustainable.

Moizer and Tracey co-opted Elkington's 3BL concept to assert that a defining characteristic of SEs is the necessity to manage a double bottom line of a different nature – “a balance between resource utilization (in order to build and maintain competitive advantage) and engagement with local stakeholders (in order to build and maintain organizational legitimacy)” (2010, pg. 253). It is the balance of these aspects that ensures organizational sustainability. While this is the case, some literature assumes that there is a tension present between the two sides of a SE's activities – the social action required to fulfill its social objectives and maintain legitimacy, and its need to maintain a business model that can continuously generate capital (Moizer and Tracey, 2010, pg. 255-256; D. R. Young, 2005, pg. 12). This tension will be amplified by the pandemic since the business activities of these enterprises will be strained – as is the case for most businesses – and their ability to perform social action will inevitably be impacted in some way by quarantine and social distancing measures. The organizational sustainability of many SEs is therefore at risk.

While the social and commercial components of the SE strategy may present a tension, it is not to say that they are in conflict. Investment in social action and investment in business effectiveness are not separate and distinct entities, but rather exist in synergy. Moizer and Tracey's work illustrates that a social entrepreneur must understand how their social and business components relate to each other, and whether one draws from the other in "either a virtuous or vicious way" (pg. 264). Managing the balance of these features is the key to ensuring organizational sustainability; the domination of one organizational feature over the other is likely to result in significant – potentially disastrous – problems for the SE.

The researchers identify three generic strategic options for SE decision-makers (pg. 259). The first of these is separating the social and commercial missions. The second is integrating the social and commercial missions. The third is building alliances with for-profit businesses. In their implementation, these options may be simultaneously combined. The first two of these speak to the balance between resources invested in the social mission, versus the ability to generate capital. In the first strategy, the commercial and social components are detached in order to maximize the sustainability of the organization (pg. 260). In the second strategy, the resources required and the output of social good are closely intertwined and would be difficult to detach. This strategy is applied by businesses that employ persons typically excluded from the labor market, and businesses whose goods or services serve their social mission. The third generic strategy involves partnerships which can exist in many forms, but are most often observed as preferred supplier relationships (pg. 262). If the for-profit partner is reliable, this strategy can reduce the efforts needed to generate capital and be highly influential in an SE's pursuit of social initiatives.

While SEs are indeed strained by COVID-19, it is argued that some features of SSE business models help to protect these businesses against shocks during a crisis. These include their

anchor in local communities and economies, their inclusive and participatory governance structures, and their mobilization of a mix of resources (revenues, public subsidies, donations, and volunteering) (OECD, 2020, pg. 8). As a result of these mitigating factors, SSE organizations are credited with building resilience in a given economy (OECD, 2020, pg. 6). They achieve this by addressing social needs that are not covered by the market economy and by organizing their business activities in a more inclusive and sustainable way. By offering a sustainable solution, these enterprises enable their communities to use their autonomy, creativity, and solidarity to overcome the social problems they face (Vázquez-Maguirre et al., 2018, pg. 4-5). Additionally, the ability of a SE to adapt to a shock as destabilizing as the COVID-19 pandemic depends on the organizational structure of that enterprise, as well as its goals, resources, and consumer base.

In relating contingency theory to SE, it is necessary to reiterate that there are various organizational and legal structures that Ukrainian SE can assume. Furthermore, each SE can be further differentiated by their social objectives – whether they are in pursuit of the SDGs or other local goals. In accordance with this theoretical approach, my research will maintain the following assertions:

- (1) Organizations are open systems – meaning they have internal interactions – that need careful management to satisfy and balance internal needs and adapt to the circumstances of the environments in which they function.
- (2) The adaptations made to each venture’s organizational structure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are contingent on the unique internal and external situations – the goings-on within the enterprise as well as the novel environment the pandemic presents.

Applying this framework will allow me to understand how the leaders of the SEs that I am researching have approached the environment of COVID-19. As the managers of businesses

with varied objectives facing challenging, novel circumstances, they must remain open and flexible while functioning under operationally stressful conditions.

5. Results

Of the responses received to the survey, seven came from SEs in the west of Ukraine, with five from Lviv, one from Volyn and one from Vinnytsia. Three of the SEs that responded were based in Kyiv. The remaining three came from the east of the country, with two from Zaporizhzhia and one from Kharkiv.

The accounts collected through the survey contained stories of resilience, creativity, and innovative thinking. Some respondents expressed that they had come close to losing their SE entirely but were able to adapt and remain flexible in order to stay in business. Many representatives expressed how worried they had been at the prospect of being unable to help their SE's beneficiaries. It is evident that social entrepreneurs in Ukraine cared deeply about the communities that they served and were frustrated at the lack of support that they received from government programs or other organizations. The following is a breakdown of the results of the survey responses from these Ukrainian social entrepreneurs.

5.1 Legal Registration of Companies

Nine of the SEs surveyed indicated that they were registered as private companies, and seven of these were registered as FOPs - the Ukrainian abbreviation for "fizichna osoba-pidpriyemets", which are sole proprietors. Otherwise known as private entrepreneurs, this form of business registration is one of the most common forms in Ukraine. Sole proprietorship is different from a company or corporate entity as there is no director, shareholders, dividend payout or share capital; there is only an individual entrepreneur who is able to conduct business activity and maintains full responsibility for their business ("Registration of Individual Entrepreneur", n.d.).

Another form of business registration identified was that of the TOB - the Ukrainian abbreviation for “tovarystvo z obmezhenoyu vidpovidalnistyu”, which is equivalent to a limited liability company. One enterprise surveyed indicated that they were registered as such, with another mentioning that they were a branch of another TOB. To be registered in this way under Ukrainian law, a company must have a minimum of one shareholder, a director appointed by shareholders, share capital must be formed, and the company is governed by a general meeting of shareholders and a director or board of directors (“Ukraine Company Registration Guide”, n.d.).

Two of the enterprises surveyed stated that they were registered as NGOs or public organizations. Under Ukrainian law, an NGO, public organization, or public association is “a voluntary association of persons and/or legal entities under private law for the purpose of exercising and protecting rights and freedoms and satisfying public, among them economic, social, cultural, environmental, and other interests” (“On Public Associations”, 2012, article 1). According to the Law of Ukraine “On Public Associations”, businesses who register under this designation must operate under the principles of voluntary participation, self-governance, free choice of the territory of operation, absence of any property interest on the part of their participants, and transparency (2012, article 3).

The survey responses of two participants indicate that their SEs operate to financially support the needs of a specific public association. One of the respondents said that their SE was registered as an “NGO and FOP”, while another called itself an “enterprise of a citizen’s association”. The former has been included in the total above related to FOPs, as technically its business activities as an FOP are distinct from the activities of its associated NGO (based on the respondent’s subsequent survey responses and the website of this SE); the latter did not specify what type of enterprise it is registered as, therefore it was not included in the totals.

Additionally, a third participant simply responded “social entrepreneurship” to the question of how their enterprise is registered. Since this response was unclear, it was excluded from the totals.

5.2 Enterprise Goals

The goals of SEs tended to be either socially or environmentally focused. The majority of the enterprises whose representatives responded to the survey had goals that were largely socially-oriented, aiming to support specific vulnerable populations. Seven of the enterprises referred to goals which were centered around social inclusion. This involved the employment - or assistance with employment - of vulnerable groups, including women, people with mental and physical disabilities, and veterans of the Russian-Ukrainian War.

One enterprise stated that their goal was the development of folk crafts and the dissemination of cultural traditions. Another enterprise indicated that their goals were partially social and partially environmental; their aim was to involve people in nature, build environmental awareness, and to help with skill-building for vulnerable groups (including the elderly, internally displaced persons, and people with disabilities).

Five of the SEs who responded expressed that their goals were largely environmental. These goals were related to the upcycling of plastic waste products, the dissemination of waste sorting practices through practical tools, providing environmental education, and changing the paradigm of consumption to promote environmental responsibility and a circular economy. One of the enterprises aimed to promote healthy lifestyles and environmental stewardship while rewilding the local habitat.

5.3 Challenges During COVID-19

Naturally, the COVID-19 pandemic presented a health risk to employees and customers. This was an ever-present challenge that added to the other hardships experienced, and this risk needed to be mitigated throughout the entire period. In addition to the challenge of limiting physical exposure to reduce the risk of contracting the virus, survey respondents reported various other challenges that they faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In several reported cases, the SEs were forced to cease their activities and close their offices. Three of the respondents said that quarantine measures caused a temporary shutdown of their SEs and a termination of activities. Those that managed to continue their activities were at times unable to work in-person or interact with customers/clients face-to-face. A representative from a SE that produces consumer goods said that they were forced to close their production facility from March until September 2020 due to a lack of customers. One enterprise surveyed frequented festivals and fairs to sell their upcycled goods, but reported losing these revenue streams when events at those venues were canceled or postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

As might be expected, reductions and shutdowns of business had financial consequences. Many of the respondents surveyed reported a reduction in income, with one describing a 70% drop in sales. Respondents reported that their social businesses lost purchasing power and financial capacities, while simultaneously incurring debt during this period. Several survey respondents reported trouble with paying for utilities and rent for their facilities, with one entrepreneur opening a small production operation in the basement of their own house to save on costs.

One representative from a SE which sells its product in order to raise money for a day care centre for youth with developmental disabilities cited a loss of corporate clients as being a significant challenge. Presumably, many of these clients experienced similar challenges as the SEs as a result of COVID-19, like shutdowns, reduced operations, and financial hardship.

A respondent from a SE that aims to educate on waste management pointed to restrictions on public sorting as an impediment on their environment impact. Targeted collection of secondary raw materials was suspended, and many establishments where collections of waste would typically occur were closed. Offices, which typically accounted for the majority of customers for recycling services, were closed. Representatives from this SE also noted that it was impossible to hold lectures and live events to teach about proper waste sorting. For the enterprises that fulfilled educational services, held training sessions, and gave tours, restrictions on attendance impeded operations.

A depleted staff, either out of necessity or due to personal circumstance, was a challenge reported by several survey respondents. According to the responses, the financial losses suffered meant that some SE owners were unable to pay their workers' salaries. Two of the respondents said that a significant reduction in product orders necessitated an overhaul of their business models in addition to a reduction in staff to limit costs during the difficult period. A representative from another SE reported losing 4 out of 10 workers, as some employees came from other areas of Ukraine to work but returned to their families when the pandemic took hold in the country. It was reported by one survey respondent that the restrictions on public transport that occurred throughout the pandemic, particularly when infection rates were high, had an impact on staff movement.

5.4 Adjustments Made to Business

To cope with the pressures of the pandemic and its restrictions, a majority of survey respondents (85%) said that their SEs adjusted their operations or focus. When asked whether the pandemic-era measures or plans were likely to be maintained after Ukraine achieved sufficient collective immunity, the same representatives responded in the affirmative.

Respondents pointed to the positive impacts that these changes had on business, the stability they provided, and the efficiencies they engendered. While operating under the pandemic restrictions was clearly difficult, they challenged some of the SEs surveyed to innovate and optimize their businesses to adapt to their exigent external environment.

Navigating the health risks of COVID-19 meant that some measures for mitigation needed to be established to protect the health of staff and patrons. Two respondents indicated that action was taken by their SEs to ensure proper sanitation and compliance with pandemic protocols, including regular disinfecting of the premises and the use of sanitizers during in-person activities. Representatives indicated that they intended to largely uphold these changes due to the fact that they created a more hygienic environment for staff and patrons.

To adapt to the pandemic social environment, some enterprises developed new formats to continue their work, like moving to online platforms to continue their business remotely. The pandemic pushed one enterprise to launch its website and begin utilizing targeted advertising. Representatives from two other SEs said that they refocused on increasing online sales. The initiation of distance learning was a tactic used by one SE intent on building financial literacy and knowledge around environmental stewardship. An SE that formerly relied on in-person recycling activities came up with the creative solution of a mobile collection service, whereby a team would collect raw materials straight from apartment buildings, rather than requiring people

to visit the recycling site. This particular enterprise also launched online training and expanded their work on social networks.

According to one respondent, COVID-19 pushed them to develop their business and become more recognizable as a SE. They formed alternatives to the support circle that they had previously relied upon in order to maintain the sustainability of their project, which focused on providing care for youth with developmental disabilities. They attempted to grow their retail presence, which offered potential for a stable revenue stream to maintain their social impact. If the SE had closed, the young beneficiaries and their families would have been negatively impacted by the loss as they would not have had access to routine day care. The representative from this SE was thankful to have continued their work during the pandemic despite hardships and uncertainty. They reiterated their commitment to planning for maximum maneuverability to keep the center afloat and ensure that these young people are supported.

Some enterprises were able to progress their business in new ways by finding creative solutions to the challenges of the pandemic and lockdowns. To encourage sales, one SE organized delivery services to get their products into customers hands without requiring them to leave their homes. A SE that worked with building materials (exclusively with wood and metal, according to the representative) was forced to switch to inexpensive sheet materials – like particle board, plywood, and veneer – to reduce costs under the threshold needed to stay financially afloat. That enterprise reported that had they not switched to lower-cost materials, they almost certainly would have gone out of business. The SE's representative said that this was a smart business move and, at the time of their survey response, they were continuing to use these lower-cost alternatives. These changes reportedly enabled the enterprise to scale up and hire additional employees.

The exploration and establishment of new partnerships was cited in several of the survey responses as a best (and essential) practice for maintaining business during this difficult period. To supplement the support that it lends to its associated women's centre, one SE began to seek charitable donations from philanthropists. According to its representative, this allowed the SE to achieve a higher level of efficiency to fulfill its social goals. The company will reportedly strive to maintain these indicators in the future.

While one SE representative reported negative financial impacts due to a loss of corporate clients, another reported that shifting from a business-to-consumer (B2C) model to a business-to-business (B2B) model was imperative for their SE. This respondent stated that establishing business relationships with corporate clients enabled their business to stay financially viable after sales to individual customers plummeted. According to that representative's survey response, changing from a B2C to a B2B model allowed their enterprise to focus on wholesale and generally produced positive results for business operations. The pandemic forced SEs to search for new business outlets, which was a challenge that when overcome proved beneficial.

Recognizing the advantages of cooperation during a time of significant financial hardship for businesses everywhere, one SE began looking for collaborations with other businesses and developed partnerships on social media. A representative from this SE said that one particular collaboration proved especially advantageous since it did not require the SE to invest its own resources, increased the number of jobs at the SE from two to five, and allowed the SE to remain in business. Similarly, another SE representative expressed that they had sought to cultivate partnerships with larger businesses in the same field, as they were more resistant to the impacts of lockdowns than small businesses. This respondent credited these business modifications for the innovation that resulted in the creation of new products and the establishment of partnerships that could be carried into the future. Despite experiencing an

overall loss of profits, the adjustments prevented this SE from disappearing from the market entirely, according to the representative. Given their positive results, the representative stated that these changes will be maintained, although the B2B segment of their business model (which here entails the supply of products to offices) will be restored.

5.5 Support from Government or Other Organizations

Regarding financial aid given to support SEs during the pandemic, a large majority (69%) reported that they did not receive any assistance from the Ukrainian government. Three of the respondents reported that their SEs were able to defer payment on taxes. However, these three representatives stressed that the impact of this on their SE's overall situation was negligible.

For some SEs, assistance was received from other organizations. One SE reported that their landlord gave the business a slight rent reduction. Another SE credited its municipality with providing help with advertising and its city council for making orders while the SE was going through a difficult financial period.

A SE that previously did not have a website won a competition hosted by a web studio development site. As the winner of this competition, the SE was provided with help to launch their website, which in turn had a positive impact on their sales. That same enterprise was able to attract two small grants – one from an organization that promotes social projects and another from a private foundation.

The Ukrainian Cultural Foundation was mentioned by one representative as a source of help for expanding their SE's sales channels. The Foundation is a state-owned institution established to

promote the development of the arts and Ukrainian culture, with a competitive selection process for determining where support will be given.

In the survey, representatives voiced their frustrations with doing business – specifically social business – in Ukraine. One respondent's passion came through in their strong words, which passed into the territory of profanity (although their candor was appreciated). To paraphrase, this representative felt that their business was fighting to operate during a pandemic without state support, but while still paying taxes. Another representative echoed this sentiment, saying that they felt that there was no support from the state to SE, and this needs to change. A third representative pointed to the lack of regulation for SEs, along with a lack of municipal or state support programs. Overall, government assistance was reported to have had a minimal impact, if received at all. Any assistance received was given under specific circumstances, was the result of a competition or of goodwill, and was not widely accessible to all SEs.

5.6 Consequences for Social Impact

A major inquiry of this research is whether COVID-19 and its associated restrictions have impacted the ability of the SEs surveyed to make a social or environmental impact in the communities that they serve. Of the SEs surveyed, 100% reported that the pandemic had a negative effect on their capacity for impact.

A reduction in profits meant that fewer resources were available to the enterprises. Enterprises were forced to enter into states of self-preservation in order to withstand the pressures of the pandemic. For example, given that stable funding could not be obtained, some enterprises could not hire new employees. One of the SE representatives who responded said that two of their employees have been left to lead the SE while also working with the associated

organization and directly with the beneficiaries. The work of these two employees is done entirely on a volunteer basis, for around six hours per day. While demonstrative of the commitment of the small staff force to the enterprise's mission, this is not sustainable for the enterprise's long-term success.

For one SE that works with women in vulnerable situations, reduced profits led to the decrease in the amount of financial assistance for social projects. That enterprise was not able to deliver on the social integration aspect of their business, employing at-risk women. This experience was shared by another enterprise which hires men recovering from addiction. Due to the pandemic and restrictions which created an unstable financial situation, the enterprise was not able to hire new employees from that population for almost one full year. Those at-risk individuals typically supported by this enterprise were not able to receive the opportunity to learn a new profession and earn money.

Another enterprise that works for the benefit of women in difficult life circumstances reported that they could not continue to conduct free training and art therapy courses. A SE focused on sorting recycling and education around that practice described being unable to carry out the in-person activities that constitute the foundation of their work; they could not collect raw materials from the public or continue the work of the public sorting station (which is typically visited by over 500 people per month). Additionally, they were unable to host lectures to teach about responsible waste sorting practices. The representative revealed that this inability negatively impacted the SEs capacity to produce the positive environmental results it typically achieved.

Two of the enterprises surveyed work with recycling old materials in order to make a social impact. The first of these accepts clothing to be either sold for a profit or donated to charity organizations, but was not able to do so. The representative from the enterprise assumes that

articles that may have been otherwise brought to them pre-pandemic were probably discarded in the garbage and went to a landfill. The second enterprise focuses on upcycling materials from the advertising industry and had a unique perspective when reflecting on their social impact. This enterprise reported that the reduction in public events as a result of COVID-19 meant a reduction in the materials the enterprise uses to create their products. On one hand, this has a positive impact on the environment as there is less plastic waste going to landfills and taking hundreds – or even thousands – of years to decompose. On the other hand, this created negative consequences for the SEs, as their business model was impacted by the decrease in the amount of materials to upcycle decreased along with customers to the business. According to the enterprise’s representative, this dynamic has affected the sustainability of their business and has forced its management team to look for new opportunities to make an environmental impact.

5.7 Lessons Learned from Operating During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Finally, representatives were asked to share some of the lessons that they have gleaned from their experience managing a SE within the context of the COVID-19 public health emergency. The social and economic environment during the pandemic was, of course, volatile and characterized by a high degree of uncertainty. Accordingly, the themes of “flexibility” and “adaptivity” were frequently mentioned in the survey responses.

As made evident in the responses, SE representatives learned the necessity of harnessing innovation to find adaptive business solutions. One suggested setting up different avenues to make sales and generate profits. Another respondent referred to the need for a diversification of services. Not only is this necessary for financial stability, they stated, but also to ensure that a

SE's social impact will be maintained for customers and in the community at large, regardless of factors external to the SE. Offering different formats of service provision ensures that beneficiaries continue to receive the help necessary to preserve their wellbeing.

One respondent recommended reanalyzing organizational and technical potential. When their SE had sought to balance the social impact and business components in the past, decisions tended to be made in favor of the social. This oversight proved to be a challenge for the SE when faced with COVID-19, as it suddenly found itself dependent on one sales channel and lacking a reserve fund. According to this SE's representative, the primary lesson learned is that a successful, robust business model provides greater opportunities to fulfill the social mission, therefore maintaining a strong focus on profit generation is necessary.

One representative from a SE with a workforce comprised entirely of veterans said that the nature of the employees' military history fostered emergency preparedness, flexibility, and adaptivity for the SE. The need for a strong, cohesive team was echoed by another representative who saw a motivated staff force as necessary to maintain stability as a SE. A third respondent stated that "everything is based on people" and "it is important to take care of each other."

Respondents communicated the need to be "prepared for surprises", to act with timeliness, and to respond quickly to problems as they arise. A SE must be prepared to quickly readjust internal processes. Being prepared entails having resources and plans to fall back on, and it was clear by the survey responses that SE representatives acknowledge this fact as a lesson learned. Several respondents mentioned the need to be economical with expenses. Two referred to the importance of maintaining a financial "cushion" or "airbag" to protect the business in cases of

emergency. Another recommended saving resources and auditing available resources in order to allocate them as efficiently as possible.

Three of the respondents indicated that they had experienced a shift or reaffirmation of values. Good health and family, one representative said, were paramount when operating under conditions like the COVID-19 pandemic. Another respondent whose SE promotes healthy living and environmental stewardship remarked that they had lost faith in traditional medical systems to protect the health of Ukrainians. This respondent also expressed their opinion that measures related to the pandemic contributed to the stratification of society into those who seek nature and those who prefer urban life. They noticed that people became increasingly interested in natural ways of strengthening their immune systems. A third respondent, when asked if they had any final thoughts related to the research project, rhetorically asked why all diseases are now called COVID-19. Although these personal views are not representative of the outlooks of Ukrainian social entrepreneurs, they are interesting to note as these SE representatives chose to express these views through their survey responses. The last two of these responses point to the frustration, disillusionment, and distrust of established institutions that some people have felt during the pandemic. Not just in Ukraine, but in countries around the world.

In the survey, as well as in follow-up emails, several SE representatives expressed their gratitude for this research project. One representative said that the electronic survey in this study was the first time that someone had asked them how their company was surviving the crisis. Others said that they appreciated that there is a community interested in how their SEs are faring, as times had indeed been tough. One representative concluded their survey response with the century-old Ukrainian national slogan: “Slava Ukraini! Heroyam slava”, meaning “Glory to Ukraine! Glory to heroes!”. The stories of perseverance relayed in this survey attest to the pride and dedication to social good that the staff of these SEs share.

6. Analysis & Discussion

6.1 The Development Impact of SE in Ukraine

It became apparent while preparing this research that self-identifying SEs in Ukraine supported a wide range of initiatives and populations. Given that their reach was so wide, and that all experienced hardships as a result of the pandemic, it can be assumed that the gaps in service were felt across many vulnerable groups.

The SEs surveyed functioned in support of the national goals for sustainable development by fostering LRD. Around half of the SEs prioritized social inclusion. Of these, the groups most frequently employed were women (particularly those in vulnerable situations), veterans, and persons with physical and/or mental disabilities. These populations are also among the most vulnerable in Ukrainian society and were most at risk during the COVID-19 pandemic. By providing safe and reliable employment (or skills for acquiring employment) to people in difficult life circumstances, the SEs empowered those who fell through the cracks of the government and market systems. Where the welfare state has failed, these entities of the SSE have stepped in to ensure that needs are met. The integration of vulnerable groups contributed to their overall quality of life – an example of the ability of SEs to support development at the local and regional levels. In doing so, the SEs surveyed were able to build resilience of the Ukrainian workforce from the grassroots.

As responsibility for community well-being shifted to local governments as part of the decentralization reform, more of this grassroots empowerment was made necessary. The ability of local governments to create and follow their own local plans for development left space for

SEs to be factored in as contributors to the regional development agendas. Social entrepreneurship continuously drives social innovation, as it is required for an SE to remain financially viable. As mentioned during the overview of the theoretical framework, the convergence of government and civil society on meeting social and environmental needs is important. The strength of this relationship can promote justice and enhance democracy, which aligns with the goals of the decentralization reform.

Efforts to expand the workforce supported the goals of the national strategic framework related to sustainable economic growth and employment. At the same time, by realizing the potential of those left out of the traditional labor market and prioritizing their employment, the SEs surveyed contributed to the national focus area of equitable social development. By the same token, the SEs that pursued a primarily environmental mission carried out initiatives which align with the focus area of environmental balance present in Ukraine's national strategic framework. These efforts included advocacy, education, and waste management.

The results of the survey point to a ripple effect, whereby the ramifications of the external environment on an enterprise were felt by the enterprise itself, through its profit margin and ability to maintain staff, down to its beneficiaries. As contingency theory suggests, the decisions made by the SEs in response to their external environment impacted their output – the fulfillment of their social goals.

When impacted by the pandemic, several SEs reported that they had been required to reduce their staff to balance finances. This not only negatively impacted the capacities of the businesses, but for those SEs that centered around social inclusion, employees were returned to a state of vulnerability. A reduction in capital meant that the momentum of social projects was slowed or halted, limiting the accessibility of social and environmental services that meet

community needs. Conceivably, this impacted the progress towards sustainable development at local levels. Since the state institutions of Ukraine and social programs implemented post-independence cannot adequately protect the vulnerable, significant responsibility falls on civil society. When SEs, as entities of the SSE, can no longer contribute to the welfare of vulnerable persons who rely upon them, these persons are at increased risk of poverty and inequality.

As previously mentioned, some enterprises noted that if they had been forced to permanently close, the populations that they served would be left unprovided for. As the SEs surveyed focused their services on different populations, a breadth of vulnerable populations would suffer in the event of their permanent closure. The impact would be felt by at-risk women, at-risk men, children, veterans, those with physical and mental disabilities, and the environment. The SEs must ensure the presence of safeguards, because they are - in some cases - the final defense of some vulnerable groups against serious hardship.

The diversification of services was noted as a potential solution for maintaining a social impact and building resiliency of the business. While SEs must constantly respond to the needs present in the community to remain commercially viable, COVID-19 proved the importance of protecting against sudden fluctuations in the external environment of the enterprises. The need for contingency planning and maintaining a financial reserve were important takeaways from the pandemic, according to survey participants. The COVID-19 pandemic showed the potential for a SE's external environment to quickly become volatile, which is a testament to the need for emergency preparedness. Emergencies represent opportunities for growth, as was evident in the responses of several participants. These responses indicated that many enterprises intended to maintain pandemic-era changes after COVID-19 becomes endemic; one respondent declared their commitment to continuous improvement within their SE. Analyzing risks and

developing strategies for preparedness creates a more robust, sustainable business model, increasing the ability of the business to remain a going concern.

6.2 Flexibility, Innovation, and Adapting to Challenges

Earlier in this paper, when framing this research through contingency theory, the assertion was made that SEs are open systems in constant interaction with their environment, with which they must act responsively and proactively to maintain influence. However, responding to the fluctuations in their external environment was easier for some of the SEs surveyed than others. In the ever-changing environment of COVID-19, remaining responsive while balancing internal needs became an unprecedented challenge. The adaptations implemented by the SEs surveyed were contingent on the challenges they encountered as a result of external forces beyond their control. This aligns with the assertions of contingency theory, namely that organizations are required to match the nature of the diverse social issues in their environment to remain viable. The loss of revenue streams, the need for new or revised procedures, and business costs pushed social entrepreneurs to quickly seek solutions that would address these gaps. According to the survey results, the existing structures and the pandemic adjustments made by the SEs aligned with the strategic options laid out by Moizer and Tracey (2010). Namely, separating the social and commercial missions, integrating the social and commercial missions, and/or allying with for-profit business.

For some, the pandemic brought into focus the shortcomings of their business model. One of the survey respondents referred to their need to reassess how their decisions altered the balance of their SE's social and economic aspects. Having prioritized the business's social impact in past decision-making, the enterprise found itself at a loss when the pandemic struck a blow to their ability to generate capital. The predominance of the social aspect of the

enterprise's business model over its economic aspect was a pressure point during the state of uncertainty caused by the pandemic. Recognizing the symbioses between the commercial and social aspects – and adapting to the need for balance – allowed the enterprise to overcome this threat to its organizational sustainability. The survey respondent's reflection speaks to the central tension between a SE's need to invest resources in both its market-based activity and social value output.

While this respondent suggested a need to assess the balance of their SE's social and economic components, a complete separation of these may bring challenges of its own. Two of the enterprises representatives noted that they were both private businesses and NGOs. This indicates that they followed the first strategic option presented by Moizer and Tracey (2020, pg. 260), being the separation of social and commercial missions. They are stand-alone businesses that contribute a significant portion of profits to respective NGOs, which have no capacity to generate capital and solely function to achieve a social mission. The lessening of community inputs during the COVID-19 pandemic, given that people could not purchase goods from these SEs, lessened their capacity to achieve their social mission and was a threat to the organizational stability of both the businesses and the NGOs that they functioned to support. More closely integrating the social and commercial missions was key to the success of some of the SEs surveyed. Switching to materials that were more easily acquired reduced production costs for one SE, allowing them to continue hiring men who were rehabilitated from addiction. Several SEs were able to remain in business by expanding the delivery methods of their services, which functioned to achieve particular environmental and social goals. Balancing resource deployment with social action in an inverse way from the enterprises mentioned in the paragraphs above ensured organizational survival.

The pandemic pushed some of the social entrepreneurs surveyed to identify new partnerships and avenues for profit generation. One respondent had built an alliance with a for-profit enterprise in the form of a preferred supplier relationship. By selling their goods to this corporate client, the SE was able to generate sufficient revenues to stay in business and maintain their social objectives. Fostering this partnership would perhaps reduce the effort needed on the part of the SE to generate resources. Mozier and Tracey (2010, pg. 262) are proponents of alliance-building with for-profit businesses due to its potential for resource generation and building legitimacy. However, they state, “[i]f the SE allies with an external partner, then that partner’s reputation with a given community may have a bearing on the SE’s organizational legitimacy” (2010, pg. 258). The SE may be affected in a virtuous or vicious way as organizational legitimacy is essential for community support, which sustains a commercially viable SE business model.

In allying with other organizations, the social entrepreneurs employed a high risk/high reward strategy with the potential to impact their organizational legitimacy. Even under dire circumstances, collaboration with a profit-making organization has the potential to impact the social reputation of a SE. Such partnerships shift some control over social reputation out of the hands of the SE itself, as the reputation and conduct of the partner corporation will influence how the community perceives the SE (Mozier & Tracey, 2010, pg. 263). Examining the impact of this strategy on the perceived legitimacy of Ukrainian SEs may be an opportunity for future research.

When SEs practice flexibility, they are well poised to respond to crises. This need for adaptability was reiterated through the survey responses and is in accordance with the second assertion made in my theoretical framework regarding the relationship between contingency theory and SE. Namely, that changes to a venture’s organizational structure are contingent on

their unique internal and external environments. The quality and efficiency of these adaptations dictates the SEs success at navigating the challenges it is faced with. Of interest was the shift towards online advertising and sales, as well as the digitization of services offered. In the presence of social distancing rules, it became vital to find new ways to make connections with customers and ensure services remain accessible as to not be pushed from the market. The survey participants whose SEs embraced these methods considered them indispensable to business viability and/or social impact during the pandemic. This points to the necessity to engage with an increasingly digital world. Looking to the future, SEs that are able to harness technology are likely to be more resilient when facing unforeseen challenges and may have a greater chance of success.

Since insights from Ukrainian social entrepreneurs were gathered in November 2021 – around 20 months after the global shutdown – and the SEs had remained in business, it is reasonable to assume that the decisions made by their management upheld organizational sustainability. Given the evidence of their resiliency and innovation, consideration should be given to their potential for social good in a future plan for sustainable development.

6.3 Discrepancies in SE Law and Integration into National Policy

As expected, there was no standard of how social entrepreneurs legally registered their businesses, as there is no distinct classification of SE in Ukrainian legislation. As mentioned when listing the survey results, a majority of enterprises included in this study were registered as private companies, with two registered as NGOs. It is possible that this inconsistency in legal registration could create a discrepancy in the rights of these entities under the law during crisis situations, like a pandemic, as well as the resources that are available to each. When these results were examined, the question arose as to whether some companies, and not others,

were able to receive support from the government during the height of COVID-19 due to how they were legally registered. However, the survey results suggested that this was not necessarily the case.

Three respondents reported that they had been permitted by the government to defer on taxes, and all of these were registered as FOPs – sole proprietors. The remaining SEs, including those also registered as private companies, said that no help was received from the government. It is possible that some SEs registered as private enterprises did receive a tax deferral, but did not include this in their answer as the impact of a tax deferral on the business' overall financial situation may have been considered negligible.

No government funding or grants were received by the SEs whose representatives responded in the survey. Without direct state support and facing losses resulting from the pandemic, SEs did not have the resources needed to reach the threshold of social good at which they normally perform. As a result, the SEs surveyed were required to develop innovative solutions to adapt to the hardship they faced.

Survey respondents indicated that a lack of government support was a significant challenge during the pandemic, as well as during the time of peace that preceded it. By supporting the SSE through priority inclusion in its institutional reforms, the Ukrainian government could encourage the development of this business sector in the country. Legitimacy could be affirmed by the construction of a comprehensive legal framework outlining the distinguishing qualities of SEs and determining their role in the decentralized model of governance. These forms of support and affirmation would likely foster growth in the sector, revealing an attractive opportunity for impact investment. Moreover, in Ukraine's future, consideration should be given to constructing regional development plans that incorporate SEs and other SSE organizations.

This would utilize regional unity for the purpose of developing targeted initiatives to ameliorate local problems.

7. The 2022 Russian Invasion of Ukraine

Upon concluding the analysis of the majority of research on this project, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. It was the most devastating military offensive in Europe since WWII. Globally, news cycles and social media timelines flooded with horrifying images of buildings destroyed by shelling and corpses of civilians lying in dusty streets. On February 21, 2022, days prior to the invasion, Putin gave a speech foreshadowing the act of military aggression in the days to come. In this speech, he recognized the independent statehood of Donetsk and Luhansk and accused the government of Ukraine of supporting radical nationalism and systemic Russophobia (Putin, 21 Feb. 2022). Recounting a revisionist history of Ukraine, he falsely claimed that Ukraine was created by Russia, with communist figure Vladimir Lenin as its architect. Continuing these falsities, Putin accused Ukraine of “starting to build their statehood by renouncing everything that was bringing us together”. He then went on to say that Ukraine has no stable traditions or genuine experience of its own statehood, and stoked fears regarding the supposed threat that the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) poses to Russian security. Showing his disdain for Ukraine’s progress towards shaking the remnants of its Soviet past, Putin threatened, “[y]ou want decommunization? [...] We are ready to show you what real decommunizations would mean for Ukraine”.

Three days later, Russian forces moved in on Ukraine from the south, east, and north through Belarus. On February 24, 2022, Putin gave a speech in which he spoke about his goals for the invasion, which included “to demilitarize and denazify Ukraine, as well as bring to trial those who perpetrated numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including against citizens of the Russian Federation” (Putin, 24 Feb 2022). He called the war in Donbas a genocide of millions of ethnic Russians and people who sympathize with Russia. Putin at the same time framed the “special

military operation” as a liberation of Ukraine from those who had taken the country “hostage”, and also as an act of self-defense. The following day, in an address to members of the Russian Security Council, Putin claimed that the armed forces of Ukraine had been infiltrated at the highest levels by drug addicts and neo-Nazis. Attempting to appeal to Ukrainian soldiers, he urged them to reject their leaders, who he claimed were using citizens as human shields and who were responsible for a genocide of ethnic Russians in Donbas (Putin, 25 Feb 2022).

By February 26, Russian forces were attempting to move in on Kyiv, and the destruction of war could be seen on the streets of the capital city. Aggressive shelling was carried out on the towns on the outskirts of the capital. As the weeks went on, the images from Ukraine only became more gruesome. At the beginning of April, Russian forces withdrew from those towns around Kyiv, as massive material and personnel losses and failings caused the Kremlin to shift its focus primarily to the Donbas region. Bucha, in the northwest of Kyiv, had been occupied since the third day of the war. Videos taken after the Russian withdrawal show the bodies of civilians scattered in the streets, some with their wrists tied behind their backs. Many had been killed in a typical execution style, shot in the backs of their heads. Images showed mass graves, full of unburied or partially buried corpses dressed in civilian clothes. The deputy mayor of Bucha, Taras Shapravskiy, said that of the approximately 300 who were killed, 50 were victims of extrajudicial killings (D’Andrea, 2022). The images from Bucha led to a global outcry and intensified the calls to prosecute the Russian Federation for war crimes.

In a July meeting with ambassadors of the member countries of the League of Arab States, Foreign Minister of Russia Sergei Lavrov said that Russia would “help the Ukrainian people to get rid of a regime that is completely anti-people and anti-historical” (Petrenko, 2022). An article from the popular Ukrainian news company *Ukrainska Pravda* reported on these statements,

noting that Russia has made similar statements regarding the illegitimacy and “anti-people” nature of every government since the 2014 Russian invasion of Crimea (Petrenko, 2022).

The full-scale Russian invasion has profoundly changed the social and economic landscape of Ukraine. In April of 2022, the World Bank estimated that the Ukrainian economy will shrink by an estimated 45.1 percent, depending on the magnitude and duration of the war (World Bank, 2022). The damage to infrastructure is monumental, and the humanitarian consequences staggering. Millions of Ukrainians have fled the country to seek refuge elsewhere, millions more are internally displaced. An estimated 900,000 to 1.6 million people have been forcibly deported to Russia (Blinken, 2022). Entire cities have suffered from Russian bombardment, which have left many essentially levelled. Nationwide, efforts are focused on the war.

Faced with amplified Russian aggression and full-scale invasion, Ukrainians immediately united in a fierce resistance that the world looked upon with awe. Within the first two weeks over 100,000 Ukrainians joined the newly-established volunteer branch of the Ukrainian Armed Forces – the territorial defense forces (Kyiv Independent, 2022). Civilians joined in mass protests in the cities that Russian forces entered, flying Ukrainian flags in a bold defiance. Breweries, like the Lviv-based *Pravda*, began producing Molotov cocktails and metal road defenses, in addition to a special craft beer series with proceeds going towards humanitarian efforts (BBC, 2022). Volunteer groups that had been crafting camouflage nets for the Ukrainian Armed Forces since the 2014 Russian invasion were suddenly augmented by additional volunteers (Khurshudyan, 2022; Marsden, 2022). Others have put their efforts towards gathering medical supplies, body armor, helmets, and other equipment for those on the frontlines. Everyone has a job in the resistance. Against existential threat at the hands of Russia, Ukrainians appear more united than ever in their patriotism and vision of the country’s free future.

For those who study Ukraine, or who know Ukrainian history, they will know that this resistance is not a novel phenomenon. Attempts to subjugate or destroy Ukrainian national identity and detract from a progressive vision of the country's future have historically resulted in widespread citizen revolts in the past. The steadfast resistance was foundational to the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan, as well as other instances of mass mobilization before the country's independence from the Soviet Union. Currently, social media are creating historical records that can be searched and viewed instantaneously across the world.

Although Ukraine has been revered globally for its bravery and strength, the human cost of the invasion is unfathomable. The war has obliterated cities, displaced millions, and killed thousands. On a regular basis, aerial strikes are carried out by Russia against Ukrainian city centers with no military significance. Entire cities have been laid to waste and the evidence of indiscriminate killing has stretched into quiet suburban areas.

There are no indicators to determine how long the war initiated by Russia will last, and what a post-war Ukraine would look like. As the war continues, progress towards a sustainable future in Ukraine is further impeded. The devastating shrinkage that is expected of the Ukrainian economy is likely to heighten an already disastrous humanitarian situation. Until the war reaches its conclusion, one cannot reasonably speculate on whether the country will be positioned to reach its 2030 development targets, but the situation appears increasingly unlikely. Peace is fundamental to development.

Efficient governance and trust in public institutions may be the one sustainable development focus area in which progress has not been halted, and in fact may be advancing. The Russian invasion has united Ukrainians profoundly; pro-Ukrainian attitudes are stronger and more

pervasive now than they have ever been, and the de-Russification of Ukraine is occurring at a rapid pace (Walker, 2022; Mirovalev, 2022). The Russian invasion transcended politics, and Ukrainian politicians at every level of government have united with each other and with citizens to assert Ukraine's sovereignty. President Zelenskyy himself has refused to evacuate from Kyiv and has become a global symbol of resistance. This display of accountability to the people and to the nation is likely to have positive outcomes for trust of public institutions in post-war Ukrainian society.

The decentralization of government services that took place during the last eight years has contributed to the ability of Ukrainians to defend key territories and locally manage community needs (Bidenko, March 2022). Concerns about a lack of human capital and capacity have seemingly been refuted by the effective coordination of local governments for the defense of Ukraine. However, it is impossible to say whether effective execution of the duties of local governance will be sustained in the post-war period. As the regions experience unprecedented requirements for efficient management and self-reliance, resiliency is developed at the local level. Community is being forged in fire.

The context of this paper would not have been complete without acknowledging the 2022 Russian invasion, its impact on Ukrainians, and its implications for the country's development. The invasion enhanced the importance of documenting the emergence of SE in this post-Soviet country. While this paper still aims to tell the story of social entrepreneurs operating during a global pandemic, the research carried out for this project is a historical account of life in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion – life during a time already plagued by an infectious disease, as well as the Donbas war.

The existence of SE in Ukraine is proof of the social fabric that existed in the country prior to the Russian invasion. Under a lack of supportive legislation, owners of SE persisted to deliver help to those in need. Not only did Ukraine have a SSE, but that SSE contained SE that was innovative, resourceful, compassionate, and resilient. While legislation lagged behind, there was noteworthy progress towards advancement in Ukrainian civil society.

The unifying of Ukrainians in defense of their country, whether by joining territorial defense units or supplying the war effort, demonstrates the country's immense capacity for civil organization. This spirit of unity is the lifeblood of civil society. As made evident by Euromaidan and the Orange Revolution, "Ukrainian society has repeatedly demonstrated a capacity for mass mobilization and engagement in political protest" (Sakwa, 2015, pg. 81). Ukraine possesses the potential within its populace to pursue sustainable development through development of its SSE, as long as circumstances and political will abide.

8. Conclusion

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the SEs surveyed pursued innovative and industrious ideas to continue addressing the needs of those who have been made increasingly vulnerable. By doing so, these SEs have contributed to the country's pursuit of its sustainable development priorities in fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda.

Increasingly, governments view SEs as providers of essential services, particularly for vulnerable groups that are hard to reach (Cornelius & Wallace, 2013, pg. 233). In accordance with the decentralizing of government and shift of responsibilities to regional authorities, SE in Ukraine has the potential to help to build social inclusion and cohesion in the country's COVID-19 recovery. Including SE in local development plans moving forward could help to manage the needs of vulnerable persons that may otherwise be difficult to sufficiently meet. Collaboration between government and civil society, in this regard, would be advantageous towards ensuring the welfare of citizens. As found in the survey, existing Ukrainian SEs functioned to support a variety of the most vulnerable groups in Ukraine. Some did so through hiring directly from those communities, others brought affordable goods and services to those in need. Others still functioned to financially support NGOs that made an impact in these communities.

From an organizational sustainability perspective, the identification of pressure points and interventions made to alleviate them allowed the SEs surveyed to survive through the pandemic. For some of the SEs, their actions led to significant performance improvements that had the potential to be lasting. These beneficial actions were a product of innovation and creativity. Economic pressures require an SE to be agile and responsive to their environment, which is crucial in the pursuit of sustainable development.

Government support for SEs through legislation and development is weak and was reported to have been a hinderance for those enterprises. The lack of municipal and state support to SE was especially felt throughout the pandemic as these social businesses suffered financial losses. The commitments made in the 2020-2022 National Economy Stimulus Plan reiterate the importance of effective recovery of the SME sector and leaves the door open for the possibility of SE to play a significant role in the sector post-COVID. With government commitments to supporting SMEs in the post-COVID-19 period, there is an opening in the conversation as to what enterprises need to be sustainably financed and how SMEs can contribute to a strong social and economic future in a recovering Ukraine.

The large majority of this research was carried out at a very specific point in time: during the biggest health crisis that our world has seen in a century and just prior to the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. In the time that has elapsed, Ukraine has been fundamentally changed by war. This research can therefore never be duplicated in quite the same way. It is a window into the experiences of Ukrainian SEs during a slice of time marked by crisis, which has since been eclipsed by an even greater, more existential crisis at the hands of its hostile neighbor.

Putin has continued to argue that Ukraine has no stable traditions of its own statehood, yet the civil society of Ukraine tells a different story. Historically, as evidenced by the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan, as well as now with the latest Russian invasion, civil society and voluntary activism have been drivers of reform and of mobilization against external aggression (Kauffmann, 2014, pg. 219). While largely unregulated, Ukraine had the beginnings of a social entrepreneurship ecosystem that sought to promote the common good while pursuing innovative, sustainable business. The unity and solidarity that Ukrainians have shown, along with their willingness to help those in need of support, is further evidence of the foundation needed to build a thriving SSE.

Efforts to decentralize government were indicative of a striving for greater democracy. As the Ukrainian government continues to undergo reforms to increase quality of life and improve access to social goods, consideration should be made for the role of the country's SSE in these changes. The resilience of the sector and its ability to withstand significant hardship has been proven in the responses received in the survey study.

The resistance that was exemplified by Ukrainian SEs fighting to stay in business during COVID-19 was an echo of the resistance at the Maidan during the major revolutions that shaped Ukraine at the turn of the century. The resistance is visible again, with monumentally higher stakes, in the united effort to combat Russia's hostile takeover. While the circumstances differ greatly, examples of Ukrainian resilience and an unwillingness to accept defeat punctuate the history of the people. Each example, while very different, also shows how Ukrainians have worked under harrowing circumstances to provide for and protect those who are vulnerable.

While the country is likely to benefit from additional support to social business, it is necessary to note that a highly developed SSE has not been fundamental to the resilience and unity necessary to resist a full-scale invasion. An area for future research is how and to what degree the social responsibilities usually fulfilled by elements of the SSE and civil society organizations were dispersed in broader Ukrainian society when citizens were suddenly faced with war.

Given the current state of grave uncertainty in Ukraine, it is difficult to look to matters of the future and attempt to make hypotheses and recommendations surrounding development. Will Ukraine opt to invest in its SSE following the war? Restoring infrastructure and managing the extreme costs of war are likely to take precedence. However, these matters are interconnected with the nation's development initiatives. SEs can be instrumental in the literal and figurative

rebuilding of the country towards greater equity and economic prosperity. SEs support community needs, bringing those communities closer together through the resilience that they cultivate.

It is my hope that this research can contribute to future studies on Ukraine by providing a benchmark for research on Ukrainian SE prior to the invasion. This time in Ukrainian history is marked with uncertainty and the focus of the entire nation is on winning the war in order to protect the country's sovereignty. A limitation of this research was that it was performed entirely virtually. While the survey responses were fruitful, face-to-face interviews allow for the researchers to build rapport. In future research, especially where it concerns the war, researchers should seek to perform research involving Ukrainian participants in person. Another limitation worth noting is the fact that survey responses were received only from SEs that survived the pandemic; none of the respondents indicated that their SE had gone out of business as a result of COVID-19. Additionally, while the 13 responses to the survey produced valuable knowledge, this is still a rather small sample size and should be considered a limitation of the research, as findings from a larger sample size would allow for more robust analysis.

I often think about those who responded to my survey, and I hope that they are safe. I am aware, however, that even if physically safe the trauma of war is ever-present, and every Ukrainian has felt its impact. I wonder whether these SEs are operating at all or whether they have ceased to exist; whether they have been physically destroyed by Russian bombardment. Some of the participants from my survey may have taken up arms to protect Ukraine. Perhaps others have been able to maintain business operations, as they did during the pandemic, and are able to assist in the war effort through their SEs. Future research could seek to understand how the SSE in Ukraine was affected by the war, and the roles that entities within the sector played in the effort to overcome the invasion. In the years following the war, periodic

examination of the Ukrainian SSE should be carried out to understand the longitudinal impacts on the sector.

Looking forward, the rebuilding of Ukraine will take place under the vision of a common future. Informal networks promoting mutual support and solidarity have been established through efforts to mitigate effects of the war. These newly formed relationships present an opportunity for innovation and a foundation for local/regional development. United by their common strife, Ukrainians are more motivated than ever to promote the common good and support their communities most in need. In a post-war scenario, there will be an opportunity to build back stronger, more inclusive, and more resilient. The Ukrainian government has the unique opportunity to leverage international support and make the legislative reforms to support SE, as these organizations are better positioned to deliver local results where needed.

Government support to SE during the transition from war – in the form of financial support and clearer regulatory frameworks – can bear powerful results for redevelopment, and this prospect should not be overlooked. The innovation and unity needed to drive Ukraine's future has been documented in this research; the seeds of successful SE already exist, they merely require institutional support to grow.

List of Abbreviations

EU	European Union
IDP	Internally displaced persons
ILO	International Labour Organization
LLC	Limited liability company
LRD	Local and regional development
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPO	Nonprofit organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SE	Social enterprise
SME	Small and medium enterprises
SSE	Social and solidarity economy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Annex - Electronic Survey Questions

Serving Communities During a Global Pandemic: Exploring the Impact of COVID-19 on Ukrainian Social Enterprises

BASELINE INFORMATION

This section of the survey aims to establish some basic information about your enterprise/organization.

1. What type of entity is your enterprise registered as? Eg. NGO, LLC
2. Describe the goals of your enterprise/organization, in your words.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND CORRESPONDING RESTRICTIONS

This section of the survey seeks to understand how the pandemic and restrictions have affected your enterprise/organization or your ability to continue making a positive social impact (if applicable).

3. What challenges, if any, did your enterprise/organization face during the COVID-19 pandemic? What were the results of these challenges?
4. How have restrictions imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic impacted your enterprise/organization?
5. Has your capacity to make a social or environmental impact in the community that you serve been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions? [If this is not applicable to your enterprise/organization, please proceed to the next question]
6. Did your enterprise/organization adjust its operations or focus in any way to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic?
7. What type of support has your enterprise/organization received from the Ukrainian government or from other organizations to help cope with the pandemic? To what degree was this helpful?
8. If adjustments were made to your enterprise/organization's operations during the pandemic, will any of these measures or plans be maintained after herd immunity is achieved in Ukraine?

9. What are some of your lessons learned from operating within the context of a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

10. Are there any other comments or statements that you would like to make that relate to the questions asked in this survey or your experience with COVID-19?

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