The reviewed monograph is well characterised in motto placed by the author in the introduction: ‘It is impossible to define whether it will be better when it will be otherwise. But if it has to be better, it has to be changed’ (Georg Christoph Lichtenberg). Non-governmental and not profitable organisations – carriers of innovations of public services is a title of the monograph taking the current topic in Slovakia. So far lack of literature which could show in a holistic way the studied issues prompted the author to interest the topic. The task was not so difficult for her because she has a dozen items of literature with similar problems in her scientific achievements.

Totality of the non-governmental organisations is defined as the third sector. The term is derived from the theory of division of a modern state into three main sectors: state, market and non-profit organisations acting pro publico bono but at the same time not linked institutionally with the public administration. In this review there will be also used interchangeable names non-governmental unprofitable organisations, non-profit or non-governmental organisation (NGO) to determine the third sector according to the convention accepted in this thesis.

According to the author the dominant legal-organisational form of the non-governmental organisations in Slovakia are associations which are up to 90.3% of all the organisations, on the second position there are so-called unprofitable organisations which represents 7.2%, funds 1.2% and not investment funds which are 1.3%.

Economy of each country among other things influences on connection of the public sector, private and non-profit. The sectors cooperate with each other and they fulfil their functions contributing to meet the needs in terms of improvement of quality of the provided services. The monograph is focused on the non-governmental organisations as institutional entities belonging to the private non-profit sector which is crucial for its existence but also from the economic theory’s point of view of the youngest sector. The NGOs fulfil an important role in each society. They are not only providers of services which cannot be protected by the public or private sector. Finally, they are also an indicator of development of the civil society which often help and inform public opinion about initiating social and politic changes.
The non-governmental organisations are a development tool, an advocate of citizens’ interests, a guardian of democratic society promoting of active citizenship and its self-awareness. They are also carriers of innovation and implementation of new forms and methods of providing public services in different areas, for example educational, social, health and physical culture services. The present monograph is focused on innovations in the public services sector related with respect of public space and obtaining social housing by local communities. The publication presents examples of good practices in Slovakia which bring benefits consisting on the fact that the non-governmental organisations are carriers of social innovations which bring tangible benefits for the society and economy.

For aims formulated in such way there was subordinated structure of the thesis which is presented as follows.

In the first chapter which is focused on theoretical considerations there were presented issues of the private unprofitable sector as a provider of the public services. Therefore, there were described differences and existing relationships between the three sectors.

In the second chapter there were showed innovations of the public services and among them social innovations, co-creation. A significance part was also devoted to simulators and innovation barriers in the public services.

In the third chapter of the monograph there are analysed individual innovations based on specific examples in the Slovak Republic. These are services which meet needs of the groups having little purchasing power and therefore commercially unattractive and also services which providing also requires the trust. The non-governmental organisations in such actions are usually better than companies or public administration institutions. Higher quality of the offered services results from the fact that the services offered by the organisations are usually cheaper, the organisations adapt quicker to the needs of the people for who they work and they have also better understanding of the needs.

In the fourth chapter of the publication there are identified selected examples of the innovative potential of the non-governmental organisations. It includes summary of results of own pilot studies using the method of structured review and also analysis and synthesis.

Effects of the co-creation which was devoted quite a lot of the thesis can be summarised based on the research as follows:

1. The co-creation is neither a miraculous solution of the social problems nor recompense in the form of increased efficiency and effectiveness in relation to the already existing public services.
2. The effects of the initiatives’ co-creation are possible only by indicators typical for logic. It can be also claimed that the co-creation is itself a value therefore it engages the citizens to public action in the areas of the public administration.
3. The co-creation engages different groups of the citizens especially those who have: less education, are poorer or come from national minorities.

The publication is based on research purposes and methodology of interna-
tional scientific projects Learning from Innovation In Public Sector Environments (LIPSE), which is focused on development and implementation of innovative services in 12 EU countries including Slovakia. The project sensitizes on the barriers and limitations related to the specific environment of the public sector.

Moreover, the arguments included in the monograph are supported by practical experience of the author who participated respectively as a volunteer, project manager and recently as an executive director. Therefore, the theoretical findings are enriched and given in the thesis in the way which is suitable also for not academic society.

The monograph is especially dedicated for academic teachers and specialists studying issues of private unprofitable sector providing innovative public services. The publication gives valuable information and findings about innovation of the processes in providing public services which are also useful for the local governments and other organisations of the public sector as well as for the non-governmental unprofitable organisations which intention is to strengthen their innovative potential and engage citizens and other entities to development of the community they work in. Finally, the government authorities of the state can get information during introduction of the innovations in providing the public services in their own range.

After familiarisation with the monograph the following reflections appear which I would like to share with the Readers because they were not enough clearly articulated and they are as follows. Some associations and foundations often do not keep any promotional activities because simply they do not see such a need what in my opinion is a mistake. Real action is more important for them than promotion. Taking part in different kinds of actions and activities people often do not realise that for their organisation is responsible any association or foundation. The non-governmental organisation for majority of the society is an association or foundation collecting money for lofty goals and helping people in need. It can be concluded from the above mentioned considerations the better is image of the non-governmental organisations the greater is tendency of the society to involvement in philanthropy and volunteering for all kinds of associations. Therefore, significant part of the organisations publishes information about their activities on websites or keeps profiles in the social network. The vast majority of the society associates the non-governmental organisation with help for the people in need – poor, homeless, disabled, sick and with collecting money for important social goals.

The tendency of the local communities to support any non-governmental organisation evidences results of action of the association or foundation. In opinion of the respondents there is lack of mechanisms or processes allowing easy check of honesty of an organisation. High competences of employees are first of all an important factor of credibility of the non-governmental organisations. Our confidence to actions of a specific organisation (similarly like politics or product brand) often is not a result of direct contract but a result how the phenomenon is presented by the media.
At the end summarising the arguments indicated in the review it should be said that the non-governmental organisations are important element of democracy and the civil society. The roles fulfilling by them can be divided into social and economic functions.

1) The social functions are represented inter alia in:
- creation and differentiation of the public opinion,
- acting for interests of the minorities,
- care of the common good,
- social integration and initiating its change,
- completion of the state’s activities,
- education of leaders which the evidence is the author of the publication.

2) The economical functions in turn manifest inter alia in:
- education and hiring of unemployed people,
- providing services,
- proposing innovative solutions,
- reducing expenses on social benefits,
- creating of social capital,
- promoting balanced development.

The third sector by building social and economic capital influences on changes in quantitative and qualitative form in the economy and thereby indirectly supports economic development and growth

Wojciech Sońta