Social Innovation Research for Tackling Social Exclusion

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Outline

- Basic Considerations

- Theory-Practice Relationships

- Sociology of knowledge

- Post-structuralism and reflexivity

- Action research

- Transdisciplinarity

- Example: Incubadoras

Theory-Practice Relationship (1)

- Identification of the **roles of all the actors** involved

- Identify **institutional dynamics** and the **contextualised** socio-cultural and politico-economic relations that support or hamper SCS

- Social Innovation research to tackle social exclusion is about **understanding <u>and</u> changing the world! =>** Clear **agenda for change** is needed**!**

Basic Considerations on Theory-Practice Relationship (2)

- Produce **socially robust knowledge**:
  - Valuating, exchanging and integrating different forms of knowledge (scientific, systematic, evidence-based, experience-based) → **New forms of knowledge emerge**
  - Experiment with new forms of thought and action: **socially creative strategies** (cf. New forms of action research)
  - **Against fragmentation** in society and knowledge production (new concepts like bottom-linked initiatives, deviant mainstreaming, multi-scalar governance)
- **Organisation** of research as priority

Sociology of Knowledge

- **Sociology of knowledge and practice** together with **action research** in order to understand the institutional and sociocultural context and changes within which the actors operate

- Sociology of Knowledge places **theory building and scientific practice** in the context of the society and community in which they came about. Example: integrated neighbourhood development in reaction to particular conditions of urban decline, making use of theories of endogenous development and self-reliance which rose as a reaction to regional growth and property-led urban regeneration approaches in the 1980s.

Post-Structuralism and Reflexivity

- **Post-structuralist approaches** to understanding the creativity of actors in the search for social innovation within a complex socio-cultural world
- Society is more than structure, it is about **reflexive agency** – relating action-impact to own initiatives of researchers and practioners, which also includes responsibleness, accountability, interaction with other researchers and practioners
- … and **institutional change**.
- Social structure is more than (and not even in the first place about) economic relations, but also about socio-political, socio-cultural relations.
- Structural determinism (economic determinism, role of large bureaucracies, …) is challenged by bottom-up creativity and initiatives.
- Path dependency to be interpreted as path paving, path making …

Action Research

- Support **collective action and produce new knowledge** based on the co-operation between researchers and participants to overcome social exclusion

- Concrete situations as starting point for action research

- Connects **understanding and change**, theory and practice, science and experience

- Development of **strategic capacity skills and orientation**

- **Action-Reflection over time embedded in practice** (spiral-form of knowledge production)

Transdisciplinarity

⇒ Researcher and practitioner aim at **solving real world problems together** (like social exclusion)

1. Includes interdisciplinarity; but goes beyond knowledge exchange within science: Exchange between systematic and experience-based knowledge => **a twofold dialogue**

2. Stresses the **organisation** of knowledge production (clear rules for theory-practice cooperation! => Incubadoras)

Incubadoras at Brazilian Universities

- Cooperation between research, public policy making and deprived neighbourhoods
    - Incubadoras at the University
    - Grupos populares
    - PRONINC - Programa Nacional de Incubadoras de Cooperativas Populares

- Knowledge transfer and popular education as key resource

- Jointly looking for solutions for social exclusion

Incubadoras at Brazilian Universities II

- Incubadoras and grupos populares establish together **self-governing** and **solidarity-based co-operatives**

- **Creation of jobs** and income as vital element of the success of this project

- Awareness-raising in questions of **citizenship** through practices of popular education

- Process embedded in **continuous research** about the process-related topics