

...Katarsis



What is social innovation? And why is it politically relevant?

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Outline

- ▶ The rise of social innovation as a concept in science and as a reference in socio-political mobilization
- ▶ What is social innovation? Social transformation, social economy, social innovation?
- ▶ Social innovation in scientific disciplines and dimensions of analysis
- ▶ Its politico-ideological significance
- ▶ Spaces and places of social innovation
- ▶ Policy opportunities
- ▶ References

Scientific concept and socio-political reference

SCEPTICISM:

- ▶ Fashion: for the last five years the term has become ubiquitous and used in too many meanings
- ▶ Polishing the 'blazon' of the business world? CSR, Green economy, Corporate Governance, ...
- ▶ From active to cheap active welfare state? ...

RELEVANT OPTIMISM:

- ▶ Challenging technological innovation in business practice and innovation literature
- ▶ Socio-political mobilizing: 'slogan' or even 'marching order' – Opportunity to revitalize the Welfare state? To democratize it?
- ▶ Growing synergies with arts and creativity
- ▶ Scientific concept in social science
- ▶ Revival of solidarity ethics

What is social innovation?

A few definitions...

- SINGOCOM (ALMOLIN, 2005: Moulaert et al. 1990):
Social innovation is path dependent and contextual.
It refers to those changes in agendas, agency and institutions that lead to a better inclusion of excluded groups and individuals into various spheres of society at various spatial scales. Social innovation is very strongly a matter of process innovation, i.e. changes in the dynamics of social relations, including power relations.
[...] as social innovation is about social inclusion, it is also about countering or overcoming conservative forces that are eager to strengthen or preserve social exclusion situations.
[....] social innovation therefore explicitly refers to an ethical position of social justice. The latter is of course susceptible to a variety of interpretations and will in practice often be the outcome of social construction.

What is social innovation?

- **Michael Mumford:** “... the generation and implementation of new ideas about social relationships and social organization.” (2002, p. 253)
- **Chambon, David et Devevey:** “des innovations sociales” ... “des pratiques visant plus ou moins directement à permettre à un individu - ou à un groupe d’individus - de prendre en charge un besoin social - ou un ensemble de besoins - n’ayant pas trouvé de réponses satisfaisantes par ailleurs” (1982, p. 8)

Social Innovation in scientific disciplines and dimensions of analysis (examples)

Dimensions of SI	Purpose of initiatives and agencies	Organizational changes	Role of special agents, leadership	Role of path dependency	How to bridge tensions between ethical norms and 'reality'?
Science disciplines					
Business and Management science	Social coherence to boost returns	Improve social capital – Democratise decision-making systems	Innovation Agents cultured by the organization	Role of history of business admin., role of networks	Co-learning Normalise relationships between leaders and workers
Heterodox economics	Integrate social and ecological goals into business agendas	Ex: human relations on the job, creation of cooperatives	Collective multi-purpose leadership	Tensions between old economic principles and new ones	Better embedment of firm within its societal environment
Arts and creativity	Socio-cultural emancipation Shared symbols	Socio-cultural learning dynamics Community building	Role of artists and emblematic art projects	Cultural heritage Historic communities	Arts as a boundary lifting act and process

Social Innovation in scientific disciplines and dimensions of analysis (2)

Dimensions of SI	Purpose of initiatives and agencies	Organizational changes	Role of special agents, leadership	Role of path dependency	How to bridge tensions between ethical norms and 'reality'?
Science disciplines					
Integrated Area Development	Satisfaction of human needs	... in connection with innovation in social relations (esp. governance relations)	Yes but more stress on role of community and collective leadership	Socially reproduced character of social innovation	Negotiation Institutional design Joint learning Protest movements
Governance and Public Administration	Efficient, transparent, democratic governance and administration	Reduce hierarchy Network communication	Civil society social movements	Surpass bureaucratic rigidity and political 'cenaclism'	Finetuning of organizational structures with desired democracy



The politico-ideological significance of social innovation

- A clear mobilising power in reaction to economic and technologist interpretations of innovation
- ... and in reaction to privatization discourse and practice
- ... filling the gap between the farewell to public man and the rise of communitarianism?
- Reaction to alienation, exclusion, deprivation, poverty (material and ethical dimension)
- “Micro” ethics: reaction to new public management style, bureaucratic Taylorism, work organization codes and practices and how they have alienated human relations on and off the workplace.

Spaces and places of social innovation

- Quite often SI is about '(re)moving boundaries': social boundaries, political boundaries, mental boundaries: reconfiguring identities, building of community identity, re-appropriating (public) space through social mobilization and socio-political action
- The (re)moving of boundaries should also be taken literally:
 - ✓ Space (spatial forms, boundaries, reconfigurations, networks, ...) and Place (local identity rebuilding, defragmentation of urban space, ...) are outcomes of social innovation processes or strategies.
 - ✓ Very often Place and Space are at the heart of the social innovation strategies themselves: neighbourhood cooperation, neighbourhood development agencies with a spatial integration agenda (e.g. spatial connection of housing and public space functions), collective decision-making on spatiality of governance dynamics, etc.
 - ✓ Place and wider spatial relations should be considered together:
 - alternative supply chains as spaces of social innovation networking local communities taking part in social and solidary economy
 - microcredit communities work best when accompanied with social innovation in local and supra-local governance of credit institutions

Policy opportunities

- ▶ The EC holds a rich portfolio of good practice in SI ('best' practice only exists in paradise, or not even there): Urban I, LEADER, a diversity of Community Initiatives, Professional Training, Co-learning networks in various policy fields, ...
- ▶ But it increasingly goes wrong with the *institutional leverage* of SI: liberalization of markets for public services leads to loss of quality, compression of innovative opportunities and further exclusion of deprived citizens
- ▶ Learning through KATARSIS?

Policy opportunities (Examples)

Type of Social Innovation “Scale”	“Finalité”	Governance	Institutional leverage
Neighbourhood (SINGOCOM book)	Olinda: social economy, emancipation	Self-management and wider-area networking	Legal changes Support networks
City	Lawaetzstiftung: project development consultant	But also District Agency connecting to Hamburg urban policy governance	Good practice proliferator ‘Connector’ with European institutions
Region	Negotiated development agenda for Region (Social Region)	Socially Innovative Region	Network of socially innovative institutions

References



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