WP4 Integration exercise

Introductory remarks to a discourse on social innovation

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Social innovation. What are we looking at?

- responses to exclusionary dynamics of the contemporary economy and polity
- initiatives which are innovative in terms of response to otherwise unsatisfied and/or unrecognised/unrevealed needs

→at the individual and collective level

Developing a shared language

In order to develop a shared language, it is essential to …

- revisit/analyse the role of these initiatives and their statute in the economy and polity
- revisit some theoretical meta-concepts about the economy, polity and society

Economy: the rediscovery of principles of solidarity and reciprocity

- we take the market as a social construction
- we assume that redistribution and reciprocity principles have been always present
- we work with these two principles and give them explanatory power.

It is the mix, the combination of these principles in these initiatives, that constitutes the innovative feature

The neo-classical economic view

By contrast….

- Market and State constitute the normal way for the circulation of goods and services
- Third sector is called to intervene when the State fails (SCS initiatives are seen as a residual category)
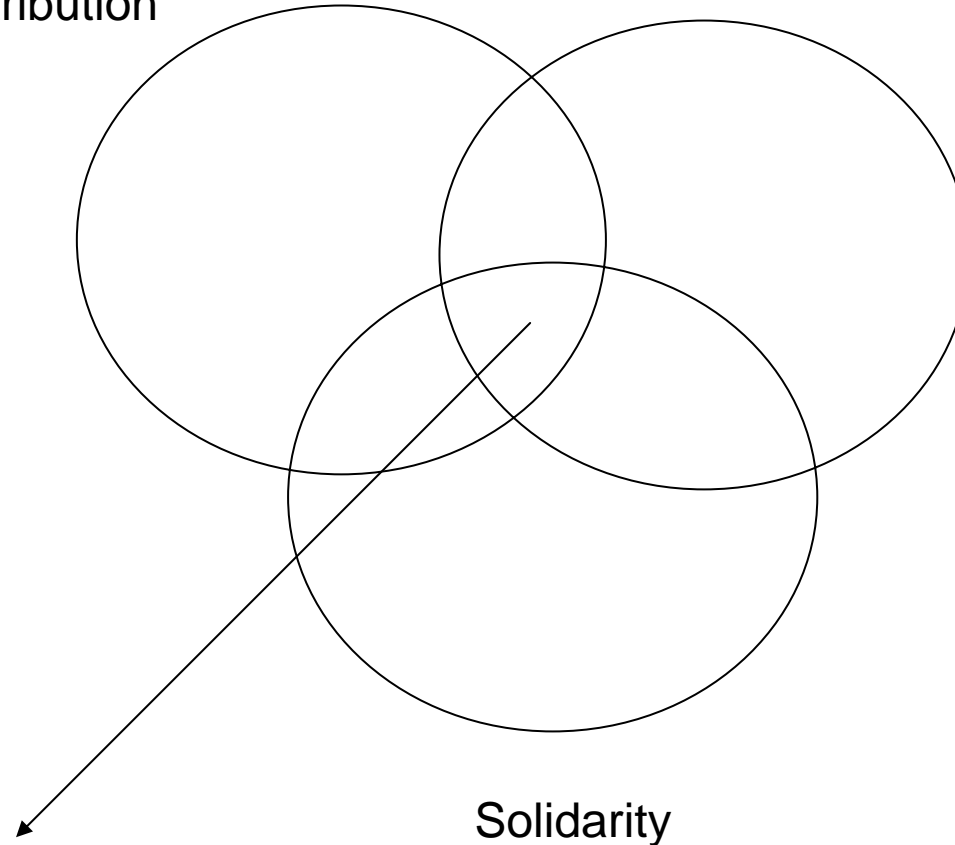
But…

this approach is first of all contradicted by history, at least in Europe, where social economy initiatives pre-existed the welfare State

Taking a pluralist view of the economy

Redistribution

Market

Solidarity

Polity

- the historical role of representative democracy in defining rules of redistribution and the progressive recognition of citizenship rights

- the political dimension, at the *individual* and *collective* levels

The individual level: citizens who are active participants

- *participation in the public sphere*: implies at the individual level issues of empowerment and recognition

- *artistic expression and culture* both as way of individual expression and empowerment and as communicative tools for collective representation and local identity

The collective level:

- citizens associate among themselves in order to mobilize resources
- to produce shared visions and make them public and visible
- When their action is recognized (legitimizing the political and administrative sphere) → we speak of *institutionalisation* of these practises or *participation* in governance structures

By contrast…

Within this discourse social innovation is essentially foreign to the practices:

- of the informal economy insofar as individual rights are not fully recognized
- in the non-profit sector insofar as it assumes asymmetric, hierarchic relationships among actors

Society

- A discourse about society and the role of social innovation in it.

- A "society of individuals"

- Two models of society

- Two new forms of reciprocity:
    - philantropic
    - democratic