

**Parallel session:
Presentation of existential field survey
WP1.4 Health and Environment
and
discussion of practices in the field**

Co-ordinators:

Richard Kimberlee (RK Chair)
Judy Orme (JO)
Derrick Purdue (DP)

Participants:

Tommaso Vitale (UNIMIB)
Isabel Lopes (Humanus CAM, Women Support Centre, Lisbon)
Juan Luis Klein and Denis Harrisson (CRISES)
Helle Storm (University College Seeland, Ankerhus)
Maria Clara Garcia (Dr Torres Vedras, Health Centre)
Eduardo Henriques (Lisbon)
Marisol Garcia (Barcelona)

Joachim Becker (Wu-Wien), Vilma Flores (School Health Program Lisbon) and Isabel Prates (Sto Condestável Health Centre, Lisbon) sent their apologies as they were unable to attend.

Welcome and introductions was followed by five Presentations of Socially Creative Strategies:

Presentation 1: Judy Orme, Derrick Purdue and Richard Kimberlee
Overview of WP1.4

The presentation introduced the Socially Creative Strategies as falling in the intersection of health and well-being, the physical and social environment. Two broad theories structure the literature: political economy – concerned with social, health and environmental injustice arising from the operation of global markets, global political structures and neo-liberalism; networks – concerned with oppositional or alternative networks through which citizens take control of these aspects of their lives and/or challenge power and policy. SCS were classified as social movements, NGOs or community based organizations, local governance institutions or socially innovative individuals. The SCS in this field have immediate aims to improve social, mental and physical well-being and long term aims to promote global and local sustainability.

Two case studies of SCSs' innovative good practice were briefly summarised. Hartcliffe Health and Environment Group (UK) is a community based organization located in a deprived neighbourhood of Bristol (UK), which has

developed a local food network engaging local people collectively in all stages of the food cycle. Their plot to plate project starts with growing locally in a community garden and allotments, then moves onto trading through a food co-op with local membership, and finally includes running training courses in cooking for healthy eating. This process involves exercise and low carbon consumption (by reducing food miles) and encourages social well-being through social interaction as well.

Critical Mass is a social movement, whose mass cycling protest events happen throughout Europe and the world. They challenge unsustainable and often dangerous pro-motor car traffic policy by blocking traffic and using the public space of the streets for art, music and creative activity. Delegates were shown a short film clip of a Critical Mass event in Budapest (Hungary). The film clip was taken from the web ([link to video](#)) and was offered here as an illustrative example of the ways in which ICT can be used to promote networks and exchange ideas beyond the nation state. Critical Mass is a global movement with a myriad of local bases that needs to be seen as an evolving and changing dynamic source of socially creative strategies. Part of the dilemma posed by critical mass is use of public space in communities and it highlights the challenges that this poses for the state that tries to keep roads free for motorised traffic. This is a protest movement and it proclaims to be traffic when confronted by police and other state agencies.

Points from the discussion

- Public spaces are disputed spaces where socially creative spaces are rapidly evolving and changing
- We need to address social, mental and physical well-being in social creative strategies to sustain a holistic approach in innovative solutions
- Critical Mass includes excluded groups not necessarily immediately seen as excluded in traditional European approaches to exclusionary dynamics e.g. pedestrians, cyclists, non-car users
- It challenges our notions of community
- Continuing source of creative invention in art and modus operandi
- Locally and globally connected through ICT. The potential dynamics of ICT are frequently underestimated.

Presentation 2: Tomasso Vitale *Social Innovation in Mental Health: Public Places as Instruments for Recognition (Italy)*

[Vitale slide](#)

In this presentation Tomasso highlighted how our understanding of well-being is challenged by exclusionary dynamics around mental health. Documenting the shift from institutional care to community based provision he discussed the challenges posed by exclusionary dynamics faced by people suffering from mental ill-health. The presentation stressed that there were frequently political reasons for the shift in policy and highlighted the innovative work of R.D.Laing and Felix Guattari in the 1960/70s to develop unique responses to mental health issues. He pointed out that it is rare that people suffering from mental ill-health experience their condition collectively; indeed he argued that there are only *moments of collective vision*. He discussed a project from Italy that had transformed the *psychiatrical space* and the importance of social entrepreneurship for sustaining this approach. Failure to transform spaces to accommodate mental ill-health means that those excluded face only pharmacological solutions, private clinics or will continue to be hidden in the family.

Fragmentation is the most important feature of what is happening in Italy. One reason for this is that there is a lot of private money to support the health sector but there is no control or coordination over who takes this money to make projects. No feedback loops are in place resulting in no institutional learning. Reflexivity is important, the exposure of weakness should be seen as a strength.

Mainstreaming is an issue for socially innovative projects in that it is important to ask if they become like the system they move into or do they change? They are often seen as examples of good practice but can argue that the essence of good practice is in the process and not necessarily something that can be copied.

Points from the discussion

- Experiences are similar in Portugal (EH)
- Having and maintaining a space is important particularly for those confronting mental health issues (TV)
- We need to ask what are their views and are they valid? (JLK)
- Need constant innovation and challenging of our own ideas about mental ill health

Presentation 3: Helle Storm *The Green House of Køge (Denmark)*

[Storm Presentation](#)

This was an extremely interesting presentation about the *Green House of Køge* which is an example of a Local Agenda 21 centre founded in 1997. It is a place that combines environment and health with cultural and social activities. The presentation had taken the themes and dilemmas posed by the WP1.4 Health and Environment presentation and validated its concern with the nexus that exists between health and environment. The Green House is working with health as an integrated part of environmental sustainability. The House is an NGO financed partly by the municipality of Køge, energy suppliers and users. The community has the philosophy that a person's everyday life is not solely focused on health, nature or transport. Instead it is a mix of everything. Working with the belief that it can foster good lives the project hosts a variety of schemes including an exchange of services club, a cow club and a car sharing scheme. Helle pointed out that:

- Every-day lives is the frame for commitment and change
- Learning in a face to-face practice community is more powerful than a focus on isolated individuals.

- There are different ways of participating from very active to legitimately remote participants
- You can construct stories and facilitate networks
- The importance of a longlasting governance network
- The importance of political endorsement of the bottom up process

She also framed some questions from the workshop to discuss:

- How to create the conditions for local participation?
- How can networks and democratic governance endorse communities of practice and learning?
- What action and learning is needed related to well-being and sustainability?

Points from the discussion

- What if members of a community do not want to participate in innovative practice?
- How can innovative practice be challenged by those who feel uncomfortable?
- Bottom up-practises need a robust top-down frame – national and local government support and a strong governance network.

- There are different ways in which people can participate in innovative practice.
- Well-being can be a concept around which people can mobilise.
- Cannot wait for legislative changes to catch up with practice.
- Representation....who has the right to do this?
- The importance of the local for developing new and good practice but also for being grounded.

Presentation 4: Maria Clara Garcia (Torres Vedras Health Centre) *Farming Practices and Chemically Safer Food /Cancer Disease Prevention* (Portugal)

[Garcia et al Presentation](#)

Maria highlighted the increasing concern she had discovered while practising as a GP. She has discovered that there are rising cancer mortality and morbidity rates in her local area in recent years which was affecting mostly hormone target organs (most likely via endocrine disruption) and intestine in young people in the area of Torres Vedras (a community of approximately 90 000 inhabitants). She believes that these are caused by environmental toxins originating from agriculture, poultry and stock-farming practices in her community, which affects food/water safety. She highlighted that thousands of new or already existing artificial chemicals are still used in Portugese farming practices and pointed out that there was insufficient scientific information available about their biochemical action on humans and local ecosystems. She pointed out that law enforcement is weak with few resources to sustain adequate inspection and control activities.

However the “Torres Vedras - Healthy City” Project is a partnership between the local municipality, veterinary services, GP services and the government’s social affairs department. Together they are promoting the need to participate in development of organic food. The project concentrates on working with farmers and schools to raise levels of awareness.

Points from the discussion

- It is important to recognise the importance of epidemiological data in highlighting areas of health and environmental concern. Standardised Mortality Ratios (SMRs) will not necessarily show any causal link between chemicals and cancer but careful analysis of epidemiological data in context should be able to do this.
- The EU is driving change on use of chemicals, but the Portuguese Government is slow / weak in implementation.
- Farmers in Portugal are predominantly an older excluded group and a difficult group to access (e.g. they mainly fall over the legal age limit for

- training in chemical use) and socially creative strategies have to be developed to influence their training and education in these areas.
- The importance of a multidisciplinary public health perspective on this area of environmental concern is essential to be able to facilitate an appropriate response to this relatively invisible problem.
 - NGOs have an important role to play in engaging victims and local communities with multi-disciplinary teams and Government.

Presentation 5: Isabel Lopes *A new life, a new project: Early pregnancy in social disadvantaged situations* (Portugal)

[Lopes Presentation](#)

Isabel reported on her work with the Humanus project in Lisbon. She explored the medical, functional limitations, educational, independent and social models available to address the needs of young pregnant teenagers. In highlighting the latter she concluded that using such models in everyday practice enabled service providers to see and understand the power dynamics that limit young women's ability to participate in society normally. Discussing transferable methodologies she highlighted the importance of empowerment and team building to raising self esteem and tackling exclusion. The project provides a basic life skills package and support to enable women to sustain their position in society.

Points from the discussion

- The importance of giving autonomy and not dictating solutions to social exclusion.
- Need to consider the problems that socially creative strategies may cause for everyone else
- How do we avoid being didactic in our explanatory approaches
- The gender dynamic needs to be included in explanatory approaches

"Vauban: a car free community", A DVD on a community experiment to develop a sustainable community (Germany) was made available during lunchtime.

Overall reflections on all presentations and the importance of the workshop.

All the contributions were examples of social innovation but they were all different in their applications and what we can learn from their examples.

It is important to have a deep conceptual definition of social innovation. The power that is shared by some people is a strong base for a definition

- Empowerment of people is central. New ideas come from people and to be able to share with others.
- Involvement in some sort of network and in some cases support partnership
- Importance of the social context. The general context of the social innovation is important.
- Lots of problems without resolution – need to have a creative solution and to share it with others.

The Welfare State is changing and dynamic and difficult to conceptualise. There are clearly very good health care systems in some countries, but the problem is that they are insufficient for many people who need them. This constant flux and change does allow us to consider innovation. By putting health and environment together it forces you to define a new empirical subject on an integrated basis. It is completely coherent to think of every social actor in the construction of solutions to new governance.

Most important point is thinking about a new kind of system – a ‘system of care’. The paper is proposing a health system for the whole of society which is organised at the local level and it is the scale that is appropriate to put actors together and consider new ways to bring new solutions and solve problems. By focusing on the local scale – the link between civil society and the local scale is emphasised but complicated because civil society is not just local but also organisational, political and social considerations.

Conflicts – what is important is the social capability to bring about regulation of conflict. This kind of action cannot be efficient if it is not brought about by partnership – otherwise it is privatisation.

It is important to connect bottom up action and top down policy frames. Empirical evidence shows that every local action is specific, but a supportive top down frame at the national level should allow specificity and flexibility to innovate.

Local initiatives and local actors have to be put together with global frames, so as to create vertical and horizontal partnerships, across different sectors.

Key lessons which can be learnt from this EF which were identified in the group discussion included:

- Innovation can be locally dependent and not necessarily transferable to other arenas
- Networks are important to sustain movements and these can be done either in real time but also remotely through ICT

- Why are we discussing now? Because we are faced with real challenges from the threats to our institutions in the welfare state, in particular with the fragmentation of services (DH)
- Will mainstreaming actually work?
- What if members of a community do not want to participate in innovative practice?