

**Social and solidarity-based economy as a  
new field of public action:  
evaluation of the social utility of SSE  
initiatives as a method for promoting social  
innovation**

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# SSE as a new field of public action

- Local public policies in favour of the Social and Solidarity-based Economy (SSE) in France
- New field of public action in municipalities, general and regional councils (ex. Nantes, Lille, Rennes, PACA, IDF, Hte Normandie...).
- Building a horizontal and cross-cutting policy (crossing sectors and statutory boundaries)

# Supporting the emergence and development of SSE initiatives

- One of the strategic line in SSE local public policies
- An answer to the inadequacy of support and funding programs dedicated to small and medium businesses for SSE organizations
- A policy of “good practices” and pedagogical examples
- Counterpart to SSE entrepreneurs' political commitment and mobilization in the co-production of this new field of public action.

# SSE initiatives: diversity and characteristics

- A sector-based diversity of local initiatives : fair trade, micro-finance, proximity and community services, housing, work integration social enterprises, new coops, etc.)
- Characteristics : co-production of goods and services, social entrepreneurship and multi-stakeholder dynamics, mixed sources of funding and volunteer commitment, mix between the economic dimension (production of goods and services) and political dimension (advocacy function)

# Social utility as an emerging and controversial concept

- Specific program dedicated to SSE initiatives (call for projects).
- Integration of SSE priorities within mainstream policies (in particular economic, employment and social policies).
- Definition of new criteria for supporting and developing innovative socio-economic activities.
- The statutes (coops, NPO) and modes of organization are less likely to guarantee public funding, tax exemptions and exemption from competition rules.

# Social Utility in the recent history

- Tax reform of economic and commercial activities of association
- Subsidized and non market jobs for « disadvantaged » people.
- Social utility limited to job creation, labour market integration of disadvantaged people and new activities meeting needs unsatisfied by the market.
- Toward a broader conception of social utility

# Social utility references

- The institutional aspect: social utility as a new administrative assessment procedure for justifying public funding to SSE initiatives
- The identity aspect: social utility as way of recognizing SSE characteristics and their contribution to the general interest
- The axiological aspect: social utility as a compromise between heterogeneous values and interests among SSE actors and other stakeholders

# Limits of social utility evaluation

- Restrictive interpretation of social utility criteria by the policy makers and the administration
- Social benefits disconnected from organizational aspects (how goods and services are produced). Highlight immediate outputs versus process
- The risk of normative framework which disqualify innovative aspects and discourage creativity



# Tensions in the methods

- Comparative, quantitative and external evaluation of social utility
  - new tools of control for local government?
- Qualitative, participative and partnership evaluation
  - limits : self-legitimization of SSE actors, absence of comparison with for profit and public organisations
- Compromise between support dedicated to participative evaluation for SSE organizations and negotiated evaluation of sector-based criteria and indicators