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## Katarsis Comments

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Serena and Chiara made an attempt to group socially creative strategies into specific forms of social innovation, i.e. the transformation of existing relationships or the forging of new relationships in order to make them more conducive to development or social economy or social work that satisfies the basic needs of deprived groups. It seems to me that their overarching criterion is the distinction between self-organising networks and established and formally institutionalised agencies as agents of creative strategies. The question then is why is this distinction deemed relevant? Do they differ in the kind of social innovation they deliver?

I agree that the form and degree of institutionalisation of the actors and strategies for social innovation are very important. As Serena and Chiara rightly point out social innovation emerges from organisations. The crucial research question then is how social relationships that are relevant or necessary for the reproduction of that agency changes over time and in various phases of the cycle of institutionalisation. Is the overarching concern of an organisation at a particular moment in time gaining legitimacy with the local population or rather entry in formal government networks? Does it need subsidies or other sources of finance to pay its employees or does it work with volunteers? Is it involved in co-production or implementation of projects? Dependent on which concerns and aims are dominant at a particular point in time, some (kind of) relations are more important than others. The social relations which are necessary to reproduce the organisation will affect its socially creative dynamics. The issue of scale is of great importance here as upscaling and downscaling organisations requires embedding them in different networks of relationships.

My methodological suggestions would be to map the institutional context and the evolution of the networks in which organisations pursuing socially creative strategies are embedded and analyse the typical agencies and their calculative rationalities.

As for the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research on social exclusion: you argue that large-scale research is superior in generalisation, but is weak in causal analysis, while quantitative research does make much of contextualisation, thick description and analysing the actual mechanisms of social exclusion but is weak in generalisation. I wonder whether the aim of our research should be generalisation. I would like to suggest that the aim should not be generalisation but abstraction. Generalisation implies making 'local contexts' comparable by standardising local specificity in a limited number of quantitative variables of local characteristics that are empirically observable. Abstraction however

focuses on identifying the causal forces and structural mechanisms at work across different local contexts (and which are not always directly empirically observable) and at how these are modified, overruled and reinforced in specific institutional contexts. Abstraction also highlights the importance of theory. E.g. Sassen's theory of the global city focuses on the dualisation of the labour market as the causal mechanism that produces social exclusion in the city. Generalisation would imply looking at correlations between different empirically observable variables, in which local context is standardised in a number of 'interaction variables'.

Deleuzian social innovation theory is an interesting extension of existing social innovation theory, because it deepens our understanding of the creative moment of social innovation (in terms of concepts as well as methods). Integrated Area Development already moved well beyond analysis of socio-economic development and into the creative moment of bringing about social change through socially creative strategies, albeit more in a planning sense (bringing about the collective capacity to enact socially creative strategies). This move beyond analysis is important, because it responds to the critique that structuralist understandings of socio-economic development are discouraging and disempowering (cf. Gibson-Graham) because they seem to foreclose the possibility for acting towards social change. Deleuzian social innovation theory stresses the fundamental openness of socio-spatial reality and socio-spatial relations and the need for creative experimentation. Methodologically, it points towards applying the creative methods of *design*: designing scenarios (potential futures), using metaphors not to analyse but to create and mobilise, etc.

However, Deleuzian social innovation theory needs to be embedded in a structural realist approach. In order to actualise socially creative strategies, we need to act on a socio-spatial field that pre-structures (rather than pre-determines) the chances for different potential futures to be realised. Structural realist social innovation theory is particularly well equipped to deal with question of mobilisation, governance, institutionalisation and path dependency/path shaping.

Given the broad scope of the concept of social innovation (take social relations in their multidimensional and historical nature serious for development questions), the sociology of knowledge approach looks like a fruitful way of specifying different understandings of social relations in different varieties of social innovation theory. Serena and Chiara suggest to situate social innovation theory in their societal context by making them responsive to the contemporary challenges addressed by the anti-globalization movement. The anti-globalisation movement indeed is an interesting exercise in transforming social relations in order to produce progressive social change. The movement makes a sustained attempt to break through the thematic or one issue focus of many civil society groups and integrate their concerns in an overall view of alternative socio-economic development. It also experiments quite consciously with new scalar articulations of social struggles and in doing so makes new social combinations possible.