THIS IS HOW

WE DO IT!

An analysis of social innovation discourses in Europe

Concepts and Strategies of Social Innovation

Elisabeta G. Ilie and Roel During

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The sequence of publications This is how we do it! aims to provide an understanding of the roles and powers of citizens' initiatives in the practice of environmental politics and policy. This is deemed important for social innovations and the related political dilemma's. The biggest dilemma is the drive of politicians to maintain the structures of the welfare state while giving way to self-organisation. By taking care of the welfare of citizens politicians constitute passive citizens, whereas promoting self-organisation constitutes a privileged upper class. How can one limit care and responsibility? We want to contribute to the renewal of democracy in which pluralism in society is considered advantageous, by researching experiments in social innovation. Research is conducted within the Transition processes, Institutions, Management and Policy Programme.

Contents

This paper is the outcome of four months of theoretical research as part of my internship with the Alterra Institute in Wageningen, the Netherlands. The study explores and brings into question the theoretical interpretations and practices of social innovation (SI) as a consequence of the personal challenge to better understand the concept of SI, a concept growing in importance and use in the areas of decision making and community empowerment alike. We had a twofold reason for doing this: the first, to broach the debatable field of social innovation and make our own sense of it and, second, to link this emerging concept and its somewhat flexible definitions to the different interests and categories of research conducted at Alterra.

As the definitions of work differ considerably from one agency working in the field of social innovation to another, we started this study by identifying and critically studying a variety of approaches to its processes at an European level. The existing working definitions adopted by SI actors, the most active on the multi-layered stage of social innovation, were consequently systematised in distinct categories based on the desired outcome of envisaged SI processes. The result of studying the scientific literature as well as the agendas of both governmental and entrepreneurial bodies which set the trend in the

on-going discussions on social innovation is an analysis of its discourses in Europe. Overall, this report sheds a critical perspective on existing SI approaches and practices, as well as on assets and loose ends in related commonly accepted discourses. This study is built on unexplored potentials of SI in order to open alternative paths of understanding and implementing them. By doing so, it adds to the further diversification of processes in the field of social innovation and to a much richer palette of SI solutions, anchored in the immediacy of their cultural contexts.

I am grateful foremost to Roel During, my internship supervisor who co-authors this report. The inspiring conversations I have had with him, his permanent intellectual engagement and invaluable feedback have helped me develop significantly within the four months of my internship and have made this study possible.

The working environment at Alterra and the stimulating discussions with researchers there such as Pat van der Jagt, Irini Salverda, Rosalie van Dam and Carmen Aalbers have often motivated me in integrating my academic pursuits with my personal concerns. Drawing upon my interactions and working experience at Alterra, this report constitutes the first step on the professional path on which I have just started.

I also thank my family and my friend who have supported and encouraged me throughout this period. Their comments and pieces of advice have played a defining role in developing this study.

Elisabeta G. Ilie

Abstract

Discussions around social innovation make the heads of the governmental and organisational agendas nowadays. The focus of these discussions is to address societal challenges through the instrumentality of policies, programmes and projects that enhance the quality of life and social cohesion through innovative social processes. The institutions and agents that theorise, stimulate and implement social innovation function according to the principles of social structures. The present paper argues that this specific operational mode limits the understanding, as well as the performance of social innovation. The existing related body of literature addresses the questions of *what*, *where* and *who* makes social innovation happen, but overlooks the issue of *how* it is initiated it and *why* it happens at all. For this reason, we propose post-structuralism as a critical perspective on social innovation which deals less with the accountability of the process and more with acknowledging the multitude of innovation sources starting from individuals and groups in the community and a broader field of practice.

Keywords: social innovation; discourse; power; structure; culture; community

The concept of social innovation, also referred to as SI in the expert body of literature, finds its roots in the long tradition of innovation as a driver of competitiveness of institutions and regions. This paper captures the on-going debate on defining the concept of innovation in the social sphere as change which is social both in its goal and means. We discuss here the existing theories on products and processes of SI (from services to systemic change) and identify flaws and loose ends which lead the way to new perspectives of scientific enquiry and empirical research in the field.

Starting with technological, economic and, later on, organisational innovation, the related scientific theory developed on the inter-dependency between market demand, governmental decision-making and scientific research. This triad is at the same time a manifestation and an expression of the power relations in today's capitalist society. This triple bidirectional relationship between the state (governance), the market (social enterprise) and science (academic enquiry) constitutes the base on which this study is founded. Processes of social innovation are highly dependent on social structures and their understanding of societal challenges and change. Later on, we will briefly outline the main features of these relations of power that shape the performance stage of social innovation. For the time being, for the purpose of this paper, we underline the fact that the theory of social innovation finds its premises and definitions in the structures of the western world (Moulaert et al., 2005, p. 4). It is within the existing economic, political and cultural contexts here that the concept of SI emerges as a new orientation and finds its sense and purpose. First, the expanding economic crisis called for immediate effective solutions that could reverberate fast in the state of the economy and that of the society so that it could be reproduced and implemented elsewhere; what this elsewhere actually refers to, it is hard to say. The discussion on social innovation is mainly contained within the boundaries of Northern America, Canada and Europe. Reclaiming their role as major economic powers worldwide, the western countries look for solutions not only to save their own economies, but also to preserve their influence at a global level. Projects on the DESIS website (the network for design schools and institutions promoting social innovation and sustainability) show that universities and research centres in Asia, for example, also take great interest in matters related to innova-

tion, but this interest rarely breaks out of the academic circles. The western culture of a democratic society, in which principles of vertical and horizontal collaboration are highly valued, provides a propitious environment for discussions of acting for and with the community towards development and a higher quality of life.

The present paper identifies existing discourses on social innovation and analyses them in the context of the structures that both define and use them. As Moulaert and Hamdouch (2006) stress, the literature on social innovation deals mainly with agents (such as policy and strategy intermediaries, business services, public research institutions, universities), their motivations and roles. Nevertheless, it offers insufficient information on their behaviour. Aiming to address this gap in knowledge, we ask a twofold question: *why* does social innovation take place and how does it happen? By relating social innovation to concepts of 'culture' and 'networks', we will look into how innovation is understood and implemented at the moment and what does this mean for the performance of the process itself. By challenging current SI discourses and definitions, we will explore a different analysis of social innovation – from a post-structuralism point of view. By advocating for such an approach, we believe that the interpretations which it involves enrich the existing perspectives on SI and encourage discussions on a diversity of process mechanisms and outputs that add greatly to the field of social innovation.

'Innovation' has become a key concept in scientific and market researches ever since it was first introduced by J. Schumpeter in his studies on capitalism and the role of enterprises. Having its roots in the economic sector, innovation as *'a process by which new products and techniques are introduced into the economic system'* (Schumpeter, 1949, cited in Z.S.I., 2003, p. 4) spread rapidly as an engine to stimulate new and improved solutions to market problems and to push forward local economies lagging behind. With the challenges that the global economy faced in the second half of the 20th century and the quest for fast and efficient solutions, the concept of 'innovation' slowly expanded to the fields of research in technology and business. Following its historical evolution and underlining the specific focus under which the concept grew, determined J. Hochgerner (2009) to call innovation *'an asset in economy'* in a *'culture under economic dominance'*. Relating the concept of 'social innovation' to that of 'culture' will become a focus point later in this paper.

"... generating ideas by understanding needs and identifying potential solutions." (The Young Foundation, 2006)

In recent years, as environmental and social problems deepened, existing models and tools could no longer provide solutions. In a process very similar to a pavlovian reaction, as the economic crisis settled in, the scientific research world focused most of its efforts towards the field of 'innovation'. Funding and policy support for innovation increased systematically as the existing economy and market processes became more and more dependent on new technologies and business models. With this strong economic foundation in mind, it is no surprise that *'the foremost international source of guidelines for the collection and use of data on innovation activities in industry'* (OECD, 2005, p. 166) at the moment is the Oslo Manual, which lists under types of innovation the following categories: product innovation, process innovation, marketing and organizational innovation. It comes through rather clearly that innovation in these spheres can be accounted for in terms of finance (how much investment goes where and what the profit is) and visible outputs (more jobs, included social groups).

As a result of the attention given to it and the boom in the market and industry research in the last decade, 'innovation' has turned nowadays in a real trend. This pampered offspring of the scientific world is looked up to as the holder of answers for the major problems that today's society faces. As it became increasingly obvious that economic and technological innovations were failing to reach significant societal issues fallen between sectors' niches, a question had to be raised: which are the real nature and purpose of innovation?

Due to increasing social challenges that were no longer successfully addressed by the State and the market, new solutions had to be found. In 2000 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) created under its LEED Programme (Local Economic and Employment Development) a Forum on Social Innovation with 11 member organisations from 6 countries and formulated a working definition that *'linked social innovation to the improvement of individual and collective well - being and quality of life'* (OECD, 2000). Dealing with exchange of best practices and policies in SI, the knowledge content of the Forum addressed almost exclusively policy and decision makers.

Outside the major power systems, one of the first to publicly pull the alarm signal was the Young Foundation in UK who in the spring of 2006 published an article entitled 'Social Silicon Valleys; a manifesto for social innovation: what it is, why it matters and how it can be accelerated'. After underlining the existence of societal demands and needs to which the existing structures and policies gave no response, the authors of the manifesto called for innovation at the social level of community life. The main ideas that they advocated for were collaboration between *'cities, governments, companies and NGOs to accelerate their capacity to innovate'* and the launching of *'new organisations and models which can better meet people's needs for care, jobs and homes'* (The Young Foundation, 2006, p. 8).

In the above mentioned paper, the authors identified gaps in the existing knowledge in the field of social research as well as a relatively small interest in carrying through these types of studies, funding, testing and ultimately implementing 'social innovations'. For this reason, before making way for new research and paths of action, the Young Foundation made a first attempt to define the concept of 'social innovation' as referring *'to new ideas that work in meeting social goals. Defined in this way the term has, potentially, very wide boundaries – from gay partnerships to new ways of using mobile phone texting, and from new lifestyles to new products and services'* (The Young Foundation, 2006, p. 9). As we can see, a clear distinction was drawn from the very start between 'innovation' and 'improvement' (the latter implying a change towards a better status-quo evolving gradually in time) on one hand and *'creativity and invention (which are vital to innovation but miss out the hard work of implementation and diffusion that makes promising ideas useful)'* (The Young Foundation, 2006, p. 9). Very simply put, in this definition social innovation was to be about *'generating ideas by understanding needs and identifying potential solutions'* (The Young Foundation, 2006, p. 21). The main difference between this and any other type of innovation lied in the fact that the final end was not to be about market profit, but about social outcomes.

Throughout the years, this definition has been rephrased and polished, taken over by (non)-governmental agencies and young entrepreneurs alike, to the point where in 2010 it was included in the agenda of the European Commission. Further on, the concept was developed under the

initiative of the Social Innovation Europe platform launched in March 2011 and has recently become part of the Innovation Union flagship in EU's 2020 strategy. The approach that the European Commission has to social innovation is synthesised in the introduction to Innovation Union: *'innovation has been placed at the heart of the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs. With over thirty action points, the Innovation Union aims to improve conditions and access to finance for research and innovation in Europe, to ensure that innovative ideas can be turned into products and services that create growth and jobs.'* (European Commission, 2011a).

In the recent past years, the need to define 'social innovation' and introduce the concept in processes of decision making, were facts noted and supported by a number of researches. The existence of social needs and demands that were not addressed by the market had become an obvious state of affairs (The Young Foundation, 2006; Tracey and Jarvis, 2007; SIX, 2008; Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010; Hochgerner, 2011). At the same time increasingly more arguments were brought to support the idea that referring back to the community, would not only lead to a better quality of solutions, but also to enhanced performance and significant capital savings in times of economic struggling such as these (The Young Foundation, 2010).

With 'social innovation' being a fairly young concept in the way in which it is defined today, its specific characteristics and general outlines are still rather diffuse. For this reason, certain flexibility in approaching it in practice still exists. As it is systematically stressed by the Young Foundation and in a document published by BEPA (Bureau of European Policy Advisers) in 2010, the models, methodologies, tools and institutions that could support social innovation are not developed enough. Present research still looks for patterns and methods to prompt ideas, nurture proposals, fund and support prototypes, manage implementation and scaling and eventually encourage systemic change (The Young Foundation, 2006, 2010). As both theory and practice allow certain variations in defining SI, we identified three dominant discourses on social innovation in the existing literature and applied field. These three discourses are: governmental, entrepreneurial and academic.

"Conceptual, process or product change, organisational change and changes in financing, and can deal with new relationships with stakeholders and territories." (OECD, 2000)

For the purpose of this study, we considered it important to include a short review of existing SI discourses. A better understanding of what social innovation assumes both in theory and in practice serves to frame the concept and constitutes a background for our analysis. We have used this understanding of existing perspectives, with their advantages and disadvantages, to propose a different approach to the study of social innovation – an approach from a poststructuralist perspective.

The three dominant discourses that we identified are specific to categories of structures that work with social innovation. This is not to say that this is the only possible classification of theoretical approaches in the field, as others are also possible and just as valid. Moulaert et al. (2005) distinguishes between the dimensions of social innovation in terms of disciplinary approaches, BEPA (2010) defines the SI approach perspectives according to the social output, while Murray et al. (2010) analyse processes in relation to the economic sector that nurtures them. The three different discourses that we use in our analysis group organisations and institutions based on the form under which they provide their output: policies, entrepreneurial work and/or scientific papers. We consider that such a form-based classification of existing discourses is the most appropriate for our study on structures that work with social innovation and the conceptual meanings of SI that they produce.

The governmental discourse

The governmental discourse is mainly adopted by the European Commission, various governmental bodies and independent agencies. The latter include think tanks, design labs, organisations and teams that act as intermediaries between governments and communities. All these institutions work with policy making as well as projects and programmes implemented at local and national levels. Their governmental agendas have their focus on making policies more efficient and more engaging for the community. From this perspective, social innovation is interpreted as an equivalent of improved implementation and outcome assessment. To explain this new approach, the institutions involved in decision making processes have adopted the concept of 'social experimentation'. What this concept specifically refers to is finding *'ways to revitalise policy by making it more efficient, more effective and better adapted to new social needs'* (Jouen, 2011). This concept is gaining importance in the European political discourse as policy makers are seeking to find better ways of dealing with poverty and social inclusion within the European context by changing their regulation and funding frameworks (Notre Europe, 2008). As social innovation in the governmental discourse appears to be centred on encouraging and supporting more integrated policy solutions, it seems that throughout the decision making process, the role of the civil society is relatively passive. Most policy related documents assign this passive role to the community through categorisations such as 'citizen', 'consumer', 'resident'. By treating community members as amorphous categories, these documents place the public peripherally to decision making processes. A good policy or a good master plan aim at a general common good and, as we will see further down, this discourse plays mostly on participatory methods and an improved dialogue between communities and local authorities through the medium of intermediaries. As a result, there is little if no differentiation amidst social groups or individuals within the community.

Participatory and collaborative methods, co-design, co-creation, are all buzz-word constructions in this SI discourse. As our analysis will exemplify, this double relation is not as equally balanced as its phrasing would suggest. Authority and liberty of action hang differently at the two poles

of these collaboration processes: the governmental structures are the ones in power and have an active role, while the community keeps a predominantly passive position being stuck into somewhat of a marginal role in decision making processes. This chapter illustrates the approach that agencies of expertise in somewhat of a power position, benefiting from networks, funding and support from governmental bodies, have to processes and products of social innovation.

The structures operating most often within the governmental discourse are rather impermeable to external influences, an idea which we will develop later on in this paper. Acting primarily on self-sufficiency, these closed structures rely predominantly on their own resources (a multi-faceted capital - human, creative, managerial, expertise, financial, material) in order to produce knowledge and know-how. From this perspective, social innovation in the governmental discourse appears to be an almost exclusive outcome of expert organisations' work. Such an understanding of SI leaves no room for discussions on the networks dynamics and processes of becoming which in fact precede that which is popularly accepted as social innovation. Social innovations falling under the governmental discourse are selected from amidst a mass of improvements and simply new ideas based on principles of innovation in economy. The two major pre-requisites are one prior to the implementation phase: *'psychologically original to the inventor or historically to the community' and the second posterior to it: 'generates financial success'* (Shane, 1992, cited by Taatila et al, 2006, p. 2). This type of approach to social innovation pin-points it as a class of economic goods, product of an Expert's conceptual and appliance work. This is very much in the old tradition of blueprint plans and fits well under the study framework for social innovation networks developed by Taatila et al. (2006). The way in which the latter treat processes of SI is highly representative for the governmental discourse where processes of innovation are looked upon as being characteristic to relatively closed structures. By analogy, the inference from here is that social innovation is a product of social structures, structures which are narrowed down to the category of organizations understood as modes and models in which people manage the creation of innovation and relate to the organization's competences in terms of resources/ individuals/ structure-based (Taatila et al., 2006).

Within the governmental discourse, the independent agencies are the most active in theorising and experimenting in practice with social innovation. Below are a few of the definitions adopted by some of these agencies in their work:

"An initiative, product or process or program that profoundly changes the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of any social system (e.g. individuals, organizations, neighbourhoods, communities, whole societies). The capacity of any society to create a steady flow of social innovations, particularly those which re-engage vulnerable populations, is an important contributor to overall social and ecological resilience." (SiG@Mars, 2010)

"Social innovations are new concepts and measures to resolve societal challenges, adopted and utilised by social groups concerned." (ZSI, 2010)

"Conceptual, process or product change, organisational change and changes in financing, and can deal with new relationships with stakeholders and territories. 'Social innovation' seeks new answers to social problems by:
• identifying and delivering new services that improve the quality of life of individuals and communities;
• identifying and implementing new labour market integration processes, new competencies, new jobs, and new forms of participation, as diverse elements that each contribute to improving the position of individuals in the workforce." (OECD, 2000)

Throughout all these attempts to capture the significance and role of social innovation, it is fairly easy to trace back these definitions to the innovations' classification in the Oslo Manual. Although putting people and their demands at their centre, the products, processes, services, policies, internal organisation models and so forth, all these outputs link social innovation in this discourse to an economic perspective and try to evaluate it in terms of finite, accountable ends.

The verbs used in the above SI definitions, such as 're-engage', 'identify', 'deliver', 'implement' all assume the active role of the governmental agency (or this structure's representatives) and the passive role of the individuals. While the first group deals with policy and decision making, the latter is reserved the position of a receiver. The community is not given a framework within which to act, but is expected to adopt and use governmental solutions. As it appears in the above statements, social innovation is about change in mind sets, resources and authority flows aimed at resolving societal challenges. The structures functioning according to the principles of the governmental discourse re-define their organisational patterns and use their own resources (material, capital, knowledge) to produce *new* methods and tools through which they can perform their activities. The systematic repetition of this feature of novelty is an expression of innovations in form and not necessarily in content. What we mean by this is that agencies working under the governmental discourse perform their traditional practices (policy development, planning, provision of services and employment) in a different format – one with a twist towards more inclusive processes (engaging vulnerable populations, improving existing participatory methods, re-shaping behavioural patterns).

The result is a class of outputs characteristic by now to authority related agencies (policies, master-plans, services, jobs) disseminated among the larger public in a different way than in the past. This change from older modes of performance and provision for the community to new modes finds its roots in the paradigm shift (Moulaert et al., 2006, p. 4; Howaldt, 2011, p.3) from government to governance, towards more collaborative methods of working with the public in decision making processes. Within this paradigm shift, the concept of social innovation is used to frame solutions to existing societal challenges, with the limited involvement of the community (more on the consulting side and very little on the active participation), but with a high level of governmental action. In this sense, the structures with political authority play on the knowledge that they produce as structures in power and act from an expert's position. The assumption here is that these structures of power (political, economic and scientific) are the main producers of knowledge in the field of social innovation and, as a result, it is (only) up to them to stimulate, propose, test, implement, diffuse and scale up innovation. Starting from the

controversy in practice around power structures as experts (Healey, 1997; Allmendinger, 2009), chapters 4 to 6 will provide an overview and analysis of existing power structures, the way in which they interact with each other in producing and exchanging knowledge and the role that the community plays in these networks.

The European Commission is a special case, as it makes the transition from the governmental discourse, to the entrepreneurial one. In the context of EU's 2020 strategy for a *'smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe'* (European Commission, 2010), the Commission adopted a plan called the Innovation Union, a flagship initiative for the future strategy, holding innovation as *'the key not only to creating more jobs, building a greener society and improving our quality of life, but also to maintaining our competitiveness on the global market'* (European Commission, 2011a). This novelty is meant to bring out the best from present potentials and conditions and, as the website states, it regards directly three groups of interest: the entrepreneur, the researcher and the European citizen.

Interesting enough, while the envisaged innovations give the first two groups higher and better chances to be active, the last group, that of everyday citizens, is reserved a passive role. The standard and quality of life are expected to improve with not much need or, for that matter, possibilities for individuals to act. While funding sources and policy support are sought for both businesses/management and the Research & Development field alike, the benefits of *'empowering citizens thanks to social innovation'* (European Commission, 2011a) remain vague. This new empowerment can range anywhere from insuring decent living conditions for those who are vulnerable, with no necessary contribution of their own, to participatory planning and, finally, to active citizenship. But where is the line of active involvement drawn?

An EU workshop in January 2009 on stimulating and monitoring the use of new social networking models in both private and public services led, among others, to the conclusion that *'Europe's financial systems are not well-suited to support social innovation'* (BEPA, 2010). The pressing demand from interested parties, such as stakeholders and think tanks, to see social innovation recognized at a high political level, resulted in BEPA (Bureau of European Policy Advisers) pub-

lishing the paper 'Empowering people, driving change: Social innovation in the European Union' in May 2010. The document brings together the considerations and conclusions reached during the workshop in January of the previous year and ends with a set of recommendations to *'better develop the social innovation dimensions in EU policies and programmes implemented at national, regional and local level'* (BEPA, 2010). Although this report is not necessarily a reflection of the European Commission's point of view in the matter of social innovation, it holds significant value as it is an expression of the joint interest that various stakeholders take in this field. Throughout the document, the reader is provided with a general image of the approach that these stakeholders have to SI.

The concept definition that the Bureau advances is that of social innovations as *'innovations that are social both in their ends and their means. Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships and collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society, but also enhance societal capacity to act'* (BEPA, 2010). The approach adopted by the Bureau and, by extrapolation, by other governmental agencies as well, is that of engaging society for better policy results, but it is nowhere clear to what point precisely is the community involved and how much freedom it has to act. This might be because of a preconceived idea among policy making stakeholders of social action itself : *'Inertia and a bias in favour of the status quo lead to any changes in behaviour being avoided at all costs (through procrastination and decisions delay), despite the obvious benefits. In public and scientific debates, SI is about developing innovative solutions and new forms of organisation and interactions to tackle social issues.'* (BEPA, 2010)

It is interesting to observe that the stakeholders whose points of view are represented by the BEPA document are themselves members of authority structures. Their interests in having social innovation supported by governmental policies relate in fact with concerns for funding and recognition of their authority position and the validity of their own actions.

The European Bureau's report is not interested in the nature of social innovation processes, nor in who can be said that innovates and what characterises this knowledge of innovating socially. The report's focus lies somewhere else: in the role that the governmental agencies can play in stimulating and supporting social innovation. This rising interest in SI has a two folded aim: one oriented inwards, towards the organisation and management of the governmental structures and the second oriented outwards, towards the policy and decision making instruments and methods. The first goal refers to reducing the level of bureaucracy and working across sectors and departmental structures, managing structural funds for co-designed services and new businesses. Meanwhile, the second goal links the theory of social innovation with the need of integrating the concept in governmental documentation and practice for increased social and, most important, economic benefits. For this reason, the discussion on SI is framed in a language specific to governmental bodies: *'dominant policy framework', 'main programmes and supporting schemes', 'initiatives and instruments', 'measurement', 'financing'* (BEPA, 2010, p. 4). This is an illustration of how the governmental discourse looks at social innovation by using its own system of referencing. In order to support this new approach to innovation, the discourse defines the concept and the processes connected to it by creating relations to its characteristic (political) tools and methods. As a result, this discourse turns the idea of accounting for SI into a requirement. For social innovation to be accepted and supported by governmental bodies, it needs to comply to principles of measurable outputs; most often this measurement is a game of numbers – financial benefits, number of jobs, a quality of life which can be accounted for by statistical data.

As a result, action is taken by those who have the will and power to act and it is ultimately up to them to provide for society's needs and demands. As we underlined previously, the position of the public remains predominantly passive throughout this type of social innovation process. Community members are consulted more on what than on how services and facilities should be distributed to them. Participatory and inclusive processes are promoted generally with the intention of developing methods and tools for stimulating, implementing and evaluating social innovations. Nevertheless, these innovations cannot always be assessed according to market principles. Rapidly developing participatory methods make use of the expanding field of social

media in order to both engage and empower communities. One such example is E-governance, a digital environment of knowledge exchange between the government and other agencies, businesses and citizens. In theory, the purpose for adopting a technological solution for collaboration processes is to provide the community with a better understanding and, to a certain degree, with a say in decision making processes. In fact, as it is designed at the moment, E-governance works as a governmental instrument for more efficient policies.

OECD's Better Life Initiative (OECD, 2011) is a second example of combined social media and new technologies, employed in the service of more inclusive forms of governance. This OECD initiative provides a digital environment where individuals can rank countries according to what they consider to be the most important indices of a good quality of life. This initiative provides, indeed, transparency of perceived life quality in different regions and how this is evaluated by groups of professionals, along with an insight into what the population values. Nevertheless, at no point is the public given the opportunity to have its own saying in these evaluations. Restricted to playing with the commands of the interactive tool, the individual can only create personal rankings. Through an exploration of the website, we learn one of the two: to appreciate personal roots or to day-dream of better-off lands; the Better Life Initiative offers limited participatory action. This virtual experience does not influence in any way the categories chosen by OECD representatives to signify a good life style, nor does it lead to new policies which may integrate the public's selections.

In its document, BEPA underlines the idea that certain social outcomes, like social cohesion and well-being, even though they do provide economic growth, are not included in the composition of the national GDP and thus cannot be accounted for in a market related reference system. In this context, the representatives of the above European Bureau refer to social innovation as *'an effective way of responding to social challenges by mobilising people's creativity'* (BEPA, 2010, p. 6). Coordinated actions at EU level are essential as social innovation has a cross-border dimension and requires multi-level governance (migration, climate change, education). For this reason, European practices are often seen as best examples to follow. In this

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Did You Know?

Population	**16.4** mil.
Visitors per year	**10.1** mil.
Renewable energy	**4.97** %

How's Life?

The Netherlands performs very well in overall well-being, as shown by the fact that it ranks among the top countries in a large number of topics in the Better Life Index.

Money, while it cannot buy happiness, is an important means to achieving higher living standards. In the Netherlands, **the average household earned 25 997 USD in 2008**, more than the OECD average .

In terms of employment, nearly **75% of people aged 15 to 64 in the Netherlands have a paid job. People in the Netherlands work 1378 hours a year**, the lowest rate in the OECD. **75% of mothers are employed after their children begin school**, suggesting that women are able to successfully balance family and career.

Having a good education is an important requisite to finding a job. In the Netherlands, **73% of adults aged 25 to 64 have earned the equivalent of a high-school diploma**, close to the OECD average. The Netherlands is a top-performing country in terms of the quality of its educational system. **The average student scored 508 out of 600 in reading ability** according to the latest PISA student-assessment programme, higher than the OECD average.

In terms of health, **life expectancy at birth in the Netherlands is 80.2 years**, one year above the OECD average. **The level of atmospheric PM10** – tiny air pollutant particles small enough to enter and cause damage to the lungs – **is 31 micrograms per cubic meter**, and is much higher than levels found in most OECD countries.
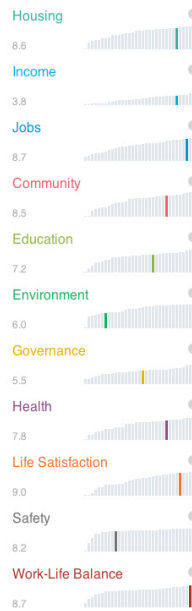
Concerning the public sphere, there is a strong sense of community and high levels of civic participation in the Netherlands. **95% of people believe that they know someone they could rely on in a time of need**, higher than the OECD average of 91%. **Voter turnout**, a measure of public trust in government and of citizens' participation in the political process, **was 80% during recent elections**; this figure is also higher than the OECD average of 72%. In regards to crime, **5% of people reported falling victim to assault over the previous 12 months**.

When asked, **91% of people in the Netherlands said they were satisfied with their life**, much higher than the OECD average of 59%.
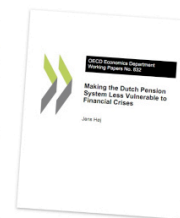
Topics

Topic	Value
Housing	ⓘ 8.6
Income	ⓘ 3.8
Jobs	ⓘ 8.7
Community	ⓘ 8.5
Education	ⓘ 7.2
Environment	ⓘ 6.0
Governance	ⓘ 5.5
Health	ⓘ 7.8
Life Satisfaction	ⓘ 9.0
Safety	ⓘ 8.2
Work-Life Balance	ⓘ 8.7

OECD in Action

OECD Economics Department
Working Papers No. 832

Making the Dutch Pension System Less Vulnerable to Financial Crises

Jens Høj

Making the Dutch Pension System Less Vulnerable to Financial Crises

The Dutch occupational pension system has been successful in securing high asset accumulation to fund generous pension promises. However, for the second time in this decade the pension system has been affected by a financial crisis.

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Figure 1: OECD Better Life Initiative: the Netherlands

context, the six major European challenges stated under the EU's Renewed Social Agenda (economic growth, unemployment, climate change, aging population, social exclusion and public sector innovations - innovative public service models) are highly relevant in their phrasings as social innovation domains that can still be evaluated in terms of primary or secondary market benefits. Social innovation outputs remain interlinked with products of economy. In other words, policies and decision making systems aim to answer social challenges through the use of market mechanisms. By looking at it in this way, social innovation becomes just another product, whose outputs and outcomes are predefined from the start. This generalisation leads to a contradiction in the argumentation and understanding of SI processes within discussions which recognize the existence of social outcomes impossible to be accounted for in terms of GDP (BEPA, 2010, p. 15). As it appears now, we can conclude that in this first SI discourse, social innovation is dependent on governmental recognition, on policies and official funding.

In outlining the social dimension of social innovation approaches, BEPA develops 3 categories of perspectives: the social demand perspective, the societal challenge perspective and the systemic changes perspective. The exemplary innovations listed under each of these categories are all initiated either by local authorities, agencies, NGOs or social entrepreneurs. The list includes: second chance schools, microfinance, the Open University, time banking, complaint choirs and participatory budgeting. Even though, most often than not, these initiatives are not financed by governmental funds, they work as smaller or larger organisations that place a precisely defined output back into society. This output takes generally the form of a social service, as this is the type of 'product' that fits best with the most commonly spread of the social innovation understandings: social both in its means and ends. From the governmental agencies' perspective, this focus on services can be explained in the larger context of the European Commission's goal for a sustainable and inclusive Europe. The ideas behind a smart Europe (European Commission, 2010) are founded on the principles of technological innovation and a market economy. Given the political structures' tools and methods, which will be discussed later on in the text, the service appears as a good form to support implemented policies and to contribute to solving societal challenges. As we were previously stating, in the governmen-

tal discourse social innovation needs to be accounted for. As existing examples in practice illustrate, most services apply to this requirement. For the purpose of funding, it can be clearly defined where the investment goes, how it is used and which are the specific economic benefits. If the service involves the public actively, to a certain degree, and adds to the solution of a social problem, than it has gained itself the chance to funding and the recognition of its status as a social innovation at the level of political authorities. In this context, public empowerment and communities' involvement act towards economic growth by saving on services capital on one hand and producing new enterprises and implicit profit gain on the other hand.

The entrepreneurial discourse

"Social innovation is the process of designing, developing and growing new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs." (SIX, 2010)

The entrepreneurial discourse is, up to a point, quite similar to the governmental one, with the one significant difference that in this case the community becomes a more active actor in the process of social innovation.

Some of the most exciting and revolutionary social innovations (Time Bank, Red Cross, Youth Net) come under the auspice of this particular discourse. With a high community involvement and strong social impact, social businesses benefit from increasing policy and financial support from governmental bodies (European Commission, 2011b). The reason for this is that social businesses are regarded by political power structures as economic boosters for society. Starting from this privileged position, the social enterprise takes on the task of answering to societal challenges where the state and the market have failed to do so.

By integrating a plurality of resources (from the government, the economic sectors and the community) in an innovative way, social entrepreneurs succeed very often to fill the existing

gap in dealing with our society's needs. The marking features of the social enterprise lie in its tools and methods used to engage the public. This leads to an entrepreneurial discourse with a considerably higher degree of involvement on the communities' part than in the case of the governmental participatory processes. The field of social entrepreneurship has two extremes, one more experimental, oriented towards society and learning from experience, the second anchored in the traditional theories of economic and technological innovations.

In the first case, the initiative often belongs to entrepreneurial spirits, individuals with vision and an appetite for change or agencies and organisations that engage people in projects and programmes in a very do-it-yourself manner. The trigger behind social entrepreneurship is seeing the opportunity within the social challenge. The community in this situation is a sine-qua-non in the process of social innovation.

The concept works at its best in this discourse in the way in which it was first defined by the Young Foundation and taken further by the global community SIX (Social Innovation Exchange): *'Social innovation is the process of designing, developing and growing new ideas that work to meet pressing unmet needs. The term is a relatively new one, but there is a long history of social innovators and examples of social innovation - from kindergartens to hospices, and from the cooperative movement to microfinance. Social innovation is happening across sectors, from the private and public sectors, to people's homes and the third sector.'* (SIX, 2010)

''Social innovation is a new idea that works in meeting social goals' (Mulgan, 2006). In other words, social innovation can be seen as a process of change emerging from the creative re-combination of existing assets (social capital, historical heritage traditional craftsmanship, accessible advanced technology) and aiming at achieving socially recognized goals in new ways. A kind of innovation driven by social demands rather than by the market and/or autonomous techno-scientific research, and generated more by the actors involved than by specialists." (DESIS Network, 2011a)

The prevalence of social value over financial benefit is much stronger here than in the governmental discourse and it leaves a strong imprint on practices where social cohesion, identity and community cooperation are key features. The entrepreneurial discourse co-relates 'social innovation' to the concepts of 'social enterprise' or 'social entrepreneurship' to the point where they overlap. The widespread belief adopted here is that communities often lack the human, creative and/ or financial resources to act on their own and this is where the innovative spirit of the entrepreneur steps in. He is attributed the role of 'creating new ventures for social purposes' while proving in practice a *willingness to take risks and find creative ways of using underused assets'* (The Young Foundation and SIX, 2010, p. 15).

In recognition of some of the most significant social innovations in Europe, SIX and Euclid Network, in partnership with the Social Innovation Park, Bilbao, published in 2010 'This is European Social Innovation – A call for inspiring stories'. The jury had to select the 10 best social innovations, considering diversity, usefulness, cost efficiency, meaning for both providers and consumers and influence on relationships in society. As in the case of BEPA's influential social innovations, this list is composed by unidirectional initiatives from local authorities, NGOs or the private sector. The difference lies in that, first, the role of the social entrepreneur is defining in promoting change and setting new trends and second, the community is far more active, individuals assume their own role and the innovations play a significant part in changing behaviours and attitudes in society.

Unlike under the governmental discourse, social innovations from an entrepreneurial perspective tackle a broader agenda of social issues that go far beyond the six major societal challenges identified in EU's Renewed Social Agenda (European Commission, 2009). From the selected projects it becomes clear that innovation in the healthcare and education sectors is regarded as being highly valuable. The projects resulting in the provision of services in the above mentioned sectors address a diversity of community needs and social groups. On the side of health and social care, the projects propose solutions for problems ranging from drug addiction to feelings of isolation among the elderly community. In its turn, education is perceived as a cornerstone

for increased chances and a better quality of life. As the saying goes, knowledge is power. For this reason, the entrepreneurial spirit is paying careful attention to equal study opportunities within more vulnerable social groups or societies. Second chance schools, schools in poor communities with extra-curricular activities meant to keep children in class, childcare systems which allow mothers to work again or pop-up shops where people are introduced to a range of subjects from first aid to conflict resolution, all these are regarded as social innovations, services in education meant to be equally easy accessible to all members of the community alike. In this way, services and social enterprises have a strong immaterial purpose.
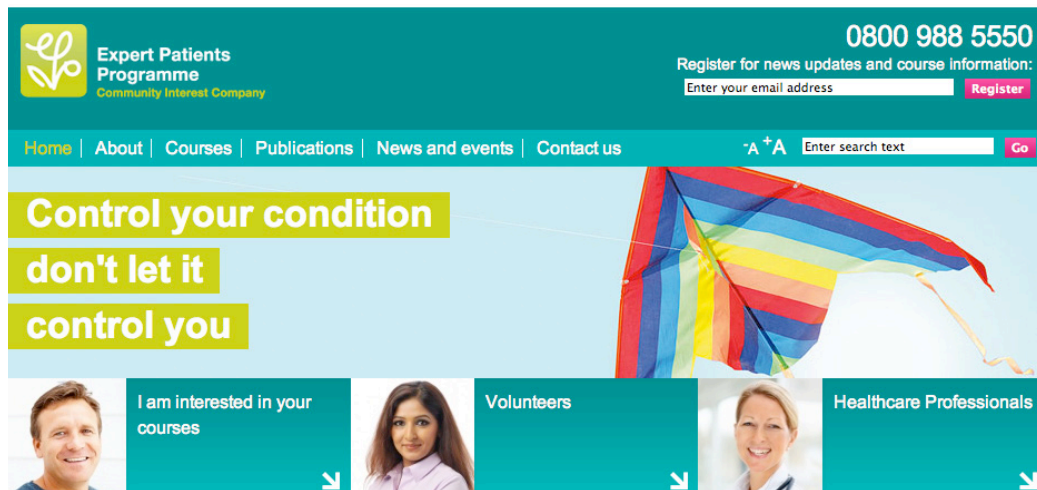

Figure 2: Expert Patients Programme

Handling social exclusion or providing the community with knowledge and skills is no longer an issue of answering social problems alone; it plays on community action and social cohesion. The household is lifted to the status of major actor of change. This is where networks and groups of mutual help come into being as part of new structures of prompting and managing action. This base of a strong civil society and community feeling is the one that nurtures also community initiatives. Nevertheless, this is the subject of another discussion, since the

entrepreneurial discourse is built all around the sagacious figure of the entrepreneur and his use of professional skills and knowledge to engage communities and make the most of their inner resources and potentials. The independent structures working under the entrepreneurial discourse have a high level of public engagement. They initiate communities into working with their instruments and methods and subsequently helping themselves.

The social innovations listed by the 'This is European Social Innovation' (SIX and Euclid Network, 2010) document are relevant for this analysis because they offers a perspective of the types of projects and processes that the entrepreneurial discourse regards as being social innovations. As the examples above illustrate, the social entrepreneur acts where he finds a niche in-between the market, the public and the private sectors. Social problems insufficiently addressed by these sectors and human needs inadequately answered, lead to increasing societal challenges. This gap is mostly felt in the level of a community's wellbeing where employment, health, education, social belonging become problematic matters. This same gap is an opportunity in the eyes of the entrepreneur who takes it upon himself to provide solutions. In the form specific to market structures, the social enterprise is shaped on the business model. As the recognised examples of social innovations show, the social enterprise works as an environment into which the community is engaged, mobilised and trained to use the tools and methods proposed by the social entrepreneur to change the status quo.

As a consequence of this operational mode of the social enterprise, the public is reserved a passive role in the phases of brainstorming and developing an entrepreneurial prototype. Although the community's creativity is insufficiently explored, the individual is given a certain freedom of action in the phase of SI implementation. We use the term is given because most often than not, individuals act within the specificities of the social enterprise. To a certain degree their actions are regulated by the enterprise's managerial frame.

It is worthwhile noting that the SI entrepreneurial discourse accounts only for a fragment of what follows to the implementation phase. This study shows an entrepreneurial concern for

evaluating (measuring), diffusing and scaling up successful social business models for an over-all increasing level of quality of life and economic growth. What the entrepreneurial discourse overlooks though is the plurality of networks created between individuals who come together and interact in the process of social innovation. From these networks, new flows of resources, knowledge and ideas follow. As the nature and dynamics of these flows remain unexplored, the field of social innovation loses in terms of a better understanding of its own processes and their outcomes. We will come back to this argument in chapters 5 and 6 where we will discuss in more detail these emerging networks and the role they (could) play in processes of social inno-vation.

As mentioned in the previous section, the most popular mechanism of public engagement at the moment is that of social media use. Ruiz de Querol et al. (2011) see it as a solution for *'diffusion, collaboration and coordination'* going all the way as to state that it has been *'empiri-cally demonstrated that the success of collaborative bottom-up organizations depends on a variety of factors on which the available communication capabilities have a decisive influence'* (Ruiz de Querol et al., 2011, p. 3). This is most likely the recipe behind the high quality of the work that NGOs, independent organisations and young entrepreneurs achieve. By making use of social media features, they promote ideas, initiatives and projects in order to attract and engage com-munities. From here to socially successful ventures is only a small step. In this way, a positive example is set by the Social Innovation Camp, a Young Foundation initiative, bringing together creative members of the community for one intensive weekend of brainstorming; the results of such events are sets of web-based technological solutions for social problems. The best ones are chosen for trial and, if successful, implemented at a community level.

Figure 3: Social Innovation Camp

As we mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the SI entrepreneurial discourse plays on two perspectives. If the previous one focused mostly on social values, this second one comes much closer to the business model. Although it refers to innovation starting from inner re-structuring, this model still draws on the entrepreneurial spirit; the idea here is to build paths, tools and methods to stimulate and trigger social innovation. As a result, existing organisations innovate the way in which they function, working on both staff-staff relations and producer-consumer. New business models such as social enterprises, co-operatives, socially driven businesses, all re-define market principles.

"The modernization of work organization and full exploitation of competencies, aimed at the improvement of the organisations performance and development of talents... It includes such things as dynamic management, flexible organisation, working smarter, development of skills and competences, networking between organisations. It is seen as complementary to technological innovation. Social Innovation is part of process innovation as well as product innovation and it includes also the modernisation of industrial relations and human resource management." (NCSI, 2011)

"Creating new business models in a multi-stakeholder community, aimed at realizing social values, by introducing high-level knowledge of humanities and social sciences. It serves the region as a <Living Lab>." (TiSIL, 2011)

It is not difficult to detect behind this business approach the four categories of the same Oslo Manual used in the governmental discourse as well. Outputs are once again more important than the outcomes and financial gain is the one which defines to a large degree the level of success or failure that a social innovation has. It must be bared in mind at all times that an SI's level of success in the sense in which we use it in this chapter is a success defined and understood within the discourses that we study, based on market and technology principles and it does not fully reflect our point of view in this study. If a social process, service or initiative is successful in itself can be evaluated to a certain degree based on outcomes in practice and experience. But for this same process, service or initiative to be accepted by political or entrepreneurial structures as a social innovation, its success must be definable and measurable by using tools and methods characteristic to these structures of power. For them to accept a social innovation as such, they need to account for it in their own terms. In this context, it is understandable then why, working under the economic innovation model, the entrepreneurial discourse uses franchises.

Similarly to the commercial franchise, its social counterpart, if successful, can extend through *'sister organizations to carry on its work in other regions'* (Collin, 2011). Paired up either with the term of 'social' or 'solidarity', franchises in the field of social innovation differ from the traditional model by always putting the social purpose of their actions above the financial one. *'This model allows social businesses to quickly expand their structure and further the development of effective activities. Solidarity franchising also enables ethical and sustainable economic sectors to develop more quickly in order to effectively meet unfulfilled social needs on a systemic scale'* (Collin, 2011). From this understanding of franchising, we can conclude that this process of enterprise expansion has a goal similar to that of the governmental discourse, to find patterns, models that can be reproduced for diffusion and up-scaling with the final aim of causing a large scale change in society on the principle of something that sounds very much like bowling: a polished stroke bound to win.

From this second social entrepreneurial perspective, the community is more passive than it was in the previous case. Focused much more on their business-like structure and their specific operational modes, this second class of social enterprises restricts the movements of the individuals they engage. Although the outputs and outcomes which result in this segment of the entrepreneurial discourse concern the larger community and address general societal challenges, the mechanisms of the social enterprises taking form here have a target social group. From within this group, only a small number of members can be involved in the social innovation process.

The social enterprise can provide for a limited number of active participants and a limited number of predefined positions. Due to its structure, the social enterprise draws patterns of work and resource flows based on its own principles, instruments and internal regulations. As a result, community creativity and initiative appear to be inhibited. Thus, it would seem that the field of social innovation is used as yet another stage for alternative market development, on which new businesses can spring up and grow, adding to the general regional and/or national economic growth.

The academic discourse

"The significance of innovation is culturally embedded. This is why it makes sense to discuss 'cultures of innovation' and 'innovation cultures'." (Z.S.I., 2009)

Governmental bodies, independent agencies or NGOs, be it with or without the engagement of the community, very often link their work in practice with the theoretical knowledge of the academic world. In fact, a significant number of the projects and programmes unfolding at the moment under the general label of social innovations are backed up by scientific research. The best example of universities trying out their subjects of research in practice are those gathered in the DESIS Network. Some of the successful project applications include CityCare – a participatory mobile application design for public service, DESIGN Harvests – an acupuncture

Figure 4: Letlhafula Cultural Food Festival, Botswana

design approach towards sustainability, NeWuxi – a food network (DESIS Network, 2011b). To a certain extent, these types of projects carried out across sectors and with a high level of public involvement are generally beneficial to the community. Nevertheless, in practice, the approach is very similar to that of the two previous discourses – solutions address a majority amidst the public and are eligible for scaling up and diffusion. And then there are those few exceptions that escape this rule.

Such an example is the Letlhafula Cultural Food Festival in Botswana. Although undertaken by local authorities and the private sector, this festival is consigned to the particular – to an element that directs to local identity and culture – Botswana's gastronomy as part of the country's cultural heritage.

This idea of a relation between (social) innovation and context is taken to a different level in certain areas of the academic world where social innovation and culture become inter-related. Thus, when Hochgerner (Z.S.I., 2009) argues that *'the significance of innovation is culturally embedded'*, he advocates for a re-evaluation of the cultural aspects of innovation in order to find the best solutions for both *'innovation in economy and innovation in society'* (Z.S.I., 2009, p. 8). The result is a changed perspective of looking at social innovation and, more important, it advances a polemic on the purpose and process of SI. This is to what we will refer as the academic discourse of social innovation in the present chapter. Coming with a somewhat smaller body of knowledge and literature than the previous two discourses and with an even smaller history of relevance for applications in practice, the main characteristic of this discourse is the link that it establishes between SI and the theories of social action and social change such as those of

M. Weber's or T. Parsons' functional systems – economy, culture, politics and law (Z.S.I., 2011, p. 10).

The definitions that the concept of SI takes under this discourse are much broader in understanding and the attention shifts from action towards context.

The academic discourse is no longer preoccupied with finding patterns, with the general which can help define methods and tools to help re-create, diffuse and finally scale up social innovations. The focus here is on the particular and on culture as an expression of context. Existing conditions and potentials are not dependent on external factors alone, but placed against their background as a determinant factor for the failure or success of socially innovative solutions. As a result, in this discourse social innovation *'refers to new concepts, strategies, initiatives, products, processes or organisations that meet pressing social needs and profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of the social system in which they arise'* (Biggs et al., 2010, p. 3).

Following up to date the short history of the concept of 'innovation', J. Hochgerner identified in an article he published in 2009 considerations related to social innovation dating from half a century before. The piece of text he refers to in his publication belongs to Kallen and it is contemporary with that of Schumpeter's now referential theory of 'creative destruction' and 'innovation' (Schumpeter, 1975, cited in Z.S.I., 2009, p. 4). In writing about innovation, Kallen brought into discussion *'changes or novelties of rites, techniques, costumes, manners and mores'* (Kallen, 1949, cited in Z.S.I., 2009, p. 8). In the context of existing social challenges and demands, J. Hochgerner advocates for a re-consideration of the relationship culture – (social) innovation. According to him, the understanding of innovation as bearing a significance deeply rooted in its cultural context, leads to a discussion about *'cultures of innovation'* and *'innovation cultures'* (Z.S.I., 2009, p. 8). These two constructions relate the idea of context with a culture's capacities to nurture innovation and the emergent moulds which shape principles and processes of social innovation. The two deficiencies that he remarks in the existing concepts of technological, and, if we may add, even business innovations, are the following:

- "Regarding pre-conditions and the variety of innovations, so far inadequate analytical competence has been applied to the socio-cultural embedding of technological innovations. The same is true regarding the fact that social innovations may occur without technology as well as by incorporation and utilisation of technological components.
- Concerning results of innovation processes, too little attention is being paid to the fact that innovations in technology – in particular when they turn out to be very successful in markets – may have underestimated or sometimes simply ignored negative effects in respect to social, cultural or environmental fields."
(Z.S.I., 2009, p. 10, original emphasis)

Flew et al. (2008) also draw a clear differentiation between social innovation and the other types of innovation by identifying the two developments that in their opinion drive SI:

- "The technological revolution of the internet, characterised by a spread of networks and communication infrastructure.
- The cultural background, which involves the emphasis on human dimensions; in this context, cultural goods are understood in a parallel way to services (for reasons of spiritual concerns, aesthetic considerations or the contribution of the goods and services to community, understanding of cultural identity)."
(Flew et al., 2008, p. 10)

It appears from the above cited authors that the discussion around context and social innovation is focused on values and systems of belief and practice that play a role in developing prototypes for SI and implementing them. While it is true that the specificities and the level of success of certain social innovations over others can be better explained and understood in this way, the academic discourse does not seem to provide any foundation for how social innovation comes to being, who shapes it in practice and by which means.

In 'The Analysis of Social Innovation as Social Practice' (Z.S.I., 2011), J. Hochgerner links the geographical, historical and political contexts of regions with specific cultural patterns in the area and processes of social change. He attributes the success and failure of innovations to the compliance or opposition between intentions to *innovate* and the *normal* course of things. Filling a gap in the existing literature on innovation, he starts from Parson's functional systems and adds four more categories to the ones in the Oslo Manual. These new categories relate directly to types of social innovation and their purpose is to make the study of SI easier, as well as to open future research perspectives in the field. In his view, these new categories: roles, relations, norms and values, allow for innovations in the State and in civil society to become *'objects of empirical research'* (Z.S.I., 2011, p. 10).

Such a classification, once defined and explored, is likely to offer a much better evaluation system for social innovations than the technologically inspired scoreboards or the economic market value. J. Hochgerner himself considers it to be relevant to *'analyse influences and interactions between new elements of social practice, the objectives of novelties, their functions and effects'* (Z.S.I., 2011, p. 11).

There appears to be a trend in a certain area of the academic research to place SI in its multilayered context. Culture is neatly outlined as having a major influence on the process of social innovation; it can be a condition, a driver or a set of elements which define the characteristics of the social innovation itself. Flew et al. (2008) take one step further and place cultural goods in balance with services and find them to be complementary for reasons of *'spiritual concerns, aesthetic considerations, or the contribution of the goods and services to community understanding of cultural identity'* (Throsby, 2008, cited in Flew et al., 2008, p. 11).

Throughout this argumentation for culturally embedded processes of social innovation, the focus remains on values. Civil initiatives and community action do not emerge as relevant features in shaping social innovation from one context to another. The public is regarded, once again, as remaining passive. But social innovations do not take place in a culture devoid of its

people. We argue that what a community makes of its values and the way in which these values are used and applied to particularities of daily life are elements that influence to a high degree the contextual nature of social innovation processes.

Hochgerner advocates for *'bridging the gaps between structures of industrial and information society'* which *'requires new ways of working, learning, re-organisation, institution building'* (Z.S.I., 2009, p. 20), but the part that culture actively plays in all of this is too little explored beyond social movements. *'The higher the total value of innovation, the less it seems recommendable to ignore the social and cultural relevance of innovation in general'* (Z.S.I., 2009, p. 9). His 'cultures of innovation' and 'innovation cultures' are constructions that explain much of social innovation in its broader context, but deal with the particular only marginally.

How much does culture's innovative potential relate to how innovation happens and which social innovations take place? Guides of emergence and innovation diffusion lead to models and processes of SI embedded in their cultural context, but how does this relate to the specificities of the developed tools and methods – does fighting poverty in the outskirts of London take on a different form than fighting poverty in third world countries? How much influence does culture then have in the process of social innovation and to what degree? Can it justify the level of success or failure that SI has in different situations and in various implementation modes and, if so, approaching it the other way around, developing social innovation from a cultural context, is there any guarantee for better success of the innovation? All these are questions aroused by the relationship culture – social innovation, questions that until this moment have remained insufficiently pursued.

The academic discourse remains strongly anchored in a theoretical perspective where SI is *'regarded as the interface point between sociological reflection and social action as it requires reflecting on social problems and intentional action'* (Kesselring and Leitner, 2008,

cited in Howaldt, 2011, p. 14). Culturally embedded SI processes as an alternative perspective to study theories of social innovations add, indeed, to the understanding of this growing field. Nevertheless, the way in which the academic discourse is constructed, deals too little with the real nature of processes of social innovation in practice. Not only that, but, although it has the right tools, this discourse does not challenge existing assumptions in the commonly spread discussions on social innovation, assumptions which seem very often to be taken for granted by structures working with both the governmental and entrepreneurial discourses.

Within this academic discourse it would appear appropriate to infer that processes of diffusion and scaling up can only be done by marginalizing cultural contexts. How else can social innovations be re-produced if not by a generalisation and standardization of the process. Overlooking the variables also means overlooking the specific characteristics of the parties involved. From here onwards, the entire interpretation of SI processes can be brought down to question.

It seems rather strange that in the study of a field which relies so much on the social aspect, rooted in processes of collaboration and co-production, as we discussed in the analysis of the governmental discourse, there is so little concern for this overwhelming majority at the other end of social innovation. Where are the members of the community placed in all this wider discussion on SI? What roles do they play in the production and development of social innovations? What processes and networks form parallel to SI processes, what is their nature and outcomes? These types of questions remain un-addressed leaving gaps and unexplored potentials in the understanding of social innovation. As a result, this study field is impoverished in practice experimentation and diversity and quality of solutions to the societal challenges that it supposedly addresses.

How can we account for those original processes that challenge established status-quos, processes resulted from introducing uncontrolled initiatives and forms of organisation in the lives of communities?

Scanning through the three social innovation discourses discussed above, it can be concluded that SI has a multitude of definitions and a diversity of approaches and applications, working mainly with elements of social change and market devices. If it is relatively difficult to capture the meaning of social innovation in one universally accepted definition, it may turn out to be easier to capture what social innovation is not in relation to other types of innovation: SI is not purely policy and service innovation, although under the governmental discourse they do frequently overlap. SI is not purely business/enterprise innovation, as the entrepreneurial discourse is trying to put social values both in the means and the ends of the innovative process. SI is not an imported, over-imposed solution to existing problems, since cultural context matters in terms of potentials, resources and social needs that need tackling. Another thing that SI is not, is a genuine bottom-up expression. In its current promoted form, social innovation is done on behalf of and for the community. Participatory methods are always in use, through either the passive or more active engagement of the public, but rarely is social innovation understood as initiated by the community.

Applying the principles of working *for* and *with* communities (in this particular order), the first two major discourses, governmental and entrepreneurial, practice oriented as they are in their current form, appear to result in service innovation more than anything else. This perspective on social innovation processes is somewhat understandable given the context of the still young field of SI in need of expanding much of its conceptual grounds. Fighting to take distance from other types of innovation, social innovation needs to find a more suitable form of expression for its characteristics. As a consequence, services are constructed as the most widespread embodiment of SI – social in means and ends, as they should be. Their visible outcomes allow for evaluation and can be accounted for through the use of instruments available to socially innovative established structures (political or entrepreneurial in their form).

Emerging bodies of literature, predominantly in the academic sphere, attempt to bring forward alternative principles of SI in order to differentiate it from business and technological innovations. Nevertheless, this trial for differentiation comes with the risk of yet another containment of the concept of social innovation. By promoting the idea of a service – social innovation interlinkage, there is a danger that due to an insufficient understanding of SI processes, existing practices will overlap service innovation and social innovation to the point where they identify with each other. As case studies on successful social innovations and examples set by decision makers show, there is already a strong focus in practice in working on service innovation as a mean to answer societal needs and challenges.

By assuming that *'transition from an industrial to a knowledge and services-based society corresponds to a paradigm shift of the innovation system'* (Howaldt, 2011, p. 3), there is today an increasing body of literature on service innovation. In a presentation given for a conference in Vienna, in September 2011, F. Djellal and F. Gallouj Clersé from the Lille University made a clear distinction between *social* and *service* innovation. Not only this, but they take their understanding of the two concepts even further and find them to be ignoring each other mutually due to:

- "Initial focus of the service literature on technology, while social innovation refers to non-technological dimensions.
- Initial focus of the service literature on KIBS (consulting, banking, insuring..) rather than personal and public services.
- Disciplinary division of labour." (Djellal and Gallouj Clersé, 2011, p. 2, original emphasis)

The authors propose a dialogue between the two. In their paper, the they argue for a more integrated approach to the study of SI, which would allow for less formal social innovations. Instead of a dominant focus on the development of the economic sectors, where social innovation comes from the service provider, F. Djellal and F. Gallouj Clersé propose a broader understanding of SI processes which would provide an *'informal satisfaction, a combination of a purchased good and household work'* (Djellal and Gallouj Clersé, 2011, p. 10). This more informal approach does not associate the success of social innovation with its capacity to be re-produced. What becomes a characteristic of SI in this interpretation is the original links and networks that form between producers and consumers. Innovation lies in the novelty of flows and outcomes which result from here. The authors identify different categories of gaps in the existing understanding of social innovation: *'non-technological product and process innovations, ad hoc and custom-made innovations, innovation in public services, innovation in complex packages'* (Djellal and Gallouj Clersé, 2011, p. 7). By addressing these gaps, new perspectives of looking at social innovation open up. The major novelty here, by comparison to the current dominant SI discourses, is that the customer, in other words, the community, is no longer regarded prevailing as a consumer. An informal approach to processes of SI recognises and allows for the active participation of the public in the production of social innovation.

J. Hochgerner (2011) links social innovation to M. Weber's *social action* where the individual refers him/herself to the others; the reflection on behaviours and needs of these other people in the immediate surrounding influence the course of his/her actions. If this is the case, then one might wonder: what does the *social* in social innovation really stand for?

The different definitions that the concept of SI takes do coincide on three points: that it springs from decision makers or inspirational figures from across the three sectors, that it happens through joined effort from different sectors with the explicit involvement of the public and that it is oriented towards social outputs or outcomes, where the focus is on major social challenges. In short, the recipe for a social innovation recognised and promoted in the field would cumulate something specific – that you can identify on site, have a never been done before touch to it and a pinch of the wow effect. If there is anything else, we are no longer talking about social innovation, but something different. This alternative something has a long list of names attached to it: an initiative, a system of organisation, a design, an action, a movement, a protest, a project, an event, a network, a platform and the list can go on, but it can not bare the name of a (social) innovation.

Figure 5: Urban EcoMap

Naming a *social innovation* as such, is debatable in itself. Those who take this name wear it as a distinction mark in the manner of an honorary badge. The examples presented as successful social innovations by BEPA (2010) or 'This is European Social Innovation' (2010) documents, do not present themselves as such to the world. Turning Point, UK are *'a social care organisation'* (Turning Point, 2009), Vitaever in Italy is *'an innovative cloud-computing'* (Vitaever, 2011) and Urban EcoMap in the Netherlands and USA is *'an interactive decision space'* (Urban EcoMap, 2009).

The social innovators themselves do not stand on their own and their names disappear behind the identity of their innovation. It would seem then, that social innovation is classified and referred to as being indeed *social innovation* only when politically or financially powerful decision making agents recognise it as such. In order to apply for funds and obtain support towards development, the characteristics of an idea need to be neatly placed in boxes of social innovation requirements and only once these requirements have been satisfied and the idea successfully implemented, can we talk about a case of social innovation.

In this context, it is no surprise that only socially innovative ideas flowing towards communities from the direction of trend-setters are being promoted. Understanding the basic assumptions of the current dominant perspective on social innovation, makes it easier to grasp the reasoning behind the fact that communities themselves are perceived as having such a poor contribution to the knowledge and case studies data bases of SI. It is not because communities as groups lack initiative, creativity or a history of social actions that are socially innovative; the reason is that these types of actions or processes are not innovative enough, or maybe simply not innovative in the *right* (accepted) way. But is it efficient from both a material and immaterial point of view to disregard learning from simple, small scale solutions? In their present acknowledged form, social innovations are controlled processes – managed, subsidised, governed. But how can we account for those original processes that challenge established status-quos, processes resulted from introducing uncontrolled initiatives and forms of organisation in the lives of communities?

In the following chapters we will question a number of premises and basic assumptions on which existing discourses on social innovation are founded and we will propose a poststructuralist analysis of SI processes in the attempt to explore a different perspective of looking into the *how* and *why* of social innovation.

Who decides which are the best practices in processes of social innovation)? And they are best for whom?

As we noted previously, the governmental and entrepreneurial organisations that deal with social innovation operate as social structures that build their tools and methods based on the Oslo Manual's guidelines and the four categories of innovation this document stipulates - products, processes, marketing and organisation. As structures, these organisations are characterised by the internal rules and the functioning mechanisms that bind together the groups of people that form them (Moulaert et al., 2006, p. 3).

In the ways specific to each of their niche of specialisation, these organisations and institutions stimulate, define and account for social innovation within their internal networks, by making use of their own understanding of the concept and their particular tools. The way in which they do this is by assigning meaning to things outside their organisations in order to validate and legitimise their own actions. We can understand better this dynamics of assigned signification if we consider the specialisations of these social structures as cultures in the way that S. Fuchs (2001) defines culture: *'A culture produces its own history, self-observations, and modes of causation. Then it can no longer be understood as reflecting, say, economics, class, or politics. Rather, a self-organizing culture decides what mat-*

ters to it, how it measures and distributes reputation, and how it explains its internal workings. Such cultures become observers, and self-observers, in their own right, and any <explanation> of culture should acknowledge this operational independence.' (Fuchs, 2001, p. 59) In other words, social structures are self-referential and their functioning rules, their interests, standing points and tools which are to be used are subjects to internal decision. This does not mean that individuals within the same institutional structure do not have differences in opinion, but when they act, they act as representatives of the structure that they belong to. They advocate and promote one and the same discourse in a unified manner and very often, when individuals act, it is their structures who act through them (Fuchs, 2011, p. 20-24).

In a similar way, social innovators, once their idea becomes reality, no longer stand as independent individuals in the field of social innovation; their identity blends in with the network, organisation, platform and so on which was in the beginning their invention, as we saw in the cases of some of the social innovation examples acknowledged by BEPA and The Young Foundation documents (egg. The Dreams Academy in Turkey, Siel Bleu in France or Eltern-AG in Germany). Social innovations such as Time Banking, Freecycle or free trade have been internalised to such a degree that almost everyone is familiar with what they are about, but only a few know, or were ever interested in who the initiator of the idea was in the first place. Thus we can say that innovation is at the base of every structure, with its members, internal rules, methods and organisational patterns; being a structure, in return, it makes use of its knowledge as a niche to validate or not other innovations. As a result, socially innovative structures, like any other type of structures, have the potential of being re-produced, as shown by processes of diffusion and scaling up.

The examples of social and solidarity franchising are the best illustrators of the desire that socially innovative structures have to replicate successful social enterprises in other parts of the world. The approach is not yet so popular among the young entrepreneurs who aim for the originality of their project (here the innovative spirit of the entrepreneur plays an important part); examples of such franchises are Altermundi, a group of fair trade boutiques in France

Figure 6: Le Mat Hotel, Italy)

Figure 7: La Suite dans les Idees, France

and Le Mat Europe, a social hotel chain in Italy. Nevertheless, there are strong incubators in the field whose main purpose is to cultivate, promote and spread these two concepts of social/ solidarity franchising in the practice of social innovation. European Social Franchising Network, a resources website and La Suite dans les Idees, an association promoting the idea at a French national level, are two such incubators.

The main thing that needs to be understood in discussions about these structures, also in the case of social franchises, is that because of their nature, they can be transformed either from within (organisational innovation) or due to external influences. Independently of the source of the cause, these structures can only be transformed by those individuals who form them. This means that the changes can be made only by the head franchise and the sub-structures need to comply. There is, of course, some liberty to adapt the changes to their own context, but these also are decisions that need to be taken in collaboration with the mother structure, if we can call it in this way.

The reason why certain structures overrule others is determined by power relations in a society. In the case of the western world, where our study on social innovation is rooted, democratic capitalism and rational thought are determinant for the existing political system and economic regulation. As a result, the state and the market are the two main pillars of power (van Assche, 2008; Madanipour, 2006; Moulaert et al., 2005). Due to their configuration and status they have the power to legitimise and validated their own actions. We use the concept of *power* in the sense in which it was used by M. Foucault, as an alternating *regime of truth*, constantly shifting, constituted by the commonly accepted forms of reality, knowledge and scientific un-derstanding in a society. It is based on these appropriated *truths* that a society builds its values and norms and regulates its behaviour. And it is these same truths that lie at the foundation of social constructs. What we make of our world, the way in which we understand it and perceive it is anchored in this regime of truth, product of the power relations in our society. When we use the construction 'power structures' we refer to those structures that are the major generators of discourses standing at the base of our society.

The economy and the state are dominant elements in exerting power in the western society. As a result we call those structures founded on democratic capitalist principles, *power structures*. This comprises of governmental agencies, organisations and institutes involved in policy and decision making, companies and organisations which are actors in the market dynamics. The latter group counts in businesses of all sorts, including social enterprises. Scientific research represents the rational component and its role is often to legitimise the action of power structures. This is not to say that all scientific thought is subject to power relations, but it is not always entirely independent from it. After all, that is where funding, project opportunities and sometimes even prestige come from. In consequence, scientific enquiry is to a high degree liable to the knowledge paradigm under which it develops and the cultural context that shapes it.

Problems and challenges in economy are the main triggers in processes of innovation, as we could already note. To put it in simple words, this makes the market one of the major drivers of social innovation, alongside societal challenges. On the other side of the power balance stands the government which re-asserts its status of authority by arguing for processes of social innovation that it can warrant through an evaluation of the final product. But this product can only be accounted for in terms of market processes as these are the guiding principles of the western states' economy. This is because, on one hand, it is in the nature of the way in which governmental tools are built and, on the other hand, because of a long tradition of decision making processes (Allmendinger, 2009).

As a consequence of the governance-market power relation, until recently decision making was predominantly a top-down process. It is specific for top-down solutions to favour development (Madanipour, 2006, p. 186) and, as a result, planning systems and policy making often look towards economic growth first of all. This growth is interlinked with a better quality of life and very frequently it comes with an increased quality of the living environment, jobs, good services, security and so on. This leads often to cohesive communities that perform well and become competitive, adding to the economic value of different neighbourhoods and/or regions. This way of looking at innovation renders a rather limited understanding of its process and it

makes it all the more difficult for these structures to see social innovation outside their already acknowledged sources. As this study has already shown, social innovation is something that (needs) to be stimulated by the state through competitions, funding and projects in order to ensure a positive outcome for areas of interest and is very often implemented by other structures in power (local councils, development organisations). When this is not the case, it is the role of the social enterprise, through exploration of market niches, to answer societal needs. Most often, the enterprises provide innovative services, again products that can be accounted for in terms of final outputs (employment, education for the underprivileged, wellbeing).

G. Welz notes that, in the larger context of economic theory on which our society is based, theories of innovation are linked to *'the ability to produce new knowledge and know-how and to set off learning processes in organizations'* (Welz, 2003, p. 256). As the existing literature on social innovation shows, this concept is used as an operational instrument for institutions that innovate at a social level to define their means and goals and to describe their processes. In this way, they legitimise their actions. As their structures dictate, governmental bodies and independent agencies work with policies and development strategies while social enterprises manage market regulators.

The socially innovative structures which get to be acknowledged are those which develop the most suitable tools and methods to stimulate, implement and diffuse social innovation and have a positive final output which can be evaluated according to market principles. All the developments, incubators and management mechanisms that are used to foster social innovation by bringing new services, products and knowledge to deal with social challenges are evidence of a *'culture of innovation'* which is transforming today's society (Welz, 2003, p. 256). It is interesting how, once again, we run into the concept of 'culture'.

The way in which we saw culture being used up until now is from the perspective of structuralism; as a system. This is the way in which C. Levi-Strauss defines culture, as a confined set of patterns, which, once a basic configuration is identified, it can consequently be generalised

from one structure to others. It is based on this assumption that institutions promoting social innovation develop a strong bias towards tangible outcomes. Outcomes need to be obvious, palpable, so that they can be measured and evaluated. The aim of this assessment is to identify a typology of patterns like the one that C. Levi-Strauss refers to. This is meant as a theoretical base for the construction of methods and tools for stimulating, developing and implementing SI, and, in a later stage, diffusing and scaling up the processes. Moreover, we can see that a large part of these structures' discourses are focused around these two latter processes (of diffusion and scaling), with the final stated goal of developing best practices. But who decides which are the *best* practices? And they are best for *whom*? The first question finds its answer in the previous chapters of this paper. The decision of which processes and products are to be assigned the title of social innovation and which not is taken by the structures in power – governmental agencies and the market intermediaries. Through funding and development opportunities, some initiatives are supported and preferred over others. As the existing examples show, more often than not, those who are privileged are enterprises with a social goal, successful in engaging communities.

The second question, that of the value of these practices for those who should benefit, does not find its answer in the existing literature so easily.

Those who benefit from the services and the processes of social innovation belong, as the name itself indicates, to the social realm – society itself, understood as a whole or fragmented into communities or social groups. We could see previously that society is included in the processes of social innovation. The degree of this involvement depends very much on how closed the structure that proposes the innovation is. For ossified networks, with long lasting traditions of using their own resources and working only in areas where their institutional regulations can be applied, public involvement is limited. This is the case of governmental agencies and some independent bodies (SIG@Mars, NESTA, 27e Region, SITRA) that act as intermediaries between government and the community. These types of structures operate with strategies, policy-making and programmes which imply an expert's approach in the way in which they are

formulated and implemented. But an expert's approach is very often exclusive of less powerful stakeholders, such as the community. Experience has shown that by using decision making discourses analogous with the Argument for Design, many of the planning and policy making processes have proven to be faulty in the past (Allmendinger, 2009). For this reason, although oriented outwards, social innovations proposed and implemented by governmental power structures are often desk decisions. Participatory methods allow for public consultation and knowledge exchange, but in a controlled and limited manner that has more to do with content than with the form in which the product (service, neighbourhood development) is delivered. When the content is indeed altered to accommodate community desires this is done only within the limits in which it fits under the interests of the more powerful stakeholders and it can be fitted in the accepted formats of governmental documents.

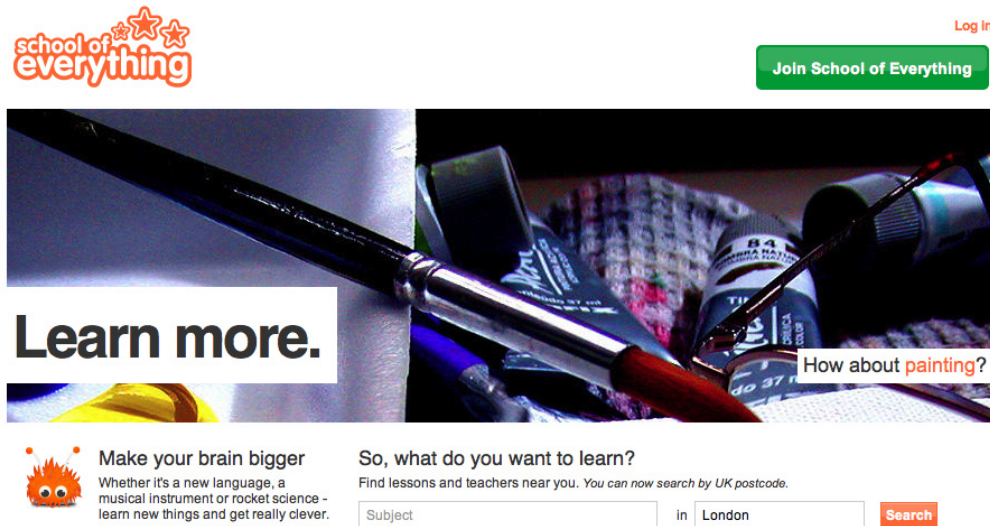Figure 8: Copenhagen City Honey Cooperative, Denmark

There are a number of social enterprises that operate as closed structures as well. Take for example Vitaever in Italy (a software for management of homecare) or the Copenhagen City Honey Cooperative in Denmark (a cooperative for preserving traditional beekeeping and developing a local honey industry), two acknowledged social innovations.

Figure 9: Dreams Academy, Turkey

Although they work with members of the community and provide positive social outcomes (good quality services, jobs, wellbeing or preservation of local traditions in the case of Copenhagen) they remain closed to transformation from outside. Those who are involved with these innovations work by the rules set by their initiators. There is very little that they can add to it or mould according to their own views. Although very young, the structure is already enclosing on a specialised service which is developed and delivered according to internally set principles.

The situation is different with more fluid networks which are more project-oriented. The Dreams Academy in Turkey (a project for the active involvement of people with disabilities in society), the Aconchego Program in Portugal (a programme in which senior provide accommodation for young students who, in return, become company and help for their hosts), or Eltern-AG in Germany (a group helping underprivileged children by supporting their parents) provide the central concept and the service apparatus, but the exact outcome cannot be determined. As individuals come together, they share knowledge, interrelate in unpredictable ways and create new networks with the potential of transforming into something else. We can find relevant examples of open structures also among the innovations developed by The Young Foundation. The School of Everything, Social Innovation eXchange, Action for Happiness, NeuroResponse are just a few examples from a long list of innovations which bring people together in order to stimulate interaction and action.

Figure 10: The School of Everything, UK

And so, change slowly happens; but not through ready-made service packages and closed institutions which deliver final outputs. Change happens as a result of human interaction and the dynamics created by the exchange of knowledge and ideas and the creation of new networks. In this case, what we mean by *networks* is no longer in the structuralism acceptation of a structure, but in the post-structuralism one of mechanisms. The networks that form the base of systemic change are the relations established between individuals and/or existing structures. They are flows of resources (material, capital, human, expertise, knowledge) and know-how that metamorphose society continuously.

And so we ask again: for whom are social innovation practices the best? Moulaert et al. question such an absolute value and point out to the normative nature of the concept (Moulaert et al., 2005, p. 1978). But if there can be no discussion of *best* practices outside social innovation power structures, and *good* is all there is, than what is good for one person is not necessarily just as good for another one. Moreover, what can be a good solution in a certain context at a given place and moment in time, may not have the same value in a different context, in another place and/or in another moment. Based on these premises, social innovation can be considered contingent – given other circumstances, today's social innovation may be obsolete and replaced by another. Thus social innovation loses its universal and necessary value and finds its meaning only in context.

Starting from this, we argue for a study of social innovation praxis from a poststructuralist perspective. By using the concepts of 'culture' and 'networks' specific to this approach, our aim is to explore the nature of SI processes and to add to the understanding and knowledge of social innovation.

The plurality of discourses found within a culture may very well come together in the form of structures and generate a larger, governing discourse.

Culture does matter if social innovations are to be successful.

In one of the previous chapters, we discussed the state-market power relation and the role that science plays in legitimising power structures' action. In that same discussion we referred to science as working in a context based paradigm. BEPA (2010) and Moualert et al. (2005) point out to the emergence of a paradigm shift, a concept introduced in the social sciences by T. Khun in 1962 and defined as *'a change in basic assumptions'* (Wikipedia, 2011). This shift refers to the increasing current attention that decision making agents give to participatory methods and to public involvement. Since it is a consequence of an alteration of existing power relations, this shift affects all power structures alike. It encompasses change in thought patterns that define the way in which knowledge is produced and the way in which the individual perceives reality, in ways similar to M. L. Handa's social paradigm (Wikipedia, 2011). We could observe how older structures such as governmental agencies, with a long tradition of working with top-down approaches, show predominant features of enclosure and limited willingness to integrate change. Contrary to them, the rather new structures show more flexibility and are built so as to allow transformation. Independent organisations such as The Young Foundation promote social innovations that mobilize society to help itself.

Nevertheless, the way in which even open structures operate indicates a paralysis of the present bottom-up paradigm; by paradigm paralysis we understand *'the inability or refusal to see beyond the current models of thinking'* (Wikipedia, 2011). This assumption is supported by the way in which even the most flexible structures follow entrepreneurial models as a result of the influence that market principles exert over processes of social innovation. In consequence, we argue that there might be much more to social innovation than existing structures see to it. A reason for alternative SI processes not being acknowledged as such is precisely the fact that they cannot be classified under accepted categories of innovation in the social sphere – services, developments, processes of inclusion and community binding.

All the existing discourses on social innovation revolve around social change and diffusion of innovation. But neither of these two processes is possible outside the concept of 'culture'. What we choose to work with here is not the structuralist definition of *culture* that we used earlier in this paper when we were discussing social innovation discourses. We opt for a poststructuralist perspective like that of K. van Assche who defines 'culture' as the way in which a group sees itself and the world (van Assche, 2008, p. 20) - the domain of social innovation defines its own boundaries and its driving principles. Treated in this way, culture is no longer patterned and generally valid like in C. Levy-Strauss' theory.

The main characteristics that the concept takes on are those of permeability and metamorphoses. Thus, culture is about the particular and a multiplicity of individual discourses, but at the same time, it is open to the outside world and in a continuous process of knowledge exchange and transformation. The plurality of discourses found within a culture may very well come together in the form of structures and generate a larger, governing discourse. For the purpose of this paper it is important to note this diversity of perspectives.

Recalling the way in which young structures start from dynamic networks which interact and create nodes that foster innovation, it becomes clear that a plurality of discourses would imply an infinite number of combinations between individuals and/or structures. This diversity of

combinations, given different circumstances, can result in various forms of social innovation. The cumulated body of literature on the importance that culture plays in social processes (Swidler, 1986; van Assche, 2008; Hochgerner, 2009 2011) brings a silent critique to processes of social innovation that argue for re-production and scaling up.

Culture fosters certain social innovations over others. One which may be an efficient solution somewhere is likely to fail given another context. Cultural contexts themselves, even local ones, are complex and dynamic. Let us take the example of the care for those of old age. In parts of Asia, the elderly are highly esteemed and the younger generation and the older coexist throughout their lives under the same roof. In Europe, most often than not, the young and the elderly live separately. If in western Europe there is an increasing habit of placing old people in nursing homes, in eastern Europe it often happens that they are deserted by their living family and/or acquaintances and spend their last years in isolation. Clearly, social innovations such as Participle's 'Get Together' project in the UK, whose purpose is tackling loneliness among older people, cannot and will not develop in similar ways and have similar outcomes if it were to be implemented in all of the three contexts discussed above. From this we can infer that culture does matter if social innovations are to be successful. This makes context a problem of utmost importance in discussions of diffusion and scaling up social innovations.

We saw in the existing processes of SI that community members remain anonymous. Innovation takes place in the established power structures and the public is often the receiver. The position that the community is assigned is active to a certain degree (depending on the type of operating structure) in the processes of idea development and implementation.

While public engagement in decision-making is aimed at satisfying the larger part of the community by achieving some sort of general public good, social enterprises share responsibilities among members of the community and social action becomes everybody's concern. Individuals are brought together by shared values (like care for the elderly, inclusion of minorities or the right to education) and join in the process of change by following the lead of the trend-setter: the social entrepreneur.

There is one particular segment of the social innovation process throughout which the public remains constantly passive. This is because this section of the process takes part within the walls of the power structure. The segment that we are referring to is that of *creating* social innovation. It is beyond the community's reach which social innovations are to be funded or not, what form they will take and which will be their guiding principles. By the time the public gets involved, the prototype is already constructed. In the best scenario, people like it and it turns out to be beneficial in terms of social and market principles. As a result, it is considered to be successful and it takes on the status of social innovation. The fact remains that community initiatives are not granted this same status. This may well be because they do not fall under accepted forms of social innovation which can be accounted for and explained according to principles that we have discussed previously. The existing body of literature admits that there are values of SI outputs which cannot be evaluated in terms of GDP (BEPA, 2010, p. 15). In this context, it seems only logical to assume the probable existence of ideas stemmed from the community that have a high social value, but a value which cannot be certified by using a market reference system. Nevertheless, among the existing socially innovative structures that hold a position of power in decision making processes, there is none which is looking to support and set examples from the lines of civil initiatives.

We argue that there are indeed civil initiatives whose added value to the field of social innovation should not be completely overlooked.

The social movement is the most spread form of civil initiative accepted as social innovation – i.e. feminism, public rights (The Young Foundation, 2006, p. 11; Crothers and Lockhart, 2000). But these movements have achieved recognition through the scale of their actions and their role as game-changers. The Occupy movement that has recently taken over public spaces in New-York, London, Amsterdam contested a societal status-quo. It was among the first of its kind and its impact was rather small. But it raised significant questions on existing power relations and it set a precedent. Once this gate has been opened, who can predict what is to follow. EVA-Lanxmeer is an ecological neighbourhood in the Dutch town of Culemborg.

Figure 11: EVA-Lanxmeer, Culemborg, the Netherlands

Here, the residents designed the green spaces and are currently managing them themselves. In USA's Minnesota, thousands of ice-fishing lovers are attracted to Lake Mille Lacs every winter. Here, yearly, smaller and larger neighbourhoods pop-up on the lake, as people bring along their own prefabricated housing units to enjoy their hobby. As this happens, streets and public places also take shape, without any planning regulation. As a result of internal organisational skills, networks and community activities are performed and social life unfolds in a familiar way.

Figure 12: Lake Mille Lacs, Minnesota, USA

As a result of the popularity of the internet and the know-how widely accessible nowadays, communities use the virtual interface as a first step towards support, growth and change from within. SIX's Social Innovator identifies as an emergent trend of the household economy, the formation of new forms of *mutual action between individuals* (The Young Foundation, 2010, p.195). Examples of such forms are the open source software and the web-based networking.

The problems that groups face may not always be considered challenges worth fitting in a (so-

cio-) political agenda and their solutions may not be exceptional, but they remain highly efficient nonetheless; their best quality lies in the susceptibility towards the identity and specific needs of different individuals and social groups. According to existing data, there are 18 million cancer related websites, the great majority created by people who have suffered or still suffer from the disease. Mothers from all over UK run local websites joined together under the Netmums website, to give each other support and advice. Individuals join guerrila gardening websites and connect with others who want to take into their own hands the design of derelict sites in the city. All these platforms are results of groups organising themselves – open and aware of the world around them - to take matters into their own hands.

As we can see, communities do take initiatives, and these initiatives are oriented very much towards social action. So why are these not considered to be innovations? It may well be because they cannot be evaluated by using market indexes. Or perhaps because of a stereotyped view of the community that power structures have deeply embedded in their mechanisms; a community which needs to be ordered and regulated in order for it to function properly. But as the example of the Lake Mille Lacs' neighbourhoods illustrate, people can organise themselves.

Acting on poststructuralist principles, we argue that there are indeed civil initiatives exemplary in the way in which they are formed and implemented. Socially innovative power structures, especially governmental agencies, could gain considerable knowledge by taking these actions into consideration. This would add not only to improved participatory methods, but also to the quality of planning and design processes. Moreover, by acknowledging initiatives from within the community as social innovations, would bring them a recognition that would support and encourage an increase in public creativity and social action on behalf of society.

Something old can also be innovative in particular situations. Again, specific contexts ask for specific solutions.

Discussing about best practices in social innovation has no real grounds and even good practices themselves are subject to contextual interpretation.

The subject of an approach to the study of social innovation that would recognise the community's place in the process has already been probed before. F. Moulaert et al. (2005) built an argument for alternative models of local innovation around the concept of innovative community development initiatives. Prior to the study, the models in question were brought together in a databank for projects with the general name of SINGOCOM, an acronym standing for Social Innovation, Governance and Community Building. Throughout their work, the authors advocate for integrated planning and decision-making processes and they point in the direction of community initiatives for unexplored potentials of social innovation. In their view, SI is *'a catalyst, but also an ensemble of constraints'* (Moulaert et al., 2005, p. 1975) which makes it the optimal integrative approach in territorial planning processes. What we notice though in the study is a particularity in the classes of initiatives that the study proposes. Hence, the originality of the selected initiatives, that which makes them innovative, lies in the association of institutions and their collaboration methods and not necessarily in the operational mode or in the discourse of the newly formed community structures. Although community visions and movements occupy an important place and they are brought forward as inspirational elements for neighbourhood development, what we

are presented with in the end is a different mechanism of engaging the community in decision-making. Nonetheless, the view that this study casts on civil initiatives has significant value in advocating for acknowledgment of social innovations sprang from a community level.

The same study introduces a very interesting idea, where innovation does not necessarily mean the invention of something new. In discussing processes of developing inclusive actions and strategies, F. Moualert et al. argue that: *'A return to old institutional arrangements or agencies can sometimes be quite innovative in the social sense (for example, the reintroduction of free education for all; free art classes for all citizens)'* (Moulaert et al., 2005, p. 1978).

By definition, social innovation is meant to find effective solutions for a problematic state of facts. In this case, if a return to previous institutions and methods can bring positive change, then something old can also be innovative in particular situations. Again, specific contexts ask for specific solutions. It is a fact that returning to old structures is commonly regarded as a no-do. In the western world's race for positions of power, as societies reinvent themselves as *knowledge societies* (Stehr, 2000; Stehr and Ericson, 1992, cited in Welz, 2003, p. 256), the internal societal structures need to permanently re-assert their place in local/(inter)national power relations by using the same principles of producing knowledge and know-how. Due to some cultural mechanism they are only looking forward, for elements of novelty that can bring them legitimacy and prestige.

But if good solutions already exist in our recent history why tolerate a faulty state of fact for the sake of reinventing the wheel? If social innovation is supposed to be a change in the better, why adopt a presumption that closes the possibility to learn from past experiences? The discussion can be taken one step further and question the positive value of social innovation.

The history of market and technological innovations is full of examples which were eagerly promoted, implemented and even thought of as beneficial in their right time only to be proven faulty later on. One type of bad or, better said, failed innovation is the collectivization process

in the old European communist bloc. Basically, what this process consisted in was the seizure of all agricultural private property and merging them into state co-operatives. Many land owners, especially inhabitants of the countryside, opposed it. The consequence was a governmental counter back based on a long and violent series of deportations, imprisonment and the confiscation of all valuable belongings of those who were involved. In post-communist years the co-operative system was annulled (another innovation) and the land owned by the state was returned to its rightful owners. But people nowadays lack the resources to manage and work their properties. As a result, a large surface of the eastern European agricultural fields lies derelict. Can we deny with all confidence the innovative nature of collectivization and the co-operative? Maybe this would be possible, were it not for the fact that the co-operative as a business organisation is functioning very well and growing in popularity in its western European version. As far as the collectivization process is concerned, it had in mind the best interest of the community – equal rights and equal chances for everyone.

In technology, Cleg Samuda's valve in England, G. Hubner's automobile gas turbine in the USA or Itera's plastic bicycles in Sweden, are all examples of innovations backed up by large financial investments and promotion and which, nonetheless, didn't get very far. All these examples direct us back to the discussion on what it is that makes social innovations successful and how can this success be evaluated. Culture plays its part in the way in which innovation is accepted and appropriated by communities. As F. Moulaert et al. (2005) point out, discussing about *best practices* in social innovation has no real grounds and even *good practices* themselves are subject to contextual interpretation. In the case of social innovations, history is not so rich in examples for the simple reason that the concept of social innovation in itself is relatively new and so it is not present in past discourses or in the existing body of literature.

Granting power structures legitimacy to be the trend setters in defining and developing the concept of social innovation to the point where they own the dominant discourses is not always a guarantee for positive outcomes. The above examples demonstrate this. The existent status-quo assumes that knowledge and expertise are indeed products of the power structures. Think-

ing otherwise seems almost absurd as it implies denying the very foundation of what we called earlier a society's *regime of truth* in Foucault's view. But power structures themselves are not infallible. In support of this argument, here are some examples of predictions made on a number of innovations, all of which, as time showed, could not be more wrong:

"How, sir, would you make a ship sail against the wind and currents by lighting a bonfire under her deck? I pray you, excuse me, I have not the time to listen to such nonsense." Napoleon Bonaparte, when told of Robert Fulton's steamboat, 1800s

"Rail travel at high speed is not possible because passengers, unable to breathe, would die of asphyxia." (Dr. Dionysys Larder (1793-1859), professor of Natural Philosophy and Astronomy, University College London)

"Dear Mr. President: The canal system of this country is being threatened by a new form of transportation known as 'railroads' ... As you may well know, Mr. President, 'railroad' carriages are pulled at the enormous speed of 15 miles per hour by 'engines' which, in addition to endangering life and limb of passengers, roar and snort their way through the countryside, setting fire to crops, scaring the livestock and frightening women and children. The Almighty certainly never intended that people should travel at such breakneck speed." (Martin Van Buren, Governor of New York, 1830)

"Heavier-than-air flying machines are impossible." (Lord Kelvin, British mathematician and physicist, president of the British Royal Society, 1895)

"The Americans have need of the telephone, but we do not. We have plenty of messenger boys." (Sir William Preece, Chief Engineer, British Post Office, 1878)

"There is not the slightest indication that nuclear energy will ever be obtainable. It would mean that the atom would have to be shattered at will." (Albert Einstein, 1932)

"This is the biggest fool thing we have ever done. The bomb will never go off, and I speak as an expert in explosives." (Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy during World War II)

"Television won't last. It's a flash in the pan." (Mary Somerville, pioneer of radio educational broadcasts, 1948; Listverse, 2007)

Bear in mind the earlier discussion on discourses within structures and on how these structures often pass on their message through individuals! The individuals quoted above talk as representatives of their respective structures, representing their standing-points, principles, interests and working patterns. Starting from these premises it is easy to see how the authors of the quotes speak as part and on behalf of the structures to which they belong. When A. Einstein dismisses the idea of nuclear energy he does so not merely because he does not believe in it. His point of view can be explained through the perspective of the scientific culture in which he worked (the debate on nuclear fusion and the limited knowledge available at that time regarding nuclear power) as well as the larger socio-historical context (only a few years later, in 1938, nuclear fusion was discovered). This is the case of the other quotations as well. They are statements made at specific moments in time and space and are expressions of cultural contexts. Once again, culture matters. In the same way, today's overlooked solutions may well be tomorrow's innovations.

As we repeatedly pointed out throughout the paper, culture does matter and it has a determining role in processes of social innovation. As governmental bodies and different sectors of the market seek to find more efficient and integrated ways of dealing with the challenges that today's society is facing, the community itself should not be confined to a passive collaboration.

The field of civil initiatives can contribute greatly to discussions on both integrated decision making processes and local innovation (Moulaert et al., 2005, p. 1988). These types of initiatives, sprang from contextual particularities, re-address in practice the culturally embedded nature of social innovation (Z.S.I., 2009, p. 8). By understanding the mechanisms of civil initiatives and what it is in their nature that makes them innovative, may lead in time to a broader perspective on SI and to a more diversified and perhaps even more efficient range of stimulated and supported solutions to societal problems.

At the moment, the structures working under the governmental and entrepreneurial discourses take on the role of educating the public in the culture of social innovations. Instead of this unidirectional flow of knowledge, we argue for a network of actors (gov-

ernmental, belonging to the private, public and third sectors or members of the community) who share knowledge and resources throughout a continuous process of innovation. Such flows of resources have the potential to lead the way towards alternative models of participatory methods and policy making processes. This change in decision making processes would assume another paradigm shift from a governance based on participatory methods to one which accepts and works with civil initiatives. The task of bringing these initiatives into the focus of decision makers lies within the academic discourse. The predominant existent body of literature around social innovation links this process with the cultural context, an idea which increasingly catches onto social entrepreneurs (egg. Eltern-AG, Germany; The Copenhagen City Honey Cooperative, Denmark; Aconchego Program, Portugal).

The issue of community initiative is only marginally dealt with in relation to social innovation. Nevertheless, a link does exist and it offers a relevant starting point for a poststructuralist approach to SI. We refer here to C. Wright Mills' sociological imagination (Lesemann, 2011) that brings together history (understood here as cultural context) and personal biography – the idea behind it being that we place ourselves in society and find our identity amidst others and the space we live in through our understanding of the world around us and ourselves as individuals. F. Lesemann (2011) uses this concept to introduce in the scientific sphere the idea of informality. We are already acquainted with informality from F. Djellal and F. Gallouj Clersé who proposed an understanding of SI processes as producers of an 'informal satisfaction, a combination of a purchased good and household work' (Djellal and Gallouj Clersé, 2011, p. 10). The novelty of F. Lesemann's approach lies in his proposal of regarding 'informal collective behavior' as a 'radical form of collective social innovation' (Lesemann, 2011, p. 2). By doing this, he outlines the possibility of a new discourse in SI, one that sets itself apart from the existing innovation theories of improving existing status-quos.

A SI discourse around informality is based on dynamic processes in society, from migration and demographic changes to day-to-day relationships. The main characteristic of 'collective social innovation' in F. Lesemann's opinion is its 'free-form nature, allowing circulation, fluidity of

people, ideas, etc. rather than by more static structures and stable organization. This encompasses the concepts of networks, flows, diasporic phenomena, crossbreeding, cross-cultural societies' (Abeles, 2010, cited in Lesemann, 2011, p. 6). In short, an understanding and inclusion of informal forms of community processes and organisations would bring people with their identities and the dynamism of their networks forward, to the centre of social innovation processes.

We propose the concepts of 'sociological imagination' and 'informality' as starting points for a better understanding of civil initiatives and their characteristics and role in relation to processes of social innovation. In the field of SI, the information available on community action is relatively little, as often it is not considered for documentation. Nevertheless, a closer look into specific examples has shown that civil initiatives can often be innovative in their own right. A collection of such case studies may prove to be inspirational for the study and practice of social innovation.

Further on, more research needs to be done into the nature and mechanisms of civil initiatives for better acceptance and support of their innovative features. Moreover, the relations between communities and the intermediary bodies that support them (such as GreenWish or the Science Shop in the Netherlands) need to be further explored. The purpose for this is to develop models for both non-profit intermediaries and formal organisations (governmental or entrepreneurial), models which would allow for experimentation with new ways of stimulating, funding and implementing civil initiatives as social innovations.

Based on all the inferences made throughout this analysis, we argue for the inclusion of civil initiatives in the study of social innovation and for more focus on culture and networks, in their poststructuralist understandings, in order to learn more on the why-s and the how-s of social innovation. If structures were to assess their tools and methods from this perspective it may lead to a certain degree of openness and fluidity on their part. The resulting changes in the networks flows would nurture a different category of social innovation which remains still to be explored.

For this reason, we believe that culture should be an issue of concern in the study of social innovation not only from the point of view of community or national cultures in which these innovations are implemented. The culture of social innovation itself and the cultures of the power structures that formulate the dominant discourses in the field should be analysed and interpreted from a poststructuralist perspective also. Only in this way can truly critical research in SI be performed. The result would be more than a larger body of knowledge and a wider, pluralistic perspective on social innovation. A poststructuralist approach to the study of SI would also add to the practice of social innovation. The quality and the diversity of solutions and social outcomes can be highly enhanced by better understanding the existing and potential processes and structures that social innovation involves.

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