

INTRODUCING THE ATLAS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION



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Social Innovation is on the rise: As a lived practice, social innovations take countless approaches and present a wide array of success stories. On a policy and public level, interest in the concept has been growing over the last years and the international scientific debate has gained momentum. At the same time, there is an increased awareness of the complexity of challenges modern societies are facing and the subsequent requirement that innovation processes have to meet. Like technological innovations successful social innovations are based on a lot of presuppositions and require appropriate infrastructures and resources.

Against this background, a new generation of EU-funded projects^{1,2} worked on a better understanding of the conditions under which social innovations develop, flourish and finally increase their societal impact. In this respect, SI-DRIVE (www.si-drive.eu) made an important contribution by developing and testing a comprehensive and analytical definition, which describes social innovation as a new combination or figuration of social practices. Using these analytical lenses, the project's 25 international partners mapped and scrutinized over 1.000 cases of social innovation all over the world and selected over 80 cases for an in-depth case study analysis.

The Atlas of Social Innovation presents SI-DRIVE's empirical results and the broad variety of this phenomenon. It takes a unique approach in portraying experiences, theoretical considerations, and lessons learnt from all around the globe and across disciplines ultimately presenting Social Innovation's many connotations and nuances. To display the concept's multifaceted nature in one book, articles by leading experts complement SI-DRIVE's insights into the world of Social Innovation. The Atlas of Social Innovation delivers new intelligence on the diversity of social innovation approaches in different parts of the world used by practitioners, researchers and policy makers, reflecting the diversity, broadness and usability of Social Innovation, proving the variety of actors and their interaction and exploring the systemic character and concept of Social Innovation.

The first part Social Innovation Landscape – Global Trends reveals the importance of Social Innovation addressing social, economic, political and environmental challenges of the 21st century on a global scale. It demonstrates the need for Social Innovation to overcome the great societal challenges and social demands and presents a broad range of important topics that are essential for a better understanding of the key

elements and the potential of Social Innovation. The articles explore new avenues and concepts of innovation, make use of new tools (e.g. design thinking) and form alliances with other streams of research and practice (e.g. sustainable development). The second part Social Innovation in World Regions provides an overview of various types of Social Innovation in different local or regional settings. Looking at the different world regions Social Innovation has various meanings, can take different forms and engage a diversity of actors. The third part Social Innovation in Policy Fields uncovers that Social Innovation is omnipresent in the policy areas of education, employment, environment and climate change, energy supply, transport and mobility, health and social care, and poverty reduction and sustainable development. The Atlas of Social Innovation's final part Future Challenges and Infrastructures demonstrates that social innovation processes and the underlying resources, capabilities and constraints are also very much related to the actors of the different sectors of the social innovation ecosystem (policy, economy, science and civil society). This includes a new role of public policy and government for creating suitable framework and support structures, the integration of resources of the economy and civil society as well as supporting measures by science and universities (e.g. education for social innovation performance, know-how transfer).

One of the most important insights of the Atlas is that given the strong need for Social Innovation highlighted by the various policy field experts, and, bearing in mind the drivers but in particular also the barriers for Social Innovation, a social innovation friendly environment still has to be developed in Europe as well as globally.

By gathering the leading experts, the Atlas opens up new insights in the current trends of social innovation research. Building up a knowledge repository for a growing community of practitioners, policy makers and researchers it should open up new avenues to unfold the potential of social innovation in the search for new social practices enhancing a better future.

¹ besides SI-DRIVE (www.si-drive.eu), see SIMPACT (<http://www.simpact-project.eu/>), TRANSIT (<http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/>) and CrESSI (<http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/faculty-research/research-projects/cressi>).

² For an inventory of FP6 and FP7 projects see the European Commission's "Research on Social Innovation" (https://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/project_synopses/ssh-projects-fp7-5-6-social-innovation_en.pdf)