EMPOWERMENT, CO-CREATION AND SOCIAL INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS

While co-creation and empowerment are generic features of social innovation, initiatives are embedded in an environment which can sometimes be supportive or even hostile. Research in SI-DRIVE provides examples for a variety of manifestations, leading to a typology of six models.

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EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is one of the most specific features of social innovation processes on the one hand, and of outcomes (potential impact) on the other hand. This was emphatically highlighted by the European Commission in an early key document on social innovation: *"The process of social interactions between individuals undertaken to reach certain outcomes is participative, involves a number of actors and stakeholders who have a vested interest in solving a social problem, and empowers the beneficiaries. It is in itself an outcome as it produces social capital."* [1]

Co-creation and empowerment can be determined as generic features of all sorts of social innovation. Over and above these characteristic properties any social innovation is embedded in an eco-system.

CO-CREATION

According to an understanding of social innovation as a new figuration of practices, i.e. how to act when individuals, groups or organisations intend to solve social issues, some form of collaboration is always essential and indispensable. The fundamental concept of *social action* explicitly connects the *intention of an actor with another person or group.* Thus, an interactive relationship between social entities comes into being, that is crucial for the generation of social innovation and its outcomes: a rather loosely form of relation is to accept the action of someone else – yet the more mutual and trusted a relationship becomes, the better the impact. This is why SI-DRIVE emphasises *"co-creation"* and participation next to *"empowerment",* as verified by the results of the research [2].

ECO-SYSTEM

Research proved that social innovation still appears to be a fragile as well as blurry term, if compared to the common understanding of innovation and Research, Technology Development and Innovation (RTDI) -policies in the framework of measures to enhance technological progress and economic growth. It is therefore highly relevant to also look at what determines the conditions for success or failure of social innovation initiatives, the so-called *"social innovation eco-system"*. The comprehension of social innovation eco-systems includes, first of all, patterns of the pre-conditions to instigate and implement social innovations. Such patterns are formed by potential causes (in the sense of *issues, needs, challenges and desires*) as well as by *facilitating instruments* (*knowledge, competencies, funding, drivers* and varieties of actors which may be *individuals, organisations* and *institutions* in all societal sectors), *and* obstructive factors and *impediments*, too. Moreover, an eco-system might bear the potential to ensure the sustainability of results and impact. An effective social innovation eco-system usually is required to hedge lasting impact of social innovations.

LEARNINGS FROM SI-DRIVE CASES

Concluding from the mapping and in-depth case studies selected from a total of 1005 examples, observations confirm that some form of co-creation plays a role in all social innovations; additionally one of the effects – impact – of social innovations is empowerment. Therefore *co-creation and empowerment* can be determined as *generic features* of

all sorts of social innovation. Over and above these characteristic properties any social innovation is *embedded in an eco-system,* in fact ranging from conducive to hostile socio-economic or cultural environments, just think of the struggle of women in Saudi Arabia for car-driving permit.

So, empowerment, co-creation and eco-systems make a difference *beyond* peculiarities in relation to the five key dimensions of social innovation, i.e. *concepts, societal needs, resources, process dynamics,* and *governance* [3, p. 5]: There are various forms of co-creation, different directions and efficacy of empowerment, and modifications by a spectrum of respective eco-systems. A focus on the ways of collaboration in social innovation processes, and on impact by empowerment under conditions of respective eco-systems enables to determine characteristic modes or typical varieties of social innovation. The specifics and differences of certain modes of social innovation are best explained by key features of concrete social innovations, as identified and thoroughly analysed in the SI-DRIVE case studies. Hence, a sample of case study extracts illustrates the following generic typology.

SIX MODELS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

(1) Social innovation as new or improved service
In this case innovators identify needs and provide solutions for a target group with particular demands. Yet even in this case social innovation may not be seen as something ready-made to be bought and consumed off the shelf, because acceptance and adoption of the new practice(s) require adaptation or imitation as a minimum of joint activity. Such types of social innovation are *most* likely in policy areas like health, care, raising children, education, poverty, where beneficiaries come into play in the stage of implementation. Yet of course, there are such cases of providing social innovation *for* somebody in need in all policy fields surveyed.

> **Example "MomConnect"**
> *Policy Field: Health and Social Care | Region/Country: South Africa (Republic of South Africa, RSA)*
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> MomConnect is a free mobile service for pregnant women and new mothers. It might be termed a "Public Start-up", carried out and made possible by private companies, foundations and others in a consortium of more than 20 partners. The main driver and initiator was the National Department of Health; so it is a case of government buy-in social innovation (like many other e/m health care examples). Launched 2014, the mobile phone based service connects more than one million women to vital services of 95% of all health clinics across RSA. The service is not one-directional, as it enables critical feedback and thus stimulates also innovation in the clinics and other service providers, e.g. of education and training.

(2) The DIY-model: Social innovation as self-help
In the case of "Do-It-Yourself" (DIY) the social innovation typically is initiated and carried out by a certain group of people or an organisation to benefit their own good and value. The initial *raison d'être* is to create the possibility of working toward fulfilling a specific demand of members. Because of the perceived lack of other opportunities they develop new forms of collaborating and organising processes. If successful, such initiatives want to expand and tend to change the prior social demand perspective to a societal challenge perspective, hoping the own model may become adopted and replicated on larger scale.

> **Example "Nova Iskra"**
> *Policy Field: Employment | Region/Country: Europe (Serbia)*
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> Nova Iskra is a network of designers and creative consultants, aiming at an alternative model of business organisation, following innovative principles such as diversity management in the way of co-working and new forms of governance. The workplace innovation affects management, relationships with users and other stakeholders, and the work environment itself. Success explicitly is perceived by the number of people empowered, namely some 9,000 beneficiaries by 2016.

(3) Social innovation emerging from co-creation
This is the case of a direct start-up aiming at social innovation and to achieve objectives of public interest. "Start-up" does not necessarily mean to become a company – be it for-profit or non-profit. It may remain, at least for some time, an "initiative" of individuals collaborating without a formal structure. Yet as it grows through attraction of new members, occasionally involving companies and other organisations, an appropriate formal structure will be required to enable a reasonable extension to *co-working* following the stage(s) of *co-creation.*

> **Example "Qvinnovindar"**
> *Policy Field: Energy Supply | Region/Country: Europe (Sweden)*
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> A women only initiative in the field of wind energy production emerged since 2007 because of the fact that a group of ten women found it impossible to participate by investment in existing wind power projects. As they could not afford the minimum investment required, the prime idea was to enable women with economic potentials lower than usual investors to also produce wind energy – and encourage (empower) them to better take part in ecological and economic affairs by bundling their individual resources.

(4) Social innovation as cooperative

Social innovation as a cooperative places participation of like-minded players in the foreground. However, the significant feature of such cases is that cooperatives want to transcend solely own concerns. An initiative of this kind may be the result of only one person as prime creator, yet it can be as kicked-off as well by a group of people, a civil society organisation, a scientific or research institute, a private company or a government department. In its core, however, the project to launch and implement a social innovation typically is carried out by close participative cooperation in what usually is considered a civil society cooperative. Nevertheless, after implementation and either in the course of its development or in case of replication the organisational framework may become varied or more diverse because of novel processes of participation and cooperation.

> **Example "Dignity and Designs"**
> *Policy Field: Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development | Region/Country: Asia (India)*
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> Dignity and Designs (D&D) is a craft and marketing social enterprise committed to social and economic empowerment of women, free from practices of bondage and sexual violence in labour dedicated to the lowest cast (Dalit). Starting from concepts of rehabilitation, on to providing new skills (e.g. apparel making) D&D shows elements of becoming a mass movement – slowly mainstreaming the concern of inclusion, capacity building and livelihoods promotion of poor and marginalised communities, particularly women.

(5) Social innovation initiated to drive social change

Examples of this kind combine from the beginning explicitly the objective to deal with issues of a specific target group in society with the further perspective to influence social change on a broader scale (→ societal challenge perspective). Such initiatives first look at often age-long lasting problems of insecurity or inequity, and from there develop an innovative concept to intervene and improve quality of life and/or working conditions of the particularly affected target group. When implemented, success may pop up sometimes quickly for a small part of the target group, yet in the long run it may gradually change the social issue to the better.

> **Example "dynaklim"**
> *Policy Field: Environment and Climate Change | Region/ Country: Europe (Germany)*
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> dynaklim aimed to develop a climate change strategy for the region (mainly North-Rhine Westphalia) and increasing Germany's adaptive capacity by anchoring an awareness of the necessity of adaptation within society. The initiative was started by a science lead

consortium, having had worked together previously and had generated a high degree of trust and collaborative experience. Because of the size of the societal challenge addressed, the cooperative efforts reached out to public, private and civil society groups and organisations, based on scientific research and evaluation. Funding was received from the Federal Government for a period of five years, ending in 2014. The downside of the experience was an important learning: after finalisation of the project many participating municipalities returned to their administrative routines, although these had been found inadequate to solve the problem at the beginning. This clearly illustrates that the process of social change requires process methodologies in order to secure permanent impact of social innovations. Piecemeal public investment in – maybe even consecutive – projects does not suffice.

(6) Support measures improving the social innovation eco-system

Accelerated since about ten years, an increasing number of organisations aim to support the creation and advancement of social innovation – some in general, some in a particular mode or sector. Such centres, labs, or hubs (to name the most frequently used notions) may be seen as an emerging infrastructure for social innovation. Their evolvement proceeds along the lines of what was implemented many decades ago by policies to boost technology development and, ultimately, *economic growth:* Technology Centres or Technology Parks, Business Incubation Centres, various funding programmes for RTDI and favouring start-ups. There is, world-wide, a delay in setting up similar research and *social* development centres which should facilitate *social change and societal evolvement* (social and cultural evolution) besides economic growth. Existing organisations of this kind are usually civil society organisations (NGO's,

> **Example "Social Impact Hub"**
> *Policy Field: Employment |Region/Country: Global (Australia)*
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> Two organisations with the same objective, created in Germany on the one hand (focusing on developments in Germany), and in Australia (expanding as a global network of hubs) on the other hand, are specialised on start-up assistance for social enterprises and advancement of particular target groups.
> Empowerment and co-creation are cornerstones of their work, enabling individual self-confidence as well as creating work organisations that display novel properties of quality, inclusion, fairness and other human values not sacrificed on behalf of business profit and economic growth.consecutive – projects does not suffice.

partly co-financed by private foundations and other donors). Other sources of facilitation are knowledge production by science and research organisations, and promotion and encouragement of social innovators by awards, festivals and publications in various media.

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