Social innovations as repair innovations.  Some paradoxes of governing social change
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### Introduction

Sociology of technology: - social and technical change

- performativity of instruments

- means are not neutral towards the ends.

Innovation studies: - emergence and persistence of dominant designs

change in the direction of "more of the same"contingent rather than controlled processes.

Focus on: - paradoxes,

- contradictions,

- ironies,

- dilemmas, and

- unintended consequences.

Social change, institutions, innovation, and repair



Institutions and social change: behind the backs or in the hands of the actors?

#### The "Weber" mode of institutions: a rigid iron cage.

"The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. [...] In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage."

Weber, M. (1930). The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. London: Allen & Unwin: 181  $\,$ 

### The "Hughes" mode of institutions: a contingent enterprise.

"It is their fiscal separateness [from the community] and the consequent precariousness of their existence that makes institutions, perforce, enterprises. The entrepreneur is one who undertakes to coordinate the activities of others; he makes decisions and meets contingencies."

Hughes, E. C. (1936). The ecological aspect of institutions. American Sociological Review, 1(2): 183.

Social change, institutions, innovation, and repair



Innovation and repair: progressing or repairing in times of inevitable change?

## The "Schumpeter" type of innovation: progress & creative destruction.

- Pressure to change stems from competition within the economy.
- Entrepreneurial invention through technical or economic creativity.
- Supply and demand regulate the diffusion of novelty into innovation.

Schumpeter, J. (1942). Capitalism, socialism and democracy. New York: Harper & Row: pp 81.

#### The "Ogburn" type of innovation: repair & cultural lag.

- Pressure to change stems from misaligned yet interdependent social spheres.
- Dissolution of the cultural lag through adaptation of the dependent sphere.
- Forces of societal integration balance the misaligned social spheres.

Ogburn, W. F. (1922). Social change. With respect to culture and original nature. New York: Viking Press: pp 200.

Social change, institutions, innovation, and repair



Governing social change: two paradoxes from the literature.

# Revolutions and small scale social experiments: the "Popper" perspective.

- Large scale utopian revolutions limit societal freedom.
- Piecemeal social engineering transforms society without great revolutions.
- Social change should happen through step-by-step, localised interventions.

Popper, K. (1945). The open society and its enemies. Volume I: Plato. London: Routledge: pp 138.

#### Intervention and irritation: governability from the "Luhmann" perspective.

- The limits to governability reside in the self-referentiality of systems.
- The effects of governance are both uncontrolled and uncontrollable.
- Results are side-effects, performance deficits, and self-defeating prophecies.

Luhmann, N. (1988). Die Wirtschaft der Gesellschaft. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp: pp 324.

# Social innovation as repair innovations

Social innovation as repair innovations: A "social" fix to "technical" problems.



Today's societal challenges: climate / environment health / ageing participation poverty

Kindergarten: repairing the side-effects of industrialisation

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/7e/Bundesarchiy Bild 183-31215-0003%2C Th%C3%B6rev%2C Spielplatz des Erntekindergarten.ipg

Social innovation as a mode and a means of social change

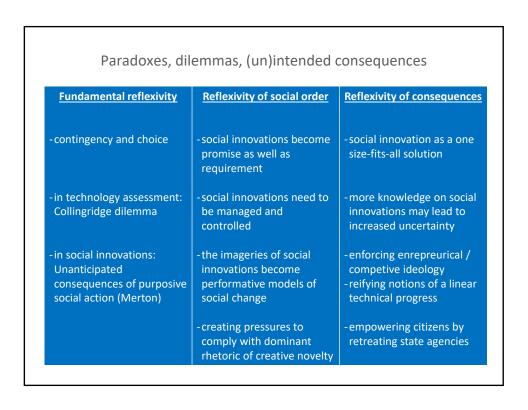
Social innovation as a general mode of social change:

- Adaptive solutions to "problematic" situations.
- Mindful inventions in existing practices.
- Increase of social innovations with increasing societal "maladjustments".

Social innovation as a specific means of social change:

- Discursive shift to social innovation as a "dominant design" for social change.
- Bottom up, local initiatives (where politics and markets fail).
- New (participatory & sustainable) ways of addressing societal challenges.
- Creation of reflexive knowledge on social innovation processes.
- Problems of scaling and controlling novel practices upwards.





# When social innovations become social technologies

Social innovations: Social technologies:

bottom-up top-down participative grassroots entrepreneurial

local / internal universal / external planned sustainable instrumental

contingent manageable

social empowerment | social fix

# Conclusion

- 1. Social innovations as repair innovation: fixing the "lags" of modern societies.
- 2. In the EU discourse, the framing of social innovations very much resembles entrepreneurial/technical innovation in the sense of Schumpeter.
- 3. As a policy instrument, social innovations increasingly take the discursive shape of social technologies adding to a market/mechanical model of change rather than an evolutionary mode of emergent development.