

#### 2

# Social innovations for social cohesion. What welfare politics can learn from them. Findings from a transnational study.

Adalbert Evers<sup>1</sup> and Benjamin Ewert<sup>2</sup> (Justus-Liebig-University Giessen/Germany)

With a view on the big challenges to societies, political and social systems in Europe, small entities have found increasing attention – social innovations (SIs). But what can they contribute? How to understand them properly? And how to establish a positive interaction between them and public policies for reform? In this field of concerns an EU-funded international research project, called "Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in favour of Cohesion' (WILCO) asked more specifically, how, with respect to the major challenge of social inclusion, SIs can contribute to find better coping strategies, both by themselves and through ways their innovative nudges are taken up by the established local welfare systems. This implies to study both sides, the projects that represent social innovations and the developments within welfare systems.

This contribution focuses on one side of this relationship, the SIs themselves. It is based on the information and experiences of case studies from more than 80 SIs<sup>3</sup> in twenty cities and ten states in Europe<sup>4</sup>. The way we describe and analyse approaches and instruments used by these local projects with a strong innovative dimension aims at building bridges between the often separated social innovation debates on the one and the wider debate on reforms in public policies, and welfare systems on the other hand.

Raising such a task entails already a special perspective on social innovations and the various promoters, change agents and social entrepreneurs concerned with them. The approaches and instruments developed by SIs are both-something that should work here and now at the place they operate but as well something that entails kind of messages concerning values, hopes and assumptions. Other actors, such as the political-administrative system can then dialogue with and react to SIs in very different ways. They can use various instruments, adapting them to their own administrative and policy frameworks. But they may as well feel challenged by the spirit and concerns the respective instruments and innovators are associated with. There is then a considerable space between *making use* of SIs, their methods and instruments and *learning* from their approaches.

The way we have analysed the SIs collected in the WILCO research aims at facilitating such a broader concept of policy learning that goes beyond making (more) use of SIs.

In the following we will (1.) sketch shortly the way we proceeded in the WILCO research on social innovations; then in the main part (2.) we will present what we see as approaches and instruments, public policies could use and learn from, before (3.) raising in conclusion some questions about the difficulties of welfare systems and related public policies in learning.

<sup>1</sup> Corresponding address: adalbert.evers@uni-giessen.de

<sup>2</sup> Corresponding address: benjamin.ewert@sowi.uni-giessen.de

<sup>3</sup> All cases of social innovations will be available as an e-book at www.wilcoproject.eu by the end of 2013.

The sample comprised the following cities: Zagreb and Varazdin (Croatia), Nantes and Lille (France), Berlin and Münster (Germany), Milan and Brescia (Italy), Warsaw and Plock (Poland), Barcelona and Pamplona (Spain), Stockholm and Malmö (Sweden), Berne and Geneva (Switzerland), Amsterdam and Nijmegen (The Netherlands) and Birmingham and Dover (United Kingdom).

#### 1 On concepts and methods

#### 1.1 The understanding of social innovations

In the WILCO project we have defined social innovations as: likewise products and processes; as ideas, turned into practical approaches; as new in the context where they appear. The problem with definitions however lies less in "innovation" but much more in the meaning one gives to "social". If one studies the present literature on conceptualizing and defining *social* innovations, it is mostly claimed that "social" stands for "improvement" (Phills 2008), a better answer to basic needs, for more satisfying social relations (Moulaert 2010), and assorted "good things".

However, while most analyses try to derive from the "social" in social innovations a widely consented positive meaning (see BEPA 2010 and Mulgan 2006) the values, actions and outcomes of SIs will in fact mostly be a contested issue as well. Innovations differ from given widespread practices by definition. They may become a mainstream practice but this is not already so at the outset. They can be linked with a diversity of goals and take different meanings over time. The wider political concept and institutional system wherein they get embedded (see e.g. Osborne and Brown 2011), the ways, the social and economic environment reacts to them, are as important as the initial goals and the hopes for better coping strategies and solutions SIs attract. Hence they are in their course of development marked by a high degree of risk and uncertainty.

Therefore in our definition we avoided to objectivise what is a normative, often conflictive and - with an eye on processes and the future - insecure issue. We have used the modest criterion that social innovations are those that at the given moment raise much hope and expectations for processes towards something "better" (something more social / democratic / sustainable / effective). Whether or not this is or comes true, is hard to fix, depending from the values and strategies of the observer, the impact of contexts on the careers of SIs, and often only to be stated in retrospective.

#### 1.2 Methods to sort out local examples of innovations

Since we looked as well at the dynamics of social innovations, we selected only those that have overcome the very inception stage. Each innovation picked up by our teams entails a practical "project" that has been realised. As it turned out, this "project" can be an organisation or an organisational subunit with new services that clearly differs from what existed so far in the field, but it can also be a measure/intervention such as a new transfer, tax or resource arrangement.

Innovations may be represented by a local network rather than a single organisational unit; or they may show up as an experimental model and unit to be found in plural forms in the local setting (e.g. new family centres). Therefore, speaking about SIs can mean to refer to a large project, but also to a cluster of small, similar projects.

As a mandatory requirement, in each of the twenty cities at least three and at most six innovations had to be featured and analysed by each team. The actual number of cases chosen in a city depended largely on the complexity of the respective cases.

Each team had to cover three policy fields (child care, employment and housing) and target groups (single mothers, youngsters and migrants) that we had agreed upon earlier, when it came to make out of the criterion of exclusion/cohesion a practical and operational issue. For purpose of comparison, every innovation had to cover a specific field. However, we realised that in practice innovations cross-cut fields and address several fields and groups at once. Therefore, as a general guideline, it was agreed to make sure that all fields and groups are at least somehow covered in the selection of innovations.

Beside the use and review of documents and programs, interviews were a key source for analysing social innovations. The number of interviews carried out was obviously linked to the number of innovations chosen. On average more than three interviews per case were carried out.

# 1.3 Ways of analyzing

When it came to look at the rich number and diversity of cases of innovations, discussing, analysing and finally presenting them, several issues called quite soon for joint decisions among the research teams.

The first one is concerning the meaning of "different", "new" and "innovative" in relation to what is already there in terms of institutions, practices and modes of thinking. The main aim of the WILCO research has been to look at *common international trends* that get visible despite different national trajectories. The point of view from which we have looked at innovations is not concerned with the difference they make to a special type of national welfare culture or regime ("liberal", "conservative" or "social democratic") and its form of governance (such as e.g. "corporatist"). It was concerned with *differences towards shared patterns of welfare and governance in the European region*. Three elements can be seen as widely shared across "regimes".

- First of all, there are the commonalities of postwar-welfarism as described by Wagner (1994) like standardisation and the search for large scale uniform regulations in welfare institutions going along with a minor role of participative elements and civil society in welfare systems and democratic decision making.
- Secondly, there has been the influence of new public management and respective managerial concepts across borders with their practices of economisation and rationalisation of welfare agencies and concepts of governance that were taken from the business sector.

The social innovations that had been recommended to us as "socially useful" and "promising" and that we selected, are throughout characterized by the fact that they differ from practices, services and regulations that are in line with the two traditions just mentioned.

When it came to single out these differences it showed as well that quite a number of the characteristic patterns of these SIs *lean on something that is shared in positive terms* – among each other and in relation to the context wherein they develop. This is their relation to a third element, cultural and social aspirations and movements across borders as they have developed and showed up from the seventies of the last century onwards up until today. All European countries have in one or another form gone through phases, where cultural and social movements have revitalized elements of self-organizing, new social solidarities, reaching from the social movements of the early seventies and the democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe over to the new waves of movements linked with the issues of growth, the environment, sustainability and participation (Evers 2009).

This leads to a further point. It is concerning a difference between our choice of innovations and what is portrayed in the mainstream literature. The latter usually looks at social innovations with a focus on social *service* innovations. What was brought from the first city surveys to the international meetings of the WILCO teams showed however quite soon, that innovations touch on more than services and ways of organising their provision. *Changes in rules and regulations* (e.g. concerning the access to financial benefits) *in governance* (forms of democracy and decision making on priorities in welfare and cohesion politics) *and in modes of working and financing* are likewise important fields for social innovations.

The final point is concerning the way we arranged our findings on recurrent approaches and instruments of the social innovations we looked at. It mirrors the central task and mandate that has been given to the WILCO research: to look at the impact of SIs on local "welfare systems". Therefore, that we have arranged the presentation of our findings with an eye on constitutive elements of *welfare systems* rather than alongside separate policy fields, e.g. by grouping findings on innovations as they prevail in the field of housing, in neighbourhood development, occupational and social integration, or family and child care related services.

All this should be kept in mind when looking at the classification system by which we have arranged our findings. When presenting what we see as the most important recurrent approaches and instruments of local social innovations, we opted for *grouping them in relation to five fields and dimensions of welfare systems*: (I.) services and their ways to address users, (2.) regulations and rights, (3.) governance, (4.) modes of working and financing and (5.) innovations concerning the

What welfare politics can learn from them. Findings from a transnational study.

entity of (local) welfare systems. These five dimensions hopefully allow to integrate our findings into current debates as they can be found in the community of researchers on welfare and social policy, on urbanism and local policy but as well in public policy research at large.

#### 2 Findings on recurrent approaches and instruments

#### 2.1 Innovations in services and their ways to address users

The majority of the social innovations, that were recommended to the national teams by local interview partners as important and promising and finally chosen as cases to be described, have been service innovations. Since services are mostly less closed and standardized organizations than e.g. pension systems, it is no wonder that they are more accessible to small scale innovations. There have been four characteristics that mark the differences of SIs towards service systems as they have built up alongside post-war welfare traditions and the more recent managerial culture of public and private services. These differences play a role not only in the special field of social inclusion policies but very much so in the field of personal social services at large.

#### 2.1.1 Investing in capabilities rather than spotting deficits

This hallmark can be found basically in most of the SIs. The services are not so much about giving or granting or filling gaps than about a kind of relationship that aims at reducing the initial dependency of the users by opening up chances or strengthening capabilities. In various ways this element can be linked with the activation rhetoric as it is known from public welfare debates. Different activation discourses will give service innovations that want to strengthen capabilities different meanings. A telling example in this respect is e.g. the project "Her second chance" from Varazdin (Croatia), aiming at supporting women and mothers in special difficulties in acquiring competences and self-esteem on a way that might lead back to paid work.

# 2.1.2 Preference for open approaches avoiding targeting with stigmatizing effects

Most of the present occupational and social integration programmes and schemes one can find in workfare policies operate by a strict approach of targeting that clearly indicates who is "in" and "out" and detailed rules for stages of foreseen integration proceedings, preconditions and admission to them, entailing much danger of stigmatization. In contrast to that, many of the innovations that deal with topics of occupational and social integration operate with kind of looser and more open approaches not defining admission to an offer top down and not prescribing in detail how a re-integration process and its stages should be processed. While personal help and advice play an important role, the whole approach is less directive. An illustrative example is e.g. given by the Family Office in Münster (Germany) offering its support in a kind of way that is basically open for all, even though some families will need and use it much more than others.

# 2.1.3 Concern with bridging the gaps between professional services and people's life worlds

Cultural and ethnic diversity, overlapping with poverty, has increased in times of migration, unemployment and harsher inequalities. This makes it increasingly difficult for services and professionals to reach the groups that might need their help, be it that the respective offers are unknown, hard to understand or not taken up due to lacking trust. Therefore bridging gaps between professional services and people's life-worlds has become an increasing challenge. Among the innovations of our sample that touch on this problem one can mention here e.g. the "Neighbourhood Mothers" from Berlin (Germany), women that are on the one hand networked with and trusted in their communities but who likewise are experienced in making contacts withadministrations and the services and entitlements that they offer.

# 2.1.4 Service-offers that connect otherwise often separated forms of access, allowing for personalized bundles of support

While public administrations and welfare bureaucracies have in the course of their development differentiated and specialized, with particular but as well partial solutions, the complex needs of customers are hard to be met adequately. Getting together a bundle of support measures that fit is mostly complicated and discouraging. Therefore among the selection of innovations service offers that allow to connect otherwise often separated forms of support and channels of access play an important role. There are various schemes that operate with personal advisers, care- and case-managers and various forms of "one-stop-entry-points". A good example is given e. g. by offices in Nantes (France) that offer joint assessments of families' needs when it comes to link access to jobs and day care, something that is especially important for single-parent families.

## 2.2. Innovations in regulations and rights

## 2.2.1 Creating flexible forms of ad hoc support that meet newly emerging risks

Changed and less continuous biographies of working and living and more complicated zones of transition between those life situations and stages, traditional services and transfers were built for, are increasing. This might mean being out of school but not yet in a job, on a track back to work but without access to a flat. Often this coincides with acute problems that call for immediate and time-limited help. So far unknown gaps feature what some call "new social risks" (Bonoli 2005), not foreseen in the manual of standard risks that made up for the social service offers and transfer-systems of postwar-welfare-states. Innovative ways of offering an often provisional "quick fix" can well be the critical missing link when it comes to uphold a living and working arrangement that secures staying "in the game". Quite a number of the WILCO innovations are about establishing such kind of short term time-limited ad hoc support. A telling example is e.g. the "Welfare Foundation Ambrosiano" in Milan (Italy) that has the mission to support individuals and families who are in conditions of temporary need for various reasons (job loss, illness...) disregarding of their previous and/or current type of working contract and place of origin.

## 2.2.2 Working by kind of "social contracts" with individuals and groups

By tradition, most public welfare offers and services have the status of rights that are unconditional insofar as they require usually only a set of material preconditions to be fulfilled. A new tendency in welfare arrangements, namely in the field of "workfare", differs from that. Because here, the clients enter a kind of contractual relationship where the preconditions needed for support are concerning the future behaviour of the client(s). These types of contractual relationships are about responsibilities the clients take exclusively for themselves. Among our set of innovations there have been other types of contracts, that define the claim to give something back for what one gets from society in a broader way: people get access to some goods and services once they oblige themselves to do something for others: in form of volunteer work, defined tasks of personal support for people in need in the community etc. An example for such practices of a different, more socially defined kind of working with contracts is given by "Time for a Roof", an inter-generational home-share service in Nantes (France), offering cheap lodging for students that enter an inter-generational co-habitation arrangement.

### 2.3. Innovations in governance

The cases of SIs that have been studied all represent a combination of new "products" and new "processes" The latter term refers to both – the internal organisation of decision-making and ways of interacting with the environment, the public, various stakeholders, social partners and political and administrate authorities. Hence, most SIs that aim at developing new kinds of services have as well a governance dimension. However, for some innovations, influencing and changing the system of governance has been found as being their core issue.

# 2.3.1 Fostering units and types of organization, that operate in more embedded and networked ways

Traditional service organizations and systems are very much focused on their respective special tasks, functioning like "silos" (Boyle et al. 2010). The low degree of cooperation and sharing holds, however, true as well for those parts of the service-landscape, that have been shaped by managerial reforms. In contrast to that social innovations are characterized by bringing together what is usually separated, be it ideas, concerns or practices. Since the SIs that we studied have a highly local character they are much more embedded than organizations that act as part of a hierarchical system, be it in business or centralized welfare administrations. A good example for unconventional forms of networking are e.g. the Neighbourhood Stores for Education, Research, and Talent Development in Amsterdam (Netherlands), where teacher and students from the university cooperate with activists in a community development programme that links governmental, non-profit and business organizations.

#### 2.3.2 Giving new concerns and groups a voice in the public domain

Innovation means as well, to address issues, concerns and related forms of self-organizing in a way that is more up to date with changing challenges and pressures. Conventional orders of presenting and organizing concerns often do not work anymore. Standing for women's concerns, both the MaMa Foundation in Warsaw (Poland) and the RODA initiative (Zagreb) have overcome the traditional restricted focus on getting the same role as men in a male-shaped labour market; they include and highlight other concerns that had before seen as mere private issues, scandalizing local environments and systems that before and after socialist times showed little interest in the manifold challenges of care and the difficulties to get to an upgrading of concerns with new ways of working and family life in public and policy agendas. These and other innovative projects and initiatives we selected have been eager with finding new forms of organizing debates, deliberation processes and publicity in order to establish finally a new consensus on priorities and agendas. Among such examples the Maggio 12 Initiative in Milan (Italy) has been one of the most impressive ones. It aimed at bringing together concerned citizens, experts, politicians, professionals and administrators in an organized deliberation process on a new agenda for dealing with children and childhood.

# 2.3.3 Building issue related coalitions and partnerships

Coalitions, partnerships and alliances can be seen as more intense and dense forms of networking that are often concerned with raising or upgrading an issue. Establishing such kind of actorship, that is at once unified and plural, can be seen as an important innovative element in policy making and participating in governance. Besides examples from the field of urban housing and neighbourhood revitalization, an SI already mentioned such as the Foundation Ambrosiano in Milan gives a good example, knitting together stakeholders from quite different social and political areas.

# 2.4. Innovations in modes of working and financing

When innovation means to deal differently with a given challenge or pressure this must often entail a way to accept and live with worsening material conditions. This tends to increase the anyway huge imbalance between ambitions on the one and conditions and means on the other hand. Therefore innovative elements like flexible team work are hard to disentangle from the mere acceptance of conditions where it is impossible to offer some basic degree of job security.

# 2.4.1 Flexicurity in working contracts; levels of institutionalization and security below traditional standards

People working in projects and earning their money there may enjoy an atmosphere of creativity and trust-based relationships that allow for many of the various co-operators to "plug in" just for a while and to accept short term contracts, being sure that there is a possibility for a new contract

principles and should be taken up or rejected.

once circumstances allow. However, all these mixes between some attractive and other more frightening elements in the modes of working, between gains and sacrifices, are far from being chosen or shapeable by those who work there. The SI "Kreuzberg Acts" from Berlin (Germany) describes some of these recurrent dilemmas. E.g. Lok.a.Motion, a social enterprise organisation

# 2.4.2 Different working collectives – professional teams and voluntary commitments as part of the projects and approaches

that is counselling local business and start-ups by interweaving this with community development, operates with very few permanent staff and much ad-hoc hired experts; however it does so in order to get sufficient leeway to decide whether a certain project actually suits to their key professional

The arrangements for cooperation in SIs are much more diversified than in the public or business sector, including not only various forms of casual paid cooperation but as well many forms of voluntary and civic contributions, reaching from short term activism over to regular unpaid volunteering with a long-term perspective, from "hands on" volunteer work over to constant inputs by civic engagement in a board. Kinds of "working fields" are taking shape that link paid work, volunteering and civic engagement. It is remarkable, how much the demarcation lines between those who operate inside and those that get addressed as co-producers are often blurring. An illustrative example standing for similar others is an initiative like "Bimbo chiama bimbo" (Child calls Child) in Brescia (Italy); here, voluntary commitment and community work is both in quantitative and qualitative terms more important than the contribution of paid staff

#### 2.4.3 A professionalism that combines formerly fragmented knowledge

The kind of professional to be found in many of the innovative projects and initiatives has to manage tasks that often escape traditional professions and the divisions of labour they imply; professionals in the innovations have to learn to dialogue with addressees, co-citizens and volunteers; they are sometimes simultaneously specialists, entrepreneurs and managers. This kind of re-professionalization processes may e. g. concern architects that work simultaneously as community organizers and mediators. The SI example of supporting housing self-renovation in Lille (France) "Companion Builders" (Les compagnons bâtisseurs) managing, training and supervising, the implementation of such a process in a region where such practices have been like elsewhere marginal and unprofessional, gives a good example.

#### 2.4.4 Short term and time-limited funding, combining resources from different stakeholders

Many if not most of the SIs we dealt with are based on a multiplicity of resources and their combination; their mix may vary and often state-financing may be the most important component; but mostly there is a degree of (financial) co-responsibility of other organizations from the civil society or the business sector; furthermore the funding arrangements are very often precarious and limited in time. Here once again innovative elements mix with hardships one would like to lower or avoid. Interesting examples of the possibilities opened up and the restrictions that are found are given e.g. by the SI "Job explorers" in Berlin (Germany) that matches a. o. money from the chamber of industry and commerce and the local labour market office for programs that build bridges between schools, their young apprentices and local employers.

# 2.5. Innovations concerning the entity of (local) welfare-systems

The WILCO project has operated with the task of looking at the possible contributions of SIs for changes and developments in local welfare *systems*. We have understood, that by this label consciously more is addressed than just the local welfare-*state* institutions. Speaking about a welfare system usually means to include besides the local welfare state/the municipality the welfare related roles and responsibilities from the third sector, from the market sector and from the community and family sphere. The cases of social innovations we have looked at testify the mutual relations that exist between all of these four components of a (local) welfare system – and the ways they change.

#### 2.5.1 Reaching out to all sectors of local welfare systems; a lesser state focus

Even though the impact of state funding and backing for the SIs that we studied varies very much, one can make the general statement that they are concerned with establishing relations to all of the sectors and that the respective organisations then often take a "hybrid" character. Once again, one can argue that most SIs would like to see more state and municipal support; but one can as well presume that they would reject to get incorporated into the public sector. Therefore it can be argued that the SIs can be caught best by concepts of welfare that are based on a consciously worked out mix and pluralism of actors, resources and responsibilities. Needless to say that the share of state-public welfare contributions, of various kind of third sector organisations, reaching from associations to social enterprises, from NGOs to community networks and finally the level of corporate social responsibility is a very conflictual matter. Such conflicts are not only concerning ideas and finances but as well power.

#### 2.5.2 Aiming at less standardized, more diverse and localized welfare arrangements

Innovation gets difficult, if not impossible, wherever a right to act, organise and provide differently is negated; this can be the case both in big private business organisations, steered centrally and in respective market sectors, controlled by oligopolies of big business. Therefore those who want to give social innovations a more important role will have to allow for degrees of decentralisation, diversity, difference and moreover possibilities for unconventional mergers between what is usually separated. Moreover, supporting innovation means to go for arrangements that allow for a new balance between equal standards to be guaranteed and a diversity of localized arrangements. Good examples for the tasks and problems in interweaving and balancing concerns with universalism and diversity can be found e.g. in the example of striving for the right of a municipality to get a status that allows for developing its own options for occupational integration strategies (see e.g. the "Optionskommune" in Münster as one of many municipalities in Germany that opted for local responsibility instead of being part of an integrated central service system).

## 2.5.3 Upgrading the community component in mixed welfare systems

Given the fact that quite often the community-sphere is subsumed under a "third sector" of voluntary associations in society, excluding family relationships and rather informal neighbour-hood--communities from such a view, it is all the more important to see that developing innovative forms and functions of community is an important trait of many social innovations. Good examples for the intertwining of the public and community sphere and their sharing of responsibilities for care are given by the example of the Neighbourhood Cafes in Lille (France) which open up tasks and concerns with family life to the community; others are the Neighbourhood companies where a housing corporation in Amsterdam (Netherlands) decided to support community organizing in their housing areas under reconstruction. It should certainly be noted, that many SIs are in a way challenging an understanding of welfare, wherein community is seen as a rather parochial element to be substituted stepwise by more state-public, professionalized and completely freely chosen "voluntary" elements.

# 2.5.4 Integrating economic and social logics

Differently to the aforementioned point the integration of social and economic logics is a much better established concern in the debates on the profile of future welfare systems. The creeping economisation of all spheres and an increasingly productivist attitude, that rates all social actions and relations mainly with respect to their measurable economic effects, is just one side of the coin. The adverse side may be found in the debate about the welfare state as a "social investment state" (Morel, Palier and Palme 2012), modernizing public welfare by an approach that argues with the positive economic by-effects of social policy interventions in education, family support, occupational and social integration. Those SIs that e.g. in urban revitalization try to interweave active participation of people as co-producers and co-decision-makers with public and private investments can be seen in such a social investment perspective of societal development.

# 2.5.5 Integrating welfare and urban politics – a way of upgrading the impact of local governments

Policy fields that are usually excluded from the welfare system, such as environmental policies or cultural activities, are important stages for socially innovative developments. The two examples of innovations in our sample that are linked with the urban gardening movement, the "Gardens of Life" from Varazdin (Croatia) and the "Prinzessinnengärten" from Berlin (Germany) point at the role of this urban element in environmental politics. This leads over to the important policy field of spatial planning and development – be it on the level of regions, cities or neighbourhoods. The innovative element consists in establishing an essential link between urban transformation and social intervention, something quite new in local politics and based on merging knowledge and professionals from diverse fields (architects, economists, educators and social workers). A good example is the "Omradesprogrammet" which aims at lifting several districts in Malmö (Sweden) by the cooperation of "resource groups" such as for city development, the elderly, young people, culture and recreation and last not least labour market and economic growth. Not by accident our collection of social innovations, deemed as important and promising by local experts, is in large parts located at the intersection of welfare and urban development. By tradition local and urban politics have been on the minor ranks of the systems of public policy making. This should change as e.g. Barber (2013) has recently argued.

#### 3 Conclusive remarks: Welfare politics and social innovation- bridging the gaps

In this paper we have presented what we found out about recurrent patterns of approaches and instruments of local SIs. It has been done in a way that suggests that such patterns may as well become useful tools and elements in the established welfare systems themselves. As it has been argued in the introduction, public welfare policies could do more than just using SIs—they could learn from them. For conceiving an interplay between SIs and welfare politics that can grow and develop, broader issues, such as welfare discourses (Schmidt 2010), matter much, i.e. the way key actors and the public understand the nature and tasks of welfare policies and what that means for the place "social innovation" gets. In this respect four points have a central importance.

# 3.1 Learning about the history of welfare as a history social innovations

A lot of social policy text books have a narrow focus just on state-policies, debates and decisions on reforms within state-institutions, where the societal outside just comes in by social movements and lobbies as pressure groups that try to influence the contents of state decisions on welfare. When it comes to welfare provision, typically one finds in textbooks like that of Esping-Andersen (2002, 11) only the state, the market and the family as the only three pillars. Civil society, contributing to new and innovative welfare arrangements not only by participation in the decision-making process but as well by creating and preserving all kind of social services is missing. There has always been an important role of many movements and organisations in inventing and creating welfare arrangements of their own - mutuals in the field of social security, cooperatives as early "social enterprises", voluntary associations bringing up and running all kind of services. This rich history of inventions, innovation and creation throughout Europe (Evers and Laville 2004) was not only about predecessors of the "real thing" - state-based social security and service systems - but it entails a voluntary, non-profit and community sector where up until today social innovation plays an important role. Speaking about welfare systems and welfare mixes (Evers/Wintersberger 1990; Evers and Guillemard 2012; Jenson 2012) that encompass this "third sector" rather than just about state-welfare is one important mind opener when discussing potential links between SIs and welfare.

# 3.2 Rethinking the balances between equality and diversity

In various ways historical welfare policies have cared for more equality in society. People should be able to have access to the same institutions and facilities, be it in health, social support services or education. This was to be guaranteed both in urban and rural areas and the same quality and procedural standards were to safeguard this, exerting as well a pedagogical influence on users and citizens. This idea of equal provision was mostly linked with rather hierarchical systems of

decision-making and administration. However, the respective uniform and centralised school and health systems but likewise centrally installed workfare services and the attitudes of their professionals and partisans give little space for social innovations. The latter need by definition rights and rooms to do differently; they often build on the specificity of local contexts and traditions, something that is seen in a conventional welfare perspective but as well by system managers often with mistrust. How to balance the need for standardized and uniform regulations and the claims on rights and spaces for trying out something new and different? To what degree e.g. different and new forms of schools and education should be allowed to grow and get supported? *How can innovation and diversity get amalgated with reliability and equality*? These are questions the community of welfare researchers just begins to reflect (see e.g. Anttonen, Häikiö and Stefánsson 2012).

# 3.3 Between state steering and laissez faire: bridging social innovations and welfare reforms by programmes and pilot schemes

Much of the traditional policy making was guided by the concept of building top down comprehensive institutions and regulations. Social inventions had to make it either to the top of political and professional elites that designed far reaching reforms or to seek niches at the margins. There has been however always a second line of tradition in policy making that has probably won more influence in the last decade, especially on local levels: *nudging change and preparing reform* by time limited programs that take up an innovation, support it for a limited time-span, evaluate the outcomes and decide then about a reform with a more long-lasting and encompassing design. Among the social innovations we have studied many of them are addressed by and part of such programs, trying out new ways of urban revitalization, family-support, occupational and social integration. A good deal of social innovations may get mainstreamed then in recurrent processes; however not all programs succeed, different schemes mirror different concepts and priorities, changes stay often incomplete. But could not such a diversity and constant incompleteness mirror better the needs of society than the dream of ultimate grand designs? A metaphor can be found in the history of urban planning and its often frightening attempts for constructing completely new cities following throughout one logic and design.

# 3.4 Present politics of welfare reform and policies in support of social innovations – to be thought together even when they do not go together

Each of the overarching discourses on the future, economic and societal priorities that coexist presently in our societies gives different meanings, roles and incentives to social innovations; mostly they lie beyond what the initiators may think and intend. In the time of banking crisis and the widespread call for a further slimming down especially of those parts of welfare benefits and services that can be seen as consumptive and protective rather than productive (expenses for social protection, elderly care etc.) a focus on social innovations and their support by public authorities may well mask a bad deal. The effects of waning labour market regulations, more in-work-poverty, less chances for getting into job markets, less old age security etc. probably cause more des-integration in the first place then what can be cured after all by socially innovative services that try to empower people and communities. When it comes to social cohesion, one should dare to think about the net-balance of the present down-building of the big and basic welfare systems and regulations of protection and the diversity of attempts to innovate services and local networks. How do e.g. EU policies for economic and welfare modernisation (European Commission 2010,) and the planned special programs for stimulating social innovations (European Commission 2013) go together? If one wants to avoid a rather cynical statement about local social innovations, as representing in face of the structural problems of welfare democracies essentially a "mission impossible", then thinking about the tensions between given policies of "welfare reform" and policies for "upscaling" social innovations is indispensable. Are the communities of social policy researchers and of researchers on social innovations prepared for that?

What welfare politics can learn from them. Findings from a transnational study.

#### References

Anttonen, A./Häikiö, L. and Stefánsson, K. (2012): Welfare state, universalism and diversity, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Barber, b. (2013): If mayors ruled the world. Dysfunctional nations, rising cities. Yale: Yale University Press

Bonoli, G. (2005): The politics of the new social policies: providing coverage against new social risks in mature welfare states, Policy & Politics, 33(3), 431-449

Boyle, D./Coote, A./Sherwood, C./Slay, J. (2010): Right here, right now. Taking co-production into the mainstream, available via http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/ right-here-right-now

Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA) (2010): Empowering people, driving change. Social Innovation in The European Union, available via http://ec.europa.eu/bepa/pdf/ publications\_pdf/social\_innovation.pdf

European Commission (2010): EUROPE2020 a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, available via http:// eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:20 10:2020:FIN:EN:PDF

European Commission (2013): Guide to social innovation, available via http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/documents/10157/47822/Guide%20to%20Social%20Innovation.pdf

Esping-Andersen, G. (2002): Why we need a new welfare state, New York: Oxford University Press.

Evers, A./Wintersberger, H. (eds.) (1990): Shifts in the Welfare Mix - Their Impact on Work, Social Services and Welfare Policies. Frankfurt/Boulder: Campus/Westview 1990

Evers, A./Guillemard, A. M. (2012): Reconfiguring welfare and reshaping citizenship. In Evers, A./Guillemard, A.M. (Eds) Social Policy and Citizenship, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 359-388

Evers, A./Laville, J.-L. (2004): The third sector in Europe, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar

Jenson, J. (2012): Redesigning citizenship regimes after neoliberalism: moving towards social investment, In Morel, N./Pailier, B./

Palme, J. (Eds) Towards a social investment welfare state? Ideas, Policies and challenges, Bristol: Policy Press, pp.

Morel, N./Pailier, B./Palme, J. (Eds) Towards a social investment welfare state? Ideas, Policies and challenges, Bristol: Policy Press

Moulaert, F. (2010): Social Innovation and Community Development. Concepts, Theories and Challenges. In Moulaert, F./Martinelli, F./Swygedouw, E./González, S. (Eds.) Can neigbourhoods save the city?, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 4-16

Mulgan, G. (2006): The Process of Social Innovation, Innovations I (2) pp. 145-162

Osborne, St. P./Brown, L. (2011): Innovation, public policy and public services delivery in the UK: The word that would be king?, Public Administration 89 (4), pp. 1335-1350

Phills, J. (2008): Rediscovering social innovation, Stanford Social Innovation Review, 6(4), pp. 36–43

Schmidt, V. A. (2010): Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth 'new institutionalism', European Political Science Review 2 (1), 1-25.

Wagner, P. (1994): A Sociology of Modernity: Liberty and Discipline, London: Routledge