



Advisory Committee

Social innovation in Europe: what relation with solidarity economy?

Towards a plural European vision of social innovation

Social innovation is on today's [political] agenda. In Europe, the year 2009 was dedicated to creativity and innovation; in 2010, the "union for innovation" initiative was promulgated by the Commission; in 2011, "Social Innovation Europe" was launched. The European Union introduced social innovation in its strategic programming towards 2020; the structural funds include it, as training programs managed by the Directorate of Employment and Social Affairs.

Nevertheless, the popularity of social innovation goes hand in hand with the polysemy of the term. To clarify the different uses, we will proceed in four phases. As a first step, we will insist on the importance of placing social innovation at the heart of a debate, dating back over two centuries, between two conceptions of solidarity. The assumption here is that social innovation is a reformulation and update of this debate, which will encourage us to think in a long-term perspective. In a second step, we will briefly review the origins of the term social innovation and the historical context of its emergence. Thirdly, we will identify two contrasting models of support for social innovation that explain a number of contemporary ambiguities. Finally in a fourth stage, the challenges of appropriate policy will be discussed.

Back to history: the two concepts of solidarity

Since the beginning of the 19th century, when the incompleteness of the market to fully structure modern society and to articulate and integrate all its dimensions (economic, social, cultural and political) became apparent, the concept of solidarity emerged. But this solidarity was immediately separated into two approaches: democratic and philanthropic. In a way this provided on one hand a strong definition of solidarity and on the other, a weak one.

What characterized the strong, democratic solidarity when it emerged? It aimed to expand democracy that had been won at political level, to all economic and social life, fighting inequalities and seeking social justice through forms of self-organization and a commons' oriented approach (Bollier, 2014; Ostrom, 2010).

Incidentally commons are not just property, but are co-activities, collectively conducted activities that enable people to progressively define rules. Learning and democratic forms of socialization allow new institutions to emerge. They fall under associationism, extended by cooperatives and mutual societies characterized by their willingness to combine protection and emancipation. So there was a democratic solidarity movement that emanated from these societies in the first half of the nineteenth century.

This democratic solidarity, this strong solidarity was rapidly challenged by the introduction of the ideology of Progress. Another way to consider solidarity emerged: it was more benevolent, paternalistic, and thus also moralistic. We therefore gradually turned towards a philanthropic concept of solidarity that was no longer

intended to claim equality, only to fight poverty. Solidarity was equated with the problem of a particular group, those affected by poverty, and we lost the understanding that it was originally a principle for the whole society.

The clash between these two forms of solidarity continued for much of the 19th century, into what we might call the triumph of democratic solidarity, but in a modified version that was no longer that of collective self-organization and Commons, but that of the Welfare State, which called for the implementation of public policies. If one refers to the plurality of economic principles put forward in a substantive approach (Polanyi 2011) that refutes the reduction of the economy to the Market, it is possible to assert that democratic solidarity, first based on its egalitarian reciprocity, later manifested itself by the public redistribution, while philanthropic solidarity is a gift without reciprocity and a private redistribution.

At the end of the 19th century, the institutional architecture that dominated the 20th century, and especially after WWII, was established. Social innovation was however understood as a signal of the destabilization of this combination between Market and State, as it proposed a new formulation of solidarity.

The introduction of social innovation

Here we look at the conditions for the emergence of the concept of social innovation at the end of the 20th century. As noted previously, its appearance is linked to the crisis of the synergy between Market and State that had previously existed. But it would be fairer to speak of "crisis" in the plural, as we can distinguish two crises that occurred and became established.

The first is a somewhat forgotten crisis of a cultural nature. We could define it succinctly as the erosion of the ideology of progress. It manifested itself through the "new social movements", to use the terminology of the time, who questioned the remaining forms of domination in the welfare state, and that took the form of "providentialism". But we can also think of the criticism of the Westphalian Social State by the feminist movement or even of all of the new issues introduced by the ecological movement that criticised the lack of limits and the headlong rush of the system. These dynamics over time became linked to changes in forms of public engagement, characterized by an emphasis on pragmatism, local action, concrete experiences, which in turn lead to a change of terminology. We then see a shift from the "new social movements" to "social innovations in civil society". Many of these initiatives for social innovation therefore identify with solidarity economy that can be considered at a certain level as a re-politicization of the social economy and as a reaction against its earlier trivialization (economic, social and political).

All the issues that had been raised in the course of this cultural crisis remain topical, since none have been truly resolved. However, they were overtaken by the economic crisis that corresponds to a second conception of social innovation. It is no longer perceived in relation to citizen initiatives, but in relation to economic performance. With the growth slowdown in the 1980s, the idea that technological innovation contributes to economic recovery began to spread and became a major issue for political scientists. Furthermore, broadening the understanding of technological innovation led to the idea that a condition for success is the transition to organizational innovation, integrating the concern for the organization's coherence so that the technological "insertion" is not rejected.

Finally – relying on a number of currents, that put forward the concepts of national systems of innovation, of local production systems or actor-network theory – there is the recognition that innovation is not just technological or organizational, but also inter-institutional in a given territory and thus is a deeply social process. We can thus see that the difference between the two approaches explains why we now have some difficulty understanding what is happening in terms of social innovation. Furthermore, over time, there has been a certain crossover between these two distinct ways of looking at social innovation. Thus, on one hand we see citizens' initiatives that were initiated as a result of democratic issues, that have now evolution marked by the significance of entrepreneurship. On the other hand, all the questions that have been posed about economic performance have extended the field of "scientific technological society", that have led to the emergence of new problems, be about politics of participation or the citizens' scientific movement. These two meanings of solidarity and social innovation have however led us at the beginning of 21st century to establishing two production regimes, control and ownership of social innovation. They correspond to two different models of society.

Social innovation and weak solidarity

The first is a model of social innovation and weak solidarity. In it, social innovation stems from a new framing in the Market. That is to say, market competition is quite decisive in the recognition of the relevance of social innovations that are evaluated on their effectiveness and considered on the basis of their degree of financial

return and commercial ability to be self-financing. There is now a penetration of the commercial model that impacts the issue of poverty as well as the environment. It depends on the privileged tools of partnerships with large private enterprises and the re-internalisation of externalities, such as the market's rights to pollute. Obviously, social innovation in a perspective of weak solidarity, also follows the direction of a plea for the capacity of capitalism to reform itself as well as its moralization. There is a whole array of new institutions dedicated to such a conception of social innovation: corporate social and environmental responsibility, entrepreneurial citizenship, *venture philanthropy*, the *bottom of the pyramid* as a marketing adapted to the market for the poor, *social impact bonds*, or even *social business*.

They suggest an institutional reconfiguration for private action, a kind of privatization of action and social policies. An independent sector that brings together civil society and virtuous companies opposed to the Public sector is considered to be essentially a generator of perverse effects. This approach to private action is more available and closer to the public; it is opposed to State bureaucracy and has influenced discussions, and has now contributed to dissociating solidarity from democratic decision-making.

Social innovation and strong solidarity

The second scenario is based on a model in which social innovation no longer has a strictly restorative function. It is also transformative, giving it its full complexity. In this second sense, it is not simply a matter of responding to needs, but also to aspirations towards a new paradigm of social change; it includes a reflection on the intermediate institutions, as well as on institutional and political mediation that is required to enable social innovation to transform the institutional framework.

This conception of social innovation combines two registers of democratic solidarity: one based on egalitarian reciprocity and the other on public redistribution. This leads us to conclude that social innovation passes through the reconfiguration of public issues, the public nature of citizens' initiatives, as determined in solidarity economy that advocates for the consolidation of representative and deliberative democracies.

Furthermore, plural democracy must be linked to a plural economy. We thus return to the fundamental contribution of Karl Polanyi to which we can add that of Eleonor Ostrom on the question of the Commons. Re-embedded in the question of a new conception of the non-State public sector through the plural economy, the challenge is to proceed to rebalancing economic activity, within a problematic of hybridization.

Thus, what is fundamentally different in this second scenario of social innovation and that leads to social transformation thanks to its strong solidarity, is that he suggested considering the relationship between the institutional framework and public action. It is therefore no longer a question of returning to private action, but rather about approaches that enrich public action to renew and redemocratize democracy.

The challenges of a policy of social innovation

All the forms of social innovation need to be mobilized to preserve integration and cohesion in Europe. Some emerging trends however focus institutional support for those related to the version of weak solidarity. In relation to this, it is necessary to mention the importance of what the strong form of solidarity represents, as expressed in the solidarity economy. All the constituent networks of RIPESS Europe therefore call for a thorough consultation with the European authorities, so that all member initiatives, of which some examples are mentioned above by country, are taken into account in the policies for social innovation.

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Some examples of social innovations in the strong version of solidarity from social and solidarity networks

Social innovation, solidarity economy and food sovereignty (URGENCI)

The European Union's approach to agriculture and food almost totally overlooks the importance of social innovation linked to solidarity economy and food sovereignty. Yet there are several aspects that need to be taken into account: There is an embryonic emergence of Local Food Policy Councils at Local Authority level to develop coherent sustainable local food systems that include a solidarity dimension, are fully participatory and are governed by CSOs together with Local Authorities.

Such structures enable civil society's interests (peasant farmers, conscious consumers and institutions) to work together towards solidarity local procurement and also making an alternative sustainable, local, solidarity-based offer of food available to inhabitants, and linking urban and rural inhabitants. One key aspect of this is Community Supported Agriculture. Urgenci, the global CSA network has been working at European level on a project to further local Food Policy Councils. Another aspect of social innovation that links solidarity economy and food sovereignty in CSAs is the possibility of sliding scales of payment based on CSA members' needs. This is practiced in many CSAs throughout Europe, using diverse approaches. Food in this way becomes part of the Commons and not a commodity. This is also part of the principle of agroecology, as witnessed in the Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology in Mali in February 2015.

In Romania, one of the most significant initiatives is the solidarity partnerships between consumers and small producers (ASAT). Such partnerships allow the development of an economy of solidarity, risk-sharing practices between consumers and producers, promoting a fair price for small producers and a more large debate about an alternative economic model.

Social innovation in Europe: what relation with Solidarity Economy? (European Network of Social Integration Enterprises - ENSIE)

The European Network of Integration Enterprises has gathered a number of experiences in Europe.

Some examples related to social innovation:

ACT Grupa (Croatia): launching a social and ethical fund/bank in order to support social economy development in Croatia

FEICAT (Spain): An original partnership between the Catalan work integration social enterprises, the Mayor of Barcelona and the Foundation « la Caixa »: the integration of homeless people in Barcelona

Groupe Terre (Belgium): The matrix of participative management in social economy

COORACE (France): An innovative tool to measure the territorial impact of Work Integration Social Enterprises in France

The project 3E4SE, European Ethical Financial Ecosystem for local partnerships supporting new Social Enterprises

RISS : The field of social enterprises is growing every year. In Romania exists a national network of **working integration social enterprise (RISS)**, part of the international network ENSIE. In Romania, doesn't exist financial facilities for WISE. The social enterprises are developed in sectors as: bakery, tailoring, making decorative products (even hand-made products), recycling, agricultural farms.

Social innovation and solidarity in Greece (*Solidarity 4 All*)

The grassroots social solidarity movement in Greece is one of the most important developments and forms of resistance and people's self-organisation to emerge in the last five years. The more distant roots of this movement can be traced to the antiglobalisation movement, the defence of public spaces by local communities, to the growing culture of self-organised social centres. However, the transformative experiences that triggered the rise of the solidarity movement were the multifarious struggles of Greek society against the Troika and the bailout programs, especially the occupation of the squares in the summer of 2011.

Moreover, by creating a different kind of social relationship between people, by fostering participation and real democracy and by practicing self-management in various areas of social and economic life, the solidarity movement has managed to become one of the most important, innovative, and hopeful outcomes of the peoples' mobilisation and resistance. Solidarity structures are active in the areas of health, food, education and culture, housing and debt, legal support, social and alternative economy, workers and immigrants' solidarity, and international solidarity.

The solidarity structures are organised as open assemblies with horizontal decision-making processes. In this way, they function as spaces for real democratic and self-organising practices, aiming to enhance the participation and contribution of all on an equal basis – both those yet able to donate but mainly by energising those who approach the solidarity structures because they are in need. It is important to note that participation is the leading principle in the practice of grassroots solidarity and the main source of its resources.

Its objective is not to substitute the collapsing public welfare system, or to only build alternatives within a system of inequalities. On the contrary, it seeks to contribute to the development of a different concept and response to people's common needs - for everyone and with the participation of everyone - by instigating practices, spaces and processes that will facilitate change at every level, from the bottom up. A practice where ideas are put into action and thereby tested, spawn a whole repertoire of experience, with potentially emancipatory and empowering possibilities.

Health Solidarity

Solidarity Health Centres: 40 (16 in Attica and 24 in the rest Greece)

Volunteers in 16 health centres in Attica: 750 (median 46 per solidarity clinic)

Visits per month in 16 health centres in Attica: 2000 per clinic

Food solidarity structures & solidarity kitchens

Food solidarity structures: September 2012: 12 / December 2014: 47.

Solidarity parcels distributed fortnightly: February 2013: 1987, March

2014: 3874, September 2014: 4318

Participation per solidarity structure: core group 26, plus extra 30 volunteers per action.

Solidarity kitchens: 21 (12 in Attika and 9 in the rest of the country)

“Without middlemen” networks

“Without middlemen” distribution groups: 45 (Athens: 26 – rest Greece: 19)

People involved (on average per group): 45 (core group 19 / extra 29 in actions)

Number of consumers: 655 per distribution

Households supported in Athens: 2169

Number of producers that participate: 23 per distribution

Volume of distributed products (estimate): more than 5000 tones (2012-2014)

Social and solidarity economy

500 new cooperatives, 15 alternative currencies, 20 time banks

Activities of SSE initiatives in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg (*Network Post-Solikon 2015 - Allemagne*)

We are a network of people and initiatives that come together in different constellations to promote diverse activities and projects of alternative economy (such as solidarity economy, economy for the common goods and contribution economy among others). The network arose out of the alliance of projects and persons organizing and supporting the Week of Change and Conference on Solidarity Economy and Transformation in September

2015 (short: Solikon2015) in Berlin in cooperation with the *Forum Solidarische Ökonomie e.V. in Kassel* (short: Forum SÖ*), das *kooperativ e.V.* and other initiatives and people of Solidarity Economy and related movements.

Specific projects finished or in progress:

Week of Change - with tours to more than 80 practitioners and projects of alternative economies in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg (in 2015 with almost 1000 visitors) in summer 2016 - www.solikon2015.org/wandelwoche

Workcamp Economic Change (Workcamp Wirtschaftswandel, www2015) - at the University of Sustainable Development in Eberswalde, Brandenburg, 20th-22nd of November 2015 with more than 40 activists of alternative economics living in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg - www.solikon2015.org/region

Workcamp Economic Change (Workcamp Wirtschaftswandel, www2016-1) - at Projekthaus Potsdam, Brandenburg, 11th-13th of March 2016, continuation of first specific projects of the www2015 that are for example:

Decentralised Logistics - Formation and development of decentralised logistics in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg with the focus on CO2 efficiency and alternative transport vehicles such as cargo bikes in cooperation with the cooperatives and companies Velogista, Fahrwerk, Fairmondo, Gekko and others

Common agricultural property - alternative models of property in the agricultural use of land supporting regional food sovereignty and decentralised and sustainable economics, in cooperation with agriculturists, Mietshäuser Syndikat Berlin-Brandenburg, Network on Solidarity Agriculture Berlin-Brandenburg, Bündnis Junge Landwirtschaft, Ökonauten eG, Kulturland eG, Zukunftsstiftung Landwirtschaft, BioBoden Genossenschaft and others

Science and best practice - connecting alternative economical practices and science; organization and support of events and content-based, methodological concepts, as well as specific projects promoting the integration of alternative concepts on economics, living and education in the disciplines of research institutions and universities; interlacing research and specific and practical needs of Solidarity Economy projects and initiatives in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg; in cooperation with Alice-Salomon University Berlin, Technical University Brandenburg and the University for Sustainable Development Eberswalde

Public Relations and Education - enhancing visibility of existing and emerging initiatives, circles and projects of alternative economics and activating supporters in politics, churches, universities, workers unions, NGO's (...) in the region of Berlin-Brandenburg by organizing events like the Week of Change, work- and barcamps and fares of critical consumption; mapping of existing projects and activities in collaboration with imwandel.net and Projekthaus Potsdam

Direct Import - import and direct distribution of food starting with fruits and olive oil from small organic farms, cooperatives and networks. So far from Sicily and Greece, perspective also from countries of the Global South

In progress: research on opportunities and influences as well as requirements for developing models of an Economy of Contribution (Beitragsökonomie) for supporting self-administrated and regional-based structures that contribute to the empowerment of social, economical and political discriminated persons.

Social innovation and solidarity economy in the artistic and cultural field (Fce)

(Union Fédérale d'Intervention des Structures Culturelles (UFISC) - France)

The artistic and cultural initiatives gathered in UFISC (+/- 2500 and 15 organizations) participate in the development of solidarity economy by combining a wide range of activities: production and dissemination of shows or events, cultural activities in a region in direct contact with the population, artistic creation of spaces for the public and citizens, sharing of knowhow and support for amateurs as they develop their practice. Their collective and artisan dimensions position the work and the people at the centre of the projects they defend, not money. These structures have arisen from private and independent initiatives.

The main pillar of their commitment is the defense of cultural diversity as a fundamental right, and as a basic element of people's dignity. Those initiatives rely on the principles most specifically stated in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, in the Fribourg Declaration on Cultural Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – advocating for the creation and freedom of expression to be positively endorsed and secured. This commitment more generally tends to enhance civil society initiatives as well as a local

sustainable development in an economical, social and cultural perspective. It aims at building a society based on people participation and exchanges.

Therefore those initiatives rely on social and solidarity economy. This posture referring to a civic disposition is a matter of meaning: the SSE enterprises' peculiarities are related to the fact that they flourish in the nonprofit private sector. They favor partnerships in their relations with local governments, taking into consideration this environment - from local to global - consistently investigating what contributes to culture. They develop local innovative dynamics that generates wealth and cooperation, developing social utility experiments. Hence, contribution and cooperation become real practices, processes in action, people dignity being at the core, and thus renewing the theory and patterns for the development of diversity and wealth.

For those initiatives, social utility must be transformative by addressing aspirations. It must take into consideration intermediary institutions, institutional and political mediation that are essential for the transformation of institutional patterns through social innovation. This is how cultural initiatives want to participate in coconstruction of public actions, of public policies, and of general interest. This conception of social innovation connects with the two dimensions of democratic solidarity that are equal reciprocity and public redistribution. A pluralist democracy, composed of civic initiatives, people participation and bottom up principles, must be associated with a pluralist economy.

Those cultural structures identify with the Manifesto for another economy for art and culture, which illustrates their practices' characteristics, the values they rely on, and their commitments for a more participative democratic organisation and for a solidarity economy.

<http://www.ufisc.org/1-ufisc/manifeste.html>

http://www.ufisc.org/images/Contenu_Ufisc/UFISC_Manifesto_EN.pdf