SIMRA Workshop: Social Innovators in Rural Areas

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Session C: "How can public policies support social innovation in rural areas?"

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Programme of the Workshop:

Welcome and introduction: • **On the role of policies in social innovation, and**   • **Goals of the WS**
Getting a common view on expectations.   **What are the participants' expectations? Keywords to be developed in triads of participants.**
Introduction to the work: **The role of political frameworks and public policies in respect to social innovation initiatives**
Group work: Groups of 4-5   • **What are the experiences of social innovation initiatives we know with institutional/political frameworks and public policies? (Which frameworks, which policies?)**   • **In which way do they hinder or further these initiatives? (Furthering and hindering influence factors)**   • **Who should do what to strengthen the furthering elements and to curb the hindering ones? (Recommendations for institutional/political frameworks and policies)**
Policy recommendations presented and discussed in plenary by the audience
Wrapping up and thanks   • **What we have learnt**   • **How this relates to the work of SIMRA**   • **Implications for policy practice**

Expectations collected amongst the participants about the workshop:

- Social Innovation (SI) needs more recognition.
- Policy fields relevant for Social Innovation need to be mapped.
- Internal relations within a Social Innovation are important.
- Best practices are to be mentioned, something which works locally.
- Integration of policies at all scales and sectors must be discussed in the workshop.
- Multi-actor approach is important.
- A critical point is the motivation of civil servants and the question of how they can be motivated for SI?
- Feedback and tweaks are important elements in policies for SI: a) in the delivery of funding, b) policy "tweaks" (= small nudges for change) for instance in environmental preservation policy.
- Non-monetary support has to be considered.
- SI needs to be systematically dealt with at the local level.

Results on recommendations for institutional/political frameworks and policies:

1.) Creating policy frameworks for social innovation:

- There shall be agents at the interface between funding and the operations.
- Innovation brokers can be such agents. They are already active in some countries for EIP-Agri. At the national and regional levels there must be someone who is responsible is repeated.
- Third sector agencies could be portals to channel money; usually they operate within specific thematic fields; this needs to be considered, as Social Innovation is a cross-sectoral issue.
- Hubs are mentioned as a possibility for supporting process based Social Innovation.
- Public officials should receive trainings for a better understanding of Social Innovation processes.
- "Labs" could be organised by the national authorities at regional levels, they shall bring together people with certain needs and policy experts, also to embed the focus on Social Innovation within policies.
- Cultural diversity has to be taken into account. Some policy makers tend to get out of touch with wide parts of the population. Social innovation can emerge in policy gaps or niches, bringing forth new forms of organisation. Awareness rises, existing power constellations get questioned, new parties emerge, new movements and conflicts, then new policies, until new power balances (equilibria) emerge from the interaction between top-down and bottom-up.
- Silence and isolation in marginalized rural areas must be broken. There are growing groups of marginalized people standing at the very end of society, also in Europe. Hotlines and group counseling in social services must be installed, to prevent accidental or suicidal deaths.

2.) Ways to curb hindering factors for social innovation from side of policies:

- One example for the cross-sectoral features is the Italian social farming example, it is neither entirely agricultural nor social, somewhere between the chairs when it comes to public policy and "thinking in boxes".

- Others shall learn from the Italian social farming example; Ireland is mentioned in this respect, there is more lobbying needed. One funding model for instance could be the use of the patients' budgets. But also legislation is needed, such as regulations on who is eligible in practice.
- Hindering factors are most often the lack of legal frameworks and of sufficient revenues. This must be tackled.
- Legal systems should not be too narrow; the same applies to support schemes, strategies. There should be sufficient breadth of eligible structures to host Social Innovation initiatives (cooperatives, community trust funds, non-profit associations, charities….). For example, cooperatives are not so appropriate in the Scottish context, but there is the possibility to create a Community Development Trust instead; it is rather tailor-made for local communities.
- The present EIP framework was not relevant for rural social innovation, in the next period this might change.
- The ARKIS (the Agricultural and Rural Knowledge and Information System), as opposed to 'Agriculture only' in AKIS shall be strengthened.
- "Social economy policy" is the kind of policy that can help to rethink public policies.
- Any support by ways of funding must match the Social Innovation in its different phases, as there is a difference between the early stages versus the upscaling phases.
- There needs to be standards and criteria that promote Social Innovation.

3.) Needs and support for Social Innovation through public policies:

- LEADER and other funds shall also allow for smaller funding, so-called "seed-funding"; calls need to be simplified to become more adaptive, e.g. for social gardening activities, or so-called "community-fridges".
- The EU smart villages initiative is well suited to support civil society engagement via Social Innovation.
- Some initiatives have difficulties to find a contact person in order to make a project happen; examples were brought forward from Liechtenstein. Sometimes the policy steps only after the termination of a project have proven to be successful, but supportive policies are needed beforehand.
- Examples show that if for instance a local mayor is really into a project, then it thrives; sometimes there is funding, too; but this just holds for a short period of time; what happens afterwards? The question of sustainability is discussed. Projects need longer-term perspectives.
- As in the conference the day before, it is emphasized that it's the soil that has to be nurtured (the "innovation ecosystem"), not the plants (single projects).
- Support for "creativity" needs to become common ground, creativity has to be promoted.
- More support for networking activities is needed, in order to keep the projects and the exchange alive, also for upscaling.
- Social Innovation needs to be turned into a priority (and the respective means and resources shall be devoted)
- Increasing capacity must happen via dialogue rather than imposition.
- The European Green deal needs to be imbued with Social Innovation.
- There is the figure of a so-called "Hacker" in French social economic policies: a public agent nested in administrations who has the task to "rethink public policies" from scratch.,

(3)

Considerations of...

- Balance of power.
- Scale :
- Scope :
·

everyone

identify **blockages**

understand who
you are + what you
do

[internal]

[external]

Understanding
what you
are doing
+
make things
better.

Strength
Depth
Collaboration ··· equal partners ?

Do good + speak about it !
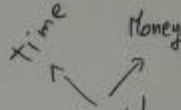
Do wrong + speak about it !

Actions

Change

3end

Who:

Recommendation

time   Money

→ Make social innov. a priority
→ Creating Social innovation Hub & Network
→ Identify a RESPONSIBLE PERSON
→ Evaluation MUST Be process-based and not output based
→ Multiactor Projects promotion
→ Development of standards to promote social innovation.
→ Scaling-out.

④ Recommendations

- Long-term approach in policy-making
- Evidence-based policy-making
  - proper indicators

- Cross-sectoral approach
  + Trans-disciplinary

- Consider cultural diversities

- Dialogue rather than imposing

- Increased capacity

- Inter-reg + ABDA

Reco

6

Q

(1) [LEADER] - small
Funding

(UK) → SEED-FUNDING → simplified
CALLS TO ADAPT
→ Social Gardening; Community Fridges

(2) Hard to find a contact
person (Liechtenstein)
the politics step in, when it
became successful.

Q
(2)
● No real support for.
Creating ..
⊖
● if e.g. a mayor is really
into it. How sustain
⊕

● scaling out [→ would be furthering]
people copy successful projects
→ policy can support networking

(3) ● make it
a priority
(=time and
money)

(3) (HUB) ● [process based]
● AT the national / regional
Public level someone that is responsible

3) Recommendations

- Funding/support should match the SI in its different phases (different in the early stages than in upscaling stages)

- There should be agents at the interface between funding and the operations.
  "Third sector agencies" as portals to channel public money.

  [funding balancing]

  3rd sector agency { they usually cover certain thematic fields (energy / land mgt. / forestry / also)

  SI

- Training of public agents re. processes of SI
- (FR) Labs which bring together the people with certain needs and policy experts ⟹ to devise customised policies ("social innovation in policies")

organised
by the national authorities at regional level

(FR) Social economy policy: "Hacker" "Rethink public policies"

3) Recommendations

— LEGAL SYSTEMS SHOULD HAVE SUFFICIENT BREADTH (not be to narrow)

independent structures ← providing sufficient diversity of eligible legal entities to host the initiative (structures)

e.g. Cooperatives in Scotland → not so adaptive
→ Community Development Trust is more tailor-made for local communities

▷ also the support schemes / strategies (rural)

AKIS → AAKIS   e.g. EIP are until now not ~~relevant~~ relevant for SI
→ This shall change (in farming there of is)

— What about "Cares"

⟹ social services (preventing accidental or suicidal deaths)
from hotline to group counseling
{ think about breaking silence & isolation }