



Social engagement

DOI:

[10.13140/RG.2.2.28787.84002](https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.28787.84002)

[Link to publication record in Manchester Research Explorer](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Amanatidou, E., Cox, D., & Gagliardi, D. (2018). *Social engagement: towards a typology of social innovation*. (MIOIR / MBS Working Paper Series – Working Paper ; Vol. 82). Alliance Manchester Business School, University of Manchester. <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.28787.84002>

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Social engagement: towards a typology of social innovation

MIOIR / MBS Working Paper Series – Working Paper 82

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March 2018

Abstract

Social innovation has seen several different interpretations and definitions in recent years. Either considered as innovation with a 'social twist', or a facet of social entrepreneurship, or an innovation type that has to be distinguished from other types, social innovation has been central in academic and policy discourses especially in the context of dealing with societal challenges. Given this increasing importance, the aim of this paper is to identify the special features of social innovation and thus clarify the fuzziness around the multiple definitions, conceptualisations and interpretations. In particular the development of a typology of social innovation types is attempted largely based on the role of society in the innovation cycle. The paper concludes with reflections on the analysis and policy implications.

Introduction

In recent years, the conceptualisation of social innovation has produced a number of definitions and interpretations, each with implications for social and economic development. Achieving some degree of clarity in the definition of social innovation proves not to be an easy task. As Benneworth et al. (2015) note, apart from the neglect of the social nature of innovation processes, the innovation debate is also facing a series of fuzzy conceptualisations; a) fuzziness between normative policy goals and objective scholarly understanding, b) fuzziness in the actual ontological foundations of the way social innovation is used between different disciplinary communities, c) fuzziness in the extent to which these concepts are concerned with innovation *stricto sensu*, and d) fuzziness inherent in different traditions of innovation studies which use the term 'social' somehow inappropriately.

Given the increasing importance of innovation in general and social innovation in particular, the aim of this paper is to identify the special features of social innovation and thus clarify the fuzziness around the multiple definitions, conceptualisations and interpretations surrounding the concept of social innovation. In doing so, the analysis looks at the rationales and main features behind the definitions and practices of social innovation, in trying to identify the differentiating factors of social innovations.

There is a strong need for clarity and precision to understand the different interpretations with which social innovation ideas are currently used. In doing so, the evolution of the term 'social' innovation' is studied through a historical overview (section 3), while special emphasis is also placed in the conceptualisation of the social dimension in social innovation (section 4). This is done in an attempt to understand and classify the different social innovation definitions. The plurality of definitions is not totally unstructured but reflects a number of characteristics that can be grouped to form a range of social innovation types. This is attempted in Section 5 based on the different reflections of the social dimension in the available definitions. Conclusions and further reflections are discussed in section 6 while the overall methodology applied is briefly presented in section 2.

1. Methodology

This study has been designed to draw theoretical insights from the extant literature on social innovation and corroborate/elaborate through the analysis of case studies. The literature on social innovation was obtained by scanning through main research databases; namely, the Web of Knowledge (Thomson Reuter) and Scopus. The search was complemented by search on Google Scholar which includes also official reports and relevant grey literature on the subject of our analysis.

The method was designed according to Greenhalgh et al (2004) and Greenhalgh et al (2005) systematic literature review. In detail, the 'sorting' activities have been implemented with the objective of identifying meta-narrative story-lines in order to tease out main components of the definition of social innovation. We found that social innovation is deriving from a broad set of scientific disciplines from economics, sociology, geography, environment and psychology. We then proceeded by analysing and discussing the story-lines emerging from these streams of the literature to build towards a common understanding of social innovation.

The literature review is complemented by research on social innovation cases available from on-line databases. We adopt a case study approach since case study research may be appropriate when the particular circumstances of a phenomena or a conceptualisation are to be studied within a real-life context and the objective of the investigation is to answer questions such as 'how' and 'why' specific classifications may contribute to the general understanding of a phenomenon (Yin, 2003). Moreover, the choice of multiple case studies can yield interesting insights for theory building especially when studied under the lens of a typology set out from the literature (Heisenhardt and Graeber, 2007, p 25). We do not rely on case studies criteria for statistical representativeness; rather, we consider them as focusing devices whose characteristics are representative of the categories of social innovations populating the typology developed (Bergek et al, 2008). They therefore constitute the evidence base of our conceptual framework.

The case studies were selected from a number of databases that began to emerge since 2010 focusing on 'social innovation' and some of which were created under the aegis of

The European Commission Framework Programmes. Amongst these we have consulted the Social Innovation Exchange¹ and Social Innovation Europe² as well as the cases studied by the Young Foundation³. As these databases have a variety of case studies related to several thematic areas including education, health, environment, amongst others, our criteria have been applied to show the diversity of the cases in relation to governance, organisation, and the role of society in the social innovation process. Nine cases were selected in this regard as focusing devices that adequately reflect the diversity underlying the typology developed.

2. Social innovation a brief historical overview of the term

Early studies on Social Innovation: view through a modern lens

The term 'social innovation' is not new. Edwards-Schachter, et al. (2017) state that social innovation goes back almost two hundred years, while sporadic mentions of 'social innovation' in academic publications may be dating back to the 1920s. Edwards-Schachter et al. (2017) distinguish several waves when different understandings of social innovation were prevalent in the debate. Starting with P. Drucker's work on post-modernity (1957), social innovation was linked to a search of organizational efficiency through means other than technological. Between 1965-1975, social innovation was largely pre-occupied with social practices within communities aiming at empowering deprived groups (such as the elderly, the poor, the unemployed or low-income clients) through 'social engineering' models, or 'new patterns of service' (Taylor, 1970). However, social innovation as associated with social practices remained largely neglected in the following years after the '70s until it reappeared in the last decade.

In these first decades, social innovation was largely disassociated from technological knowledge or R&D, and differentiated from institutionalized social practices or inventions arising from technology-based innovations such as a program, a model, a standard, a norm, or a procedure. This changed with the emergence of the discussion about the knowledge society (Drucker, 1969; 1994) in the '70s-80s when social innovation was used to define products, processes and services mediated by

¹ www.socialinnovationexchange.org/

² <http://eai.eu/organization/social-innovation-europe>

³ <http://youngfoundation.org/>

technologies or closely linked to technological innovations with social purposes (Edwards-Schachter, et al. 2017).

At the same time, another perception of social innovation emerged that possibly reflected the proliferation of third sector initiatives and social movements as providers of services in sectors such as healthcare, employment, and education. Along this stream, the French philosopher Lapierre (1977) defined SI as *'the process of transformation of social relations through groups' collective action that mobilize resources for certain categories, layers or social classes, and that eventually impose both new production relationships, new needs, a new discourse, new codes, a new political regime, a new organization of the social space'* (p. 310; Edwards-Schachter et al. 2017).

Around the start of the 21st century, social innovation began to be used as label 'practices' of third sector organisations while also representing activities of social enterprises and emerging CSR initiatives (Mumford, 2002) and thus putting the business world into the social innovation landscape alongside the third sector. The blurring of the social and technological innovations started. As Cloutier (2003) noted, social innovation might refer to practices, processes and services and address the organisation of activities, while at the institutional level it could refer to laws, policies, standards and rules, but could also be tangible, i.e. a technology or product. (Edwards-Schachter, et al. 2017)

Social innovation: the 'revival' in the last decade

In the last decade, i.e. 2005-2015 we have witnessed an increasing and extensive use of the term in the academic community as well as in the European policy discourses especially in the context of addressing the so-called 'grand challenges'. A Google Scholar search of the term "social innovation" between 1965-2004 shows 7,690 results against 24,000 results between 2005-2017. Numerous papers have been published in recent years including both theoretical contributions and empirically-based reports which have aimed to define the concept of social innovation, shedding light on its relationship

with other types of innovations and trying to identify consequent implications for innovation policy⁴.

Marking its importance in the European policy discourse the accompanying document to the Communication on the Innovation Union⁵ acknowledges social innovation as a new form of innovation together with non-technological forms of innovation and user-driven innovation. It states that “*Social innovation is of particular importance for policy development because of the important role that governments are expected to play in the resolution of societal problems*” (EC 2010, p. 28). Social innovation is thus defined as “*new forms of social organisation and interaction that respond to social demands for new and better ways of resolving societal problems and satisfying social needs*” (EC, 2010, p. 29). Social innovation is now seen as a means for the public sector to respond to challenges that are ignored or not considered worthwhile for an adequate market response from the private sector (Murray, et al. 2010) while Phills et al. (2008, p. 5) link social innovation to new solutions to a social problem that are more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just.

An evolution of the definition of social innovation possibly influenced by the ‘knowledge society’ earlier debates (Edwards-Schachter, et al. 2017) reappeared in the work of the Young Foundation (Murray, et al. 2010). However, apart from defining it as new ideas, products, services and models that aim to meet social needs (also welcoming links to technological advancements) Murray et al. (2010) attached another feature, that of creating new social relationships or collaborations. Building on the definition supplied by Murray et al (2010), Hubert et al. (2010) add that social innovation is social in both its ends and means and enhances society’s capacity to act. This definition clarifies that it is not only in the idea, service, or product that the social dimension materialises (i.e. the social consequences of the diffusion of innovation), but that the process of developing

⁴ A significant part of this work resulted from research done under projects supported by the European Commission Framework Programme 7; see for example publications of TEPsIE, <http://tepsie.eu/index.php/publications>, SI-DRIVE, http://www.si-drive.eu/?page_id=871, TRANSIT, <http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/downloads>, or CRESSI, <http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/faculty-research/research-projects/cressi/cressi-publications>. In addition academic contributions include for instance Benneworth, et al. 2015; Howaldt, J., et al. 2014; or Benneworth & Cunha, 2014; or Haxeltine, et al. 2015.

⁵ EC, 2010. Europe 2020 Flagship Initiative Innovation Union. Communication From The Commission To The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic And Social Committee And The Committee Of The Regions. COM(2010) 546 final. Brussels, 6.10.2010.

the innovations themselves also need to be ‘social’. As noted by the authors social innovations may be conceived and executed by individuals, organisations or groups under a process of collective creation, thus emphasising the social dimension both in the conception and development of the innovation.

Thus, the perception of social innovation as collective action earlier introduced by Lapierre (1977) comes back but is now extended to involve heterogeneous informal and formal networks, and hybrid organizations between State, Market and Civil society (MacCallum et al., 2009). The active role of users and communities in developing products and services is reflected in the emergence of terms such as ‘user-driven innovation’ (von Hippel, 1986, 2005)⁶ and ‘co-creation’ or ‘co-production’ (Boyle and Harris, 2009)⁷ connecting business with social innovation in the public services sector. As Voorberg et al. (2013, p. 4) note social innovation *‘can be considered as a process of co-creation’ where citizens can act as co-implementers of public policy, co-designers and co-initiators ‘in the design and development of new goods and services’* (Edwards-Schachter, et al. 2017).

These evolutions are also reflected in innovation policy documents. In 2009, the OECD published the ‘New Nature of Innovation’ where it was noted that a new conceptualisation related to innovation was emerging with new key characteristics, novel attributes and purposes which differentiate the ‘new innovation’ from the innovation of the industrial era. These characteristics stemmed from new drivers: 1) Co-creating value with customers and tapping into users’ knowledge; 2) Global knowledge sourcing and collaborative networks; 3) Global challenges as a driver of innovation and 4) Public sector challenges as a driver of innovation.

At the same time, in the last decade the idea of social innovation is more strongly associated with social practices. This view gained a ‘primary’ role in recent years from

⁶ Eric von Hippel introduces the concept ‘user innovation’ in his book titled “Democratising Innovation”. As he notes many products and services are actually developed or at least refined by users and then they are moved back into the supply network. This is because products are developed to meet the widest possible need; when individual users face problems that the majority of consumers do not, they have no choice but to develop their own modifications to existing products, or entirely new products, to solve their issues.

⁷ Boyle and Harris (2009) define co-production as *“means delivering public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co-produced in this way, both services and neighbourhoods become far more effective agents of change”*. (2009: p. 11).

the ‘subsidiary’ role it used to have as largely an ‘inductor’ of technological innovation in the ‘70s and ‘80s. Hochgerner (2013) defines social innovations as new practices that are adopted and utilized by individuals, social groups and organizations concerned. For Howaldt and Kopp (2012) social innovation is:

‘a new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by actors or a constellation of actors in an intentional, targeted manner with the goal of satisfying or answering the needs and problems of society better than it is possible through established practices’. (p. 47)

Van der Have and Rubalcaba (2016) make the point that the focus on “social practices” is more prominent in sociological conceptualizations of social innovations while economic conceptualisations are more outcome-oriented and related to the “ideas”, “services” or new “systemic” transformations and associated social impacts.

The transformative role of social innovation as bearer of changes in production relationships, creating new needs, a new discourse, new codes, a new political regime, or a new organization of the social space that was earlier introduced by Lapierre in the ‘70s reappears in the works of Haxeltine et al. (2015). Haxeltine et al. (2015) define ‘transformative social innovation’ as a change in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organising, framing and/or knowing, which challenges, alters and/or replaces dominant institutions/structures in a specific social context.

Social innovation is associated with a renewal of social relations based on relational values such as trust, reciprocity, equality, collectiveness, cooperation, sharing, solidarity, inclusion, transparency, openness, and connectedness, transforming interpersonal as well as societal relationships at the institutional level (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015). Benneworth, et al. (2015: 14) warn that *“the ‘upscaling’ of social innovations and the achievement of socio-technical transition to more environmentally sustainable as well as socially-just societies is a key concern for social innovation, and therefore attention need be paid to the compatibility or contradictions in the values of actors driving change and the values that become embedded in the successfully-adopted social innovations.”*

Examining the relation between social innovation and social change (from a sociological perspective) Howaldt et al. (2015) draw on the overlooked event-oriented social theory of Tarde (1899) that allows the examination of many small inventions, ideas, initiatives, the intentional attitudes behind them, and how they spread and change through imitation. These evolutionary patterns become part of an emergent process to form ever more complex constructs and produce social development and transformative social change. As the authors state, this can be the right framework to analyse social innovation phenomena and their contribution to social change covering the micro, meso and macro levels.

The association of social innovation with the empowerment of deprived social groups (Taylor, 1970) finds in social values such as inclusiveness and social justice a revival in the work of Moulaert (Moulaert and Ailenei, 2005, p. 2037). On this point, there is a growing discussion about the social values underpinning the definition of social innovation. Social values are the major driving force of social innovation (Harrison et al 2009) and the values that social innovations are based on are not oriented primarily towards economic utility (Kesselring and Leitner, 2008). Etzioni (2004) and Harrison et. al. (2009) note that if innovation in business aims to improve productivity by bringing forward one advantage over the others, social innovation promotes values such as cooperation, direct democracy and empowerment of citizens, social justice, solidarity, and social cohesion. Scholars such as Mulgan et al. (2007) note that the boundaries between profit and non-profit can be blurred when engaging in social innovation (Mulgan et al., 2007). On the other hand, Hubert, et al. (2010) highlights that the value of social innovation is more concerned with issues such as quality of life, solidarity and well-being rather than profit-making. Along similar lines, the Stanford Social Innovation Review notes that the value created from social innovations accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than the private individuals (Phills, et. al. 2008).

Moulaert and Ailenei (2005) also put emphasis on the participation of citizens and communities to build participatory and 'good' governance for a sustainable future. Moulaert (2000) highlighted that the participation of the third sector evolved to new modes of organization of citizens for example through grass-roots movements. Along similar lines, Seyfang and Smith (2007: 85) define social initiatives as *"innovative networks of activists and organisations that lead bottom-up solutions for sustainable*

development; solutions that respond to the local situation and the interests and values of the communities involved”.

Over the years, we can observe (Edwards-Schachter et al. 2017, p.6):

- a strengthening of the perception of social innovation as a collective process;
- a revival of considering social innovation as social practice associated with social (or socio-technical) change;
- a rather steady orientation towards covering (unmet) social needs and reflecting social values;
- a significantly strengthened role of civil society, third sector as well as social and grassroots movements;
- a rather diminishing trend in limiting social innovation within the remits of ‘intangibles’ (as new law, norm or rule).

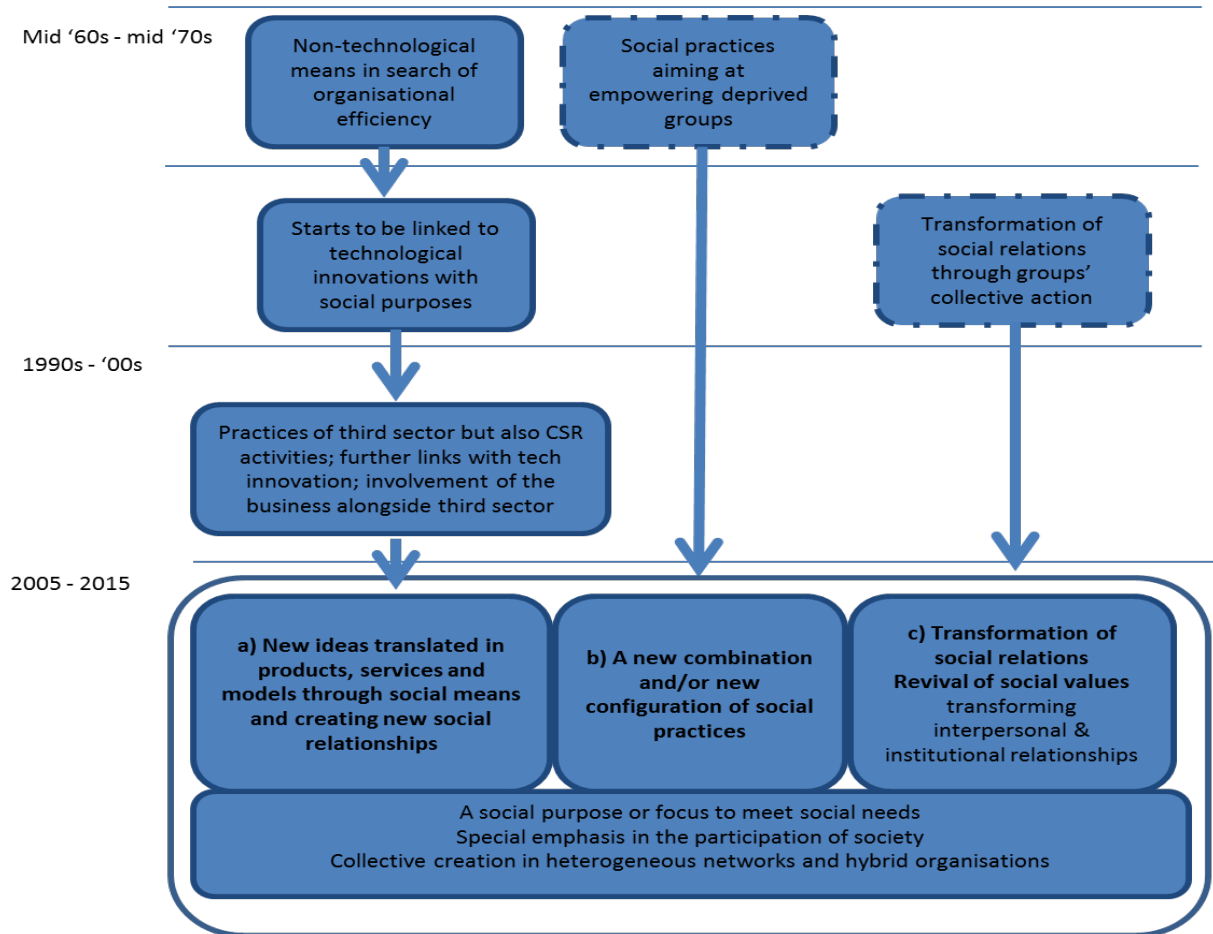
Based on the various definitions scoped and their persisting commonalities, Edwards-Schachter et al. (2017) conclude that social innovation can be understood as the intersection of three interrelated evolving ‘areas’: *social innovation involving big societal transformation (‘Processes of social change’) in close dialogue with the aspiration of (sustainable) ‘Development’ and a progressive delimitation of the ‘Services sector’*. Thus they attribute to social innovation a more transformative dimension along the same conceptual development of Haxeltine et al., (2013).

Finally, Edwards-Schachter et al (2017) and Van der Have and Rubalcaba (2016) have come to substantially similar conclusions. The latter, based on the study of 172 publications, conclude that despite the plurality of definitions, the literature does appear to share two ‘core elements’: a) social innovations are geared towards solving a shared human need/goal or solving a socially relevant problem, b) social innovation encompasses change in social relationships, -systems, or-structures.

Based on the discussion above, we illustrate the evolution of the conceptualisation of social innovation through the definitions advanced in the years under consideration (Figure 1). Naturally, this is a rather simplistic illustration but serves the purposes of providing insights into the multiplicity of elements associated with social innovation,

group them in clearer strands, chronologically ordered, which help in the structuring of a typology of social innovation.

Figure 1. Schematic representation of social innovation definitions



Source: our elaboration based on Edwards-Schachter et al. (2017) (*) The dotted lines illustrate that the specific perception of social innovation was largely neglected and emerged again the last decade although in a new context/form.

Although the 'blocks' are not isolated from one another, we may argue that there are 3 strands. The first can be characterised as being more outcome-oriented, looking at economy-efficiency related issues, organisational type of perception of social innovation (Block a) which we may call it 'New ideas and relationships'). This stream originates from the earlier conceptualisations of social innovation and evolved to include the latest discussions. However, we can also see two more strands characterised by a more 'sociological' conceptualisation of social innovation: one defining social innovation as changing social practices (Block b) and the other stressing the role of changing social relations under specific social values and oriented towards broader societal change

(Block c). These three blocks co-exist in the latest debate on social innovation while the boundaries especially the more sociological conceptualisations are somewhat blurred.

Nonetheless, there are some distinct differences. For instance Howaldt and Schwarz (2010) highlight that social innovations are 'objective good', whilst the association of certain values such as equality, sharing, solidarity and inclusion to social innovation suggests that the definition of transformative social innovation may be rather normative (Avelino and Wittmayer, 2015). To this end, also other scholars remarked the normative connotation attached to these definitions (Osburg, T., Schmidpeter, 2013; Franz, et al. 2012) and what may be 'social' (beneficial) to one group at a given time and context may be irrelevant or even detrimental to others. Through these contributions, the authors warn us against falling into the trap of considering social innovation as 'good' *per se* thus overlooking risks and possible problems (Franz, et al. 2012). On the other hand, Anderson, et al. (2014) reject normative statements as reflecting a post-modernist stance, whereas abiding by critical social theory, because they allow value-laden statements thus rejecting the notion that we do not know what a good society looks like. The ethical dimension of defining social innovation requires the identification of values; values that are explicit in purpose and intention and that for the authors include justice, fairness, the righting of wrongs and the meeting of needs.

It stands that all three blocks of today's definitions of social innovation are underlined by certain common elements: a) an orientation towards meeting a social purpose/need, and b) collective action among various stakeholders with a strengthened role of society that may take various forms (Edwards-Schachter et al. 2017; van der Have and Rubalcaba, 2016).

3. The social dimension and the role of society in social innovation

The various definitions discussed above reveal a plurality not only in the way social innovation is perceived but also in the social dimension attributed to it. Firstly, the word 'social' may refer to the social purpose or focus of an innovation, i.e. addressing a problem or a challenge that society faces (such as climate change, ageing, rising unemployment, or migrations amongst others). Such a societal dimension reflects a more 'instrumental' approach, present in most policy and practitioner narratives, related to the social services provision addressing societal needs and social market

failures (Edwards-Schachter, et al. 2017). In these definitions society does not seem to enjoy a prominent role. It seems that society is the 'end-user' of products, or services thought out to meet social needs.

Drawing upon the discourse of Ilie and During (2012) on the role of society, parallels can be drawn with the 'governmental discourse' of social innovation. The authors argue that the degree of involvement of society depends on how closely-knitted the structure proposing novel social initiatives is; for example, within long-lasting traditional networks or social organisations whereby investments and areas of intervention are institutionalised, the involvement of society might not be necessary or even sought for the development and deployment of social innovations.

Another feature attributed to social innovation is that it responds to social needs that either the business sector has no interest in or the public sector has been less effective in dealing with (Mulgan et al 2007; Hubert, et al. 2010, Murray et. al. 2010; NESTA 2007). This particular feature implies an upgraded role of the third sector or societal organisations in relation to that of the private and public sectors. In these cases the third sector is 'raised' to the level of co-producer of those goods and services meeting social needs (Boyle and Harris, 2009). In this discourse, the role of society shifts from that of the end-user to that of the co-creator or co-producer of social innovation. Here, social innovation can be seen as complementary to concepts such as user-driven innovation through the focus on social practices rather than that of products or services innovation.

A further tradition considers social innovation with a strengthened role for the individual or groups. This stream is particularly focused on wider/distributed societal change. Here, social innovation encompasses stronger societal engagement and refers to the notion of empowerment. Social innovation is seen in terms of its contribution to satisfying human needs that would otherwise be ignored, to empowering individuals and groups and to changing social relations (Martinelli 2012, as cited in Anderson, et al. 2014). Moulaert, et al. (2005) as already noted, places particular importance on the 'empowering dimension' and the increasing level of participation of individuals and deprived groups in social innovation. The stakeholders of this social system are

individuals, organizations, neighbourhoods, communities and whole segments of society.

Seyfang and Smith note that “grassroots innovations” are driven by two key goals: 1) satisfy the social needs of people or communities who may be in some way disadvantaged or excluded from the mainstream market economy, through helping them develop their capacity; and 2) by an ideological commitment to develop alternatives to the mainstream hegemonic regime, which includes re-ordering the values and indicators of success for initiatives (Seyfang and Smith 2007). It is interesting to see that covering unmet needs by providing alternatives to the mainstream market structures is driven by an ideological commitment in grassroots innovations. Whereas in the ‘classical’ innovation policy literature, the community sees the same goal - providing solutions to unmet needs - driven and justified by concerns of effectiveness and efficiency in relation to existing means (Mulgan et al 2007; Phills et. al. 2008, Hubert, et al. 2010, Murray et. al. 2010).

Society has a strengthened role also in the definition proposed by Haxeltine et al. (2015) especially with reference to the transformative role of social innovation. The authors consider that social innovation can originate in and/or address any sector, including the state and the market as well as community and the third sector. Transformative social innovation dynamics evolves around the concept of individual and human ‘agency’ and goes even further than the notion of ‘empowerment’. In other words, agency is the dynamic, relational and constantly evolving process through which actors transform themselves, their relationships and the social context in which they exist. The strengthened role placed on society in the definitions of social innovation as bearers of social change differentiates these from innovations where citizens are engaged as end-users, as well as those where society can act as co-creators or co-producers.

This type of social innovation matches the ‘entrepreneurial discourse’ in Ilie and During (2012). Innovations emerge from ‘fluid networks’. Individuals come together, share knowledge, interrelate in unpredictable ways and may create new networks with the potential of transforming into ‘something’ different from what was initially envisaged. In these cases, change usually happens as a result of human interaction; the dynamics emerges from network activities such as exchange of knowledge and ideas rather than

through ready-made service packages and closed institutions. The network dynamics in these cases become the base of systemic change based on the relations established between individuals and/or existing structures. In this context, certain social values prevail over financial benefits such as social interests and needs, environmental responsibility, solidarity, social justice, openness and transparency.

Reviewing these different perceptions of social innovation, the social dimension seems to be scaling up from a level of merely reflecting a social purpose and trying to achieve this through social means, to engaging society actively in this process and upgrading its role from an end-user to that of co-creator, and then to a third level where society enjoys the key role of 'agent' in the innovation process from initiation to generation and diffusion. In this context society is mobilised by aspirations to bring wider societal transformation. Based on the three main building blocks of social innovation definitions (Figure 1) and the three main roles of society implied, a typology of social innovation can be developed. However, it is worth to briefly introduce the concept of 'social participation' and the underpinning factors in the context of social innovation drawing on relevant literature.

Social participation and the levels of participation

Stehr (2001) notes that the growth of the 'civil society' sector is one of the major trends in modern economies yet, it is still barely visible. The growth of economic well-being, the widening access to higher education as well as the entry of women into the labour market are among the social forces that provided the conditions for new types of conflicts and social changes to emerge, which in turn gave birth to new 'social movements'⁸. Drawing on the literature about movements' emergence and mobilisation, the definitions emphasis is on 'collective action' and 'solidarity'.⁹ Reviewing the works of several authors (Weir, 1992; Dalton, et. al, 1990; Inglehart, 1990) Stehr agrees that

⁸ By 'social movements' Stehr refers to "organised activities that rely for their formation on accelerated social change, a transitory membership that is as loosely constituted as are social classes or generations, and that pursues more or less clearly identifiable contentious objectives that transcend the status quo." (Stehr, N., 2001: 140-141)

⁹ For example Charles Tilly defines social movements as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people made collective claims on others (Tilly, 2004). Tarrow (1994) defines a social movement as collective challenges to elites, authorities, other groups or cultural codes by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities.

the birth of 'new' social movements reflect the emergence of novel problems and commitments such as 'post-material' values about personal and collective freedom, self-expression and quality of life. Pestre (2007) also highlights the change in the modes of political action from nationally defined frameworks to world activism, and from claims for social justice (directed to state-like structures) to a complex mix of direct and media-oriented kind of action, of participation in official bodies and boycott. From another perspective, Drucker (1994) attributes the increased participation of citizens in voluntary and civil society organisations in the U.S. to the need for additional social interactions beyond the area of their own specialist knowledge. He further notes that this new social sector (independent and autonomous civil society organisations and NGOs) is needed in all developed countries not just for satisfying social needs but also for reviving the notion of the 'citizen', with responsibility, active involvement and initiative, and of the 'community', based on sympathy and commitment.

Scholars also acknowledge that the ways in which activists communicate, and collaborate have changed today mainly due to the advancements enabled by information and communication technologies. New social movements are keen to use information technologies because they fit their ideological and organisational needs enabling diversity, de-centralisation, informality and grassroots democracy (van de Donk et. al., 2004). At the same time, there is a trend towards individualised and informal forms of civil society at the expense of collective and formal ways of civic participation (van Bavel, et. al., 2004).

It becomes evident that there are significant similarities between the values and motivations that drive social movements and those that drive social innovations. The relation between social innovation and social movements has been studied by social innovation scholars such as Mulgan (2006) or Smith and his colleagues in the TRANSIT project¹⁰. Although in a rather restrictive sense, social movements can be considered in retrospect as social innovations themselves such as environmentalism and feminism, and can trigger societal change. Much like social innovations, movements have been responsible for forging new problem framings, concepts and diagnoses, and suggesting

¹⁰ <http://www.transitsocialinnovation.eu/blog/considering-social-innovation-from-a-social-movement-perspective> accessed April 2017.

novel solutions to new social needs. They may be key in the process of initiating and diffusing social innovations such as fair trade schemes originating from movements for international development and solidarity, or exchange networks reflecting concerns of the de-growth movement, or agro-ecological initiatives and sustainable energy practices originating from environmentalist movements.

There is little agreement about the definition of social engagement or 'participation' as more widely known. Its terminology constantly changes, for example from 'participation' and 'empowerment' to 'self-advocacy' and 'involvement' (Croft and Beresford 1992, Crowther, J., Shaw M., 1997). In 1969, in an effort to clarify and systematise the different ways that citizens may take part in decision-making processes, Arnstein introduced different levels of participation through the so-called 'ladder of citizen's participation'.

The 'ladder of citizen participation', as analytic tool, considers 'informing' and 'consulting' as a first step towards participation. Here, citizens may learn of future actions and eventually be heard by the decision makers without being able to act upon the process and insure that their views will be heeded. When participation is restricted to consultation, there is no follow-through, no "muscle" to citizens' opinions, hence no assurance of affecting the decision making process. The next step is 'placation' where citizens are 'allowed' an advisory role in the decision making process; however, the power holders retain the right to decide. Further up the ladder citizens' power increases with an increasing degree of decision-making clout. Citizens enter into 'partnerships' with decision makers enabling the former some negotiation power and direct engagement. At the topmost rung of the ladder, namely 'delegated Power' and 'citizen control', citizens are engaged in the key decision-making process and retain full managerial power (Arnstein, 1969).

These levels reflect the different roles of society under different social innovation meanings and can thus help build a typology of social innovations. This is attempted in the next section.

4. A typology of social innovations

Translating the 'ladder of citizen participation' in the domain of social innovation we see three main roles for society, i.e. that of a being informed/consulted, that of being a 'partner' and that of being 'in control'.

In the first case, society is usually seen as the end-user being primarily informed and consulted occasionally on specific issues mainly in order to strengthen social acceptance of innovations. In this first type, social innovations can be new ideas, new processes etc. that are devised to meet social needs through social means. Such a perception of social innovation can be accommodated within the definitions of Mulgan et al. (2007), NESTA (2007) and Hubert, et al. (2010), i.e. in the definitions represented by the Block a) in fig. 2 above. This type would include innovations featuring specific social purposes but not those which are characterised by a strong engagement of society in the innovation process/cycle. They include social innovations that can originate from private initiatives (which may include also Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives) as well as innovations promoted by the public sector where society has a marginal role: it is informed and consulted without having any guarantee that the views expressed will be heard or that they can have an input in the decision process.

The second case includes an upgraded role for society, i.e. that of being a 'partner'. Such a role can be accommodated in definitions primarily concerned with new or changing social practices (Hochgerner, 2013, Howaldt et al. 2014) i.e. by those represented by Block b) in Fig. 2 above. The focus on finding solutions, that are more effective, efficient and just than existing ones (Phills, et al 2008) implies an increased role by the third sector alongside the private and public sectors. The third sector may question existing practices and promote the need for new social practices. In this case, the third sector is upgraded to the level of 'partner' of the public and private sectors in dealing with societal challenges. This type lends itself to a higher level of societal engagement, shifting the role of society from that of the 'end-user' to that of 'co-creator' or 'co-producer' in social innovation, playing an important part in designing, delivering and diffusing social innovations.

The third case would include the highest level of participation, i.e. that of being 'in control'. It includes initiatives where society plays the key role in the social innovation

cycle from initiation to diffusion and delivery. However, businesses or other private organisations are not totally excluded from the process. Communities, civil society or groups - even informal groups of individuals - lead the innovation process, they identify the challenge/problem, design, develop and deliver innovative solutions. In this third type, society is seen as a key 'agent' of social change and social innovation constitutes the process for the promotion of specific values where priority is given through to the empowerment of citizens working towards social justice, solidarity, social cohesion, openness, and social responsibility over profit-making motivations and private interests. Conceptualisations of social innovations of this type lead to social innovation definitions coming from Moulaert, et al. (2005) or Seyfang and Smith (2007) or Haxeltine et. al, (2015) i.e. those represented in Block c) in figure 1 above.

The following table (Table 1) illustrates the three types of social innovations based on the level of societal engagement: 1) 'Society Consulted', 2) 'Society in Partnership' and 3) 'Society in Control' and summarises their main features. Each type represents one the three main traditions dominating the debate in today's social innovation. The various definitions can be used to explain the type of social innovations in relation to how it would accommodate the specific role to society. We have to note here that the attribution of definitions to the three social innovation types is based on the interpretation of the authors. We believe that the definitions cited imply and can accommodate a differentiated role of society in the innovation process. The scholars that introduced these definitions do not explicitly attribute to society any specific role apart from noting the increasing collaboration between the public and private sectors and the third sector.

Interestingly, we hardly found any definitions of social innovation explicitly addressing the role of society except in the case of grassroots innovations (Seyfang and Smith, 2007).

Table 1: Different levels of the role of society in the definitions of social innovation

Social	innovation	Main characteristics
types		
1) Low level of societal engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicative definition: social innovation as new ideas translated in products, services and models, with a... • social purpose or focus, i.e. addressing a problem or challenge that society faces through social means (Mulgan et al 2007; Murray, et al. 2010, Hubert, 2010) • Means of innovation delivery: through (new) social relationships, and collaborations, enhancing society's capacity to act • Key actors: business actors (without excluding the public sector or society) • Role of society: society or social groups as end-users of social innovations
Society Consulted		
2) Moderate level of societal engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicative definition: social innovation as combination and/or new configuration of social practices (Hochgerner, 2013; Howaldt et al 2014) with a... • social purpose or focus, i.e. to with goal to provide novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than what is possible on the basis of established practices (Phills, et al 2008) • Means of innovation delivery: enabling new forms of participation that affect the process of social interactions • Key actors: third sector alongside public sector and private sector • Role of society: society / consumers as co-creators, co-producers (involved in the delivery of innovation)
Society in Partnership		
3) High level of societal engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indicative definition: social innovation as change in social relations, involving new ways of doing, organising, framing and/or knowing (Haxeltine, et. al. 2015), with a... • social purpose or focus: a) to satisfy social needs of disadvantaged groups (unemployed, disabled, etc.) (Moulaert et al, 2005), b) to develop alternatives to the mainstream regime (Seyfang and Smith, 2007) which includes re-ordering of values (primacy of values such as social justice, solidarity, social cohesion, and social responsibility over profit-making) under an aspiration to challenge / alter or replace dominant

Social	innovation	Main characteristics
types		
Society in Control		institutions/ structures in a specific social context (Haxeltine, et al. 2015, Harrison et. al., 2009)
		• Means of innovation delivery: new social practices that alter social relations
		• Key actors: individuals, organizations, neighbourhoods, communities and whole segments of society (may be supported by public actors)
		• Role of society: key agent in the social innovation process

How the typology proposed can be used to classify real cases of social innovation?

To respond to this question we identified and analysed social innovation cases in existing databases such as Social Innovation Exchange and Social Innovation Europe. The results of this task are summarised in the following table 2 and discussed in detail in the following text.

Actors involved in ‘Society consulted’ social innovations (i.e. Ofbug, the Hiriko car, or the LifeLens project) may be firms, research organisations and government agencies acting as research/innovation funders. In terms of interactions, cooperation and interactive learning are central to the process of innovation. Much like in the case of technological innovations, ‘Society Consulted’ type of social innovations may involve collaborations between industry and academia. These often play a significant role since technology is a key driver rather than an enabler. Society, in these cases, is usually informed or consulted as end-user. It is acknowledged that interactions between providers and end-users are necessary to ensure the up-take of final products or specialised services. Regarding the motivations behind these initiatives, the social aim of meeting a societal challenge, does not hinder profit seeking; in fact, may as well be an important driver to mobilise action from the private sector although profit seeking motives necessarily come in combination with social and environmental considerations.

Examples of social innovations included in the second type - ‘Society in Partnership’ - may be either profit or non-profit and may be initiated by public authorities (wethecity) or the private sector (Dreams Academy) that eventually take the form of public-private partnerships. The shared feature is that society - organised formally or informally - has an active role as a partner in the design and delivery of the innovation. Social innovation cases in this group are characterised by profit-making as well as social responsibility motivations. For instance, the privatisation of public services in the health sector in partnership with the third or the private sector falls under this social innovation type. Technologies in this category might be a key driver of innovation (e.g. personal health system technologies) but might also be an enabler (ICT-enabled platforms for socialising).

When we consider examples of ‘Society in Control’ initiatives such as La Fageda, the Aconchego programme or the Time Banks, a different picture emerges. These are

mainly community-driven social innovations, the so-called 'grass-roots social innovations' (Seyfang and Smith, 2007). Here citizens, sometimes alongside local authorities, are actively engaged not only in delivering solutions to satisfy social needs but also as active promoter of the innovation process since inception. They are directly engaged in identifying problems, needs and possible solutions. The main actor is society whether it manifests through the actions of societal organisations, informal / formal citizens' groups, communities or the third sector.

In these cases, the scientific and technological aspects behind the social innovation activities might have a downsized role. Science and technology may be enablers of social innovation rather than key drivers although in many cases they may provide the infrastructure or the distributed platform upon which social actions may be enacted. Interactions between society and local authorities are strong as social innovations of this type may be supported (financially or in kind) by local authorities and / or the third sector. However, it is within society that social interactions are very much strengthened mostly through self-organised, formal/informal networks. These usually are the promoters and the decision makers in collective initiatives with the underlying aim to empower society, develop capacities and limit social exclusion.

In this context, the role of the state is both important and uncertain. These initiatives, in fact, may be filling in the gap created by the limitations of the public sector in reaching all strata of the population, providing particular services but also provide a quasi-market where social relationships are key for the provision of those services not provided by the private sector and where the risk of unmet social needs may be high.

Table 2: Examples of social innovations of different levels of societal engagement

Initiative	Basic description	Characteristics
Low level of societal engagement - *Society Consulted*		
Hiriko project	car A 100% electric, folding and high-tech car intended for car sharing in municipalities. This new concept electric city car was designed at MIT Media Lab in Boston (USA) and now commercialised by a consortium of automotive suppliers in the Basque region of Spain. The idea is to use Hiriko in a car-sharing scheme and in public fleets or, alternatively, it could be released for sale privately at around €12,500. Hiriko was initiated thanks to a European social fund project aiming at stimulating job creation in a disadvantaged area.	The car is assembled locally by a network of co-manufacturing industries and automotive suppliers, especially in poor and deprived areas. Thus, Hiriko's creators believe it is a solution to environmental and social problems – bridging deepening social divides. This is a project clearly oriented to meet a social need but involving society only as the end-user. Further it provides opportunities to create new social relationships in the form of implications from the application of the innovation use through the car sharing approach. (retrieved from http://www.eltis.org/discover/news/100-electric-folding-and-high-tech-hiriko-city-car-future-spain-0)
Ofbug	An ento-protein producer in Vancouver, BC, using insects in animal feed to reduce the environmental impact of meat consumption and promoting humanely produced meats, and insects as food for people.	This is a typical for-profit, innovation company involved in ento-protein production but also promoting entomophagy. Society is addressed by an aim to satisfy societal needs for environmental protection & healthy nutrition. (retrieved from http://www.ofbug.com/)
Lifelens	Lifelens is a smartphone application that diagnoses	Lifelens hopes to directly address the major problem of

Initiative	Basic description	Characteristics
project	malaria from a drop of blood. This multiple award winning app was created by five innovative graduate student-founders from cross academic disciplines (medicine, business administration, software engineering, user interface designer). Lifelens can be used by anyone who has the ability to operate basic cell phones.	reducing child mortality rates throughout the world. This is clearly a private initiative with a social purpose addressing society as the end-user. It opens up the possibilities to offer lower cost care to a much broader population than that which can currently be served by blood analysis labs or rapid diagnostic tests. (retrieved from http://lifelensproject.com/blog/)
Moderate level of societal engagement - *Society in Partnership*		
SielBlue	A non-profit organisation founded by Jean-Michel Ricard and Jean-Daniel Muller in 1997 in France to provide exercise in combination with socialising opportunities to the elderly. SielBlue works closely with and for older and vulnerable people as well as with research departments (Sport Science University of Strasbourg, French Institute of Medical and Health Research) to reassure the effect of the physical activities and continually develop their programmes.	This is an organisation providing special services to the elderly but with a new approach encouraging socialising and social inclusion of vulnerable groups. By working closely with their clients they promote co-creation and co-production of their services and by promoting socialising they affect the process of social interactions. (retrieved from http://sielbleu.ie/vision/)
'#wethecity: collaborate to compete in	An initiative of the Committee of Sydney aiming at creating ideas and opportunities for collaboration to improve the city surroundings. #wethecity is the second	The resulting project ideas are intended to be 'crowd-sourced' amongst a wider group of people with diverse ideas and experience to help shape and prioritise them. They

Initiative	Basic description	Characteristics
the digital era'	in a series of Issues Papers from the Committee for Sydney looking at different dimensions of Greater Sydney's performance, priorities, prospects and opportunities for renewal. It draws on experiences in other cities (16 case studies) and suggests 7 ideas for Sydney's renewal.	represent initial thinking from the Committee with some input from colleagues in government and the private sector. In this way society is engaged in the city's renewal as co-creators. The Committee's website offers a platform for exchanging ideas as a new form of participation (retrieved from http://www.sydney.org.au/media/uploads/Issue2_2013_04%20FINAL%20EMAIL.pdf ; www.sydney.org.au)
"Dreams Academy"	Vodafone Turkey Foundation launched in 2008 the Dreams Academy programme in Turkey in collaboration with UNDP, the Alternative Life Association, and the Ministry of Development. The programme supports projects related to arts that strengthen social integration of the disabled. Implementation of projects is done in collaboration with the Municipalities of Beşiktaş, Ataşehir and Kadıköy.	This can be considered a public-private partnership reflecting also Vodafone's corporate social responsibility. Society is actively engaged as professionals are brought together with the disabled to implement special projects like the Social Inclusion Band, Dreams Kitchen, Dreams Company or the Alternative Camp. This offers new forms of participation also affecting social interactions. (retrieved from http://www.duslerakademisi.org/en)
High level of societal engagement - *Society in Control*		
La Fageda	A cooperative of 270 workers, of which 150 suffer some form of mental illness or handicap, offering high-quality dairy products, whilst ensuring the social integration and	This initiative was started by psychologist Cristóbal Colón who recognised that 95% of mentally ill people in Spain remained jobless and needed to find real work as part of

Initiative	Basic description	Characteristics
	labour market participation of its members. Currently, La Fageda has an annual turnover of 10 million euros and sells 35 million yoghurts competing with some of the world's largest food producers. The cooperative is owned by the workers, who become shareholders by paying 60 euros upon entry.	their rehabilitation. Colón began La Fageda as an independent organization located in a rural area of Catalonia along with two other therapists. A support programme has also been developed and comprises of a group of psychologists who follow each worker's personal and professional rehabilitation. This is clearly an initiative designed, and implemented by society aiming at citizens' empowerment, and social inclusion (retrieved from http://www.socialinnovationexchange.org/categories/read/la-fageda)
Aconchego project	An award-winning project of social innovation running at Oporto, Portugal, which aims at cross-generational interactions. Local seniors rent their rooms to students coming from all over the country and abroad. Students can get to know more about the city, discover its history, its stories, its "hidden spots" while seniors, in turn, get company and help in their daily chores. The Aconchego Program has already been replicated in Lisbon and Coimbra.	The idea came from Teresa Branco, social volunteer. The project is supported by the Porto Social Foundation and the Academic Federation of Porto. This initiative came as solution to the problem of a large ageing population suffering from loneliness and isolation by exploiting the city's large student population. The identification of the problem came from the local authorities while the implementation is directly dependent on societal engagement. (retrieved from https://openideo.com/challenge/vibrant-cities/inspiration/-programa-aconchego-the-cuddle-project-students-and-

Initiative	Basic description	Characteristics
Time banks (cf. Seyfang 2006; Cahn, 1992)	Time banks bring people and local organisations together to help each other, utilising previously untapped resources and skills, valuing work which is normally unrewarded by the market economy, and valuing people who find themselves marginalised from the conventional economy. (Seyfang, 2006)	seniors) Time banks can be initiated by municipalities or organisations of the third sector (like charities or foundations) but they can also be an initiative of citizens and social movements. Some scholars consider them as flexible forms of co-production of public services, while others see them as enablers of wider social change enabling solidarity and societal justice.

5. Conclusions and further reflections

The conceptualisation discussed indicates that social innovation is subject to a variety of different interpretations. It may include several different types of social innovations which may be systematised according to variety of social engagement modes. Casting a look over the different definitions, the social dimension seems to be scaling up from a level where social innovations merely reflect a social purpose and address the problems/needs through social means, to engaging society actively in this process and upgrading its role from that of end-user to that of co-creator. Moreover it seems that there are many cases where society may indeed play the role of key agent in the innovation process from initiation to generation and diffusion of innovative solutions. In these cases, society may be mobilised by aspirations to bring wider societal transformation. As a result, the role of society in the innovation process can be the basis upon which a typology of social innovation can be developed.

The first type of social innovation ('Society Consulted') involves a more restricted role to society, i.e. that of the end-user. In these cases, society is informed and consulted but does not have a key decisional role in the innovation process. We can see these types of social innovations in output-oriented definitions reflecting more utilitarian, economic or efficiency types rather than sociological conceptualisations.

The second type of social innovation ('Society in Partnership') comprehends an upgraded role for society that can be accommodated in more sociologically driven conceptualisations of social innovation. It may involve changes in social practices oriented towards providing improved solutions to social problems. It however implies an upgraded role of the third sector to the level of 'partner' with the public and private sector in dealing with societal challenges

The third type of social innovation accommodates an even higher level of societal engagement 'Society in Control'. It includes initiatives where society plays a key role from the initiation to the diffusion and delivery of innovation but also aspires to bringing wider social change. In these cases society is the key agent. Looking across the two types of social innovation - 'Society Consulted' and 'Society in Control' - there seems to be a shift from 'networks of power' - stifled and underpinned by long-lasting traditions - to 'networks of change' - self-organised, informal, aiming to bring wider

social change. This social change is underpinned by social values such as social justice, solidarity, social cohesion, openness, and social responsibility dominating over private interest and profit-making motives. They seem no different from other cases of innovations where institutions, in the form of laws and regulations, play a significant role in enabling or hindering the innovation process. However, the third type of social innovations may sometime clash with the dominant institutional setting as they are primarily targeting transformative change (Haxeltine et al. 2015).

The role that the state will eventually take vis-à-vis supporting social innovation is a political decision. It may be the case that certain types of social innovations would not flourish in contexts where the state is the main provider of welfare services. However, it may be that low quality of public services may trigger the emergence of social innovations. Social innovations may also emerge in policy contexts where the role of the state as a provider of welfare services is uncertain and/or led by myopic policies linked to political cycles. In these cases emergent social innovations may function as a buffer mitigating the negative effect of uncertainty and loosen the social sphere from its dependence on state agency.

Established institutions may place barriers to the diffusion of certain innovations. For instance the movement of “markets without intermediaries” in Greece that appeared during the financial crisis aimed at providing cheaper food to people. This was beneficial for low-income families but not for open-market intermediaries. The initiative was considered ‘unethical competition’ and was banned in certain municipalities because it affected the vested interests of long-established “open markets” networks whose members paid regular taxes and thus enabled wealth redistribution¹¹. Likewise, grassroots social innovation may assert the interests of certain innovative social groups over those of others. In such cases social innovation might favour social exclusion with some unintended or anti-social consequences.

Overall, regulation, relevant policies and incentives affect the adoption of social innovations either in a negative or a positive way similarly to any other type of innovation. In countries encouraging social entrepreneurship (like Canada, Austria, or

¹¹ Retrieved from http://kinisienergoipolites.blogspot.gr/2014/11/blog-post_606.html (in Greek) last accessed 14 April 2015.

the UK) social innovation has blossomed throughout the years; although certain national regulations may be hindering some form of voluntary activities, for example by job-seekers who benefit from an allowance in fear of losing social benefits (Seyfang, 2003).

Although inherently interesting, the reflections provided above only show the tip of the iceberg that is the conceptualisation of social innovation and its practice in real life. There are still several issues pending for examination and detailed analysis. Of course, the issue of normativity is highly relevant as most of the definitions of social innovation bear such connotations, but some significant questions do emerge and are pressing. Should state policy promote social innovation and if so, under what conditions this should better be designed? How might “costs” and “benefits” be conceptualised in social innovation and how can these be mitigated by respective public policies? Do we need new theories comprehending the different dimensions - including the social innovation and social economy - to understand the role of different types of innovations or do we need a framework encompassing diverse types of innovations?

Whether social innovation is a distinct category of innovation alongside other types such as technological or organisational has attracted a variety of views. Howaldt et al. (2014) argue that a new paradigm of innovation emerges, reflecting the transition from an industrial to a knowledge and service-based society. This calls for social innovation to be considered an independent field following its own rules. Going even further, Haxeltine, et al. (2010) attempt to develop a theory for transformative social innovation. Hochgerner (2009) identifies social innovations in businesses, civil society, government and social milieus whose content relates to participation, procedural rules and behaviour as a special type of innovation to be distinguished from technological and non-technological business innovations. At the same time, Hochgerner (2011) suggests the notion of an extended paradigm of innovation arguing that all innovations are socially relevant, both those with objectives and rationality to change economic parameters and those with social intentions and effects in the field of social practices.

The increasing level of discussion on social innovation in the academic community as well as in the policy community denotes an imperative need for further studies in this area. The debate needs to develop through an approach of analytical distance and critical reflection. At the same time and even more importantly, these developments call

for a renewed conceptualisation of the concept of innovation and innovation policy itself that will bridge several research areas such as innovation, sustainability and community development that are still fragmented.

The typology presented in this paper is a first attempt towards this direction. It focuses on the variety of conceptualisations of social innovation that reflect different interpretations of the social dimension by different communities. By default this links the innovation and social theory/change communities incorporating innovation experts, sociologists, geographers and sustainability experts. A first attempt has also been made to inform this typology with the analysis of some social innovation initiatives. This analysis, however, is certainly not exhaustive and needs to be enriched by more focused analyses of a greater and significant sample of cases of social innovation and respective policy responses.

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