Tackling climate change in ordinary cities: tracing the origins of social innovation

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Low Carbon Action in Ordinary Cities

European Research Council
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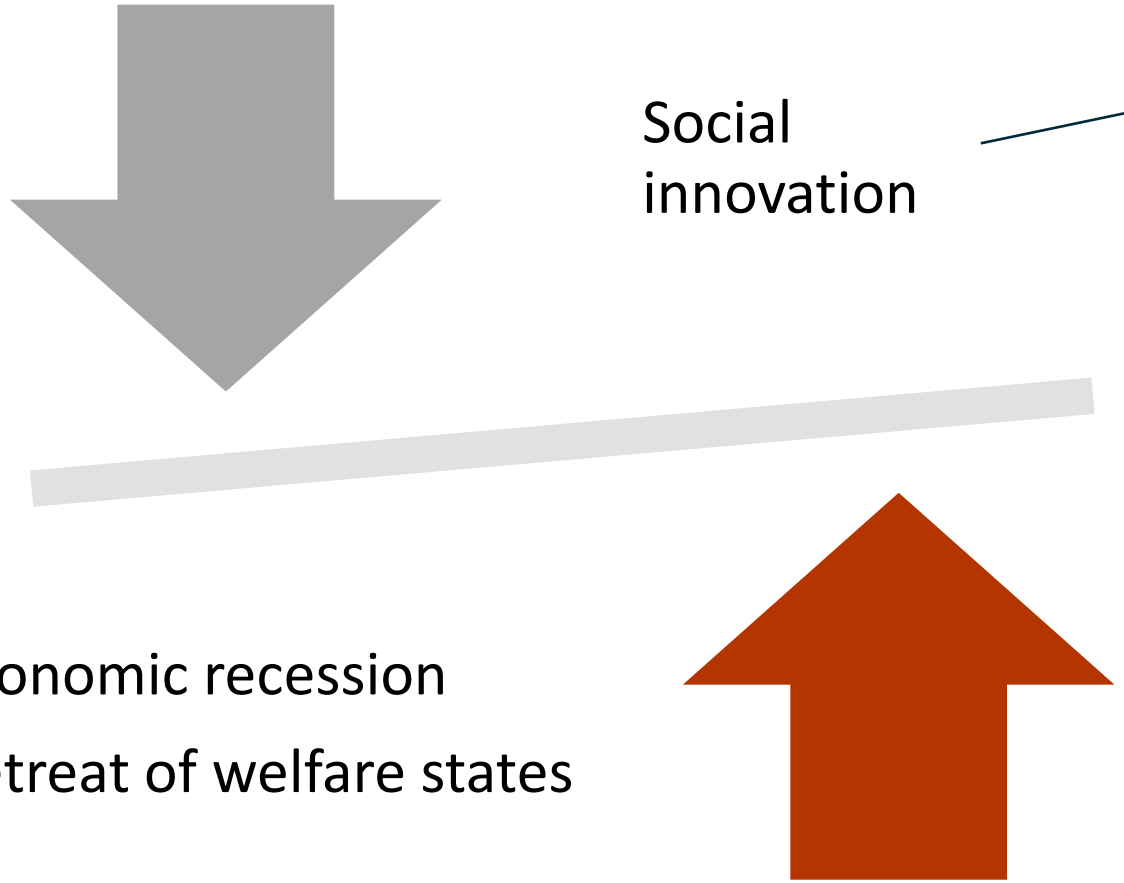
The concept of social innovation



The general assumption is that, when it comes to addressing societal challenges, social innovations might play a greater role than technical innovations.

Ref: Rüede, D. and Lurtz, K., 2012. Mapping the various meanings of social innovation: Towards a differentiated understanding of an emerging concept.

The concept of social innovation

"…an effective way of responding to social challenges, by mobilising people's creativity to develop solutions and make better use of scarce resources." (BEPA, 2010)

- An all-encompassing concept
- Lack of conceptual clarity

- The implicit value judgement - something inherently 'good'

Ref: Bureau of European Policy Advisors, Empowering people, driving change. Social Innovation in the European Union, European Commission (2010).
Franz, H.-W., Hochgerner, J., & Howaldt, J. (2012). Challenge social innovation: an introduction. In H.-W. Franz & J. Hochgerner (Eds.), Challenge Social Innovation.
Moulaert, F., MacCallum, D. and Hillier, J., 2013. Social innovation: intuition, precept, concept. The International Handbook on Social Innovation

The concept of social innovation

Paradigm shift in (technological) innovation studies

- The innovation process opening up to society
- Its orientation by the major societal challenges
- A stronger recognition of non-technological innovations geared to changing social practices

Ref: FORA. (2010). New nature of innovation.
Howaldt, J., & Schwarz, M. (2010). Social innovation: Concepts, research fields and international trends.

The concept of social innovation

- Debate of the differences between technological innovation and social innovation
- Social innovation is concerned about 'social practices with social ends and social means' (Franz, Hochgerner, & Howaldt, 2012)
- The fundamental unit of social innovation are social practices (Domanski et al. 2019):

The working definition

"…we describe social innovation as a new combination and/or new configuration of social practices in certain areas of action or social contexts prompted by certain actors or constellations of actors in an intentional targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying or answering needs and problems than is possible on the basis of established practices."

Ref: Franz, H.-W., Hochgerner, J., & Howaldt, J. (2012). Challenge social innovation: an introduction. In H.-W. Franz & J. Hochgerner (Eds.), Challenge Social Innovation.
Domanski, D., Howaldt, J. and Kaletka, C., 2019. A comprehensive concept of social innovation and its implications for the local context–on the growing importance of social innovation ecosystems and infrastructures.

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ERC Starting Grant 2018: Low Carbon Action in Ordinary Cities (LO-ACT)

- The majority of emissions in the next century will be emitted by infrastructures that are yet to be built, particularly in rapidly urbanising areas where infrastructure is lacking.
- Cities outside global networks of climate innovation and leadership.

WP3: Action Impacts in Unusual Locations

- 141 cities that had between 300,000 and 1 million inhabitants in 2010 and will grow over 4% of their current size before 2030 (UN, 2018).

Initial database

- 108 cities (except for 33 cities in Nigeria), 442 initiatives

Ref: UN, 2018. World Urbanization Prospects 2018.

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Bamboo Bike Project in Kisumu, Kenya

Creative utilization of natural endowments to meet with local social needs

Incremental house in Tasikmalaya, Indonesia

The local wisdom of using sustainable materials and incorporating social and cultural elements into architecture

“Urban minerals” recycling in Miluo, China

Deeply rooted in the historical tradition of waste recycling practices dated back to the Qing Dynasty

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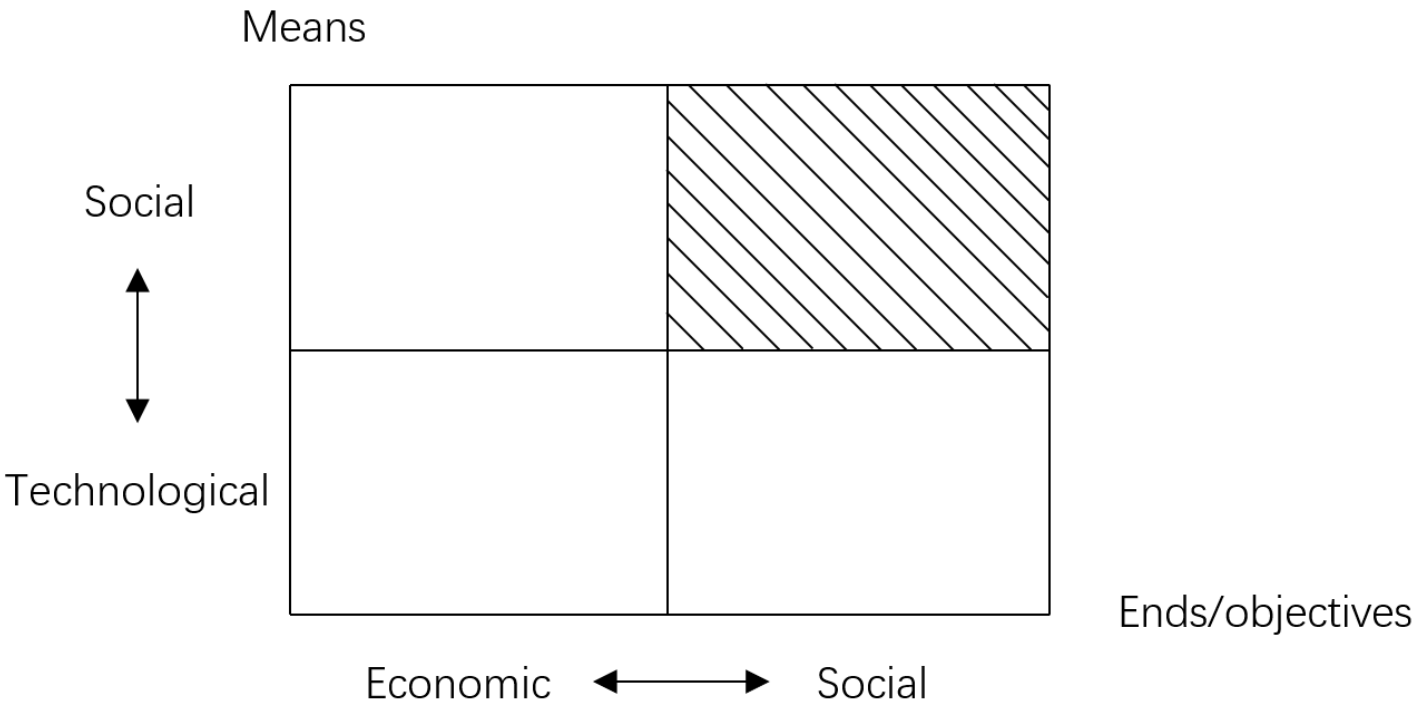
Research design

- To identify climate initiatives that (used to) belong to innovative social practices (the second quadrant (the striped area))



Research design

- To code all the social innovative low-carbon actions with following coding system

Category	Indicator	Example
Actor	Leading actor	
	Implementing actor	
	Funder	
	Coordinating actor	
	Partnership	local partnerships, participatory international partnerships, non-participatory international partnerships
Forms of operation	Doing	practices, technologies, material commitments
	Organizing	rules, decision-making, modes of governance
	Framing	meaning, visions, imaginaries, discursive commitments
	Knowing	cognitive resources, competence, learning, appraisal
Resources	Endogenous resources (human or non-human)	
	Exogenous resources (human or non-human)	

Ref: Avelino, F., Dumitru, A., Cipolla, C., Kunze, I. and Wittmayer, J., 2020. Translocal empowerment in transformative social innovation networks.
Pel, B., Haxeltine, A., Avelino, F., Dumitru, A., Kemp, R., Bauler, T., Kunze, I., Dorland, J., Wittmayer, J. and Jørgensen, M.S., 2020. Towards a theory of transformative social innovation: A relational framework and 12 propositions

A few questions

To discuss

Should social innovation be neutral? How should we deal with social practices that creatively address the pressing social challenge, but damage the environment and climate (e.g. “Making Diesel From Plastic Bags” in Aleppo, Syria)?

How should we address the dynamics of social innovation, particularly the “scale-up” of social innovation towards more technical-based and economic-oriented practices (e.g. “Bamboo Bike Project” in Kisumu, Kenya)?

THANKS

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