

Below are some of the main findings presented and discussed during the CrESSI final event on 26th January 2018.

## 1. Creating fair space for social innovation

Communal, public, and business ways of meeting human needs must be considered, in their relation, and from the perspective of the marginalised.

Economic space for social innovation is not bounded by markets. Social innovation often speaks of market and non-market aspects, but the 'non-market' space is left undefined.

An alternative is the typology of modes of provision. Further to the money-based exchange relations in markets, there is self and informal provision based on social norms such as reciprocity, community and sufficiency. These forms of provision generally do not require money and include: public provision of entitlements and public goods organised via political processes, as well as professional provision based on expert knowledge (for example doctors). While these ideal-types blur in practice, they show the rich contours and collaborative pluralism of economic space in practice.

Fostering fair space for social innovation needs to take all these modes and their relations into account, not just markets. As marginalised people often occupy disadvantaged positions within the market, it is of particular importance to consider non-market based ways of producing goods and services via new solutions. Social innovations can signal to the public where a change in mode or a reconfiguration of modes is demanded.

Fairness not only means taking the perspective of those marginalised and least advantaged, but also calls for evaluative scrutiny of innovative solutions: do social innovations empower beneficiaries to become agents, or do they consider their well-being as that of 'patients' that need to be supported? The capabilities approach offers a rich, ethical language to explore these questions. It is particularly useful if empowerment - as an exit route from marginalisation - is taken seriously.

### References

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## 2. The Extended Social Grid Model

The Extended Social Grid Model has validity and is useful for revealing the power dynamics behind social innovation

One of the key theoretical contributions of the CrESSI project has been the development of the Extended Social Grid Model. This analytic framework brings together three disparate streams of research in a new synthetic model designed to be a diagnostic tool to understand the socio-structural drivers of marginalization.

This model aims to reveal the power dynamics and social structures that enable and constrain an individual's life choices and capacity for action. Its three elements are Beckert's Social Grid, Mann's typology of power and Sen's capabilities framework. Together these elements connect the macro-level dynamics that shape social structure (institutions, cognitive frames and social networks), via a typology of power, to micro-level effects on individual capabilities and the ability to flourish. Thus, the influence and effects of hierarchical social structures are shown to be central to shaping and maintaining of marginalization.

The model was tested by detailed empirical work, both quantitative (at the micro-individual level) and qualitative (at the macro-field level). Notably, the qualitative work makes use of long (100 years +) case studies of key social innovations such as social housing and drinking water provisions. In both empirical settings the Extended Grid Model was found to have analytic utility and theoretical validity.

## 3. Social innovation needs to be seen in long historical context

The results of the historical analysis of social innovation undertaken by the project help shed light on the complex interactions between institutions, social networks and cognitive frames before and during social innovation processes.

Multiple actors and social networks are typically involved in developing and implementing successful new solutions. When social innovators ensured and demonstrated that the spread of the social innovation would benefit all, they had more success. As these actors were often coming from a different socio-economic background than the marginalised groups themselves, they were equipped with varied resources and had access to important social networks. Marginalised people profited more in the long run if these actors shaped the process. Moreover, if the social innovation improved the position of the marginalised group, others profited as well.

There is a risk, however, that the broad uptake of a social innovation means that the original target group is not reached anymore. Becoming mainstream often changes the mission of a social innovation and leads to the neglect of the most marginalised.

The long view on social innovation showed also that social innovations keep adapting continuously to their ever-changing contexts. New questions, emerging

demands and changing cognitive frames shape and re-shape the specific ecosystems in which social innovations are embedded and on which they are dependent. This requires continuous business and social innovation. The social context of the original social innovation is once again uncovered again when the basic questions are posed anew in society and the issues are dealt with again. Then the normative decisions are revealed and the debate resumes.

## References

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## Forthcoming

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 in the CrESSI book

## 4. Politics and institutions

### Fostering economic space for social innovation is a matter of politics and institutions

Social innovation is not apolitical. It is, in fact, a manifestation of collective agency that seeks to modify some aspects of those social structures to which it is exposed. This could be the functioning of formal institutions, prevalent ways of thinking, or the networks that span within and across societal groups. Social innovation typically pushes for change in any or all of these.

For this reason, social innovation should be understood for what it is: a political undertaking in which current and future available options are being reshuffled for society. Politics and existing institutions are therefore involved in the process, not least because they need to make space for new proposals to arise, be formulated, tested and implemented.

The tricky political aspect of social innovation, however, is that it often seeks to change the existing dominant ways of doing politics or of institutional functioning. Furthermore, social innovation processes do not always engage directly with politics, but instead seek to work at its outskirts, in a very self-made way.

Crucial for the creation of economic space for social innovation is, therefore, the design of tools and opportunities that allow for new ideas and solutions to arise from civil society, without depending on top-down policy design. Politics also needs to be self-reflexive and brave enough to support (and possibly, finance) proposals that may put their own institutional dominance under pressure. Politics and institutions, therefore, need to pursue three things, mainly:

1. maintain an open attitude towards proposals that arise within society;
2. finance mechanisms that allow for the greater process freedom that is needed to develop, test and improve innovative solutions;
3. actively support the capability to associate within society in order for more marginalized groups to be actively included in social innovation processes

In the EU, the rather vibrant discourse on social innovation keeps on failing to acknowledge its deeply political implications, especially if social innovation is to keep up with its promise to reduce marginalisation.

## References

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## 5. Evaluating social innovation

### Social innovation needs critical impact metrics

The CrESSI project builds on prior work on impact measurement that focuses less on methods and more on principles.

Capturing impact is difficult and requires a nuanced and contextualized understanding of how change occurs and how those who experienced it value such change. Whilst Welfare Economics has a fifty-year history of devising quantitative methods of accounting for impact and there is a range of other well established, bespoke, impact measurement practice in development institutions and charitable organizations, these traditions fail to establish a more standardised approach to the subject.

One way to do this is to focus on a critical framework for impact measurement that asks a series of key questions based on the principals of effective metrics already established elsewhere. This critical framework begins by asking why an impact

needs measuring and for whom. This helps to bring to the surface the multiple functions of impact data and reveals the power structures inherent in all measurement systems (broadly, that what is counted, counts).

Next, the framework considers what and when – namely the unit of analysis and at what point in time the data will be collected. 'What' highlights the importance of participation and engagement with key stakeholders when establishing measures of material significance for target populations. 'When' sensitizes the measurement process to the variability in reported performance of social impact projects at different points in time (for example, educational outcomes).

Finally, the framework builds on these questions (and the principals embodied in them) to explore the 'how', that is, the most appropriate methodology for addressing the issues already identified by the critical framework. This critical approach to establishing impact increases the likelihood that impact data will have validity. It also ensures that stakeholder participation is front and centre of methodological design – an approach that is, in itself, empowering.

## References

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