Abstracts PhD Social Innovation

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- ## Abstract 1 – Social innovation and the role of the encounter

The social innovation process, as a method and a practise, is dynamic and includes a plethora of different actors. It derives from bringing together these different actors that usually do not maintain relationships or only in direct conflict. This paper aims at elucidating the level of the individual in socially innovative actions. It investigates how the relationships between different actors are (re)organised by drawing on the concept of **the encounter** frequently used in the human and social geography literature. Careful consideration is asked for the types of encounters sought for and avoided by individuals.

Social innovation works towards social change through social actions and conscious awareness. Mutual learning plays an important role in this. The role of **the narrative** has often come to the forefront implicating its research significance as a method through narrative analyses for interpreting human meaning and experience. Yet, the role of the narrative in working practises in mutual learning, mobilising action, and bringing about change has received little to no attention in the public administration discipline.

To explore the role of the encounter and the narrative in the social innovation process this study draws on a combination of qualitative data. Process documents from different projects are used to determine explicit points of encounter. In-depth interviews and a focus group enhance this data by elucidating inexplicit points of encounter and the role of the narrative within this.

Against the background of decentralisation and the growing importance of investing in a public meeting culture, understanding the role of the encounter in socially innovative actions could support public administrators in facilitating alternative structures for societal change. Introducing the narrative, and hence ethnography in innovation, as a practise could provide policy makers an additional instrument for mutual learning and thus to gain a qualitative insight of the relationships between people and the topics of importance to enhance quality of life from a policy perspective.

- Borzaga, C., & Bodini, R. (2012). What to make of social innovation? Towards a framework for policy development. *Euricse Working Paper, N.036*(12)
- Grimm, R., Fox, C., Baines, S., & Albertson, K. (2013). Social innovation, an answer to contemporary societal challenges? Locating the concept in theory and practice. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 26*(4), 436-455.
- Moulaert, F., MacCallum, D., Mehmood, A., & Hamdouch, A. (2013). *The international handbook on social innovation: Collective action, social learning and transdisciplinary research*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- Valentine, G. (2008). Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter. *Progress in Human Geography, 32*(3), 323-337.

- ## Abstract 2 – Introducing the concept of place in socially innovative actions

As the position of the nation state has weakened with decentralisation as result, local socially innovative actions have come to the attention of a plethora of actors. As a means to an end and an end in itself, social innovation has increasingly gained the interest of academics, practitioners and policy makers alike. Much has been said about the definition of social innovation and also the outcomes have been discussed at large. The process dimension of socially innovative actions is less explored. Especially the micro level with the individual as a central point of focus has gained little to no attention in the current discussion.

Consequently, this study focusses on what is happening on a micro level during the process of social innovation. More specifically, this first paper enhances the discussion by introducing the concept of **place.** Decentralisation has enhanced the position of place in organising society. As a location with a purpose it is perceived as something people take shared responsibility of. It presupposes a position of equivalence and pluralism. Place is where the development of new, or the transformation of, social relations between individuals takes place, being at the centre of socially innovative actions.

In order to explore the concept of place in the process of social innovation, this study takes on a cross-disciplinary approach and draws on the human and social geography literature. Instead of looking at shared norms and values and following a pre-given set, it focusses on altering the meaning of what it is to be social in the process.

It draws on in-depth interviews with individuals involved in the different social innovation processes. Especially the project of the Zeeuwse Huiskamer is used as the case for this study. De Zeeuwse Huiskamer is a project that aims at bringing people together. Living longer at home independently in a pleasant way is of interest to a plethora of people. Questions such as "What is going well and what can be improved? Are there gaps between supply and demand, how does cooperation and contemporary society support living longer at home independently?" are explored in these projects. The aim is to jointly formulate solutions to questions around well-being, living and care.

The results are relevant for researchers, practitioners and policy makers interested in the greater picture of social innovation.

- Amin, A. (2008). Collective culture and urban public space. *City, 12*(1), 5-24.
- Massey, D. (2004). Geography of responsibility. *Geografiska Annaler, 86*(1), 5-18.
- Moulaert, F., MacCallum, D., Mehmood, A., & Hamdouch, A. (2013). *The international handbook on social innovation: Collective action, social learning and transdisciplinary research*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

- ## Abstract 3 - Ethics of care: Means to an end or end in itself?

The previous two papers explored the role of place and encounter in the social innovation process. Social dynamics for the development of new or existing relationships between individuals is at the core of social innovation. The development of the capacity of collective action is what aimed for. Still, these social means are often solely perceived as a side effect of the social innovation process. Nevertheless, within the encounter between people, social dynamics are an inevitable factor.

A concept which could meaningfully explain the social dynamics in collective action is the concept of **care.** Care is at times used as a synonym for solidarity and could be understood as connections that are made between individuals on the basis of natural predispositions. Apart from natural predisposition, moral principles are also influencing the development of relationships in socially innovative actions. Hence, the theory of an **ethics of care,** in which interpersonal relationships and benevolence are a virtue to moral actions, could meaningfully address the social dynamics in the social innovation process. In short, this paper focusses in particular on how individuals take care of each other. This leads to the question if an ethics of care is a means to an end, or an end in itself in social innovation.

In order to explore the role of an ethics of care in the social innovation process this study draws on in-depth interviews.

The results of this research are relevant for public administrators to better understand the role of ethics of care in micro practises. It will enhance the understanding of how the choices of individuals effects societal change.

- Amin, A. (2012). *Land of strangers*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Cajaiba-Santana, G. (2014). Social innovation: Moving the field forward. A conceptual framework. *Technological Forecasting & Social Change, 82*, 42-51.
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2003). An ethics of the local. *Rethinking Marxism, 15*(1), 49-74.

- **Abstract 4 – Politics of Care for Social Innovation**

The involvement of civil society to bring about social change while also renovating democracy has gained importance in public administration. Transparency, legitimacy and democracy need to be guaranteed with specific governance mechanisms. Apart from bringing about cultural change amongst civil society, this also depends on a cultural change in public administration. Social innovation aims at eliminating the long lines set by rules and regulations by bypassing existing welfare state institutions. Local socially innovative actions tend to highlight the need for recognition and representation and could hence help to improve conventional welfare state politics. Still, a sense of togetherness and pluralism does not rest alone on the idea of recognition and community, or i.e. the commons.

Instead of looking at the code or the principles, the norms and the values, this paper focusses on the cultivation of the political person. In particular, the self-formation as an ethical subject involving practices of forming the ethical political subject. It puts emphasis on the attitude of a divers set of policy makers rather than looking at the administrative perspective. Which attitudes and practices could enable ethically sensitive, negotiated settlements between different groups and individuals in the social innovation process and the construction of the commons. It looks at what a **politics of care** could be and how local politics participate in ethics of care and building new communities and collaboration.

In-depth interviews with policy makers are used as method to explore this research. Aldermen and civil servants of different municipalities in the Netherlands are the sample in particular.

The aim is to explore the **anthropology of policy makers** to enable a more affective and informal perspective for the political subject. More so, to explore how anthropology, as a means, could change attitudes and enhance determination in mobilising action and leading change in an organisational setting. The paper looks at places where the commons exercise their responsibility in order to provide policy makers a closer look into micro political opportunities. Hence, the results are relevant for public administration and policy makers in particular.

- Grimm, R., Fox, C., Baines, S., & Albertson, K. (2013). Social innovation, an answer to contemporary societal challenges? Locating the concept in theory and practice. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 26*(4), 436-455.
- Pinxten, H., & Verstraete, G. (1998). *Cultuur en Macht. Over identiteit en conflict in een multiculturele wereld*. Antwerpen: Uitgeverij Houtekiet.

- ## Abstract 5 – What happens when you become a best-practise

The up-scaling of local socially innovative actions is of paramount importance to a variety of actors included and excluded in the process. The so-called best practise should lead by example and practises should become transferrable to other cases and contexts. Yet, the local social innovation is oftentimes context-bound and running on bottom-up initiatives and practises. Transferring it to other places and context could therefore be problematic. In addition, gaining publicity as best-practise could work as an accelerator but may also act as a boundary for success.

Ulrum is a small village in the province of Groningen, The Netherlands. Due to population aging and dejuvination demographic changes are clearly felt and visible. In order to become a future-proof village, residents started working on changing their village in a place tailored to their needs. With a plethora of local, regional, national and international partners the residents have worked on finding a solution which fits the local needs of Ulrum. Instead of taking an external look, the project was set up from the inside, with the people who live and work in Ulrum. The official timeline of the project was three years, finishing in 2016. However, DEEL & Ulrum continues till this day.

In order to explore what happens when you become a best-practise, this research draws on a wide selection of data. All meeting minutes are used to develop a timeline of events. This information may also be used to analyse possible changes in the project due to these events. The documentary made of the Ulrum caused a lot of commotion in the village and the project. This documentary is also used in the analyses. In addition, interviews are conducted with various people involved in the project.

The aim of this study is to provide an insight of the dynamics taking place when a local project becomes a best-practise. Due to historical data, a retrospective view provides the opportunity to elucidate the process over time.

The results are of interest to people involved in social innovation projects. The greater field of social innovation and public administration in particular benefit from this research.

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- Moulaert, F., MacCallum, D., Mehmood, A., & Hamdouch, A. (2013). *The international handbook on social innovation: Collective action, social learning and transdisciplinary research.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

- **Abstract 6 – Auto-Ethnography for Social Innovation**

The last paper focusses on the role of the intermediary, the facilitator, the professional in the process of social innovation. Concentrating on managing and creating innovative and productive contexts and to value each other's strengths and avoid each other weaknesses is one of the tasks of the intermediary.

The central supporting role of the professional and the public meeting culture is compelling in the social innovation process. It is of importance to explore this role if only to undermine the illusion of spontaneous care and direct solidarity. Place-bound and local forms of direct types of care are strongly interwoven with the indirect care of the welfare state through financing professionals and the meeting culture. The role of reflection and balancing power through perpetuating or imposing priorities from outside is what the professional needs to cope with. Within this the encounter with different kind of people is also challenge and furthermore a risk full process. Absorbing this risk is key to the process of socially innovative actions. Yet, for who is the professional absorbing this risk, the local community or political figures and bodies. Who is the object of care, of solidarity, is the question. Within the encounter the professional continuously takes on a different role, in which they themselves become a different person, a stranger.

Through auto-ethnography this paper explores the field of tension between distance and involvement of alienation and appropriation, the self-evidence of the researcher and the informants in thinking, feeling and doing. It provides an insight of the dynamics in the case of Ulrum.

The aim of this paper is presenting an alternative for making personal experiences relevant for people in similar positions and the pedagogy discipline in particular.

- Ellis, Carolyn (2004). *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, Carolyn (2009). Telling tales on neighbors: Ethics in two voices. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, *2*(1), 3-28.