Social Innovation

Social innovation (SI) concerns the implementation of a wide range of activities and practices oriented to addressing **social problems** or meeting **human needs** (e.g., aging, deprivation, inclusion, and education).

"*Social innovations are **new ideas** that meet **social needs**, create **social relationships** and form **new collaborations***" (EU, 2013)

There is a strong relationship between **places and innovations**, especially considering **social** ones because societal needs that SIs aim to alleviate are **place-specific** (Haddad et al., 2022).

The concept is debated, but scholars agree on something:

- why SIs emerge? They are the **response to social needs**: the outcome is part of the definition (Cajaiba-Santana, 2015).

- why they emerge in **different places**? "Innovation is thus intimately involved in the social conditions in which it is produced" (European Commission, 1995). For example, several cases link social innovation to **rural** and **remote** areas as a possible escaping factor from marginality (Neumeier, 2017).
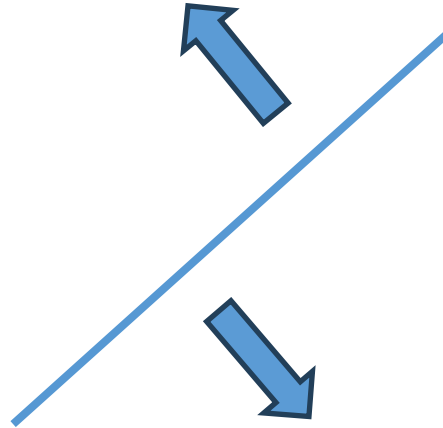
- President Obama established The White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation in 2009

- The European Union launched its Europe 2020 strategy in 2010, identifying SI as a field that should be nurtured in the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative.

- In 2013, the Social Investment package was launched to support EU member states in renewing their social protection systems, with a special focus placed on SI projects.

- SI became an opportunity for experimentation in multiple domains of government and industry through the Horizon 2020 and Collective Awareness Platforms for Social Innovation and Sustainability (CAPS) programme.

- While the term "social innovation" has been in circulation since the early 19th century, in its earliest incarnation, the term was **politically** charged and associated with **social reform** and revolution (Godin, 2012).

- By the mid-20th century, it was used to describe the remainder of "technical innovation" (Cajaiba-Santana, 2014).

- This meaning closely corresponds to the distinction between (Nelson and Nelson, 2002, Nelson and Sampat, 2001) "social technology" and "physical technology".
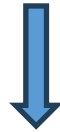
Innovation: (mainly) addressing **economic** issues
- Products/services
- Process
- Organizational structures
- Marketing strategies

THIS IS HOW WE DO IT!

An analysis of social innovation discourses in Europe Concepts and Strategies of Social Innovation Elisabeta G. Ilie and Roel During

Innovation: (mainly) addressing **social** objectives
- Roles (of individuals, firms, institutions)
- Relations (in private/professional environment, networks, communities)
- Norms (formal and informal)
- Values (customs, manners, ethics)

Innovation seen as "new combination" of production factors – land, labor, capital, entrepreneurship (Shumpeter, 1934)

PUBLICATIONS

THE SPECTRUM OF SOCIAL INNOVATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE

Keynote to expert's presentations in the European Parliament

SECTION: Management including Cross-Project Activities

The Spectrum of Social Innovation and its Importance

Josef Hochgerner, Centre for Social Innovation (Vienna)

Social innovation as new combination of social practices
- for resolving societal challenges
- which are adopted and utilized
- by the individuals, social groups and organizations

… they both **create value**

A definition by European Commission – among the others:

"*Social innovations* are *new ideas* that meet *social needs*, create *social relationships* and form *new collaborations*. These innovations can be products, services or models addressing unmet needs more effectively. The European Commission's objective is to encourage *market* uptake of innovative solutions and stimulate *employment*".

The Commission's actions on SI stem from the Innovation Union Initiative (2010) and the Social Investment Package (2013). These actions facilitate the inducement, uptake and scaling-up of SI solutions. The main objectives are:

1) promoting social innovation as a source of **growth and jobs**;
2) **sharing information** about social innovation in Europe;
3) supporting **innovative entrepreneurs** and mobilising **investors** and **public organisations**.

The European Commission's actions on social innovation relate to:

- **Networking**: help organization across Europe to connect.

- **Competition**: the European Social Innovation Competition is yearly organized to support new solution to societal challenges.

- **Funding**: direct funding to support social innovation through different programmes.

- **Ecosystems**: improving the conditions for social innovation and social enterprises in Europe, also to attract private investors…

This is **European Social Innovation**

… the European Commission's actions on social innovation relate to:

- **Impact**: gathering and disseminating evidence about the benefits of social innovation and methodologies for result measurement.

- **Incubation**: supporting incubation structures for social innovation in Europe, through EU-wide networks of incubators.

- **Exploring**: looking for new ideas, applications or fields for social innovation.

Several approaches:

- A **pragmatic approach**: SI as "innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a **social need** and that are predominantly developed and diffused through organizations whose **primary purposes are social** (Mulgan et al., 2007)

- A **systemic approach**: SI as a **complex process** through which new products, processes or programs are introduced, leading to a **deep change** in daily routines, resource streams, power relations, or values within the **system** affected by the innovation (Westley and Antadze, 2010)

oxford
SAID BUSINESS SCHOOL

SOCIAL INNOVATION

WHAT IT IS, WHY IT MATTERS AND
HOW IT CAN BE ACCELERATED

GEOFF MULGAN
WITH SIMON TUCKER, RUSHANARA ALI AND BEN SANDERS

The Innovation Journal: The Public Sector Innovation Journal, Vol. 15(2), article 2.

Making a Difference: Strategies for Scaling Social Innovation for Greater Impact

Frances Westley and Nino Antadze

Several approaches:

- A **managerial approach**: SI as a new solution to a social problem which is more **effective, efficient, sustainable or fairer** compared to existing solutions; and which generates **value primarily for society** instead of single individuals or organizations (Phills et al., 2008).

- A **territorial approach**: SI is conceived as a process of empowerment and political mobilization targeting a **bottom-up** transformation of the functioning of a social system, in terms of **stakeholders** and in terms of **distribution** of material and immaterial resources (Moulaert et al., 2009)

Involved societal levels according to the Bureau of European Policy (BEPA):

1) **Micro level** – the **social demand** level: tacling specific problems faced by **specific groups on the ground** that are traditionally not addressed by the market or existing institutions and often impact vurnerable people much more than others.

Involved societal levels according to the Bureau of European Policy (BEPA):

2) **Meso level** – the **societal challenge** level: tackling challenges that affect people at a larger societal scale or across whole sectors often manifests through complex mixes of **social, economic, environmental and cultural** factors that require new forms of **relations** between social actors.

Involved societal levels according to the Bureau of European Policy (BEPA):

3) **Macro level** - the **systemic change** level: enquiring some **fundamental transformation** of the way **society**, its institutions and actors operate, for example by changing governance structures, and creating more participative arenas where empowerment and learning are both the sources and outcomes of well-being.

SI addresses social needs and new social needs.

- **Socio-economic drivers**, for examples:

- New forms and sources of competition
- Changes of investor confidence
- Changing value of some assets (e.g., properties)
- Alterations in demand/supply relationship
- Employment/unemployment
- Poverty

SI addresses social needs and new social needs.

- **Technological advancements**, for examples:
- ICT imperative
- Automation
- Digitalization
- Platforms advent
- Access to information
- Ethical and privacy-related issues
- Balancing work/home mix
- Altering value of property rights
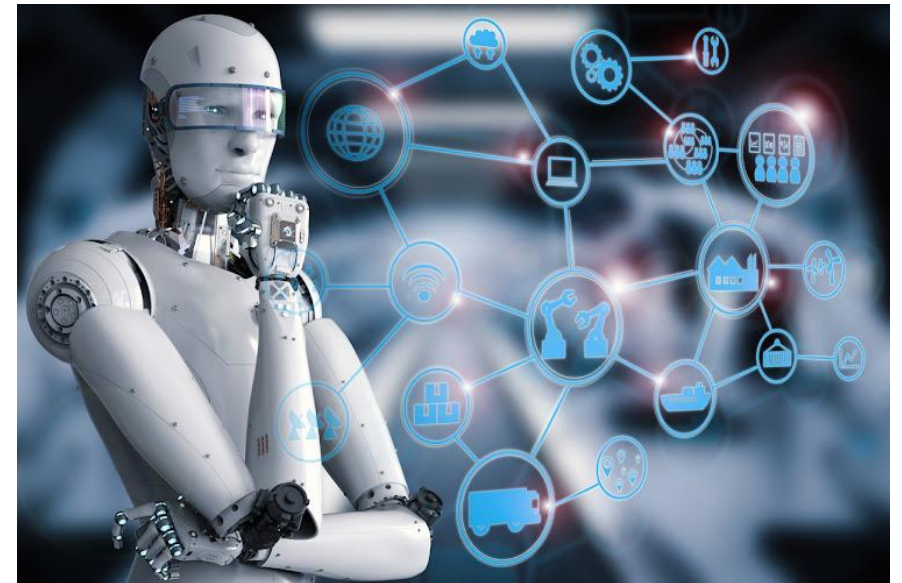
SI addresses social needs and new social needs.

- **Cultural drivers**, for examples:
- Changing local traditions
- Fundamentalisms vs democracies
- Generations' cultural gaps
- Altering values and norms
- Opinions, attitudes, behaviors (role of media)

SI addresses social needs and new social needs.

- **Sustainability related drivers**, for examples:
- Environmental awareness (climate change)
- Social pressures
- Population changes: demographic dynamics and migration patterns

- **Single events**, for example:
- Financial and economic crisis
- Natural disasters
- Health emergencies
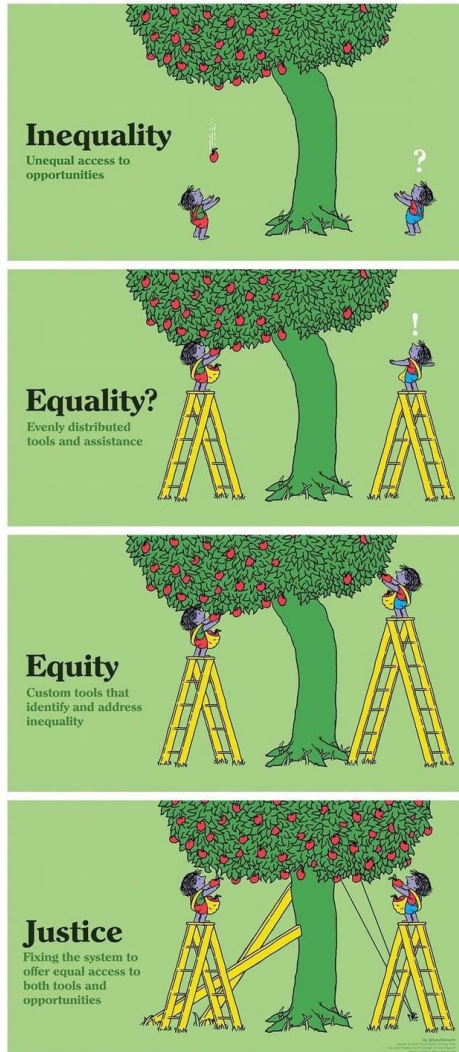
Societal changes can create problems and new needs, as:

- Societal and economic inequalities
- Economic decline
- Institutional and political distrust
- Digital divide
- New labor structures displace previous ones
- Generational gap
- Gender (pay) gap

Classification of intangible social innovation concepts

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Abstract. In social sciences, similarly to other fields, there is exponential growth of literature and textual data that people are no more able to cope with in a systematic manner. In many areas there is a need to catalogue knowledge and phenomena in a certain area. However, social science concepts and phenomena are complex and in many cases there is a dispute in the field between conflicting definitions. In this paper we present a method that catalogues a complex and disputed concept of social innovation by applying text mining and machine learning techniques. Recognition of social innovations is performed by decomposing a definitions into several more specific criteria (social objectives, social actor interactions, outputs and innovativeness). For each of these criteria, a machine learning-based classifier is created that checks whether certain text satisfies given criteria. The criteria can be successfully classified with an F1-score of 0.83-0.86. The presented method is flexible, since it allows combining criteria in a later stage in order to build and analyse the definition of choice.

Keywords: text mining, classification, natural language processing, social innovation

A possible **categorization**:

1- Objectives
2- Actors and actor interactions.
3- Outputs/Outcomes.
4- Innovativeness.

Objectives.

- SIs satisfy societal needs - including the **needs of particular social groups** (or aim at **social value creation**) - that are usually not met by conventional innovative activity (c.f. "economic innovation"), either as a goal or end-product.

- SI does not produce conventional innovation outputs such as patents and publications.

Actors and actor interactions.

- SIs are created by actors who usually are not involved in "economic innovation," including informal actors.

- SIs often involve predominantly **new types of social interactions** that achieve common goals and/or innovations that rely on **trust** rather than mutual-benefit relationships.

- SIs often involve different action and diffusion processes but ultimately result in **social progress**.

Outputs/Outcomes.

- Early definitions of SI strongly relate it with the production of social technologies (c.f. innovation employing only "physical technologies") or "intangible innovation."

- Some others indicate that social innovation changes the attitudes, behaviours and perceptions of the actors involved.

- Some others stress the public good that SI creates.

- SI is often associated with long-term institutional/cultural change

Innovativeness.

It involves "the implementation of a new or significantly improved product (good or service), or process, a new marketing method, or a new organizational method in business practices, workplace organization or external relations" (Develop, 1997)

- **Corporate Social Responsibility** (CSR) involves initiatives which **extend beyond** meeting the immediate interests of stakeholders of for-profit enterprises, offering the potential to also enhance performance.

- Adopting a business approach, **social entrepreneurs** focus on bringing about improved **social outcomes** for a particular community or group of stakeholders.

- The underlying driver for social entrepreneurship is the creation of **social value** as opposed to personal or shareholder wealth and the activity of such social creation is characterized by pattern-breaking **change or innovation**, through the creation of new combinations of, for example, products, services, organization, or production (Phillips et al., 2015; 430).

These concepts share common overlaps, significantly in the process of identifying problem-solving opportunities for unmet social needs.

Research on SI (source: Isi Web of Knowledge)

Research on SI (source: Isi Web of Knowledge)
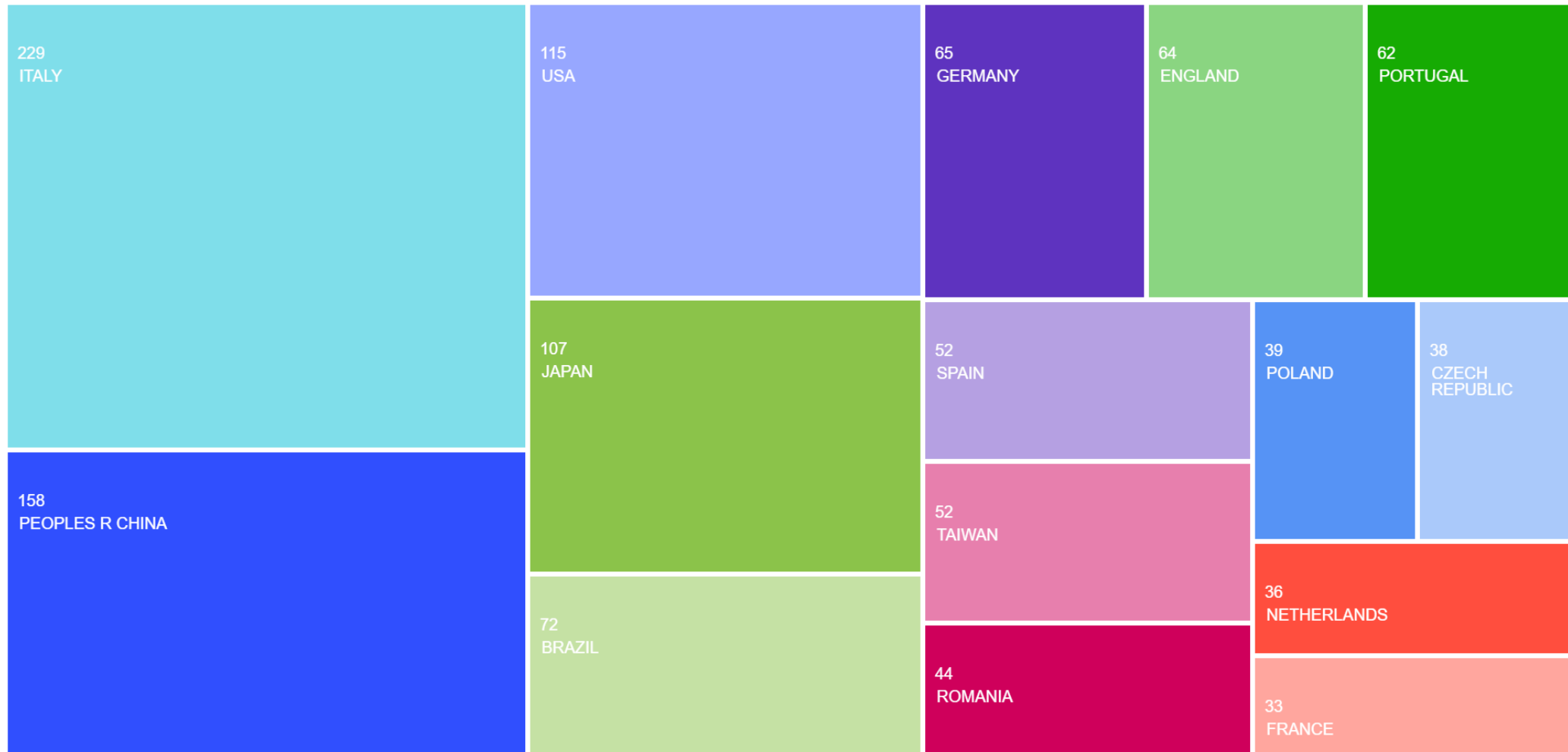
ESID

Social Innovation; social innovation projects; machine learning; Natural Language processing

ESID is a comprehensive and authoritative source of information on social innovation projects and actors in Europe and beyond. The ESID database contains two sets of datasets, one being the subset of the other. The full dataset comprises of 9577 social innovation projects in total. For these projects, ESID contains a title, type of social innovation with scores, summary, location and topic.

https://docs.risis.io/datasets/metadata/esid

Keywords: Social Innovation, new forms of innovation, social innovation projects, machine learning, Natural Language processing.

- ESID is a source of information on social innovation projects and actors in Europe and beyond.

- It utilizes advanced machine learning and natural language processing techniques to collect information about social innovation projects and actors from the publicly available information on the web.

- It also uses some limited human annotation to train its machine learning models and to ensure the quality and the integrity of the data.

- The full dataset comprises of 9577 social innovation projects in total.

- For these projects, ESID contains a title, type of social innovation with scores, summary, location and topic.
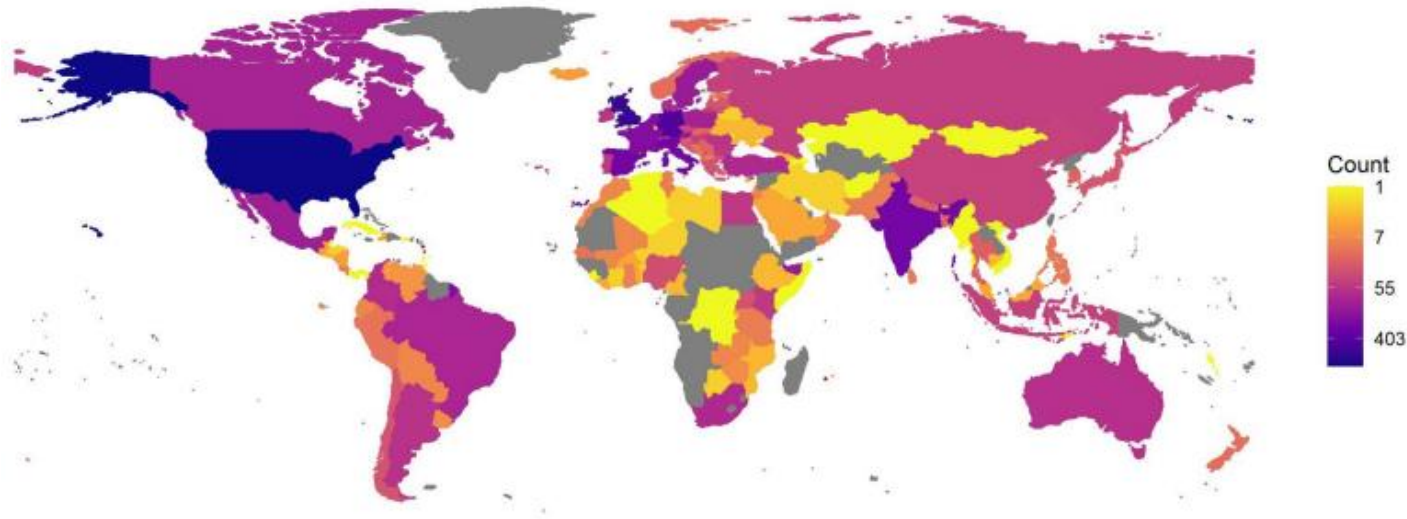
	Topics
Key Enabling Technologies (KET)	Industrial Biotechnology
	Nanoscience and Technology
	Optics and Photonics
	Micro-and Nano-electronics
	All Projects with a KET
Societal Grand Challenges (SGC)	Society
	Bioeconomy
	Transport
	Health
	Climate change and the Environment
	Energy
	All Projects with SGC

dSEA

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE
ECONOMICHE E AZIENDALI
'MARCO FANNO'

UNIVERSITÀ
DEGLI STUDI
DI PADOVA

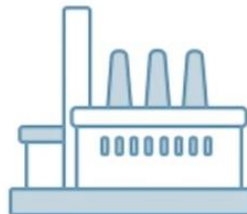Some real cases of SI activities and projects are presented in the next slides

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Simone is 184 cm tall and wears an M

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DETAILS ＋

The Ferruccio sweater is made entirely from refined recycled wool yarn, a sustainable and biodegradable material. With its clean design and crew neck, it's a true must-have in your wardrobe.

- 310 g
- Stockinette stitch

MATERIAL －

COMPOSITION: 100% recycled wool.
This completely recycled wool garment **is crafted from <u>certified yarns</u>, regenerated by textile artisans in Prato**. By doing so, we uphold the tradition of our district that dates back over a century, while reducing the consumption of water and chemicals.
WASHING CARE: We recommend washing recycled wool garments by hand to maintain their high quality. After, put it in a light spin cycle to drain excess water. Alternatively, wash it on a gentle cycle setting at a maximum of 30°C. Place it on a flat surface to air dry.

FIT ＋

SHIPPING AND RETURNS ＋

Orti generali – Turin

The project has recovered a residual agricultural area **previously abandoned** and **previously used for illegal vegetable** gardens.
It responded to the **resident population's need** for land to legally cultivate, also becoming a place for **socialization** and **training** on sustainability and agriculture issues for all citizens.

Why a social innovation?

- Because the project responded to the needs of local farmers, redeveloping the agricultural area and opening it up to the use of the population.
- Because it aims at the work and social inclusion of marginalized people, through training internships and job grants.
- Because after being founded by an association, the project was able to evolve, engaging in dialogue with the public administration and activating an alternative business model in the agricultural sector.
- Because it favors ethical and sustainable cultivation of the land.

D-Hub Atelier di Riuso Creativo - Verona

It **fights social exclusion** through social and work **integration** (especially of disadvantaged women) and **community** animation.

Why a social innovation?

- Because it responds to the needs of the population of the neighborhood, representing a hub of meetings, relationships and unions of diversity.
- Because it aims to introduce previously unemployed disadvantaged women into the world of work and make them independent.
- Because it is an active subject in the governance of public spaces and common goods in the neighbourhood, collaborating with many other formal and informal Third Sector actors, but also with the Municipality (participation in municipal projects, signing of a collaboration agreement).

Welf Care – Verona

It addresses social needs related to **work-life balance**, through personalized service packages, organized and networked by a Welfare Community Manager.

Why a social innovation?

- Because starting from the theme of work-life balance, the project develops personalized services based on the needs of each user.
- Because they were the first to officially experiment with the figure of the Welfare Community Manager.
- Because it presents an exploratory approach: one of their mottos is "Welf-care not only offers services, but finds new ways to respond to the emerging needs of our territory".
- Because the project was able to evolve what was its website into a real welfare services platform.

Accademia Flauto&Variazioni - Ferrara

It offers **musical and instrumental training**; organization of concerts, musical aperitifs; development of paths for people with Specific Learning Disorders; dissemination of the instrument and inclusive music.

Why a social innovation?

- Because it uses music to address and support disabilities and learning disorders, without any prejudice or stereotype.
- Because it offers musical courses, aimed at anyone, and highly specialized training in the instrument, with personalized courses and prices regulated compared to those of the private market.

Association for the Integration of Women (AIW) - Roots: - Modena

The project aims at the **work and social inclusion of migrant women**, in order to train them in the catering and hospitality sector and to make them autonomous in looking for a job.

Why a social innovation?

- Because it responds to the needs of migrant women excluded from the world of work, through training and work placements.
- Because it experiments with a social entrepreneurship model.
- Because it aims to impact the exclusionary dynamics of the traditional labor market.

Studiamo insieme – Bologna

Teaching support with homework help for elementary and middle school children (made online), guaranteeing **assistance** and **socialization**.

Why a social innovation?

- Because the group responds to an unprecedented need, which emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic and felt collectively by families with children of school age.
- Because the group's activity involves university students (association volunteers), who during the pandemic would not have been able to provide any other type of help, due to the lack of cars or sufficient economic resources. In this case, all you need is a PC and a connection.
- Furthermore, the group provides a service, usually provided for a fee, free of charge, giving even low-income families the opportunity to use it.

Undicesima Ora – Senigallia (Ancona)

Rethinking of the territorial governance model of personal services with a view to activating **new co-planning** with the **local administration** for the acquisition of PNRR **funds**.

Why a social innovation?

- It is a social cooperative that acts as a promoter and driving force for the rethinking of the service governance model.
- The proposed model adopts the principle of experimental governance, proposed by the sociologist Charles Sabel; also recalling the potentialization of welfare, according to the approach of the sociologist Niels Akerstrom Andersen.
- The development of the entire process and the new governance structure were entrusted by the cooperative to an external consultant who plays the role of welfare community manager.

Al di là dei sogni – Sessa Aurunca (Caserta)

Job placement and **valorisation of assets** confiscated from the Camorra.

Why a social innovation?

- Because the Cooperative uses Health Budgets to finance and support individualized therapeutic rehabilitation projects.

Controcorrente S.O.S. – Bisceglie (Barletta Andria Trani)

Controcorrente aims to combine two apparently distant areas: the **employment of young people** with **kids with difficulties** in sport, in particular aquatic sport.

Why a social innovation?

Because Controcorrente creates a working context that integrates kids with relational and cognitive difficulties, going beyond mere welfare, in favor of a path of self-determination that is aimed at making the kids themselves absolute protagonists of their future

Xfarm Agricoltura Prossima – San Vito dei Normanni (Brindisi)

Reuse and **transformation of lands confiscated** from organized crime through the development of an agricultural, ecological and social company. The objective is to promote a **circular economy**, encourage **socio-work placements** and animate the **local community**.

Why a social innovation?

- Because the Cooperative has redeveloped 50 hectares of confiscated agricultural land, using organic and regenerative agriculture practices.
- Because in doing so it has favored job placement processes: currently 9 people are permanently employed at the cooperative, plus another 20 during the harvest periods.
- Furthermore, the Cooperative manages a communal garden and organizes activities for the local community.

Renewable Energy Communities:
social impacts and innovation locus

Targets by the European Union require that at least 75% of total energy comes from **renewable sources** and 16% of electricity generates in **collective projects** (EU, 2018).

Citizens should be involved in energy consumption, generation, trading and supply for reaching such targets and **energy transition**.

Renewable Energy Communities (RECs)

Renewable resources   Emissions decrease   Collaborative social transformation

Local economic growth
(job creation)
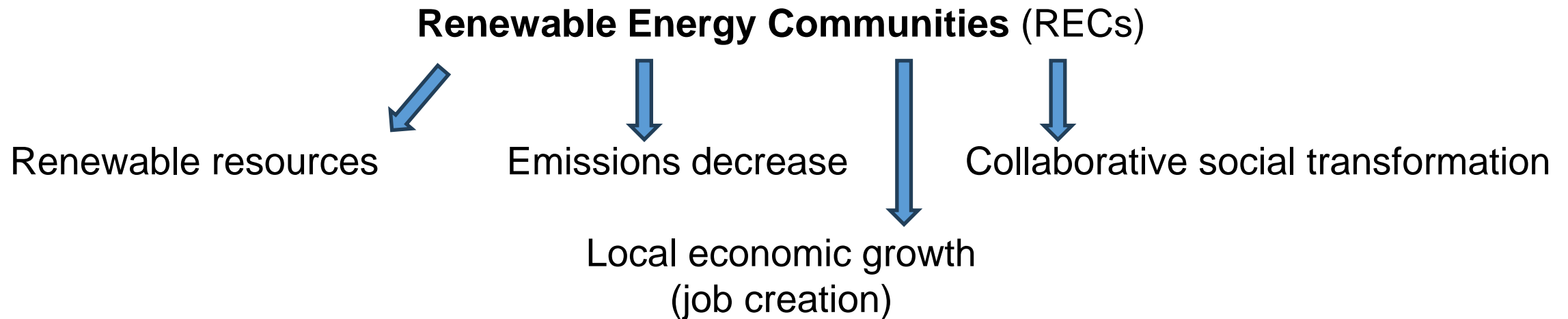
In RECs contexts, an **innovative** business model should be elaborated because:
- high levels of technologies
- high presence of ICTs
- new market operators (in comparison with traditional ones)
- centred on an original agent: a **prosumer**

Value should be created for members at **different levels** (collective consumers, firms, third parties, etc.)

+ in the **renewable energy sector**, attention should be paid to social, environmental and economic **sustainability** (and specific material structures of the electricity system).

Innovative and Sustainable Models

JRC SCIENCE FOR POLICY REPORT

Energy communities: an overview of energy and social innovation

Aura Caramizaru
Andreas Uihlein

Review

A systematic review of social innovation and community energy transitions

Alaize Dall-Orsoletta, Jorge Cunha [*], Madalena Araújo, Paula Ferreira

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

For the energy transition, Social Innovation (SI) has been defined as innovations that contribute to the low-carbon energy transition, civic empowerment, and social goals through initiatives such as new forms of governance, social configurations, supportive policies and regulations, and new business models. This work systematically reviews the literature to identify (potential) impacts of SI and bottom-up initiatives on sustainable energy transitions. Based on bibliometric and qualitative content analysis, works were classified by the type of SI, related renewable energy source, and geographical context. Associated sociotechnical changes, obstacles, and enabling factors of SI are also indicated. Main findings show that SI has an important role in local transitions but limited power to challenge the regime and scale-up. For just energy transitions, it can facilitate energy access, co-production, energy democracy, and participatory processes besides bringing regional socio-economic development and building community capacity. SI can contribute to renewable energy deployment through co-ownership and community finance. Also, community-led actions are in a unique position to access local tacit knowledge, influence individual behavior, and use them to build more sustainable cities. Finally, research limitations and directions towards future research are presented.

- Engaging citizens through collective energy actions can reinforce **positive social norms** and **support the energy transition**.

- Community energy can foster citizens' participation and control over decision-making in **renewable energy**.

- Its SI potential also resides in the ability to **integrate consumers independently of their income and access to capital**, ensuring that the benefits of decentralisation are also shared with those that cannot participate.

- **Innovative social policy** and revisited regulatory structures are needed to address the potentially regressive effects that could arise when some societal groups might be impaired by an inability to invest in renewables projects.

- Ensuring that as many people as possible can participate in community energy can release the **creative forces of social innovation** and **sustainable lifestyles** across different social groups.

- The report recommends carrying out an EU-wide exercise assessing the potential of energy communities in **reducing energy poverty -** including lowering the barriers that prevent socially vulnerable groups from participating in distributed generation and communities.