

# Chapter 1

## Social Innovation: A Sympathetic and Critical Interpretation

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### 1.1 The Promise and Challenge of Social Innovations

The effort to strengthen social cohesion and lower social inequalities is among Europe's main policy challenges. At the urban level, these great challenges become visible and tangible, which in many senses makes cities a microcosm of society. It means that local welfare systems are at the forefront of the struggle to address this challenge—and they are far from winning. While the statistics show some positive signs, the overall picture still shows sharp and sometimes rising inequalities, a loss of social cohesion and failing policies of integration and inclusion. When we focus on specific groups in society (e.g. migrants), the situation is even more dire. It is clear that new ideas and approaches to tackle these very wicked problems are needed.

Contrary to what is sometimes thought, a lack of bottom-up innovation is not the issue in itself. European cities are teeming with new ideas, initiated by citizens, professionals and policymakers. There are by now many examples of innovation, paraded by think tanks and policymakers as tomorrow's answers. This is certainly promising. Yet this altogether too rosy picture obscures some of the drawbacks,

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T. Brandsen et al. (eds.), *Social Innovations in the Urban Context*,

Nonprofit and Civil Society Studies, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-21551-8\_1

which are both practical and academic in nature. In public policy, there has often been the suggestion that such innovations will substitute for, rather than complement, present welfare arrangements. This has made the concept rather suspicious, in the eyes of many. It is not our wish to enter into a political debate here, but it must be observed that we as yet know little about the broader effects of innovations and how these compare to the effects of established programmes. Also, it is often implicitly suggested that social innovation is necessarily good, which is again unproven. As we will show in this book, while it is fine to regard social innovation with sympathetic eyes, it is misleading to ignore the contested and dark sides of the phenomenon.

Academically, there are also various reasons to be careful with the term. To begin with, the concept of social innovation is poorly defined and demarcated. Furthermore, innovations are too often presented as “pearls without an oyster”: They are pretty to look at, but we do not know where they come from. How do such innovations originate in a specific local context of social relations, regulations, space and politics? What exactly did they contribute to local welfare systems? And how can we ensure a positive interaction between these forms of social innovation and public policies for reform? The European Union (EU)-funded international research project “Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in Favour of Cohesion” (WILCO) was set up to find out specifically how social innovations can help to deal with the challenge of social inclusion, in the context of established local welfare systems.

This entails a special perspective on the phenomenon of social innovation and the various promoters, agents of change and social entrepreneurs that are involved with them. The new approaches and instruments developed, which are part of social innovations, should, self-evidently, work “in the here and now”, in the place they are operating; but they also contain messages concerning values, hopes and assumptions. Other actors, such as the political-administrative system can then engage with and react to innovations in various ways. They can borrow successful instruments, adapting them to their own administrative and policy frameworks. But equally, these other actors may also feel challenged by the nature of these new instruments or by the innovators themselves. There is, then, a significant difference, as well as significant room for variation, between *making use* of innovations, their methods and instruments and actually *learning* from them. From that point of view, our analysis of innovation aims to facilitate a broader concept of policy learning that goes beyond making (greater) use of social innovations. It tries to understand them as socially embedded phenomena, with all the strings attached.

## 1.2 Social Innovation: A Contested Issue and the Concept Proposed by WILCO

The definition of social innovations is a bone of contention. In their overview written for the European Commission and the WILCO project, Jenson and Harrison have referred to social innovation as a “quasi-concept”, a “hybrid, making use of empirical analysis and thereby benefitting from the legitimising aura of the scientific-

ic method, but simultaneously characterised by an indeterminate quality that makes it adaptable to a variety of situations and flexible enough to follow the twists and turns of policy, that everyday politics sometimes make necessary” (European Commission 2013, p. 16). Indeed, it has achieved the status of a buzzword in national and European policy circles. US President Obama established no less than two offices for social innovation. The EU has used the term to fund several initiatives, including the research project upon which this book is based. It is then little wonder that the meaning has diluted, sometimes referring to anything that is considered new and that is not technical.

Although as an academic concept, it is less wide-ranging, there still remains a broad range of interpretations. Some posit simply that it must constitute a new approach to a particular kind of problem. The Stanford Centre for Social Innovation, for example, describes it as “the process of inventing, securing support for, and implementing novel solutions to social needs and problems” (Phillis et al. 2008, p. 34). This is a conveniently flexible interpretation, yet one could argue that, according to this definition, there is little that does not qualify as a social innovation. Other scholars are more specific in circumscribing the nature of innovation. For example, the SOCIAL POLIS project defined it as “the satisfaction of alienated human needs through the transformation of social relations: transformations which ‘improve’ the governance systems that guide and regulate the allocation of goods and services meant to satisfy those needs, and which establish new governance structures and organizations (discussion forums, political decision-making systems, etc.)” (Moulaert 2010, 2013). This implies not only that an innovation must be radical (transformative), but also that it changes the power structure within the system where it is introduced. The problem with this kind of definition is less with its normative character, but with its essentialist nature. It is true that innovations are about new ideas and purposes deriving from established paths and patterns getting practical; however, it must be likewise considered that they are about processes and ways of development under conditions and in contexts where interaction is not determined and foreseeable *ex ante*. Innovatory effects of a new product, strategy or service can be path breaking to different degrees. Thinking this way it becomes clear that what is needed is a *concept* of social innovation as a complex societal process, rather than a mere classificatory *definition* of an action or product.

For the purposes of the WILCO project, we defined social innovation as both products and processes; ideas translated into practical approaches; new in the context where they appear. It was important for us to use such a definition, rather than a more specific one, because one cannot clearly predict what comes out of even a very promising innovation in the course of its development. The problem with defining social innovation resides less in “innovation” and much more in the meaning one attributes to “social”. Studying the current literature on conceptualising and defining *social* innovations, one finds that “social” is mainly equated with “improvement” (Phillis 2008), finding better answers to basic needs and more satisfying social relations (Moulaert 2010), and a range of other “good things”.

One way of challenging such an interpretation of “social” has been proposed by Johnson in his essay asking “Where good ideas come from” (2010). He argues that there are four different environments that create new ideas, processes and things:

(a) the ideas of individual inventors working as or with businessmen, (b) ideas of individuals in society that may be taken up at different places, (c) market-networked innovations, generated by (clusters of) enterprises and their R&D departments and finally (d), what he calls “the fourth quadrant” (2010, p. 213), non-market/networked movements inventions and actions making them practical innovations. It is then not the more or less technical nature of an innovation, nor the degree to which its final (by)effects are beneficial, but the offspring from the realms of society and social interactions that might make a difference between innovations at large and *social* innovations. He also tries to show that in the last centuries, there has been a swing from individual and business based to what he calls “non-market/networked” based (social) innovations. It would be tempting to discuss then in which ways there is a link between more *social* innovation and more *civil* society as a fertile ground for processes that generate and give room to such innovations.

The view proposed by Johnson may allow a more subtle understanding of the prevailing broad consensus on the positive definition of the “social” aspect of social innovation (see BEPA 2010; Mulgan 2006). They may not always be seen unambiguously as good, but possibly as more promising or attractive than previous arrangements, or in comparison to the lifestyles created by the innovative products, services or regulations of big business and big government. While this allows us to feel sympathetic towards social innovations, we must still remain critical about statements and definitions that declare them as inherently good.

Interpretations of the added value and success of social innovations, which reflect what is seen as good and better for society, will often be widely contested. By definition, innovations differ from prevailing routines, forms of thinking and acting. It is possible that they may become a mainstream practice, but this is never the case at the outset. They can be linked with a diverse range of goals and come to take on different meanings over time. Just as important as the initial goals of social innovation are wider political concepts and institutional systems in which they become embedded (see e.g. Osborne and Brown 2011), reactions of the social and economic environments, and the hopes for better coping strategies and solutions that they attract. The enormous impact of social environments for the shape and directions innovations take is a well known topic from the older and more established research and debates on technological innovations (see e.g. Chesbrough 2003). Basically all innovations, technological and social innovations, are, as convincingly argued by Nowotny (1997), marked by a high degree of risk and uncertainty in the course of their development.

Altogether, this shows that defining innovation—and more specifically social innovation—is an issue in an evolving area of study undergoing a great deal of change and often linked with normative assumptions.

Against this background, our definition avoids objectifying what is a matter of processes involving not only proponents and activists and their initial goals but also the ways contexts react and shape the ways and directions social innovations develop. We employed the simple criterion *that social innovations are those that, created mainly by networks and joint action in social realms beyond business and government routines, at any given moment, raise the hope and expectations of progress towards something “better” (a more socially sustainable/democratic/effective*

*society*). Whether or not these hopes and expectations come to fruition is harder to ascertain, as they depend both on the values and strategies of change agents and on the impact of context on these social innovations, which can often only be verified in retrospect. Thereby we have tried, first, to avoid working with a normative concept that is imposed on social processes from a purely academic perspective and second, to take account of the fact that innovations are processes with future directions and meanings that depend on many factors.

Furthermore, we have avoided assuming an inherent link between social innovation and specific organisational forms such as “social enterprises” or an individual character or attitude represented by the “social entrepreneur” (for an overview on this perspective, see the contributions in Nicholls 2006). The link between social innovations and organisational forms should be an empirical question, not a presupposition.

### 1.3 Aims and Methodology

The findings described in this collection derive from the research project WILCO (“Welfare Innovations at the Local Level in Favour of Cohesion”, 2010–2014). The project was funded by the EU under the 7th Framework Programme and included universities from ten countries (Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and UK), coordinated by Radboud University Nijmegen. Its objectives were twofold:

- a. To chart patterns of social inequality and exclusion in European cities.
- b. To identify (socially) innovative practices in European cities, specifically related to local welfare. It is on the second objective that this book focuses.

With respect to both points, it must be emphasised that our project was not about comparing countries and their welfare regimes or systems of governance. Instead, we studied urban patterns of inequality and exclusion, and the social innovations related to them, within a wider framework of reference than the national level only. Today’s social innovations, the patterns and instruments that make them different to what exists, are not primarily about regime differences, but about dealing with the insufficiencies of traditions and trends shared across European countries. Innovations generally have to cope with (a) typical patterns of traditional post-war welfarism and (b) more recent modernisation strategies building on neo-liberal and managerial concepts. As the respective chapters on social innovations in this book will show, it is with regard to this international heritage in welfare and governance that social innovations make a difference and show commonalities.

Taking an international perspective and looking at commonalities does not, however, deny the importance of context. Our work has been guided by a perspective that underlines the impact of *local* contexts, of the peculiarities of cities and urban areas. These local contexts are not merely local representations of national regimes. Cities and their governing elites have room, sometimes wide room, to manoeuvre,

as our city chapters in part II of the book show, and these different local contexts determine the conditions for the emergence and development of local social innovations, for example, the space given to them, the opportunities for sustainability and the scope for policy learning.

In accordance with our understanding of social innovation, focus on the axis between specific contexts of local and urban settings on the one hand and innovations taking shape there on the other has been central to our research and constitutes the basis of this book. Part II looks at it from the perspective of urban contexts and regimes, whereas part III is focussing on typical examples of such local innovations and the various ways in which they interact with their local context. To what degree and in which ways the interaction of local contexts and innovations is mediated by national traditions and trends is a challenge for further research. It was not central to this project.

The first period of our research work was devoted to mapping the context of social innovations at the local level. We described the historical-institutional backgrounds on the basis of two dimensions: the structure of the overall welfare state and the degree of centralisation and the position of “the local” in shaping welfare. For this purpose, we made an inventory of variables that must be regarded as formal preconditions for local welfare policies and initiatives, including key regulations, financial provisions, contractual arrangements and entitlements. Because at this concrete level there were many changes in key variables (e.g. in financial and regulatory conditions), we set a time frame covering the last 10 years. The variables were specified for three policy fields central to the project: childcare, employment and housing.

We started with a literature review and conducted six interviews per country (two in each of the three policy fields, with public officials and professionals), 60 overall, to make sure our information was up-to-date. After mapping the national backgrounds to social innovation, we moved to the local level. We chose 20 European cities (two per country) on which we focused our further research. The chosen cities were: Münster and Berlin Friedrichshain—Kreuzberg (DE), Zagreb and Varazdin (HR), Amsterdam and Nijmegen (NL), Barcelona and Pamplona (ES), Milan and Brescia (IT), Stockholm and Malmö (SE), Birmingham and Medway area (UK), Warsaw and Plock (PL), Lille and Nantes (FR), and Bern and Genève (CH). For the 20 chosen cities, we gathered data about social inequality and exclusion in the local labour market, housing market and childcare facilities, as well as more general data on patterns of social cohesion. Specifically, we identified the relative position of age, gender and migrant groups with respect to general patterns of social inequality and exclusion. Data collection consisted of two parts. The first was an analysis of the Eurostat Database Urban Audit that includes data for more than 200 European cities; it constituted the background for our comparative analysis. The second part consisted of 360 intensive interviews, 36 in each country (six interviews for each group mentioned above in each city). The analysis was aimed at describing the living conditions of people experiencing difficult situations and at identifying the strategies they adopt in order to deal with them. This first stage of the project has been the subject of a separate book (Ranci et al. 2014).

Having identified the contexts of social innovation in local welfare in the first period of the research, the project then turned to the innovations themselves. In order to do so, a distinction was made between the core ideas behind local welfare and the concrete approaches and instruments through which local welfare is implemented.

The first part of this second stage of our research focused on discourses on social inequality, social cohesion and their links with overarching concepts for local economic growth and urban development. We examined the ways these shaped the three policy fields mentioned above, revealing the locally prevailing practices, core ideas and discourses that drive local welfare systems and their governance.

In the second part of our analysis, interviews were conducted with experts, policymakers, administrators and key persons in the three policy fields, which included questions about what they considered new and promising in their local context in terms of activities, concepts and organisations. This matched with our concept of looking at social innovations as risky and basically open processes, leaving it to central stakeholders what to qualify as new, innovative and promising. Our final choice of local social innovations to be studied (three to five per city) was thereby guided and informed by local knowledge.

We described instruments and approaches used to fight against social inequality and stimulate social cohesion. By virtue of the knowledge accumulated in previous phases of the research, we could assess how instruments and approaches were innovative in their contexts. It allowed us to generate a more concrete knowledge about what kind of shared patterns make up for social innovations. What instruments and approaches do they use when they try to act different and better? We were interested in styles of services rendered, forms of organisation and working patterns and in issues of governance. The development of such local innovations was understood as a co-product of their own strategies and of the impact of local discursive contexts. In total, we gathered information about 77 social innovations. This was done primarily through an additional 180 interviews (Table 1.1).

The key methods used were:

- An analysis of documentation, including policy documents produced by the stakeholders in the chosen policy fields, parliamentary protocols produced at the local level discussing choices taken in the policy fields and newspaper articles produced in the local press concerning the policy fields.
- Qualitative semi-structured interviews with stakeholders both within the analysed fields and at the level of general policy with policymakers, civil servants, representatives of civil society organisations and representatives of our three chosen groups. In total, we carried out about 12 interviews per policy field per country and 360 interviews overall.
- To involve stakeholders in the progress of the research, focus groups were organised in each city to invite policymakers, civil servants, representatives of civil society organisations and representatives of the three groups of interest.

**Table 1.1** Overview of methods

Stage of the project	Focus	Data collection
Stage one	Collecting data about social inequality and exclusion in the local labour market, housing market and childcare facilities, as well as more general data on patterns of social cohesion	Analysis of the Eurostat database urban audit Interviews with migrants, young unemployed, single mothers (360 overall)
Stage two—preparatory phase	Update on the state of the art	Literature review Six interviews per country
Stage two—analysis of cities	Cities (Münster and Berlin Friedrichshain—Kreuzberg (DE), Zagreb and Varazdin (HR), Amsterdam and Nijmegen (NL), Barcelona and Pamplona (ES), Milan and Brescia (IT), Stockholm and Malmö (SE), Birmingham and Medway area (UK), Warsaw and Plock (PL), Lille and Nantes (FR), Bern and Genève (CH))	Analysis of policy documents, parliamentary protocols and newspaper articles Qualitative semi-structured interviews (12 per policy field per country, 360 overall) Stakeholder meetings (20 overall)
Stage two—analysis of innovations	Social innovations (3–5 per city, 77 overall; full list available on <a href="http://www.wilcoproject.eu">www.wilcoproject.eu</a> )	

## 1.4 Contributions to the Book

*Part II of the book* summarises the overall findings, addressing the topics of how local development and its innovative elements are framed and shaped by urban regimes and local governance arrangements. Contributions illustrate how local context and urban welfare politics with their respective governance arrangements function as a framework that defines room and limits for social innovations. As such, the contributions of this chapter exemplify the general findings of the research as regards specific governance arrangements with a detailed analysis of a city. Each city corresponds to a specific arrangement and thoroughly highlights the identified dimensions.

*The introductory chapter on urban governance and social innovations by Sandro Cattacin and Annette Zimmer* highlights the urban governance arrangements identified by WILCO. These arrangements provide very different opportunity structures for social innovations. They are characterised by following dimensions:

- The *governance of cooperation* is characterised by a general orientation on innovation in politics and economics; the search of synergies between economics and social policies to foster the urban character of the city operates as the main orientation.
- The *governance of growth* prioritises economics and economic interest groups. Social problems are individualised and innovation in the social field is relegated to the self-organisation of groups.



- The *governance of social challenges* develops social policies through state-oriented initiatives that are coordinated with private non-profits.
- The *conflicting governance of social and economic challenges* describes policy developments based on a competition for public investment in economic or social initiatives. No clear priorities are stated and decisions depend on the mobilisation of interest groups.

*The next chapter in this part, by Christina Rentzsch, concerns the German city of Münster.* This city's governance regime is influenced both by traditions and structural changes. In line with this political context, economics and local welfare policy appear to be geared towards innovation—which is characteristic for such a regime. Furthermore, non-profit organisations are heavily integrated in local welfare provision. The underlying idea is the attainment of broad-based involvement of various actors from different sectors of society. Nevertheless, this orientation towards collaborative governance of innovation has started to change, that is, increasing competition between municipalities led to stakeholders focusing intently on strengthening the attractiveness of Münster as such. Therefore, over the last few years, Münster has gradually shifted away from being the poster-child of such an ideal regime towards a more economically oriented regime. This regime transition could, moreover, pose a threat—in the long run—to the tradition of third sector involvement and citizens' influence at the local level, to the benefit of investors' interests.

*The chapter on Malmö by Ola Segnestam Larsson, Marie Nordfeldt and Anna Carrigan serves as an illustration of how urban governance arrangements provide structures for social innovations and where the city of Malmö could be categorised as an example of the governance of social challenges.* The chapter contributes to the debate on social innovations by arguing that attention must be paid also to the relationship between inertia, clearings in local contexts and innovations in order to understand the underpinnings of social innovations in local welfare regimes. Specifically, in addition to describing the local welfare regime and a set of social innovations in the city of Malmö, the chapter analyses the different types of clearings that proved fertile for the development of the social innovations under study. Rather than arguing that social innovations come to the fore as a result of the quality of certain individuals or being locally and socially embedded, the authors put forth that innovations also may emerge in clearings as a consequence of inertia, in the case of Malmö in the shape and form of an unwillingness to change due to political and ideological factors.

*The next chapter, by Nadia Brookes, Jeremy Kendall and Lavinia Mitton, focuses on Birmingham, the UK's second largest city with a growing number of residents, the youngest population of any major European city and significant diversity in terms of ethnic composition.* There is general agreement across the city that a local welfare system should support vulnerable people and promote equality and inclusion, both socially and economically. In the UK, however, social policy tends to be centrally driven and funded, although there is often scope as to how this is implemented at a local level. There is consensus in Birmingham on the nature of social

problems and the local political decision-making process allows for policy solutions to be developed. Another reason for consensus is economic growth, important for all cities and enhancing the quality of life of residents, usually linked to social inclusion. Although social policy coordination in Birmingham is characterised by partnerships, decisions are not usually implemented without the involvement of local government.

*The chapter about Geneva by Patricia Naegeli* shows that Geneva's governance arrangements are built on a strong local and cantonal state that uses the support of subsidised non-profit organisations in order to implement local welfare decisions. In the Swiss context, which is based on the principle of subsidiarity, this is quite an exception. It can be explained by a strong public administration that influences all local welfare decisions in a conservative way and the presence of a relative consensus among political forces to have "generous" social policies. Yet since the 2000s, newcomer parties have challenged political stability and long-lasting conflicting debates within the city council and the cantonal parliament. Both the influence of neighbouring France, where social policies are centralised and state-oriented and the strong economy of Geneva that can finance "generous" social measures are part of the explanation. However, in the *governance of social challenges*, social innovation tends to be incremental, and seems to happen within the public sector or at least, under the guidance of the local or cantonal state.

*Milan, the focus of the chapter by Giuliana Costa, Roberta Cucca and Rossana Torri*, can be described as a city lost in transition. For more than two decades, Milan has been ruled by a strongly market-oriented system of governance, following the rhetoric that creating a "good business climate" is not only an effective way to foster growth and innovation, but also to eradicate poverty and to deliver higher standards of living. This approach has led to (a) a disinvestment in welfare services directly provided by the municipality, in favour of a more residual welfare system based on non-profit and private involvement and (b) a huge investment in neo-liberal tools of government for the economic development of the city, such as the promotion of international events (Expo2015) and large real estate investments through public-private partnerships. After some scandals as well as a huge increase of social inequalities, municipal elections rewarded a new coalition following a style of governance oriented to a social innovation approach. However, the difficult financial situation of the municipality has reduced ambitions of the current government.

*The chapter by Benjamin Ewert on Berlin* shows that for a long time the city benefitted immensely from the myth to be "poor but sexy". The popular slogan, referring to the coexistence of impoverishment and creativity in the city, expressed very well the Berlin Zeitgeist promising "a good life for little money". Hence the city has been a home for creative workers, artists, cosmopolitans and young people from all over the world, literally speaking "change agents" that sustainably co-designed Berlin as a place for unconventional life styles and innovative solutions for everyday challenges. This chapter argues, however, that Berlin's sources for innovative capital may dry up in the near future due to the re-emergence of social challenges that tend to eclipse the improvements emanating from social innovations. There are very different ways of giving innovatory practices and organisations a preliminary place in the architecture of public policies and forms of governance. A new system

for establishing a back and forth between the political administrative system and social innovations has still to be developed.

Part III *of the book* focuses on distinctive types of innovations, describing two basic aspects. The first concerns their internal characteristics, approaches and instruments used. The major goals of innovators and innovations will be sketched, as well as the internal governance and organisation of innovations. The second aspect concerns the context of the innovation and the ways the innovators deal with it. The creation of innovations is to a large degree contingent and their dynamic risky. The focus is on their interplay with the urban and city context of the innovation, the climate(s) of a city and the locally prevailing political strategy and its role in the policy field where the innovation is located. Contributions in this part represent a choice of more detailed and elaborated case studies carried out as part of WILCO, published in an e-book in 2014 (see: Evers et al. 2014).

*The introductory chapter to this part on the nature and relevance of local social innovations by Adalbert Evers and Taco Brandsen* deals with two issues. First of all it identifies and analyses recurring approaches and instruments in local social innovations that differ from those dominating in the past and prevailing presently. These include the search for new ways of addressing users and citizens; the emphasis on new risks and related approaches to the issues of rights and responsibilities, ways of organising and working; and finally the concern with issues of governance. The features of these local innovations may have significance for welfare systems at large, going beyond the introduction of special new items in special fields. Secondly, the chapter discusses the kinds of typical relationships of innovations with their environments, as they are embedded in local contexts, reaching from tolerance to policies of mainstreaming. This helps to determine the local conditions and support innovations required for innovations to unfold, blossom and become part of changing local welfare systems in various ways. For the discussion of policies on social innovation, that is, approaches and instruments, and of politics of social innovation, shaping the processes of their development over time, a common metaphor is used: understanding social innovations as messages with a content that may be read and understood differently by the addressees in the (local) contexts, assuming such messages find their ways, are read and interpreted with some degree of interest.

The next chapter in this third part is on *the MaMa Foundation, Warsaw, described by Renata Siemieńska, Anna Domaradzka and Ilona Matysiak*. It is a non-profit organisation established in June 2006 by young, highly educated mothers. Its activities are based on the idea that mothers and fathers with young children should be able to increase their participation in local public and social life through the elimination of cultural and architectural barriers. MaMa Foundation's modes of working include social campaigns, such as "O Mamma Mia! I cannot drive my pram in here!"—a campaign for adapting public spaces to prams and wheelchairs; campaigns for employees' rights, such as "Horror Stories", which lists examples of dismissing mothers from their jobs; legal and psychological advice; and workshops for female refugees. MaMa Foundation starts many cultural and artistic initiatives as well as educational projects. It also supports local moms' clubs organising workshops for mothers and local leaders and promotes the economic value of women's housework.

“RODA” (“Parents in Action”) in Zagreb, described by Gojko Bežovan, Jelena Matančević and Danijel Baturina, is a civil society organisation founded in 2001 by a group of mothers as direct answer to the reductions of maternity leave benefits. Over time, the organisation evolved into a group of concerned and engaged citizens interested in promoting and protecting the rights to a dignified pregnancy, parenthood and childhood in Croatia. Being fully engaged in meeting the needs of their members, and equipped with an entrepreneur spirit, the organisation launched the production of cotton diapers, organised in sheltered workshops. It was the first organisation of its kind that emerged in the broader field of family policy. It is actively involved in advocacy for changing regulations in family and health policies at national and local levels.

Francesca Broersma, Taco Brandsen and Joost Fledderus discuss the *Neighbourhood Stores for Education, Research, and Talent Development (Buurtwinkel voor Onderwijs, Onderzoek en Talentontwikkeling, BOOTs) in Amsterdam*, an initiative of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. In BOOTs, the students of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA)—under supervision of teachers and professionals—provide certain (welfare) services for residents in so-called problem areas. In this manner, the students develop practical skills while also assisting the residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods, either directly by offering services to residents themselves or indirectly by offering services to partner organisations. The services offered by BOOTs include financial, legal, and social consultation hours, homework support for 6–10-year-olds and an atelier for urban renewal. In addition, depending on the needs of a specific neighbourhood, BOOTs may also engage in other activities.

The chapter on *Ilot Stephenson, the co-production of housing in a major urban renewal district in Lille*, written by Laurent Fraise, analyses how an historical local dispute in a renewal operation has led to an emblematic housing innovation called Ilot Stephenson at the periphery of one of the biggest urban renewal projects in the Roubaix-Tourcoing-Wattrelot district. A protest by inhabitants against the demolition of popular housing led to co-production between architects, local authorities and inhabitants. Access to homes at reduced cost has been achieved thanks to an innovative mode of architectural intervention that encourages inhabitants’ participation in the self-rehabilitation of their neighbourhood. The building phase is no longer considered as a parenthesis in inhabitants’ lives, but as an important opportunity for public expression and civic participation.

The *Neighbourhood Children Services in Pamplona*, analysed by Manuel Aguilar Hendrickson and Marta Llobet Estany, are social activities aimed at the prevention of social problems amongst children in Pamplona. They are the result of a movement of community associations that developed leisure activities for children and their integration into the local government structure of social services while retaining a specific way of working. They show a blurring of limits between practitioners, volunteers and service users, who in fact become co-producers of services. It shows as well some of the ambivalence that may be found in social innovation projects. Born out of an initiative of grassroots associations, it was integrated into the municipal structure due to its effectiveness and efficiency by local authorities

that did not have much initial sympathy for such organisations. It has been criticised by advocates both of traditional public responsibility on the Left and of a more corporate approach to service management on the Right, but it has been able to find support on both sides of the political spectrum for different, sometimes opposite reasons.

*Benjamin Ewert and Adalbert Evers argue that the innovation of “Kreuzberg Acts—entrepreneurship in the district” in Berlin results in the intertwining of two issues that are usually separated: On the one hand, individual consultancy for (future) entrepreneurs and, on the other hand, a concern with community development and urban planning addressing different local groups. “Kreuzberg Acts” bridges economic and social concerns. For instance, those interested in founding a start-up are coached by local mentors how to apply for public subsidies and how to launch an effective marketing campaign. Yet, the project is also striving for street credibility by building bridges to the local economy. Project leaders and participants develop strategies how local people may benefit from the district’s booming economic sectors such as health care or tourism. Respective inventions are designed in a neighbourhood-friendly way, for example, by devising small-scale business ideas that fit the local social ecology.*

*The Fondazione Welfare Ambrosiano in Milan, discussed by Giuliana Costa and Stefania Sabatinelli, was created by a heterogeneous group of actors to support individuals and families dealing with short-term risks and reducing economic precariousness. It promotes access to micro-credits by persons who lack financial guarantees and/or have a past record of “bad payers”. Two types of micro-credits are available: “social credit”, reserved to persons who can hardly afford crucial expenses (such as the payment of university fees for their children or unexpected health expenditures) and credit for self-employment, to overcome unemployment or under-employment. The basic guidelines for actual and future programmes are an active approach to hardships following the idea of “we help you to help yourself” and the rotation of existing funds in order to be sustainable long-term.*

*Children to single (lone) mothers, analysed by Marie Nordfeldt, Ola Segnestam Larsson and Anna Carrigan, is a project carried out by Fryshuset, a well-known and entrepreneurial third-sector organisation with a wide range of activities within the field of youth policy. This project started with the aim to support and strengthen children living with a single mother in economically vulnerable circumstances. From a health perspective, the focus is on the everyday situation of children and mothers. This represents an example of an innovation initiated within civil society, in line with the traditional role of third-sector organisations to be pioneers and to focus attention on new needs and new groups with needs that are not covered in other ways. There are elements of advocacy in this innovation with the aim to raise attention to the issue of child poverty and the situation of unemployed or low-income single mothers. Fryshuset implements this by developing cooperation with different stakeholders and spreads awareness on this subject through these channels.*

*Joost Fledderus, Taco Brandsen and Francesca Broersma discuss “work corporations” in Nijmegen, social enterprises that aim at reemploying social assistance recipients with a considerable distance to the labour market by offering them a place*

where they can combine work and education. Participants are supposed to become more job-ready by actively taking part in courses or educational programmes and by getting used to a work rhythm. Furthermore, they sell products or offer services together with other participants in order to raise money that is invested in the programme itself. This means that a highly active role of participants is expected. For the municipality of Nijmegen, the new policy of work corporations represents a radical shift: from providing subsidised jobs towards co-produced activation. This chapter investigates the origins of this shift and the current organisation and functioning of work corporations.

*YEER (Youth Enterprise and Employment Rehearsal) in Birmingham, which Nadia Brookes, Jeremy Kendall and Lavinia Mitton have analysed, was set up by The Future Melting Pot, a community interest company, to provide business support to black and minority ethnic young people who were not in employment, education or training. The main aim was to enable participants to set up their own enterprises. The project included training, support and access to accredited advisors. The approach was innovative in that it offered young people an alternative to the conventional focus on getting a job by providing the opportunity to explore the option of self-employment in an environment that was needs-led. The approach could be described as intensive, personalised support to stimulate entrepreneurialism and an example of integrating economic and social domains.*

*Nadia Brookes, Jeremy Kendall and Lavinia Mitton also discuss the locality approach to worklessness in Birmingham, an approach to tackling worklessness developed by the city. It was locality driven and focused on areas where worklessness was high. Detailed consultation took place to agree on neighbourhood employment and skills plans and services commissioned on that basis. It also had a strong client focus adopting an Integrated Employment and Skills model. The aim of the model was to offer a continuous service, incorporating the provision of targeted action and support that each individual required no matter which provider they accessed. It enabled an in-depth understanding of issues for local residents where worklessness was high, provided the opportunity for provider organisations to work together for the first time and the development of small-scale innovative projects. Key was agreement of the major players in the local welfare system and their signing up to the model.*

*Andrea Walter and Danielle Gluns discuss innovations in childcare in Münster. The general orientation in Münster is collaborative. As such, local elites utilise networks and resources in order to put their ideas into practice. The chapter outlines the implementation of prevention visits as an example for the use of expertise, political connections and negotiating skills. The head of the Youth Office—who initiated the visits—is very well connected in the city and used these networks in order to improve local child protection. The chapter shows how structures and individual agents act in synchronism with regards to childcare policy as to obtain the observed outcomes.*

*The “Citizen’s Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona” is described by Teresa Montagut, Gemma Vilà and Sebastià Riutort. The program “Citizen’s Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona” is an innovative policy in the field of social welfare*

of the city. It represents a different model of governance based on a new decision-making process where local government and civil society organisations act together with a common strategy. They join efforts and resources with the aim to improve social cohesion in Barcelona. One of the powerful outputs of this program is the creation of several action networks to carry out concrete welfare policies. The chapter will analyse the social processes that allowed the emergence and development of the program, its effects and expectations of future.

*The integration guidelines in Bern are the subject of a chapter by Maxime Felder.* In the second half of the nineties, due to growing heterogeneity and fragmentation of the social and urban structure, and the arrival of new lifestyles (of nationals as well as of migrants), Swiss cities started taking charge of the challenges of migrant integration. In order to overcome an ageing foreigners law and diverse understanding of concepts and procedures, the city of Bern decided to elaborate a concept of guidelines and recommendations regarding integration of migrant populations. A large consultation resulted in a widely publicised document compiling recommendations addressing everyone, and particularly institutional actors. The document was meant to inform the population about the position and aims of the city council regarding integration. This way of discussing, negotiating and writing down guidelines supports participation and acceptance through involvement of stakeholders and acknowledges the limits of traditional welfare governance operating by enforceable rules in a field like integration.

*The fourth and final part of the book (Part IV)* is devoted to crosscutting and conclusive issues.

*A chapter on the dark side of social innovation by Ola Larsson and Taco Brandsen* critically appraises the concept and practice of social innovation. Normative assumptions behind research on social innovation tend to obscure the dark sides of the phenomenon, such as failure, political conflict and oppression. One of the aims of the WILCO project was to identify lessons for social policies and ultimately improve social cohesion. Such an optimistic approach should not, however, prevent us from discussing the more disturbing elements that the researchers identified.

*The final conclusive chapter of the book by Taco Brandsen, Sandro Cattacin, Adalbert Evers and Annette Zimmer, gives an overview of the Good, the Bad and the Ugly in social innovation.* It discusses the implications of the findings, for policymakers and professionals as well as the academic research agenda. “Good” signifies what innovations can contribute to a society’s ability to cope with change and, more precisely, to do it in a way that change can be perceived as progress in civility. “Bad” signifies the shortcomings of social innovations—especially their limited impact in an overall averse social and policy context. “Ugly” stands for discourses that deal with social innovations as if they were something else—usually, treating them like market-based products and technologies. On the basis of the overall evidence on the potential and limits of social innovation discourse, the chapter will give a balanced assessment of the state of the art of social innovation and of social innovation research.

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