

EXPLORING SOCIAL INNOVATION COMPONENTS AND ATTRIBUTES: A TAXONOMY PROPOSAL

Matteo Caroli, Eleonora Fracassi, Riccardo Maiolini

CeRIIS - LUISS Guido Carli University, mcaroli@luiss.it

CeRIIS - LUISS Guido Carli University, efracassi@luiss.it

CeRIIS - LUISS Guido Carli University - John Cabot University –
corresponding author: rmaiolini@luiss.it

Paper presented at ISIRC 2016 – Glasgow Caledonian University



AGENDA

introduction

Grounding SI

Research Trajectories on SI

Methodology, Data Collection & Selection

Iterations & Ontology proposal

Future directions

INTRODUCTION

Despite the growing conceptualization of SI is becoming consolidated (Mulgan, 2006; Westley, 2008; Murray et al. 2010; Westley & Antadze, 2010; Nicholls & Murdock, 2012), there is still an ongoing debate regarding the definition of it, as a new phenomenon or an unexploited theory.

The objective of this paper is to delineate this relatively new domain of study by proposing a Social Innovation Taxonomy, based on an empirical analysis of 545 Italian SI initiatives.

GROUNDING SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social Innovation can be defined as:

- a product (a novel output that solves unmet or non-satisfied needs) (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012)
- or a process (a new way of engaging actors to solve specific needs)
- that emerges where is evident the failure of conventional paradigms when basic routines authority flows or beliefs change inside a social system (Westley, 2008)
- or when institutional changes take place (Pol & Ville, 2009)

SI is attributed to a growing **dissatisfaction** to the actual resolution **of social issues**, where the **technological innovation assumes a new role** in the identification of innovative solutions (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012).

RELATIVENESS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

What really matters is the improvement of the social results in comparative terms between the existing and new solutions, rather than the novelty of the service itself (Neumeier, 2012).

Consequences:

- SI should be understood more for its **ability to create social impact**, rather than the inherent novelty of its proposals.
- **Improve the quality of life of a particular community** (Pol & Ville, 2009) and creates a discontinuity with the past, where the novel solution improve conditions of the community, compared to the previous state of things.

RESEARCH TRAJECTORIES ON SOCIAL INNOVATION

Identify models that could explain the basic features of SI

Author	Topic
Murray et al. (2010)	Social Innovation Life Cycle
BEPA (2011; 2014)	Sectors & Social Challenges
Heiskala & Hämäläinen (2007)	techno-economic innovations, regulatory/legal innovations and cultural innovations
Gabriel (2014)	Scaling SI
Dawson & Daniel (2010)	people, (b) challenges (c) processes and (d) goals

METHODOLOGY

Taxonomy: *a fundamental mechanism for organizing knowledge*” (Wand et al., 1995)

We followed the process and the methodology developed by Nickerson et al. (2013) using an empirical to a conceptual approach (Bailey, 1994) starting with empirical data and then deductively conceptualize the nature of each dimension:

- continuously confronting theory and practice throughout the research process (Dubois & Gadde, 2002)
- overlapping data analysis with data collection (Eisenhardt, 1989)
- finally shift between analysis and interpretation (Hussein, 2015; Mathison, 1988).

METHODOLOGY

2 steps approach:

- Conceptualized the main characteristics and dimensions of objects starting from empirical evidences compared with a literature review
 - The Social Innovation ontology presented in our research paper builds upon and combines elements of sectorial classifications (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012) and problem/needs identification previously pointed out in literature (Nicholls & Murdock, 2012; Nicholls et al., 2016).
 - Starting from the literature we identified the meta-characteristics that emerge from previous studies; in particular, we concentrated on the role of individuals and communities (Pol & Ville, 2009 ; Guida & Maiolini, 2013), how innovation has been declined in terms of social innovation (Christensen et al., 2006 ; Caulier-Grice et al., 2012), and the economic and social impact of social innovation activities (Phills et al., 2008).
- Examined objects for these characteristics and dimensions trough an empirical analysis and we concluded revisiting the taxonomy previously conceptualized

METHODOLOGY

In order to identify all the components of the taxonomy, we divided the component exploration process into single distinguished iterations. Every single iteration starts from a theoretical positioning of the single component, that is first of all compared empirically with information in the database.

We followed Gruber (1995) in the identification of the components.

For our Taxonomy we identified

(a) basic or ground level objects

(b) attributes.

The ground level objects are identified with iteration 1 and 2. Attributes arise from the remaining iterations.

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection was intensive (one year) and involved interviews, and documentary analysis. The data were largely analyzed after the study period. The dataset is made-up with Italian Social Innovation initiatives, projected and carried out in Italy.

We define a “Social Innovation initiative” (hereafter SII) as a collective activity specifically projected and implemented to find a solution to a social need.

It is collective in terms that there are different kind of actors interacting in the fulfillment of the project.

We distinguish between collective initiatives with a social purpose and single organizations that provide services or goods with a social purpose.

Every initiative has a temporal specific dimension (distinguished between ad hoc solutions with a defined time limit and urgent characteristics, or long term projects that satisfy continuing flows of social needs).

DATA COLLECTION

We identified a total of 545 Italian SIIIs.

To find and classify the SIIIs we conducted a three stages analysis.

The **first stage** was the identification of **web portals and databases** that permit the initial identification of the initiatives. The SIIIs were mainly chosen because data were available through an on-line research. We collected only public and available data. The initiatives were selected investigating all the available “Italian public announcements” (in particular developed from ministries, local public administrations, corporate and bank foundations, NGO’s and other kind of subjects that are able to allocate grants and funds).

The **second stage** was based on a **snowball sampling technique** (Browne, 2005) and opportunistic sampling method (Maitlis, 2005) to validate the sample focusing on convergent validity of the cases identified between different informant resources (Driessen & Hillebrand, 2013).

The **third stage** involved the **creation of a unique database** that allows a condensed and synthetic overview of the phenomenon under study (Huberman & Miles, 1994).

DATA SELECTION

We adopted tree criteria for the research and selection of the SIIIs to be included in our dataset:

- (1) the selected initiatives won in the last three year funds, grants or premiums explicitly labeled as Social Innovation prizes;
- (2) the initiatives provide an explicit statement of Social Innovation activities in their description (mission or vision);
- (3) the initiatives are recognizable through secondary data provided into official reports and repositories (as for example ministerial reports, journalistic reportages, web databases).

ITERATION 1

most relevant intervention areas (Bosworth et al., 2016; TEPSIE, 2014; Murray et al. 2010)

Intervention areas	N.	%
Social Integration	82	15%
Social Assistance	75	14%
Green Environment	63	12%
Education	61	11%
Crowdfunding & Microcredit	54	10%
Co working & Smart working	37	7%
Culture	37	7%
Quality of life	33	6%
Urban Requalification	30	6%
Mobility	28	5%
Tourism	23	4%
Health care	22	4%
Tot.	545	100%

ITERATION 2

Typologies of actors involved in the development of SIIIs (Mulgan, 2012; Murray et al., 2010; Voorberg et al., 2015).

Actors	N.	%
NPOs	1110	52%
POs	510	24%
PUBs	356	17%
COMs	153	7%
Tot.	2129	100%

ITERATION 3

characteristics of actors and their role in the implementation (in terms of development and support) of the SIIIs.

	Promoters	Developers
NPOs	827 - 43%	283 - 52%
POs	331 - 28%	179 - 33%
PUBs	343 - 24%	13 - 13%
COMs	83 - 6%	70 - 2%
Tot.	1584 - 100%	545 - 100%

Nicholls & Murdock (2012 p.12): *“a variety of heterogeneous institutional and organizational forms facilitate Social Innovation activities”*.

ITERATION 4

Innovation is no longer conceived as a discrete event only involving the development of technical solutions, but as a process also involving social interactions; second, innovation is no longer explained by the sole combinations of tangible forms of capital (physical, financial, ...), but also by combinations of intangible forms of capital, especially social capital” (Landry et al., 2002, p. 3).

Marcy & Mumford (2007) : Social Interactions

Auerswald (2009): social desirable solutions

Traditional relationship	Innovative relationship
Sharing an operational objective distinct and separate roles (financer actuator beneficiary)	Sharing a common vision and values Roles shared or otherwise highly integrated
Activities carried out by the actors with a predominantly, sequential or little interaction	Activities carried out by the actors in an interactive and relevant circularity
Generally not based on digital technologies and “social” systems	Generally based on digital technologies and "social" systems
organizational and strategic impact limited to the scope involved in the relation	organizational and strategic impact significant distributed widespread inside an eco-system

Typologies of Innovations	N	%
Innovative relationships/roles	265	49%
Technological Innovation	124	23%
Both of them	156	29%
Tot.	545	100%

ITERATION 5

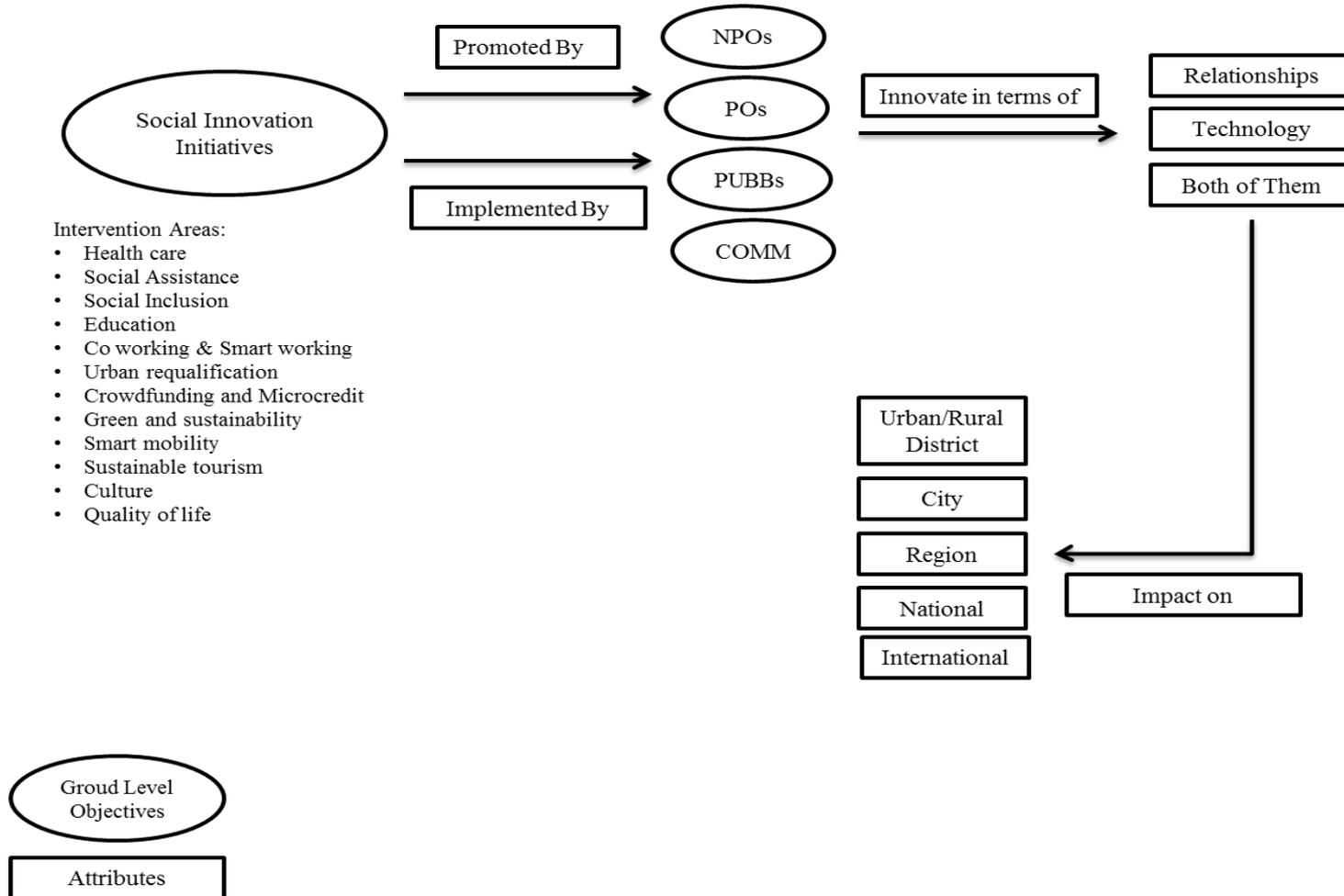
Rogers (2010) and Gillwald (2000): an innovation to be such need not be new, but rather, new to the territory, sector or field of action of the innovation itself, a “social achievement” that provides the best solutions.

Geographic area	N.	%
Urban/Rural district	220	40%
Nation	160	29%
Region	76	14%
City	62	11%
International context	27	5%
Tot.	545	100%

SI TAXONOMY

Iteration	Categories				
Intervention Areas	Health care, Social Assistance, Social Inclusion Education	Co working & Smart working, Urban requalification	Crowdfunding and Microcredit	Green and sustainability, Smart mobility	Sustainable tourism, Culture, Quality of life,
Typologies of Actors	NPOs	POs	PUBs	COMs	---
Implementation Roles	Promoter	Developer	---	---	---
Typology of Innovation	Innovative relationship	Technological innovation	Both of them	---	---
Geographic area	Urban/Rural district	City	Region	Nation	International context

SI DYNAMIC TAXONOMY



FUTURE ATTRIBUTES

- Economic sustainability (BM)
- Financial Life cycle

CONCLUSIONS

- Management field lacks a conceptual understanding of Social Innovation as a whole: Social Innovation may enrich more established fields of inquiry related to innovation theory, organization design, finance and business responsibility.
- IS can be an adequate methodology and foundation for managerial tools to react to the increasingly dynamic social environment and help organizations, entrepreneurs and, again, policy makers to find new ways to operate and find innovative solutions.

Future research:

- Future research in taxonomies in the SI field can take a number of directions. One is to investigate the question of sufficient conditions for a useful taxonomy (Nickerson et al., 2013) in terms of inter-organizational or intra-organizational components.
- The application and evaluation of our taxonomy to SI initiatives that are developed also in other countries to verify the robustness of our model.