Points of contestation across Social Innovation in public and social policy: a research review

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Social Innovation: a debated concept

Debated definition

- **New** ideas to improve either the **quality or the quantity of life** (Pol and Ville 2009)

- Innovations that are **social both in their ends and in their means** and meet social needs creating new **social relationships** (Murray et al. 2010)

- Address **unmet needs** motivated by a **social purpose** and occur in the **public as well as the third sector** and civil society (Sinclair and Baglioni 2014)

- Process where new forms of **social relations** lead to **societal change** (Ayob et al. 2016)

Relevance for social and public policy

- A **new paradigm** in the field of innovation policies or more broadly in relation to social policy and welfare reforms (Mulgan 2006, Echeverria Ezponda and Merino Malillos 2011)

- A **convenient label** used by policy makers to cover a policy compromise in a situation of economic crisis and budget constrains (Bonifacio 2014, Pol and Ville 2009)

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What do we know about SI?

- Competing ideas of SI
- Different use of SI in different contexts (academic, public, policy)
- Different use by different actors (policy makers, civil society, companies)

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SI has entered the public debate and the policy agendas.
How did it happen?

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Multiple Streams approach

J. W. Kingdon, "Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies" (1984)
How does an idea enter the policy agenda?

Policy Window	A window of opportunity for advocates to promote their solutions or to push attention to some specific problems. It opens when three streams encounter : problem, policy, and politics.
Problems stream	All those conditions that are *perceived* as problems at a certain moment. Something become defined as a problem when people come to believe that something should be done about it.
Policy stream	A "primeval soup" where different ideas float forming combinations and recombinations of solutions.
Politics stream	Events such as elections, changes in administration, swings in the national mood, etc. that occur independently from problems or policy stream.
Policy Entrepreneur	People with ideas and means "willing to invest their resources in return for future policies they favour".

Multiple Streams approach and SI

MSA uncovers the unpredictability and **ambiguity** of policy making.

Solutions do not always address specific problems, but there may be a solution searching for a problem (Zahariadis 2008) or even policies designed as a response to a particular problem can be used to address another problem if needed (Béland 2005).

$\Rightarrow$ SI is often presented as a potential or supposed solution to unspecified and multifaceted problems.

MSA gives great attention to the initiative of **agents in the policy making**:

Policy entrepreneurs are involved in pushing ideas and solution into the policy making (Zahariadis 2008)

$\Rightarrow$ Actor-based perspective can be particularly valuable in the field of SI.

A review of the literature

How are the three streams composed and who are the policy entrepreneurs in the case of Si according to the existing literature?

Review of the literature in the field of social and public policy:
- Between 2005 and 2015
- Focusing on European context
- Field of social and public policy

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Problems: welfare reform and economic crisis

LONG TERM PROCESS OF WELFARE REFORM

SI as a response to a long term process of transformations generating changing demand for welfare support and new social challenges that remain unanswered by traditional welfare systems (Sinclair and Baglioni 2014, Grimm et al. 2013, Benneworth et al. 2015).

ECONOMIC CRISIS AND BUDGET CONSTRAINT

SI as an contingent answer to social tensions following the economic crisis and the crisis of public accounting (Bonifacio 2014, Ewert and Evers 2014, Oosterlynck et al. 2013)

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The «primeval soup» of innovation ideas

A SHIFT OF THE BROADER IDEA OF INNOVATION

SI as a shift in the broader concept of innovation and part of a broad system change: there are no "pure" forms of innovation and a more integrated socio-technological innovation framework is needed to explore SI (Moore and Westley 2011, Edwards-Schachter et al. 2012, Amanatidou et al. 2014)

A PURELY SOCIAL PHENOMENON

SI as different or opposed to economic and technological innovation: different origins (industries vs. civil society), theoretical backgrounds (natural sciences vs. social sciences), impacts (neutral vs. positive) (Dandurand 2005, Pol and Ville 2009, Borzaga and Bodini 2014)

Political mood and «apolitical» concept

2008-2009 EUROPEAN POLITICAL MOOD

Some political events supported the emergence of SI policies across Europe around 2008-2009 (Barroso presidency) and culminated in the Europe 2020 strategy (Echeverria Ezponda 2011, Bonifacio 2014, Eriksson et al. 2014)

THE APOLITICAL USE OF A POLITICAL CONCEPT

Even if SI is often used by policy makers as an "apolitical" and pragmatic solution, it is actually underpinned by some political ideologies (Harslof 2014, Fougère 2015, Montgomery 2016)

Policy Entrepreneurs for SI

CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships among multiple actors and cross-sector collaborations and partnerships as a peculiarity of SI (Ayob et al 2015, Fougère et al. 2015, Moore and Westley 2011)

PUBLIC SECTOR: the role of public sector in SI through public sector innovation, new models of policy production and implementation including new approaches to measurement and accountability (Cressey et al. 2015)

CIVIL SOCIETY / THIRD SECTOR: third sector organisations and SE are not only providers but also in charge of advocacy for SI (Eriksson et al. 2014, Anheier et al. 2015, Borzaga and Bodini 2014)
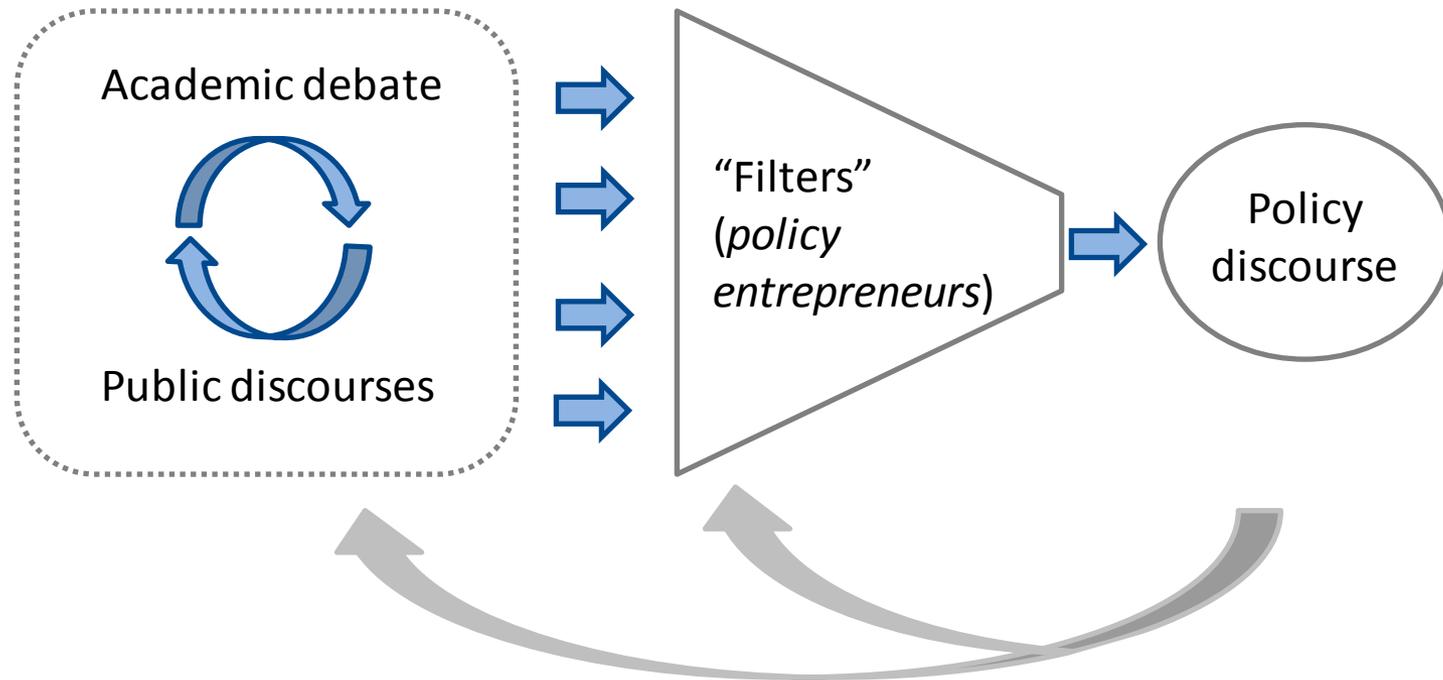
Preliminary results from the review and future steps

- Competing ideas of SI emerge from the literature.
- There is not a clear position about what political ideologies underpin SI
- The role of policy entrepreneurs for SI has not been explored.

Beyond the academic debate, study the public and policy discourse on SI

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Which ideas of SI are present at different levels?
And why? Who inform the SI discourses?

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SI discourses

Thank you!

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