SOCIAL INNOVATION COMMUNITY

Assignment of first SI Assembly

D 6.5 of the SIC project

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Assignment of first SI Assembly

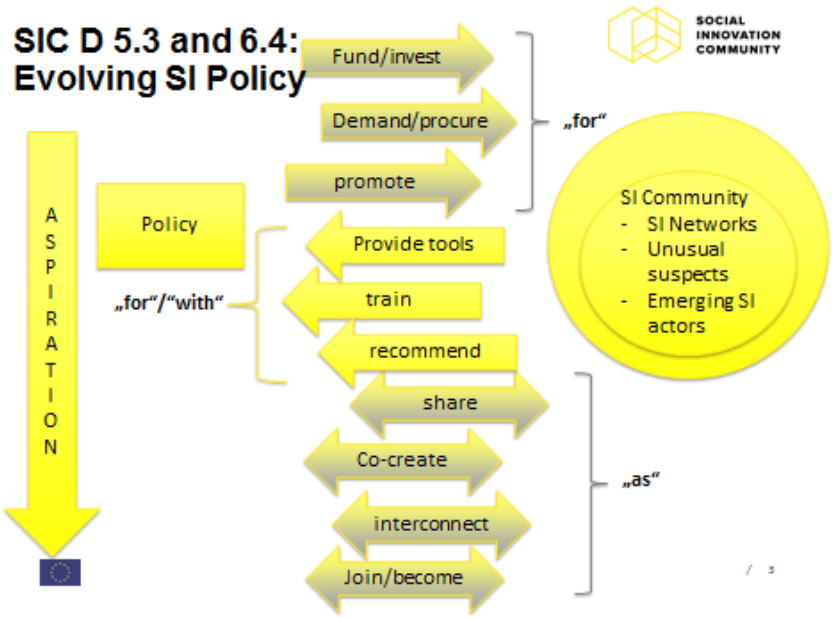
1. INTRODUCTION: THE SI ASSEMBLY

The SIC project in general aims to "deepen and strengthen existing networks, forge new connections between networks and create new links to actors and networks which hitherto have not been included in the field of social innovation" (DoA, p. 3). It aims to evolve into a sustainable, inclusive and visible community of social innovation. For the purposes of WP6's strategy development, we are calling this the future **SI Community** - to distinguish it from the **SIC project,** as the SI Community extends itself into the future and will sustain itself well beyond the project's end in 2019 (see D 6.4). The **SI Assembly** now is one complement of the SI Community, its **liaison** with the developing field of **social innovation policy**, in particular, but not exclusively on the European level. It will develop from the **SI Policy Forum**, which is being built in Task 5.6 of the SIC project. The Policy Forum "will identify and respond to opportunities for policy influencing (e.g. relevant consultations) and will actively create connections and opportunities for SI actors to link up and amplify their own policy activity. It will provide a route through which policy makers can reach beyond usual suspects in their consultations" (DoA, p. 30). In this context, the usual suspects refer to the established interest groups and stakeholders that are routinely consulted in policy development such as social partners in work and employment, arge research organisations and corporate interests in R&D and so on. Here, the Policy Forum will need to connect policymakers to the relevant SI networks and actors in the respective field or roles. SI networks include (or aim to include) other Initiatives that, for reasons of size, newness, marginalised constituencies or a community-based character have fewer ties to policymaking. The **SI Policy Forum** thus has a double task: connecting policymakers to wider and more inclusive groups of stakeholders for consultation and input and connecting social innovations actors to a wider array of policy contacts. Within SIC, the **Policy Forum** addresses European public policy primarily, but also aims to influence international organisations, and the policies of corporations and third-sector organisations on the European level.

This description clearly states that neither the **SI Community** nor its "policy component", the **SI Assembly,** can simply be designed by the project's work. Influencing policies requires both proactivity and responsiveness to opportunities on both sides, careful building of connections and nimble networking. Whereas European projects have been generating policy recommendations and seeking stakeholder and policy dialogue for several programme periods, social innovation is less institutionalised. It has its stakeholders and networks already, but these are both varied (D5.1) and unevenly developed across policy fields and issues. In SIC they are represented by the various networks, and the project's own impact assessment (T6.8) shows that unevenness. Most networks find that policy uptake of their work is very limited and needs additional efforts, but networks are focusing on building their own communities (SI Intermediaries, Corporate SI, Community-led SI, Public Sector

Innovation), developing the understanding of SI and its methodologies (Collaborative Economy, Social Economy) raising awareness (Digital SI, Cities and Regions) (Luna & Millard 2017). However, social innovation in the ambitious SIC sense of "networking networks" and creating an SI ecosystem cuts across themes and policy domains, and hence, needs to balance its crosscutting mission with ensuring its relevance to existing policy fields and domains.

Figure 1: Policy and the SI Community



Source: Ursula Holtgrewe, Presentation of WP6 to SIC General Assembly, Paris, February 27-28, 2017

In addition, social innovation is in some ways more demanding on both projects and policymakers than other areas of policy. It requires more active engagement, and is not always satisfied with "business as usual" even if policy was to deliver favourable outcomes for SI. SI projects frequently aim to self-innovate their own processes and structures, and increasingly challenge policy to do the same - in SIC, this is discussed under the heading of "policy for → with → as social innovation" (D5.3, Reynolds, Gabriel, & Heales, 2016; cf. D6.4, Holtgrewe, 2017). Policy promoting and supporting social innovation in this paradigm equals policy "for" social innovation. It is to be complemented and enhanced by policies engaging and collaborating "with" SI actors, and by policies innovating their own processes (policy "as" social innovation) through links across departments, with communities and social entrepreneurs, citizen participation or collaborative design and delivery of services. In the previous deliverables this suggests a progression of socially innovative approaches towards a deeper penetration of procedures by social innovation. However, there may be trade-offs between a focus on outcomes and processes. Some favourable outcomes for social innovation may be created through conventional policy approaches, whereas others will be contingent upon changed processes, for

example involving end-user participation. Hence, an exploration of appropriate and desirable levels and types of policy engagement and the "tailoring" of aspirations to the requirements of the field or networks in question may make sense. For this reason, we suggest to replace the arrows of "policy for → with → as social innovation" with vertical lines that symbolise a more open relationship between modes of policy engagement: "policy for | with | as social innovation".

Innovating processes is (almost) common sense in fields of public sector innovation or in the collaborative projects and platforms of digital social innovation, but in other policy fields appears to be a tall order, due to either systemic inertia, or the perceived well-functioning of more established approaches. Both varied policy fields and varied policy levels or regimes will have varied absorptive capacities (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990) for socially innovative processes and procedures - for either "good" reasons or "less good" ones, depending on the respective contexts' existing capabilities. All of this shows that connecting SIC to the level of policy is an incremental process of trial and error, and learning by doing. For this reason, recent social innovation projects in the EU context have explored varied ways of advising, engaging and involving policy.

In SIC, intense networking and co-creation efforts are taking place among partners and their respective networks, environments and areas of interest both within and beyond SIC activities. The **Policy Forum** will have its **first real-life appearance** in a typically networked way. SIC has joined forces with the SI-DRIVE project for that project's final conference in Brussels on 24-25 October 2017, "Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change".[1] This conference has policy sessions that address the "policy fields" investigated by SI-DRIVE (such as education and employment, energy, the environment and mobility, health and care, or poverty reduction and sustainable development), and from the SIC side, one session addresses the role of intermediaries in social innovation (one of SIC's networks), and one considers "Social Innovation Policy in Europe: Where next?" The conference also contributes to visibly connecting the two projects, ensuring continuity of knowledge and debate beyond the duration of individual projects (also, through SIC's other networking activities such as the Research Forum developed by WP2 and the Learning Repository developed by WP4). Another instantiation of the **Policy Forum** SI Assembly, which is not entirely fixed yet, will hopefully take place at the EC Conference "Opening Up To an Era of Social innovation" in Lisbon, 27-28 November 2017.[2]

At this stage in time, to support the Policy Forum on its way to an SI Assembly, this deliverable outlines a selection of examples of practices to engage policymakers and influence SI policies from both larger (FP7 and Horizon2020) and smaller social innovation-related projects. This was gathered chiefly through desk research, but also through informal interviews with colleagues from neighbouring SI

[1] https://www.si-drive.eu/?page_id=2631
[2] http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2017/era/index.cfm

projects. It is not comprehensive, and conclusions are tentative. We explored the websites of the recent European projects on social innovation, in particular CASI, CRESSI, SI-DRIVE, SIMPACT, and TEPSIE for evidence such as reports and documents on dedicated policy engagement formats and outcomes. For CASI and SI-DRIVE, the authors could also draw on some experience as a workshop participant and organiser respectively. We also looked into existing policy platforms with some connection to social innovation. One smaller-scale project connecting cities, EP-DeM Labs (Equity, Participation, Decision-Making Labs) funded by Erasmus+ is of particular interest as it combines Labs for policy development that involve both disadvantaged youth and local policymakers and service providers and has comparatively advanced procedures for ensuring and retaining commitment.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To support SIC's policy engagement and hence, increase impact and sustainability of SIC, this paper reviews the formats of policy engagement employed by "neighbouring" social innovation projects, in particular, platforms, policy briefs and handbooks, and workshop formats.

It reflects that policymakers are often treated as one stakeholder group among others, and that many engagement formats focus on idea generation and input for policy but address the specific functions of policy to a lesser extent. However, policymakers are to some extent different from generic stakeholders. They hold powers of influence or decision over social innovation in the respective context, its ecosystem or environment. They may play a part in selecting social innovations to sustain, extend or scale, adapting rules and distributing resources, lending legitimacy and creating viable SI ecosystems. Depending on the context of the project or SI Community, they may be considered principals rather than stakeholders. Nevertheless, policymakers' commitment to the demand or the problem in question, or to social innovation may vary, and their interest will be contingent on political priorities, strategic considerations, perceptions of needs and opportunities.

Existing platforms aiming at policymakers among other stakeholders mostly take the shape of learning repositories as provided in SIC WP4. They have their subjects in innovation in specific contexts, on methodologies as in the Foresight case, or coordinate specific initiatives. The platforms investigated do not feature much interaction and discussion. Where online discussion fora are on offer, they are not frequented much. In particular, online follow-up of face-to-face seminars or even of online learning opportunities appears not to be very successful. Apparently, the transfer of debate and mutual learning from a dedicated context of time and space (even if it is not face-to-face as in the case of webinars) to the looser one of online fora is not easy and requires some preparation and then, a critical mass of content to become attractive.

Workshops with policymakers are a staple of social innovation projects and research, and a generic methodology has emerged. It focuses on some variation of SWOT analysis and aims mostly at generating input and recommendations for policy. One example, EP-DeM Labs, increases the stakes

and has participants commit (to some extent) to implementation of the results. Fostering that kind of commitment apparently is easier on a local level and/or in a policy field with a sense of urgency. Otherwise, there are no immediately handy and visible formats that create policy commitments. Policymakers' function as distinct and powerful type of stakeholder is thus hardly reflected in interactive workshop formats. Arguably, the decision-making and selective functions of policy (and politics) are even blurred in the established brainstorming and SWOT methodologies and their etiquette of equally valuing opinions by all participants.

Written outputs of neighbouring projects address both policy "for" and policy "as" social innovation. There is a shift to "activation" of policymakers in the changing denominations of policy-related project outputs: **policy briefs**, overviews of social innovation and handbooks that address policy *for* social innovation are complemented by "toolkits" or "**toolboxes**" that support policy *as* social innovation. In spite of their hands-on denominations, they are intended to work less as immediately applicable tools but as boundary objects to enable reflection, dialogue and organisational and policy change which is left to context-specific processes.

For the (future) SI Assembly and the Policy Forum under construction, the following "assignments" can be concluded from this analysis. These are not assignments in the sense of "homework" but suggestions for consultation with WP5 and all partners:

01 Consider ways of increasing commitment by policymakers and sustainability of the Forum/Assembly. This may well involve the Forum itself in its varied instantiations. Establishing a repeat format could work.

02 Involve policymakers in the assessment of impact. They play a powerful role in enabling or constraining the impact of social innovations. Hence, impact cannot be "delivered" by initiatives but is inevitably co-created with policy (if things go very well). Possibly, WP3's experimentations could consider a policy role in this.

03 Shift the focus of policy engagement from idea and input generation to implementation. Most likely this requires a smart mixture of the general and the specific. As some policy fields and networks may have come "closer" to an implementation focus, they may provide examples.

04 In general, select the specific content, examples and success stories to show "low-hanging fruits" and easy examples to emulate.

05 Experiment with and reflect upon experience with formats, procedures and content of policy engagement. Currently, there is too little exchange on such experiences and their methodological implementations.

Immediate next steps could consist in

01 applying the typology of policy for | with | as social innovation to the SIC networks: where do they locate their most relevant policy relations? This could be done in conjunction with impact assessment (T6.8) and tried in the next survey round in September 2017.

02 checking aims for the Policy Forum against WP6 results on Governance (D6.1) and Sustainability (D6.7): Could the Forum take functions of an "Advisory Group" to the SI

Community - possibly by providing a regular gathering of "critical friends" from the policy sphere? This should be considered and established within year 2, to allow for testing in year 3.

3. DEGREES OF POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging policy makers becomes a matter of interest as soon as social innovations are no longer local, volunteer-based and focused on immediate problem-solving within a given context in a self-sufficient way, but aim at extending reach and creating wider societal impact, and/or as they require changes in their institutional requirement, adaptations of rules and resources to operate or develop. From the policy side, interest has increased on local, national or the European level, as for many reasons and in many policy fields, conventional modes of addressing societal challenges show their limitations and require collaboration across the domains of the state, business, academia and civil society. Hence, social innovation has become part of policy, research and structural programmes. We are seeing a certain degree of institutionalisation of social innovation, which is, however, far from complete. While projects have been gathering and generating recommendations, handbooks and toolkits, there are few well-established channels and recognised modes of exchange and collaboration between policy and social innovation at large.

A distinct kind of stakeholder

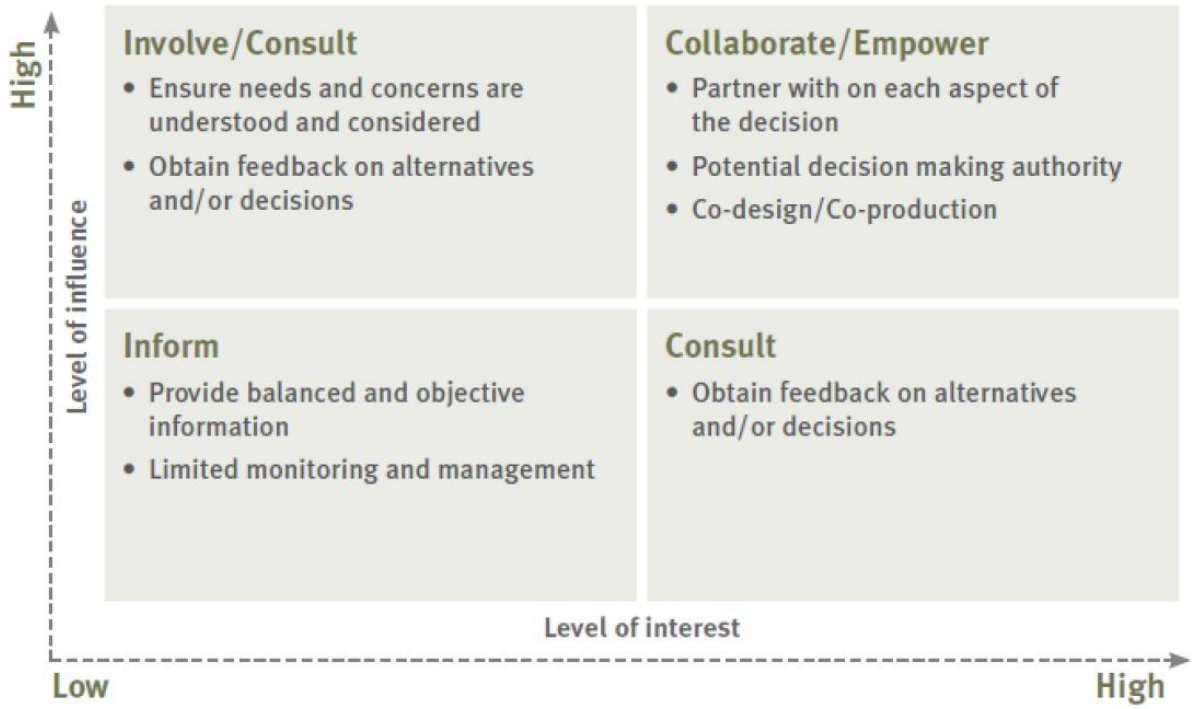
The location of policymakers in social innovation is summarised by Boelman and colleagues in the FP7-funded TEPSIE project: "policy makers are able to act both as a support and a catalyst for the field as well as being a source of innovation themselves" (Boelman, Kwan, Lauritzen, Millard, & Schon, 2015 p. 23). The "Open Book of Social Innovation" (Murray, Caulier-Grice, & Mulgan, 2010) points out the different scales of intervention, and authors from the INNOVATE project emphasise the links between the large- and small-scale capabilities in social innovation: "Obviously, as Murray et al. (2010) underline, governments with large budgets and law-making powers can achieve large-scale change more easily than small community groups. Yet most social change is neither purely top-down nor bottom-up. It involves alliances between the top and the bottom, or between what we call the ‘bees’ (the creative individuals with ideas and energy) and the ‘trees’ (the big institutions with the power and money to make things happen to scale)" (Combe & Mendez-Navia, 2014,p.13).

However, governments' or policymakers' capabilities to achieve large-scale changes into desired directions are not undisputed, and the divisions of labour between these scales are not always clear. Social change is complex and many societal challenges that social innovations aim to address represent genuinely "wicked problems" with complex relations of causes and effects, unclear solutions (that may become part of the problem), extending across institutional and political domains (Manning & Reinecke, 2016).

A recent policy brief on stakeholder engagement from the context of public-public-partnerships in

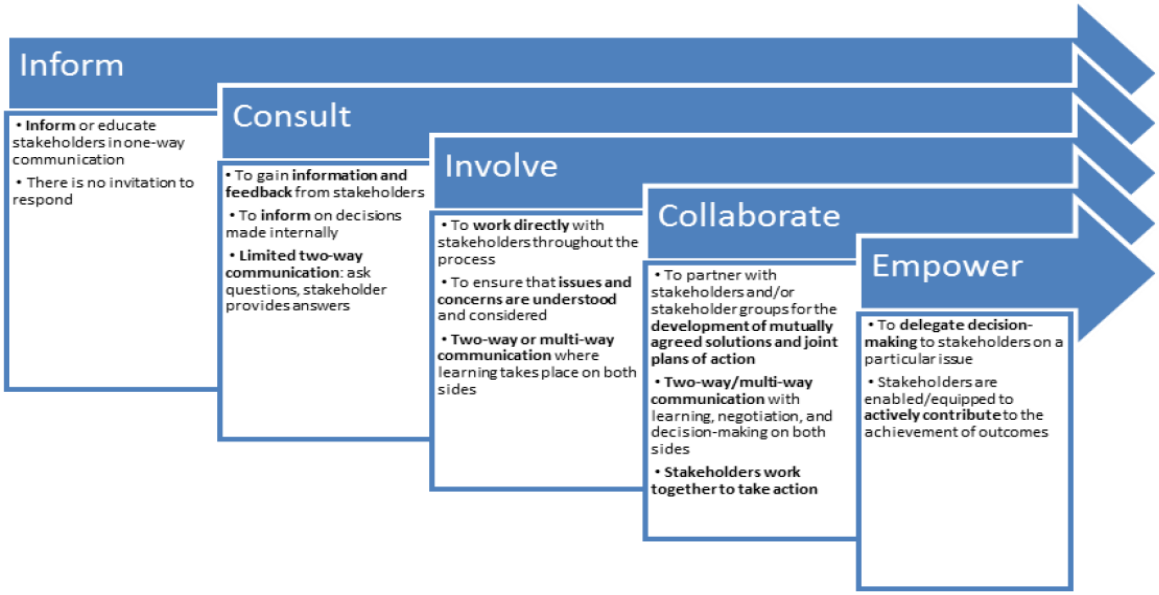
research policy, specifically the Joint Programming Initiatives (Dinges, Wang, & Köngeter, 2017) provides two handy and pragmatic overviews (Figure 2 and 3) of stakeholder types and ways of engaging them that could also be applied to policymakers.

Figure 2: Stakeholder Analysis Tool - plotting influence against interest



Source: Dinges et al. 2017, p.7

Figure 3: Levels of stakeholder engagement



Source: Dinges et al. 2017, p. 8

They distinguish the levels of interest and levels of influence of stakeholders which may not always be connected, and then match levels of stakeholder engagement accordingly. Stakeholders that are both influential and interested are to be involved to the largest extent in collaboration and empowerment. The influential and less interested ones need to be consulted and involved, whereas less influential stakeholders are either informed or consulted if interested. This can help to gauge expectations from stakeholders and calibrate the use of resources for communication and engagement in the light of the engagement's objectives.

However, policymakers are to some extent different from generic stakeholders (if there is such a thing). Firstly, they hold powers of influence or decision over social innovation in the respective context, its ecosystem or environment. They may play a part in selecting social innovations to sustain, extend or scale, adapting rules and distributing resources, lending legitimacy and creating viable SI ecosystems. Depending on the context of the project or SI Community, they may be considered principals rather than stakeholders. Hence, empowerment applies less to policymakers than to other stakeholders. Nevertheless, policymakers' commitment to the demand or the problem in question, or to social innovation may vary, and their interest will be contingent on political priorities, strategic considerations, perceptions of needs and opportunities. Hence, the mission of social innovation is also to increase policymakers' levels of interest, that is, move them to the right-hand sight of the matrix when possible.

4. FORMATS OF POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Nevertheless, we can use the continuum of "policy for → with → as social innovation" (Reynolds et al., 2016) to distinguish various degrees of policy engagement and also some shifts in emphasis over time. While the generation of policy briefs and recommendations as well as stakeholder workshops and roundtables have been a part of European projects across several Framework Programmes, it appears that relations of SI with the policy sphere are changing and roles for policymakers are becoming more relational: they are no longer just recipients of advice and recommendations. Like citizens and clients of social services, they are being "activated" by social innovation projects of networking and research. The success of these ambitions for activation of policymakers is open and again, uneven among countries and regions, policy levels, and policy fields.

In this section, we explore a range of existing policy platforms, the Innovation Policy Platform, the Foresight Platform, REIsearch, and the SIMPACT project's use of LinkedIn, the genres of interactive workshops that are currently used (for example by CASI, SIMPACT, SI-DRIVE, SIC and EP-DeM Labs), and other written outputs aimed at policymakers by European social innovation projects, to gain a sense of the "state of the art" in policy engagement formats.

Platforms

Platforms are a somewhat vague format that social innovation is borrowing from technological and commercial innovation and in particular from aims to "open" innovation. A handy definition from the angle of research in a development context is the following: "An innovation platform is a space for learning and change. It is a group of individuals (who often represent organizations) with different backgrounds and interests: farmers, traders, food processors, researchers, government officials etc. The members come together to diagnose problems, identify opportunities and find ways to achieve their goals. They may design and implement activities as a platform, or coordinate activities by individual members." (Lerna & Schut, 2013 p. 1). Such platforms connect research and users and allow for shortened cycles in prototyping and testing the innovation, and may also involve policymakers. The role of researchers in such contexts has been specifically reflected in the methodology of action research which also provides a wealth of methods and tools (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). Notably, platforms in recent European projects are not necessarily platforms in the sense of digital innovation (that recently appears to have annexed the term). We shall see that their digital sides are somewhat less interactive than we would assume and that even existing discussion fora are somewhat underused. Arguably, relevant and committed discourse and deliberation still need dedicated contexts in time and space.

The most striking example is the **Innovation Policy Platform** (IPP)[3], developed by the World Bank

[3] https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/

Group and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): It "is a web-based interactive space that provides easy access to knowledge, learning resources, indicators and communities of practice on the design, implementation, and evaluation of innovation policies. The Platform helps users learn how innovation systems operate, identify good practices across different countries, conduct statistical benchmarking and devise and apply effective policy solutions. More broadly, it facilitates knowledge exchange and collaboration across countries and regions."[4]

There is also an entry covering SI[5] - with a somewhat economic bias. SI Is considered as a kind of backup to policy and to markets: "an important tool to identify and respond to social challenges when the market and the public sector have failed to do so". Its content again is translated into economic terms mostly: " Social innovation seeks new answers to social problems by (1) identifying and delivering new services that improve the quality of life of individuals and communities and (2) identifying and implementing new labour market integration processes, new competencies, new jobs, and new forms of participation, as diverse elements that each contribute to improving the position of individuals in the workforce." (ibid.)

It offers definitions, handbooks, case studies, country information and data visualisation tool about a range of innovation subjects in the context of developing and emerging economies, with a focus on inclusive and Green innovation. Webinars and an online course on "Innovation Policy for Developing Countries" is also available, and a facilitated version is planned.[6] Case studies of innovation examples in inclusive and Green innovation are an important part of the platform and are integrated into its learning offers. There is also a "Communities of Practice" section that includes discussion fora that have been announced as a follow-up to a webinar in 2016. However, online discussion so far is absent - not an uncommon occurrence.

The **Foresight Platform** is another knowledge platform aimed at policymakers, managers, other "practitioners" and "beginners". It provides a database of case studies of foresight exercises to search and information on foresight purposes, methods, outcomes and impacts. The website connects the results and the process of foresight exercises: "The transdisciplinary foresight approach helps to strengthen the links between decision-making and relevant stakeholder communities as well as look at new and emerging issues from an integrated and multi-layered perspective." [7] However, it does not provide live online foresight exercises.

4 https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/about
5 https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/social-innovation
6 https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/introduction-innovation-policy-developing-countries/module-2-pragmatic-national-innovation-agenda
7 http://www.foresight-platform.eu/community/forlearn/what-is-foresight/foresight-for-policy-makers/

REIsearch[8] is a platform aiming to "connect citizens, researchers and policy makers on topics linked to the scientific research and to societal challenges that Europe will face in the years to come"[9]. It is interesting in that it involves comparatively high-ranking and well-established stakeholders and policymakers and uses classic media campaigns to connect to citizens on subjects such as chronic diseases (2016) and the "next generation internet" (2017). It can thus be described as a distinctly top-down platform with, however, considerable reach and possibly, influence. This connection amounts to conducting surveys[10], reporting on their subject matter[11] and the survey results. REIsearch is operated by the Atomium – European Institute for Science, Media and Democracy, which was established in 2009 by a group of high-ranking politicians and elder statesmen[12]. It involves ca. eight national quality newspapers and their science editors, and in the role of corporate "Business Partners" scientific publisher Elsevier, telecommunications competitors Nokia and Huawei, Microsoft, consultancy Deloitte, health companies Takeda and MSD (a subsidiary of Merck).

An alternative and indeed, opposite approach uses **generic social media** to exchange news, discuss and debate. The SIMPACT project has set up a LinkedIn group[13] on “Public Policy and Social Innovation” hosted by Peter Totterdill "as a vehicle for wider dialogue and knowledge exchange, specifically targeted at policy makers globally with an interest in social innovation also account for different socio-economic regimes" (ibid.) - a low-maintenance approach that may also lend itself to piloting formats, discussions and initiatives.

In sum, existing platforms aiming at policymakers among other stakeholders mostly take the shape of knowledge and learning repositories as provided in SIC WP4. They have their subjects in innovation in specific contexts, on methodologies as in the Foresight case, or they coordinate specific initiatives. The platforms investigated do not feature much interaction and discussion. Where online discussion fora are on offer, they are not frequented much. In particular, online follow-up of face-to-face seminars or even of online learning opportunities appears not to be very successful. Apparently, the transfer of debate and mutual learning from a dedicated context of time and space (even if it is not face-to-face) to the looser one of online fora is not easy and requires some preparation and then, a critical mass of content to become attractive.

8 www.reisearch.eu
9 http://www.eismd.eu/reisearch/#
10 For example, the first internet survey: https://reisearch.eu/initiatives/next-generation-internet/1/en
11 For example, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/apr/18/eu-launches-public-consultation-into-fears-about-the-future-of-the-internet
12 Indeed, all members of its Presidency, Advisory and Executive Board are male, and there is one woman on the Editorial Committee staffed by five science editors of national quality newspapers.
13 https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8131036/profile

Workshops

Workshops for stakeholders at large or for policymakers are a well-established output format of European projects. They can be said to embody steps towards social innovation *with* policymakers and other stakeholders, even though their involvement may be limited to participation in the workshop. They may take place at different points in the project: At the **start** as a part of data collection and dissemination, for identification of challenges, pain points or "hot topics", **in the course of the project** to validate and complement findings and sustain a dialogue, or towards the **end** when results can be presented and refined, and recommendations developed collaboratively. Most workshops bring together **diverse groups of stakeholders** and many aim to do so deliberately: social innovators, NGOs, SI intermediaries and researchers from the respective field are generally present. Business and finance actors play a part in the context of social entrepreneurship but also, sometimes, with regard to social policy, in particular in liberal market economies such as the UK or in Central and Eastern Europe. The majority thus aims at social Innovation "with" policy and other stakeholders and focuses on **idea** and **input generation** for policy by a range of stakeholders.

Among recent social innovation projects a "standard" methodology for this genre is emerging even though various new and participatory methods are employed such as World Cafés, Graphic Facilitation or other kinds of visual mapping - but as far as we could find, there is hardly any systematic reflection or evaluation of different methods in this context. In this "standard" methodology (applied for example by CASI, SIMPACT, SI-DRIVE and SIC), workshops entail **presentations** by the project, plenary and **small group discussions**. **Case studies**, based on desk research or collection of original data, figure strongly as starting points for discussion in the tradition of exemplary learning. They may be presented in more or less aggregated and comparative ways, with the familiar trade-off between comparability and telling an engaging and specific "story" (Holtgrewe, Markova, & Ravn, 2015).

This raises the question of **theme-specificity** versus a focus on **cross-cutting subjects** at large, such as "social innovation policy" - or, more generally, of homogeneity versus diversity. SI-DRIVE for example divided its global stocktaking of social innovation initiatives into a range of policy fields that (roughly) match established policy domains, even though social Innovations recognise that societal needs and challenges do not necessarily fit neatly into those domains. This allowed the project to conduct its Foresight workshops by policy fields. This format combined an internal discussion focusing on the findings of case studies and some comparative analysis on drivers and barriers and the role of policy. From this, field-specific policy ideas were generated. On the second day, policymakers, representatives of SI intermediaries and other stakeholders and researchers with expertise In the policy field joined the group, were presented with research results and participated in one "foresight" session on possible futures for SI in the respective context and a "policy" session to develop achievable recommendations. A panel discussion in a "fishbowl" format developed general conclusions. However, even focusing on particular themes, the wide, and indeed, global variety of institutional contexts and also of social Innovation paradigms was striking. This, in the authors' opinion both widened

perspectives and sensitised participants to the salience of institutional and political context for social innovation but it may have rendered findings a little generic.

For smaller group discussion and joint analysis, workshops tend to use some kind of **SWOT analysis** that addresses strengths and weaknesses of policies and/or practice in the context under discussion, and barriers/challenges and opportunities. At this point, one or more **key challenges** may be picked to address in more detail, and **recommendations** generated.

The following paragraphs address specific practices and experiences of the respective projects:

CASI applies the "general" methodology to policy audiences and outlines the multiple aims of the activity: with the aims

01 to have a dialogue with policy makers about societal engagement in sustainable innovation (task 8.1),

02 to contribute to policy coordination between the national and EU levels through a policy conference at European level (task 8.2), and

03 to develop policy recommendations that stimulate a wider societal engagement in sustainable innovation and which also target the assessment and improved public management of sustainable innovation (task 8.3)."

As in the case of handbooks and toolboxes (see below), **process** is thus deemed as relevant as **output**, and "networking" is generally an objective in itself. CASI employs workshops at both the European and **national levels**. National "mutual learning seminars" are to introduce the project and its understanding of sustainable innovation to national stakeholders, policy-makers, NGO representatives and researchers and neighbouring projects. This aims both at **dissemination** and at data gathering, especially on exploring **reasons for lacking acceptance** of sustainable innovation among stakeholders or in the national context.

SIMPACT's policy dialogue work package located its first round of workshops at the beginning of the project to "**generate hypotheses** about the challenges posed by social innovation, their economic underpinnings and the need for a departure from traditional modes of public intervention and regulation." The first dialogue workshop addressed effective stakeholder engagement and integrating SI into Structural Funds programmes. To give a flavour of the results, for stakeholder engagement, the workshop found that "trust, risk taking, leadership and community capacity are core dimensions to be considered when engaging with stakeholders. Cooperation with citizens, NGOs, entrepreneurs and other social innovation stakeholders must be meaningful and fair. At the same time policy and decision makers need a clear understanding when to engage with whom for what purpose." For integration into

Structural Funds, the workshop suggests “the application of balanced score card methodology to develop a joint vision and strategy among stakeholders”, enhancing SI visibility through case studies and improved communication, and pilot projects.[14]

Another format that aimed at more sustained dialogue in SIMPACT is “**Action Learning Sets**”: "The planned three action learning sets will bring together relevant policy representatives from each case over a seven-month period. Through expert facilitation, action learning sets build empathy and co-operation between members who represent diverse case settings, leading to knowledge sharing, critical reflection and mutual support. This process of exchange will lead to the creation of new knowledge at two levels:

01 At case level comparison between cases and dialogue between participants will generate new understanding of the enablers and inhibitors in the policy and regulatory environment of each social innovation. This will provide participants with an opportunity to reflect on and to refine practice within their own cases, and the experience gained during the process of refinement itself becomes the focus for discussion at subsequent Action Learning Set meetings.

02 At system level it will lead to the identification of generic and transferable lessons on which the practical guidance for policy makers can draw."[15]

However, the project website does not provide any output on the Action Learning Sets apart from the "Policy Toolbox" (see below).

Finally, Erasmus+-funded EP-DeM Labs is a smaller-scale project with far-reaching aspirations and an interesting workshop or "Lab" design **connecting end-users** and **decision-makers**. It brings together (disadvantaged and vulnerable) youth with policymakers and social service providers in the city to discuss youth and labour market policy needs in the light of equity, participation and social inclusion. Labs take place first separately for each group in the cities of Bologna, Cagliari, Dublin and London, then jointly to combine perspectives. The project aims simultaneously to empower young people, render policymakers more aware of local needs and more accountable towards citizens and beneficiaries, and enhance both groups’ capabilities to listen to one another, plan and develop visions for cities and regions, and their knowledge of workable initiatives and constraints in education and training. The ambition towards local but far-reaching impact is large: The Labs aim at organisational change in the organisations involved and in "systemic change" in municipal social services facilitating access and inclusion of young people to employment and education and ensuring their voice in the process.

Three Lab sessions are planned for young people and institutional/organisational representatives each,

[14] http://www.simpact-project.eu/publications/press/pr2014-06-23.pdf
[15] http://www.simpact-project.eu/dialogue/actionlearning.htm

then another two joint Labs. Again, the "institutional" Labs use an adapted SWOT method based on previous research into the cities' challenges and solutions to the inclusion of vulnerable young people, with an emphasis on young people's own voice in service delivery. This format is particularly interesting for its explicit way of sustaining commitment. Institutional Labs aim for a "**Group action plan**" and for pledges by participant organisations to Implement follow-up actions with timelines (Parish, 2016)**.**

In sum, workshops are a staple of social innovation projects and research, and a generic methodology has emerged that focuses on some variation of SWOT analysis and aims mostly at generating input and recommendations for policy. One example, EP-DeM Labs, increases the stakes and has participants commit (to some extent) to implementation of the results. Fostering that kind of commitment apparently is easier on a local level and/or in a policy field with a sense of urgency. Otherwise, there are no immediately handy and visible formats that create policy commitments.

Policymakers' function as distinct and powerful type of stakeholder that may enable or constrain social innovations and indeed, contribute to "selecting" particular Innovations and paths of development, is thus hardly reflected in Interactive workshop formats. Arguably, the decision-making and selective functions of policy (and politics) are even blurred in the established brainstorming and SWOT methodologies and the common workshop etiquette of equally valuing opinions by all participants. These functions are addressed in a theoretical way (based on detailed and decidedly conflict- and tension-oriented case studies enhanced by policy and practitioner workshops) by, for example, the CRESSI[16] project (for example (Edmiston, 2016)). In the documentation of workshop formats, such a methodological self-reflection is mostly missing. In this central practice of social Innovation projects, reflection and evaluation of "what works" is currently a matter of informal exchange and pragmatic decision-making.

From briefs to toolboxes: SI projects' policy outputs

Interestingly, policy "for" and policy "as" social innovation are both centrally addressed in the written outputs of neighbouring projects. The shift to "activation" of policymakers is mirrored in the changing denominations of policy-related project outputs: **policy briefs**, overviews of social innovation and handbooks that address policy *for* social innovation (Boelman et al., 2015; Bureau of European Policy Advisers, 2014; Gabriel, 2014) are complemented by "toolkits" or "**toolboxes**" that support policy *as* social innovation (Combe & Mendez-Navia, 2014; SIMPACT, 2017). The SIMPACT "toolbox" is of particular Interest. From the project's own research in social policy and the validation and elaboration of findings through its policy dialogue it has identified a set of enablers of social innovation that mutually

[16] https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/faculty-research/research-projects/creating-economic-space-social-innovation-cressi/cressi-publications

enhance one another and thus form an "ecosystem". These are operationalised as a self-assessment tool for an administration or policy unit to gauge its innovative capabilities.

However, in the self-description of the tool the authors insist that it Is not intended for a purely instrumental use: "It does not provide a blueprint. Rather it should be used as a means of stimulating critical reflection within public policy making bodies, and constructive dialogue between policy makers and the wider community of stakeholders in each social policy field. […] Its ultimate purpose is to promote fresh thinking that leads to real innovation in the way that social policies are conceived and delivered. Power sharing, inclusion, dialogue and trust are the vital ingredients in helping ensure the capability of European welfare systems to meet the needs of the next generation. But they require structural change at the heart of the policy process to make them happen" (SIMPACT, 2017, p.1). This amounts to the use of a "toolbox" less as such but as a kind of boundary object for reflection, dialogue and organisational and policy change which is left to context-specific processes.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Engaging policy "for | with | as" social innovation

Coming back to the typology of the relations between policy and social innovation, the genres and methodologies described have varied affinities with these types: Briefs and handbooks firstly address policies "for" and also "as" social innovation (chiefly in the context of public sector innovation), and, together with knowledge repositories and training or exchange offers, provide ample knowledge. Platforms chiefly work as knowledge and learning repositories. Communication is thus mostly one-way, and leaves the actual use and commitment to a scattered, self-selecting audience. So far, we are seeing little evidence of more advanced interactive formats outside of dedicated digital social innovation projects. For example, examples like the Foresight platform could very well be imagined to present some interactive fore sighting exercises that rely on distributed inputs. However, this would probably need some critical mass of contribution and lively facilitation by participants close to the respective project and subject matter. External "crowds" and even previous participants appear to be unreliable sources of content.

However, knowledge repositories and learning platforms frequently are complemented by real-life and virtual communities of practice, more or less formalised networks of innovators or intrapreneurs within and between institutions and organisations. Workshops at first sight represent policy "with" social innovation but have their own constraints. In a typical 1/2 - 3/2-day format which tends to be densely packed with inputs, brainstorming exercises, carefully facilitated interactions, and as-concise-as-possible outputs, there is little space for in-depth investigation and self-reflection. Co-creation of social innovation policies is thus constrained in this context and there remains a gap between actual possibilities and (sometimes) ambitious promises of impact. A local focus, or a sense of urgency and "ownership" of challenges and possible solutions appears to allow for more commitment. Within SIC,

examples and activities with this degree of co-creation are probably found in WP3 and experiences there could make useful starting points for stepping up policy engagement.

In previous SIC deliverables, policy "as" SI was suggested as the more "radical" or comprehensive approach that aims to address not just outcomes in terms of problem-solving and meeting social needs but the processes in which this is achieved. However, shifts from outcome to process (and back again) have characterised modern organisations and policies for decades and are well documented in organisation and administrative studies (for example, Brunsson, 2006; Luhmann, 1969). Possibly (and in line with the evidence of SIC, for example D5.2), the needs of diverse policy fields for diverse types of relations between SI and policy vary, and mixtures of formats and modes of engagements need to be adapted and explored.

Challenges

Challenges for policy engagement in social innovation are similar to those of social Innovation networks at large. The following have emerged through this review of policy engagement formats: .

01 sustainability and commitment
02 impact,
03 focus on cross-cutting versus specific subjects,

Sustainability and Commitment

Firstly, the sustainability and reliability of contacts are not guaranteed. Within projects, workshops and roundtables are mostly one-off events or short series of events. Organisations and individuals in charge of such events will of course have their social capital of previous contacts and collaborative experience and may mobilise partners' contacts and networks. Nevertheless, the logic of projects generates a certain discontinuity, especially when workshop organisers are not clearly recognised actors in the respective field or do not have a critical mass of contacts and interactions yet. Timing of involvement may be crucial: on the one hand, in some contexts, early-stage involvement may be difficult if policymakers expect to be shown "results" of a project, but on the other hand it may create a sense of trust in the process of collaboration and the results, and thus increase commitment and the likelihood of transfer into political decision-making. Where commitment is high already and policymakers share a sense of ownership in the solution (or have initiated the social innovation consultation or process themselves), it may be possible to render it explicit: negotiate objectives and "contract" over next steps to be taken.

Impact

In terms of policy engagement, the question of impact is double-edged: demonstrating the impact of

social innovations is necessary to generate and sustain policy interest, but in the context of policy engagement, the onus to generate impact no longer rests on projects alone. Policy engagement is *about* increasing the likelihood that impact is achieved. Policymakers have a central role in selecting social innovations to sustain, extend or scale, adapting rules and distributing resources, lending legitimacy and creating viable SI ecosystems. However, the "state of the art" in SI policy dialogues turns the question of impact back onto the policy environment. The SIMPACT project aptly summarises the policy constraints on delivering Impact:

" Public policy is excessively focused on:

- ***short-term*** funding, often reflecting electoral cycles and the perceived need to demonstrate immediate impact;
- ***quantifiable outcomes*** which are relatively easy to measure in demonstrating impact;
- ***political fashion,*** distinguishing each administration from its predecessor rather than focusing on evidence-based practice;
- ***media*** reaction, leading to risk aversion.

The result is:

- ***limited impact*** on ***'landscape change',*** when disadvantaged communities and groups are the recipients of successive short-term initiatives with little cumulative effect;
- weak core capacity in NGOs and community organisations because quantifiable deliverables neglect the need to strengthen competencies, governance structures and renewal mechanisms required for sustainability;
- the suppression of enterprising behaviour by public sector staff, often linked to a blame culture, and both tacit and explicit incentives to maintain established practices;
- transactional rather than transformational relationships between public agencies and other key actors because the funding relationship leads to an unequal distribution of power and the dominance of contract compliance as the principal focus for interaction;
- few spaces for innovation because competitive procurement processes encourage bidders to pursue established approaches, resulting in conservative interventions." (SIMPACT, 2017 p.2).

Impact measurements can also be challenging in a different way: Where participant numbers, or numbers of blog posts, tweets, media reports are considered indicators for impact, they may direct effort away from focused and substantial discussion. Ironically, focusing on direct output such as target numbers of suggestions and action points for workshops may contribute to that focus, especially, when workshops and platforms are embedded in a committed effort at change. However, the shape and dimension of projects needs to be considered when assessing and using impact. Where inappropriate indicators are a criterion for funding, the mechanisms of "begging and bragging" described for project work in research by Ursula Huws (Huws, 2006) apply. They may lead to excessive promises and either a cynical or a naïvely arrogant assumption that "one mere workshop will change everything" (EP-DeM Labs researcher) - with subsequently likely disappointment of participants, project partners and stakeholders. This researcher argues that smaller-scale outcomes may already be desirable:

Policymakers in this project are exposed to the diversity of end-users of social target groups and their lifeworlds that can only insufficiently be addressed by bureaucratically implemented programmes, and a learning of policymakers could already be "to accept that insufficiency of one-size-fits-all programmes".

A logic of ongoing legitimation and justification efforts that is disconnected from actual challenges and contexts is shared by policymakers, projects, initiatives and stakeholders, all of whom feel the need to continuously evaluate and legitimate their own efforts on top of the demands of the project. It may in effect undermine "real" impact, as it gets in the way of open-ended, open-minded, trusting and self-reflexive collaboration. Where such collaboration works, it probably succeeds in suspending the logics and conventions of impact assessment.

Cross-cutting versus specific subjects

This question is both didactic and pragmatic, and is often answered in project design already through the focus on particular subjects, policy levels or regions. Social innovation as a subject risks attracting the "usual suspects", policymakers and stakeholders who are promotors already - but of course, this may increase commitment in a small group and allow for moving beyond idea generation. Specific subjects may add a sense of urgency and actual problem-solving to discussions and bring the angle of social innovation to more subject-related policy fields. In SIC, WP3 with its experimentation formats on a municipal level has this function. Cases and examples are frequently used for this purpose and to generate engagement through an approximation of storytelling. However, cases are often selected for illustrative and pragmatic purposes (being accessible from the workshop location) and tend to focus on success stories. The in-depth case studies in the CRESSI[17] project provide a counter-example as they focus on quite conflictual social innovations and explore their context in some detail. Immediate interactions can generate interest and commitment - but do not necessarily solve the problem of policy commitment. They are the more likely to do so if the field is densely connected enough that repeat interactions are likely.

6. ASSIGNMENTS FOR THE SI ASSEMBLY

For the (future) SI Assembly and the Policy Forum under construction, the following "assignments" can be concluded from this analysis. However, these are not assignments in the sense of "homework" but suggestions for consultation with WP5 and all partners:

01 Consider ways of increasing commitment by policymakers and sustainability of the Forum/Assembly. This may well involve the Forum itself in its varied instantiations.

[17] https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/faculty-research/research-projects/creating-economic-space-social-innovation-cressi/cressi-publications

Establishing a repeat format could work.

02 Involve policymakers in the assessment of impact. They play a powerful role in enabling or constraining the impact of social innovations. Hence, impact cannot be "delivered" by initiatives but is inevitably co-created with policy (if things go very well). Possibly, WP3's experimentations could consider a policy role in this.

03 Shift the focus of policy engagement from idea and input generation to implementation. Most likely this requires a smart mixture of the general and the specific. As some policy fields and networks may have come "closer" to an implementation focus, they may provide examples.

04 In general, select the specific content, examples and success stories to show "low-hanging fruits" and easy examples to emulate.

05 Experiment with and reflect upon experience with formats, procedures and content of policy engagement. Currently, there is too little exchange on such experiences and their methodological implementations.

Immediate next steps could consist in

01 applying the typology of policy for | with | as social innovation to the SIC networks: where do they locate their most relevant policy relations? This could be done in conjunction with impact assessment (T6.8) and tried in the next survey round in September 2017.

02 checking aims for the Policy Forum against WP6 results on Governance (D6.1) and Sustainability (D6.7): Could the Forum take functions of an "Advisory Group" to the SI Community - possibly by providing a regular gathering of "critical friends" from the policy sphere? This should be considered and established within year 2, to allow for testing in year 3.

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