

Social Innovation Processes to Address Climate Change

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Project Description:

We are living with disruptive changes, such as Covid-19, that go beyond the health or economic realms and invest all the spheres of society. These changes are characterised by high levels of complexity, volatility in context, and unpredictable developments (Ansell and Trondal 2018), and they will generate new inequalities and challenges that will need solutions and answers. Alongside these turbulent events, climate emergencies are a turbulent event that will have an impact on our societies. It is important to develop initiatives that can respond to the issues described above and tackle inequalities and the challenges deriving from profound societal changes (van Wijk et al. 2019). Among these initiatives, social innovation responses might provide a path to an alternative future leading to transformative societal and environmental changes (Montgomery and Mazzei 2021).

Over the last decades, social innovation has been increasingly promoted in public policy debates as a vehicle to developing innovative and efficient solutions addressing societal needs (Sinclair & Baglioni, 2014). Social innovation has been presented as a distinctive and effective response to a welfare crisis (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012). Understood as a novel way of working that promotes collaborations between citizens, third sector organisations and public actors, and a platform that enhances the design and delivery of public services (Hubert, 2010), social innovation has been harnessed by policymakers around the globe. However, due to the novelty of the concept and challenges associated with measuring it, empirical research evidencing the effectiveness of social innovation in addressing societal needs and environmental challenges is still scarce (Pel et al., 2020; Repo and Marschoss, 2019). This scarcity becomes even more relevant in the face of crisis such as COVID-19, when for example novel approaches of governance such as social innovation will be scrutinised to see if they are effective to cope with high-impact threats (Dunlop et al., 2020).

In this PhD project we are aiming to better understand the dynamics of social innovation initiatives in addressing climate change. The PhD student will be involved in collecting secondary and primary data to explore the role of social innovation in solving climate-related issues, with a particular focus on if, how and under what circumstances social innovation initiatives might work. The supervision team is flexible to consider any country context to execute this project as long as its relevance to the project is justified. The supervision team is flexible to consider any methods to execute this project, including both qualitative and quantitative and secondary data analysis, as long as its relevance to the project is justified. The PhD student will work in a team that is leading a new EU Horizon-funded project, ENCASE, with a similar topic of interest. Therefore, the student will have the opportunity to participate to team meetings and exchange ideas and synergies with the ENCASE OU team.

References:

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