

Abstract for review

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Sharing Space as Social Innovation Re-embedding Social Values into Public Space

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Abstract:

Departing from the results of a three-year, large EU project called ITSSOIN.eu project that investigated impacts of Third Sector as Social innovation in a variety of societal areas, this paper takes base on the empirical results related to the field of environmental sustainability in Cities and offers some extended analytical reflections. The empirical work relates social innovation to a spatially-based city context. The large project included a cross-country/city comparison of examples of social innovation activities in cities of four selected European countries. Social innovation cases covering sharing space for using bicycles was selected as providing a widespread stream of innovation in environmental sustainability of significance in most European cities and around the world. The promotion of bicycle use and sharing space for bicycle mobility in many cities is a task undertaken not only by state and private actors, but also with a strong interplay of many civil society organizations in a variety of forms and with different degrees of success and failure across cities. The study focuses on the social innovativeness and issues arising from civil society involvement in practices to share public space. The analysis followed a process tracing methodology and produced a thick story for each city, which traced the evolution of the forms of social innovation, and identified moments of contention, within which the influence of the actors and the type of narratives that are produced over time became apparent. The four European cities are Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Milan and Bruno. The most successful case-Copenhagen- demonstrated social innovations of the kind that recreated values such as reciprocity/mutual help,

as critical components in the formation of new narratives, and unlocking practices to demonstrate new possibility where the use of bicycles became a social instrument. The social innovation created not just provision of material services but an opening in the formation of new values and norms (use of spare time, mutual help/reciprocity, quality of life) born in this interplay of actors sharing space in new forms. This analysis can also be linked to debates about what contributes to re-create the civic space and how practices of social innovation to share space succeed (or fail) in becoming vehicles to re-introduce the social (values, reciprocity- etc) in civic life and the construction of “new imaginaries” for progressive social and environmental change.

Most important references:

Figuerola, M.; Greiffenberg, C.; Akinyi, E.; Brink, A.; Behrendt, C.; Krlev, G.; Navrátil, J.; Placier, K.; Cavola, F., Turini, A.; Cancellieri, G. (2016). Social Innovation in Environmental Sustainability. Deliverable 6.4 of the project: “Impact of the Third Sector as Social Innovation” (ITSSOIN), European Commission 7th Framework Programme, Brussels: European Commission, DG Research. www.ITSSOIN.eu