



Creating social innovation in urban development via collaborative processes

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The success factors that create effective social innovation in an urban context is contested with two different schools of thought and approaches; the systemic approach, which accounts for the social practices and subsequent changes as a result of the innovation; and the pragmatic approach, which follows a well-trodden planning process, which focuses on creating solutions to a defined social problem.

What conditions enable successful social innovations to emerge from collaborative processes in urban development?

The authors posit that creating the conditions for ‘socially creative milieus’ enables a pathway for success in urban social innovation. A case study, based in Switzerland, demonstrates the power of the social collective, in transforming places, from a bottom-up approach, rather than city-council led.

[#Innovation](#) [#SocialInnovation](#) [#Collaborate](#) [#UrbanDevelopment](#)

Background

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Context



- **Social innovations are ‘innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means’.** True social innovation is likened to social entrepreneurship, in a mutually supportive environment, that enables co-production of ideas and projects, builds upon shared values among stakeholders and acknowledges the role of place-based leaders, regardless of the sector they represent.
- Traditionally, there are **two key approaches for social innovation**. First, **systemic**: encourages social innovation to evolve from the unique conditions within a place. Second, **pragmatic**: leans on tried and tested project development methods in social science. **Both approaches have known weaknesses.**
- **To address the weaknesses, the concept of ‘socially creative milieus’ acknowledges the important of the ‘place’ and its context, taking account of the culture as well as the physical resources or challenges of that place.** Using this socially creative milieus concept removes the challenge of choosing one approach to social innovation over the other.
- Applying the lens of **socially creative milieus** the authors focus on the following concepts to study social innovation: **‘agents of innovation’, ‘adopters’, ‘diffusion channels’, ‘constraints’, ‘inertia’, and ‘impacts’.**

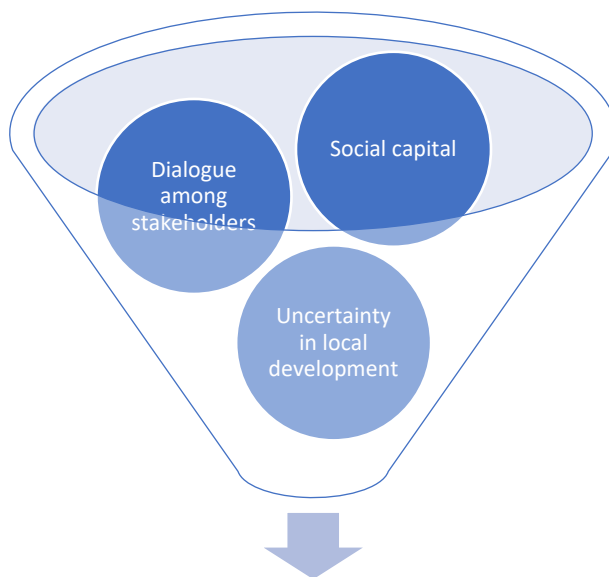
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Take aways & Learnings



- To explore the conditions for social innovation to emerge, the authors looked at Gundeldinger Feld in Switzerland, and found that **the role of adopters or supporters within a social innovation, and a participatory and inclusive planning approach, created the conditions for success.**
- **The socially creative milieus concept accepts that uncertainty exists and success in social innovation depends on the inter-connectedness of key stakeholders including the leaders, adopters or followers and the wider stakeholder networks within a place.** As places develop, the stakeholder groups adapt to the new environments of the social innovation and they too, evolve in terms of culture and community.
- The research suggests that **bringing other stakeholders to a public sector development**, and taking a proactive approach to encouraging collaboration, identifying and using social capital, and acknowledging uncertainty, can **reduce the role of the public sector, decrease competition**, and increase the buy-in from the wider community.
- As a regeneration project, transforming a disused factory into a community space, the project capitalised on the 'genius loci' (the spirit of the place), the people and the physical environment.



Successful social innovations to emerge from collaborative processes

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