Fostering quality of life through social innovation: a Spanish case-study

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Abstract

Participative processes and citizen’s empowering are considered a crucial aspect for social innovation, involving both private and public sectors. Different models of social innovation are beginning to emerge, reflecting a variety of strategies for collaboration and for detecting societal needs. This paper analyzes recent trends in literature on social innovation, considering the interrelationship between citizen participation processes and improvement of quality of life. As far as people's needs represent societal needs, identifying those non well-covered by existing products and services are considered a powerful way for arising social innovations opportunities. In this context, we present a case-study of social innovation focused on the gap between elderly people needs and the creation of business opportunities throughout a living-lab initiative. It constitutes a case of collaborative innovation between users and producers using an ICT (Information and Communications Technologies) platform as instrument to detect and answer user expectations, gather people needs, identifying social innovation opportunities and assisting decision-making processes of local governance.
1. Introduction

Social innovation is an outstanding paradigm that is increasingly attracting the interest of research, companies and policy makers (Andrew and Klein, 2010; Trettin and Graskamp, 2010). Despite its popularity\(^1\) and the emergence of different models\(^2\), social innovation rarely appears as a specific and defined term and its presence in research literature is still scarce (Beham, Drobnic and Verwiebe, 2009; Goldenberg et al., 2009; Howaldt and Shwarz, 2010; Echeverría, 2010). The concept of social innovation is often used interchangeably with a number of different topics including innovation activities in the non-profit sector, social entrepreneurship, social economy, social enterprise, among others (Mulgan et al., 2007; Rodríguez and Alvarado, 2008; Andrew and Klein, 2010; Howaldt and Shwarz, 2010).

However social innovation is today discussed at international level, in the European Community and at the highest political level in countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia. It is also a major component of aid programmes targeted at developing countries (Hubert, 2010). The *Renewed Social Agenda*, which was adopted by the European Commission in June 2008 emphasizes the role of social innovation as an opportunity to shape Europe’s response to new social realities, to generate new solutions, connecting with the citizens and promoting a better quality of life. Social innovation is seen as a powerful instrument to affront the economic crisis which requires both quick solutions to pressing social problems and the long term development of a sustainable social system (BEPA, 2009). As underlined by the Lisbon Agenda, some of the most important social challenges facing Europe will also require innovation that cuts across sectoral boundaries, straddling public and private sectors. For example, responding to ageing requires changes to everything from employment law and pensions to new models of care, interlocking changes in hardware, infrastructures, local government and lifestyles. Struggling against new risks or inequity demands innovative initiatives in social fields not only in applying new technology, manufacturing and services innovation but also in proposing

\(^1\) Social innovation has been reflected in multiple respects since the beginning of the century, including the rising number of centers devoted to promoting social innovation, such as Canadian inter-university Centre de Recherché sur les Innovations Sociaux (CRINES) in 1986, the Vienna-based Zentrum für soziale Innovation in 1990, the Social Innovation Generation at the University of Waterloo, Stanford University in the US in 2000, etc. (For a detailed list of social innovation organizations see Goldenberg et al. 2010, p. 6 and Appendix 2, p. 49).

\(^2\) Murray, Mulgan and Caulier-Grice (2008) in their working paper “How to innovate: The tools for social innovation” list 260 methods, processes and examples of social innovation in their proposal of social economy framework.
innovative organization and new methods of collaboration, bringing together novel sets of social actors. Knowing more about the processes of social innovation and the forms of support for social innovation would help societies to act more effectively on these ‘wicked’ problems. As Mulgan argues, social innovation is especially oriented to “fields where there is the greatest gap between needs and current provision, which can often be gauged by how angry or dissatisfied people are” (Mulgan 2006, p.148).

Phills, Deiglmeier and Miller (2008) have underlined the mechanisms involved in bringing about positive social change, bolstered by the “cross-fertilization” of the non-profit, government, and business sectors in response to the increasing complexity and global scale of issues in recent decades. These authors identify three critical mechanisms of social innovation: 1) Exchanges of ideas and values; 2) Shifts in roles and relationships; and 3) Integration of private capital with public and philanthropic support (p. 37). These mechanisms of social innovation and their dialogical processes favour the increasing access to resources and fostering mutual consideration of all involved parties. Laville (2005) have analyzed the process of social innovation, looking at the ways in which the overall inadequacy or lack of the response to social needs has led to different kinds of locally based activities and local services. In the European countries, these services are the origin for the development of enterprises that contribute both to social cohesion and to employment creation. Andrew and Klein (2010) considers that those using the services, as well as the institutions themselves, should become actors in the democratization and the decentralization of the administration of the services, contributing to social innovation initiatives.

How to detect and to provide the better response to societal needs? How to encourage people to get involved in solving social problems and promote partnerships between the people, government, non-profit and profit sectors? How to identify and support innovative ideas for transforming communities with greater civic participation?

Lundvall (1985) recognized the usefulness of applying a user-producer perspective to innovation since several decades, considering innovations as the result of collisions between technical opportunity and user. From his point of view, the interaction between user and producer can adopt three different forms: exchange of products, exchange of information and cooperation. He affirms that “the interaction between innovation and user-producer relationships is far from harmonious and states of disequilibrium - reflected in unsatisfactory innovations- prevail. We, thus, find that the users and producers of product innovations are mutually interdependent in a complex way. Only if we assume that producers have immediate access to information not only about
‘revealed preferences’ but also about needs and wants in relation to products which do not exist, can this problem be overcome” (Lundvall, 1985:p.7). Citizen and customers no longer serve as suppliers for information about their needs, they make contributions to the process of developing new products to resolve problems. Terms as open innovation (Chesbrough, 2003), user and customer integration (Leonard-Barton and Sinha, 1993; von Hippel, 2005; Leadbeater, 2006) and networks (Debressons and Amesse, 1991; Biermans, 1992). In particular, von Hippel (1986) introduced the concept of lead users as responsible for a large amount of new innovation, more than manufacturers. In his opinion, “lead users are defined as being in advance to the market with respect to a given important dimension that is changing over time” (Von Hippel, 1985:108).

From a wider perspective, Lundvall has interested in the kind of interactive learning that interconnects users and producers in processes aiming at new products may have a major impact on economic performance of the economy. This researcher argues that “learning by interacting” is fundamental for the generalization of local learning. This raises the next question – what determines the willingness and capability of citizens to make commitments, collaborate and trust others in processes of exchange and interactive learning? This question concerned for both technological and non-technological spheres. In words of Howaldt and Schwarz (2010) “innovations are deliberative interventions designed to initiate and establish future developments concerning technology, economics, and social practices”, the preparedness of society to adopt new solutions for needs and challenges comes into play. How can people act as lead users and contribute to social innovation? How can share social innovation best practices?

In this context, this paper analyzes theoretical perspectives of social innovation, exploring the interrelationship between Social Innovation (SI) and quality of life (QL). We also present a study-case of services and social innovation focused on the gap between elderly people needs and the creation of business opportunities throughout a living-lab initiative. It constitutes a case of combination of services and social innovation using an ICT (Information and Communications Technologies) platform as instrument to detect and answer user expectations, gather people needs, identifying

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3 Lundvall refers to Pasinetti’s model on Growth and Structural Change for building up the logics of value creation in a dynamic context, recognizing the critical importance of the phenomena of explaining how and why learning takes place in consumption and production. To get closer to understanding how learning takes place, it is actually necessary to open the black boxes of the vertically organized production chains (Lundvall, 1982; 2005)
social innovation opportunities and assisting decision-making processes of local governance.

Our principal purpose is to explore the transformational potential of mechanisms of the process of collective action and urban governance practices, promoting both the intentional cross-sector fertilization and a system-building or “scaffolding” endeavor that accomplishes the mechanisms of social innovation. Volckmann and Bellamy have described scaffolding as a technique that involves people in activities that are “normally out of their reach” because it “enhances the experience of collaboration and exchange across organizational or community boundaries” (p. 28). Such collaborative exchange addresses “individual and systems lines of development, while recognizing that the hardest things to change—the soft and illusive aspects of the individual and culture—can be surfaced and addressed” (p. 29). Tapping into social, financial, and other support networks across organizational boundaries offers capacity-building opportunities for people and organizations (including firms), and introduces greater complexity of thought and action in addressing the targeted social problem and the needs demand.

The paper is organizes as follows. In the first and second Sections, respectively, it presents a briefly literature review on the principal theoretical approaches to social innovation and the interrelationship with the concept of quality of life. Third Section presents a social innovation case-study, describing the methodology, tools, action plans used and results obtained with a project led by CVIDA (Association of companies for quality of Life) in Vilareal, a city of more than 50,000 inhabitants in the region of Valencia (Spain). This pilot experience aimed at testing a model for improving people quality of life especially stressing the following interrelated dimensions: a) Satisfaction of human needs that are not currently satisfied (gathering and measuring frail seniors perceived QOL, detecting niche segments), b) Identification and viability assessment of innovation (developing procedures and tools for mapping and assessing local resources), c) Change in social relations (implementing a dashboard for assisting in local governance, enabling the satisfaction and increasing the level of participation of all but especially deprived groups), d) Empowerment dimension (increase in the socio-political capability and access to resources needed to enhance rights to satisfaction of human needs and participation, the city as a laboratory of experiences and encounters). Finally, the last Section summarizes and comments the lessons learned from this pilot experience.
2. Social innovation: beyond social change and technological innovation

As a discipline innovation research widely finds its systematic beginnings point of reference in Schumpeter’s 1912 publication of *Theory of economic development* (Schumpeter, 1934). In words of Howaldt and Schwarz (2010: p. 9) “Schumpeter focuses not only on technical innovation, but also distinguishes between product-related, procedural and organizational innovations, using new resources, and tapping new markets. He also addresses the process of innovation. Moreover, he underscores the necessity of social innovation occurring in tandem in both the economic arena as well as in culture, politics and a society’s way of life in order to guarantee the economic efficacy of technical innovations”. However, the mention of social innovation in literature after Schumpeter is rare and only marginal and the focus is essentially in technological innovations.

Although social innovation was associated primarily with the non-profit, civil, or third sector, the concept and practices of social innovation have evolved and today’s innovative social solutions cut across the boundaries that traditionally separated non-profits, the public sector, and business (Goldenberg et al., 2009; Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010; Chetkovich, 2011). Basically, four domains of coverage of the discussion on social innovation can be found in today’s social science literature, related on the role of the non-profit sector, social entrepreneurship, social economy and its relationships with the market economy, the voluntary sector and quality of life and existence. “Today social innovation –in words of MacCallum et al. (2009:1)- is an anchor concept for research in creative arts, human organization, economic diversity, neighbourhood regeneration, regional renaissance, governance and other areas”.

The introduction of the social to innovation –and vice versa, as well as of innovation to the social– is considered from multiple research perspectives, embracing social science and economic literatures, as well as in the socio-political practice (Brooks, 1982; Laville, 1994; Nahuis & Van Lente, 2008; Andrew & Klein, 2010). Much of the literature on social innovation draws from economics; management studies; business and technology innovation (especially with regards to socio-technical scopes); social anthropology, sociology and politics, among others. Despite the development of the concept in such a range of disciplinary perspectives, it retains at its core a key commonality: social innovation embracing social relations and meeting human needs. In part this is because social innovation does not have fixed
boundaries; it cuts across all sectors (the public sector, private sector, third sector and household) and cuts across fields as diverse as energy, health and housing.

The emerging field of social innovation is rich and varied – from new models of learning and eldercare to new ways to reduce waste, empower communities and transition to a low carbon economy. It is a multi-faceted concept which can be placed at the intersection of spontaneous and rationally organized movements, at the micro, meso or macro levels of society. Also citizen movements can be sources of social innovation and key drivers in changing societies, constituting an evolving form of democratic governance (Henderson, 1993).

Social innovation regards the economy quite differently compared to the discourses about economic strategies directed to make regions and cities more competitive by physical renewal activities in order to strengthen the infrastructure of territories. Economy is seen as a set of social practices anchored in institutions and activities ranging from the everyday life of families and communities to norms of consumption and social regulation of work habits and professional practice (MacCallum et al., 2009). Perspectives of social innovation from the social economy field include instruments of solidarity, finance, social entrepreneurship and research partnerships (Mendell 2008).

Murray, Mulgan and Caulier-Grice (2009) describe the social economy as including parts of the state, the market, the grant economy and the household and argue for the importance of the cross-border relations between them for supporting and encouraging social innovation. Diffusion of social innovation takes place primarily through organizations with social aims, but the practices of other sectors are important as are the relations between the sectors. Social innovation works against the dichotomizing of the non-profit sector and the for-profit sector; the central issue is that innovation should be a response to social problems and social conditions and can produce a real social change (Lemieux, 2004; Murray, Mulgan and Caulier-Grice, 2009; Andrew and Klein, 2010).

Social innovations also have been increasingly perceived as an important subject in discourse in civil institutions since 2000 as, in part, reaction to the extensive fixation on technology in innovation policies. At the present, in opinion of Howaldt and Schwarz

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4 Social economy defends the primacy of individuals and work over capital in the distribution of its surplus and its revenues, basing its activities on the principles of participation and individual and collective empowerment. Social economy therefore encompasses all cooperative and mutual movements and can be developed in all sectors that meet the needs of the people and the community (Mendell, 2008).
(2010:7), an "innovation system paradigm shift" is taking place that in turn is changing the relationship between technological and social innovation. "In the face of the social shift from an industrial society to a knowledge and service economy and the profound change this entails in the economic and social structures of modern society, there are many indications signaling a fundamental shift in the innovation paradigm" (Howaldt and Schwarz, 2010:16). According to MacCallum et al. (2009:1) social innovation "rejects the traditional, technology-focused application of the term 'innovation', which has been central to recent European development policy, in favour of a more nuanced reading which valorizes the knowledge and cultural assets of communities and which foregrounds the creative reconfiguration of social relations". 

Brooks (1982) has analyzed the social dimensions of invention and innovation, classifies social inventions and innovations as market, managerial, political, or institutional. He stresses the fact that technological innovation often is accompanied by social innovation: the Apollo program was not just about space ships but also about a new managerial system. When distinguishing between "pure social inventions and innovations, sociotechnical system innovations, and pure technical innovations" he cautions that "there are no entirely pure types". In the first category, there are, e.g., withholding taxes (requiring computers), the supermarket (requiring new types of check-out counters and stackable grocery carts), the implementation of government research contracts and the Yunnus model of micro microcredits, among others.

Several authors, such as Mulgan (2006), Morales (2009), Echeverría (2010), among others, consider that the key aspect to distinguish between social innovation and other forms/types of innovation is the characterization and peculiarities of its praxis and its finalities, its principal objectives are focused in society and not in the market. Mulgan (2006:8) affirms that “Social innovation refers to innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social”. Social innovation is innovation explicitly oriented to the social and public good, inspired by the desire to meet social needs which can be neglected by traditional

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5 Social and technical constructions are treated as inseparable by other theoretical approaches, such as the Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law, and the theory of socio-technical systems, Networks are heterogeneous and contains people, objects and organizations (See Latour, 1987; Bijker, Hughes and Pinch, 1994; Williams & Edge, 1996). Social innovation can be seen as emergent phenomena in such socio-technical systems.
forms of private market provision and which have often been poorly served or unresolved by services organized by the state. Social innovation can take place inside or outside of public services. It can be developed by the public, private, or third sectors, or users and communities – but equally, some innovation developed by these sectors does not qualify as social innovation because it does not directly address major social challenges. Innovation is conceived as a process involving social interactions and is no longer explained by the sole combination of tangible forms of capital (physical, financial …) but also by combination of intangible forms of capital, especially social capital\(^6\).

Nonetheless, social innovation is characterized by at least three forms of achievements, alone or in combination, accomplished through some form of collective action, as opposed to individual action:

1) It contributes to satisfy human needs not otherwise considered/satisfied.

2) It increases access rights (e.g. by political inclusiveness, redistributive policies, etc.).

3) It enhances human capabilities (e.g. by empowering particular social groups, increasing social capital, etc.). The latter form of social innovation, that which allow for capacity building, i.e. the creation and accumulation of social capital in marginalized places and within deprived social groups, focuses on the process rather than product dimension of innovation (in particular, the development of people’s competences and capabilities). In this sense, Morales (2009) distinguish between traditional social change processes and the new social innovation processes (see Table 1).

\(^6\) According to Moulaert and Nussbaumer (2008) the concept of social capital expresses the quality of social relations within a community or an organization. On the individual level, social capital designates the sum of advantages gained from a network of relationships over a long period of time, or through belonging to a group. Distinct from the individual dimension and taking account of the economic, cultural and symbolic dimensions, social capital is an attribute of the structure of relations between social actors. Three characteristics define social capital: networks, norms, and trust - this last characteristic is transformed from a personal level to a societal one through the application of norms of reciprocity and civic engagement.
In his opinion social innovation can be characterized as:

- an endogenous or exogenous intervention (which occurs answering to people needs)
- a social development action (for improving welfare and/or social cohesion)
- which through an original/novel (different from the pre-existing situation)
- provides a service or generates goods (both intangible or tangible)
- results achieved (there are indicators of the change objectively produced)
- usually through a network system
- which has potential to be reproducible (Morales, 2009:20).

Chambon et al. (1982) affirm that social innovation involves the wish to do things differently, to think in terms of transformations to institutions and to social practices. Andrew and Klein (2010) have appointed that many social innovations result in the reconfiguration of social-spatial relations, in new ways of locating social activities in space (social innovation is socially and spatially embedded). Also they consider that “social innovation requires learning and institutional capacity to learn. ‘Learning regions’ and ‘learning institutions’ are therefore critical elements in the social innovation process” (Andrew and Klein, 2010:22).
A recent report of The Young Foundation (2010) describes several characteristics of the new nature of innovation which differentiate future innovation from the innovation of the industrial era. The report identifies four drivers which will change the way firms and organizations innovate. These are:

1. Co-creating value with customers and tapping knowledge about users;
2. Global knowledge sourcing and collaborative networks;
3. Global challenges as a driver of innovation;
4. Public sector challenges as a driver of innovation (YF, 2010: 10).

The authors argue that firms constantly search for new business opportunities and that social and environmental challenges – such as climate change, the supply of clean water, chronic disease and so on – constitute a huge new market. Companies can cultivate new business opportunities by creating new and more responsible and sustainable solutions. Equally, challenges facing the public sector – increasing demands from citizens for higher quality and more personalized public services, together with greater budgetary constraints – also provide an opportunity for the business sector (YF, 2010:11).

Table 2 summarizes several approaches related to the conceptualization of social innovation that we have considered in our work.

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<th>Definition</th>
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<td>By social innovation, we mean new organizational and institutional forms, new ways of doing things, new social practices, new mechanisms, new approaches and new concepts that give rise to concrete achievements and improvements.</td>
<td>CRISES (2004)</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Social innovation refers to new forms of social relations, including institutional and organizational innovations, new forms of production and consumption, and new relationships between economic and social development”.</td>
<td>Neamtan and Downing (2005:12)</td>
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<td>“Social innovation is the development and application of new or improved activities, initiatives, services, processes, or products designed to address social and economic challenges faced by individuals and communities”.</td>
<td>Goldenberg (2004:1)</td>
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Social innovation refers to innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need and that are predominantly diffused through organizations whose primary purposes are social.\(^7\)

Social innovation is “a complex process of introducing products, processes or programs that profoundly change the basic routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of the social system in which they arise. Such successful social innovations have durability and broad impact”.

In a recent report for the EU Commission, Hubbert (2010) makes a complete review on social definition a defines it as “innovations that are social in both their ends and their means. Specifically, we define social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs (more effectively than alternatives) and create new social relationships or collaborations. They are innovations that are not only good for society but also enhance society’s capacity to act”.

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3. Exploring the interrelationships between social innovation and quality of life

Quality of Life (QoL) is an area of study that has attracted an ever increasing amount of interest over the past three decades in medical sciences, sociology, political science, economics, psychology, philosophy, marketing, environmental sciences, medicine, and others. In each case, the construct is conceived and measured differently. While Quality of Life has long been an explicit or implicit policy goal, adequate definition and measurement have been elusive and its relation with innovation has been little treated.

\(^7\) Mulgan (2006:8) also prefers the following simple definition “‘new ideas that work’. this differentiates innovation from improvement, which implies only incremental change; and from creativity and invention, which are vital to innovation but miss out the hard work of implementation and diffusion that makes promising ideas useful. social innovation refers to new ideas that work in meeting social goals. defined in this way the term has, potentially, very wide boundaries – from gay partnerships to new ways of using mobile phone texting, and from new lifestyles to new products and services.
Research is mainly characterized by two streams: a) concerned with the examination of quality of life at the aggregated level (society/country) and a comparison across countries, and b) related to the experience of subjective well-being at the individual level (Beham, Drobnič and Verwiebe, 2009). Diverse "objective" and "subjective" indicators across a range of disciplines and scales, and recent contributions such as subjective well-being (SWB) surveys and psychology of happiness have spurred renewed interest (Bunge, 1975; Nussbaum & Sen, 1993; Costanza et al., 2008).

Erikson (1993) has defined quality of life in terms of control over resources, considering the standard of living in a society. Lane (1996) understood high quality of life in terms of subjective well-being, human development, and justice. The World Health Organization, concerned with health related quality of life, defined QOL as “an individual’s perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value system in which they live and in relations to their goals, expectations, standards, and concerns” (WHOQOL-Group 1998: 551). The frequently used concepts of well-being, welfare, wellness, happiness and life satisfaction are all constructs closely related to QoL. Consequently, there is no single, agreed-upon definition of the construct and measurement instrument to assess quality of life in contemporary academic research (Mickel, Dallimore, and Nelson, 2004).

However Schalock et al. (2002) distinguish three primary sources in the historical evolution of this concept of quality of life: a) shift in focus away from the belief that scientific, medical, and technological advances alone would result in improved life towards an understanding that personal, family, community, and societal well-being emerge from complex combinations of these advances plus values, perceptions, and environmental conditions; b) the next logical step from the normalization movement that stressed community-based services to measuring outcomes from the individual’s life in the community; and c) the rise of consumer empowerment with its civil rights movements and their emphasis on person-centered planning, personal outcomes, and self-determination.

These approaches are considered in the recent Europe’s innovation policy (Innovation Union Initiative, October 6th 2010), as a means of stimulating a more dynamic, inclusive and sustainable social market economy. This new focus combines
economic growth with wellbeing objectives, considering the particular constraints which affect the Member States related to ageing population and social exclusion\(^8\). On the other hand, the emergence of a wide range of socially innovative activities in local area developed has to be considered in the context of wider political economic transformations. Most socially innovative projects are directly concerned with the delivery of unsatisfied services that are neither provided by the state nor by the market. At this respect, Klein and Harrisson (2007:3) consider social innovation as a response to social problems and social conditions in the context of democratic governance and development, both territorially and organizationally (including socio-economic and cultural interrelations) with direct implications in people quality of life.

Social innovation therefore responds to a number of deep seated social trends and a wider vision of human development and has been expanded research agenda in turn introduced numerous topics: regional economic development, the social economy, enterprise financing, development funds and financial institutions (Lévesque, 1995; Lévesque; Mendell and Van Kemenade, 1996). Social innovation occurs in all sectors of society, where the three spheres, government, private sector, and voluntary sector, should interact productively and in appropriate equilibrium to engender and sustain a healthy and sustainable economy, social system, and physical environment (Goldenberg, 2004). In a recent report Hubert (2010) stresses that social innovation should aim at identifying and delivering new services that improve the quality of life of individuals and communities by addressing:

- Social demands that are traditionally not addressed by the market or existing institutions and are directed towards vulnerable groups in society.
- Societal challenges in which the boundary between ‘social’ and ‘economic’ blurs, and which are directed towards society as a whole.

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\(^8\)By 2020, 25% of the population will be over 60 years old and the 80+ population is expected to double before 2050 (this will lead to an increase of costs linked to pensions, social security, health and long term care by 4-8% of GDP by 2025). Other relevant challenge is the social exclusion due to ageing, poverty and effects of the cultural diversity. New solutions need to provide better access to services (health, care, housing and education) and opportunities for learning and employment. The growing social needs, together with budgetary constraints, call for radically new and innovative public service models. Social innovation is critical to tackling these challenges; in many cases social innovations are already providing new and robust models.
The need to reform society in the direction of a more participative arena where empowerment and learning are sources and outcomes of well-being.

For Surman (2006) social innovation is a very broad concept that embraces “how ideas are making change to make the world a better place”, ideas that work for the public good and for a sustainable development. Shapson (2009:5) have provided a definition with an explicit mention to the quality of life improvement. His definition contains practically all the dimensions related to social innovation, related to actors, sectors and effects/contribution of SI. He affirms that “social innovation is a process by which value is created for individuals and communities through public and private organizations. SI transforms new knowledge and technologies into policies and services for local, national and global application. A high rate of innovation in turn contributes to more intellectual capital, social capital, economic growth, and enhanced quality of life and cultural engagement”.

4. Social innovation in practice: Living Lab and collaborative partnership

The different stages or steps in the social innovation process are not very different from that in other types of innovation. Two complementary but slightly different descriptions of such a process are: 1) diagnosis, design, development, sustaining innovations, scaling diffusing and connecting, and, finally, systemic innovation; and 2) generating ideas by understanding needs and identifying potential solutions, developing/prototyping and piloting ideas, assessing then scaling up and diffusing the good ones, learning and evolving (Mulgan, 2007). The main differences with other types of innovation are that ideas come from social demands and that social objectives are, at least, as important as economic ones. In this context, the main barrier to put social innovation into practice is the lack of a general framework offering 1) a clear idea of what a social demand is and how to assess and gather them as a source of opportunities, as well as 2) indicators to assess monitor and compare the effectiveness of initiatives.

Citizen mobilization and a desire for citizen participation in decision-making in all sectors of the society is also a factor behind the greater importance of social innovation; encouraging the self-organization of citizens and therefore producing new forms of participation to meet these demands. Technological advances form an integral part of these citizen engagement strategies and certainly the internet
has both produced social innovation (Google, for example) and been a support to social innovation. Living Labs are commonly characterized as both a methodology that stresses user involvement in innovation and the organizations that focus on its use (Bergvall-Kareborn, 2006). Living Labs are driven by two main ideas: involving users as co-creators on equal grounds with the rest of participants and experimentation in real world settings (Almirall and Wareham, 2008). Living Labs therefore provide structure and governance to user participation in the innovation process, enabling the construction and testing of social innovation indicators.

5. Study-case: the CVIDA (Association of firms for quality of Life) project

The Association for Quality of Life Care (CVida) was founded in 2006 with the support of Valencian Government with the following purposes:

- The design and implementation of local programmes for improving local economic development and the people quality of life

- The organization of activities using a Living Lab methodology under the concept of the city + people as “a social innovation space”

- The empowerment of citizen participation and decision-making in local government

- The improvement professional development, generation of employment opportunities and social entrepreneurship, focusing in the interrelationship between users and producers and adopting quality and socially responsible business practices

- The establishment of constructive relationships and networks with institutions and other agents

CVIDA Association is structured around nine areas perfectly aligned with the users' needs which are assigned to firms and organizations according to their areas of activity: clothing, rehabilitation and personal autonomy, automotive and transport, unit of elderly people care, habitat and sport, tourism and leisure, health in the workplace, healthcare technology and health.
Cvida Vilareal pilot experience

Cvida Vilareal is an association in the city of Vilareal (Castellon, Spain) which integrates local companies, professionals and citizen associations (elderly people, handicapped, etc.). Cvida Vilareal constitutes a local mirror of the Association for Quality of Life Care (CVida) in Vilareal, a city of more than 50.000 inhabitants sited in the province of Castellón in the region of Valencia, Spain.

Cvida Vilareal was born from the initiative of a group of local businesspeople and professionals in response to the worrying situation of the city due to the international crisis. Vilareal was intensive in ceramic tiles industry, which has been specially affected by the crisis in the building industry. In fact, unemployment has grown from near 1.000 people at the beginning of 2007 to near 6.000 at the beginning of 2011. The main goals of Cvida Vilareal are the local economic development, the improvement of people’s quality of life and the creation of employment. With these purposes and with the technical supervision of the Institute of Biomechanic of Valencia (IBV) a local social innovation space is under development following the framework of people’s quality of life driven innovation. The Biomechanics Institute of Valencia (Instituto de Biomecánica de Valencia, IBV) is a technological centre that studies the behavior of the human body and its interaction with products, environments and services. Founded in 1976, the Institute is currently coordinated under the agreement of the Valencian Institute for Small and Medium Industry (IMPIVA) and the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV). With the aim to improve competitiveness among the business sector, the IBV promotes people’s well-being through the combination of knowledge in areas such as biomechanics, ergonomics and emotional engineering, and its application to diverse sectors. The approach developed around the idea that people perceived QOL built from their needs is a potential field for social innovation. Non-covered needs of frail and vulnerable people are considered social demands as well as opportunities for social innovation. In this context, the experience in Vilareal has started by focussing in elderly

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10 IBV offers a wide range of advanced technological services to its clients to apply and transfer R&D generated knowledge. Technological services provided by IBV can be grouped under three strands: a) Inspection and testing of safety, ergonomics and functionality of products, b) Biomechanical evaluation of the functional capacity of individuals, while carrying out day-to-day activities, and their interaction with the environment, and c) Person-oriented design of highly differentiated cutting-edge products and services aiming to generate consumer satisfaction by using the IBV’s expertise and integral approach to innovation (http://www.ibv.org).
people. People needs, preferences and expectations related to their QOL are identified and translated into both innovation opportunities and in the decision making process of local governance.

People participates in a Living Lab implemented in this city and their needs, preferences and expectations are gathered using a combination of an ITC system and innovation sessions. The information gathered are then analyzed and presented to companies and local authorities to identify opportunities for both, improving QOL and for making business.

**ITC system for detecting needs demand related to measuring QOL**

An on-line questionnaire (www.cvidacenter.com/expoiqv) is used to collect people perception in a series of items related to their QOL. A total of 24 questions are used to identify people problems, which are then used for developing a series of indicators aimed at helping local authorities in decision making as well as for identifying innovation opportunities. This questionnaire has been adapted from several works found in a complete review of literature (Tarzia, 2003; Gallup, 2009; Cummins, 2010). The information gathered is the basis for developing indicators for monitoring QOL, people needs satisfaction and coverage, as well as of utility of products and services. These indicators are intended for both, detecting innovation and opportunities as an aid for local governance by considering people Quality of life in the decision making process (Figure 1).
**QOL indicators**

An Index of Quality of life, IQV, is computed using the following mathematical model:

\[
ICV = \sum ai \times Fi = \sum ai \times (\sum Bi \times ci)
\]

Where:

- Fi are factors determining QOL: health, safety, comfort, etc.
- αi is the weight of each factor in QOL
- Ci are components (items in the questionnaire) for each factor. For example, rest, nutrition, physical aspect and others are components of health. Bi is the weight of each component in the factor.

The IQV is showed in an analogical indicator ranging from 1 to 100. Also, it is displayed as a bar chart compared with the average QOL of the chosen reference population. In this case elderly answering to the questionnaire. Also, indexes for the factors determining QOL: health, safety, comfort, hedonism, environment, personal relationships and performance and self-development, are obtained and showed in a radar diagram compared to the average for the reference population. These indicators form a dashboard for monitoring local QOL in general or for given population groups.
The questionnaire is accessible via internet at the web site of different local entities and at the main social networks. Any person fulfilling the questionnaire gets the information showed in the figure. At present, several PC terminals are being installed at different points in the city (elderly home, sports facilities, etc.) to collect more people opinions, considering the importance of their perceptions of quality of life (Bowling et al., 2003).

The information obtained from people is also used to develop indicators showing people satisfaction with their needs with respect to average satisfaction in the reference population. In the dashboard, needs are ordered from left to right according to their weight in IQV (see equation above). In our approach, we first identify local products, services and facilities and classify them according to a taxonomy developed considering the part of life style they are used in. For example, a swimming pool is a resource for sports whereas a dentist is a resource for health care. Each resource is placed in a database including all labels needed for further analysis. In the first approach, only location and if they were adequate for elderly people were considered. Each generic resource may have a positive, neutral or negative effect on each people need. In this way, the coverage of a need is estimated as the total number of existing resources that may cover it. Coverage is presented as the percentage with respect to a threshold value that in this case was fixed following the criteria used in Spain to determine the size of public services according to city inhabitants. In this case, needs
are ordered from left to right considering their weight in the IQV and people satisfaction. In this example, the information gathered after the measurement of all indicators is using by local authorities in their decision making process and the final implementation plan.

6. Conclusion and comments

Our principal objective in this paper, by illustrating the importance and widespread nature of social innovation, is to emphasize the relevant role for people to participate in the building of social innovation. Social innovation arises from public dissatisfaction with existing conditions and with concern about the gap between conditions of privilege and conditions of want. An additional challenge comes from the fact that social innovation is often inter-sectoral or cross-sectoral and very often multi-level. Social innovation can produce major public savings and improvement of people’s quality of life through better public policy, fostering better social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes on the ground. The case study that we have described -and the theoretical literature supporting this case study- reveals the importance of people participation for sustaining, institutionalizing and therefore benefiting from social innovation. This type of experiences can support and integrate social innovation in policies and local governance process, contributing in the wake of the European renewed social agenda, particularly at local levels. Social innovation is about new and effective solutions to pressing social needs, created by individuals or organizations with both a social and an economic imperative. Further research on social innovation will be important in order to increase our understanding of the concept and theoretical interrelationships between social innovation and quality of life and the development of appropriate measurement methodologies and instruments.

References


