



**RESEARCH IMPULSE  
ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITIES  
FOR RURAL SOCIAL INNOVATION**

MALIN LINDBERG  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR



# Rural social service innovation

## Defining the concepts

### Social innovation

Development of new solutions to societal challenges and social needs

Empowering involvement of disadvantaged groups

Cooperation over organisational and sectorial boundaries

Simultaneous change on individual, organisational, societal levels

### Social service innovation

Improves quality and access in social services to better address social needs  
(e.g. increased user-friendliness, need-adaptation or efficiency)

Empowerment of service users from specific social groups  
by information, knowledge, recognition, voice or power

Especially crucial for rural areas

due to geographic and demographic challenges to service provision



# Rural social innovation

## in SEMPRE

Identification of urgent societal challenges of rural decline

Persistent outward migration

Economic downturn

Deteriorating social service infrastructures

Initiatives to increase the rural attractiveness by

Innovative forms of social service delivery

Empowering mobilization of disadvantaged groups

Multi-stakeholder involvement of local/regional community actors

Participatory workshops to delineate needs and develop solutions

Implementation of solutions in micro-projects





Institutionalising, transforming



Testing, implementing, organising



Involvement, needs, ideas

# Complex, long-term rural challenges

Outward migration, economic downturn, declining social services



Temporary, short-term interventions

Enabling bottom-up experiments,  
learning and innovative cooperation



Permanent, organised solutions

Ensuring sustainable conditions  
and provision



Innovative services, methods etc.  
Sustainable organisational forms

## Reference

Edvik & Björk's chapter in *Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprises*, edited by in Lundgaard Andersen et al. (2016).

# Institutional factors

## impacting social innovation organisation

### Temporary

Short-term funding and organisation

External policy objectives

Goal-oriented rationality vs. creative unpredictable processes

### Legitimacy

Relevance among various stakeholders

Different institutional logics

### Collaboration

Cross-sectorial partnerships

Public welfare-services systems

#### Reference

Edvik & Björk's chapter in *Social Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprises*, edited by in Lundgaard Andersen et al. (2016).

# Organisational forms of rural social innovation

**Nonprofit associations/foundations**  
formed to institutionalise the innovation

**Social intrapreneurship**  
in public, private or nonprofit organisations

**Social enterprises**

Cooperatives, Work-integrating social enterprises (WISE) etc.

**Other forms**  
social media platforms, informal networks etc.

**Partnerships**  
between public, nonprofit, business organisations



# Civil society organisations

## in rural social service innovation

Regarded as the optimal social service providers and innovators as they are:

“supposedly more ‘rooted’ in the local civil society and more responsive to local needs than traditional top-down, bureaucratic public services”

“supposedly also ensure more democratic governance and user-friendly delivery processes”

But also risk being smokescreens:

“hiding both the selective reduction in public expenditure on social services and the growing inability of such services to reach certain groups”

### Reference

Martinelli's chapter in *The international handbook on social innovation*, edited by Moulaert et al. (2013).



# Sustainable

social service innovation

## Requires

Spaces for context- and user-sensitive, diversified initiatives bottom-up

and

Universal access to basic services guaranteed by the public system top-down

### Reference

Martinelli's chapter in *The international handbook on social innovation*, edited by Moulaert et al. (2013).