



WILCO

Welfare innovations
at the local level
in favour of cohesion

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Building inclusive welfare systems
A dialogue between research and practice

Lessons from the WILCO project - flashlight 2

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0. The WILCO project and its approach

- 📌 **tasks:** (a) Looking at innovations from twenty cities in ten EU-countries (b) Looking for ways of taking up innovative nudges by established systems
- 📌 **concept of innovations:** among new attempts that are locally seen as “promising” we have chosen those that are “path-breaking” i.e. not merely modernizing what is inherited from “industrialist” welfare heritage and managerialism (NPM)
- 📌 **basic hypothesis:** even though there is much diversity, these innovations show common recurrent patterns and instruments, being of importance not only for special solutions & groups but for innovative changes in the “culture” of social services at large
- 📌 **General recommendation:** learn to see innovations as a challenge to many old and new welfare and service systems in place; learn to live with diversity; mainstreaming some innovatory features is a risky and difficult task,

1. Acknowledge the distinct profile of SIs

- ③ **their modes of organizing and financing** mostly third sector- based, but as well by inter-sectorial networks and intra-preneurs/policy entrepreneurs; mixed & hybrid resources
- ③ **the service design** : trust- based rather than control-based, group-building instead of singularizing approaches, linking occupational goals with social support and community development, upgrading social skills and co-production
- ③ **the kind of rights + benefits:** new ways of activation and support e.g. by ad-hoc microcredits, rewarding pro-social attitudes
- ③ **their modes of governance:** looking for local embeddedness +profiles that fit with local peculiarities; cross-sector networking with partners and stakeholders;

2. Acknowledge the tensions between (local) welfare systems and innovations

- ⊞ acknowledge that degrees of openness to change and innovation vary much by policy fields
- ⊞ face the fact that SIs meet special difficulties wherever policy fields are marked by hierarchical, uniform, closed services and systems, with little local autonomy
- ⊞ mostly, SIs co-exist with or get some support as “apps”, special tools in trouble zones, as “buffers” for dealing with side-effects of given tendencies and prevailing policies
- ⊞ Besides, there is casual emergence of “bridging” policies, that prepare reforms by pilot-programs supporting some selected innovative projects + networks, putting them to a test

3. Find routes towards more innovation-friendly welfare systems

- ⊞ need for welfare policies, that (a) allow for more diversity, co-existence and mutual learning of given and innovative concepts, as well as for (b) reducing the gap between dispersed innovatory changes and central state policy interventions - e.g. by devolution, pilot-programmes, room for policy entrepreneurs and reform-networks
- ⊞ creating a special new EU program for innovative services to be measured according to instant increase of effectiveness and efficiency might isolate innovations, fail to meet their localised character and their fuzzy social benefits
- ⊞ some defined innovatory characteristics should be convened upon and strengthened as points of reference for selecting and evaluating projects in already established and operating EU funding streams such as EQUAL, LEADER a.o.

Thanks for your attention!



Presentation based on already accessible results from the WILCO research project, namely:

Evers/B.Ewert 2013: Social innovation for social cohesion. Findings on communalities of innovation from a new transnational study. Paper given at NESTA conference “Social Frontiers. The next edge of social innovation research, London 14.-15.-11.-2013

<http://www.nesta.org.uk/event/social-frontiers>

B. Ewert/A. Evers 2014: Blueprints for the Future of Welfare Provision? Shared features of Service Innovations across Europe, in: Social Policy & Society Vol 13/3 (to appear in summer)

Evers/B. Ewert/T.Brandsen (eds.) 2014: Social innovations for social cohesion - Transnational patterns and approaches from 20 European cities (ed. with Benjamin Ewert and Taco Brandsen)

<http://www.wilcoproject.eu/ereader-wilco/>