



Open innovation for transforming food systems: Social Enterprise as a catalyst for bottom up collaborative social innovating

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University of Birmingham

Introduction

- Social enterprises create space for open social innovation that is inclusive, sustainable and healthy
- Beyond innovation as monodisciplinary, controlling intellectual property for maximizing profit... towards....
- ...Collaboration of multiple stakeholders and different objectives
- How to navigate these tensions between social and commercial
- Institutional logics help examine the challenges
- Research question
 - How do social enterprises catalyse and scale open social innovation for food system transformation?

Context – the UK food system crisis

- Existing approaches largely unsuccessful in addressing poor dietary health and unsustainable food production.
- ‘Top-down’ public health and behaviour change interventions perceived as preaching/patronising/stigmatising by vulnerable people on low incomes and minority ethnic groups.
- How to have social innovations for Sustainable Prosperity – living well within our limits
- Examples of tackling food issues found in a very diverse range of social enterprises many not known to be focusing on food
- Making healthier / sustainable choices the easiest choice

Literature review

- ☾ Open Social Innovation in less formal settings:
 - Multisector perspectives (Gegenhuber and Mair, 2024) and purposeful /SE ecosystem (Lyon et al, 2024).
- ☾ Social innovation- beyond the technical - Processes, services, strategies, and organisations (Mulgan, 2006; Zeigler et al, 2023)
- ☾ Social enterprises as combining social and commercial objectives (Jay, 2013; Doherty et al, 2014; Vickers et al, 2017)
- ☾ Social enterprises as ways to catalyse, engage communities with democratic approaches (Smith and Raven, 2012)
- ☾ Democratic governance and collective capabilities (Vickers et al, 2024)
- ☾ Development of ideas and scaling of innovations – beyond the niche (Seyfang and Hexeltine, 2012)

Methodology

- ☾ Case studies with 6 Social enterprises – co designers of the research
- ☾ purposeful sampling- including SE not operating in the food sector
- ☾ Observation and 3-6 interviews per case study, workshops with community researchers
- ☾ Analysis- abductive- coding systems from literature and informed by emerging findings





Findings Types of social innovation

- ☾ **Addressing food poverty and basic needs** – food banks/hubs and enabling access to affordable food (CTG, Cultivate, LEYF, SA, Selby, WH).
- ☾ **Behaviour change about healthy diets** e.g. early years context (LEYF), health / fitness / recreation services (Cultivate, SA, Selby, WH), growing/horticulture (Cultivate, WH, SA).
- ☾ **Therapeutic services and social prescribing** using gardening/growing, cookery classes etc (Cultivate, SA, WH).
- ☾ **Community cafes and catering** - bringing people together socially as well as generating income (Cultivate, LEYF, SA, Selby, WH).
- ☾ **Sustainable, local and organic growing** - increasing access to fresh food and supporting other local growers and ethical suppliers (particularly Cultivate and WH + LEYF, SA, Selby with some growing).

Discussion

- ☾ OSI through engagement of communities and diverse collaborators – as part of social enterprise activity – beyond the top down behaviour change
- ☾ Participatory forums/events, user co-production groups, Staff Councils and informal engagement
- ☾ Importance of everyday understandings of food-
 - Requires community members to articulate issues
 - beyond the preaching/stigmatising

- ☾ Institutional logics (social and commercial) shaping the process-
 - Combining logics and hybridity – eg keeping financially viable, while maximising social benefits
 - ownership of the innovation and IPR -Open access v using the innovation to generate revenue

- ☾ Capabilities for Open social innovation
 - Building networks, trust and legitimacy
 - Multiple voices in the process of developing ideas
 - Breaking down silos and boundaries
 - Building trust, communication and shared goals
 - Collective capabilities for democratic decisions – to design innovation process and sustain it
 - Transparency of decision making, data ownership

Conclusion and implications for innovation

- ☾ Need to look at less formal (social enterprise led) open social innovation- beyond the white coat, lab based, monodisciplinary
- ☾ Recognise the need for other funding beyond the innovation- tyranny of the novelty
- ☾ Open social innovation as a process, and as an outcome
- ☾ How can the academic research process support open social innovation?
 - Funding for co- creation
 - Challenges of publishing
- ☾ How to design Open Social Innovation (do we need OSI for OSI?)