Key Issues and Dimensions of Innovation in Social Services and Social Work

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Abstract

Social services are usually delivered in the context of the welfare state. Some important features of innovation in social services arise from this framework. Moreover social services typically deal with social change and the resulting problems. The challenges of the knowledge society, in particular the pre-eminence of scientific knowledge and the impact to transform new findings and insights into robust, innovative programs and methods are therefore prominent issues for social work as an applied science. Against this background a strikingly scant attention towards innovation in social services as an empirical subject has to be asserted. The discussion on innovation in social work has been hitherto limited to theoretical-conceptual approaches.

The present article discusses the specific context of innovation in social services and presents the results of an empirical study addressing the questions of triggers, proce-dures, influencing factors, and successes of innovation in social work. In line with other studies on innovation in non-profit organisations for person-related services these find-ings highlight the importance of both personal and organisational factors in innovation processes. Besides they outline desiderata for further innovation research.

Keywords

Social Services; Social Work; Innovation Research; Knowledge Society

Introduction

Social services are usually delivered in the context of the welfare state. Some important features of innovation in social services arise from this framework. Social services intend to improve the capabilities of service users. Capabilities serve to help users realise their chances of leading an independent life and can thus be considered synonymous with the freedom to choose from a bundle of functionings, what Sen has referred to as valuable "beings and doings" (Sen, 2007). Investments in education, health, and social justice make sense from both a free democratic and economic standpoint. But social services are not provided first and foremost according to the logic of demand and supply. Instead, service users often have no real choice of calling upon services mainly funded by public authorities. Upon receiving these services, users are expected not only to cooperate with professionals, but also to actually generate the desired outcomes (in terms of an enhanced "uno-actu-principle"). Obviously, the insights of innovation research in areas such as economics and technology cannot be transferred one-on-one to the ethically founded social sphere. However, the claim to innovation is becoming increasingly important for developments and projects in social services. The accelerated dynamics of social change make it vital to formulate adequate approaches to new or modified problems, to organise the social services, and to translate the research findings of the respective disciplines into practice. Innovation is therefore also a pressing theme in social work. In this respect, it is even more astonishing that an applied science like social work has to date left unresearched innovation as an empirical subject. The study presented here aims to contribute to innovation research in social work. However, there is no need to reinvent the wheel, since one can draw upon and further develop the findings and insights of the innovation research conducted in the non-profit and services sectors and partly also in the economic sector. Social services and social work are thus an example of devising and researching innovations as sector-specific on the one hand, and of how interdisciplinary approaches can mark a new point of departure for developing new perspectives on the other.

This paper first considers the interrelation between knowledge and innovation. Secondly, we discuss social services and social work (as the

principal profession and scientific discipline related to social services) as a specific context of innovation. Thirdly, we present the results of our investigation into innovation processes in social work. Finally, we discuss these results in the context of the innovation research undertaken in neighbouring fields.

Knowledge and Innovation

The concept of innovation is closely related to the discourse on societies in which the boundaries between truth-driven knowledge and the utilitarian application of knowledge in industry, services, and administration are considered increasingly permeable. Knowledge thereby constitutes the "substance of innovation" (Voss, 2003, p. 16). If we thus hereinafter assume that innovation amounts first and foremost to the use of knowledge, then we must first clarify what knowledge is and which significance it has in relation to innovation.

In an everyday sense, knowledge means to "have knowledge" or to "have an awareness" of a given matter. Such knowledge carries with it the ability to take social action and thus the possibility "to set something in motion" (Stehr, 1994, p. 208). However, knowledge is neither a subjectively nor randomly construable notion of reality, but instead it is forever exposed to the expectation that contradictory facts necessitate revision. The notions of reality that human beings have beyond their thinking should thus not be set unalterably in stone, but instead they should be conceived as "schemes of interpretation willing to learn" (Heidenreich, 2003, p. 46). Such notions, moreover, are sense-giving and serve to guide practical action. Knowledge is constructed in social processes, and humans can produce, acquire, and pass on knowledge only in social and historical contexts.

Increasing mention of the knowledge society from the 1960s points to an altered approach to knowledge in society, in terms of both an orientation towards a theory of modernisation and an understanding based on the sociology of knowledge (Gemperle & Streckeisen, 2007, p. 18). On the one hand, the expansion of education and the growth of the service sector entailed knowledge-based activities (see, for instance, Bell, 1985),

centred not on a product but instead on conveying knowledge and information. On the other, the transformation from an industrial to a knowledge society, in which knowledge and expertise have become the decisive factor for social problem-solving and modernisation (Homfeldt & Schulze-Krüdener, 2000, p. 9), involves an equally momentous change in the forms of knowledge production and knowledge use. Socially more strongly embedded forms (Gibbons et al., 1994), situated increasingly beyond the confines of disciplines and practical domains, now become effective alongside knowledge production in differentiated contexts relieved from action. Development as the implementation of knowledge thus occurs frequently in networks and involves a wide range of individual and institutional actors, thereby implying manifold processes of knowledge transformation and transfer. Questions about learning and the willingness to learn thus present themselves in a new quality.

The increased significance of applied knowledge fundamentally changes the relationship between society and science: knowledge production contexts are more open to the demands of society, and are thus more reflexive and to a greater extent prepared to assume social accountability (Bender, 2001, p. 13). The pre-eminence of scientific knowledge in modern society is not, however, based primarily on its claim to truth and objectivity, but rather on the fact that "scientific knowledge, more than any other form of knowledge, permanently manufactures and constructs incremental possibilities for action" (Stehr, 1994, p. 210). These additional possibilities for action alter the conditions and possibilities for the production of goods and services; in the economic context of action, knowledge as a productive force thus becomes the basis of economic growth (Stehr, 1994, p. 210). Notwithstanding the scientific ethos that knowledge should be generally accessible, access is in effect far less boundless, just as it is also subject to a logic of social structuring. Social inequalities reproduce themselves in the knowledge society, not least in that possibilities for action are limited by structural inequalities and therefore remain actually unused (Gemperle & Streckeisen, 2007, p. 41). On the level of all-embracing, comprehensive systems, this constant marginal increase in possibilities for action leads to an pre-eminent influence of scientific knowledge on society and the economy, even though "scientific knowledge by no means exhausts the knowledge at the overall disposal of society" (Stehr, 1994, p. 210f). Contrary to the currently widespread restriction and stylisation of knowledge as scientific

knowledge, other forms of knowlege – such as knowledge gained through experience, routines, creativity, tacit knowledge, and varieties of interpersonal and social skills – are also relevant to innovation (Kocyba, 2000, p. 35).

The close interlocking of the process of scientific inquiry and social practice, as mirrored in the concept of innovation, however, quite justifiably becomes a point of criticism: no shortcut should be taken to conceive knowledge production from a utilitarian perspective or as a process of value creation (Willke, 2002, p. 67), since focusing on the usability of knowledge deprives the sciences and other areas of knowledge production of their critical function and autonomy. Knowledge must thus both amount to more and also remain more than a means of production. Or as Nowotny phrases it, "Thinking the future requires knowledge and imagination, oscillating between seriousness and play, science and irony" (Nowotny, 2005, p. 16).

The term "innovation" has a long history, shaped by both everyday life and science (Fagerberg, 2006, p. 1). What constitutes innovations has been the subject of much discussion in various disciplines, without, however, these deliberations resulting in a uniformly recognised definition of the term. In addition to the aspect of novelty and the subject-specific aspect of any given product, process, or organisational innovation, the sectors debating innovation merely seem to agree that the *social* embeddness, facilitation, and impact of innovation matter. Relevant new ideas and prototypes emerge in supra-individual innovation systems. Whether a new product eventually becomes an innovation depends on demand. A novelty that remains undisseminated is not an innovation. In this respect, Aderhold concludes that "Innovation is thus the result of social judgment" (Aderhold, 2005, p. 31). The social component seems to be one of the few defining characteristics of innovation on which a consensus exists. However, differentiated observation needs to clarify sector-specific conditions of the social dimension of innovation. Thus, what are the particular framework conditions of innovation in connection with social services and, by further implication, with social work as an applied science?

Social Services and Social Work as a Context of Innovation

Societies are divided into an array of areas. This differentiation has increased exponentially in recent decades, especially in western societies where it has engendered highly specialised spheres. Specialised knowledge, however, means enhanced complexity, not only with regard to problem solving, but also as regards the description of subsequent problems, which become ascertainable in ever finer "resolution." As the driving forces behind this modernisation, the institutions of modern society and especially of the sciences come under pressure and experience legitimation difficulties (Sommerfeld, 2005, p. 12), since whether they are able to competently address and resolve the problems at hand is subject to debate. In this respect, innovation presents a semantic and pragmatic option: while it anticipates neither the aim nor the content, innovation indicates potentially new possibilities, which can be measured against a changing reality and lead to robust results. "The collective bet that we have placed on the future is called innovation. Innovation, however, is also unable to tell us how matters will be nor how they should be. What is called for is a social debate and strategic sites in order to reach a consensus" (Nowotny, 2005, p. 62f). Social work is such a strategic site, since it must deal especially with social changes and the resulting problems. Social work services have always been subject to further development, reform, adjustment or fundamental reconception to ensure public interest orientation, that is, to correspond to the cardinal liberal value of individual opportunities of participation and attainment. Strikingly, however, innovation research, which is either already established or has made promising beginnings in other disciplines and sectors, is to date hardly developed in social work (Blättel-Mink, 2006, pp. 3-56). The discussion on innovation in social work has been hitherto limited to some few theoretical-conceptual approaches (Rothman et al., 1979; Maelicke, 1987; Düx et al., 2002; Conger, 2002; Wendt, 2005). Notwithstanding a considerable expansion of social work research over the past decade, innovation as an empirical subject has received, and continues to receive, no more than scant attention. Significantly, this is the case although social work is challenged ever more frequently to formulate new, high-quality, and empirically founded prevention measures as well as approaches to tackling social problems in its different fields of action

(Homfeldt & Schulze-Krüdener, 2000), and although professional discourse is able to present new points of view, questions, and approaches.

If innovation research is to be undertaken within and for the benefit of social work, and if due consideration is to be given to the findings of innovation research in other areas, then some specifics of social work action need to be heeded. Under the constitution of the welfare state, social work involves a particular relationship between remit and accountability, since no "client sovereignty" (Maelicke, 2005, p. 12) exists for most groups at which social work is targeted. Social work clients are at first often unable to accurately define the assistance they require, or to self-confidently represent their needs, or indeed to bear the costs incurred. Social work services, moreover, occur essentially in people-related processes and interventions, which, because their principal characteristic is simultaneous production and consumption, are neither transferrable nor storable nor indeed transportable (Bauer, 2001, p. 77). This *uno-actu* principle, which also applies to other social services, is particularly pronounced in social work: without the cooperation of service users, the desired outcomes remain unattainable. There are good reasons to consider users as the actual service providers, and accordingly to regard professionals as co-producers (Schaarschuch & Oelerich, 2005). Beyond this fragile interactional level, not seldom do tensions arise between an institution's remit and the concerns and expectations of its clients, in the processes of providing support and education. This tension is often referred to – albeit not quite appropriately – as the "dual mandate" (Dewe & Otto, 2005, p. 1406). Finally, one needs to consider that social work services are rendered in specific contexts of action and in particular situations. Innovations in social work must therefore factor in the limited standardisability and the processual nature of social work action.

Seen against the background of these definitions of social work, we offer the following preliminary definition of innovations in the social services as

- new types of programmes, forms of work and organisation, methods and/or procedures,
- on a micro-, meso-, and/or macro-social level,
- developed in intended and cooperative processes,
- oriented towards resolving social problems or improving social circumstances,

- aligned with attaining the central values of human co-existence (integration, participation, social justice) and thus with the remit of social work, and which
- create added value, especially for service users.

Results of the Study on Innovation Processes in Social Work

In priniciple, the research gaps existing in the non-technological area of innovation research were acknowledged by political actors in Switzerland some years ago. Due to changes in educational policy, state innovation promotion was mandated to better integrate and address the health and social sectors and the arts. Such mandating expressly underscored the economic significance of these areas and acknowledged both the need to build knowledge on innovation and the need for innovation in these areas. Against this background, the Federal Innovation Promotion Agency in 2008 commissioned a study on "Innovation Processes in Social Work." The study addressed the following questions:

- Which need for innovations and which expectations concerning the procedures and successes do social work professionals formulate?
- Which understanding of innovation do the respondents from the various areas of social work practice have?

Data collection was undertaken at six institutions operating within different fields of social work practice (penal and corrections system, work integration, migration and integration, open and residential youth work, social welfare) by means of problem-centred interviews and subsequent content analysis. In each institution, interviews were conducted with one manager and one professional involved in direct client practice (social workers, social pedagogues, and sociocultural animators). This procedure rested on the assumption that depending on their position within an institution individual respondents would have different viewpoints on the issue, and would consequently differently perceive the challenges in-

volved. Selected results of the study are shown below.[1] In what follows, we discuss the triggers of innovation processes in social work, possible procedures for generating innovations, relevant factors influencing innovation processes, and the successes and benefits of innovations as perceived by the respondents. Table 1 shows what social work professionals consider to be possible forms of innovation.

Type of innovation / development	Examples from the data
▪ Conceptual innovation	▪ Socio-spatial orientation ▪ Networked procedure ▪ Introduction of the principle of normalisation
▪ Institutional differentiation ▪ New service, specialisation, previous service in new form	▪ Introduction of a triage department ▪ Social firm ▪ Introduction of reintegration coaching
▪ Adjustment of an institution's form of organisation	▪ Merger with other institutions ▪ Professional implementation of new legal requirements
▪ New function	▪ Case coordination ▪ Pedagogic advice
▪ Redefinition of processes	▪ Reorganisation of decision-making powers ▪ Concept for the involvement of local authority members ▪ Concept for internal work organisation
▪ Method/procedure	▪ Networked implementation planning ▪ Assessment for unemployed service industry professionals ▪ Mentoring ▪ Online advisory service
▪ Instrument	▪ Assessment instrument and appropriate IT solution ▪ Online portal with exchange platform ▪ Specialised software
▪ Structural modifications	▪ Rebuilding and refurbishment of institution New building

Table 1: Forms of Innovations in Social Work

1 For a detailed discussion of the study and its findings, see Parpan-Blaser 2009.

Triggers

Various causes and reasons exist for initiating development and innovation processes in social work institutions. Interview respondents indicated client-side changes as the principal trigger. Such changes include altered forms of behaviour or changes in the lives of users (such as the use of electronic media and the acceleration of the working world). As a result, social work services are used differently or to a lesser extent; or identifiable needs cannot be met adequately (anymore), thus entailing dissatisfaction among those concerned; or indeed adherence to an institutional concept necessitates changes on another level. Innovation can also be triggered on a specialist-disciplinary level, in that subject-specific debates within a team, or diverging practices, or further training, or indeed systematic evaluations prompt social work professionals to identify and work on a need for development and innovation. Social work managers play a particularly critical role in identifying a need for innovation, since they monitor developments and tendencies beyond everyday events and beyond an institution's standard operations. Respondents observed that the innovation potential increases for a short period upon managerial appointments, since new managers initially have an unbiased view of the institution. Another trigger for development and innovation processes in social work can be found in a new legal or regulatory framework and in public expectations, as expressed in how much media attention a particular theme or issue (for instance, security, welfare abuse, youth employment) receives. Research findings can also trigger development and innovation processes in institutions. Last but not least, inter-institutional exchange and the demands of allocating and funding bodies can prompt an institution to undertake a development and innovation process.

Procedure

Overall, the social work respondents interviewed in the present study have clear ideas about which procedures are appropriate for innovation and development processes. Respondents consider these processes consistently as cooperative. On the one hand, they refer to the inner workings of an institution, in which the appropriate involvement of staff must be ensured; on the other, reference is made to cooperation with umbrella

organisations and associations, public administration, other-domain experts, and not least university researchers and those working for social science research agencies. Where institutions assume sole responsibility for innovation processes, respondents on the one hand indicate an iterative procedure involving simultaneous early implementation and continuous reworking. On the other hand, reference is made to institutions that adopt an approach based on knowledge management in order to bundle existing knowledge with staff or, failing such knowledge, to initiate external or internal further training. Respondents, furthermore, hold two different views of cooperating with researchers on development and innovation processes. One view assume that practice formulates a research contract, whereafter empirical findings and results are often used for legitimatory purposes (for instance, to account for decisions, funding applications, or staff increases); the other view stands for an implementation-oriented process of cooperative knowledge creation. In view of successful cooperation, researchers are required to be especially sensitive to how their presence affects an institution; here, practitioners also emphasise the need for stringent role clarification. Respondents concurred that ongoing collaboration with a particular research institution simplifies matters. What characterises the innovation processes described by our respondents is that such processes are organised as projects and can be thus undertaken alongside everyday business. The project format enhances the ability to concentrate on a particular theme, moreover in a clearly defined organisational and time frame, which in turn allows for cushioning the risk of failure.

Influencing factors

With regard to the factors influencing innovation processes in social work, our results indicate that a clear distinction needs to made between conducive factors on the one hand, and impeding or hindering ones on the other. Factors can be arranged along five distinct levels.

F*irst,* respondents mention the basic attitude of all actors within an organisation (staff, strategic and operational management).

Conducive factors	Impeding factors
▪ Consensus on basic attitude, comprehensive vision ▪ Leeway for error ▪ Culture of transparency and openness ▪ Institution as a learning community ▪ Comprehensive process of reflection	▪ Coercion to undertake ▪ development

Table 2: Conducive and impeding factors in innovation processes on the level of institutional culture

Secondly, factors conducive to innovation on the level of staff include formal prerequisites, institutional framework conditions, and personal attributes. Factors hindering innovation on this level include personal attributes and structurally contingent factors, which, however, find expression on the personal level. They study further revealed that openness and a lack of flexibility are also related to the duration of staff appointments: longstanding staff are said to be less able to engage in innovations, whereas new staff tend to be more open to new ideas and even suggest these themselves.

Conducive factors	Impeding factors
▪ Good basic training and broad knowledge ▪ Use of knowledge and skills ▪ Ongoing professional development / further training ▪ Supervision ▪ Openness, willingness to learn, curiosity	▪ Lack of time resources ▪ High (case) workload ▪ Lack of acceptance ▪ Uncertainty of action or application ▪ Resistance, fears ▪ Insufficient flexibility

Table 3: Conducive and impeding factors in innovation processes on the level of staff

The *third* level concerns management and leadership, where a distinction needs to be made between designing innovation processes and establishing a workable framework for staff.

Conducive factors	Impeding factors
▪ Proximity to strategic leadership ▪ Development coordination ▪ Anchoring in annual planning ▪ Human resources management (scope to set staff priorities, thematic consistency) ▪ Participatory leadership and decisiveness ▪ Determined will for change ▪ Anticipate and address resistance	▪ Rate of change too high and a lack of prioritising ▪ Too little attention paid to difficulties ▪ Search for alternative approaches ▪ missing ▪ Rash labelling of structural changes as innovation

Table 4: Conducive and impeding factors in innovation processes on the level of management

The *fourth* level on which factors influencing innovation processes could be identified is an institution's organisational structure. In relation to fostering and impeding innovative developments, this level concerns how information, documentation and evaluation processes are shaped, and how staff and other resources (finances, infrastructure) are organised. Concerning the institutional level, the verbal data gathered suggests that innovation processes tend to occur in institutions of a certain size through the possible bundling of specialist knowledge, just as large institutions are inert and innovative developments only find their way into institutional structures with difficulty.

Conducive factors	Impeding factors
▪ Vessels for internal professional development/further training ▪ Forms of retreat from everyday business ▪ Vessels for ideas generation (e.g., vision days) ▪ Size of the institution ▪ Functioning information flow ▪ Systematic needs analysis ▪ Supra-institutional cooperation, ▪ Infrastructure (congenial, generous rooms) ▪ Careful documentation ▪ Sufficient financial resources	▪ Insufficient evaluation ▪ Lack of documentation ▪ Insufficient specialisation, few exponents of a theme within the institution ▪ Size of the institution ▪ Longstanding staff ▪ Great distance between functions within an institution ▪ Insufficient financial resources ▪ Content divergences with funding body

Table 5: Conducive and impeding factors in innovation processes on the level of organisational structure

The *fifth* level concerns the institutional environment, including those factors influencing innovation in the institution's political and administrative environment.

Conducive factors	Impeding factors
▪ Accessible resources of other comparable institutions	▪ Constricting administrative jurisdiction ▪ Competition with other providers ▪ Lack of political will ▪ Interest lacking within the discipline (at educational institutions and training centres)

Table 6: Conducive and impeding factors in innovation processes on the level of the institutional environment

Successes

The benefit and success of an innovation becomes evident in social work on an institutional level, on the level of clients and service users, and on a supra-institutional and social level. On the *institutional* level, the benefit of innovations is related to enhanced procedural reliability, professionalism, and knowledge. Procedural reliability and clarity are especially important for cooperation with both other bodies and clients, since they help reduce the need for preceding triage and specific case-related arrangements. In addition, there are new possibilities for cooperation and transfer, additional revenue possibilities, and an enhanced efficiency in the use of financial means. Respondents, moreover, stated that development processes entailed contacts that could be used at a later stage or enabled the continuation of collaboration in other subject areas. Another benefit aspect is the successful positioning and enhancement of a given institution's profile. On a financial level, development and innovation successes can enable an institution to achieve greater efficiency in its use of resources or indeed to create revenue possibilities by marketing a newly developed product. Observations on how social work innovations can benefit *clients* reveal a differentiation between a hindrance benefit and a facilitation benefit. The first benefit category includes the prevention of social decline and the attainment of diminished recidivism. Another aspect of success that was mentioned was the reduction of violence. On the client side, the following benefit aspects can be summarised as facilitation benefits: greater self-determination and increased self-activity enhance the quality of clients' lives. New social work developments relieve the financial and time burden on both clients and their relatives. With regard to benefit aspects, moreover, it seems crucial that these are not only postulated by professionals, but also that they are perceived as such by clients. If a new development in social work can lead to a benefit, this often also means success on the supra-institutional, *social level*. What is at stake is the prevention and reduction of costs on the one hand, and the attainment of central values on the other, for instance security, integration, the diminishing of prejudices, or an animated public sphere.

Concerning the success aspects of developments and innovations in social work, moreover, one needs to distinguish between a monetary-material, an indirectly quantifiable, and a hardly quantifiable, value-

related benefit. A *monetary-material benefit* arises wherever social work innovations prevent or reduce costs, enable a more efficient use of resources, or create new or improved revenue possibilities. Moreover, respondents mention success aspects that are not directly material, but instead are *indirectly quantifiable*, such as the saving of time or on the user-side the prevention of social decline or relegation. Finally, one considerable success aspect of innovations in social work is a *hardly quantifiable, value-related* benefit: key social and partly also legally secured values (security, integration, participation) hardly lend themselves to adequate quantification, but their attainment is by no means less significant.

Generally speaking, we can thus distinguish between two kinds of benefit, one involving a gain and facilitation, and another amounting to a means of preventing negative consequences. Both types and their specific characteristics, however, are condensed into the better provision of social work services. Such improvement occurs, for instance, when innovative developments enable a differentiated resource capture or swifter and more precise interventions. Several respondents explicitly mention, however, that improved provision must be recorded and evidenced by means of systematic evaluation. In general terms, this could also enhance understanding of the fact that in social work additional material expenditure sometimes generates an immaterial gain. Or as one of the interviewees put it: *"In the mid-term, we obviously throw more money into the bargain, because if everything proceeds more slowly, then we have less turnover and so on … But instead we make striking profits as regards security and therapeutic progress."*

Discussion

The factors relevant to innovation processes in social work, as our study demonstrates, coincide with the hitherto existing findings and results of the scattered empirical studies on person-related or social services. In their comparative study of non-profit organisations for person-related services in Latvia and the United States, Jaskyte and Kisieliene conclude that a greater consensus on cultural aspects within an organisation (for

instance, stability or team orientation) correlates with lower innovativeness in the same organisation (Jaskyte & Kisieliene, 2006, p. 171). Quantitative surveys on the connection between organisational innovation and leadership (Shin & McClomb, 1998) have shown, furthermore, that a centralist form of organisation correlates negatively with innovations on the organisational level. Another finding that coincides with our results is that management plays an important role in the emergence of innovations. With regard to leadership styles, a visionary style as opposed to a task-oriented or analytical style proved to be an important predictor of innovations in non-profit organisations (Shin & McClomb, 1998, p. 15f). Likewise, innovations are developed in cooperative processes. If cooperations involve researchers, however, the related challenges reside in the mostly distinct institutional locations of those involved. The blended funding of social services, which goes hand in hand with lacking client sovereignty, means that research cannot be undertaken in institution-based R&D departments, but must instead occur in publicly funded institutions such as universities. This institutional separation of large parts of knowledge production and fields of practice necessitates manifold transfer and transformation efforts in order to set the different logics of action of those involved into a productive relationship. Various recent deliberations on cooperative knowledge creation and evidence-based intervention development address this issue (Gredig, 2005; Hüttemann & Sommerfeld, 2007; Gredig & Sommerfeld, 2008).

Concerning the success and benefit of innovations, a specific situation arises for non-profit oriented organisations in social services, which previous research has hardly taken into adequate consideration: the success of innovations in social services is generally not measured in terms of optimising profit, but instead in terms of reducing costs, that is to say, in terms of a more effective use of available resources and of ethically founded benefit aspects. Since social services are not funded by their immediate users, but instead by public monies, innovations in the social services require additional financial means other than those employed to maintain standard operation. Such funding comes from various funding institutions (for instance, foundations, federal funds, relief agency funds/charitable associations). What emerges is the image of a brokered market that is not oriented towards expansion. We intend to study the interaction between innovation promotion and innovation processes in a future research project.

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Content

Chapter IV: Innovation in services – social resources, current practices, regulatory consequences

Chapter V: Innovation and changing nature of work

Chapter VI: Sectoral and regional dimensions of social innovation