



Heritage and Social Innovation Observatory (HESIOD) presentation

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Introduction

The Heritage and Social Innovation Observatory (HESIOD) is a platform aiming to identify, analyse, give visibility and disseminate socially innovative experiences in the field of cultural heritage: museums, collaborative projects, innovation labs, community centres, shared workspaces, co-creation, co-production, crowdsourcing and crowdfunding processes, etc. Also it seeks to serve as a platform to connect the community of social innovators in this sector and facilitate their cooperation.

Does the Cultural Heritage contribute to create social innovations? To which extent? Are the organisations in charge of the Cultural Heritage management socially innovative? To which extent? How could they become more innovative? Who innovates and where? These are some of the questions for which we are still seeking for an answer.

What is social innovation?

The main consequence of the actual economical and social crisis is a progressive erosion of the Welfare State. The growing importance that social innovation as a concept represents nowadays cannot be understood without taking into consideration this grim evidence. Hence, in less than a decade Social Innovation is more and more present in the public sector agendas.

Social innovation are new ideas or processes (products, services and models) that meet various social needs (more effectively than other alternatives) and contribute as well to the creation of new relationships and/or collaborations. Therefore new means of organisation and interactions are involved in order to respond to society's problems and needs. In other words, these are good innovations for society, improving at the same its capacity to act (European Union, 2013; Tepsie, 2014; Murray, Caulier-Grice and Mulgan, 2010). However, despite the growing use of this concept, there is no unified definition to it as yet. Anyway, a static definition of this concept would contravene its own dynamic, changing and adaptable nature (European Union, 2013). More likely it would be a question of finding common denominators for the definition and analysis of the social innovation processes, such as: satisfying social needs, promoting changes in the behaviour of society and generating new forms of governance, bearing in mind the emergence of a new philosophy of production, beyond the dichotomy between public-private sector.

In the field of cultural heritage, we use the term Social Innovation when the following factors meet:

1. New solutions – products, services, models, processes – are created complying best with the objectives of conservation, management, dissemina-

tion, defence or enhancement of cultural heritage.

2. Social needs are met, such as the access to: education, science and knowledge, culture, quality and non-offshoring employment, new technologies, participation and democracy, environmental conservation, sustainable development, social inclusion, integration and gender equality.

3. New types of relationships are created, improving the society's capacity to act. It incorporates itself to the citizenship as an active agent in innovation processes.

Does the cultural heritage sector generate social innovations?

No doubt it has created social innovations long before the invention of this new concept. Museums are an example, and their contribution to education and to improve the quality of life of society is a well known fact. However new times require changes and adaptations, which are becoming more and more urgent and, at this juncture, it is difficult to know the real role that cultural heritage is playing for the new needs of

society. That is why the social innovation concept can easily have a function as a new frame for reflection, around which we must reconsider our cultural heritage management models and aim to a systemic and integral social amelioration.

In order to transform the cultural heritage sector in a strategic space for social innovation, it is necessary to reinforce its collaborative character, where all the private, public and non-profit organisations may act in a smooth, joint and positive manner.

It is only possible to create dynamics that can solve problems both quickly and efficiently bearing in mind our experiences in common. Thus, the leadership of citizens and their organisations hitherto scarcely involved in the decision making and management of collective resources is fundamental.

But, how can one analyse and measure social innovation?

This task is not an easy one. We lack theoretical approaches and a solid analytical tradition (Sinnergiak, 2013). Therefore, we are compelled for the time being to apply experimental analy-



sis and methodologies in different fields, as for instance cultural heritage.

The variables necessary to analyse social innovations are five according to Buckland and Murillo (2013): social impact, economic sustainability, type of innovation, intersectorial collaboration and its scalability and replicability. From these variables, we have created a prototype poll focused on creating a first general framework of reflection and analysis about social innovation in the field of cultural heritage.

How can one collaborate with HESIOD

In order to collaborate with HESIOD it is only necessary to complete a questionnaire. Estimated time for completion is about 15 minutes (accessible in <http://www.hesiod.eu>). The data provided will be integrated on a map under a Creative Commons licence. The aim is to build an online platform through which organisations or socially innovative projects become more visible, they can be interconnected, cooperate, implement networking and share experiences.

The HESIOD aims

- **Obtain data.** Conduct a basic research through questionnaires, fieldwork and case studies in order to know where, how and who innovates socially in the field of cultural heritage.
- **Mapping and analysis.** Move to an online map this information to have a geographical analysis tool. Carry out comparative studies between different cases, regions or countries, thus enabling us to reflect more broadly about social innovation in this sector and measure its scope.
- **Build a community of innovators.** Create an online platform through which socially innovative initiatives are

more visible, they can be interconnected, cooperate, create networking and share experiences.

- **Disseminate.** Enter the debate on cultural heritage and social innovation in the society and academic world, by means of organising and participating in conferences and scientific meetings

References

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