Social Innovation cases from the Mediterranean

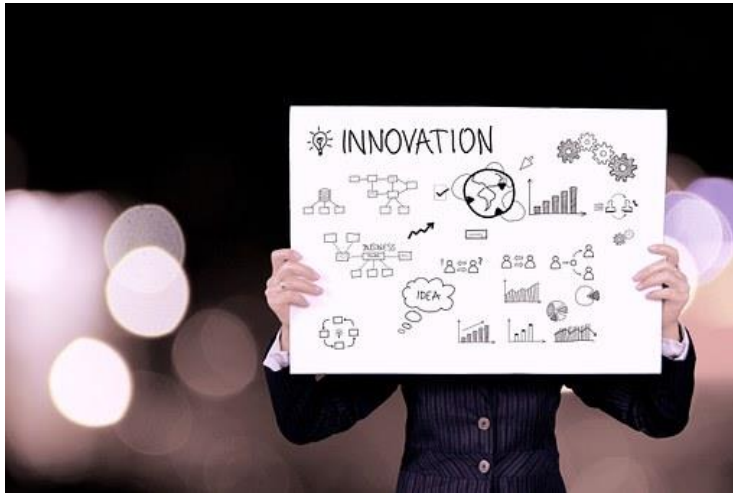## A focus on forestry

Valentino Marini Govigli

Outline

- What is Social Innovation?

- The role of Social Innovation in forestry

- Examples of Social Innovation initiatives from the Mediterranean

- Designing Social Innovation initiatives: insights from SIMRA Social Innovation Actions

- Key conclusions

What is Innovation?

*"a **new idea** that proves successful in practice"*

*"The introduction of **something new** (or renewed, a novel change) which turns into an economic, social or environmental benefit for rural practice"*   *© EIP-AGRI*

What is Social Innovation?

The reconfiguring of social practices, in response to societal challenges, which seeks to enhance outcomes on societal well-being and necessarily includes the engagement of civil society actors

Polman *et al*. (2017; D2.1)

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…to solve environmental,

economic, social challenges…

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(network, governance, attitudes)

…and new products or services

The role of Social Innovation in forestry

Conventional forestry sector

- Reliance on tax-payers' money (public budget, subsidies)

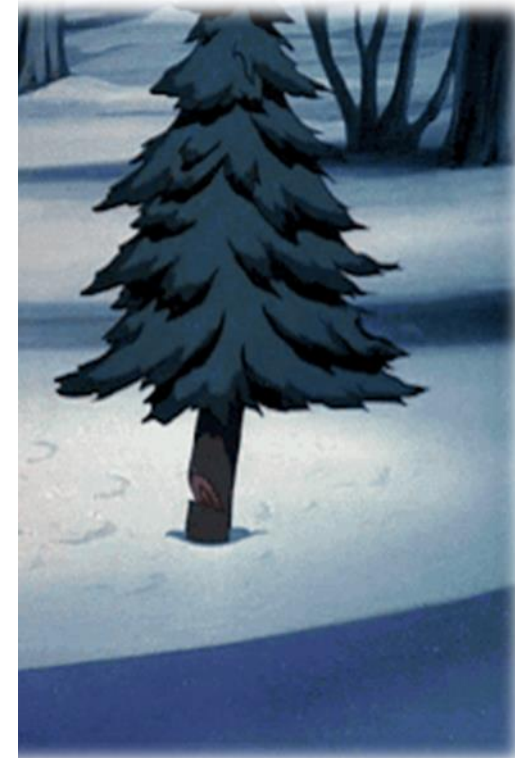- Target: wood-based products

- Individual strategies

The role of Social Innovation in forestry

While in the Mediterranean…

- Low profitability of wood value chains

- Needs of multi-products and multi-services apporaches (tourism, NWFPs)

- Changing climate, socio-economical disparities

Niche for Social Innovation?
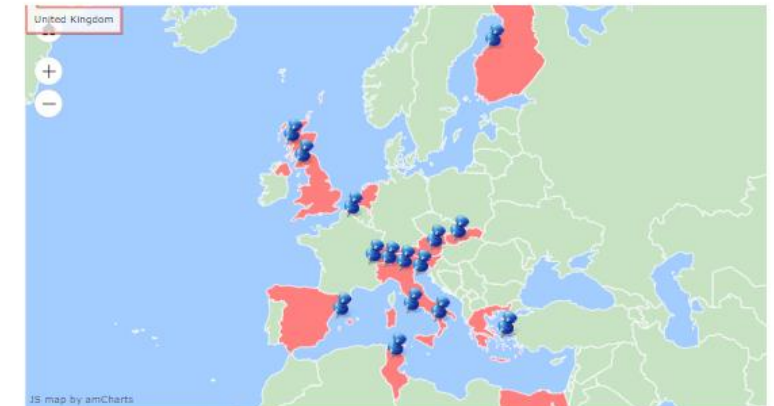
Social Innovation and the SIMRA project

- Social innovation initiatives do exist in the Mediterranean area!

- Applied to Agriculture, **Forestry** and Rural Development

- Broad diversity of trajectories across initiatives

- Lack of integrated approach for assessing Social Innovation

- Studied in detail in H2020 SIMRA Project

http://www.simra-h2020.eu/

SIMRA Case Studies

SIMRA Case Studies collect and analyse empirical evidence of social innovations in agriculture, forestry and rural development in marginalised rural areas in selected European, Associated and non-EU countries, particularly focusing on the Mediterranean region. A co-constructed evaluation of success factors for social innovations in selected case studies will be carried out not only by the academic community, but also by the people involved in rural development practice (such as technicians, LEADER groups, etc.), covering spatial variation and heterogeneity of regions (e.g. in terms of natural conditions,

Social Innovation and the SIMRA project

- 23 cases of Social Innovation across Europe and the Mediterranean Region (11 of these studied in details)

- Mix of qualitative (focus group, semi-structured interviews) and quantitative techniques (Structured questionnaire, quantitative indicators)

- Main research questions:

Inputs and process oriented questions: What factors have affected the development of the Social Innovation? What were the constraining and facilitating factors, including context, agents and policy questions?

Output oriented questions: What are the effects of the Social Innovation (evaluated in four dimensions of social, economic, governance and environmental)?
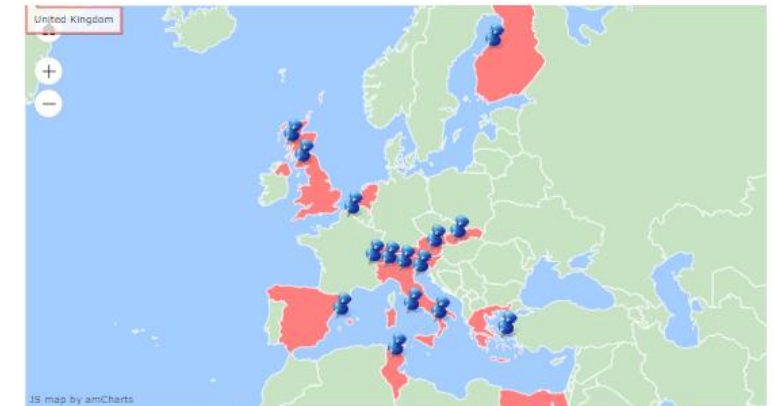
Work in progress!   http://www.simra-h2020.eu/

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Examples of Social Innovation initiatives

★ SIMRA forestry case studies

★ Additional SI cases

★ SIMRA Innovation actions

● Non forestry SIMRA case studies

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New Governance Arrangements

Forest Fire Volunteer Groups - Catalonia, Spain (Case led by CTFC)

- Traditionally originated from groups of Catalan peasants, who have helped each other to protect their farming and forestry properties from wildfires.

- Since 1986 Regulated by the regional government

Social innovation:

Direct involvement of local communities and civil society in solving an environmental problem

engagement of civil society actors

© SFADF Catalunya

New Governance Arrangements

Community woodlands – Slovenia (Case led by CETIP/IFE SAS)

- Forest commons are common-pool regimes that play an important role in the well-being of local communities in European marginalized mountain regions.

- The Social Innovation development in Slovenia was initiated by social disturbances (restitution process of land and afforestation due to nationalization)

- Current revitalization of forest commons, thanks to their maturity and self-organisation facilitate the adoption of novel forest management practices, even with low institutional and minimal financial support.

Social innovation:

Direct involvement of local communities and civil society in solving an social problem

engagement of civil society actors

© http://www.urbarhybe.sk/

New Networks

Valorization of Non-Wood Forest Products - Tunisia

- Promoting the valorisation of NWFPs through the implementation of forest micro-enterprises managed by forest communities (women and young people)

- Sustainable management of forestry resources and empowerment of forest communities

- This initiative led to the development of a national strategy for the valorisation of NWFPs

Social innovation:

Empowerment of forest community (young and women)

reconfiguring of social practices

© FAOSNE

New Networks

Mosaico project- Extremadura, Spain

- Design a participatory fire prevention strategy based on agricultural, livestock and forestry activities to recover the landscape

- Working to stimulate and consolidate small or large initiatives that generate firebreaks (through cultivation, grazing or extraction of forest products).

- Act as a bridge with local and regional institutions

Social innovation:

Reducing fire risk in a fires prone area

Response to societal challenges

© www.mosaicoextremadura.es

New Attitudes

Boschi Vivi - Italy

- Non-profit Italian initiative aiming to support the use of burial woods for reducing the ecological footprint of cemetery practices.

- Reinvests profits in forest conservation activities (Old-growth forests recovering)

- Social entrepreneurship

Social innovation:

 Support forests multi-functionality (generation of multiple cultural activities)

Enhance outcomes on societal well-being

© boschivivi.it

New Attitudes

Social Forest - Catalonia, Spain

- Spanish company dedicated to forest management, focusing on training and social integration of vulnerable groups (immigrants, unemployed youth) in the forest labour force

- Social entrepreneurship

Social innovation:

Integration of vulnerable groups

Enhance outcomes on societal well-being

© socialforest.org

Designing Social Innovation initiatives: insights from SIMRA Social Innovation Actions

How to guide, implement and assess social innovation actions?

- **Design phase** aiming at defining the scope of action of the Innovation Actions, the objectives that the stakeholders wish to pursue, and at operationalising the Innovation Action activities

- **Implementation phase** which carries out the planned social innovation activities, including dissemination of the activities, processes and outcomes to the wider public.

- **Consolidation phase** where the achievement of the targets (performance) is evaluated in relation to the objectives identified during the design phase.

Designing Social Innovation initiatives: insights from SIMRA Social Innovation Actions

A series of factor to consider when supporting social innovation actions:

- Leadership (who is going to take forward the idea?)

- Enabling and constraining factors (e.g. social norms, policy support)

- Feasibility of the idea (technical, economic, legal, collaborative, schedule)

- Funding (issue with discontinuity of funds)

- Context knowledge

- Researcher's role

Designing Social Innovation initiatives: insights from SIMRA Social Innovation Actions

Land bank initiative – Aragon, Spain (Case led by EFI)

- Tackling abandonment of agricultural lands, promoting local varieties and organic production

- Wildfire risk protection

Support actions:

- Organization of dissemination events for interested farmers and landowners

- Identification of available parcels and possible local crops to grow

- Market study on ecological and proximity products

- Support to new farmers' establishment

- Fundraising

© EFI

Designing Social Innovation initiatives: insights from SIMRA Social Innovation Actions

VI MFW
Mediterranean Forest Week

Land bank initiative – Aragon, Spain (Case led by EFI)

Challenges:

- Lack of leadership -> Regular meetings and follow up

- Lack of interested farmers -> Dissemination events with the public

- Lack of time of the local actors -> Seeking political support

- Low profitability of the land -> Exploration of niche markets (ecological, proximity)

© EFI

Designing Social Innovation initiatives: insights from SIMRA Social Innovation Actions

Community project on forest benefits for health and wellbeing

- Catalonia, Spain (Case led by FORECO)

• Revitalization of the rural area resources, fostering human wellbeing.

• Activities to encourage the social use of the forest landscapes, paying particular attention to human health, and trying to engage different actors within the County.

Support actions:

• Organization of dissemination events for interested stakeholders

• Identification of forests

• Facilitating communication and dissemination at the regional and international level

• Funding

© Association of friends of the cultural and environmental heritage of Madrona

Designing Social Innovation initiatives: insights from SIMRA Social Innovation Actions

Community project on forest benefits for health and wellbeing

- Catalonia, Spain (Case led by FORECO)

Challenges:

• Lack of local contacts -> Implementers contacted different local organizations

• Lack of social capital-> Personal meetings with representatives of the institutions to engage (local medical centre, local schools)

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Key conclusions

1. Social Innovation has the potential to develop *out-of-the-box* initiatives which could both tackle pressing societal issues and improve the competitiveness of the forestry sector

2. Triggering elements, contextual factors, and actors' dedications are key for Social Innovation initiatives to occur

3. If successful, these initiatives can be formalized into policies and regulations (e.g. in Catalonia with the fire volunteer groups, in Tunisia with the national strategy for NWFPs valorisation)

4. Supporting social innovation actions is a complex endeavour which requires practitioners to fully understand local communities' customs and the socio-ecological environment where they act

THANK YOU

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