



Selecting Best Practices in Social Innovation and Resilience

We aim to collect **examples of activities where participatory models have produced a more resilient CH and progress in social innovation.** We should also take into consideration some practices that have not quite worked out the way the organisers had hoped, providing information on insurmountable obstacles the initiators may have encountered, unforeseen consequences, or projects that had to be shut down for lack of funding, problems of sustainability etc. In other words, we should aim for a balanced assessment of cases that proved less effective than expected from which we can draw ‘good’ lessons.

The geographical scope is limited to Europe – so **only examples of activities located in Europe will be considered.** We aim for an initial selection of about 15 cases, among which we will then choose 10 (or fewer) practices shortlisted for the final selection and critical reviewing.

In order to choose what practices best exemplify social innovation and resilience, we need **qualitative criteria to help us show that a given activity has produced concrete results** in terms of strengthening resilience or creating social innovation. Below are some definitions and criteria I derived from current academic literature and European projects..

Selected practices must have relevance either for social innovation or resilience, but there may be cases in which both social innovation and resilience are combined in one single activity. Fill in the boxes in the Template as appropriate.

Social Innovation

Although the concept of social innovation has several shades of meaning in academic literature, four key elements have been identified as fundamental: ‘satisfaction of a need’, ‘innovative solutions’, ‘repositioning of social structures and relationships’, and an ‘increase in society’s capacity to act’.¹ For the purpose of selecting relevant best practices, the following definition of social innovation can be of help:

“Social innovations are new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes, etc.) that, simultaneously, satisfy a social need (more effectively than existing solutions), create new or better capabilities and relationships, and make better use of assets and resources. In other words, social innovations are good for society and improve society’s capacity to act.”²

As regards the application of social innovation in the field of cultural heritage, the HESIOD project (<http://hesiod.eu/en/#hesiod>) has already mapped several experiences and identified **three specific criteria** that can guide us in the selection of best practices:

- **New solutions:** products, services, models, processes are created complying best with the objectives of conservation, management, dissemination, defence or enhancement of cultural heritage.

¹ Portales, Louis (2019). *Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship: Fundamentals, Concepts and Tools*. Palgrave Macmillan: p. 4. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-13456-3>

² The Young Foundation. (2012). *Social innovation overview: A deliverable of the project: “The theoretical, empirical and policy foundations for building social innovation in Europe”* (J. Caulier-Grice, A. Davies, R. Patrick, & W. Norman, Eds.). Brussels: European Commission.



- **Social needs** are addressed or met, such as access to, or enhancement of: 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.
- **New types of relationships** are created, improving the society's capacity to act. Social innovations are developed by and with users rather than delivered to them. Citizens are active agents in innovation processes.

When assessing a participatory initiative, **look for specific evidence** related to the above-mentioned criteria:

- ✓ What kind of innovation does the activity under scrutiny promote that helps to improve how heritage is managed, preserved, enhanced, re-used etc.? What distinguishes the new solution from more traditional approaches? Provide details about the category or categories (preservation, management etc.) addressed in each initiative and how the innovative approach has been carried out.
- ✓ What types of social needs are met and how? Does the activity meet needs that were previously insufficiently or only partially satisfied? Provide details about the ambit (education, employment, social inclusion etc.) that is of specific interest to the activity under scrutiny.
- ✓ How does the activity encourage the creation of new relationships among social actors? Does the activity contribute to increasing the participation of vulnerable, marginalised and/or under-represented groups? Does it increase the capabilities of beneficiaries? Have new forms of governance, or new and better forms of collaborative action, been experimented with in the course of the activity? Does the activity challenge relationships of power? Providing details about this aspect should not be difficult as the question of new relationships overlaps with REACH's focus on participation.

Resilience

The concept of resilience has become ubiquitous across academic domains. Definitions vary according to different disciplinary perspectives, and whether the focus is on individuals and communities, or on social and ecological systems. A most basic definition of resilience is: "*the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and re-organize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedback*"³. Scholars also describe resilience as the capacity not only to 'bounce back' but also to 'bounce forward' thus emphasising adaptability to uncertainty as well as positive transformation and 'anticipatory action'.⁴ As regards community resilience (how groups survive in the face of adversity or extreme events), this is often described as "*a community's collective capacity to function in, respond to, and potentially influence an environment characterized by continuous change, uncertainty and crisis*".⁵

³ Walker, B.H, C.S. Holling, S.R. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig (2004). "Resilience, adaptability and transformability in social-ecological systems". *Ecology and Society* 9(2): 5. <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol9/iss2/art5>.

⁴ Brown, K. (2016). *Resilience, Development and Global Change*, Routledge: Abingdon: 6.

⁵ Maclean, K., Cuthill, M. & Ross, H. (2014). "Six attributes of social resilience". *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 57 (1), 144–156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09640568.2013.763774>



We are mostly concerned with cultural resilience, which has two facets: 1) **culture and heritage as resources for the resilience** of individuals, communities and systems; 2) the **resilience of cultural heritage**. The aim is to select best practices that demonstrate a connection between participatory approaches and increased resilience (of communities, heritage, small towns, groups etc.).

When assessing these practices, the following criteria might be of help in identifying aspects that connect a certain activity to increased resilience:

- ✓ **Adaptivity:** adaptive capacities and strategies of individuals and communities directed towards responding to changes; how are these adaptive capacities exhibited or deployed? What specific skills and mechanisms are adopted or used to contribute to resilience?
- ✓ **Participation:** assess the inclusion of stakeholders throughout the various stages of the activity. Has the practice fostered collaboration among different sectors involved? What participatory actions can be described as success factors?
- ✓ **Effectiveness:** has the approach proven effective? Has it provided achievements in terms of resilience? What aspects in the project or action under review contributed the most to this end? Although we are not in a position to provide exact measures of effectiveness (quantitative assessment), we can highlight the achievements and benefits of any given best practice on the basis of the information we have.
- ✓ **Transferability:** assess the potential of the practice to be up-scaled or transferred to a different context. This assessment may not always be possible, for lack of relevant information, but one could identify at least some elements that stand out as potentially replicable.