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PRECONDITIONS FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: BEST PRACTICES IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, regarding the essential drivers of social innovation, widely popularized three social innovation practices in Turkey are examined which are leaded by farmers' cooperative (Tire Dairy Cooperative), NGOs (TEMA) and local public institution (Seferihisar Town Municipality). The aim of the study is to explore main characteristics and drivers of these successful social innovation practices occurred in the rural areas and determine the preconditions of these successful social innovation practises.

Key Words: Social Innovation, Rural Development, Endogenous Development

1. INTRODUCTION

Social innovations have been receiving increasing attention from policy makers and scholars and are seen as viable alternatives for the so called grand challenges of 21st century like ageing societies, increasing inequalities, destruction of environment because of economic processes, runaway increase in unemployment, climate changes in the last decades. Social innovations tend to offer sustainable solutions to these so called problems where government policies and market conditions are not able to solve (Murray et al. 2008).

The literature on social innovation give rise to different perspectives about the issue as sociological, creativity research, entrepreneurship, welfare and development (territorial, rural, local, regional development) economics.

Although the studies of Durkheim and Weber firstly emphasized the importance of social innovations in the creation of social order in a society, it was first Joseph Schumpeter to point out the importance of social innovations in the context of development economics. Social innovation is defined as the generation and implementation of new ideas about people and their interactions within a social system (Mumford 2002). In a broader concept the term refers to innovative activities and services that are motivated by the goal of meeting a social need in which are motivated by increasing social benefit instead of individual benefit and profit motive (Mulgan 2006).

As mentioned the definition of social innovation differs in related literature according to the context of the research and yet there is no common definition for the term. As each discipline has its own perspective, it is difficult to agree on one definition. But when all definitions are considered together, it is seen that the term has been used to describe processes of social change and the transformation of societies brought out with the

changes of behaviours and attitudes of individuals to create new social ventures with the aim of social benefit of whole society as a result. It changes systems and permanently alters the perceptions, behaviours and structures that previously gave rise to these challenges. In essence, a social innovation must work for the public good by creating and delivering social value (INNOVATE Project, 2014).

There are three key elements of social innovation which are i) focussing on common local issues, ii) leaded by key actors at local or meso level, iii) requiring the collaboration of key actors at local/meso levels such as producers/providers or its organisations, local public bodies (governors, mayors, regional development agencies, etc.), private sector organisations and NGOs. In a broader context five core elements are suggested in one of the reports of TEPSIE project written by Caulier-Grice et al. in 2012 (EU project entitled as The Theoretical, Emprical and Policy Foundations for Building Social Innovation in Europe supported within EU 7th Framework Programme) which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Core Elements of Social Innovation

Core Elements	Description
Novelty	Do not need to be completely original but have to be new in some way either new to the field, sector, region, market or user, or to be applied in a new way
From ideas to implementation	Idea must be implemented. There is a distinction between promising ideas (which may or may not become social innovations) and social innovations.
Meets a social need	Explicitly designed to meet a recognised social and unmet need.
Effectiveness	Should be more effective than existing solutions and should create a measurable improvement in terms of outcomes like quality, user satisfaction, higher levels of wellbeing and social cohesion.
Enhance society's capacity to act	Social innovation should enhance society's capacity to act by, create new roles and relationships, develop and /or better using assets and resources, increase participation of vulnerable, marginalised and under-represented groups.

Source: Caulier-Grice et al., 2012

2. SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

When social innovations are considered and defined in the context of development economics, especially rural development literature, one of the best definitions is that Neumeir's definition in which social innovation is seen as changes of attitudes, behaviours or perception of a group of people joined in a network of aligned interests that in relation to the group's horizon of experiences leading to new and improved ways of collaborative action within the group and beyond (Neumeier, 2012).

Taking this definition as reference, social innovations have emerged new sustainable ways for exploring economic potentials in rural areas, particularly for the last decade as this definition of social innovation entails collaboration of local actors to solve common local social, economic and environmental issues to boost sustainable development (Murray et all, 2010; Moulaert, 2013). When rural development is concerned, the social is presented as a core element of innovation also in the sense of engaging society in developping new solutions (Bock: 2012). In rural development it is essential to remark the difference between agricultural innovations and social innovations. Agricultural development is primarily built on business innovation and deals with new products, processes or new strategies (Pol and Ville, 2009), just fitting on the definitions of technological or organisational innovations adopted in order to maximize profits. In contrary, rural development regards social innovations, in other words, the innovation of socio-economic systems and seeks to meet unmet needs and to create public value where markets and common socio-economic policies have failed (Phills et al., 2008).

According to Neumeier (2012), social innovations have been strongly associated with neo-endogenous development. The shift from sectoral to territorial rural development strategy in rural areas has focused attention on neo-endogenous strategies in order to achieve rural development, based on the assumption that those people working at the regional level know best how to tackle the problems within their region and the assets and endogenous potentials they have available (Shucksmith, 2010). However, this approach is dependent on the people and regions involved developing suitable organizational structures and institutional capacity to allow for the conceptualization and development of new ideas, and new ways of delivering rural policy (Neumeier, 2012).

According to Mulgan (2006), in general social innovation process has three stages which can be listed as; a) generating ideas by understanding needs and identifying potential solutions, b)developing, prototyping, and piloting ideas and assessing, scaling up, and diffusing good ideas. Murray et al. (2010) define social

innovation in six stages as a) Prompts, inspirations and diagnoses b) Proposals and ideas c) Prototyping and pilots d) Sustaining e)Scaling and difusion f) Systemic change. Although these two lists of social innovation stages look similar, the most important development in social innovation research can be seen in the second one as the importance of sustainability for the improved conditions and the necessity of a systemic change as a result of a social innovation are mentioned as stages themselves. In fact in order to fight against the global challenges of 21st century like poverty, unemployment, ageing societies and environmental issues, a collective behaviour and attitude change in global level.

3. METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to examine the selected successful social innovation cases in rural development of Turkey. The cases will be analysed according to their practical implications and the added values that they have created. This study would highlight the preconditions of a successful social innovation process and better guide communities with similar rural problems to take action in order to achieve rural development.

3.1. Case Studies from Turkey

3.1.1. Tire Dairy Cooperative

Tire Dairy Cooperative, established in 1971, was not working efficiently until the late 1990s. It used to only collect and market milk from a few producers. However, it has become a successful model cooperative in Turkey thanks to its achievements since early 2000s with the motto “from producer to consumer” and it was nominated two times by FAO in 2015 and 2016 as the “Best Example of Rural Development Model” and the best practice in “Contribution to Food Security and Rural Wealth”.

For this study, of course the existence of the cooperative is not considered as a social innovation itself but what comes into the extent of social innovation is the establishment of new relationships and networks by the cooperative as a leading actor between other local actors, creating new roles (as an entrepreneur for example) in order to handle common problems.

3.1.1.1. Practical Implications

The objective of Tire Dairy Cooperative is to ensure better income for the producers by enabling them to produce more efficiently, adding value by processing, collectively marketing their products, procure high quality inputs at reasonable prices and to improve economic and social lives of small family businesses in rural areas. The cooperative has achieved high yielding milk production per cow in accordance with quality and safety standards (Codex Alimentarius), reduced production cost of small and medium sized farmers by unification, accessed investment fund for establishing dairy processing plants and marketing its own-branded products through various distribution channels.

Tire Dairy Cooperative has one Outlet Store from which the daily needs of its members are provided with in-kind payment. Also through its Agri-Market, members can acquire necessary agricultural machinery and equipment with affordable payment plans. The cooperative also give training and consultancy services in cooperation with Ege University and Provincial Directorate of Public Education to help its members who want to turn their animal husbandries into a professional enterprises. Between 2008 – 2013 with the cooperation of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Tire Milk Cooperative, “School Milk Project” was conducted in Turkey by distributing its 25- 30 metric tons of pasteurized milk to 20 thousand children in 250 schools. Thereafter, the project turned into a nationwide project called “Spring Lamb Project” and it was conducted again in collaboration with Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The cooperative provides two litres of milk per week to 125.000 families with infants (0-5 years of age) who cannot afford it. It also has a “500 18 18 Milk Service” (Milk Line Project) by which the customers can have fresh milk delivered to their doors directly at market price. In addition, the cooperative has “Çiftçim” Cooperative Products Sales Point which offers healthy products to the consumers and also enhance cooperative forward integration. The main drivers of success are unification of farmers, collaboration of local key actors (municipality, university etc.), forward integration (dairy processing and retailing), and supporting institution to access investment fund such as Regional Development Agency.

3.1.1.2. Added Value

The proofs of the success of the cooperative are the increases in the investments of cooperative, spreading of cold milk chains and establishment of meat, milk and dairy processing units, increase in the equity capital and the members of the cooperative. Also the products of the meat, milk and dairy processing units have

become preferential in the region. If one wants to list the added values that the cooperative has created, the list can be grouped as economic, social and environmental added values.

One of the economic added values that the cooperative has created is to be able to decrease the production costs. The cooperative supports its members by subsiding them by feed and fuel supports, by giving the possibility to hire the necessary equipment (tractors, milk expressing machines etc) with affordable prices. The second point is the increase in the quality of the milk produced in the region. As the quality of milk increases with the help of cold milk tanks provided by the cooperative competitiveness of the members increases too. Another important point is that the cooperative itself processes the members' products and directly markets to the consumers so that both sides of the supply chain- the producers and consumers- are protected against milk crises occurring in the economy because of the quantity changes in the supply. Especially when the milk supply increases, the producers face difficulties to afford their production costs in order to continue their economic activities. The cooperative not only guarantees the sale of the products but also sale from a price that it determines instead of the prices determined by big processor firms. The incomes of the member producers have increased noticeably in the region so far proving that the existence of the cooperative ensures an increase in the welfare in the region.

As mentioned before, in this case the existence of the cooperative is not a social innovation itself but what comes into the extent of social innovation is the establishment of new relationships and networks by the cooperative as a leading actor between other local actors, creating new roles (as an entrepreneur for example) in order to handle common problems. Taking this point as a reference, the most important factor of the success in Tire Dairy Cooperative case is the start-up of the relationship between the cooperative and İzmir Municipality. The results of this collaboration indicate very important clues about how public policies related to the cooperatives should be determined.

In Tire Dairy Cooperative case, a local problem (low milk production, low quality, not having the bargaining power because of small and medium scaled production, low income levels of producers) is determined by the cooperative. As a leading actor, the cooperative developed a strategic plan to overcome the local problem by collaboration of local community (producers) and local government (municipalities) and private sector (milk demanding big processors). As a non-human actor another important factor in this case is the low social resilience in the region. The awareness of the local community about their problems and the trust to the collective action are other non-human actors in this case.

3.1.2. TEMA

TEMA Foundation (Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, for Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats) was founded in 1992 by two Turkish businessmen. The objective of TEMA is to create effective and conscious public awareness on environmental problems, especially soil erosion, deforestation, desertification, climate change and biodiversity loss. TEMA operates at local, national and international level by implementing training/educational activities, conducting campaigns to empower people and implementing model projects to help environmental policy makers. Today it became the largest and leading environmental NGO in Turkey serving with over 450 thousand volunteers.

The Macahel (Camili) river basin in the province of Artvin borders the state of Georgia on the eastern edge of the Black Sea region including 6 villages. Due to its mixed temperate rain, forests and high alpine meadows, it is rich in biodiversity and it features many endemic species. In this study "The Macahel Rural Development Project", conducted by TEMA is selected as a social innovation example driven by NGO's. The project started in 1998 in order to provide development to the region by apiculture, eco-tourism and organic agricultural production. Besides protecting the biodiversity in the region, the project had ensured the economic and social empowerment for the villagers.

3.1.2.1. Practical Implications

Throughout the project, new sources of income for the region are promoted as queen bee production, ecotourism, and production of goods for instance hazelnuts, applying eco-agricultural techniques. Bee keeping has been a part of the economy since way back then in the region. However before the project, it had been carried out by conventional methods only for honey production. Experts from the TEMA Foundation in cooperation with various Turkish universities identified that the bees in the region are quite productive so they regarded this as an important opportunity in the way of development of the region.

The project is also vital for ecological sustainability of the Caucasian bee varieties in Turkey and for territorial biodiversity since this species exist only in this area in Turkey. At the beginning of the project, 13

local volunteers had been trained in bee production for 3months. These trained volunteers then took subsidies to establish queen-bee production enterprises. Next, the Macahel Bee-Keeping Company was established through the partnership of TEMA and local people.

As a result of these efforts, the quantity of products and queen bees has been increasing since 1999. In 2002, the TEMA Foundation established a training and research center in the central village of Camili. The center is the most important investment in training for beekeeping in Turkey. A group of operators consisting of local women was trained in artificial insemination of bees and given a chance to work in the laboratories to increase efficiency. As a result income per family which was US$ 700–1000 annually before the project started, increased by a factor of 5 or 6 for individuals involved in queen bee production.

At the request of the Macahel Bee-Keeping Company, a breed of bees known as "Artvin–Caucasian mixed breed," resulting from cross-breeding of pure Caucasian bees with other breeds in the Eastern Black Sea region, has been produced and marketed outside the river basin since 2001. In 2003, the company earned US$ 57,189 from this activity, and has set a production goal of 8000 queen bees and an income goal of US$ 136,000 for 2004 (Somuncu and Inci: 2004). Hence, as projected from the inception of the project, queen bee production has become common throughout the Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey. Furthermore, the honey produced is currently being marketed by both the TEMA Foundation and producers in large Turkish cities.

Beekeeping is not the only output of this project. As the natural and cultural features of the Macahel area are important tourism resources, the project therefore promoted ecotourism as another source of revenue for the region. Villagers have been informed about ecotourism at periodic meetings. Two houses were converted into small hotels; walking and excursion trails, accommodation sites, and shelters and mobile huts were identified. Two forest houses were rehabilitated to provide accommodation for 25 people. One summer pasture house was built and another rented, and a tourism agency was established. Guides, accommodation facility managers, and workers were selected from the local population and trained for jobs in tourism. Currently, all the needs of those participating in nature excursions are met by local people, and the resulting revenue is distributed to villagers.

In order to prevent genetic pollution of the bee species in the river basin, the government of Artvin province banned bees from other areas. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry facilitated preparation of accommodation for eco-tourists. Academics conducted research on Caucasian bees and the crops that can be produced by eco-agricultural methods in the river basin. NGOs, on the other hand, made local people be aware of the importance and content of the project by taking advantage of their strong relationships in society. Relations with the local people were established through the efforts of villagers in leadership positions.

Since the area is a "1st degree security zone" bordering the state of Georgia, visitors are allowed to enter only with the permission of law enforcement officials. In order to facilitate ecotourism and support local people, procedures for securing permission to enter the area were simplified for visitors. The administrators of the TEMA Foundation and beekeeping specialists periodically visited the area and held meetings with beekeepers to discuss the developments and problems encountered in project implementation.

Because the river basin is divided into two sections by a political border, and one of its sections is within the borders of the state of Georgia, administrators and beekeepers of the section in Georgia were contacted to prevent genetic pollution of the bee species and exchange information. Booklets, brochures, and posters were published to inform the beekeepers and advertise the queen bees produced countrywide. The "Macahel Documentary," which presents the natural and cultural properties of the area, was shown at the 6th Istanbul International Environmental Film Festival (Somuncu and İnci, 2004).

3.1.2.2. Added Value

The people of the area benefits from the project, since the project has brought economic vitality to the villages of the town. As a result of the project, local people express an enhanced sense of confidence and feel less isolated from the rest of the country than previously. The overcoming of transportation problems in the region to facilitate project goals also increased local confidence in the project.

Directly or indirectly, the project has provided the following benefits to the area:

- ✓ Introduction of modern methods of beekeeping that do not require big investments and large areas, significantly increasing the income of local people.
- ✓ Additional income for the local people through ecotourism.

- ✓ Better integration of inaccessible areas in the region into the national economy through queen bee production, honey trade, and ecotourism. More producers and higher beekeeping production rates, and greater income from ecotourism will facilitate integration of the region into the national economy
- ✓ Awareness about environmental protection has increased since the project began. People in the region have also realized that their potential for better income is linked to protection of the
- ✓ environment. This is significant in terms of environmental sustainability.
- ✓ As the road that connects the area to the nearest town is blocked by heavy snowfall for 6 months starting in November, transfer of medical emergency cases to the nearest center had been almost impossible. With the help of a snowmobile purchased by the TEMA Foundation helicopters, this problem is partially solved. The most remarkable improvement in transportation has been the acceleration of road construction between the river basin and the town of Borcka in order to overcome inaccessibility.

In addition to benefits for the Macahel river basin, the project has also provided benefits to the country:

- ✓ Except in warmer regions of Turkey, the use of Caucasian queen bees in colonies is expected to increase the efficiency of honey production.
- ✓ •Sustainable management of original breeds of bee keeping in Turkey is promoted.
- ✓ As mass tourism prevails throughout the global and national level in time, ecotourism can be a precedent, primarily for the Eastern Black Sea region where the tourism sector has not been developed.
- ✓ The project approach is a good example in rural development and could be adopted by other organizations, including governmental institutions and NGOs.

3.1.3. Seferihisar Case

As an example of social innovation in rural areas leaded by local public institutions, the case of Seferihisar (a town in İzmir province which was chosen to be the first slow city (Cittaslow) in Turkey Seferihisar is the first slow city of Turkey within the borders of Izmir in the Aegean Region of Turkey) is examined in this study. Slow Cities (Cittaslow) is a movement founded in 1999 in Italy that has spread to 191 towns in 29 countries. The Slow City movement is a response to the fast world under the influence of globalization and it advocates local distinctiveness and desire to protect the uniqueness of localities (Mayer and Knox: 2006). Slow cities are chosen according to 59 different aspects grouped into six different topics including environmental concerns, infrastructure and technological level of the candidate city/town etc.

The philosophy behind slow city movement is to serve people while protecting its original and traditional values. Slow cities shouldn't be considered only about tourism but also a change in lifestyle and daily routines of people that have been already living there. Slow city movement is about finding out the real identity of the location and making it apparent to the world. As it is about changes in behaviours and attitudes of communities and also a paradigm change in rural development conception, slow cities fit to the definition of social innovation quite well.

3.1.3.1. Practical Implications

Up to now, Seferihisar has implemented many innovative programs as a Slow City. Among these projects, the most important ones are focused on organic agriculture and empowering women as organic bazaars, where the local farmers and women sell their products; seed Trade Festival, a restaurant for local cuisine, gathering places for women like coffee houses, cycling lanes, tree blue ribbon beaches, support for sustainable fishing, use of solar and geothermal energy, promoting the hot water bath tourism, conservation of the historic Teos Antique City, and restoration and landscaping of the Sıgacık area (Gündüz et al.: 2016).

After the designation, in 2010, a master plan was prepared for Seferihisar with a local university (Yalcin and Yalcin,2013). Other projects include the Seed Trade Festival, a restaurant for local cuisine (Sefertasi), gathering places for women like coffee houses, cycling lanes, tree blue ribbon beaches (Akarca, Sığacık and Urkmez), support for sustainable fishing, use of solar and geothermal energy, promoting the hot water bath tourism, conservation of the historic Teos Antique City4, and restoration and landscaping of the Sığacık area.

Seferihisar has a planned program for "an author in residence", in which they would like to invite a well-known author to stay and work there and also interact with the residents for an extended time. Membership to the European Drama Encounters brought many students and drama artists in 2012 to the city. Seferihisar municipality also has a plan for a Cittaslow University, focused around art, architecture and agriculture. In

addition, Seferihisar is the only Cittaslow in Turkey with a children council, which granted it the status of being a child-friendly city per UNICEF's designation. In order to create a collective memory for the history of the area and the traditions, Seferihisar also has been holding meetings with 75 + aged people to listen to their memories and to record the verbal history as told by them (Gündüz et al.: 2016).

In the following couple of months in 2010, the Cittaslow criteria were quickly adopted and adapted by the municipality not only as a guide for action but also in compensating for the general 'lack of identity' in the town, which had been growingly experienced as a 'governance failure' for the unsuccessful management of its distinguished natural and historical assets. Thus, Cittaslow was mobilized as the umbrella 'concept', through which the municipal team, with members from the mayor's previous İzmir-EXPO team, started to coordinate and introduce several other projects, events and organizations in order to transform the town into a 'slow' world city, where the local brings forth its culture as a constantly experienced 'tourist-attraction-event'. This vision culminated in mayor's merging the Cittaslow concept with that of the International EXPO, by which he introduced the idea to create a fair area where 25 countries can come together and display the most appropriate Cittaslow examples and introduce their countries in a couple of months (Gündüz et al.: 2016).

3.1.3.2. Added Value

In Seferihisar case, the social innovation process took start with the application of the Mayor of Seferihisar. The success of Seferihisar slow city emerges primarily from the strategic plan made by the mayor and the local university for creating a sustainable local economy by deciding to become a slow city. The strategic plan was first designed to build the pathway in order to meet the Cittaslow criteria and to increase the participation of the community in meeting them. The added value stems from the close participation of actors, principally the local community in actively engaging in the process. The input of local people in the development plan was a crucial part of encouraging participation in sustainability practices.

4. CONCLUSION

The examined three cases of social innovation has shown that natural and cultural resources of Turkey can make a significant contribution to social and economic development, and that development can be sustained by the change of behaviours and attitudes of people resulting from the social innovation process itself. This also emphasizes the importance of sustainable development in overcoming problems as rural poverty, out migration etc. Indeed, sustainable environmental, economic and social development is gradually being achieved. The cases has also demonstrated that limited initial subsidies and participation by various social actors can bring out development. From the view that only people facing problems can find out a solution to overcome it, the most important factor of development is the awareness of the problem as well as the power people can get by cooperation.

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