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Title: Social innovation for social inclusion: participatory practices

Research within the Department of Educational Sciences comprises three focal research areas: ‘Innovative change in educational contexts’, ‘Community development’ and ‘Cultural education’. These focal areas are set up from a horizontal cross-link with an overarching focus on social change and social inclusion. They are underpinned by a number of common values and visions, such as a humanist-critical approach, a pursuit of social participation and connectedness, citizenship and a consistent fight against disadvantage. Specific attention is devoted to the analysis of levers for (social) change situated on micro, meso and macro level in order to adjust (learning and living) environments, contexts and situations to the needs of specific groups (such as young people, older adults, financially vulnerable people, digitally illiterate people, prisoners, etc.).

A MSCA-researcher can focus on (the impact of) social innovation and participatory approaches:

1). Explicit attention will be devoted to social innovation prompted by grassroot initiatives or citizen initiatives and community innovation. How do public authorities, civil society organisations, private corporations or individuals respond to new social risks and propose possible answers to major societal challenges (e.g., sustainability, new digital divide, healthcare system challenges, city housing, refugees). How can we develop new and more effective approaches, with shrinking budgets? The goal is often: to do better and more with less. However, the question often remains: what is better and more? What is the impact of social innovation in social/cultural/societal projects? And how can you measure, validate, visualise that impact?

2). In the last decade, concepts such as co-creation, co-production, community-based participatory research, social design, citizen science have gained popularity in the field of social sciences. Within different disciplines, both researchers and practitioners as well as policymakers aim to implement these participatory practices. A MSCA-researcher can work on tackling two main pitfalls: 1) How can we include not only the voices from established groups whose members are practiced in offering their opinions, but also the voices of those who repeatedly find themselves at the margins of society? And, 2) how can you prevent tokenist participation and guarantee that users genuinely participate in all stages of development and not merely as consultants or controllers? The candidate might suggest a specific own topic, or together a proposal can be developed.

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