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Creating social innovation in urban development through collaborative processes

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Uncertainty is a major factor in urban development as a consequence of a changing society. Major theoretical approaches to urban development, such as place-based leadership or coproduction, emphasize the importance of the public sector. This study aims to enhance the understanding of urban development processes as a collaborative and participatory concept through social innovation. We apply the concept of socially creative milieus to analyze the emergence of social innovation under the constraint of uncertainty. The criteria ‘agents of innovation’, ‘adopters’, ‘diffusion channels’, ‘constraints’, ‘inertia’, and ‘impacts’ are analyzed using a holistic case study in the field of urban development. Our results show that the presence of high social capital supersedes the coercive power of the public sector. By applying the creative milieus approach, environments like the density of networks and contacts in the governance of urban places make innovative development possible.

Keywords: Social innovation; collaboration; socially creative milieus; urban development; social entrepreneurship

1. Introduction

The concept of social innovation is receiving increasing attention in the areas of science, politics, and practice (Ziegler 2017). There is a growing body of literature on social innovation that focuses on theory and concepts, areas of activity, and policies (Moulaert, MacCallum, and Hillier 2013; Nicholls, Simon, and Gabriel 2015; Ziegler 2017). However, social innovation is still ‘weakly conceptualized, due to the dominance of grey, policy-oriented literature’ (Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015, 1334). Social innovation is an essentially contested concept (Gallie 1956; Godin 2012), emphasizing its complex and open character (Ziegler 2017). Other studies evade a systematic approach by connecting social innovation to other concepts such as social entrepreneurship (Kickul et al. 2018), coproduction (Lindsay et al. 2018), or place-based leadership in urban development (Sotarauta 2016).

The approach to urban development is changing steadily. Among other concepts, it has adopted a strategy of collective- rather than individual leadership (Sotarauta and Mustikamäki 2012) and moved away from a mode of a single charismatic and risk-taking individuals who create new opportunities, projects, or concepts (Borzaga and Defourny 2001;

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Nicholls and Murdock 2012; Phillips et al. 2015) towards collective effort and social innovation. This change corresponds with a type of social innovation that can be defined as

the creation of long-lasting outcomes that aim to address societal needs fundamentally changing the relationships, positions, and rules between the involved stakeholders, through an open process of participation, exchange and collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including end-users, thereby crossing organizational boundaries and jurisdictions. (Voorberg, Bekkers, and Tummers 2015, 1334)

Social innovation takes into consideration the relationships among stakeholders on a collective basis to improve people's quality of life by addressing societal needs (Cattacin and Zimmer 2016, 33). Social innovations and changes implemented in place without collaboration are difficult to sustain due to opposing interests (Sotarauta and Mustikkamäki 2012), and even collaborative local development can fail (Hamdouch and Galvan 2019; Potluka 2021). Thus, Ziegler (2017) calls for a more nuanced understanding of social innovation as a collaborative concept, not only in terms of interdisciplinary research but also in terms of application. Thus, our research question is as follows: What conditions enable successful social innovations to emerge from collaborative processes in urban development?

Answering this call, we aim to add to the understanding of the creation of successful social innovation through inclusive processes as not all attempts to innovate succeed. We apply the concept of socially creative milieus (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009) to a holistic single case study of a successful urban development initiative named Gundeldinger Feld in Basel, Switzerland. The case study offers a multidimensional approach to understand and describe social innovation. The field of urban development now relies on that perspective as the default solution for urban development processes are based on projects organized by public authorities. Our case study introduces a situation when bottom-up initiative played a crucial role in a conversion of previously industrial site into neighborhood center accepted by all socio-economic and cultural groups. This case study provides us with information on what internal and external conditions must have occurred for a successful transformation of the industrial site.

2. Conceptualization of social innovation

Although the term 'social innovation' dates from the nineteenth century, the approach to innovation was dominated by market and technological innovations during the last century (Godin 2012). Increasing attention has been paid to social innovations since the beginning of the twenty-first century (van der Have and Rubalcaba 2016) and especially in the last decade (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019). Since then, the research on social innovation has proven the broad applicability of the concept.

An increase in scientific work indicates that cooperation is an important factor for the success of social innovations (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019). Phillips, Alexander, and Lee (2019, 326) underscore the importance of cooperation with partners in the opportunity identification phase of social innovation to gain access to new markets, prospective new stakeholders, new communities and share risks. A similar concept of collective approach appears in methods for improving quality of life that have been applied by other theories such as the place-based development that has been conducted in urban areas (Sotarauta and Mustikkamäki 2012; Hambleton 2014). Several studies (for example, Marsh, Molinari, and Trapani 2013; Nyseth, Ringholm, and Agger 2019) highlight the successful use of participatory processes in urban planning led by public authorities and the dominant

role of public authorities (Pieterse 2004). Due to failures in achieving success in participation (Hamdouch and Galvan 2019), some authors (Borja and Castells 1997) emphasize strategic urban planning and broad participation based on the assumption that large-scale infrastructure projects always require private participation.

We aim to contribute to the viewpoint of social innovation by analyzing the development of social innovation in a collaborative project. Thereby we define social innovations as ‘innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means’ (Mulgan 2012, 35).

The concept of social innovation is applied in various fields of research such as business administration, corporate success and social responsibility, art and creativity and territorial or regional development (Moulaert et al. 2005). As a result, there are many definitions of social innovation; however, a concept suitable for empirical research is still lacking (Howaldt and Schwarz 2010). According to Bethmann (2014), the research on social innovation can be roughly divided into two basic trends. On the one hand, there are *systemic approaches* that study social innovations in the context of social change, modernization theories and the reconfiguration of social practices to develop an integrative theory of innovations. On the other hand, there are *pragmatic approaches*. These assume that social innovation is a process that can be planned, and they define it as a more efficient and effective solution for social problems (Bethmann 2014).

A ‘concept of operable categories for recording, describing and analyzing different types of social innovations’ is representative of *systemic approaches* (Hochgerner 2011, 7). Following Parsons (1976), Hochgerner’s (2011) concept consists of four major functional systems (economy, politics, law, and culture) and four structural categories of social systems (role, collective, norms, and values). According to this concept, innovations do not remain restricted to their area of development but influence different functional systems. Different types of social innovation can be identified and determined by linking these structural categories in social systems. Furthermore, ‘the influences and interactions between new elements of social practice, the objectives of novelties, their functions and effects in empirical research’ (Hochgerner 2011, 11) can be analyzed through these suggested categories of innovation.

Rammert (2010) and Ziegler (2017) pursue a systemic approach. Rammert (2010) suggests that a concept of innovation should distinguish between *relations* and *references*. *Relations* consist of three dimensions, temporal, factual, and social. They describe the utilization of such dimensions in terms of the differences between novelties and innovations and other social phenomena. *References* concretize innovations through artificial selection, diffusion and institutionalization for application in the social field (Rammert 2010).

The transformative power of social innovation is based on the transfer of values among the sectors involved. The approaches of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors can be adopted by other sectors, an example is the transfer of democratic values from the public sector or the strategy of humanization from the nonprofit sector (Ziegler 2017). The emergence of social innovation in such a collaborative context is possible when different perspectives are considered and actors are encouraged to work together rather than as competitors. This concept comprises the adjective–noun aspects of schema and novelty (Ziegler 2017). The transformative power of social innovation is enabled by the values of solidarity, reciprocity and association, and it can help in resolving negative social issues such as inequity, exclusion, and marginalization (Moulaert and MacCallum 2019).

Pragmatic approaches are concerned with the practical implementation of novel ideas in the field of social practices. Pragmatic views can be identified by finding commonalities in the development of social innovations or the barriers that impede their diffusion (de Wit

et al. 2019; Monroe-White and Zook 2018). For example, the social innovations initiated by organizations that are close to target groups take a holistic view of problems and attract supporters from various sectors that have a high probability of success (Müller et al. 2013). Monroe-White and Zook's (2018) analysis of the national-level influence on social enterprises' innovations indicates that macroinstitutional factors are predictors for social enterprise innovation.

Various social and economic relationships are defining factors in the success of the strategies and implementation of social innovations in urban development (Beer et al. 2019). Such success relates to (i) power-sharing (how the stakeholders contribute to the success by sharing their political power, expertise, knowledge, and other power with other stakeholders) (Hambleton 2014; Sotarauta 2016); (ii) building networks (to whom such networks relate and whether they are horizontally or vertically oriented) (Collinge and Gibney 2010; Sotarauta and Mustikkamäki 2012); (iii) dialogue (the processes of communication among leading stakeholders and other stakeholders in a given area) (Horlings and Padt 2013); (iv) public support and funding (Horlings and Padt 2013).

In addition, Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan (2010) describe the process of social innovation and distinguish six stages that are representative of the *pragmatic approach*. The first stage of the development of a social innovation, which the authors refer to as *prompts, inspirations and diagnoses* (Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan 2010, 12), include factors that express the need for innovation at the level of social practice such as crises or shortcomings in the supply of public goods. Problem identification and appropriate analysis of this problem form the basis of the second stage - *proposals and ideas*. In this stage, the formulation of solution strategies occurs. After the development of potential new solutions to a problem, the strategies are tested in the next stage of *prototypes and piloting*. For social innovations that reach the fourth stage of *sustaining*, it is important to maintain or establish them permanently. The next stage is about the *scaling and diffusion* of social innovation as the last possible stage is systemic change (Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan 2010).

Both approaches, *systemic* and *pragmatic*, help us to better understand the concept of social innovation; however, both have weaknesses. The *systemic approaches* tend to lead in an explanatory direction and are thus suitable for determining whether a novelty is a social innovation. These approaches are not intended to analyze the emergence and development of social innovations. The *pragmatic approach* of Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan (2010), as well as the results of Müller et al. (2013), de Wit et al. (2019), and Monroe-White and Zook (2018), represent only an approximation as the process of social innovation is context-dependent and does not follow a linear pattern. Not all social innovations go through such a linear development; however, it can differ from one social innovation to another. Stages can be mixed, and repetitions can occur, a process that can be compared to place development according to the dialog among stakeholders (Sotarauta 2016). In addition, with some social innovations, single stages do not occur at all (Bethmann 2019).

Due to these weaknesses, we use *socially creative milieus* (Landry 2008, 133; André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009) as an analytical concept for the development of social innovation in a collaborative project. The overarching idea of the different concepts of creative milieus is that the stimulation and evolution of creativity are connected to a defined space or place (Merkel 2012). In particular, urban space offers resources and potentials for agents of change that they would not be able to generate on their own (Meusburger 2009). This approach is particularly suitable for explaining collaborative innovations as it does not attempt to classify the innovation process into one single scheme

but rather examines the different combinations of soft and hard infrastructure in the development of a place (neighborhood, city, region) (Landry 2008, 133). Places by themselves are not creative; however, the interactions of places with stakeholder networks produce change (Günzel 2009, 269). This enables the study of the roles of actors in various networks and the environmental factors (for the same approach in urban development based on collective leadership, see Sotarauta 2016). Thus, with the help of *socially creative milieus*, any social innovation can be studied. Simultaneously, a product of and condition for creativity, *socially creative milieus* form a unique environment for the development of local social innovations. Therefore, *socially creative milieus* are suitably stable and sufficiently flexible platforms for creative, artistic, and innovative participation in society. They are characterized by uncertainty, which contributes in terms of both threats and innovative solutions. Through their multicultural, open and participatory character, they create a breeding ground from which influential social impulses can arise in the form of social innovations (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009). Practical cases can be evaluated employing five dimensions, which creates a map for the exploration of local social innovations (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009). The five dimensions answer the following questions: *From whom are local social innovations derived? Who benefits from such innovations? How are these innovations realized? What are the constraints in bringing forth such innovations? What are the impacts of these innovations?*

The first dimension, which answers the *from whom?* question focuses on *innovation agents* (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009, 152) and leaders in urban development (Sotarauta 2016). Such agents initiate a new invention or introduce an idea from outside the milieu. Creativity is a prerequisite for invention or adaptation. It results, on the one hand, from individual characteristics and, on the other hand, from participation in local, regional and international networks. Creativity is also essential for the acquisition of *the adopters*, who represent the second dimension. *The adopters* are crucial to the innovation process because, without them, innovation would remain merely an idea. Apart from the characteristics of the potential adaptors such as age, gender, or educational level, the structure of the milieu in particular determines the timing of the adaptation process. André, Enriques, and Malheiros (2009) assume that in creative milieus, this process is faster and more intense and includes unexpected adaptors. The role of multiple actors in social innovation processes has rarely been analyzed in more detail and requires further elaboration (Windrum et al. 2016). To analyze *how* the further diffusion process of innovation is shaped, *the diffusion channels* must be examined. They are initiated by agents, adaptors or other mediators and strengthened by civic participation and relational capital. There is a crucial aspect concerning stakeholder networks (Sotarauta 2016; Cattacin and Zimmer 2016, 23). The more powerful they become, the better they can handle social and cultural diversity (see also the issue of sharing power in urban development in Sotarauta 2016). The fourth dimension involves the *constraints* that impede the diffusion channels. Here, constraints constitute conservative forces that aim to hold onto the established order. The more developed the *socially creative milieus* are, the fewer such restrictions become. Nonetheless, some *inertia and resistance factors* always remain. The last dimension analyses the *impacts*. It is important to consider not only the obvious *effects of social innovation on local development*, such as physical representation or landscape characteristics but also the renewal of the cultural values and practices that shape social relations (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009; Cattacin and Zimmer 2016, 23). If they are not successful, the whole cycle turns back and starts again.

Impacts are the outcomes of combinations of the abovementioned factors.

2.1. The case of Gundeldinger Feld

We purposively selected the case-study as we assume it is data-rich and representative of the phenomenon of interests and allows for a strong conceptual analysis (Flyvbjerg 2006). Moreover, this approach considers the uniqueness of local relationships (Collinge and Gibney 2010; Sotarauta and Mustikkamäki 2012). The unit of analysis of our case study is the ‘Gundeldinger Feld’ in Basel, Switzerland. The district of Gundeldingen is characterized by a high population density (148 persons per hectare); the percentage of foreign people is approximately 40%, and the high percentage of people below 40 years of age living alone (the mean size of an apartment is 36 m², with the mean of 1.85 people living in an apartment) (Binz, Voyame, and Müller 2008, 7). The whole project of Gundeldinger Feld is very well documented, and a comprehensive description has been published (Buser 2017).

The Gundeldinger Feld is an area of over 12,000 square meters, which was the production site of an engineering company until the year 2000. Then, the production was relocated, and the area was available for sale. The decision caused uncertainty for the city, the landowner, and especially for the community in a neighborhood of approximately 18,000 inhabitants in the Gundeldingen city quarter (Statistisches Amt Basel-Stad 2020). An urban developing company founded to convert this site into a sociocultural neighborhood center succeeded in finding investors for its concept (Buser 2017).

The basic idea of the developing company was to create a field for urban development and creative experiments under the premise of converting the former industrial area. The whole process took about a decade, but the development of ideas continued after that period. In the first conversion phase (2001-2002), parts of the halls and offices were still rented by the previous owners (Binz and Voyame 2004, 16). In that time, urban plans and the transport plans in Gundeli quartier changed with the aim to reduce transport. This step also touched the companies that rented premises in Gundeldinger Feld (for example, they were obliged in their contracts to recommend their customers to come by public transport when they visit them (Binz and Voyame 2004, 25; Kantensprung 2015)). During the second phase in years 2002–2004, a service center with around 40 offices and workshops, a nursery school rooms, a kindergarten, and a playground for children were created (Binz and Voyame 2004, 28). In 2004, the project of Gundeldinger Feld won the Hans-E.-Moppert-Preis/ Sarasin Bank (Binz and Voyame 2004). Still, it was challenging to get long-term tenants (see the need for fewer changes in tenants pointed out by Binz, Voyame, and Müller 2008, 13).

There were technical and construction issues with the passive energy savings during the third planning phase in the years 2004–2005 (Binz, Voyame, and Müller 2008, 17–18). The construction restrictions enabled using less ambitious changes (like thin insulation). Since 2015, Gundeldinger Feld has its own solar power plant, because one of the principles relates to reducing energy consumption. Environmental sustainability was enacted through compliance with the requirements of a 2,000-watt society. This concept aims at the continuous output of 2,000 watts per person, which is defined by the concept as sufficient (2000-Watt-Society 2020). This means that the annual per capita energy consumption had to be reduced from an average of approximately 6,000–2,000 watts, of which three quarters must come from renewable energies (Buser 2017). This concept is in compliance with the framework provided by the city of Basel that outlined its aims for social, economic, and environmental sustainability (Basel 2001), and thus transformed the values represented by the public, private, and nonprofit sectors involved in Gundeldinger Feld (Ziegler 2017). Three photovoltaic systems have already been installed on roofs in the case study area, and more are in the planning stage.

Another principle concerned the variety of activities in the complex of Gundeldinger Feld. Activities and providers are available to all community members. Thus, young families, athletes, partygoers, craftspeople, theater visitors and many more can satisfy their needs there. This exchange of variable values has enabled the emergence of social innovation in Gundeldinger Feld.

3. Methodology

Aiming at our research question at the conditions that enable cooperation to support the emergence of social innovation, we conducted a holistic single case study with interview data and desk research based on publicly available data. A case study is an appropriate research method for the analysis of social innovation because such a study allows for the studying of ‘a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin 2003, 13). For our holistic single case study of a successful local development initiative, we decided to study one case with its contextual conditions (single case study) from various perspectives (holistic case study) (for more details concerning this approach, see, Yin 2003). We then analyzed the data using the *socially creative milieus* approach.

We choose a qualitative mixed-methods approach to obtain rich data and an in-depth understanding of the case study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner 2007). Building on data triangulation, including different sources of information, we conducted eight semi-structured interviews. The interviews covered all five dimensions of *socially creative milieus* and related to issues of practical implementation such as timing, duration, the role of stakeholders and leaders (tenants, inhabitants, and the developing company), values in the processes of planning and implementation of strategic visions in Gundeldinger Feld, the building of networks, and support. Two of these interviews were with the partners of the developing company and included open-access information stemming from desk research. We conducted six additional interviews with other stakeholders – four tenants at Gundeldinger Feld (two nonprofits, two business companies), a community association, and the local government agency (see appendix 1). The interviews were carried out in September 2019 and in May 2020 and lasted between 45 and 60 min. The interviews were transcribed to capture detailed perceptions and formulations. A thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, and Namey 2012) was subsequently carried out on the collected data to provide further details in the explanatory analysis on the five dimensions of socially creative milieus. Two researchers independently assessed the data according to these dimensions. Differences in the assessment were resolved in a final discussion. Moreover, open-access information from newspapers and websites was used, especially for questions regarding the constraints and impacts of the project.

4. Results

The idea of creating a community center in an old production site was a risky endeavor, economically and socially. From an economic point of view, the developing company had to find tenants for the huge construction halls and office buildings with realizable activities next to each other or even those that cross-fertilized. From the social perspective, the local community reacted with reservations regarding the implementation of a diverse and unfamiliar concept in their neighborhood. The following analysis shows how the developing company was able to establish a community center that is highly successful economically,

socially, and environmentally. In our analysis, we applied the criteria of socially creative milieus, which helped us structure the analysis (Buser 2017).

4.1. Agents and triggers of innovation

The main actor in the case study is the developing company that initiated the project. The idea was to preserve the buildings of the production site by continuing to use them. In this way, the cityscape was preserved. At that time, this was a new and innovative approach to urban development. A further innovation was that the developing company did not take a dominant position in the area, and they began the project without a public mandate. The statement of one of the owners of the developing company reflects the situation just before the whole project had begun:

We always thought that if the factory ever stopped production, we would have to use it for the neighborhood. Then, there was the article in the newspaper, and we got together to tackle it. We had no ideology or concept before then. (INT 05)

The developing company was owned by five people, of whom only two were living in the Gundeldingen district while three of them were not. These two members of the group played a significant role in the initial phase. Their idea was to use the area for the local community and to strive to maintain a good quality of life in the Gundeldingen district. The developing company had good preconditions for using the area. The five owners had experience with urban planning and architecture; however, they also had implemented another project using the building of the former bank as a café (Kantensprung 2019). They used their contacts, knowledge and experience in obtaining the first financial support for further development of the complex. Thus, this composition of the owners enabled a combination of approaches to the processes with an emotional distance on one hand and deep involvement on the other. It did not limit the owners' involvement as the single partners of the company participated in the processes of development. Thus, the developing company could concentrate on rational and innovative solutions that were beneficial for all stakeholders.

Further triggers of innovation were the transformation processes, especially in social and economic terms and the focus on environmental sustainability. The transformation was managed by building a network of the community, tenants, and other interested stakeholders.

During the change of use, the function followed the space. For example, the cloak-rooms and showers of the factory workers were integrated into a hostel. The aim was not to completely change the existing space but to continue to work with the substance of the given building; the developing company sought to preserve the existing architecture and favor the financing of the conversion. For example, the former owner rented a few buildings before the sale, which was an important source of income during the initial phase of the project (years 2001-2002). Additional costs were also saved by efficiently reusing existing resources.

4.2. Adopters

Adopters are the key protagonists in innovation processes (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009). Their engagement changes an innovative idea into a successful innovation. In the case study, the early integration of the later users is an important aspect of the project: Rooms are never completely reworked but always finished in cooperation with

the future tenants and in line with their ideas. The close cooperation with the community enables long-lasting relationships of a diverse combination of tenants and uses within a short time, which continues to shape and support the development of the location today.

One major principle of the network is that whoever participates should obtain utility out of it. From the beginning, the developing company began to build a network around the community center, inviting the community to participate in the creation of new facilities and by making the place an open space in a dense neighborhood. All relevant stakeholders were invited to share ideas and to search for new utilizations of the existing buildings. From the very beginning (the year 2000), the meetings were well attended. Between 150 and 250 individuals took part in the initial meetings, and approximately 50 people decided to volunteer (Binz and Voyame 2004, 26). Thus, wide consent was achieved concerning the use of the area. This type of reciprocity can be seen as a major driver of building a socially creative milieu.

All who participate should have use of it. Our project answers diverse needs in the community. If you were to take away the community center today, nobody would be happy, I think. (INT 01)

Generally, the adopters in the case study can be divided into new tenants, service providers, and consumers and recipients. The new tenants and service providers were important to realize the conceptual idea of a mixture of business, nonprofit, and creative industries. Through this mixture, the new community center offered interesting services for many different recipients including young families, athletes, partygoers, craftsmen, and theater visitors. In this way, the community center even attracted frequent visitors from other parts of the city (Buser 2017).

4.3. *Diffusion channels*

The details on what to do and how a community center should look were not precisely specified by the developing company. These details were developed through communication and interaction with the residents. The understanding and design of urban development as a dialogic and successive negotiation process was an essential component of the project:

We want to integrate all interest groups, especially the community. You have to find out what is missing, what can be done, where the fears are, and where the needs are. We had so-called ‘process afternoons’ where people were invited, and different groups were formed to consider community needs. Through this participatory approach, we got to know the people very quickly. (INT 01)

This form of participatory planning or change-oriented capacity building (Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan 2010; Howaldt and Schwarz 2014) was crucial for the project’s initial success. A new approach to building a community center was to include all different societal sectors. In addition to nonprofit organizations, it was an initial aim to attract small businesses and craft businesses as partners. Additionally, cultural organizations were included. Based on the concept of socially creative milieus, the cross-sectoral relationships in urban development are an important means to build trust and acceptance (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009) in which dialogue plays a crucial role (Collinge and Gibney 2010; Sotarauta and Mustikkamäki 2012; Horlings and Padt 2013). Expectations and ideas are distributed among different interest groups, and new

impulses flow back into the process of creation and development. Thus, conflicting projects were not realized. For example, a study of a new residential building in the rear part of the site shown that under the given conditions, a sustainable residential project can hardly be realized (Binz and Voyame 2004, 31).

4.4. Opportunities

Tenants are selected based on defined criteria such as added value for the neighborhood, diversity of use, sustainability and willingness to integrate (Rudolph and Stark 2015). Over the years, a mixture of social institutions, cultural and leisure facilities, schools, restaurants, artists and service providers has developed. There are currently 78 tenants (Kantensprung 2019).

The initial opportunity to start building a community center when only some of the spaces were rented has been fully utilized. According to all interviewees, the current composition of tenants provides a balance among the local development's social, economic, and environmental components. Moreover, it has created an innovative cluster that offers added value and attracts firms and nonprofit organizations as well as visitors.

The concept brought very high added value because interesting synergies can be created. (INT 07)

The high level of use by a wide variety of people is an indication that the needs of the residents have been successfully addressed. (INT 08)

In addition to the goals of turning Gundeldinger Feld into a lively meeting point for the neighborhood and of ensuring that the necessary conversions are carried out according to the criteria of building biology, the environmental balance sheet of Gundeldinger Feld should comply with the requirements of the 2000-watt society.

4.5. Inertia and restriction factors

Two factors were critical for the success of the project: humans and space. Including many different stakeholder groups and opening up planning steps to many people increases the need for coordination. A time-demanding effort to coordinate diverse interests causes lengthy processes and requires the patience of all stakeholders. Additionally, all interests must ultimately be concentrated into one solution that is still economically viable and in compliance with the initial vision of the developing company. Many ideas and inquiries appeared during the consultative processes, and some of them were not viable, either financially or due to their purely commercial background without a social component. Effective participation is only possible in open project structures if it builds on the bridging social capital. Thus, entry barriers must be low, and trust must develop over time (von Schnurbein 2014).

The second factor is space. Urban space is limited and, thus, expensive. Creating innovative solutions in an urban environment competes with market return-oriented projects. To succeed, an innovative project must build on existing resources to reduce costs. In the Gundeldinger Feld case, the term 'genius loci', e.g. the spirit of the place, is used to describe the approach of reusing existing buildings.

You take a look and ask: What can the building do? What does society want? If there is a demand, how do you adjust the different switchers so that the right ingredients get in? That is the genius loci we emanate from. (INT 01)

Additionally, the project team turned the competitiveness between different applicants for space into a driving force but keeping in mind the expected composition of services provided in Gundeldinger Feld. According to interviews, ideas provided by the stakeholders, especially those who rented places in Gundeldinger Feld, are taken into serious consideration; however, they should support the core idea of a combination of various social and economic stakeholders in one place. This combination creates added value for all participants. It also requires an innovative approach to ownership and space usage regulations (Kissling-Näf 2005). The developing company never claimed full ownership but promoted the idea of collective ownership. Legally, it was still owned by a limited number of people; however, the use of the property enabled the empowerment of the stakeholders and property management as it would in a context of collective ownership.

At the beginning of the project, the communication between the developing company and the inhabitants in the neighborhood needed to be developed and improved. Thus, a neighborhood secretariat was open on the site in 2001 (Binz and Voyame 2004, 34).

4.6. *Effects of social innovation on local development*

Socially creative milieus emerge from situations of uncertainty and create innovative solutions because either the existing solutions are outdated or the challenges are completely new (André, Enriques, and Malheiros 2009). In the case study at hand, there was a need for innovative solutions to transform a production site into an open and connecting space. The integrative options for development were the major drivers of change. Although the initial plan to generate 80% of tenants from the direct community failed, and the networks had to be built not only within the Gundeldingen district but also beyond the district, the local residents adopted the community center as ‘theirs’ (Brack and Breyemeier 2005). The reasons for more city-wide tenants were mainly financial. However, the community center gained recognition beyond its close neighborhood.

The quality of life is enhanced by the possibility of use for all persons and represents very high added value in the densely built quarter. Various user groups meet each other. Even people from other quarters use Gundeldinger Feld for their leisure activities. (INT 08)

Social innovation cannot be measured directly, and effects are usually not short-term. As a project of urban development, Gundeldinger Feld received positive feedback after a few years, which emphasized the core aspects described above: reuse of existing resources, cross-sectoral participation, collective ownership, and a triple-bottom-line success (Scheurer and Grau 2005). Based on this timely evaluation, further projects were initiated by applying the same principles. In the meantime, the developing company has revitalized a former market hall, a former department store, and a former country inn. Additionally, others have copied the processes and approaches in other projects. The project was also accompanied by communicative activities such as a guided tour on-site. The project created new social learning and adoption processes that were oriented towards the community as a whole, and not towards specific interest groups or resource providers.

We are not a social business or social workers, but we act socially. That is something completely different. It is our inner attitude that drives us to do interesting and relevant projects for society. There is a lot to do, but not necessarily by us. We just cover a specific part – and that is conversion. We transfer an unsocial place into a social hotspot. (INT 01)

The interviews confirm that stakeholders greatly appreciate the intangible value of Gundeldinger Feld, including the historical development, economic, social, and environmental

aspects in development, and networks built to shape the development, which has made them proud to take part. For example, two of them stated the following:

“The area is an important bridge between culturally committed people and a broader audience interested in culture or simply in entertainment. Experience is gained here with the combination of social orientation, sustainability, and economic efficiency” (INT 02), and, similarly, “[It’s a] wonderful, diverse, living (business) ecosystem.” (INT 04)

5. Discussion

Despite the enormous number of citations in the literature, social innovation remains conceptually weak (Ziegler 2017). This is mainly because a wide variety of definitions and understandings have been formulated. Both systemic and pragmatic approaches can be used to analyze and explain the development of social innovation *a posteriori*; however, those approaches do not directly offer criteria to configure social innovation. Building on the assumption that social innovation is a collaborative action, we apply the concept of socially creative milieus to study social innovation creation.

Our results support both the concept of socially creative milieus and the criteria on which they are built for studying social innovations. We discuss the results of the case study with respect to the two major theoretical conceptions of social innovation: systemic and pragmatic. The systemic conception’s relationships (Rammert 2010) are present in the temporal dimension as industrial changes do not appear regularly. In the current case study, the factual dimension was present due to the vision pursued by the developing company with a social dimension represented by a wide dialogue and consent-search (Ziegler’s 2017 open and collaborative character of social innovations).

Socially creative milieus facilitate the definition of roles, relationships, values, and norms. In the case study, the creation of bridging social capital was a crucial success factor, allowing high engagement and the inclusion of many different interest groups to apply principles of collective ownership and participatory planning processes. Instead of forcing tensions between different logics in using urban space, the project in the case study integrated them into one utilization concept. To be successful, all partners in the project must adopt something from the other participants. For instance, business tenants must be sustainable, nonprofit organizations must be economically viable, and cultural institutions must understand social needs.

An important aspect of the concept is that the developing company served as a platform to initiate collaborative processes. This self-perception is contrary to the idea of social enterprises. In a social enterprise, the sustainable survival of the enterprise is an essential part of the overall concept. Hence, projects are tied to the social enterprise, which may reduce the chances of interaction and scaling (Phillips, Alexander, and Lee 2019).

In the pragmatic approach (Müller et al. 2013; Monroe-White and Zook 2018; de Wit et al. 2019), our case study confirmed several commonalities that were applicable elsewhere but also as well as some specifics that must be taken into account. Industrial changes affect many cities. Thus, the concept and principles of the project have been successfully applied to several other sites in the region including a former department store, a market hall, and a country inn. Hence, the principles of the concept are not limited to the specific environment and situation of the project in the case study. Dialogue with stakeholders always plays a crucial role (similar to the conclusions of Horlings and Padt 2013; Sotarauta 2016).

However, specific attributes of Gundeldinger Feld concern the minimal role of the public sector. In the year 2001, the city of Basel issued a report ‘Future Basel’ that set forth principles of economic, social, and environmental dimensions of local development including partners from the private sphere and nonprofit organizations (Basel 2001). Otherwise, the city was not involved in the process. This makes the case unique among studies on local urban development. Although the place-based approach underscores the importance of the public sector (Sotarauta 2016; Beer et al. 2019), our study reveals that innovative development is possible without public sector funding and interventions, while political support was achieved through wide participation. When high social capital is present, the direct coercive power of the public sector is needed only as the provider of a framework (see, for example, failures in coerced participation in Hamdouch and Galvan 2019). Applying the creative milieus approach, dense networks and contacts in the governance of urban areas make innovative development possible (Cattacin and Zimmer 2016). Moreover, our study confirms that capacity building and resource independence (Cattacin and Zimmer 2016) are important for innovative solutions. In Gundeldinger Feld, the resources were provided by independent foundations, the voluntary work of stakeholders, and, of course, by sources generated by Gundeldinger Feld itself.

All phases of the innovative process appeared in the case of Gundeldinger Feld. In the first phase (prompts), space was conceptualized as a dynamic scope of negotiation, connecting social and economic actors and sector convergence in innovative processes (Phills, Deiglmeier, and Miller 2008). The second phase (proposals) included the creation and synthesis of ideas in the participatory planning processes. The development of networks and creating value through transparency combines phases three and four (prototypes and sustaining). The fifth and sixth phases (scaling and systemic change) build on communicative processes such as open dialogues or the guided tour. The focus should not be solely on agents of change but also on adopters or channels of diffusion to leverage the initial idea.

Uncertainty and variability in social and infrastructural conditions are a driving force for social innovation. In urban development, uncertainty is a major factor as a consequence of a changing society (Christensen 1985). Socially creative milieus provide a framework for processes that lead to social innovation.

6. Conclusion

Through our case study, we contribute to the literature on social innovation. Answering our research question on what conditions enable successful social innovations to emerge from collaborative processes, we can underscore the importance of three factors – social capital, dialogue among stakeholders, and uncertainty in local development. In contradiction to the current discussion on the theory of place-based leadership, our case study also revealed that the role of the public sector in local development can be reduced if private agents of change are promoted.

Emphasizing collaborative processes, the concept of socially creative milieus offers relevant criteria for implementing and analyzing social innovation. In particular, it connects the emergence of social innovation with uncertainty as a facilitator.

Additionally, our findings add new knowledge to the discussion on the actors involved in social innovation. Although innovation requires forward-thinking and risk-taking actors and agents of change, adopters are necessary to develop and sustain innovative ideas. In socially creative milieus, the adopters are as essential as the innovative agents to overcome uncertainty and to generate bridging social capital as a basis of trust.

Our findings also offer insights for practice. Processes of cocreation and participation are enhanced if the constituents are given opportunities to gain ownership. Another practical implication is the value of cross-sectoral collaborations. An economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable solution in urban development requires joint efforts by stakeholders. Instead of provoking rivalry for rare urban space between the different users, collaboration leads to a better mutual understanding and advantages for all parties involved. To summarize, this study highlights the benefits of collaborative processes to initiate social innovation.

We also note two limitations concerning the research context and methodology in our study. First, our findings are based on a single case study and cannot be easily generalized. As stated above, the principles of the project have already been successfully transferred to other projects, which provides some justification for this case study. Second, the transfer of the findings beyond the field of urban development must be done with caution. Although uncertainty may evolve in other situations, dealing with development in the neighborhood is of high importance for people as it touches their everyday lives and raises awareness and interest. A simple application of the same concept can fail as the creative milieu can be different in different places. Despite these limitations, we consider our findings to be robust enough to deliver valuable insights for both research and practice.

Future research should pay more attention to the surrounding conditions that facilitate social innovation. In addition to uncertainty, more of these types of questions may be worth considering such as under what conditions should the public sector fulfill a framing role in the pursuit of social innovations?

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Appendix 1: Overview of interviews

Interview No.	Type of organization	Function in project	Position of Interviewee
INT 01	Development firm	Project development	Partner
INT 02	Association	Community association	President
INT 03	Business company	Tenant	CEO
INT 04	Nonprofit organization	Tenant	Director
INT 05	Development firm	Project development	Partner
INT 06	Business company	Tenant	CEO
INT 07	Nonprofit organization	Tenant	Board member
INT 08	Public agency	Local government agency	Director