

**Open social innovation and the ambiguous role of inclusivity:
A case study of a regional inter-sectoral collaboration**

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Currently, humanity faces numerous, mutually reinforcing challenges: COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, care crisis, structural racism and sexism, unequal educational and participation opportunities – to name just a few. Social innovations, i.e. the development of new services, products, practices or structures, aim to contribute to solving these social problems (Nicholls et al., 2015). However, dealing with social problems is a complex, ‘wicked’ issue (Ferraro et al., 2015) as they cannot be tackled in isolation from the social systems in which they are already embedded (Mair and Seelos, 2021). Innovative and equally ‘usable’ solutions must therefore simultaneously acknowledge the logics of different societal sectors and require the *concerted* efforts of multiple actors (Mair and Seelos, 2021; Pache et al., 2022; Tracey and Stott, 2017). Additionally, empirical studies (Dobusch et al., 2019; Kornberger et al., 2017; Tkacz, 2015) have shown that ‘opening up’ of certain processes can create an impression of openness (Heimstädt, 2017) but does not necessarily imply a certain level of inclusivity.

Against this background, the paper investigates the case of an open social innovation (OSI) initiative (AdvanceSocial) orchestrated by two actors from different sectors: one being a research unit of a university interested in questions of societal transformation, one being a social welfare organization interested in innovative solutions for social problems as well as the inclusivity of the OSI process itself. The basic goal of AdvanceSocial was to collect ideas for social innovations via an open call and to accompany the generated ideas with the greatest potential through the phase of development and – ideally – prototyping/implementation. To this end, a broad spectrum of stakeholders was brought together in the context of a 48h-ideas-workshop so that they could work together on innovative solutions to social challenges outside of the constraints of everyday hustling.

The studied case is particularly suited to investigate the relationship between openness and inclusivity in the context of open social innovation processes. This is because the case represents

a rather atypical constellation of OSI orchestrators in which the issues of inclusion (and exclusion) and their consequences for the process' inclusivity were the subject of explicit considerations and negotiations.

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